

## **Lecture at the Launch of the St Andrew's Foundation, University of Glasgow, Scotland**

I am grateful for the invitation to speak at the Launch of the St Andrew's Foundation as a new instrument in Scotland for the provision and support of Catholic Education and of Catholic teachers, and I wish, first of all, to acknowledge and celebrate the fruitful collaboration and partnership between the University of Glasgow and the Catholic Church in Scotland.

As a visitor from, and a representative of, the Holy See in Rome, it is heart-warming to be standing within the walls of an ancient University, whose degree awarding power still stands upon the Papal Bull of Pope Nicholas V, granted to establish the University in 1451. It is good also to be in the city of Glasgow, which, as the Papal Bull acknowledges, is "a place of renown and particularly well fitted therefore, where the air is mild, victuals are plentiful, and a great store of other things pertaining to the use of man is found, to the end that there the Catholic Faith may be spread, the simple instructed, equity in judgement is upheld, reason flourish, the minds of men illuminated, and their understanding enlightened" (Papal Bull, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1451).

In my short visit, I can already testify to the truth of the air being mild and the victuals plentiful. It is clear that the links between the University and the Catholic Church being celebrated today have their roots in the very origins of the University. I am most grateful to the University that the launch of the St Andrew's Foundation represents the continued commitment of the University to the provision of Catholic Education, even though the University itself has gone through various transformations regarding its' own mission and purpose in Scotland and the wider world.

It is opportune at this present moment, amidst the rapidly changing state of society, of higher education generally and also of the Church, to reflect on the nature and distinctiveness of Catholic Education and on the challenges it both faces and also presents. The substance of my talk today will be to offer some thoughts and reflections on these important areas.

### **The Nature of Catholic Education**

It is not insignificant to note that the vision and practice of Catholic Education has, throughout the Church's history, arisen out of a coming together of the Church with various cultures. The very mission of the Church, from its beginnings in the Upper Room in Jerusalem at Pentecost, has been to engage with the culture of the time and to seek to penetrate it with the message of the Gospel. At the same time, the Church has drawn on that culture and its wisdom, in order to help articulate her own self-understanding and to facilitate her own life and practice. From the beginning therefore, faith and culture have interacted, even when in certain periods of history, the interaction was more hostile and combative than collaborative.

It is not unknown to any of us that for many decades there have been voices raised against the idea of Catholic Education, against the fact of distinct faith schools

and increasingly, in today's society, there are great challenges to the very idea of a religious education. Various charges are made which include the suggestion that religious education is a form of indoctrination and is contrary to the prevailing culture of freedom. Faith schooling is said to mitigate against social cohesion, encouraging intolerance, social prejudice, sectarianism and even bigotry. Within the Church herself, especially in the light of the call to the Church of recent Popes to the mission of new Evangelisation, there are voices which question the need for a separate Catholic Education. Should the Church not encourage a simple engagement with the wider society rather than maintain a separate system of education? Such are some of the questions that remain today as part of the melting pot of debates around educational issues. They will, no doubt, continue to be questions discussed and researched within this very Foundation in the coming years.

### **What it means to be Catholic**

I would like to distinguish from the outset two important but different meanings of the word "Catholic" within the debate about Catholic Education. In the first place, we may consider "Catholic" to refer to a religious denomination, within society and the world at large, which is organised as a body of believers, who are admitted through baptism and whose membership can be described at the level of family, parish, diocese, the national Church and the international Church with her leadership in the Holy See in Rome. From this point of view "Catholic Education" is acknowledged by both Church and State as a fundamental right and primary responsibility of Catholic parents – the first educators of their children. In accordance with this fundamental right, the State has the duty and responsibility to facilitate the wishes of Catholic parents to educate their children according to their desire to pass on their faith to their children. Particular national states have sought to fulfil their responsibility in a variety of ways, enshrining within their systems of law different arrangements for this provision but always recognising the fundamental principle that those primarily responsible for the education of their children are their parents.

