



聖若瑟大學  
UNIVERSITY OF  
SAINT JOSEPH

**XXII Congress of The ICLA  
July 29<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019**

**Welcome Speech of the Rector of the University of Saint Joseph,  
Prof. Fr. Peter Stilwell**

Honourable participants in this 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, it is my pleasure to be one of the voices that welcomes you here today. As Rector of the University of Saint Joseph, I represent a small part of the team who worked with ICLA to make this meeting in Macao possible.

It is interesting that such a prestigious event in comparative literature should be taking place in this special administrative region of China. In 1594, exactly 425 years ago, the College of Saint Paul (Dai Sam Ba) was founded just across the water from where we are today. The visionary Jesuit who oversaw its creation was Fr. Alessandro Valignano. He was interested in providing the very best formation for the European and local recruits who would be taking up the Japanese and Chinese Missions. When, sixteen years earlier, he had arrived in Macao, he had set clear guidelines that all missionaries were to learn the Chinese language and etiquette, and study the Confucian and other Chinese classics. Michele Ruggieri (Luo Ming-Jian) and Matteo Ricci (Li Ma Dou), were among the first to follow those instructions. The College of Saint Paul rose out of that vision as the first Western-style higher education institution in the East; surely, the only one at the time tasked with studying of languages and what today we would call comparative literature.

As you may be aware, Beijing, picked up on this longstanding tradition and the Central Government designated Macao as China's multicultural and multilingual platform for building international links with Portuguese-speaking countries and Europe. We still have a way to go before we fully match those requirements. But it is a mission that will have far-reaching implications for Macao, as we see it today. Our Special Administrative Region and its 700,000 in-habitants must soon integrate into the surrounding Greater Bay Area, which stretches across nine world-class cities, boasts a population of over 69 million, a powerful export oriented industrial base, and a dynamic network of universities and research centres. If Macao is not to be simply swallowed up in that wider context, it must bring with it its unique heritage and world outreach. Our Congress is a step in that direction, setting Macao's higher education, and the Region as a whole, on the international cultural stage.

Turning to the subject matter of our Congress, it is not hard to see how comparative literature is relevant to our context. It opens avenues of understanding and cultural expression that reach across national and linguistic borders. They may appear strictly academic, but as we consider the wider picture we can see how the insights and exchanges from such a large international forum will eventually filter through our respective education systems and become unexpected paths and, eventually, even broad highways along which our peoples may meet, understand one another and trade peacefully for the betterment of all communities.

Before I end, let me congratulate the International Comparative Literature Association, and specially its Chinese branch, on having organised, in such a short time, what promises to be a very successful Congress. The preparation required has not been easy, but I am sure the



聖若瑟大學<sup>聖</sup>  
UNIVERSITY OF  
SAINT JOSEPH

interaction between the participants and the long list of papers to be presented will, in retrospect, prove that your hard work was worthwhile.

The University of Saint Joseph, which I have the honour of heading, will be hosting one of the roundtables. It will be on Comparative Literature and Religious Studies, and will take place in one of our campuses, at the Seminário de São José – a UNESCO Heritage site. I will be following it closely, so it is possible, that I will not return to this particular venue during your stay with us. May I, therefore, take this opportunity to wish you all an excellent stay in Macao and a most successful Congress.

Thank you.