

Welcome Address — Opening of the Academic Year (MA & PhD)
15 September 2021
João Carlos Espada

**Senhores Professores, Caros Alunos,
Minhas Senhoras e Meus Senhores,**

Em nome do Instituto de Estudos Políticos da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, queria dar-vos as boas vindas e dar-vos os parabéns por terem escolhido — e por terem sido admitidos — à melhor escola de Estudos Políticos em Portugal e uma das melhores da Europa.

Em atenção aos nossos alunos estrangeiros, pedia agora a vossa compreensão para me expressar em inglês.

**Dear Professors, Dear Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Institute for Political Studies of the Catholic University of Portugal, I would like to welcome you all and to congratulate you all for having chosen — and for having been admitted to — the best school of Political Studies in Portugal and one of the best in Europe.

It would take a long time to try to explain what this Institute is about. To cut a long story short, I invite you to look at the the Booklet of our 20th anniversary — which I trust you have received when registering, but, if not, we will be delighted to give you a copy.

If you want a *very brief* introduction to our Institute, I invite you to read the three opening quotations of our Booklet. One is from Edmund Burke, dated 1791, and the next two are from John Henry Cardinal Newman, dated 1854.

Please allow me to read them for you:

“To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low and sordid from one’s infancy; to be taught to respect one’s self; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; [...] to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; [...] to be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty; [...] to possess the virtues of diligence, order, constancy, and regularity, and to have cultivated an habitual regard to commutative justice; these are the circumstances of men that form what I should call a natural [as opposed to feudal] aristocracy.”

Edmund Burke, 1791

“It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life — these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge, they are the objects of a University”.

“A University is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge.”

John Henry Cardinal Newman, 1854

So, these are the three quotations that open all of our main documents — and you can find them in the home page of the site of our Institute as well.

Some people would say: these are tremendously old-fashioned quotations.

And I would like to reply: indeed they are. And what’s wrong about that?

We are at a University. And **The University** is one the oldest institutions — autonomous institutions, I must emphasise — of the Western world. They were born in Greece 2500 years ago— not only in Greece, I must say, but more precisely in Athens, in the old-fashioned, maritime, free-trading *and democratic* Athens of Socrates, Pericles, Plato and Aristotle.

Universities were then re-born across Europe in the Middle Ages. They all were Christian Universities — and we are proud of being a Christian and Catholic University, independent from the state, as all Universities were at the very beginning. And we are proud of being associate members of a Club of some of these oldest universities — the *Europaeum*, a consortium of a dozen of the oldest European universities, based at Oxford, which includes Bologna (1088), Oxford (1096/1167), the Sorbonne (1252), Charles University, in Prague (1348), the Jagiellonian in Krakow (1364), and Leiden (1575), among others.

And we are proud of preserving several crucial characteristics of the original University. One such crucial characteristic has been the study of the Great Books, the Tradition of the Great Books of our Western Civilisation.

We keep this tradition over here, too, especially at our BA Programme, but also at the Master’s and PhD Programmes.

Some people say that the study of the Great Books is propaganda — or indoctrination. But I am afraid that people who say this are usually those who have **not** read the Great Books of the West. Because one of the crucial features of these Great Books is that they disagree — they gently disagree — with one another. To be

more precise, what the Great Books and the Great Authors do is to enter into conversation with one another.

It is therefore a *pluralistic* and *free* conversation. But it is not a random conversation where anything goes. It is a pluralistic conversation with a common goal: the pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. A conversation between different views and a conversation between Faith and Reason — in the common pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, in the common pursuit of excellence.

A conversation therefore implies the free and gentlemanly interplay of different, sometimes rival, views, and different, sometimes rival, arguments.

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Speaking of free and gentlemanly conversation, it is at this point that I usually refer to the Room where our Opening Receptions traditionally have taken place — the “Prince Henry the Navigator Common Room”. Unfortunately we cannot have our Reception at Prince Henry’s room this year, because of the rules of social distancing. But I still would like to add a few words about the Prince Henry Room. This is our Institute’s Common Room — senior and junior Common Room, that is, a room that is common both to professors and students.

