

December 10, 1959
ATENEO DE MANILA - CENTENARY

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A hundred years ago, on December 10, 1859, Jesuits from the Society of Jesus formally opened the first class of the Ateneo de Manila in Intramuros, headed by Rev. Jose Fernandez Cuevas.

This was in compliance with instructions from the home office of the Society to establish a school for boys in Manila as requested by Spanish residents and approved by the City Council of Manila. Originally called "Escuela Municipal" and later "Ateneo Municipal de Manila", it remained a public school for forty-three years, from 1859 to 1902. The Jesuits dedicated themselves to rearing the Filipino youth in the traditions of scholarship, civic and Christian leadership.

The defeat of the Spanish in the Spanish-American War in 1902 brought about the separation of the school of learning.

Rev. Cuevas was succeeded by twelve other Spanish rectors. In 1921, the first American rector, Rev. Francis X. Byrne, a great friend of Gov. Gen. Leonard Wood, took his office. Eight other Americans followed him, the last one being the Rev. Leo A. Cullum, Father Rector up to June of this year.

The history of Ateneo shows a number of illustrious Filipinos it has turned out, among them the national heroes Dr. Jose P. Rizal and General Gregorio del Pilar. To this distinction, Ateneo has added another one, that of appointing its first Filipino rector, the 26th rector and the first alumnus of the school to be selected for the position, the Rev. Father Francisco Araneta. He succeeds the Rev. Leo A. Cullum, the last American rector.

The celebration of its centenary takes place today in the main building situated in Loyola Heights, a sprawling section of Quezon City, and in the College of Law building in Padre Faura in Manila, two sites the Ateneo at present occupies.

Postage stamps especially designed to commemorate this event are also today issued by the Bureau of Posts in denominations of 6c and 30c. Philatelic artist Nemesio Dimanlig, Jr. designed the stamps, depicting the old and the new official seals of Ateneo de Manila.

