

Welcome Address by Fr Edward Clare, Director of the Maryvale Institute
Maryvale FE and HE Award Ceremony,
20th November 2018, St Chad's Cathedral

Archbishop Bernard, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters in Christ. On behalf of the Maryvale Institute, I am delighted to welcome all our guests to St Chad's Cathedral for the Maryvale Further and Higher Education Awards Ceremony for 2018. As ever, we are very grateful to Archbishop Bernard Longley, for allowing us to use the cathedral, which is such a fitting venue for our graduation, and also for his presence here today to preside at this ceremony. I am also grateful to the Archbishop for the personal interest that he takes in Maryvale throughout the year.

This year, our graduation is marked with the sadness of the whole Maryvale family at the death, just over a month ago, of Mgr Paul Watson who was the second director of the Institute and served in that role from 2000 to 2012, in succession to Maryvale's founding director, Mgr Danny McHugh. That sadness is coupled with our huge appreciation of the contribution that Fr Paul made to Maryvale over those 12 years. Not only was he a gifted and inspiring teacher of the faith, with a passion particularly for encouraging his students to know and to love the word of God given to us in Holy Scripture, he did much to consolidate the academic foundations of Maryvale's work, developing and strengthening its partnerships with its validating universities, and it was under his leadership that the Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences was approved by the Holy See – meaning that it could now offer, for the first time in this country, ecclesiastical degrees designed specifically for lay people engaged in catechesis, local leadership and other areas of lay ministry. In addition, Fr Paul continued the work of Mgr McHugh in promoting the international outreach of the Maryvale Institute, and he developed partnerships with dioceses in a number of

countries – many of which continue to flourish, along with others that have been established since. Yesterday evening, as our guests gathered ahead of today's graduation, we celebrated a memorial mass for Fr Paul in the chapel of Maryvale House, attended by staff, students, sisters, friends and members of his own family. We thank God for his years of service to the Archdiocese of Birmingham and to the Maryvale Institute. May he rest in peace.

I turn now to our graduands – those of you who have completed your courses of study and who will shortly be receiving your awards. You of course are the reason that we are here this afternoon, and the reason for Maryvale's very existence. I commend and congratulate you all; this occasion provides a fitting opportunity for all of us to celebrate your success, and to acknowledge all your efforts, and the sacrifices that you've often had to make, to bring you to this point. Although Maryvale's method of distance learning enables and supports you in combining your study with your other responsibilities in life, at the same time it is a demanding enterprise and we would never underestimate the commitment, dedication and the sheer hard work that you have all had to put in to complete your courses. I would like to acknowledge also the support of your families and friends, those who have made allowances, and made their own sacrifices, to give you the time and space necessary to fit your studies into your already busy lives. I am delighted that so many of our successful graduands here today are accompanied by members of their families, whom I welcome warmly to share in the joy of this occasion, having given so much encouragement, help and support along the way.

The achievement of our graduating students represents the fulfilment of Maryvale's mission which is to provide authentic and complete teaching in the Catholic faith, particularly (even if not exclusively) for lay people and religious. It offers that not as an end in itself, but as a way of helping to form you as disciples

of Christ, and to equip you to live out your calling and play out your part in the life and ministry of the Church, particularly in the mission of evangelisation, and of sharing and explaining the Catholic faith to others, which as catechists you do in the name of the church.

Maryvale's mission is to serve the church and we keep our courses under constant review, as it is our aim to provide programmes of formation that match the needs of the Church in new situations. To do this, we remain alert to developments in the Church and society, and we are always ready respond to requests we receive from bishops and diocesan representatives. In recent years, for example, we have introduced a new course in Catholic Healthcare Chaplaincy to support the professional training needs that are increasingly being expected by the NHS and other providers from those who work as paid or voluntary chaplains in hospitals and other settings. We have revised the way in which we deliver our Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies for teachers in Catholic schools, so that it better suits their needs, and those of the schools in which they work. We have created a new course in Catechesis on Marriage and Family for those who work in various areas of family ministry and marriage preparation, for example, but which is also proving popular and highly appreciated by couples for their personal and spousal spiritual development and to enrich their own marriages. Just this year we have introduced two new courses which once again provide tailored formation in particular fields of lay ministry and endeavour. Our one-year course in leadership and management offers essential training in such areas as the financial, legal and property aspects of administration in the voluntary sector, that would be essential for, among others, lay parish administrators so that they can provide support to priests who are generally neither qualified nor experienced in these areas, and so free them for the urgent task of mission and pastoral ministry. Our other new course this year is a Higher Education level qualification in Youth Ministry and School Chaplaincy – another

area which has seen growth in the Church in recent years and which provides a good model of peer ministry – young people ministering to other young people. We hope that this course may be validated so that it can lead to a foundation degree, and ultimately to an honours degree, for the young people who follow it.

