

Magnificent Rector of the University of Lisbon Professor António Nóvoa
and Academic Authorities

Presidents of the Board of Santa Maria Hospital – CHLN and of the
Institute of Molecular Medicine

Guests and Relatives of Professor Bicha Castelo

Professors, Researchers, Doctors, and Health Professionals

Dear Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

My Dear Henrique Bicha Castelo

I start by thanking you for your decision to give this lecture as part of the Surgery Scientific Meeting that you started twelve years ago. Talking about oneself, of your circumstances, of your intellectual and professional heritage, and of the work done is certainly not easy or convenient.

But that is the essence of the last lecture before retirement, which, as I have said in similar occasions, has a double meaning: first, it is a rite of passage, fortunately made mandatory by the inexorability of time and by proof of life; then, it is a milestone in the renewal of academic institutions, which is the university's own DNA, the university that is both the guardian of the past and the builder of the future.

The changes in our environment and in the habits of our academic community have been peculiar, and the loss of traditions makes us reflect on the meaning of such evolution. I mean the disappearance of the public exams to become a Full Professor, now converted into a cold, supposedly objective, distant analysis by a panel that decides without hearing the applicant, and which is marked by the relinquishment of the solemnity of the first lecture, which represented the public act of responsibility for a project and a drive for action, and equally a sign of future and hope. How exciting it is to read, even today, some of the first lectures of our Masters. Times have changed, and so have determinations, and this, my dear Henrique, is worrying. It is a distressing sign of the way we have allowed

the construction of our *Universitas*, and how a legal web and a false transparency that ignores the soul and essence of our academic responsibility have submerged traditions; all this took place in the face of our conformism and maybe even our indifference and inability to protest.

The path trodden by Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo has already been objectively described with the rigour that the occasion imposes. What else can I say without bothering you or making this ceremony too long?

And my dear Henrique, what can you expect from my speech, other than a tour through the intricacies of memory and thoughts of a time of great hope, dreams and true friendships that grew stronger, resisting the bumps of professional and institutional life.

I refer to the unforgettable time at the Clinical Surgery Service, to the unparalleled influence of our Master João Cid dos Santos, with his seductive, captivating, stimulating personality that was a challenge and an example for us.

The true teacher, the master, is a sower of ideas, a committed cultivator and a kind and available manager of talents and emotions, an intelligent administrator of information, which he turns into wisdom, as stated by Elliot, and that is the ethos of the true Master that lingers in the spirit and work of his followers.

As you will mention, João Cid dos Santos was, for us, the master whose influence shaped our character and determined our actions. I recall with great nostalgia those days of hope and confidence, and those moments when we were noted and guided towards our future.

The exercise of *autoritas* was natural, for which reason it went hand in hand with respect for freedom, the call for responsibility and sense of duty, with the moral obligation to do good deeds, to be decent in our actions, and with the motivation to do increasingly better.

It was a great lesson, and I know how you respected and honoured it, as without hesitating, you named your General Surgery Service after our master. It was that intangible inheritance of a higher and independent spirit unafraid neither to confront the errors of power nor to deny the established scientific truths that he helped to build that you certainly

wanted to honour, since his ground-breaking scientific work has endured for over half a century in the field of vascular surgery, and his name is referenced as a pioneer in this new science and art.

Excuse me for this journey through memory, which, for Henrique Bicha Castelo, was also a foundation and a milestone in his life as a distinguished surgeon, recognized by his peers, by the city and by the academic community.

Of the work you have accomplished, of your predilection for embedding innovation and for challenging established practices – and how surgeons can be conservative, indifferent to innovation, confident in the elegance and safety of their traditional ways - what will remain, my dear Henrique, in addition to all that has been said here, is what all those you have inspired, guided and managed in the art and craft of being a surgeon will do in future, and the farther they go, the greater your satisfaction and glory will be.

This is what makes a true master.

We have shared academic responsibilities, we have not always agreed with each other, but we were able to be friends in our divergence, preserving the fundamental balances and trying to serve the institution.

As President of the Scientific Council, a position for which Professor Bicha Castelo was elected by direct vote, at a time when the academic college made its voice heard and imposed its decisions, he was a robust supporter of reforms and an ally whose institutional sense I am pleased to enhance, as it was exemplary.

Present times are difficult, and future times will be challenging for the Faculty and the Hospital, which are the settings of the institutional work of Professor Bicha Castelo and whose connection to the Academic Medical Centre and to the Institute of Molecular Medicine is imperative.

There will be certainly changes in the organization and in the structuring of the clinical units in order to adapt them to a new way of doing medicine that is more patient-centred and multidisciplinary, and in the promotion of centres of excellence that can assert themselves in the national and international context. This will be a necessary challenge to be able to

adapt institutions to current new needs and allow them to overcome the present financial constraints.

But none of us doubts that it is essential to preserve the values that shape our institutional culture, inspired in the work and teaching of the masters who have marked our collective history.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am certain that this last lecture before retirement will not be the end, but the beginning of a new phase in the life of Professor Bicha Castelo, which the distance that the law requires will not prevent him from being heavily involved in medical education and in the training of surgeons. That was the challenge I gave him to be involved in the new Centre for Medical and Surgical Simulation in the new building which, Rector, I hope and trust we will succeed to conclude, by successfully getting round this Cape of Storms that has crossed our path.

Dear Henrique, I wish you and your family a happy, healthy and long life, and that, once free from the daily duties of clinical, academic and pedagogical management, you may continue to contribute to the advancement of the art and craft that you have cultivated with so much talent and which has earned you such recognition in the country and abroad.

My words are not intended to be a farewell, and in them I express the feeling of appreciation and recognition of the faculty. Accordingly, I shall ask the Rector to give you the Medal of Honour of our Faculty at the end of your lecture.

Thank you!