



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Your Grace,
Mr County Governor,
Former Vice-Chancellors,
Mr Chair of the University Board,
Esteemed Honorary Fellow,
Doctores Promovendi,
Distinguished Members of the assembled academic community,
Students,
Honoured guests,

Welcome to the Grand Auditorium at Uppsala University and the 2018 Spring Conferment Ceremony.

I am truly delighted to welcome our friends and guests from around the world. Coming from far and near, you illustrate the international nature of scholarship and research and our own University's status as part of the worldwide academic community. We are honoured that you have joined us for this celebration. Although I will continue in Swedish, you can read my speech in the translation provided.

Summer has arrived in Uppsala and the academic year is nearing its end. In this auditorium, the air is full of expectations for the future. We are here today to celebrate our 166 new doctors and 36 jubilee doctors.

Dear *promovendi*, you have all added to our understanding of the world by work whose fruits will forever be available to your colleagues, students and interested members of the public. I would like to express the University's sincere thanks and congratulations on your achievements. I would also like to extend my thanks to your supervisors, families and friends, who today share in your happiness and pride.

Dear *doctores jubilandi*, fifty years ago you were the new doctors. Since then, your work has taken you around the globe as participants in scholarly discourse. You have served WHO and WWF, been employed by CERN in Geneva, Sida in Cairo, worked in Siberia, Tromsø, Beijing and Qatar. You have been visiting professors and have been honoured for your contributions to science all over the world.

And now, new doctors, it is your turn to take over.

When I receive the degree certificates to sign, I personally always find it a solemn and enjoyable experience, as the titles of the dissertations show so concretely how our University encompasses all times, all areas and all phases of life.

Ahead of today's ceremony, my eye was caught by titles that referred to the stages and challenges of life – reproductive health, breastfeeding of preterm infants, parents of children with cancer, diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

I noted titles such as: *Shiftings of Irony – Transformations of the Self; A World of Myths; A Market of Murders*. Others take up topically relevant subjects such as the attitudes of 18-year-olds towards reading, liability for discrimination, stress and drugs, or look further afield to challenges in other countries, such as district health in Uganda or technology, ideology and environment in metallurgy in Zimbabwe from AD 900 to the present.

CONT >>



That's how it is at a university like ours – the great breadth that combined makes up a wholeness of knowledge – or **universitas**, to use the Latin name.

And speaking of Latin, you who are here will be greeted with the word “**Salve**”, you will receive your insignia and be led across Parnassus by the firm and careful hand of your degree conferrer, who will then say: “**Vale!**” **Vale** means “live well” and I would like to interpret this expression as an exhortation: use your knowledge and skills well, they equip you to face the challenges of the future and make you ready to work for a better world.

Because that is the point of what we do. I like to recall the words of our alumnus, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, in his posthumous publication *Markings*:

Do what you can – and the task will rest lightly in your hand, so lightly that you will be able to look forward to the more difficult tests which may be awaiting you.

Knowing that we have done our best, we can feel confident taking on the next challenge, whatever it is.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres was in Uppsala recently to give the annual Dag Hammarskjöld lecture. He spoke about extremism and cyber attacks, a new cold war with a different logic than in the past. We live in an uncertain world, where the problems are often of a global nature. This makes new demands on universities and our ambition to make the world a better place.

This year it is 75 years since the Nazi occupying powers in Norway gave orders for the arrest of nearly 1,200 students and university teachers at the University of Oslo. More than half of them were deported to concentration camps on the continent. All activities at the University of Oslo were suspended. Many Norwegian students and teachers fled here to Uppsala to continue their work. Outside this building, in the University Park, Uppsala University's students and teachers organised a massive demonstration against the abuses of the Nazis.

My predecessor as Vice-Chancellor, Nils von Hofsten, declared to the 7,000 demonstrators that “the cause of the Norwegian university and the Norwegian students is our cause!”

Now, as then, it is important that universities stand for knowledge, critical thinking, tolerance and democratic values – which requires academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Then we can fully take our responsibility in the troubled world that the Secretary-General recently spoke about in the Hall of State. An understanding of the world based on facts and reflection – factfulness, as Hans Rosling called it – gives peace of mind and faith in the future.

Let your motivation be the search for knowledge with a critical perspective. By doing so, you will make the world a better place for all of us.

Dixi