

**Remarks by Ms Rose Lee  
Sacred Heart Canossian College Graduation Day  
July 2017**

Sr Agnes, Sr Veronica, Mr Kelvin Lee, Ms Fiona Chan, students, parents, honourable guests

It is indeed a privilege to be invited to speak at my alma mater's Graduation Day.

To the Sacred Heart Graduating Class of 2017... my warmest congratulations.

My invitation asked that I offer some insights that might help you in planning your personal and professional goals.

I do not expect you to remember everything that I will share with you today. I certainly don't remember everything that the guest speaker said at my graduation ceremony at Sacred Heart many years ago.

Fortunately for you... and for me back then... the wisdom that will serve you so well going forward has already been instilled in you at this outstanding school.

That said, experience has taught me the importance of several key building blocks in working to achieve one's dreams, and it is these 'foundation stones for success' that I would like to share with you.

But, before I begin, allow me to also congratulate the parents of today's graduating students.

I am sure you must be very PROUD of your daughters for their achievements . . .  
GRATEFUL to Sacred Heart's teaching staff for an education so well delivered . . .  
and APPRECIATIVE of the school's long tradition of encouraging its students to embrace and live values that are so well grounded.

I would humbly suggest that you also be BRAVE . . . and let your children freely go forth into the wider world.

See this as the first page of an exciting new chapter of life for your daughters. Take comfort in knowing that you have played a key role in the story that they will write.

But it's their story now...

As they go forth, they will no doubt experience setbacks. Please don't try to protect them from every disappointment and from making mistakes. It is often our own failures – and not stories of the success of others – that provide us with the most valuable learning experiences and opportunities to grow.

*[short pause]*

On that note, let me speak to our Graduating Class about the building blocks for fulfilling their aspirations!

**Graduates . . . first and foremost, always set yourself clear objectives.**

During my graduating year at Sacred Heart, Hong Kong was very different from how it is now.

The city's first McDonald's had only arrived a couple of years earlier<sup>1</sup>. The MTR had yet to go into operation. Mainland China was still closed to foreign investment. And the local economy was just beginning to recover from a stock market crisis. Young people were rewarded for their commitment and loyalty, and aspired to attain long-term job stability. We also readily accepted that success had to be built slowly.

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<sup>1</sup> 1975: in Causeway Bay

Today, Hong Kong is much more affluent. The career opportunities are enormous and the choices considerable. Many young people place strong importance on flexibility and freedom . . . along with fast recognition and promotions. Your generation is also more enterprising. Many of you already have experience of trading goods on the Internet and you may aspire to start your own business...to be your own boss.

Against this backdrop, you have many options as you go forth. However, a goal without a plan often ends up as an unrealised dream. So, my advice to you is: Know yourself. Choose your goals in line with your passions and your strengths.

Don't be afraid to think big in defining your objectives . . . but be willing to start small in setting out to achieve them.

After graduating from university, I responded to a newspaper ad for a job as an investment banking trainee. At the time, I certainly didn't envision that one day I'd be leading a bank.

If you are interested in business, one of the great things about Hong Kong is that gender equality is largely upheld, meaning that there could very easily be future CEOs, Chairwomen and Chief Executives in this room.

**The second foundation stone for success is to always uphold the highest standards of integrity.**

Earlier I said it was a privilege to be invited to speak today. Let me just say that it was an even GREATER privilege to have attended Sacred Heart . . . from kindergarten all the way to matriculation.

My 14 years of education here had a profound impact on the formation of my character. I am certain your experience here has had a significant impact on you as well, whether or not you realise it right now.

Indeed, this is more than just a prestigious school that promotes academic excellence while providing an all-round education. The Canossian education imparts in students a moral compass that will serve you for life. This is just one of the many advantages of being a Sacred Heartist. Good ethics will enable you to build trust and the sustainable partnerships that are central to success in business – and in the rest of your life.

**My third piece of advice is to embrace entrepreneurship and develop financial literacy.**

Now, by saying this I am not suggesting that you should go out tomorrow and start your own business. Entrepreneurship can come in many forms, arise in many circumstances, and be demonstrated in the work and actions of many different people.

