

Cardinal Winning Lecture
Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem
Glasgow, 16 November 2019

Dear Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Dr Roisín Coll, and distinguished Academics of the University, Your Grace Archbishop Philip Tartaglia and brother bishops of Scotland, Ladies and Gentlemen.

When I say that I am delighted to join you this morning, I am not being diplomatic; I mean it. I am most grateful for the joint invitation from the University and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland to give the Cardinal Winning Lecture this Year.

Real bishops, like the gentlemen here present, have dioceses, the names of which are well known to you. Bishops like your servant have a titular see, normally the name of a suppressed diocese, often in North Africa. In my case I am more fortunate-it pays to have friends at court - I am no less than the Titular Archbishop of Hodelm or Haddam, which is just outside Lockerbie. It was a monastic foundation established by St Mungo and is to be found in the modern Diocese of Galloway, so I renew my promise to Bishop William Nolan not to cause him any trouble. So, I have a cherished connection with Scotland.

Cardinal Thomas Winning was Archbishop of Glasgow when I was ordained priest in Liverpool 42 years ago. My own Archbishop was Derek Warlock. The two men were chalk and cheese. Warlock was made to be a mandarin in Whitehall, whereas he once remarked that Thomas Winning was "a bit of a street-fighter". Everyone recognised in Cardinal Winning a man of depth Catholic faith, a committed pastor of

God's people and a man of conviction and principle. If what I say this morning does him some honour, then I rejoice in that.

In a famous university such as this, even one of Papal foundation, it would be folly to claim that the Church has anything like a monopoly over education, so I will make no such claim, but I do believe that education and the Church have a fundamental relationship. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that education is connatural with the religious spirit. The Church is education.

Jesus is first and foremost a teacher of his disciples. They call him Master and they invite him to teach them. Teaching is his immediate response to their needs: when he sees them forlorn and disorientated, he sets about teaching them. He himself sought out teachers when as a twelve years old he was lost in Jerusalem, to be found in the Temple. His parents find him asking and replying to questions. One wonders what his companions thought of such a child prodigy.

It is true that the Christian message is first proclaimed, but such proclamation must be explained and justified, if it is to be embraced and lived. Religious and Christian art in particular often depict the pilgrimage of faith as movement from darkness to light, and conversion like that of St Paul is remembered as an act of enlightenment. The recently canonized Cardinal John Henry Newman instructed that on his tomb should be written the words: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* – Out of shadows and phantasms into Truth. In so doing it would appear that he wished to give a motto to his life and experience of faith.

Throughout the world education has always been among the highest priorities of the Church. This is evident from the fact that in establishing communities the school frequently came before the building of a church. The provision of decent schools and good educational opportunities were and remain priorities in the promotion of a better future for the members of the Church and their children. In these islands the emancipation of Catholics during the last two centuries can be attributed to the efforts to provide quality education to as many as possible. In terms of projects, the partnership

between parish and school has been one of the great pastoral successes of recent centuries.

In 1975 the total number of Catholic schools in the world was 106,966, while in 2016 they were 217,261. In 1975 the largest number schools were to be found in Europe, 34,300, today that distinction goes to Africa where there are 74,515. The same trend is reflected in the numbers of students. In 1975 there were 29,106,000 worldwide with the largest number in America 10,031,700. In 2016 there were 62,484,800 worldwide with 27,281,000 of these in Africa. These statistics are by any standards impressive, and proof of the Church's commitment to education and to the formation, human, spiritual and intellectual of its young people.

A particular debt of gratitude is owed to the Religious Orders. The monasteries of the Middle Ages were havens of learning and many of our most prestigious educational institutions were originally monastic foundations. Throughout Europe, North America and Australia numerous Religious Congregations were founded in the 18th and 19th centuries solely for the education of children and young people. In the old world their progressive decline has been one of the major challenges in making provision for Catholic education. The maintenance of a Catholic ethos in schools remains a contemporary challenge of great importance. Such Congregations subsequently associated themselves with the missionary life of the Church and became major players in evangelisation in Africa and Asia. With some notable exceptions, Catholic schools in Asia serve very small percentages of Catholic children, the majority being Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu. In Bangkok the Catholic schools are not closed on Christmas Day!

In Africa de-colonization led many Governments to nationalise and confiscate our schools, only to offer them back many years later in poor condition and at a time when there were no longer large numbers of missionary nuns and brothers available for such work, but before local Congregations were so developed as to be able to assume such responsibilities. More recently in Eritrea among the property taken by the

State, there are also a number of schools. The Government invokes a law from 1995, which asserts that all school must come under its direction.