The Catholic Church also recognises the rights and duties of parents in the matter of education and from the earliest times has sought to provide support to parents, not least in the area of religious education. Within the rite of Baptism, in which parents seek the gift of faith for their children, parents also express their desire and their commitment "to raise their children in the practice of the Faith". The Church, for its part, has always regarded, as an essential element of its mission, the duty of providing the means for this. As John Henry Newman once wrote: For the Church "to baptise and not educate would be a grievous sin"! (Newman Sermon No. 162)

The first justification therefore for the Church and State collaboration in the matter of "Catholic Education" is rooted in the universal and fundamental rights of parents.

This leads me to a second meaning of the word "Catholic" which also has important implications for the Foundation whose launch we celebrate today. To illustrate my meaning, I would like to refer back to the great 5<sup>th</sup> century saint and classical exponent of Christian education Augustine of Hippo, who wrote a work

called “The City of God”. The occasion of the composition was the accusation being made against Christians, that they were responsible for the fall of Rome. It was claimed that the beliefs, and more importantly, the practices, of Catholics were inimical to the Roman State and Roman society.

Augustine’s response was to argue that far from undermining the State, Catholics practiced religious, moral and social virtues that precisely upheld the State. The reasons for the civil breakdown were to be found elsewhere – ultimately, within the very heart of man. “The City of God” is a comprehensive volume, which in many ways laid the foundations for dialogue between the civic state, the secular world and the Catholic Church – in Augustine’s language, between the “City of Man” and the “City of God”. He argued that what was best in Roman society had its roots in Plato and Aristotle and great Roman minds, who had articulated the truth of the supreme Good, as the *telos* or ‘End’ of humanity – the Good that leads to happiness. They spoke of the good of the body, the good of the soul (of the mind and the will) and the good of the Common Weal (of Society).

At the heart of all of these goods was the development of the rational mind in conformity with the truth and the nourishing of the will through the attainment and practice of the virtues, of which Justice was seen as primary. The foundation was the human person, in whom they discovered a natural drive towards the discovery of the good and the true. We can recognise in Augustine’s analysis the basis of much of the way that we speak even today about educational goals, especially in our concern for the whole person. Nevertheless, there was a problem. In the end, thought Augustine, this philosophy was not enough. Individuals and also society could never achieve the good to which they aspired. It is a perennial problem. The classical philosophy was groping towards an answer.

Augustine argued that Christians not only belong to the City of Man but also to the City of God. Embracing all that was true and good in the classical philosophy, belonging to the City of God brought in a number of new elements that both transformed and completed what was lacking in the classical philosophy and Roman society. In the first place, what is and can be known by the human mind is supplemented and completed by the truth of divine revelation. Like many of the great Christian minds in the early centuries, Augustine discovered in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament the element that the classical philosophy, from which he himself came, was groping towards. God revealed himself in the history of the seemingly insignificant people of Israel and then most fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

Knowledge, which in classical philosophy was somewhat confined as a result of limitations within the reasoning human person, is both confirmed and completed. All reality and all truth, including the human person, have their source in the One God. In the history of Israel and in the person of Christ, God reveals his nature and also the ultimate nature and destiny of the human person – created by God in his own image and destined for eternal happiness, the ultimate good of humankind. The person of Jesus Christ is not only the fullness of God’s self-revelation and the perfection of man, he is also the place of salvation, the place where the wounds in human nature are revealed and healed.

The ten commandments present as Moral Absolutes those goods that classical philosophy had perceived as the goods of the person and of society. But the Decalogue, and by implication, Greek and Roman philosophy, was in the end a pedagogue leading to Christ (cf. Galatians 3:24-25), who not only reveals the full meaning of the Commandments, but both accomplishes them in himself and provides the means of grace by which the very virtues of Christ become embodied in every other person. In Christ, said Augustine, the life of seeking the truth and living the virtues is realised, even though it means a slow progression with constant need of Christ's forgiveness and healing. Finally, for Augustine, the governing power in the City of God is a three-fold love – love of God, love of self and love of others. Love originates in the mystery of the Trinitarian relationships and is the motivation for Creation, Revelation and the Redemption in Christ. Within the City of God, love gathers, unifies and perfects all the human virtues.

If I can summarise Augustine's view of the key characteristics of the City of God, they are firstly **faith** – by which we have access to God and to the truth that he reveals in Christ; secondly **hope**, by which, in Christ, human weakness and sin is overcome and earthly goodness and blessedness is made possible and the mystery of eternal happiness becomes a true goal; and finally, **love**, which provides both the motivation for living and the goal of life without end. It is precisely, these three – faith, hope and love that are the gift of God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism. In the City of God, it is these three virtues that, in addition to the natural goods and virtues of the human person, are the heart of education.

