



21 February 2024  
Henry Sy, Sr. Hall Roofdeck

## **Opening Remarks ISAC@DLSU Launch Event**

Thank you for joining us at this special event to officially launch the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics at De La Salle University (ISAC@DLSU).

I am very pleased to be here to represent De La Salle University as ISAC's partner here in the Philippines. Through ISAC@DLSU, we are partnering with an international network of researchers to help them build more resilient digital collections pertinent to the social scientific study of Asian Catholics.

At the same time, we aspire for this partnership to help Filipino scholars here in DLSU and in the Philippines to forge and maintain academic networks, connections, and linkages with researchers overseas. ISAC@DLSU will serve as a bridge, a conduit, and a node, as it were, that will join what network theorists call the 'empty space' or 'structural holes' between contacts – researchers, organisations, and scholars – who may be aware of each other but do not interact closely with one another. But these actors at the end of these structural holes have complementary and diverse resources and information that will be beneficial to both if there is the opportunity to meet and collaborate. ISAC@DLSU is that bridge between the resources that we have in DLSU and ISAC's social capital, specifically the network of 50 ISAC affiliates based in 15 countries, the information that flows within and through this network and the norms and trust that guide this cooperation and coordination.

This partnership between ISAC and DLSU is formed by our vision and aspiration that goes beyond religious orders, academic organisations, and national belonging. Our vision, our aspiration is to establish, promote, and support the social scientific study of Asian Catholics in terms of theory and methodology. We believe that Asian Catholics can be a serious research tool and a heuristic device to deepen and enrich our understanding of patterns of human behavior, social interactions, social relations, structures, and larger social processes such as migration, globalisation, inequality, etc. With this vision in mind, we aim to support research on Asian Catholics not only to further understand Catholics as a social group but also to illuminate policymakers in various countries who often have a hard time imagining and ascertaining what the Catholic Church is and who the Catholics are.

Through ISAC@DLSU, we believe this will be beneficial not only to our students and faculty members in DLSU but also to students and faculty members in other Philippine universities interested in researching Asian Catholics and Asian Catholicism. We hope that they will join and participate in this collaboration. However, we all know that digital humanities projects and social scientific research are not without challenges. Moving forward, we will possibly encounter some deferments, hindrances, and even disenchantments with our timetables but hopefully, scholars involved in this undertaking will be prepared to venture - be surprised by what they can do and deliver, and along the way, inspire us all.

De La Salle University is proud to support this collaboration and the projects that ISAC@DLSU has in the pipeline. Thank you very much.

**Brother Bernard Oca, FSC,**  
President of De La Salle University Manila