

**Speech by Ms Teresa Cheng, SC
Secretary for Justice
Graduation Day 2017-18
St. Mary's Canossian College
10 July 2018 (Tuesday)**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to be invited to speak to you on this important day for the graduates. Today signifies the end of your secondary school life but the start of a new chapter.

2. You will continue your study either in Hong Kong or abroad. Some of you may choose to work instead of pursuing further study. Some of you, the smarter ones, may take a gap year before proceeding further.

3. Whatever your choice, I am sure that, like myself some 40 years ago, you are all indebted to St. Mary's Canossian College for giving you an excellent education and providing a good foundation for moving forward.

4. If one is to recap the core values that have been acquired during the years in St. Mary's, I would suggest the following.

5. First, you have acquired the basic knowledge for you to know how to learn. Your teachers have given you adequate knowledge to help you further develop in university. It is extremely important to appreciate that the ability of knowing how to learn is a life-long target that you should be aiming for. With the basic knowledge acquired at school, you will be able to grapple with the new concepts and skills that will take you to new heights.

6. Secondly, in St. Mary's you have learned and acquired proper, decent and charming interpersonal skills. They may be simple things like saying "please" and "thank you", but they are still important. We learn to respect others irrespective of the different views they may have, because it is through the challenge of listening and managing different views that we thrive and improve ourselves.

7. We also learn the importance of helping others. We know that

when we help others, we help ourselves. When one is kind to others, one is actually bestowing kindness upon herself at the same time. An act of kindness makes both the people offering and receiving it feel happier. These are the interpersonal skills and humanity that we have learned and applied at school.

8. Thirdly, we learn important values in the setting of the Catholic Church of St. Mary's. It is very touching that the speech day began with a prayer for the graduates. It has reinforced our faith, replenished our hope and importantly nourished the charity in pursuit of our steps that henceforth would continue to be taken following the footsteps of Lord Jesus Christ. This is extremely important as Ms. Wong, the Principal, reminded us of the motto of St. Mary's: charity and humanity. We must not forget that. Our enrichment, through the education we received here, will help us all in going through life.

9. Whichever way you are going forward from here, I suggest that you must bear the following in mind. You must learn to further broaden the perspectives and pursue what you like. Not many people will tell you to pursue what you like, but I tell you to do just that. The reason is very simple: only if you enjoy what you are doing can you excel in doing it.

10. You will also want to expand and broaden the perspectives that you will be exposing yourselves to in life. If you are going abroad, try not to just get around with students or friends you know from Hong Kong, but reach out to other people, explore the cultural diversity and richness in the cultures, especially culinary experience. I may share with you my experience that I fell in love with Japanese food and learned to cook Japanese food when I was studying in England and sharing a flat with a Japanese girl. I almost spoke Japanese, or least her Japanese friends almost thought I could.

11. When you are broadening your perspectives, you also learn to adapt and accommodate, and to work together not only with people who share the same goal with you but also with people who have different views. It is important that we can be accommodating and understand views from different perspectives. .

12. When you are doing all these, may I also suggest that you try your best in whatever endeavour you are pursuing. In university, you are to decide whether to attend classes or not and you are only accountable to yourselves, but please do go to classes. If you are sitting

in a class, pay attention and take notes. Some classes may be boring, but if you are sitting there, you may as well utilise the time to the best you can. Or you can think about it in another way: it makes your revision easier, so it saves time and gives you more time to play. Work hard, and then you will be able to play hard.

13. Hardworking is important, as you have always been told, but I am going to be a little bit controversial and suggest that being hardworking alone is not enough. You have to know how to work hard. You have to think about how to deploy your resources efficiently. Your intelligence and time are your resources. You should plan how to use your time wisely and decide what to learn. In that way you will work hard and achieve whatever goal you set for yourselves. But how, you may ask, do I find out exactly what I like? What subjects should I choose when I go to university? Half way through the course I might think I have chosen the wrong one, and what should I do?

14. If you actually direct your mind to these questions, you are half way there. You will be fine because you already know how to think and know the right questions to ask. Always be inquisitive. That is something that will no doubt lead you to a very long way ahead. But practically speaking, in order to find out what you like, I suggest a few things that you might want to do.

15. First, always talk to your parents and good friends who will give you suggestions. Listen to the people with experience. If you want to do medicine, talk to a medical doctor who will tell you exactly what it is like. You may then consider whether it suits you and make an informed decision.

16. Second, you may make good use of summer jobs and internships. When you have these opportunities, reflect on whether you enjoy the particular work you are doing. That will help you decide what is the best for you in pursuing your future career.

17. I gave a talk a few months ago at a High Table event at a university. I talked to the students about the importance of making a plan, doing their best and being kind to others. While making a plan is important, you should be aware that your plan might not always go in the way you want it to. However, intelligence is the ability to adapt to changes. As experience shows, changes are good and can do amazing things.

18. I studied engineering for my first degree in university. I then became a civil engineer and worked on construction sites. It was at a time when there were very few female engineers. Some people would treat us like “protected species”, while some others would not look upon us seriously. You may come across the same experience later on in life, but do not despair. Nothing people think or talk about you will change who you really are. The best approach is to carry on what you are doing and seek to outshine the others.

19. When I was working as an engineer, I came across the opportunity to study law. It was an entirely different field, and yet I decided to embark on it because to me it was very stimulating to learn an entirely new and unfamiliar subject. I studied law part-time in the evening after I finished my work at the construction site during daytime. After I finished my study in law, I decided to switch to the law.

20. That was indeed a very drastic change but it worked well for me. I found that I like engineering but I happened to like law even more. So I changed my career, became a lawyer, and started my career dealing with construction disputes. There is nothing wasted. I have not wasted my time studying and getting qualifications in civil engineering. They actually help my legal career.

21. To end, I would like to share with you a saying from Albert Einstein. He said this (and I change his reference to “man” to “woman”): “Try not to become a woman of success, but rather try to become a woman of value”. When you study, learn how to learn. When you work, do what you enjoy. When you are around people, be kind, have compassion for them and empathise with them. In that way you will be able to be a person of value and lead a happy, meaningful and successful life. God bless you all, and live St. Mary's ever more.