

An address given by Dr Leung Fung-ye, Anita, B.A., M.A., Ph.D

I am very honoured to be able to express our vote of thanks on behalf of the seven Honorary Fellows receiving this title today from The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In fact, I am not just representing the Honorary Fellows, I am also representing the friends and families that stand by us and stand behind us, that take part with us in building the University. Without their contribution, we would not be receiving this honour. Our honour and joy should also belong to them, and I would like to say thank you to the University on their behalf.

Today, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the University with a humble heart. At this moment, many thoughts cross my mind. Should we take a traditional attitude of modesty, to say that we have never done anything to deserve such recognition? Or should we admit that the honour is fitting? The former would put us in the embarrassing position of casting doubt on the University's decision; the latter would, on the other hand, require that the facts be treated with a degree of elasticity. Here are three points to explain my rationale.

First. I always believe that carrying out one's responsibility is a duty. It is what one should do, so it should not be claimed as a merit. The Chinese University of Hong Kong has nurtured many talents for Hong Kong in the past five decades. It contributes much to Hong Kong's prosperity and stability as well as its international reputation, greatly benefitting us who live and grow up in this city. When we have means to reciprocate the University's kindness, it is not for merit, but performing our duty.

Second. I believe that if we do not work hard to accumulate wealth, we will end up with 'nothing'. If we work hard to acquire wealth but spend without thinking, we will end up 'bankrupt'. If we just cling to the wealth and not make use of it, it will just turn into 'inheritance'. Only when we make good use of what we possess, then it becomes our true 'assets'. If our donation is considered as a contribution to the University, we cannot claim that as merit. It is just us trying to accumulate more 'assets' of meaning and value. Moreover, the donations were made without affecting our lifestyles, and so we should be ashamed if we claim that as merit.

Third. We were born with our talents for specific purposes. We are thankful for the chance to perform deeds for the University, which allow us to realise and use these natural talents and experiences accrued through time. It is not something to claim merit from.

Consolidating the above points, how does it prove that it is a fitting honour? I have given that much thought but I have arrived at only one answer: to thank the University from the bottom of my heart, for giving each of us a chance to utilize our talent and our resources. This generous honour from the University, is a reminder that we have many more responsibilities to bear, many more duties to perform. Every time we experience that joy and pride from completing our responsibilities and duties, we thank the University in our heart – our gratitude is not just for today.

Founded in 1963, the government granted the name 'Chinese' to this second university in Hong Kong to distinguish it from The University of Hong Kong. To put it bluntly, the students were those from Chinese schools whose English was not good enough or those from English schools whose results were not good enough for admission to the University of Hong Kong. So reluctantly, they came to CUHK after the highly competitive examinations. When they graduated, the government and large corporations also treated these CUHK graduates as second choices. Admittedly, back then, CUHK was ranked second among the two recognized universities in Hong Kong. Today, this has been changed completely. Whether it is in international reputation, academic achievement, alumni network, educational system, staff number and quality, CUHK can proudly and unashamedly declare itself as one of the very best higher institutions. Both Hong Kong and the academic world recognize CUHK as equal to The University of Hong Kong, and other higher institutions in Hong Kong, with each carrying their own strengths, working in tandem to nurture talents.

Having strived for five decades, The Chinese University of Hong Kong stands proud, thanks to the devotion and care of many. We are deeply fortunate to be part of CUHK. And to us, gratitude is everything. Because of our sense of gratitude, we want to be involved in using our power and experience to nurture the next generation together with CUHK, especially in sharing with the youth the importance of gratitude. We are concerned that this traditional, noble moral is fading away and being replaced by a materialistic, result-oriented focus on personal gain. When we understand 'gratitude', then we will realise that what we regard as ours is not, in fact, due to us, and we must remind ourselves to do our duty, fulfil our responsibilities.

I believe if we mix up 'duty' and 'what is due to us' – forget that there is not very much in this world that is 'due' to us, while refusing to admit that there are many, many 'duties' – this will damage the harmony of our society, impede our progress. We must remember that the honour that comes with performing one's 'duties' and fulfilling one's 'responsibilities' cannot be expected as something that is 'due' to us. We should use the glory to light our way – to see clearly that there are still many 'duties' and 'responsibilities' that we have to work hard to fulfil.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to witness and share this happy, proud day of our lives.

Lastly, I have been thinking about the great Chinese educator, Mr Tan Kah-kee. At the centennial celebrations of Xiamen University, only one thought was in the alumni's minds: 'Without Mr Tan Kah-kee, there will be no Xiamen University.' When my father-in-law Mr Wong Ker-lee graduated from Xiamen University, he was fortunate enough to work with Mr Tan as his assistant. When my father-in-law made a little success in business, he donated a conference centre and an administrative building to both Xiamen University and Jimei University. The universities celebrated the occasion with a bronze bust and consulted him on the inscription. He said, 'Just one line: Wong Ker-lee is one of the many thousands of disciples and followers of Mr Tan Kah-kee.'

I believe all of us would proudly put this new and meaningful honour the University is conferring on us today on our name cards and our profiles. We are honoured to be an Honorary Fellow of The Chinese University of Hong Kong – forever grateful, thankful and moved by this honour. Thank you and we wish you happiness and good health.