

Graduation Ceremony 5
Graduand's Address
Thursday 24 November 2011 at 1630hrs
JESUITS' CHURCH – VALLETTA

Byron Baron
Ph.D graduand and representative of the students

Esteemed Rector, members of the faculties, parents, guests and graduates, my warmest greetings to each of you on this joyous day. I wrote this speech on the train to Kyoto (the old capital city of Japan) as I was going to the autumn leaf-viewing after a busy week of experiments in cancer research. In Japan, the seasons play an important part in daily life and are celebrated as unique yearly events.

Autumn brings shades of red and yellow to the mountains and cities announcing the end of summer and the coming of the new winter season. This autumn season coincides with the changes we graduating students are going through in our life. The red colour could be seen as representing the passion and dedication to our studies while the yellow to the gold that crowns our achievement. For most, this is a first experience, while for others, like myself, who are post-graduate students, this is part of a long cycle. Yet for all of us this is a season of happiness, satisfaction and celebration as well as preparation for the new season that lies ahead, full of hopes, dreams and new experiences.

As undergraduate students, the seasons for sowing and cultivating ideas and concepts are over and it is time to reap what has taken so long to mature. For post-graduates, particularly those having delved into research, the harsh summer of hard work in the various fields of thought has passed and cooler days are upon us. We must now be thankful for this harvest, gathered after many years of hard work and sacrifice. Yet soon we must prepare ourselves to once again set off on another journey and sow new seeds in different fields, for some near while for others far from home.

This graduation does not only represent the successful completion of a set of academic obligations, tests and exams but also an achievement in personal growth and development. In my case, I have had the opportunity to experience different research environments in London, Cambridge and Japan while reading for my Ph.D. in cellular biology with the faculty of Medicine and Surgery. I am certain that many of you fellow graduates treasure memories of unique experiences you have had during the course of your studies. Thus we not only pick the fruits of our studies but we reap the combined product of all the contacts, friendships and experiences we have made and gained throughout these years.

Numerous times I have felt, and I am sure many of you have too, that the task at hand was too difficult and the work-load was never-ending, but we are here today, successful

graduates. Our hardships have surely made us stronger and better professionals but in most cases we would have been unable to overcome certain situations without the support of our loved ones, be they parents, siblings, partners or friends. We owe such people so much more than our thanks and in this time of celebration they are the ones who understand and share in our joy the most.

To close, I would like to congratulate you on your achievement and to wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavours, be they academic or otherwise. May the fruits of your studies, celebrated by today's graduation, lead you far and bring you many beautiful and memorable seasons in your lives.