

Death signals finality for us, human beings. Losing our loved ones makes us mourn deeply, especially if the one who is gone left an indelible mark by inspiring us to be better people; by leading us to be more loving & selfless; and to clothe ourselves with generosity.

When our dearly beloved, Dr Cabacungan passed away, deep sorrow gripped us. How different life has become for so many, in an instant. And because of the values he knowingly or unknowingly demonstrated amongst his peers, many were truly changed for the better. Even if he was ill for some time, only in his death were we seriously filled with the memories of his sincere goodness and cheerfulness while he was still alive. During his illness, we were more concerned with praying for his healing; with hopes of being in his cheerful presence again. Oh how we looked forward to seeing him and his very sweet wife, Mrs Nenita Cabacungan once more. Then reality dawned on us. He was gravely ill then we learned, he was gone. His passing was finally announced and we shed tears of gratitude because we realized that he left this world a better place to live for so many.

Dr Cabacungan was a colleague at the CLSU International Alumni Association and being younger when I started joining the association ten years or so ago, I was a newbie observing the ins & outs of the association. Not to discount the kindness of all of them, “Kuya” Ed and “Ate” Nenet Cabacungan happened to stand out in welcoming me to the association. Their hugs can make any newcomer feel at home and at ease.

I must say that even earlier on, all the members were sincerely planning and doing great things for our Alma Mater. Some may have more roles than others but every alumnus was actively taking part in raising funds for the organization which will benefit the CLSU students in particular and the university, in general. To this day that has become the norm of the association: to get together in fun fellowship and make a difference for those in need.

When Dr Cabacungan spearheaded the Endowment Funds, many followed his lead and gave towards this perpetual financial resource for our university, including his own children, other alumni, their families & friends; many are not even CLSU graduates. He took on his role as Chairman of the Endowment Funds to heart and tirelessly worked to raise funds. He readily recognized and acknowledged those who donated and in a short time, the Endowment Fund was nearly at \$100,000.00.

He obviously breathed and lived to help raise funds for his Alma Mater but he never made people feel guilty if they can't contribute. I was one of those who were more tied up with my own ministries and Kuya Ed continued to treat me with sincerest understanding. He modeled generosity and grace in every way. He accepted everyone lovingly whether that person gave or not, served or not. He genuinely exuded joy and acceptance in every gathering, whether on a fundraising or a simple get-together.

There are adjectives that will strongly live on for me as I think of Dr. Cabacungan; that of goodness, generosity, grace, kindness and selflessness. His drive to make a difference for our university will remain unparalleled to me. His resolve to raise as much funds as he can for the CLSU Endowment Fund is forever historical in our alumni association. Here is someone who gave to the very end of his life. His wife, “Ate” Nenet gave so much more too even after his death. What a couple to emulate for our university's financial legacy.

I may not be able to serve a fraction of what he did but he inspired me to be accountable to where our Alumni Organization will be headed to as I serve. To rid our hearts of selfish motives would be a tribute to the alumni, like him, who are only thinking of the good of others; the scholarships that we can offer to the disadvantaged students at CLSU will be in their memory.

With my experiences and dealings with him, I would describe Dr Cabacungan as the man that we will never forget: he is “greatness personified”. What a privilege to have been enriched in character by one great human being!

For many who are still mourning his demise, here is a Bible verse to encourage you: **“to be absent in the body is to be present in the Lord.”** 2 Corinthians 5:8