Education is not an abstract endeavour, but rather a concrete reality conducted with real people in real places with their own culture, history and traditions. Accordingly, its success will depend in part on the capacity to inculturate the experience. One of the successes in this, and there have also be failures too, is that of the Jesuit *Reduccion*es in Paraguay, of which we were reminded by Roland Joffe's 1986 film *Mission* and by the music of Ennio Morricone. The respect with which the Jesuits accepted and embraced the culture of the indigenous population, working with it and through it brought remarkable results, especially in the arts and music. This is not to say that inculturation is an easy task, but it is worth grappling with, as any form of education must seek to build on the existing cultural riches of a people or community and not to destroy, to see the value of native cultures considering them assets to be confirmed. In the Synod of Bishops on Amazonia held recently in Rome inculturation was a constant preoccupation with many speaking of the need to appreciate more sensitively the cultural treasures of the peoples of the Amazon. This does not mean that there is not a need for an evangelisation of culture, as the transformative power of the Gospel reaches into every aspect of human reality. The integration of life and faith is a key element of religious life, and culture cannot be excluded.

Allow me now a few fundamental reflections which underpin the Church's commitment to education, but which are not concerns of the Church alone, but rather held in common with all persons and institutions who seriously engage in education in its many manifestations.

First, among such commitments is that to the truth. 'What is truth?' asks Pilate of Jesus in the Passion narrative of St John. Truth can be elusive; it can be dangerous, but it is also empowering. "The truth will make you free." The pursuit of truth sets up a dynamic which carries educational endeavour forward. It does not establish a fixed point of destination, but rather one of departure. It makes the educational

Process a lifetime occupation not confined to a set number of years of schooling or study. People who have grasped this never stop studying, deepening their understanding. And while the truth is to be grasped, even clung too, we do not reach its fullness; there is always more to be done. Commitment to the truth is also a defence against indoctrination and proselytism.

The desire for excellence is also a constitutive part of any such project. Here perhaps the key word is desire, for without it there is the danger of an acquiescence to mediocrity. Again it is a process which is not accomplished instantaneously, but we have to aspire to it while accepting limitations in terms of capacity and resources. I believe that there is a sincere desire in the Church that our schools and colleges should be as good as is humanly possible. In my life as a papal diplomat I have been blessed to visit many parts of the world. I have seen village schools in Burundi where one teacher had to teach more than sixty pupils, half looking one way to a blackboard and half looking the other way to another blackboard with the teacher oscillating between the two. Pretty awful conditions, but those children had an insatiable appetite for learning. In this regard, it was moving to be told that the worst punishment that an African parent can impose on a child is to say "You cannot go to school tomorrow". Indeed, one of the teacher's many challenges was to prevent small children sliding through the windows, or what passed for windows, to join a class.

A parochial school in the outback of New South Wales also comes to mind in a town romantically called Broken Hill, once famous for its mines, but now a post-industrial shadow of its former self. With a struggling population the Catholic community managed to preserve a beautiful little school, which offered the children every opportunity enjoyed by the more affluent centres of population.

In these last years, I have travelled quite regularly to the USA, mainly on UN business. Each time, there is also an invitation from one or more of the renowned Catholic Universities: Georgetown, Fordham, Notre Dame, while several years ago I also visited and spoke at Boston College. On each occasion, I was astounded at the

resources available both in buildings, and the size of the faculties, and for research; I found it all quite mind-blowing.

The modest schools to which I referred and the great Universities perhaps have more in common than we imagine. Both are centred on the human person and his or her inherent dignity and value, and it is on the basis of this, and this alone, that we assert the right to education and make our commitment to contribute to this noble endeavour, be our resources scarce or abundant.

At the beginning of this reflection I spoke of teaching at the origins of the Christian faith. For this and other reasons the teacher has always been and remains a revered and indispensable figure in the life of the Church. It is frequently said that people today pay more attention to and are more attracted by witnesses rather than teachers. I would argue that a good teacher is inherently a witness. The teacher may be a powerful figure in the life of a young person, an inspiring example who stimulates the interest and enthusiasm of another for a particular subject or profession, or one who simply helps in the maturing process, which can be so challenging for many of us. I think there are few of us, perhaps very few of us here this morning, who have not been influenced positively by a teacher. Accordingly, the professional, human and spiritual formation of teachers has also been one of the priorities of the Church. This led to the foundation of the Teacher Training Colleges which were part of Catholic life until quite recently. Many of these have now become universities in their own right, but the significant contribution they made deserves to be remembered and applauded. I for one pay tribute to the many fine teachers, both clerical and lay, who made such efforts on my behalf and I thank God for them and honour their memory. The relationship between a teacher and student is so fundamental as to be indispensable. There are very few people who are absolutely self-taught, and who can claim that all their knowledge and expertise is obtained without the mediation of someone else. This relationship is similar to that of a master and disciple, perhaps even of that of the Master and his disciples. Although in the Gospel we are taught that a disciple is not greater than his master, but he can become like his master, in the world of education this can be

