

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS | Sunday 19 May 2024

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Deputy Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Archbishop Emeritus, distinguished guests, staff, fellow graduates, family and friends.

It is surreal to reflect on my time as a student of academic theology. This has been a long journey of squeezing in online, after-hours lectures with full time work and raising a family, one subject at a time, from when my youngest was hip height, to now when he towers over me. It has not been easy.

But God has been in this. As the hymn by Robert Robinson says: “Here I lay my Ebenezer, hither by they help I’ve come”.

Theologically I understand God to be the author of my faith. Experientially I know that it was God that gave me a yearning to go deeper in my knowledge of him and it was God that challenged me with a felt sense of my own hypocrisy that I urged others to take steps of faith, while refusing in my own life to take the next step of faith that was available to me to study.

Books have been read, journals have been referenced, assignments have been written. My mind has been expanded, tested, and dare I say it, tortured, in this largely cognitive journey of seeking God. Ironically my key learning from all this academic work is that knowing God encompasses so much more. Augustine wrote that knowing God is about whole-of-self transformation that implicates our whole bodies in the actions and practices of coming to know.

So, this is not the end. I continue on, seeking that kind of knowing for which Paul prays in his letter to Ephesus: a spirit of wisdom and revelation, an open-eyed heart, a felt sense of hope and of power that is shared with all who believe.

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