And what is the main purpose of this Common Room?

It is very simple. The main purpose is **to enjoy** — **to enjoy the spirit of a University**. To enjoy the company of our friends and colleagues, to enjoy the spirit of gentlemanly conversation, to enjoy reading books, journals and newspapers — and I am delighted to inform you that journals and newspapers are displayed on open shelves. You can freely choose to read whichever you want — and, in return, we just thank you for returning the publication to its original place.

Please feel free to enjoy our Common Room and to make yourselves *comfortable* — to make yourselves *at home* — at this Common Room. It is still open to all, even though there are restrictions about the number of people allowed at the same time and the social distancing rules that must be applied.

And, I am delighted to repeat, this Common Room has a name: it is “Prince Henry the Navigator Common Room”. There is, by the way, only another room with a name — and that is the “Winston Churchill Meeting Room”, which you may find along the main corridor within our Institute.

Again, two very old-fashioned names. And rightly so. Winston Churchill was the leader of the Western resistance against totalitarianism — both nazi and communist totalitarianisms — in the Second World War of the 20th century and in the Cold War thereafter. Prince Henry was the founder and initiator of the Portuguese discoveries

of the 15th century — the discoveries that gradually moved Europe from a very important but closed sea, the Mediterranean, to the open Atlantic, and ultimately to a global world inter-connected by the open seas and by free-trade.

We, at this Institute, are proud of the maritime traditions of our country. Portugal is a proud maritime founding member of NATO — the Atlantic Alliance — and a proud maritime member of the European Union. This is why we, at this Institute, are very proud of having as Director of our European Studies Centre Mr. José Manuel Durão Barroso, former President of the European Commission, as well as former Prime Minister of Portugal.

We are also very proud of our special relationship with the Portuguese Navy. We are proud of having among our professors several very distinguished Admirals — and, I must add, several very distinguished Generals as well. We have recently paid a public and very intense tribute to our great friend Professor Admiral Nuno Vieira Matias, who sadly passed away last year. You can read our Tribute do Admiral Vieira Matias in *Nova Cidadania*, our Institute's scholarly journal. And I hope you are aware that all our students at IEP are honorary subscribers of *Nova Cidadania* while they are studying with us. Please make sure you get your free copy.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,**

There is a further very important distinguished feature of our Institute and of our University. This is that you are not required to agree with anything that I have just said. You are even welcome to disagree and to show your disagreement, including in your essays and in your exams. But there are **three conditions** for your disagreement, though. The first one is that you should be able to justify your disagreement in a consistent and gentle manner. The second one is that you should be able to describe the views with which you disagree in a fair and impartial manner — not in a radical or tribal fashion. Thirdly, you should be prepared to listen to our replies to your disagreements, and you should be prepared to listen, and to reply, in a spirit of fair-play, of gentlemanly, civilised conversation.

This is just an aperitif of a long series of intellectual adventures that I hope you will enjoy at our Institute for Political Studies of the Catholic University of Portugal. And indeed the programme of intellectual adventures looks quite intense:

We will soon be hosting the 29th annual edition of the Estoril Political Forum, on 18-20 October, at the distinguished Estoril Palace Hotel — the home of the Anglo-American Allies during the Second World War, as well as the birth-place of James Bond, by the British author Ian Fleming. The general title this year is “On the 80th Anniversary of the Atlantic Charter: Structuring a New Alliance of Democracies”.

The programme is already available at our Institute's website and it includes more than 50 foreign speakers as well as more than 40 national speakers. Last but certainly not least, we are honoured to have received the High Patronage of the President of the Republic, Professor Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. This will be another great intellectual adventure. You all are most welcome to register, to attend and to participate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now would like to introduce you to the Directors of our Academic Programs. Before I give them the floor though, please allow me to thank you again for coming and to wish you all the best success in your academic endeavours. I do hope you will enjoy studying at our Institute and at our University.

Thank you.

**João Carlos Espada,
Director, Institute for Political Studies, Universidade Católica Portuguesa
President, International Churchill Society of Portugal.**