

**Address by the President - Rector Magnificus  
Of Assumption University of Thailand  
at the 44<sup>th</sup> Commencement Exercises  
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center  
Sunday, November 20, 2016**

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

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All of us are here to witness and celebrate your success. Let me start from Rev. Bro. Surasit Sukchai, Chairman of the University Council and the Provincial Superior of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, Province of Thailand, Rev. Bro. Prathip Martin Komolmas, President Emeritus, the administrators, faculty and staff of the University including president of AU Alumni Association.

Outside this august assembly hall, your parents, members of your families, your relatives, friends and acquaintances are waiting to congratulate you on your memorable milestone of success in studies.

I would like to thank them all for not only being here today, but also they, in one way or the other, are a part of your success. As graduates, you have to thank them for what they have done to get where you are today.

My special thanks also go to the faculty and staff of the University who have arranged and prepared the graduation ceremony and helped make it a sacred and memorable one. I do not forget to include the band from Assumption College who adds flavor and life to this ceremony.

I love to see you in caps and gowns, symbolizing the embodiment of competency in knowledge and thinking skill, yet you should not be an illiterate graduate (Lacking what has been considered the basic level of literacy to function in a modern society).

Your graduation comes at the time when Thailand has been impacted by both internal and external challenges. Poor economy, caused by political unrests, hefty household debt, falling prices of farm produce, drought and flood conditions, shrinking private investment, slow budget disbursement by the government among others, has

made life difficult for people in general. Coupled with slow growth in world economy and pressure from the European Community in terms of human trafficking, illegal labor and malpractices in fishing industry, Thailand needs a short-term fix and long-term reforms. Such situations will considerably impact your work-life as new graduates.

I am confident that you have prepared yourselves well to face any challenge in life. On the part of AU as a Catholic University, it has the virtue of its Catholic identity which is **“first and foremost, a place of humanism”** and it has to create the conditions of **“an atmosphere of respect, trust and love in which the students are at the center of all activities.”** Our main mission is to train our students in the familial spirit of humanity. In other words, it is an integral or holistic approach to education ? training individuals fully (Jarton, 2016, p.354).

One of the hallmarks of education at AU is **the quality and excellence of teaching.** The heart of AU is its **Faculty**, “The Professional Corps, the living fabric of AU.” AU education normally focuses on the individual, a person who feels unique, valued, respected and loved for who he is. Moreover, AU has its own identity, its ways of embracing and educating its students ? preparing them for the challenges the world will bring. You have to be aware that, life on campus and outside will be totally different. Graduation is a transition period from a college life to a new realm of life – a new job or a higher degree. You will witness and embrace the dynamism and vibrancy of a pluralistic society.

Advice abounds from people surrounding you both from inside and outside AU, yet I consider it important to give you some insights to reflect on which you can use later in life in case you need them.

### **First, continue your formation.**

Formation is a process by which a person learns to sort specific experiences into general rules or classes. The formation incorporates ongoing experience, reflection and action. New experiences should shape your character and engrave new patterns as well. The ultimate aim of formation is to assist you to recognize excellence as the achievement of your full potential in the service of others.

Life is a journey – a journey to maturity and is composed of a series of acts of experience and discovery. As I mentioned earlier, the education you have received from AU is holistic in four main dimensions – physical, intellectual, emotional or social, and spiritual. You must continue the formation process for it is your core being and the true wealth of a person.

On the other hand, when we discuss about a whole-person education, we also speak of lifelong education. Consider the intellectual knowledge per se, “You are not going to get very far in life basing it only on what you already know. You are going to advance in life by what you will learn after you leave AU – utilizing AU as the base of knowledge and thinking skills. Other dimensions in life follow.

Education doesn't stop after you have graduated from college. It doesn't stop after you finish your master's degree or doctorate either. Charlie Munger says "**Wisdom acquisition is a moral duty. It's not just something you do to advance in life.**" It's a moral duty because it's only through continuous learning that you can add to the vast knowledge of mankind. If we stop learning, progress in all areas stops as well.

## **Second, know what you truly want to become.**

Some of you may want to go for higher studies, some opt to get the job right after your graduation. In whatever realm of life you may be in, you are moving towards the unknown. Be confident of your ability and uniqueness. Have the courage to follow your heart's desire, follow your passion.

