

Maryknoll Fathers' School 2018 Graduation

Mr. Chan, Fr. Sloboda, honored guests, Principal Ho, teachers, parents and students,

Welcome to the Maryknoll Fathers' School's 2018 graduation ceremony. Congratulations to our graduates for achieving a significant milestone in life – passing from carefree adolescence to wacky young adulthood.

Dear graduates, having just finished DSE exams, you probably would think that I am putting down your intelligence to ask you the answer to 2 plus 2.

Yes, to all of you, the answer is easy, it is 4.

But what if I say that it is 22. Doesn't writing a 2 next to another 2 show 22.

What do you think of my argument?

Would you think that I am just trying to be funny and would laugh it off without giving it any further thought? Or would you think that it is a quibble to attract attention, that I am a jerk and a nuisance? Or would you ponder that there is indeed another perspective to look at the question and you would try to understand the theory I presented?

What if I insisted that as Supervisor of the school, you must accept this theory without question and apply it as the mathematical theory for all arithmetic calculations from now on?

And if I indeed forced it on you, what would you do? Would you go to your teachers and all the mathematics books that you can lay your hands on to prove this specious argument wrong? Would you view that it is your righteous duty, and would you have the courage, to confront me and tell me that I am wrong?

Dear graduates, this is not a hypothetical question. You will be dealing with these perplexing situations everyday once you leave the simple and protected school environment and start to live as an independent adult. You will be confronted with many different opinions and dogmatisms in your university or professional studies, at work, with your family, on politics and social issues. You will have to identify the truth to accept and uphold, most of them will involve issues and matters that you have not dealt with or not need deal with before; issues that even teachers or parents may not know the answers and are unable to advise. You will have to decide for yourself what is really right and what is really wrong - the truth to believe in.

Our school's motto is "Truth and Loyalty". What is the truth that the school has taught you to uphold? The universal truth that the school upholds are the core values of Christian faith, and scientific truth based on discernment that is logical, factual, ethical and humanistic. "Love God above all things and love our neighbors as ourselves." is the Truth in Catholic belief, i.e. love, equality and justice for all men. We also uphold the proven laws of science and mathematics - realities that can be objectively verified with logic and evidence. While the argument of $2+2=22$ can be explained by some delusive logic, it cannot withstand the rigorous reasoning of number theories and is a sophism that can be quickly nullified by mathematical logic.

As upright and conscientious students of this school, you are to uphold truth loyally, with conviction, courage and civility. Hence when I say 2 plus 2 is 22, you should be ready to come forth to tell me that it is fallacious, that it contradicts with rigorous mathematical logic and cannot be a universal truth. You should have the courage to come up to tell me your opinion, even though I am your school supervisor who signed your graduation certificate.

You will soon be out in the real world where in many cases truth will be obscure and difficult to identify – the black and white blurred by many shades of grey. When you are deciding on the truth to believe in, remember not to go along with the crowd because it is the easy way out, or decide on it because you can personally benefit from the choice, instead of considering the greater common good. When you have to decide on the truth to adhere to, remember the 5 core values of Catholic Education that have guided your budding years: love, justice, truth, life and family; and the objectivity of rational and logical scientific analyses.

And once you have identified the truth, you should be ready to defend and uphold it with conviction, courage and civility. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the crucifix to show us the utmost action one can take to defend and uphold the Christian faith. We may not be able to match His selfless gallantry to die for His cause, but please do remember that you have many other options to loyally uphold the truth you believe in.

May the Holy Spirit guide you in your pursuit of truth and give you the strength and wisdom to defend it.

And best wishes for a bright and rewarding future ahead, in all your endeavors to better your own life and that of others. God bless you always!

Agnes G. Yeh
Supervisor