

Following is the speech delivered by the Hon Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li at the 63rd Congregation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong this morning (December 7, 2006):

Chairman, Vice-Chancellor, Members of the University, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen:

On behalf of my fellow honorary graduates and myself, I wish to express our deep gratitude to the University for the high honours which have been conferred on us and for the kind and generous citations. We receive the award with humility and we are proud to be admitted to the rank of honorary graduates of this distinguished University. It is an award which we shall treasure.

It gives me particular pleasure to receive the award from this University. I was privileged to have been involved in the expansion of tertiary education in the late 1980's and early 1990's as Chairman of the Committee now known as the University Grants Committee. With rapid growth, the tertiary institutions faced many difficult challenges. I witnessed how the Chinese University rose to meet the challenges successfully. In the last two decades, its development has been truly impressive.

With its global vision and its mission to combine tradition with modernity and to bring together China and the West, the University is a unique institution and makes an invaluable contribution. The University must be congratulated on what it has achieved. I am confident that it will go from strength to strength and I wish it every success in its endeavours.

On this happy occasion, I would like to offer some remarks to our young graduates at both first degree and postgraduate levels. First of all, I wish to offer them my sincere and heartiest congratulations. I am sure that the graduating students will agree with me when I say that you owe a great debt of gratitude to your families and your teachers for their unstinting support and wise guidance. It is a debt of honour which I am sure you will never forget. They must be very happy today and have every reason to be proud of your achievements. To them, I also wish to extend my congratulations and best wishes.

The body of alumni is a most important stakeholder of any university and can provide it with invaluable support. You have received much from the University and I trust that you will do your part to contribute to the development of your Alma Mater in future years.

It is now over three decades since I started my working life after graduation from university and the completion of professional training. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the world was very different from what it is today. World affairs were dominated by the Cold War. Major events included the 6 days war in the Middle East and the Vietnam War. China was at the height of the cultural revolution and was closed to the outside world. The first human heart transplant was carried out. Man set foot on the moon for the first time. I use "Man" advisedly since no woman was on that flight. Compact discs were unknown, let alone personal computers and the Internet. Stars like Elizabeth Taylor and Maggie Smith were Oscar winners and the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were the fashion of the day. Hong Kong was a colony with an appointed legislature. Our economy was based on manufacturing and our currency was pegged to the pound sterling. The Lion Rock Tunnel was only open in 1967 followed by the Hunghom Cross-Harbour Tunnel in 1972.

Those somewhat idyllic times are long past. The last three decades have seen the most momentous changes in the world. We have seen massive and the most amazing advances in science, technology and medicine and in every field of human endeavour. And there have been sea changes in the geopolitical landscape. The Cold War is over. The Soviet and Eastern Bloc has disintegrated. European Union is growing. Asia has become an area of strong growth. Our Motherland, China, has emerged as a modern and strong nation. And our homeland, Hong Kong, now an international financial centre, has been re-unified with her.

Youth is the trustee of posterity. By the time the graduating students of today reach my stage of life, we will be in the 2040's. What will the world be like then? What does the future hold? Looking into the future, we can only be certain of one thing. The pace of change in all fields is likely to accelerate. So, how can we, particularly our young people, prepare ourselves for the exciting challenges ahead?

Firstly, we must believe in and practise learning for life, so as to ensure that we would have the knowledge and skills required from time to time. Success, and indeed survival, would depend on the life-long pursuit of education in all respects. Things taught at schools and universities are not an education but only a means to an education and there are no limits and boundaries to learning. And we must be keen to continue to learn from the experience in the university of life.

Secondly, creativity and innovation will be of pivotal importance to human progress. We must approach all things with an inquisitive and open mind. We must always ask "why" and explore new answers and solutions. The world will be increasingly globalised. But of even greater importance than globalisation in terms of trade and services is the global market place of ideas, which has no boundaries and will

continue to thrive. We must challenge orthodoxy and must never take things for granted. We must be flexible and must be prepared to try out new ideas.

Thirdly and most importantly, amongst rapid and accelerating changes, it is of fundamental importance that our values and principles should remain constant and that we should have the strength of character to live by them:

* Abide always by the enduring values of honesty and integrity.

* Strive always for excellence. Make no compromises with mediocrity. Seize every opportunity for it may well not knock again.

* Have faith and courage to tackle what life throws at you. As you progress through life's journey, there will be many ups and downs. Sometimes, the sun will shine on you. But at other times, life can be stormy. Sometimes, the sailing will be plain. At other times, the territory will be rugged. It is important always to move on, with the determination to overcome adversity. "For sweet are the uses of adversity" as Shakespeare pointed out.

* Remember that we make a living by what we get. But we make a life by what we give. Be generous and ready to share with others and have the welfare of the under privileged in mind.

Ships are safe anchored in the harbour. But this is not what ships are made for. With the excellent education you have received here, graduates of this distinguished University are well prepared to continue on life's journey and to face life's many challenges. I wish you every success and happiness.

Thank you. Good Health and Good Fortune to you all.

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