That leads me on to now to express my appreciation to all three of Maryvale's partner academic institutions who validate our degree programmes, and I welcome their representatives who are present today. From the Ecole Cathedrale in Paris, I welcome Pere Jacques de Longeaux, dean of the Faculte Notre Dame, and his colleague Pere Brice de Malherbe. It is through our partnership with the Ecole Cathedral that Maryvale is approved by the Holy See to operate its Higher Institute of Religious Sciences and to offer the ecclesiastical degrees of Bachelor of Divinity and Licence in Divinity which are being awarded today. Earlier this autumn, Fr Michael Cullinan, director of the Maryvale HIRS, and I were pleased to be invited to the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the College des Bernadins in Paris, which houses the Ecole Cathedrale and other Catholic institutions, and provides a gateway into the church for people of all levels and backgrounds in the heart of that city. It is a remarkable and inspiring example of the Church reaching out to a secular culture in a way that is collaborative, supportive and open to dialogue. We are very grateful to Pere Jacques and to Pere Brice for their constant support throughout the year, and especially for travelling to Birmingham to join us today. Pere Jacques is approaching the end of his time as Dean of the Faculte, so this is the last time he will attend our graduation in that capacity, but I have told him that he is always welcome to Birmingham and to Maryvale.

I welcome also Paul Beeby, the Deputy Director of Validation Partnerships at the Open University – which validates our MA in Catholic Applied Theology and our

BA in Philosophy. The Open University is our longest standing validation partner, and their staff have been unfailing in their support over many years, having guided us through a series of changes and developments to our programmes and have encouraged us always to ensure that the courses we provide to our students are of the highest quality.

Although not represented here today, I express my appreciation for the support of Liverpool Hope University which, for a number of years, has provided the validation for Maryvale's postgraduate research programme, three of our students have successfully completed their PhD theses over the year and will receive their awards today.

I mentioned earlier the international dimension of Maryvale's activity, something that was promoted and developed by Fr Paul Watson. As you look through the booklet for today's ceremony you will see the names of many of our completing students who are not present today, because they have already received their awards in local graduations, or will do so later in the academic year. We are delighted that our network of partnerships is growing, and now extends from England, Scotland and Ireland to the middle east and Singapore. In a number of areas, dioceses are looking to extend the range of courses they can offer, and enrolling new cohorts of students on existing courses, having seen the benefits that come from Maryvale's method of lay formation.

Anyone who has lived or studied at Maryvale, or even visited it briefly, will know how proud we are of our association with Blessed John Henry Newman, who took up residence in the house shortly after his own reception into the Catholic Church, and who gave it the name of Maryvale. It is not just an historical association. Newman's words: "I want an intelligent, well educated laity ... who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it" continue to provide

our vision and drive our mission. All the recent Popes have emphasised that same need again and again. For example, in 2016 Pope Francis wrote: “We need lay people who are formed well, animated by a clear and sincere faith”. More recently, in his address to the Bishops of Ireland at the end of his historic visit there in August this year, he said this: “the expansion of programmes of adult education is essential for the future of the Christian community, in which a committed laity will be increasingly called to bring the wisdom and values of their faith to their engagement in the varied sectors of the country’s social, cultural and political life.” I am pleased that a number of the Irish bishops, even before that very clear encouragement from the Holy Father, have entered into partnerships with Maryvale to provide catechetical formation.

