

INTRODUCTION OF THE GUEST HONOREE MR. EDUARDO G. FAJARDO

**Chairman of the Helenica Corporation
Member, Board of Trustees, Ateneo de Davao University
and Benefactor**

REV. EDMUNDO M. MARTINEZ S.J.

My dear friends of the Ateneo,

In the discussion in the Groundbreaking Preparation Committee on who should introduce our honored guest this morning, the Committee felt that I should do it, because it was I who know him best. And I readily enough accepted because it is indeed a privilege and an honor for me to introduce to you Mr. Eduardo G. Fajardo. Before doing so, I would just like to acknowledge the other companions of Mr. Fajardo to this affair: Mr. Kenneth Sy, the Chairman of the Ellen-Francisco Fajardo Foundation, and Mr. Emmanuel Bondad, also a member of the Foundation. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Guilbert Go, a member of the Ateneo Board of Trustees. He is also representing this morning a generous benefactor for the building, Mr. Lucio Tan.

Ever since the invitations were sent for the groundbreaking of this main building of the Ateneo, the question was repeatedly asked: Who is Ellen Francisco-Fajardo after whom this building is being named? The shortcut answer is this: she is the person who is held in such high esteem and affection by her husband that he will give away millions to honor her. Except that those are also *her* millions; and it gives one an insight into what kind of a person she is to know that she is truly happy that her husband gives away their conjugal wealth.

But who is this husband? He is still the same person I knew as a scholastic when he was a first-year college student in my English class at the Ateneo de Manila: strongly driven, thoroughly alert, highly

intelligent, fiercely focused, and intensely passionate. Except that now he is no longer the poor student from Tondo, but a tycoon in his own right.

He is no longer the scholar from the Arellano Public High School, but a highly accomplished investment banker. And he is no longer investing money as a banker from the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York or the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco, or the Far East Bank, the Philippine National Bank or the Development Bank of the Philippines. Because he is investing his own money, and he is running a highly sophisticated operation of his own in The Helenica Corporation that equals if not surpasses the expertise of the banks he had worked for. And even more important, as the present event dramatizes, he is also no longer on the receiving, but on the giving side of the equation; and that, with a vengeance.

The same drivenness and alertness, the same focused intelligence, the same intense passion are now directed to one absorbing objective: to promote and support excellence in education in the Philippines. The company that *makes* the money is the Helenica Corporation. The company that *gives away* the money is the Ellen Fajardo-Francisco Foundation. And I am probably not too far from the truth in my impression that the Helenica Corporation is mandated to make money so that the Foundation can give it away.

As you may perhaps know, one of the main jobs I did for the Ateneo de Manila for many years before I came here was to be its chief fund-raiser. Never, in all my years of fund-raising, have I ever met a donor with the intense personal concern and the almost unreal generosity as the benefactor we honor today.

One does not talk of money in polite company. Well, let me talk of cars. If we bought brand new Mercedes Benzes with the cash we have received from the Ellen Fajardo-Francisco Foundation, and if we had a motorcade around Davao and announced that all these cars had been freely given to the Ateneo de Davao University, it would blow people's minds.

And yet, we are not the only recipients of the largesse of the Foundation. There is the Ateneo de Manila, the Ateneo de Naga, the Ateneo de Zamboanga, UP, La Salle, the Arellano High School, the seminarians in Sorsogon, the Capuchin Sisters in Lipa, in Laoag, and in Ormoc, even the New Era University of the Iglesia ni Cristo. The donations given by the Foundation to these institutions for this year alone run into the tens of millions of pesos. That's a lot of Mercedes Benzes! But would you believe this striking fact? Neither the Ellen-Francisco Fajardo Foundation nor the Helenica Corporation itself owns a single Mercedes Benz!

No, we are not the sole beneficiary, nor even, I think, the main beneficiary of the Foundation; and in the end, it really does not really matter. Just to see how one can master great wealth rather than be mastered by it, and to see how that Jesuit ideal of "man for others" can be lived out so selflessly in the world of high finance, is already, in the scale of human achievements, a blessing that one can cheer and be grateful for.

But I would like to think that there is a difference between the Ateneo de Davao University and the other beneficiaries of the Ellen Francisco-Fajardo Foundation. We are a proud institution. And I hope we will remain that way. We will not be out-done in generosity. We will try to outdo any generous act we receive with the gratitude we give. And in the present instance, as an expression of our gratitude and as a fitting recognition of the generous and high-minded goals of the Foundation, the Ateneo de Davao University is happy to name its main building in honor of Ellen Francisco-Fajardo.

So that you may meet the man behind the woman, I am happy to introduce to you Mr. Eduardo G. Fajardo, Chairman of the Helenica Corporation, Member of the Ateneo Board of Trustees, and Benefactor of the school.