

**Address by the President - Rector Magnificus  
of Assumption University of Thailand  
at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Commencement Exercises  
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center  
Saturday, November 15, 2014**

Chairman of the University Council  
President Emeritus  
Campus Minister  
Members of AU Community  
Honored Guests  
Families and Friends of the Graduates, and  
Dear Graduates, Class XLII

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Allow me first to acknowledge the presence of Rev. Bro. Surasit Sukchai, chairman of the University Council, and Rev. Bro. Prathip Martin Komolmas, the President Emeritus, and thank both of them for their unfailing support and encouragement.

Our thanks also extend to all the administrators, faculty and staff members who have made it possible for you to be here today and prepared you to face the real world.

We are also grateful to those who have organized this graduation ceremony as you are today's our befitting heroes.

Last but not least, allow me to take this opportunity to welcome your parents, relatives and friends to this ceremony. They have been your main sources of inspiration, support and encouragement and the driving force behind your achievements.

**Dear Graduates:**

Today is YOUR day; a day filled with joy and a sense of accomplishment and a day to celebrate your achievements. The hard-earned diploma you have just received will be one of your best assets in the future, not only for you in terms of advancing your employability and career but also for the opportunity

it gives you to serve society and contribute to its betterment; precisely one of the main purposes of the holistic education you have been given at Assumption University. It is our hope that for all these reasons you will continue in the years to come to seek knowledge, affirm your values, and strengthen your character. Today is also the first time commencement is taking place in November. As you know, this adjustment to our academic calendar was made to suit the calendar year of institutions of higher learning in other ASEAN countries. As a strong proponent of ASEAN, we welcome this move toward more cooperation among universities within the region.

With today's 42<sup>nd</sup> Commencement Exercises only a little over a year away from the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), it is important for all of us to enhance collaboration within the region as member states will strengthen one another in the process. AU sees it as one of its mandates to prepare you for the AEC and develop an ASEAN mindset.

As your campus life is coming to an end, I wish to make three important points which you should use as guiding principles in the future. You must adhere to them. They will be good starting points for the next phase in your life. What I wish to emphasize here today is the importance of first, a solid education, second, a strong family and third, a good religious grounding.

### **1. A Solid Education**

I will start with a quote from the UNESCO, the UN agency in charge of promoting education. It reads as follows: **“Education is humanity’s best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development and for personal advancement”** (UNESCO, 1997).

The key point here is simple. Education is essential to reaching one's potential and to the betterment of humanity. Education has been linked to lower unemployment, less poverty and less reliance on public assistance as well as better physical and mental health and fewer crimes. Just think of what it would be like without a strong educational system! Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistan victim of obscurantism and this year's Nobel Peace Prize recipient provides a clue.

Academic knowledge, however, is just only one aspect of education. Part of a holistic education such as the one AU seeks to give you must include character formation. This is why the University has outlined different stages of formation and set specific goals for each student to reach. This is also why, as

you were told at orientation, AU education involves all the dimensions of a person; the intellectual as well as the physical, emotional/social and spiritual/ethical dimensions.

AU also recognizes the importance of teaching life skills such as teamwork, workplace leadership, or problem solving to name just a few and has identified ways of training you.

That said, it is clear the University cannot devote the same amount of time to every dimension, not to mention the fact that there are certain aspects of character formation which students are not ready to internalize. It is just not the right time and the right place yet; hence the need to keep in mind as a guiding life principle the importance of a strong education; hence the need for you to keep educating yourselves.

You have a moral obligation to build on your AU education so as to be prepared for the commitments awaiting a responsible adult. This is your primary responsibility from now on. Your education does not stop with your leaving campus. It is a life-long endeavor.

## **2. A Strong Family**

Just as the pursuit of a holistic education is critical to one's advancement and happiness in life, so is a strong family. Everybody wants to have a happy and healthy family. This is one of our most important pursuits in life. This is also one of the reasons we seek a solid education so as it ensures financial stability and family support. Researchers have determined that the following seven characteristics are the hallmarks of a successful and happy family:

(i) Spending time together – Relationships can be built around different activities involving the members of the family. In spite of customary work pressure, congested roads, and endless traffic, family members should engage in activities together and be supportive of one another so as to nurture the bonds between them.

(ii) Effective Communication – Everyone in the family should have a chance to share his/her feelings and experiences. Each family member must try to be a good listener. Listening shows respect and also indicates that one cares about what concerns others.

(iii) Appreciation – It is important for each member to show appreciation and support for what other members do, for their efforts, for what they are, and for what they plan to achieve or become.

(iv) Commitment – Putting the family first and supporting one another with unquestionable loyalty implies that everyone gives time to the family, is concerned about each other's welfare and happiness, and seeks to structure one's lifestyle in ways that promote unity and harmony.

(v) Good Coping Skills – Strong families have the ability to stand firmly together in time of crisis. By utilizing effective communication skills and maintaining a positive outlook, families can deal with difficult times and find strength that will sustain them through any crisis.

(vi) Values and Convictions – Identifying and practicing a set of deeply held values and moral standards is an essential component of a strong family. Values can be expressed in open discussions and as part of family activities. The most effective method, however, is to be a role model to each other.

(vii) Spiritual Well-being – A shared relationship with God bounds family members together. The home is the window through which children get their first glimpse of religion. And it is in the mirror of those around them that they get their first glimpse of who they are and what they are worth. The parents provide an observable model and the family is where they learn the importance of developing love relationships with the known and with humanity.

At a time when the number of families breaking up is dramatically rising in most places in the world, inflicting much pain and sorrow, it is important for all of us to never lose track of the fact that a healthy family will always be the greatest source of support, encouragement, acceptance of oneself, and opportunities for growth.

### **3. A Good Religious Grounding**

Religion has been an integral part of most societies since time immemorial. Approximately 85% of the world's population reportedly has some religious belief. Religion influences almost every aspect of our life from the way we eat to personal ethics or national politics. Many of the laws and social customs as we know them today are based on religious teachings. Religious beliefs and teachings regulate one's life. All religions emphasize respect, loyalty, and empathy. They are unshakable and should be adhered to closely. Our ability to get along and work together is largely the result of religious teaching.

True religion, however, is not about dogmas. It is not just about accepting a certain set of beliefs, but essentially about how we live our life and the kind of life we lead. Religion should be evident in our behavior, not just in our words. Religion can lead to a life of love, joy, compassion, and devotion to serve others.

These three guiding principles are closely intertwined and form a single thread. Treasure them! Integrate them into your life and put them into practice! As Napoleon Hill, one of the earliest producers of the modern genre of personal-success literature said: **“Patience, persistence and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success.”**

### **Dear Graduates:**

Whatever paths you may take next, use your education and put it into good practice for your benefit and for that of others. And whether you decide to pursue, higher studies or enter the real world, step into your next project with resolve and confidence in yourself and your ability to reach your goals. It is now time for you to shine and expand your sphere of influence and time for you to fulfill your aspirations.

You are now alumni of Assumption University. This confers rights and obligations. You should continue to live the spirit of AU and wherever you may go, please remember that you are now AU’s ambassadors.

Be grateful to all those who have contributed to your success in particular your parents, faculty members, peers and all the others who, one way or another, have made your dreams come through.

I wish you success in life, be it in your personal life, family life, work life or social life. Live it to the fullest – but always within the aforementioned guiding principles – so that you will never regret later that you missed on some of the things you wanted to accomplish or failed to act compassionately and ethically.

May God bless you with happiness, peace, and prosperity.

Bancha Saenghiran, f.s.g., Ph.D.  
President - Rector Magnificus  
November 15, 2014