

**Address by the President-Rector Magnificus
of Assumption University of Thailand
at the 45th Commencement Exercises
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center
Saturday, January 13, 2018**

**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, Class XLV,**

I would like to begin by thanking our honored guests, administrators, faculty and staff who helped make this event a memorable one. Whenever, AU organizes the graduation ceremony, the two persons who are always present to honor our graduates and deserve to be mentioned are, first, Rev. Bro. Surasit Sukchai, Chairman of the University Council and the Provincial Superior of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, Province of Thailand. The other significant dignitary is of course, Rev. Bro. Prathip Martin Komolmas, President Emeritus. In spite of his health problem, he is most willing to be at this ceremony.

At the same time, let me recognize the presence of our vice presidents, deans, faculty and staff, members of student organization, alumni association, including parents and friends. They are here today to congratulate you on your academic success. May I join everyone to congratulate you and wish you all the best in life at this graduation ceremony. **Congratulations!**

Graduation means a time to bid goodbye to something and a time to look forward to a new beginning. You have to reflect on your life and those people surrounding you. Be grateful to all who have a share in your life, these include your parents, faculty members, classmates, friends and acquaintances, as well as the university as a whole. I do not need to get into details for you know them better than anyone else. Be grateful to all who help you get where you are.

Finishing four years of college or whatever is indeed an accomplishment, and you should be proud of yourself. Today is a great day, it's your day.

As you are navigating through the rest of your life, it would be appropriate for me to offer you a few points for reflection.

You must be well aware of the world situation. While a lot of progress and positive development have been achieved, the world is also facing a lot of dramatic problems and undergoing a lot of serious changes.

At the national level, at this moment Thailand is facing the changing landscape. On world stage, terrorism, human trafficking, migration, political strife, climate change, armed conflicts, arms race, spread of infectious diseases, are just some of the phenomena that have plagued the globe.

The momentous and unforgettable happening in Thailand is the passing of and the final farewell of our beloved father, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX. The whole kingdom joined together in synergy to organize the Royal Cremation Ceremony befitting the Father of the Nation. What is more important is how each one of us, out of loyalty, gratitude, and most of all our love of the Father of the Nation – will remain true to his teachings and live his legacy in our daily life. By this way His Majesty the King will be forever in **Our Hearts**.

After this, Thailand is confronted with economic problems, division within, problem in the deep South, corruption, and other natural problems. The government has to solve the chronic problems that have plagued the country. It needs human capital as well as resources.

Whatever the world trends may suggest, you have to live with them. The university with your collaboration had prepared you and equipped you with necessary knowledge and skills to face the situations. I want to come back to the basic principle of the **raison d'être** of a university. The schools, either in the East or in the West, concur on the core of education, that is, to prepare students to live happily in the society, to be good citizens, and to be able to face life in the 21st century.

I invite you to follow the Proverb 29: 18 **“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”** You must have your dream and see what lies beyond. It’s right time for you to move on while recognising that there will be both successes and failures, smiles and tears, happiness and sadness. You should learn from them all, those of others as well as yours.

The world now becomes a classroom to you. You will not be confined to the four walls of a classroom any more. Go after what you want. Do not be afraid not to get a job, not to earn enough, or not to do well in your work-life. You have to be confident of yourself, know yourself and try to find your inner self.

As you move on, you gain more experiences. You become more confident of what you want to undertake. When you work in a team, **open up** to the ideas of others.

Live with **integrity**, be **honest**, be **compassionate**. Know how to give to others.

The consequences of today are determined by the actions of the past. If you want to change your future, adapt your decisions today. During your younger years, you tried to imitate others, taking them as your idols, like the Korean hairdo, dressing the same way as you saw in the movies. Those will be your temporary satisfaction. They come and go.

Be well **disciplined** in life. For example, I know that today, you have to get up early to fix things and beat the timeline set by the university. With your personal effort and cooperation, things move on smoothly. With discipline a lot of things can be achieved.

The overall goal of a good modern university consists in giving a student fundamental knowledge and skills for **independent thinking**. You have to cope with the fast **changing environment**. I happened to read a book, “History of Pierre Fabre Laboratories: Innovating, from Health to Beauty,” written by Hervé Penan, 2015. He began by running a pharmacy. After some years, he created his company with a brand strategy and strong networks. The Pierre Fabre model was formed with a commitment to research and development. Then, he invented dermo-cosmetics. This is a shift in scale to international expansion, moving to family health care service. With humble beginning from a normal business of store to entrepreneurship a person could build structures with firm foundation of his business. Then, shift in scale with sustaining purpose.

