

## **Mahalagang Paglakbay** *(It's the journey that counts)*

My Saint Mary's journey will be exactly 995 days or 2 years and 265 days by the time I graduate on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2010 with a Bachelor of Commerce degree major in Entrepreneurship.

I arrived in Canada on August 29, 2007 from the beautiful islands of the Philippines. I was very excited to study abroad but I didn't know what to expect as an International Student. Prior to my trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia, my mom said to me *"Whatever happens, decide to be happy. It's the journey that counts."* I promised to myself that day that I would be happy and enjoy the experience of this journey. To this day, I still follow this advice and this advice brought me to places. I can proudly say to myself that I have enjoyed my SMU student life experience to the fullest.

Of course, my student life experience was not all the time green, blue or orange. I had my black and white moments too but these did not stop me from enjoying my journey. I would actually see the other side of the coin and try to be positive. One example was when I get homesick, once in a while; you get this bug biting you. I did get lonely at times especially during my first few months in Saint Mary's. But the very supportive and awesome advisors in the International Centre just made student life for International Students easier.

I cannot find the right words to describe how supportive the International Centre of Saint Mary's University is. Saint Mary's University slogan - *One University, One World. Yours.* - just describes

what a student life should be. It is up to you to make it happen. Fortunately, I made it happen.

I was always looking for things to do in school. I was so active in my student life balancing academic and extra-curricular activities here in university. I am a firm believer that joining in school activities and events balances life in school. With my interest in cultures, I became an International Student Volunteer and later appointed to lead a group of international student volunteers for two consecutive years until my last year. Also, with my passion for soccer, I joined the Saint Mary's Soccer Varsity team. I met so many people here that became real friends of mine. I could say that I could travel around the world from North America, Asia, South America, Caribbean to Europe without even spending a cent for accommodations. That's how many international students I have established ties with.

What makes Saint Mary's University so different from other schools is that the opportunities and international experience the school gives to the students are vast. This year, I was part of the Northern Ireland Conflict Program. This program was held in Belfast. I was fortunate enough to travel to Europe and do workshop with primary and high school students there. This was a priceless experience. At Saint Mary's, you are not a number. You are someone, someone who can make a difference in today's world.

As a student soon to graduate, Saint Mary's has prepared me in this journey of mine. Transition to the next phase in my life, hopefully, would be similar to the green, blue, orange or even the black and white moments I had in Saint Mary's. I can't really say that the colors will be exactly the same but one thing for sure, If I can be happy in a different country, I could decide to be happy in the next chapter of my life.

If I could return to Saint Mary's as freshman again, I would do it. But, it is about time to move on and carry this valuable experience forward. After all, it's the journey that counts (Mahalagang Paglakbay).



Nicholas Reyes received his prize from Director of Alumni, Pat Crowley.