

The Concordances and Discordances of the Chinese Culture with respect to  
*Laudato Si*--Experience of Young People  
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Greetings. I am honored to be given the chance by Chairman Nianbo Wu and the Conference to share on the topic of “The Concordances and Discordances of the Chinese Culture with respect to the *Laudato Si*” from the Experience of Young People. But before this, I should first briefly talk about the things that I have learned from Chairman Wu, as it is closely related to this topic.

In 2017 and 2018, Chairman Wu spoke at the Ethics in Action meetings in Vatican, where he put forward the idea of developing a Chinese management system based on Chinese ancient philosophy that put human and their relationships with the interest of the ecology first, rather than seeing the ecology as something that can be exploited excessively because of human greed. He called upon us to return to the ancient Chinese wisdom for answers. His belief is grounded in the worldview of ancient Chinese culture.

**Chinese Worldview consists of *Ti'an, Di, Ren*—heaven, earth, human 天、地、人**  
The connotation of *Ti'an* is complex, and even though commonly translated as “heaven”, the pictogram of this character simply conveys the meaning “above a human” 天, and *Tian* (heaven), *Di* (earth) and *Ren* (human) are the three treasures in the universe. Each is of equal importance, and understanding that all things are of one entity is the only way we can sustain our world's development.

### **The Importance of Family**

The *Laudato Si* carries a sub-title of “On Care for our Common Home”, and home being the refuge of a family, sits at the core of the Chinese culture. Family is the place closest to true love, it is the place that provides the most trustworthy and all rounded upbringing for a child, and it is where one’s journey in life begins.

Chairman Wu has been exploring and gradually improving the implementation of family culture in an eight-module approach. If it is likened to a tree, humanistic education constitutes the causes (roots), while fulfilling one’s duties constitute the effects (fruits), and the rest are efforts (trunk, branches and leaves). Only when the roots are well looked after can we enjoy abundant fruits. As a Chinese saying goes, “Harmony at home breeds prosperity.” My Australian colleague used to tell me “Happy wife, Happy Life.” Harmony at home is fundamental. Many of these examples were illustrated in Chairman Wu’s last two talks at Vatican and just to cite a few: education programs, treating all things with respect, volunteerism, community outreach, managers lead by example, drop in water usage, drop in wastage, increased yearly turnover and net profit.

The caring enriched with virtue education enables everyone not only feel the love, but also helps to put love, respect, helpfulness and humility in their hearts. While many people put profit seeking before virtues, Chairman Wu has demonstrated that virtues achieved through

moral, ethics and causality education will bring in wealth and results that are in line with the 17 SDGs.

### **The Importance of Education**

So we can see that education is not just learning skills and trade to sustain economic means. *Jiao Yu* 教育 consists of two words, “teach by example” and “empowering a child or student to do good and help him or her to correct their mistakes”. The standard of success is not measured by how much money one makes. Instead, it is a process that strives to attain inner peace with oneself and others by minimizing greed. The words that appeared in almost all Chinese family mottos written by the ancients consists of two words--“diligent” and “thrifty” 勤儉, a far-cry from the depiction of today’s Chinese youths as the “crazy rich Asians”. I should say that most Chinese are not crazy rich. We are just taught to work hard and not have to rely on charities.

The Malaysian Han Studies promotes classical Chinese literature to seek solutions for today’s problems. It is a school designed to be green and environmental friendly, houses a 300 people dining hall, a 400 seats auditorium, 20 classrooms, two libraries, meeting rooms and a recording studio. Students as young as 4 years old can be seen studying Chinese classics in our school and we have more than 50 staffs and hundreds of volunteers supporting our projects. To our school patrons, if no one understands what was written by the ancient Chinese thousands of years ago, their wisdom would be lost, and we will very soon forsake the idea of *Ti'an, Di, Ren* being inseparable, in the name of rapid economic development.

But in my experience, until the talks are practiced, it is not easy to convince people, especially young people that in this society of rapid internet and social media advance, selfless contribution for the good of the whole ecology is workable, or even desirable.

### **The Importance of Role Models for Young People**

My late father who owned and ran a Chinese medical herbal store refused an offer to sell herbs that are mixed with second grad herbs to make more money. When asked why he did that my father said: “For the sake of my grandchildren.” These words about leaving something good for the future generations left permanent impressions on me, and I knew at that point, as a young child, my late father received this thinking from grandpa, and his good business practice did not cause him his business but his business actually became better when he finally won back many customers.

As the appointed CEO of Malaysian Han Studies, Chairman Wu admonishes the management to lead by example. When we moved into the new school complex in 2016, he led us to do the cleaning and accompanied us to overcome obstacles. He said: Don’t cause trouble for others; Don’t waste things; Don’t take advantage of others; and most of all Be trustworthy. Today, the outsiders, irrespective of race and religions, who came to our center to study or for visits, told us that they could feel the peaceful atmosphere once they stepped into our center. The same peaceful atmosphere could be felt at Good-Ark, the company run by Chairman Wu in Suzhou, China. The language of love is indeed universal.

## **Embrace technology based on the same moral considerations**

By relying too heavily on technology, we lose sight of what makes humanity great. We no longer seek answers from studying the religious teachings and classics that have built our foundation. If we want to advance technology and live a better quality life, we must look to nature as the source of inspirations. Use the qualities of selflessness, True Love, like nature's air, to unconditionally love all things.

In 2018, the Malaysian Han Studies conducted more than 20 courses, 2000 hours of teaching and learning, and received close to 4000 visitors. The art of work and business is to uncover our innate goodness. We work to strengthen our resolve, to discover the relationship of work with living, life and mortality, if nothing more, is a constant process of discovering our potential and refining our innate wisdom.

In 2019, we have made a resolution to build an academic administration, a teaching faculty and a volunteer corps that are more systematically run, using various digitized teaching channels, including social media and blended learning to reach out to more students and teachers. We hope by doing so more Chinese and English-speaking virtue-ethic teachers and facilitators could be trained. We are confident, despite trial and errors, this target can be achieved and we will not let our sponsors down. Virtue education, we believe, can help to achieve the 17 SDGs.

## **Summary**

The Chinese native culture does not have a religion by social science's definitions. *Zong-jiao*, 宗教 the term now used to depict religion, in fact means the primary education, the most important teaching, and the most venerated transformation. So other than seeing the world as the creations of God, the ancient Chinese culture concurs to the moral implication of climate change, the unbridled technology development, and the harm that they will bring to the poor and our beautiful mother earth. Eventually, all human, rich or poor will be affected. To resolve these problems, the Chinese forefathers have educated their children and grandchildren to minimize selfishness and give more to others, understanding that prosperity is a natural outcome of a harmonious home.

But living in the same home with differences calls for tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. Perhaps all these differences can be resolved in the classrooms of a virtue school that teaches sincerity and respect, to lit up the candle that takes us out of darkness.

I am a Buddhist, but like my eldest sister who is Catholic, I hold great respect for Pope Francis. His concern for nature, justice for the poor, generous self-giving, his openheartedness, are truly touching and worthy of our utmost respects.

Thank you.