

**CONFERRING OF DEGREES AND AWARDS BY DCU
IN
MATER DEI INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**

Friday, 20 November 2009

Introduction by the President of Mater Dei Institute

Dermot A. Lane

My name is Dermot Lane and, as President of Mater Dei Institute, I am very happy to welcome all of you to this Conferring of Awards and Degrees by Dublin City University.

I welcome members of the Governing Board, the staff of the Institute, and in particular the Graduands of 2009.

I am particularly pleased to welcome and introduce the distinguished members of the Podium.

I welcome the President of Dublin City University, Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski, who will confer the degrees and awards.

I also welcome on the podium

the Director of the Institute, Dr. Andrew McGrady,
the Assistant Registrar of the Dublin City University,
Louise McDermott and
the Administrative Registrar of the Institute, Annabella
Stover.

In addition, I also wish to welcome colleagues from the
University:

Dr. Pat Brerton, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social
Science , in DCU

Dr. Francoise Blin, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in
the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences of the University.

I also want to welcome colleagues from the other colleges linked
to DCU:

Dr. Mary Shine Thompson Dean of Research from SPC
Drumcondra

Dr. Caroline Renehan Head of Religious Studies and RE in SPC ,
Drumcondra

and Ronan Tobin Dean of Studies and acting Registrar from All
Hallows College

In welcoming the Graduands of 2009, I also want to extend a warm welcome to their families and friends, and I wish to acknowledge the part you have played as families and friends in making this day possible.

Today is a day of celebration for the Graduands and their families – and it is also a proud moment for Mater Dei Institute and the University.

I offer all of the graduates my warm congratulations on your academic success and personal achievement in arriving at this happy day, and in the name of the Institute I wish all of you continuing success in the years ahead.

I want to salute our 59 graduate teachers, our 10 BA's in Irish Studies and Religious Studies, and the 12 recipients of the Certificate in Theological Studies.

I also want to congratulate the 7 students receiving the Graduate Diploma in Religion and Education – 6 of whom

are now making a very significant contribution to community life in the Dublin area.

Also, I wish to congratulate all the other students receiving Postgraduate qualifications, and especially our first PhD in Theology, Declan O'Byrne.

I am mindful that this has been a difficult year for some graduates in terms of employment. However, I am confident that you will find employment, perhaps not always in the traditional locations—but in the wider society-- because you are receiving a qualification that is very distinctive and unique in Higher Education in Ireland.

As graduates you studied the philosophical, ethical and religious dimensions of life. The more cynical might ask: “And what have philosophy and ethics and religion to do with the Smart Economy?” The narrow view of the Smart economy would simply say: “Nothing”.

But there are others who would say that the Smart economy, **if it is to be really smart**, needs a philosophical and ethical and religious perspectives.

There is a growing awareness of the need to overcome the divide between the hard Sciences and the Humanities, between Technology and the Arts, between Economics and Ethics.

If we ignore the Arts and the Humanities in the current national crisis, we run the risk of ignoring that which makes us a humane and civilised people. Without this **humanising** influence of the Arts and Humanities, society runs the risk of reducing itself and the Smart economy to a jungle without values where only the fittest will survive.

I believe that the Graduates of this Institute have a distinctive contribution to make to this new challenge facing all of us in Ireland at this time. That contribution can be made not only in schools, but in the wider society of different communities and institutions.

In the normal course of events I would now be happy to hand over our Conferring Ceremony to the University.

However, today's Conferring is not just another Conferring Ceremony. It is the last Conferring by the current President of Dublin City University who is coming to the end of his 10

year term of office next July. I nearly said “retiring” – but as you can see this President is far too young a man to be retiring!

And so I wish, if I may, to take this opportunity to pay a small tribute to his outstanding leadership, first of all of DCU and in particular of Mater Dei Institute, as a Linked College of the University, over the last 9 years.

When Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski became President of DCU in July 2000, he inherited Mater Dei Institute as one of the Linked Colleges. In fact, we had only just become a College of Dublin City University, and we were very much the “new boy on the block”.

Instead of simply accepting us as a Linked College, Ferdinand readily embraced the Institute as one of the many challenges he faced as the new President of DCU.

Because of his enthusiasm and support, the Institute has grown very significantly during his tenure as President of DCU. When the Institute became a College of the University, we had 3 programmes of study – today we have

9 programmes. At the point of entry into the University we had 240 students – today we have over 750 students.

This growth was facilitated by the fact that the President of DCU volunteered to become an active member of the Governing Board of the Institute; he sat on interview Panels for key appointments, and he encouraged the integration of services in the Institute into the services of the University in the areas of Registry, ICT and Library. He enabled this level of integration to take place while, at the same time, respecting the autonomy of the Institute.

In addition, he found time to attend important events in the life of the Institute, such as the launching of our in-house journal, *Religion, Education and the Arts*, in 2001, the publication of our Strategic Plan in 2003, and was present at the opening of the newly refurbished library in 2008.

Further, he drew up a revised Linkage Agreement in 2008 between the Institute and DCU, an agreement that firmly embeds the Institute as a Catholic College in a secular University.

Today, therefore, on behalf of the staff and students and Governing Board of the Institute, indeed on behalf of all of us here today, I wish to salute Ferdinand, in public, and thank him for his support and promotion of Mater Dei as a Linked College of the University over the last 9 years. Most of all, I wish to express the gratitude of all of us for your inspiring leadership of the University, and of this Institute during those years.

And so back to our Graduands. Today is your day of celebration--- and we all rejoice in your achievements and we hope you will keep in touch with the Institute in the coming years

I now have pleasure in calling upon Louise McDermott, Assistant Registrar of the University, to open this convocation of degrees and awards which will now be conferred by the President of the University.