surpassed. Arguably Thomas Aquinas is a greater theologian than his Master Albert the Great. It is the objective of any great teacher that his pupils should excel him or her. Music teachers are a good example. Great virtuosi are by definition normally tutored by inferior talents, though the debt of gratitude is no less for this. Great composers have to excel those who teach them the rudiments of music and composition. Everyone has to start somewhere and with someone, and this can be vitally important is the release and flourishing of genius. No teacher should ever belittle their talent or contribution.

Governments should think long a hard before they seek to reduce the social standing of teachers at all levels within society. This has happened in many countries in recent decades when the political tendencies of many teachers have not been appreciated by the government of the day. The tendency to reduce the influence and impact of teachers for ideological reasons is highly debatable, unless what is being taught is profoundly pernicious and offensive to public order and ethical standards. Where their open hostility to teachers on the part of authority it should not surprise us if an erosion of respect in the classroom is the result. This in turn makes discipline difficult and places in danger the most central objectives of the whole project.

If we can speak in such terms about the relationship of teacher and student, we should not fail to recognise the partnership which is so important between Church and State in the field of education. Depending on the level and circumstances this will often be a three-way common commitment of Church, State and Family. How this works out in practice will be greatly conditioned by history and precedent, but here it is enough to say that where there is goodwill on all sides such a partnership is nearly always beneficial. One actor complementing the other to the benefit of those who are being educated. The Church will rarely possess all the resources required for its educational ambitions to be entirely self-sufficient while the State can better meet its own legal obligations towards its citizens if it engages with other actors who are aware and committed to the particular needs of the constitutive elements within society. The fundamental values that the State wishes to transmit to its youngsters can be most effectively achieved if grounded in the values which already form part of the

background of the individual. In all of this it is indispensable that the rights of conscience be respected and that there should be a good communication and dialogue between all responsible actors. Institutions of religious inspiration must be free to teach the fundamental elements of their tradition, but this cannot involve teaching which endangers public order or security, though this must be demonstrated and not invoked without just cause and never on account of prejudice, hostility or ideology.

Allow me to draw these reflections to a conclusion by speaking briefly of a new initiative of the Holy See, which I believe demonstrates the permanent and irrevocable commitment of the Catholic Church to education in every region of our planet. Last September 23 Pope Francis announced a "Global Compact on Education". Compact is one of the latest words to be invented in that rare and impenetrable language that is UN English. Pact will not do, only compact will do if the international community is to sing from the same hymn sheet! You may recall that, in 2018 Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees were already adopted by the UN. The idea being to inject new energy into major issues confronting humanity.

In presenting the Compact Pope Francis said that: "Now as never before, there is a need to unite our efforts in a wide educational alliance, in order to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and polarization, rebuilding the fabric of relationships in a more fraternal humanity." In view of the rapid (social) change and the resulting crisis, the Pontiff also said: "Every period of change needs an educational pathway which involves everyone. For this a "village for education" needs to be built, where, respecting diversity, we share the commitment to create an open network of human relations, only in this way will it be easier to arrive at a global convergence in favour of education that can promote an alliance among all the components of the person. An alliance which generates peace, justice and openness among the peoples of the human family, as well as dialogue among the religions."

This will have three important steps: first, finding the courage to put the human person at the centre, and new ways of understanding economics, politics, growth and

progress. Secondly, finding the courage to invest our best energies with creativity and responsibility, in such a way as to obtain an education with a long-term projection, which does not get bogged down. Finally, to find the courage to form people willing to place themselves at the service of the community. Service is one of the pillars of a culture of encounter."

The Compact will be solemnised in a series of events in the Vatican on and around the 14 May next year. The Compact will be signed on that occasion and to the events will be invited a host of people from around the world and from every walk of life, who are in some way engaged in education.

I consider this an appropriate point on which to bring this talk to a close. Although it has offered you some reflections on the significance of education in the life of the Catholic Church, both in the past and present, I hope it will not have given you an impression of complacency. We have much yet to do and there are many difficulties to be faced. As I have just said we are living in times of profound change, and change is not always managed easily, but the light beckons and we are even drawn out of the shadows to the marvellous dawn, which is God. We approach him through the intelligence with which he has endowed us. We must not squander his gifts, but rather use them for his glory. Thomas Winning cheers us on.

Thank you.