Consider our school's foundress.

Saint Magdalene of Canossa is not someone who perhaps initially comes to mind as an entrepreneur.

Rather, it is perhaps more natural to first think of business owners and corporate executives. Individuals who have a single-minded determination and unwavering dedication to developing their enterprises.

As a banker, my customers included many businesspeople who went some 20 years without taking a single holiday in order to achieve the success they now enjoy.

Along the way they experienced multiple setbacks, but they remained committed to reaching their long-term goals.

From overcoming her family's objection to her leaving home to serve the poor, to generating support and resources to establish schools and hospitals, and motivating her communities in multiple locations . . . Saint Magdalene of Canossa also experienced significant challenges. But like all good entrepreneurs, she possessed a single-mindedness and unwavering dedication to her objective. In her case, to fulfill God's plan for her life.

Today . . . more than two centuries on . . . the Canossian Daughters of Charity have spread out from Italy to Asia, the Americas, Africa, Australia and other parts of Europe.

Our foundress was . . . in life and in legacy . . . a hugely successful entrepreneur whose example continues to inspire successive generations *of Canossian sisters* to carry on her good works in missions and hospitals and schools.

Just as an aside: every organisation . . . whether it be big or small . . . a hospital, a university or an airport. . . must be enterprising in order to survive. This school is a great example. At 150-plus years, it has been around longer than most of Hong Kong's largest companies. There are no more than half a dozen corporations in our city with a history of 150 years: HSBC, Swire and The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels are among the very few that come to mind that have not been taken over from the founding families.

**The fourth key building block for success is to cultivate and maintain a global perspective.**

One of the advantages you have is the fact that you are in Hong Kong. A multi-faceted city. An international financial and trade centre, with a cosmopolitan and creative community that embodies the 'can-do' spirit.

In fact, one of Hong Kong's greatest strengths is that it can never become just another Chinese city. In part, because of its past . . . a unique mixture of East and West. In part, because of its progress . . . namely its ability to repeatedly transform itself. And also, in part, because of its position . . . geographically and economically.

Indeed, this city's connectivity to the Mainland as well as to the rest of Asia provides a big opportunity . . . particularly for young people like you. As the Mainland and other parts of the region continue to see growing affluence, Hong Kong is ideally situated to satisfy the demands for high-quality services. Everything from financial services, wealth management, health and wellness . . . to education, arts and culture.

In other words, while you may have decided to go forth to pursue further education elsewhere . . . Hong Kong is still one of the best choices to live and work . . . and, importantly, offers you home-market advantage.

Closely follow international, regional and local developments, and contemplate how these can affect the priorities of people and enterprises where you are domiciled. If you can put these dynamics in perspective, you will be well placed to adapt to the evolving needs of society, evaluate risk and reward, and make the most of opportunities . . . whatever profession you wish to be engaged in.

**The fifth and final piece of advice I have for you today is to value collaboration and develop good interpersonal skills.**

Addressing complex issues requires a multidisciplinary approach. While specialist knowledge remains crucial to many professions, the ability to collaborate and work effectively as part of a team are key to problem solving. Engage with others – be they fellow students, employers or the community – and be open to different points of view. You may not always agree with other people, but understanding and respecting different perspectives can help build bridges and expand your horizons.

And while on the topic of challenging yourselves . . . I have one final assignment for you all to take on.

The assignment is this: whatever career you choose to pursue, I urge you to think in terms of verbs not nouns.

Don't just be a doctor or a surgeon . . . HEAL people.

Don't just be a lawyer or a judge . . . UPHOLD justice.

Don't just be an app designer or computer programmer . . . CREATE things that make people's lives better.

Don't just be an artist or a musician . . . INSPIRE others with your talent.

Don't just be an accountant or a banker . . . HELP people prosper.

On that note, let me conclude by congratulating all of you on your accomplishments so far. I wish each of you every success as you begin writing an exciting new chapter of your life.