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Dear Rector!

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, and especially dear Graduates with your families and friends!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you and to be with you at the graduation ceremony today. As the vice-dean for science of the Faculty of Civil and Transport Engineering, I have a great privilege and pleasure to say a big thank-you to our graduates for choosing our faculty for your master programme studies and to cordially congratulate you on the occasion of having completed your studies successfully. I am doing this on behalf of the Dean prof. Jacek Pielecha, the members of our faculty, and myself.

Dear Graduates of the year 2021, we cordially congratulate you and we are very happy that you have successfully completed your master studies at our faculty; having studied here at the banks of the Warta river we may also say that you have successfully reached the other bank of the river called "Master of Science". As a result of your hard work and determination, you become today 'Master of Science in Civil Engineering' or 'Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering'. It is something that you can be proud of.

You are from many different countries, some of them are far away from Poland. I believe that your stay in Poznań, even at these difficult times, has been an exciting and nice experience, which has allowed you to meet and make new friends and get acquainted with the Polish people, our country and our culture.

This ceremony today brings me back to my research stays abroad at the universities in Germany (Leibniz University Hannover, TU Dresden, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), the UK (Brunel University London), and the USA (Texas University at Austin), where I spent about 3 years altogether. There I learned a lot regarding science and research, but what I also learned is that staying in another country for a longer period of time permits one, on a daily basis, to better understand others - the people there, their attitude and the circumstances in which they live. And by understanding others, we can better understand ourselves. Studying abroad enriches our personality and broadens our view on what life is and what it could be.

Nowadays, amid the COVID-19 pandemic some of you are perhaps looking into the future with some apprehension. Sooner or later, the situation will normalize itself and people will return to their regular forms of activities. With a bit of optimism we are looking into the nearest future. In the coming academic year we are going to function, inasmuch as possible,

in the normal traditional form with the presence of students and faculty at the university campus. However, after this quite a long period of isolation and immediate restrictions that touched all of us, the world as we know it is going to change.

Let me here digress for a moment.

Many years ago, actually many centuries ago, because I'm going back to the 4th century BC and I'd like to take you with me to the ancient Greece. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* says: "All men by nature desire to know." In fact, "All men by nature desire to know" is the first statement in this timeless text which, I think, is one of the greatest achievements of human thought. One of the consequences of the desire to know is the development of human civilizations and the development of science and technology we can observe and enjoy nowadays, and in which we partake both as users as well as creators. However, there arise many questions, e.g.: 'Have we, as humans, developed ourselves since Aristotle's times?' or, 'Have we changed ourselves in the right directions?', and more still: 'What about the protection of the environment we live in?'

At the last turn of centuries I was staying at the University of Texas at Austin. The slogan of the university is: "What starts here changes the world." But here, at PUT, we may also say "What starts here changes the world," because "Changing the world can happen anywhere and anyone can do it" (William H. McRaven).

Having said all this, let me return to your today's graduation ceremony. This is an important day, a threshold day, which marks a certain end to your life as students, but at the same time it is a new beginning. It is the beginning of the next stage in the lifelong learning process in our extremely busy and rapidly evolving world at these anxious times.

So, wherever your future will take you, may it take you somewhere where you can work with passion and realize your ambitions and dreams. And please remember that the satisfaction we derive from the work we choose depends on our attitude toward what we do.

Dear Graduates of 2021, I would like to wish you all success and good luck in your further development, both professional and personal. We, at our Faculty, look forward to hearing about your successes and achievements. Be always proud that you have studied here.

Stay in good health and keep on moving to make the world a bit better place to live for the present and the future generations.

Finally I would like to thank Mrs. Beata Zarzycka for her commitment and dedication, for her excellent job she has done for all of us.

