

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, staff and fellow graduates.

I work a full-time job in information technology. I learnt, at the start of my enrolment, that it's not a good idea to tell your boss you are undertaking part-time study in a field unrelated to your career. I still remember, during my first semester, silently sobbing in a toilet cubicle at work after my then line manager suggested that a circumstantial failure was somehow attributable to my study commitments.

So for seven years, study has been in part a secret affair, slipping out of the office for evening classes and taking annual leave to complete intensives. My point is not the fact that I somehow managed all this, but rather: that without such class structures, not to mention online classes and electronic library resources, I could never have completed my degree at all.

I want to thank all the people who have allowed me, as a 9-to-5 worker, to access theological education: for everything from the after-hours essay consultations to the 9pm seminar finishes to the weekend library opening hours. And the constant encouragement.

I believe such provisions are crucial if we want to enable laypeople to fully explore their Christian vocation. Theological education has allowed me to explore my calling with both openness and conviction, where previously I had much passion but limited capacity to discern. Now I know I'm equipped to discuss with my old boss (or anyone else who asks) how theology actually has everything to do with working life, and indeed all of life.

I hope more and more people will access the transformative gift of theological education.

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