

**The Chinese University of Hong Kong
81st Congregation for the Conferment of Degrees**

17 November 2016

**Speech by Professor Joseph J Y Sung
Vice-Chancellor and President**

My Last Words to the Graduates

First of all, my heartfelt congratulations to all the graduates this year from CUHK. This year, we have 4,000 undergraduates from our 8 Faculties and 6,000 from our postgraduate program. Today, you open a new chapter in your life. We wish a bright future and a wonderful career ahead of you.

It is also an emotional time of each year, that we see our boys and girls leaving university. All the hours we spent together in classrooms and libraries, all the precious moments we shared in service learning and outreach excursions, all the hardship and challenges we faced together, will now be archived in our album of precious memories for many years.

This year, I am a bit more sentimental, as my days in the Vice-Chancellor's office is also drawing to a close. Soon, I will be returning to my clinic, my lab and my classroom, to teach, to research, and to see more patients. This will be my last graduation speech on this podium and I wish to share a few words with you from the bottom of my heart.

When I reflected upon what we have done in the past few years, I feel really humbled and blessed. I am extremely blessed to work with a team of dedicated teachers and educators who put their hearts and souls in CUHK, many of them having served this University for decades. I am humbled when I come to realize that education is indeed the most difficult, yet most worthwhile piece of architecture because it is not building with bricks and mortar, but with sweat and tears, with our life as example and with our belief that, while we are sowing the seeds today the reaping can only be done many years later. In the past seven years, we have gone through curriculum reform (so called 3+3+4 reform), political turmoil, ideological debates and personality conflicts. None of these can be overcome without the selfless contributions of my cabinet and my colleagues among fellow teachers and in the management.

What should I say to our graduates and students who are still studying on our campus?

As educators, if we have not taught our students to be humble, to see things from different perspectives and angles, to accept differences in opinion, to forgive those who have wronged us, to give and help those who are in need and under-privileged, to upkeep one's honesty and integrity, to claim not only one's own rights but also responsibilities to others and to society... We have not done our job well.

As an academic institution, if we have not told the society and the world that every man or woman is equal and has the right to live a good life; if we have not demonstrated to the world that through creativity and innovations, we can make the world a better place; if we have not displayed how to conserve natural resources and the ecosystem so that we can live with other creatures in harmony; if we have not been able to pass the torch of Chinese culture, philosophy and teaching, to retain our identity and make the Western world know about us... We have not done our job well.

As your teachers and mentors, we wish to see you all returning to your alma mater more frequently than just on the annual "Alumni Day", we cherish you patting on our shoulders as your friends and family, we pray that you will contribute to the future development of this great University and help us to face challenges before us in CUHK. If we fail to keep this association with you after your graduation.... We have not done our job well.

James Byrant Conant said "Education is what is left in your life after all that has been learnt is forgotten." I do hope that you have learned a few things which might be useful to you, your society and your country.

To all the graduates of 2016, WE ONLY LIVE ONCE, MAKE IT COUNT.