

Rector's Speech at Official Inauguration of Ilha Verde Campus

Honourable guests and friends,

A few days ago, I received a long message from Fr João Lourenço, first Rector of IIUM, wishing us well. He ends: *"I would like to wish the University of St. Joseph, the entire Macao Special Administrative Region, its authorities, its people and the local Catholic Church every success in its human and social development. May the University help raise the profile the Region, strengthen its social wellbeing and consolidate its cultural and scientific heritage. Macau, well deserves it!"*

Truly this is an important day for the University, for the School, for the Diocese and for Macao. Developing Education, and Higher Education in particular has been one of the strategic options of Government of Macao, and the Ilha Verde Campus which we inaugurate today is living proof of what that has meant.

Seven years ago, Dr Alexis Tam, Head of the Chief Executive's Office, chaired a meeting for us to present an updated version of the Ilha Verde Campus project to representatives from the Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, from GAES, and from DSEJ. The initial project had been prepared and submitted by my predecessor, Prof. Ruben Cabral, and after demolishing the School building and carrying out the necessary piling work, some funds were still available; not enough, however, to complete the main construction. No difficulties were raised as a result of our meeting, but, logically, there was also no immediate financial commitment. It was a high-risk option, and USJ had yet to prove it was a worthy investment. Even the Catholic Foundation, our title holder, was hesitant on whether to move forward with such a challenging project. We have Mr Ho Hau Wah to thank for the encouragement he gave us at that critical moment.

Five years later, after many trials, much sweat and a few tears, and with the generous support of funds allocated by the government, the campus was finally handed over, only to be struck in August by the fury of Typhoon Hato. Recovery has been ongoing ever since. And that is why only today we are able to host this happy event.

The job has been huge. That it got done was due, in part, to Fr. Alberto Rossa, immediately followed by Fr José Legido and his team, Principal Samuel Kio and Prof. Francisco Vizeu Pinheiro, who supervised the later stages of the project on a weekly basis; and we cannot forget Ms Lavena Cheong and Ms Gracinda Neves whose incredible work allowed us to keep track of all the details and monies involved. But none of this would have got off the drawing board without the public funds provided by Macao Foundation and DSEJ, the commitment of Bishop José Lai and Bishop Stephen Lee, the financial support of the Catholic Diocese of Macau, and the generosity of various private donors – for them we will hold a special thank-you session as soon as our "donor's wall" is ready. Thanks also are due to those who designed, built and verified the construction: Architect Koji Yagi who produced the initial concept, / Architect Campina Ferreira who turned that concept into a fully-fledged project, / our technical consultants, MPS, / the construction company, HCCG, / and Currie & Brown our quantity surveyors. It has been my honour and my privilege to have facilitated the convergence of so much goodwill and hard work invested in this project by all these and the many more whose efforts have made this day possible. So, finally, here stands our new campus: an architectural statement and a tribute to Education rooted in the Ilha Verde district and, we hope, in the heart of Macao.

Where do we go from here? Someone commented, a few months ago: “You have excellent hardware. Now you must ensure your software is excellent too?” Well, we have been working on that for the past seven years. There is still a way to go. However, I take my hat off to our team of academics, to our administrative staff, to our students and alumni. They have been investing time and effort, under very challenging circumstances, to enhance the quality of our programmes and of the services we provide.

Let me conclude with the question that is on all our minds. What is it that motivates us and so many out there in the community, to invest endless time, effort and resources in Education? For sure, it is useful for the social and economic development of the community. But a more fundamental motivation exists. The truth is, the call of Wisdom runs deep. If I may borrow words from Lao-Tzu: in those who listen to the voice of Wisdom, her influence is discreet yet powerful, and asks for nothing in return.

萬物恃之以生，
而不辭，
功成
而不名有。

*Ten thousand things depend on [Dao]
And she refuses them not,
When her work is accomplished
She claims not the name.¹*

Thank you!

Macau, 10 May 2019

Fr Peter Stilwell

Rector

¹ *Tao-Te Ching*, 34.