Each one will face different pressures. In the final analysis, it is how you look at life, how you **struggle to live** (to face pressures and problems that come your way, the way that you strengthen yourself daily). There are two sides of the same coin. You should learn from great personalities of our times, like, Zuckerberg. According to him, Facebook wasn't the first thing he built. J.K. Rowling got rejected 12 times before she finally wrote and published Harry Potter; Alibaba (Jack Ma) founder of Alibaba applied jobs 30 times, got rejected, applying for Harvard for 10 times, rejected. Even Beyonce had to make hundred of songs to be successful. You might be driven by fear of failure quite as much as a desire for success. Some failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something.

As I walked around the university at Suvarnabhumi Campus, I met couples who were taking pre-wedding photos. I tried to reflect on my life and the campus life you had spent. One question came to my mind whether our graduates had ever reflected on their lives at all when they come across some names symbolizing their ways of life. At least, you attempted to make use of them as quizzes at your last orientation to get prizes. Permit me, in a way, to summarize some of the values through the three bridges that you had crossed during your studies for the bachelor's degree programs. For those who graduated in the master's and doctor's programs, you must have seen them in pictures.

As “**bridge**” may symbolize a crossing from one state of being or perception to another; crossing a path into a new or strange territory of life; or providing passage over

the obstacle; and other meanings. I just want to recall the three out of four bridges existing on campus so that they help you to remember something and use them in your life.

The First Bridge – ทวีปวิทยา

The name of the first bridge is the “**Continent of Knowledge**” (Thawip Witthaya Bridge). As AU graduates, all of you have crossed from the “Place of Knowledge, AU,” departing from the confine of the four walls of a classroom to the real world. It’s not this piece of paper that you get at the end of your campus life. Apart from knowledge you actually learn, it’s the experiences you have, you build relationships with your friends and lecturers by participating in class, attending campus events, participating in student activities that help you build skills that you can use later in life. The world now is your classroom. In a similar way, knowledge includes your interaction with the environment, your experiences you gain from your workplaces, communities, your homes and through cyber-technology. You learn what you want to learn, when and what and how to learn, in the ways that suit you. Remember that new challenges required new approaches to learning and training. This is one of the reasons why we insist that you must learn how to learn and continue to pursue your lifelong learning.

The Second Bridge – มรรคาอัมรินทร์

The “**Path the Angels Thread**” (MakkhaAmmarin Bridge) is the name of the second bridge and it remains close to the first. An angel means spirit that possesses good virtues – like being innocent, kind and beautiful. Once you become AU graduates – with knowledge of what is good and not good – you must possess good virtues in the same manners as angels have. And if you do not have them, you should continue to form yourselves to be like them. That is why AU gives **Ethics** an important place in our students’ lives for it is the core of everyday life. May I borrow the name of the tale as old as time “**Beauty and the Beast**” to symbolize the state of human being. It would be easier for you to remember. Daily transformation, refinement of your inner being is necessary for you to possess the **Inner Beauty** or else you will remain like **Beast** instead. Therefore, being ethical is an integral part of what defines us as **Human Beings**.

The Third Bridge – มาร์ตินรังสรรค์

The name of the third bridge is the “**Creative Martin**” (Martin Rangsan Bridge). While this bridge was named in dedication to Bro. Martin who designed and supervised construction of Suvarnabhumi Campus, it also serves to remind AU graduates that they must be creative and innovative in their work-life. In the wise words of Bill Gates “Never before in history has innovation offered promise of so much to so many in so short a time” (Gates, n.d.). While creativity refers to generating new ideas, innovation is

also needed to implement such ideas into action.

In today's world, the success and perhaps even survival of individuals, companies, and nations as a whole rests on the ability to think and act creatively. Therefore, creativity and innovation have always been recognized as a sure path to success. What you learned from the world classroom will give you insight, new thoughts and ideas for new productivity.

Dear Graduates:

Life is a journey of maturity and from now on you have to be on your own, making your own decision. Others can only be your advisors and facilitators. You have to be accountable to what you do. Do not spend your whole life in waiting. Be bold to move forward.

Many of us hurry through life going from one place to the next, focused on conquering the next mountain, making the next deal, running the next errand, and believing we will never have enough time to do all the things we need to get done. Yet, there is all the time in the world if we just realize that we are the creators of this life we choose to live. (Guillemets, n.d.)

Do not put the blame on circumstances for what they are. People who get on in the world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, they make them.

My last advice for you is that "knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes" (Drucker, n.d.).

Once graduated, you become professionals who specialize in the areas of your studies. Make use of them for yourself and for others, too. I congratulate you once again on your academic achievements and wish you every success in your life, be it in your work-life, family life and your social life. At the same time, be good and active ambassadors of AU.

May God accompany you in the excitement of your life's journey and keep you in His Love.

Congratulations once again. May God bless you always!

BanchaSaenghiran, f.s.g., Ph.D.
President -Rector Magnificus
January 13, 2018