

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Archbishop, distinguished guests, staff, fellow graduands, family and friends.

When I was asked to speak today, I found myself reflecting on the many stages of my education and wondering what wisdom I might bring to the table. I thought about my schooling, my time as a swimming instructor, studying at two universities, and teaching at three, and asked myself what part of my experience as both a student and an educator was most worth sharing here. Many might have expected me to reflect on my dyslexia and how that has formed by identity as a student and teacher. But I will leave that for another day.

What I kept coming back to was this particular degree, this particular university, and this particular community.

The University of Divinity is unique when compared to my other educational experiences. For many of those I studied alongside, they were either already in holy orders or had ordination as their aspiration. While that was not the case for every student, it is generally understood that the programs offered are designed to facilitate ordination.

That, however, has never been my goal, despite suggestions to the contrary from various clergy over the years. As an adult, I have always understood my calling not towards ordination, but towards education and religion and as it turns out I have been fortunate to be at the forefront of the creation of the discipline of law and religion in Australia.

As a result, studying here at Wollaston has brought home to me the importance of lay education in religious matters, and in fact, the importance of lay education more broadly. When we educate, we often focus on the professionals who will work most directly with what we teach. At the University of Divinity, that is those entering ordained ministry. In law, my chosen profession, we educate for future lawyers.

But I sat in classrooms here with no intention of seeking ordination. And I as I teach into a law unit for master's students, many of whom are not lawyers, but who need to understand the law. Reflecting on both experiences has reinforced for me the importance of education beyond the profession for which a degree is initially designed.

There is real value in those who work with and alongside professionals understanding their fields of expertise, so that they can be genuine partners in the work. My students will never understand the law at the depth of a lawyer, nor are they trained to. Likewise, those of us studying theology as lay people will never have the lived experience of those in holy orders. There are many aspects of that vocation that extend far beyond the theological classroom.

But what we as lay people can do, and what I think we should be encouraged and supported to do and support others to do, is walk alongside clergy with understanding. We can engage thoughtfully with theology, pastoral care, church history, and, in my case, canon law, so that ministry becomes shared work rather than isolated expertise.

My reflection on my education so far, and on my continuing role as a scholar and educator, is this: the importance of making our work accessible to those who wish to walk alongside the professionals for whom our degrees were originally designed

Thank you.

