

## In memory of Prof. J. Necas

Remarks written by Y.C. Kwong and delivered at the Memorial Ceremony in December 2002

Among the collaborators of the late Prof. Necas, I am the least and most humble of all. It has been such a privilege to learn from him, not only from his immense knowledge, but also from his attitude as a search for truth.

My former advisor told me once that there are two kinds of mathematicians. The first kind is what most of us belong to: we just publish what we can publish, not risking ourselves for the uncertain and the impossible problems. However, the second kind is what he regarded as the "Romantic Mathematician"; so called because these possess a romantic view of mathematics. Their work is totally based on their genuine love for mathematics. They simply rejoice in the process of searching for the truth. Even when results and progress are not tangible, they can still be persistent and diligent. They are those who would not mind the cost, and are willing to go to any length – to sacrifice anything which they think is necessary just to be one step closer to the truth. To my advisor, those are the real intellectuals who would have lasting impact in this world, transforming our civilization and propelling it to go forward. The best example might be Andrew Wiles, the solver of Fermat's last theorem. According to his own story, he had been long obsessed with proving this conjecture – ever since his high school teacher introduced this problem to him. Throughout all these years, God knows how much effort and devotion he had invested in this, how many repeated failures he ran in to when he thought he was getting close. Throughout all these years, there have been numerous mathematicians doing the same thing, but not as blessed as Wiles. Some of them only managed to get partial results, no results, or even wrong results with their life-long devotion. Nevertheless they share one thing in common: they were all privileged to work on this difficult problem, and they all rejoiced once in this process of struggling for truth. One may say that their joint effort in their partial success or even their failures has contributed to the enlightenment in Wiles' ultimate victory. They would be proud to join hand in hand with Wiles and declare, "we belong to the same group".

Professor Necas obviously belonged to the same category (as Wiles), and one of the problems that he was obsessed with is the "blow up of the solution of the Navier-Stokes equation". Ever since he was discovered to have cancer, in spite of the gradual deterioration in his health and strength, he was still working day and night with such strong determination and diligence - "I must find out the truth while I'm still alive".

Now he has passed away, and this famous mathematical problem still remains unanswered. The most important thing is, he already made his contribution to it, he has shed a lot of light on this difficult problem, and he, too, once rejoiced in its process of struggling for the truth.

On his human side, being a great mathematician did not keep him from being approachable. He had an unassuming and unassertive character that is very unusual for a celebrity of his category. I used to listen to the stories of his own life, as well as to what had been happening throughout all those years in the mathematical circle. He was always like a father to the junior mathematicians. One of his mottos that he always encouraged and challenged me with was, "Once you were created to be a mathematician, you must always fulfill your responsibility as entrusted by God by developing your potential to its fullness."

On the other hand, when I shared with him my Christian faith, the only thing and the most precious thing of my life that I could offer him, he was always willing to listen with humility. We might not agree or share the same viewpoints a lot of time, but he was always open to my challenges.

In his last days, I came into contact with the deepest part of his human side when he struggles bravely with his cancer. He cried in pain and tears; it looked as if the cancer was going to engulf him at any moment; yet he kept fighting with such strong determination and uncompromising attitude. He once said, "If God would allow me, I'll live for a few more years and get my job done. It is not my style to die early and leave my work unfinished."

There were times he strived to stand on his feet when he was so weak that he could hardly turn his body. I would let him put his arms around my shoulders while I was holding him in my arms at the same time. I prayed for him in his ears until his willpower overcame, and he stood up eventually by exhausting his strength.

When all medical means had come to complete failure, we prayed even more earnestly for the healing of Jesus. I asked him once, "It is the teaching of our Lord Jesus that we forgive all those who have wronged us and hurt us in our lives. Would you abide by His commandment?" I could never forget the way he whispered and replied with such a weak, but determined voice, "I do, and I have!". Perhaps when one is about to depart from this world, there is nothing more important than his relationship with his Lord and with his fellow men. Indeed, from the stories about his own life that he told me, Jindrlich was just as vulnerable as any of us, there being occasions when he was hurt deeply or being treated unfairly, but I trust one of the true blessings he has left for those who did so would be his forgiveness.

I couldn't understand, and do not even now, why the Lord had not healed him in the way He always does in the house churches in China nowadays. The only thing I'm sure is, the Lord would not despise such a good, forgiving heart and has received Jindrlich into His Glory.