

**Welcome Address — Opening of the Academic Year**  
**7 September 2017**  
**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 read the IEP Handbook — which you probably have just received and is being distributed at this Reception. To take a longer view about the Institute, we also encourage you to look at 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 Handbook and 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 that tradition over here, too.

Some people say that the study of the Great Books is propaganda — or indoctrination. But I am afraid 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 the True, the Good and the Beautiful. A conversation between different views and a conversation between Faith and Reason — in the common pursuit of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.

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

This is what we are all welcome to do at this Institute: to present our different views freely — and then to be prepared to receive back the different views and criticisms of our fellow conversationalists. There will be junior conversationalists — the students — and senior conversationalists — the professors and tutors. But we are all conversationalists and we are all students of the Great Books and of the Great Authors of our Western Tradition of Liberty Under Law.

Speaking of free and gentlemanly conversation, it is perhaps appropriate that I add a few words about this precise room where we are gathering together now. 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 company of our friends and colleagues, to enjoy the spirit of gentlemanly conversation — in a word, to enjoy the spirit of a University.

Please feel free to enjoy our Common Room and to make yourselves *comfortable* — to make yourselves *at home* — at this Common Room.

And, I am delighted to add, this Common Room has a name: it is the 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 corridor.

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. Prince Henry was the founder and initiator of the Portuguese discoveries of the 15th century — the discoveries that gradually moved Europe from an important but closed sea, the Mediterranean, to the open Atlantic and ultimately to a global world inter-connected by the open seas.

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 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.

To conclude, I would like to let you know that the Portuguese Navy has just allowed our Institute to enjoy a very rare privilege: the privilege to use the premises of the Naval Club in Cascais, the Seixas Palace, — which is simply the most iconic building of Cascais, a beautiful Palace literally by the sea.

We will be having most of our Saturday morning classes of the Master and PhD programmes at the Naval Club, followed by an Academic Lunch to which all are welcome, including our BA students.

And — last but certainly not least — we will resume our old tradition of public monthly lunches, also at the Naval Club, one Saturday per month. The first one will take place this coming Saturday, the day after tomorrow, and you are all most welcome to join us. The topic could hardly be more topical — the Future of the European Union. And the speaker could hardly be more knowledgeable of the topic: José Pena do Amaral, a member of our Strategic Council, who was chief of cabinet of our late friend Ernâni Lopes — who was a co-founder of our Institute back in 1996 and a co-signer of Portugal's accession to the European Union, back in 1986.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,**

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 our University, incidentally will celebrate its 50th anniversary during this academic year. There will be a private audience with Pope Francis to mark this anniversary and a pilgrimage to Rome, on October 25-27, to which you are welcome to apply.

Be most welcome — and enjoy the University.

Thank you.

João Carlos Espada  
Director  
Institute for Political Studies  
Universidade Católica Portuguesa

President  
International Churchill Society of Portugal