

Vice-Chancellor, Your Grace, Honoured Guests, Members of Council, Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is with a certain amount of bewilderment that I stand here this afternoon. I am not just talking about the privilege of receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Education conferred by the Senate and Council of Newman University, for which I am most grateful, but also while reflecting upon my own life.

I entered Buckfast Abbey as a Novice in September 1970: that might be considered strange in itself because only two years before, on a visit there, I had clearly thought that I could not have been a monk! Nevertheless I entered Buckfast to give monastic life a try, and in doing so specifically chose Buckfast because one could simply be an English Benedictine monk there and NOT also a teacher or for that matter a priest. **In 1974** I came to Newman College, as it then was; and in 1977 I started to teach Maths and Science in the Abbey school. Teaching eventually enabled me to accept a vocation to the priesthood. I was ordained in 1984 - and eight years later I was elected Abbot of the very monastery in which I thought I could never have been a monk. **I mention** these few biographical details to caution those who would seek to plan their lives in too much detail and perhaps think they know with some certainty where the course of their life is going, because all of us, I believe, require a measure of a certain, rather elusive, virtue. Let me explain.

Along our journey towards that end at which all of us human beings will one day arrive, we gain knowledge rather inevitably merely by living this life. Some set out to acquire more knowledge than others; some achieve a high degree of particular learning. We are of course here to celebrate the very pleasing achievements of those who graduate today and nothing must take away from that. However, knowledge about something, knowledge about life in general, and even knowledge about ourselves, has limitations.

When I started teaching I came across a Japanese Proverb that struck a chord with me, so much so that I placed it on the wall of my Science laboratory. It was this: "*Knowledge without wisdom is like a load of books on the back of an ass.*" The Book of Proverbs in the Bible gives particular insight into this relationship: "*The first principle of wisdom is: acquire wisdom; at the cost of all you have, acquire understanding.*" (Prov 4:7) Knowledge may bring great rewards in this life but only with wisdom will it make you happier - and not only in this life.

So how do we acquire wisdom? The key, I think, is to listen. I thought I knew what I wanted to do with my life - I was wrong, but I found out I was wrong by listening, listening to the Word of God and listening to what others said they saw in me. By listening we adopt a frame of mind that allows us to learn - about ourselves and those around us. By learning we can change - change not only ourselves but also the world around us. As Blessed John Henry Newman said: "*To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.*" So listen, learn and change!

What could a teacher do best but help another rejoice in the marriage of knowledge and wisdom. Together they open the door of imagination. And our imaginations, guided by the Holy Spirit, can only lead us to happiness, unity and peace. Thus in this life, knowledge with wisdom is the harbinger of hope. And with that I offer my congratulations to those graduating today and fulfilment in your future careers.