We can see, therefore, that the word "Catholic" has a fuller, more inclusive, sense. It implies an overarching philosophy of life, which includes, all that is good in the philosophies of societies and human culture. St Augustine contrasts citizenship in the City of Man with citizenship of the City of God. This is not a contrast between a worldly and an other-worldly approach, but concerns the breadth of one's philosophy of life and of education.

To equip Catholic teachers with this broad philosophy of life is the key to the mission of the new St Andrew's Foundation. This will serve the self-confidence of Catholic teachers in their work in schools and provide a contribution to society as a whole.

## **What it means to Educate**

It is time now to turn more specifically to the second word in today's subject - "Education". Few subjects are more contentious in today's society. Long gone are the days in which, in Christian Europe, there was a synthesis between Faith and Reason and a unity between the disciplines of various subjects in education, in which Theology was seen as the Queen of the Sciences. This was the atmosphere in which this University received its Papal Bull. It owed a great deal to the writings of the philosopher theologian – St Thomas Aquinas. Today there are a multitude of views about what education should be and how it should be carried out. There are views that emerge from Modernist and Post-Modern philosophies and ideologies; others emerge from State and political concerns, not least today because of the crisis in the economies of most European countries; and those from capitalist and market-driven

theories and models. Finally, there is the overarching secular tone of society today with its emphasis on materialism and consumerism and the growing acceptance of a relativist stance with regard to truth and morality.

In his recent visit to Scotland and England, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the serious danger of relativism which will undermine society and religion and in the end will be detrimental to the human person. A proper understanding of education plays a significant part in providing an alternative to this relativist stance. From the time of Socrates education has been what the underlying Latin word suggests – a drawing out from the human person, through the training of the human mind, will and emotions, the ability to perceive and act upon the good and the true. The good and the true stand in some way outside the person, they are transcendent. The human person has a natural drive and curiosity to seek and understand them. A danger in the relativism of modern society is the assumption that human freedom essentially entails creating one's own truth and moral good. Notwithstanding the clear perception of the flaws within our nature, there are logical absurdities in the relativists position: first – in asserting as absolutely true that there is no absolute truth; second – in maintaining that each person's truth is as valuable as another's; and third – in asserting that each person's morality is as good as the other's. The first represents the collapse of reason; the second and third, if pursued to their logical conclusion, would lead to the breakdown of society.

This is not to say that tolerance or human freedom are not values to be highly esteemed. The problem seems to be that such values are underpinned by a weak philosophy of life and of education, or at least one that is unarticulated or not critically examined. The result is the danger of trying to build society and to educate on the basis of weak foundations.

Here we touch upon one key element of the goals of higher education. It is surely part of the enterprise of higher education that it not simply mirror back the values of the society at large, nor simply that it produce those who will serve the economy through excellence in business or industry, science or the arts. An important element is also the ability to take a critical stance and examine the underlying assumptions, philosophies and ideologies in society today and especially those underlying the very disciplines that higher education pursues. There are those who will maintain that many of the disciplines are scientific and value-free. It is not difficult to refute such a claim. The bigger danger arises when the assumptions and philosophies are unexamined.

The St Andrew's Foundation can be a place for critical engagement with the philosophies that underpin the various ideas about education, not least within the University itself and also in the wider society, articulating a philosophy of life and understanding the nature of education found within the Catholic Church herself. This understanding is especially enshrined in the various documents concerning education that have emerged from the Holy See over the last century. I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to those who have published *An Anthology of Catholic Teaching on Education*, [editor, Leonard Franchi, London 2007] an excellent volume that brings together the significant Church documents, while indicating at the same time those which more particularly pertain to Catechesis and those which pertain to

Catholic Education more broadly. It would be hard to recommend a better resource for study within this new Foundation.

