

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

I'm wondering whether an inaudible sigh might be experienced tonight, within myself and among my fellow graduates. A sigh of relief as we mark this night being the formal completion of our studies – or perhaps that is a more audible sigh - yet also a sigh of longing to continue learning about God and how God works in our lives, in whatever form that learning might take from here on - a yearning that has been nurtured and matured through our theological studies at university.

When I think about my reasons for personally taking up study of Theology, after working in a corporate career for 20 years, it was with a sense of knowing, of feeling and believing within, that I needed to be closer to God, but I didn't know what that truly looked like at that time. My natural curiosity led me to engage with study, to explore how God was calling me. In taking those first tentative and uncertain steps, I quickly realised that I had embarked upon a transformation of mind and spirit, where my relationship with God would deepen, and which would lead me to my vocation today as ordained clergy. It was studying with the University of Divinity, through St Francis College, that truly brought forth that transformative experience.

I give thanks for the support and generosity of our lecturers and staff of St Francis College who, through their expertise and gentle care, taught us, challenged us, mentored us, and tended to us, as sheep preparing to work and live our lives for our shepherd in Christ.

I particularly thank Dr Ruth Mathieson for her leadership in making learning at St Francis, engaging and inclusive. Thanks also to Dr Peter Klein, who has been particularly instrumental in making my brain explode abundantly and in life-giving ways, constantly teaching to inspire and encourage different thinking.

I'm grateful for my fellow learners and graduates. It has been a time, of discovery, and for forging lifelong friendships, as a Body of Christ in learning.

Lastly, I extend sincere thanks to the University of Divinity and St Francis College for this great honour that I personally receive tonight, and which mere thanks cannot truly express. Thank you for all that you do to embrace and nurture those who seek to respond to God's call.

May we sit with our sighs, whether inaudible or audible, to enjoy the relief found in marking this special night, and may we continue to be inspired, as we have been throughout our studies, to continue learning and living in ways that reflect God's light and love into the world.

Thank you.

Lynette Priscilla Kareta, BTheol 2024

