

**23<sup>rd</sup> Congregation (FH) – Valedictory Speech by TAN Shin Ling (BACBS)**

Prof Chu, Members of the Faculty, proud families, friends and fellow graduates, good afternoon. It is indeed an honor to speak before you today, and I'd love to take this chance to express my warmest congratulations to all the fellow BA graduates of 2017. Today is the celebration day for all of us as a cohort, and we should be proud of it because as tough as it was at the very beginning of the journey, today we're gathering around here at the final checkpoint, reaping the rewards of 4 years of hard work.

PolyU is a place where we seek knowledge, personal growth and friendships, but our faculty is the one that truly links all of us together. I'm grateful that this ceremony has brought us back, and I'm sure it feels great to see the familiar faces again because everyone has embarked on a different path since the completion of studies. As for myself, I've been working in the corporate sector for a few months now as a Graduate Trainee.

Interestingly, I'm working outside of our degree field, meaning my daily job is not directly related to what we learned in the classroom. But the reality is most people are not even surprised that your career stray far from what you studied. While hard skills are often not immediately transferrable, our core studies in language, culture, and communication – these soft skills, have given us the edge in effective communication because we understand how they are intertwined and reflected through each other. Yes, while anthropology and linguistic analysis may not factor into my daily work, what I learned while earning this degree does.

For example, I remember towards the end of the last interview in my current job, the interviewer told me she was happy to notice that on the top right corner of my PowerPoint slides, I'd included the just-rebranded company logo. "Sometimes it's the smallest thing that makes you stand out", she said it to me when we met again on my first day of work few months later. At that moment I realized that I wouldn't have paid attention to such tiny details on presentation, from content to everything basic like font size and logo, without the professional training I received from CBS. For that I want to take this chance to thank all lecturers and professors who have poured in hard work to help us in achieving our ambitions.

I'm proud to say that as a humanities student, even if we ended up with a position that does not take direct advantage of what we studied, the unexpected path we embark upon, somehow, is inherently linked with the different perspectives and world views that we gained during our tertiary education. And of course along with the studies, our friends, mentors and acquaintances have also continued to shape our personalities and interests in life. For instance my classmates are formed by a bunch of talented young individuals from different backgrounds, and we had learned from each other over the course of time. I very much want to take this chance to wish all of you the best of luck in pursuing your dreams, and becoming the person that you want to be.

Personally speaking, so much has changed since the day I came to Hong Kong to start my university studies. There were a lot of ups and downs that had left a mark in my life. For example I'd been given the wonderful chance to do internships in New York and Singapore which really broadened my horizon, as well as community works in Mainland China that made me realize how blessed we are to have all the love and resources while growing up. In the meantime, I also learnt that life is not always sunshine and rainbows. I had grieved over the loss of a loved one, and regretted some of the decisions I made.

However, rewinding back to these 4 years, I wouldn't have changed a thing because of where it has led me now. I believe that in every loss and mistake there is a gain, and ultimately it's all about "connecting the dots", as the late Apple founder Steve Job said, of which I found great solace. Indeed, as the saying goes, "I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday".

If there's anything I really wish to share with all of you today, is this one question: What are the dots you envisage connecting later in your life? To see not just scattered random dots when looking backwards, but a progression and direction towards something concrete and meaningful?

I recently watched this American TV series called *This Is Us* that has received a lot of positive reviews and nominations since its premiere. There's this one line that really tugs at my heartstrings, and I think it could be a nice way to end this speech today, because as a fresh grad, we've got a whole life ahead of us, and in times of uncertainties and challenges, let's all remember this:

*Sometimes life is about taking the sourest lemon life has to offer, and turn it into something resembling lemonade.*

Once again, congratulations fellow graduates, I wish you every success in your future endeavor. And thank you, to all of you who have rendered unconditional love and support to us.