### **The Vision articulated by the Church**

Both before the Second Vatican Council and since, the Church has consistently proclaimed the dignity of the human person, and the pattern and destiny for the person that is to be found in Christ. Education has a central place in the assertion of that dignity. In the first place, there are the important teachings of Popes Pius X and Pius XI. The particular challenge of their times concerned the extent and nature of the State's involvement in education. The Church had to struggle for her rights in the matter of teaching Christian doctrine in schools. Pope Pius XI's encyclical on Catholic Education, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), reflects the threat of the complete take-over of education by the State in a number of countries in which ideologies that deny or distort the dignity of the person, such as Communism, Fascism and Nazism were prevailing. In this hostile climate, Pope Pius XI clearly articulated an alternative vision, rooted in the basic rights of parents, explaining and defending the good of the human person as involving happiness and justice in this life, as well as the attainment of the person's ultimate and complete happiness in heaven. Happiness both in this life and definitively in heaven, was to be understood and pursued through the life of faith – the life communicated through a properly Catholic education.

The period from the Second Vatican Council has seen, with the establishment of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome, the reaffirmation of the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person and our destiny in Christ. The Council was expressly a time of returning to the Church's most ancient and secure sources; and of opening itself to the wider world. This was particularly focused on the Church's self-understanding and renewal and her salvific dialogue with the world. The Church looked afresh at the Scriptures and the Church Fathers in order to reflect on her own changing situation of being a missionary Church within an environment that was no longer a Christian culture. The Church needed to understand anew her own culture, with a history and a Tradition to transmit in a holistic way to her own future generations and to the world.

This process is ongoing and is a continued mining of the rich seams of Tradition. This is the underlying purpose of the Year of Faith that we are currently living in the Church. Pope Benedict's explicit invitation was to discover anew the documents of the Council and also the Council's primary fruit, the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism essentially represents a statement of Catholic culture expressed in the same structure as the New Testament statement of the culture of the early Church – “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”. (Acts 2:42)

This notion of the Church's culture implies also its transmission through education and leads to an engagement with the variety of cultures within which the Church finds herself today. The whole concept and project had its roots in the early Fathers of the Church who articulated, as I stated earlier in my discussion of Augustine's *City of God*, a vision of Catholic culture within the context of Greek and Roman society. Christian culture, and its transmission through education, was the

Christianisation of the Greek concept of “Paideia” – a word that is difficult to translate but contains the idea of the holistic formation **of** the human person (body, mind and spirit), of the person **within** society and **within** civilisation or culture. In its baptised form, this process is envisaged as being under the pedagogy of God himself and directed towards a final civilisation within the mystery of the Trinity.

It was in this same period both before and after the Council that the thought and writings of John Henry Newman were being more widely disseminated especially with regard to his teaching on Conscience and on Education. Newman himself was deeply influenced by the traditions of the Fathers, and the notion of “Paideia” stood behind much of his educational thought. It is not insignificant that the occasion of the recent Papal visit of Pope Benedict was also the time that Newman was beatified. At that time Pope Benedict said of him:

I would like to pay particular tribute to his vision for education, which has done so much to shape the ethos that is the driving force behind Catholic schools and colleges today. Firmly opposed to any reductive or utilitarian approach, he sought to achieve an educational environment in which intellectual training, moral discipline and religious commitment would come together. The project to found a Catholic University in Ireland provided him with an opportunity to develop his ideas on the subject, and the collection of discourses that he published as “The Idea of a University” holds up an ideal from which all those engaged in academic formation can continue to learn.

### **The Nature of the Church as Mystery, Communion and Mission**

The reflection initiated at the Second Vatican Council on Catholic culture and its transmission has found articulation, not only in the Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, and in the Catechism, but also in the structure of the Church as **Mystery, Communion and Mission**. And its particular application to Catholic Education was enshrined in the most recent document from the Congregation for Catholic Education entitled *Educating together in Catholic Schools* published in the same year as the *Anthology*.

It is important to understand what the idea of the Church as Mystery, Communion and Mission involves. Fundamental is Communion – which is another way of expressing Catholic culture and its central affirmation of human dignity as bearing the pattern and the destiny of Christ. Communion comes about through initial conversion to the person of Christ and necessarily leads to communion with everything with which Christ is in communion. In other words, it leads to communion with His Body, the Church, with her life and sacraments, her teaching and with each and every person who makes up the Church. Communion with Christ also opens up to us all, as both its origin and its goal, entry into the Mystery of the life of the Blessed Trinity. And communion within the Body of Christ and communion with the persons of the Trinity give rise to the Mission of the Church to draw all of humanity into this life and culture. Indeed, this is ultimately the mission of the Trinity itself – to draw every created person, through the Church, into participation in the Trinitarian life.

