

Congratulations to all of you on your graduation. I would also like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the parents of the graduates and all other concerned. On behalf of Sophia University, I would like to express my sincere respect to all of you who have overcome the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic while studying in high school and university and have now earned your degrees.

In a book called *The Invention of Tomorrow: A Natural History of Foresight* written by a group of psychologists in Australia, the authors refer to the acquisition of the ability to foresee the future as a major contributing factor of the competitive advantage that humans have over many other species. There are various theories about the competitive advantage of the human race, but there is something about this explanation that seems plausible. Indeed, this capacity to plan, obtain and store food, and prepare for enemy invasions, etc., was a decisive factor of our competitive advantage in terms of avoiding risk. On the other hand, I think that it is in fact because we have built up our society based on this advantage that we now feel great anxiety about the unpredictable and unforeseeable society that we are faced with today.

Being able to foresee and have a vision of the future is not only important for foretelling the future of society, but also for planning our own life. However, for now, I would like to think about looking into the past. At this graduation ceremony today, I would like to ask you all, “Is the current state of society the inevitable result of the past?” When we take a bird's-eye view of society today, of course there are aspects that we can positively appreciate, such as the unique ways in which human society has evolved, including the evolution of political and economic systems, the development of social systems, and technological advances. However, there are also many urgent issues, such as environmental degradation, poverty, widening disparities, refugee issues, and inequality, that need to be resolved. Where lie the roots of where we stand today? Or, was it simply a series of coincidences that has brought us to this point?

You may have heard of the term “butterfly effect”. It is a metaphor used to explain chaotic phenomena, and refers to the question of whether the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas, USA. It illustrates how even the smallest event can lead to a huge phenomenon. When considering the current state of society, it is impossible to specifically identify the origins of the current situation. For example, the current issue of global environmental degradation cannot be solved by pursuing, identifying and removing a single cause. Then, is what we are currently experiencing just a coincidence, rather than something inevitable? Can we get away with saying that a combination of uncontrollable forces and random events has brought us where we are today?

I would like you to think about this question in the context of your own life. Is your reality today an inevitable consequence? Or is the person you will become in ten years' time an inevitable outcome of the path you have walked so far, and the path you will take in the future? I think this is a very important question to ask about your life. When you think about who you are today, surely there is more than one factor that has shaped your personality, beliefs and aspirations. While your studies at school have undeniably played a significant role, the conversations you have with your family, the chats you share with your friends, and the dialogue you engage in with society have all had an impact on you. I believe that each of these factors has triggered the butterfly effect within you and has helped to shape the person you are today.

How do you feel about the outcomes of your studies at university? Whether your studies spanned two years or four years, your experiences here can have a significant impact on who you are in 10, 30 or even 50 years. I hope that you will develop the sensibility and consciousness that encourage you to positively create a butterfly effect. I hope that you will design your lives with a vision that your past experiences, current challenges and future endeavors will have a significant impact on your future selves, if not immediately, then over time. Whether or not our current selves are the inevitable result of our past selves is a question with no definitive answer, but I believe that we should constantly continue to ask ourselves this question.

The Director of the Catholic Jesuit Center just read a passage from the Book of John, which describes

the continuous learning of those who love peace. As seekers of true peace, we are called to engage in existential learning. Unfortunately, in our daily lives, we are bombarded with news of various events that undermine peace. I hope that you will think about your own role, continue learning in a broad sense, and never cease to be seekers of peace. I believe that the challenge of pursuing peace can have an inevitable effect on the daily decisions and actions of each and every person around the world, just like the butterfly effect.

What we learn day by day, the small challenges faced every day, the unexpected experiences encountered, and the unforeseen circumstances dealt with from time to time - these steps in life may trigger or guide creative transformation in our own lives or in society. At the very least, your studies and research at university will be enough experience that are sufficient to provide that guidance. As a graduate of Sophia University and Graduate Schools pursuing the educational philosophy of “For Others, With Others,” I sincerely hope that you will have an empathetic eye on the vulnerable. With this wish, I would like to conclude my congratulatory address.

Congratulations on your graduation.

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President of Sophia University