



**Address to the Graduation Class, Sacred Heart
School of Halifax, N.S.,
June 13, 2010
Sr. Theresa Chu, rscj**

Congratulations to you, Graduates, also to your parents, to Mrs. Donnelly and all our teachers, to alumnae and friends. Congratulations to all of you. I feel so honoured to be speaking to you on such a solemn occasion. I cannot help thinking of my own graduation from the Sacred Heart School in Shanghai many, many years ago. The RSCJ who taught me were from Canada, USA, Europe and Australia. Not one of them spoke Chinese, yet they taught me a lot.

Tomorrow you will begin a new chapter in life. We have just heard what each one of you has chosen to do, and I wish each of you success in the field of your choice. At the same time, I believe there is a wish that you all share in common, and that is: **to make the earth a better place**. The education you have received has planted the seed of this desire in you. It will spring up when the right moment comes. What I wish to do now is to mention **a few tools** you may need when that moment arrives and you decide to do your part in the gigantic task of turning the tide and changing society for the better.

First of all, society will expect from you **an ever-increasing degree of specialization** and this is necessary in order to bring about new discoveries. **The strange thing is: the more new discoveries we make, the narrower our horizon seems to become**. Take the example of fashion, if it starts in a Western country, within weeks if not simultaneously, you see the same fashion not only in other Western countries, but also in Asia and in Africa. We are left to feel that nations have lost their individuality and that there is only uniformity left. Progress is described by adjectives such as higher, faster, bigger - or smaller for that matter, depending on what you are fabricating. This **narrow way of understanding progress** has brought about many wonderful, new products which have already been woven into the fabric of our daily life, the problem is no one seems to have discovered any new horizons. Because of this lack, I believe, our socio-economic and political problems have taken on a global dimension: dependence on oil, water shortage, climate change, etc.

We need to ask new questions, for example, **what is better for everyone humanly speaking?** To be able to question in this way, our highly specialized world needs **a holistic approach to all aspects of study and research**. You need to specialize, of course, but at the same time, you need to ask yourselves basic questions such as "What purpose does this serve?" "What is the human cost of this new product?" "How will it affect nature?" This may sound easy, but it is not because with the speed at which we are going, it is hard to stop and think. Imagine! Had the scientists who discovered nuclear energy asked those questions, they might have stopped short of creating the atom bomb. The history of the 20th century would have been very different then, and the world today would be different!

To ask these common sense questions, however, you would have to step outside your immediate pursuit and become free enough **to think independently**. I believe you are equipped to take up this challenge because the education you received aimed at **integral growth for each of you**. As intelligent, accomplished and caring women, you will love truth and you will dare to be true.

Secondly, the world needs **mutual understanding among peoples**. We need to understand people who are different from ourselves. Our minds can best do this with the help of our hearts. Understanding of heart means the ability to feel how the other person feels and to see the world as the

other person sees it. **The heart raises questions that the mind does not.** The more people seem to be different, the more their actions seem to be strange, the more understanding of heart is called for. Let your heart ask questions. If more people in the world did this, perhaps international tensions will resolve and relations between nations will improve.

I believe you are prepared for this approach to life because at school, **you have worked and played side by side with friends from a variety of cultures.** You have mixed with one another so well that your friend is just a person like you regardless of her race, religion and culture. You have learned that all human beings are basically one and the same. You have already experienced the truth that, when one person suffers, all are affected. Understanding of heart is the starting point of all true peace.

Thirdly, as years go by, more potentialities within you will be developed, and I hope you will be very successful. But when you work towards social change, you are likely to have a different kind of experience. You might **feel at times utterly helpless.** The task is gigantic. You feel you just can't do it. At this point, I would like to flip the coin and show you its positive side. First of all, the experience of helplessness is good because **it is sobering.** It teaches you to face reality as it is and not to live under any illusion. This moment of truth can transform you from a builder of the Tower of Babel into a person who builds on solid ground.

The feeling of helplessness is also good because **it frees you from bondage to the current social ethos and allows room for more creativity.** You feel you have nothing to lose. You dare to be different, and you will continue to ask questions no matter what others think. **You might even discover a new horizon.**

Experiences of helplessness will also convince you that you **need to work with others.** The greater the task, the more helpless we feel, the more we need to collaborate with others, to do networking, and to pray.

Most important of all, **experiences of powerlessness teach us who we truly are. We humans are immensely great and at the same time, we are nothing.** These two opposites can only be held together by faith, **and faith will bring balance into your life.** Then we know that **our hope is not founded on sand, but on God.** We will realize that the task of making the world a better place is God's own work; we are merely lending God a helping hand. St. Madeleine Sophie said: "The Holy Spirit comes to create. We say 'Creator Spiritus' because the Spirit's action consists in a creation to be realized in us." When we know we are nothing, then the Holy Spirit is freed to create in us and through us.

Let me put this in another way. At school, you have learned to value **silence.** Silence may lead you to a look deep within yourselves. If what you find there is emptiness, thank God for it, for now you can let God accomplish whatever task is at hand, be it writing a term paper or changing the world. Your success is guaranteed!

To sum up, you need to look **from without,** that is, from outside your immediate occupation in order to remind yourself of the real purpose of your work. You need to look **from within other people** in order to truly understand them, and above all, **you need to look deep within yourself** and there find the 'courage and confidence' that you have heard Mrs. Donnelly say often. And that is what the Sacred Heart is all about. The traditional logo as well as the new one say the same things: an emptiness surrounded by people, openness meaning readiness to go forward and to engage the world.