Many don't have a clear picture of what they truly want. Too often, graduates rely on serendipity to lead them to the right job. Now it is time to consider all the infinite possibilities with introspection, deliberation and thoughtfulness. Engage in some soul-searching, take a good look at your strengths and weaknesses. Know who you are, realize the purpose of your life.

A fulfilling professional life can be found at the intersection of what you love and what you are good at. Finding the right work takes time and effort.

## **Third, define your success**

What does "success" look like? What does "being successful" mean to you? Does success mean accomplishment? Having high position? Making lot of money? Possessing lots of properties? Or does it mean happiness, good health or being satisfied with life?

Every person thinks differently about being successful in life. So there can't exist a definition that is suitable for all. You must define success for yourself, no matter what the world says. "Success is liking who you are, liking what you do, and liking how you do it," said Maya Angelou. "When you have the courage to question what you are doing and, more importantly, why you are doing it, you stay on your edge of innovation, truth and lasting fulfillment" (Adnan, 2015). You never achieve success unless you like what you are doing.

Remember that your work does not equal your worth? whether you serve as the driver of a public bus or you are the CEO of a global corporation of your own. Worth does not lie in financial value only. "A successful life isn't just about what career path you are on. Success is about becoming the kind of person you want to be" (Courie, 2015).

Do not be afraid of failure, know how to take risk. "A boat is always safe in the harbor, but that's not what boats are built for." You must have the courage to decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong. Remember that it is impossible to live without

failing. If you happen to commit mistakes, make amends, get up and move on. Time is limited, do not wait and wait, but take action now.

#### **Fourth, balance your life**

Compared to eating, too much consumption of something is not appropriate for one's health. So keep a balance of your life. But remember problems may occur now and then. You have your work life, social life, family life and personal life to handle.

The elements in life that require the most balancing can be divided into two categories: internal (mind, heart, health, feeling) and external (work, social, family, fun). Oftentimes, people focus on either one. Both ends of each spectrum are actually positive, but if either side is taken to an extreme, something that is intended to be positive can end up being detrimental. Therefore, balancing is the process of holding something steady during change.

#### **Fifth, learn to build up relationships.**

Trust is the most valuable gift you can render to anyone. We trust people in business, relationship, and life. An essential way to build trust is to stay in touch and to engage with people.

Disagreements and misunderstanding enter any relationship, but don't let such obstacles destroy the trust you have built up. Focus on fixing the problem and forget about fixing the blame.

In global economy, winners are those who know how to build long-term relationships with clients who will give them business and who will recommend them to their friends.

The same goes for life's journey. The more people you know and the smoother your relations with them, the greater your chances of finding true happiness.

Life is not easy. One of the aspects of daily life that is changing rapidly is the way we interact with each other. As communication and information technologies are rapidly advancing, people are accordingly changing their behaviors. Every day, closeness between people become less and less. We travel a lot faster doing business. Our lives depend largely on smartphones, tablets and computers. Immersed in electronic devices, we ignore our environment and people around us. Communication is changing ? basic activities will be conditioned in some way by a virtual intermediary. Our gadgets are getting smarter while we are getting dumber, lazier and more isolated.

Traditional way of communicating and relating to each other is still necessary to bring about good relationships between and among human beings.

## **Dear Graduates:**

After your graduation, do not become the burden on your parents. Make use of your knowledge and capability for your own benefits and for the benefits of humanity. Now you are free to pursue your passion and your dream. Keep pace with the rapid changing world. Grab every opportunity you have so that you will not regret later on that you did not do what you should have done.

If you cannot remember anything about AU, just recall the Uniqueness and Identity statement that AU is an International Catholic University (ICU) – inculcating the three E's with the spirit and atmosphere of love, care, and concern in the process of educating you. As alumni of AU, you become ambassadors of your alma mater. Be good ambassadors through good behavior and conduct.

You had worked long and hard to reach this goal. Be proud and confident of yourselves. May your graduation be the end of your campus life and at the same time usher in the beginning of your future. Do not be drowned in the modern world. Nurture the thirst for knowledge, keep on the spirit of service and discipline so that you remain useful to yourselves and to impact humanity.

Congratulations AU Graduates! I do wish you all the best in life. Do come back to visit us from time to time.

May God shower you all the graces you need to overcome all your problems and difficulties. May He be with you to keep you safe always.

Congratulations once again. May God bless you always!

**BanchaSaenghiran, f.s.g., Ph.D.**  
**President - Rector Magnificus**  
**November 20, 2016**