It is in this vision of a truly Catholic culture that the most recent document, to which I have referred, *Educating together in Catholic Schools* discusses the nature and purpose of education and in particular, the joint activity of lay and consecrated persons within the field of education. The document presents a new and challenging statement both of the human person and of the purpose of education.

This new statement is set in the language of “Communion”

Every human person is called to communion because of his nature which is created in the image and likeness of God (cr. Gen 1:26-27). Therefore, within the sphere of biblical anthropology, man is not an isolated individual, but a person, a being who is essentially relational. The communion to which man is called always involves a double dimension, that is to say vertical (communion with God) and horizontal (communion with people). It is fundamental that communion be acknowledged as a gift of God, as the fruit of the divine initiative fulfilled in the Easter mystery (paragraph 8).

This description of the human person is inspired by the Church’s understanding and vision of what it is to be a human being and as a response to the present cultural context. Young people are growing up in a world marked by moral relativism, individualism, utilitarianism and a lack of interest in the fundamental truths of human life. The Church is almost alone, it seems, in being prepared to assert the dignity the human person as bearing the image of God - a vision available to reason, and once deep at the heart of western culture, but which is now so generally denied. It is when humans are no longer seen to bear the image of God, that human freedom is reduced to mere arbitrary whim, and the pursuit of true value is reduced to a consumerism that never satisfies. The Church must give back to young people the true understanding of their own value that has been taken from them. And this requires the communication of the Catholic faith concerning our true destiny in Christ. This re-proclamation and defence of humanity and its true worth lies at the centre of the Church’s Mission - her calling of all people to their true destiny in Christ. We are duty bound to use every possible opportunity to articulate this vision and form future generations in it.

In the midst of so many diverse and at times bewildering versions of educational aims and processes, the Church has a rich and vital vision to proclaim. At its heart is an ideal of the person as called to love and friendship - with God and with fellow humans as bearing his image. Catholic education is an expression of a Catholic culture that is ever drawing upon the richness of its Tradition and the cultures of the ages, ever seeking to renew and re-state itself, and always conscious that it does so within the pedagogical mission of God himself in the world. It is a vision that needs to be heard in the world as the Church seeks to serve the world that God loves. As well as seeking to dialogue with today’s society, the Church also seeks to live out and incarnate in every place the vision that by God’s grace she articulates. May this new Institute play an important role in the study of this vision, its dissemination for the formation of Catholic teachers, and support of the schools in which this vision becomes realised.



## **Final Words**

I thank the University not only for its cooperation in the establishment of this new Foundation, but also for the previous years of partnership and collaboration with the Bishops Conference of Scotland in the provision of Catholic education and of Catholic teachers. I pay tribute to the Bishops' Conference for the work that has brought this project to fruition and also for their unwavering commitment to Catholic Education in Scotland. I thank also the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Society of the Sacred Heart whose dedication and commitment ensured the formation of Catholic teachers throughout the previous century.

Today, while the new Foundation will be at the hub of the provision of Catholic teachers, there are many more who contribute to Catholic education here in Scotland. I would not wish to miss the opportunity of thanking all those involved. At the heart of it all are the Teachers and Head Teachers and auxiliary staff in the schools, without whom Catholic Education would not be implemented. I thank you for your devotion to your vocation. I thank the Catholic Education Commission and the Scottish Catholic Education Service and its Director. I take the opportunity to congratulate you on the new Religious Education Curriculum document "This is our Faith", which expresses Catholic faith precisely as a culture to be transmitted. I warmly pay tribute to many others who play a support role here in Scotland – especially Diocesan advisors and Chaplains. Finally, may I extend to all those parents, those who are Catholic as well as those from other traditions, a glowing tribute. It is your desire to educate your children integrally in the light of faith that is the bedrock of the whole enterprise of Catholic Education. May God continue to bless you all as you journey together and may God bless the children that He has called into Communion in the Church and whose formation will play a great part in the building of society.