St John Paul II in his document on catechesis that remains the definitive locus for the church’s teaching on the subject, writes that “every baptized person, precisely by reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life”. All of you here today to receive your awards, as well as your fellow graduates, will realise that despite these words, you are in a minority of the Church in this country by having taken the initiative to study your faith as adults. In its documents on catechesis, the Church repeatedly emphasises the primacy of adult catechesis. But little heed is often paid to that call. For many people, catechesis is seen as synonymous with preparing children for receiving the sacraments of initiation, and adult catechesis – if it is considered at all – is often limited to the instruction sessions given to the relatively small number of converts. There is not yet a widespread culture in the Church in this country of people desiring or seeking ongoing formation in their faith, and as a result, the majority of Catholics receive little or no systematic formation since their own childhood. Any parish priest will tell you that when opportunities are offered by the parish, or the diocese, or some other institution, they are not widely taken

up and only the faithful few will attend. Well, the solution to that is not to abandon attempts at lay formation, but to look for new and creative ways to provide it. We live in a world with unprecedented opportunities for communication to audiences large and small, near and far, and the Church is increasingly making use of those means to present its message. But the unregulated nature of those same networks of communication means that as well as the authentic teaching of the Church there are distorted versions of it available which serve only to confuse and divide, as people seek to advance their own particular opinions and sometimes prejudices. It is often the case on the internet that those who shout the loudest are heard most clearly, regardless of the validity of what they are saying. That is a challenge for all who are educated in their faith and all of us who care passionately about the truth of the Catholic faith and communicating it both within and beyond the Church. Above all we need to work for that cultural shift within the Church, so that people first expect to receive formation in their faith, and then that they are helped to discover how, and where, they can receive that formation. You who have devoted time and effort to your own faith formation can now share with others the impact it has made on you, and the benefit you have received from it, and so encourage them now to do the same.

On behalf of the Institute, and all those who have studied there, I would like to thank all our staff, academic, administrative and support as it is they who enable Maryvale to fulfil its mission. Our core group of permanent staff, is generously supported by a wide range of associate staff, each of whom brings their own skills and expertise to our provision, and I am very pleased to welcome many of them here today. Maryvale's students know how all our staff, permanent and associate, frequently go well beyond the call of duty to provide support and encouragement. Distance learning can sometimes be a tough and a lonely endeavour and I know how important it is for students to have the reassurance

that whatever their concerns, and wherever they live in the world, they can access a tutor or an administrator and receive a prompt and supportive response to their query. Also, on behalf of staff and students alike, I extend our fondest appreciation to the Bridgettine Sisters who tirelessly and lovingly and joyfully care for all who come into the house, the chapel and the shrine, whether it be to work or to study or simply to pray; the sisters provide the bedrock of prayer on which Maryvale's work is built. I thank also the Fellows of the Institute, who offer us support and guidance drawn from their great expertise gained over a lifetime of study, research and teaching. I am grateful also to Trustees of Maryvale – under the chairmanship of the Archbishop – who freely and willingly support the Institute by sharing the expertise they bring in such important areas as legal and financial governance. I also want to thank our benefactors, both individuals and charitable organisations, who help us to provide bursary funding for worthy students, from this country and abroad, who could not otherwise afford to study with us.

I hope that all of you here would already think of yourselves as friends of Maryvale, but you may well know that there also exists an association of that name, the Friends of Maryvale, which provide former students, and others interested in the life and the work of Maryvale with the opportunity to stay in touch, whether they live, near or far, through prayer and keeping up to date with news and developments. The friends organise various events and activities through the year both to provide social opportunities and to raise funds – towards bursaries for deserving students and other good causes. Just last weekend, they ran an event to raise money for the victims of the recent floods in South India and the Philippines, areas where some of our Bridgettine sisters come from, and whose families in some cases, were affected by those events. You will see members of the Friends in the Cathedral this afternoon, and back at

Maryvale afterwards, and they will be delighted to tell you more about the benefits of membership

Finally, I would now like to welcome and to introduce to you our special guest speaker for today's graduation. Bishop Philip Egan has been Bishop of Portsmouth since 2012. Previously a priest of the Shrewsbury diocese, which he served as parish priest and vicar general, he also spent a number of years here in Birmingham on the staff of St Mary's College Oscott, the diocesan seminary which began its existence in the late 18th century in the house which is now Maryvale, before moving to its current premises. So he is very familiar with this city and diocese, and with the work of the Maryvale Institute, and in fact our links with the diocese of Portsmouth have flourished since he became Bishop. He is known as a bishop who is committed to the New Evangelisation and so he attaches great importance to the formation of lay people in his diocese. He has entrusted much of that work to the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph, who also have a long-standing relationship with Maryvale, many of them having studied Maryvale certificate and degree courses, they have served as associate members of staff, and in collaboration with them we provide a range of our certificate courses in the Portsmouth diocese.

I now invite Bishop Philip Egan to present the Maryvale Further and Higher Education awards for 2018, after which he will deliver his address. Graduands will be introduced and called forward in turn by the members of staff in charge of their courses.