

My words of admiration for Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo

It is a pleasure to be at the *Aula Magna* of the Faculty of Medicine in a day that unites us around Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo.

We are the words, the words we actually say and the words we leave unsaid, the words that go with us and are part of us.

Some words bring us together, others separate us; there are words that lead us, precede and surpass us, and that make us live.

Without words it would not be possible for us to be here today, we would not be able to express to Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo the admiration we feel for him and for the way he is always with us, at the university and beyond it:

*Since life is merely
what we make of it
(and there is just one life,
since we shall never return).*

– Alexandre O’Neill –

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You are all aware of my deepest admiration for Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo, for his action, work and presence at the Academy.

He always has a word to say, a critique, an idea, a project, a concern, a will... always expressing the desire to be involved and help build an entire university entwined with life and committed to the most dynamic energies of our country.

Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo's last lecture before retirement reminded me of one of the most extraordinary tales of Portuguese literature, O cabeça de boga, by Vitorino Nemésio.

In that terrible year 4 exam, Mateus, who came from a rich family, became immediately "distinguished". As for his friend Abílio, he just missed failing. As Mateus described:

We were all more or less embarrassed; only Abílio stopped crying. No one quite knew if it was because he had not failed, or if it was due to something else. In a rush of his whole being, he flung his arms around me and said:

– Mateus, thank goodness!

And it was in his eyes that I felt distinguished

I wish to tell you, Professor Henrique Bicha Castelo, with the same ² emotion as Abílio, that it is in your eyes and in your life that we feel distinguished.

This is because in a university, there is no distinction greater than the one we feel in the distinction of our best lecturers and best students.

Dear Professor and my good friend

Your history and your path honour and distinguish us. For this reason, I award you the Medal of Honour of the University of Lisbon.

And in doing so, I know that words are no longer enough. Or, rather, I know that they will turn into silence.

This is because silence is the hardest word to write.

This is because my silence contains all the colours, all the sounds, all the words that have been invented to express our *admiration* and show you our *recognition*.

This is when the word gets suspended in a gesture, in a look, in a smile, in an embrace... a large embrace.

It is this embrace of enormous gratitude that I wish to give you, carrying all the words I know and all the words I have learned as Rector and which I now offer you on behalf of your University and on behalf of our University.

António Sampaio da Nóvoa

Lisbon, 20 February 2013

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