

President's Address at the 2023 Graduation Ceremony

March 20, 2024

President, MIYAUCHI Takahisa
Kanda University of International Studies

Congratulations on your graduation.

Today is a day for all of you to express your sincere gratitude to all those who have taken care of you. It is a day to remember your parents and guardians who have supported you, and your teachers and the university staff who have provided you with careful guidance and support.

When you began your studies at KUIS in April 2020, the entrance ceremony had to be canceled due to the historic pandemic COVID19 that was spreading around the world. I know that this was an unimaginably difficult period for all of you who had been dreaming of a wonderful campus life. It was a very difficult decision for me as the president of the university to make.

During the pandemic, international travel was restricted, and it was not possible to study abroad or take trips overseas. The opportunities for interaction were reduced, and the campus life which you had been so hopefully looking forward to, became an unfulfilling time from the moment you entered the university. However, you all overcame these difficulties and have come to this day. I believe that one of the major characteristics of the students at Kanda University of International Studies is that when they are faced with a difficult situation, they have a positive attitude and make efforts to overcome the difficulty. They are curious and positive about life. I believe that all of you are glad you came to Kanda, that it was an interesting place, and that you were able to accomplish what you set out to do. What do you think? Some of you may feel that you should have worked harder, or

you regret that you did not have the opportunity to study abroad, but please have confidence in yourselves. The characteristic of Kanda University of International Studies is that there are many hours of classes required for language acquisition. Especially when you were in the first and second years, you may have felt the lack of time and mental space. But this was a kind of training. In addition, I believe that you have acquired the habit of learning and expressing yourself independently due to the many opportunities for discussion and presentation in the small classes. You should all be proud of the four years that you have spent concentrating on your studies, and I am sure that it will give you confidence as you move forward in life. The diplomas that you will be receiving shortly from the professors in your departments are proof of your efforts.

When people with similar values gather together, it is good to deepen discussions, but at times, they may become sharply focused on their own principles, dismissing different arguments and sensibilities, and even becoming hostile to each other. Recently, we have seen the phenomenon of "flame wars" on social media sites. When people who share certain values gather and sympathize with each other, their unity is strengthened, but when they become self-absorbed and overly exuberant, they stop thinking and can become violent. People are unable to look at themselves objectively. On the contrary, they tend to emotionally justify themselves, trying to eliminate opinions, ethics, and sensitivities that are different from their own.

Under the founding motto of Kanda University of International Studies, "Languages are the foundation to link the world in peace," you have learned languages other than your mother tongue, and you have studied about the climate, history, and culture of regions where languages other than your mother tongue are spoken, and you have compared them

with your own. You have learned to accept the fact that different peoples and regions have their own values and cultural differences, and you have been convinced that the foundation of mutual prosperity is to respect one another. At the same time, you have looked at yourselves objectively and considered your own identity. During your time at Kanda University of International Studies, you have learned not to be self-righteous, but to listen to others with humility, to collaborate when you feel empathy, and to find compromise when you are at odds. This is your power of connection.

I believe that from now you will have more opportunities to meet people with different cultural backgrounds and values in your work and personal lives. When you encounter a situation where you are unreasonably excluded from something different, I hope that you will exercise the "power of connection" that you have acquired and use it not as a place of confrontation, but as a great opportunity for innovation to create something new, and try to come to a positive compromise.

Remembering the founding spirit of Kanda University of International Studies, "Languages are the foundation to link the world in peace," let's build connections among people.

Let your greatness bloom!

Congratulations on your graduation today.

令和5(2023)年度卒業式学長式辞

令和6(2024)年3月20日

ご卒業おめでとうございます。

本日は、皆さんがお世話になったすべての方々に心から感謝の気持ちを表す日です。支えてくださった保護者、又、きめ細かなご指導をいただいた教員、職員の方々に恩を思い返す日です。

皆さんが入学した2020年4月は、歴史的なパンデミック COVID19 が地球上に蔓延し、入学式が中止となりました。希望に満ちたキャンパスライフを夢見ていた皆さんにとって想像を絶するような辛い期間だったと思います。決断は学長として大変厳しいものであり、

海外渡航は制限され、留学や旅行も出来なくなりました。人と人の交流機会は減り希望に満ちたキャンパスライフも入学直後から物足りない時間が続きました。しかし、皆さんはその困難を乗り越え本日を迎えられるました。

私は、神田外語大学の学生の大きな特徴のひとつは困難に直面した時、乗り越えようと努力する前向きな気持ちを持っていることだと思います。好奇心旺盛で人生に対して前向きです。皆さんも「神田に来てよかった」「面白かった」「やり切った」と思っておられると思います。

「もう少し頑張るべきであった」「留学に行けなかった」など物足りなさを感じる方もおられるでしょうが、自信を持ってください。神田外語大学の特徴は語学習得に必要な授業時間が多く、特に1、2年生のころは時間的にも精神的にも余裕がなかったでしょうが、その分だけ皆さんは鍛えられています。また、少人数教室で行われたディスカッションやプレゼンテーションの機会が多かったことで主体的に学び発言する習慣が身についたことと思います。皆さんが集中した四年間は皆さんの誇りであり、人生を送るにあたり自信になるでしょう。これから各学科の先生方から授与される学位記はその努力の証明です。

ところで、似たような価値観を持つ人間同士が集まると、議論を深めることはよいのですが、ある時は主義主張が先鋭化し異なる主張や感性を排除し、更に敵愾心を抱き始めることもあります。最近SNS内で「炎上する」現象が見受けられます。ある価値観を共有する者同士が集まり共感しあうと結束力が強まりますが、自己陶醉し高揚すると思考停止状態となり暴力的にもなるのです。人間は、なかなか自分のことを客観的に観ることができず、逆に感情的に自己正当化をする傾向があり、自分とは異なる意見、倫理観、感性を排除しようとするのです。

皆さんは神田外語大学の建学の精神「言葉は世界をつなぐ平和の礎」のもと、母語以外の言語を学び、母語以外が話されている地域の風土、歴史、文化を学び、又、自分自身と比較しながら考えてきました。民族ごとに、地域ごとにそれぞれ価値観や文化が違うのは当然であると受け入れ、尊重しあうことが相互繁栄の基盤であると得心しているでしょう。同時に皆さんは自分を客観視し Identity を考えてきました。皆さんは神田外語大学で過ごす中で、独善的にならず、他者の話を謙虚に聞き共感を覚えるときには協働し、対立するときは妥協点を見つけようとする姿勢を身に付けているのです。これがみなさんの「繋ぐ力」です。

これから皆さんが仕事、または個人生活で異なる文化背景や価値観を持つ人々と出会う機会が増えると思います。理不尽に異質を排除するような場面にあった時こそ皆さんが身に付けた「繋ぐ力」を発揮し対立の場ではなく新しい何かを生むイノベーションの絶好の機会とし、前向きに折り合いをつけるよう努めてください。神田外語大学の建学の精神「言葉は世界をつなぐ平和の礎」を思い出し人々を繋ぎましょう。そして、皆さんのすばらしい花を咲かせましょう。

本日はご卒業、誠におめでとうございます。

神田外語大学 学長 宮内 孝久