

Inauguration Ceremony of Curpadis
The 6th Executive Committee of the Undergraduate Law Society of the
Chinese University of Hong Kong
21 February 2013 (Thu)
Speech by the Honourable Mr Justice Tang PJ

Professor Gane, members of the incoming and outgoing executive committees, members of the Undergraduate Law Society, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I was happy to accept the invitation to speak because I have long wanted to meet with the students here of whom I have heard so many good things.

2. Whilst looking for a subject to speak, I came across the names or mottos which successive executive committees have chosen. I find them enlightening. The 1st executive committee in 2008 chose the appropriate name “Ab Extra”, starting from zero. In 2009, fides with its emphasis on faith, honesty, trust, and loyalty. In 2010, Excenesis, the desire

to excel; in 2011, Aestus, to illuminate with passion, and last year, Navidus, to navigate towards a brighter future, this year, Curpadis, to run with flame.

3. At the opening of the legal year, the CJ, SJ, the Chairman of the Bar Association and the President of the Law Society, all emphasized that the rule of law lies at the very heart of our values.

4. You represent our future. If you live up to the mottos chosen over the years, the future is bright.

5. To uphold the rule of law, one needs fides, a desire to excel, a belief that one is navigating towards a brighter future and a commitment to attain that goal with passion and fire. Don't ever forget these lofty goals.

6. But how does one maintain ones passion and fire?

7. In the course of your career, there will be times when you will feel discouraged. Maybe because you think that justice had not been done in a particular case and, that despite superior merit your clients case

was lost. You will wonder whether these goals are not just juvenile fantasies. You risk becoming cynical.

8. I will tell you how I deal with the problem.

9. I have an unshakeable belief that, by and large, our law is fair and reasonable. That although judges are not always right they genuinely want to do justice. I remind myself that I must be objective and try to find out whether it is I who was mistaken. I also remind myself that I must not confuse feelings of sympathy or pity for a client with justice. Our justice is justice according to law. It is also justice based on due process. And rightly so. How else could anyone organize his affairs if justice varies according to a judge's own notion of justice?

10. But that does not mean that justice is unfeeling or uncaring, or that justice is not merely blind-folded, it is also heartless. Not at all. My long experience at the bar and the shorter one on the bench convince me that justice is neither unfeeling nor uncaring. That, indeed, one ounce of merit is often better than a pound of law. But I also agree wholeheartedly with Portia that "to do a great right do a little wrong", tempting though it maybe,

is wrong because “many an error, by the same example, will rush into the state”. Unless the temptation is firmly resisted, in the end, it is the rule of law that is destroyed.

11. That is why I would not be cynical and I have faith in the law. I hope you share my faith and that true to this year’s motto, you will always run with the flame and never allow it to go out.