

Bishop Mark Hagemoen – Presentation at the Installation MASS of President Dr. Carl Still Sunday September 29, 2019

We are here today to install the President of St. Thomas More College: a institution of higher education, which contributes as a federated college from its identity and mission as an higher educational institution in the Catholic intellectual tradition, that has the name “St. Thomas More” because it is inspired and guided by More’s life, charisms, and legacy.

All of our scriptures today are provocative and may make one of the strongest cases for the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the prophetic mission of an institution named after St. Thomas More.

In the case of our 1st Reading, we look back to what was a difficult time in Israel’s history,

The message of the Prophet Amos is direct and unswerving. Following the peoples’ deliverance from slavery in Egypt – a slavery that would prove not only to be due to external oppressors – but oppression that comes within the human heart and soul - Amos repeatedly announces to the people of Israel that because of their social injustice and religious arrogance, the Lord will punish them by means of a disaster. He makes the connection between Israel’s unjust actions – past and present – and the Lord’s coming judgement. Amos’s message is hard and dramatic – but he is not a unique prophetic voice. He appeals to traditions that he and his hearers held in common – which included the belief that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and slavery, and granted the people the land of Canaan. The prophet also takes for granted that the people of Israel had always known that the Lord expected of them **justice** and **righteousness**. Amos is not introducing any new moral or legal expectations but is holding the people accountable to what God has always revealed from the beginning of Israel’s history.

The Lord’s *judgement* comes as a result of a dis-link between *justice* and *righteousness*. Amos frequently speaks of *justice* and *righteousness* in tandem. *Justice* is the establishment of the right of the person to fairness and equity which is affirmed in fair legal procedures – as laid out in Deuteronomy. *Righteousness* is that quality of life in relationship with others in the community that gives rise to justice. For Amos, a self-indulgent society will give rise to associated judgement. For example, the powerful and wealthy are accused of arrogant self-satisfaction. (The upper class, including the political leadership, indulge themselves with rich food, drink, and entertainment but

have no concern for the troubles of the nation (This is the *ruin of Joseph* mentioned at the end of today's first reading.)¹

Judgement is not a term that is comfortable for our society today – perhaps because of negative experiences and examples we have encountered when *judgement* is not properly assigned to the proper relationship between *justice* and *righteousness*. And yet today we hear about a new kind of 'judgement' – that of the earth and creation crying out because people and nations are losing sight of the need to act as noble stewards of the blessings with which we have been entrusted – and act as a people *in relationship* – to God, one another AND all creation. A contemporary prophetic and unprecedented example of this happened last Friday by high school students across Canada protesting against climate change and inaction.

Our 2nd Reading – Paul's letter to Timothy – provides a type of response to the situation Amos addresses: an exhortation to respond by "Fighting the good fight of the faith." Paul directs away from greed and self-centredness, and directs as follows: "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." For Paul this is for individuals to do, and that is why we depend on God and one another as we 'stay the worthy course,' and not be swayed from the way of good teaching and moral living by corruption and falsity.²

The Gospel is even more provocative. The passage we hearing in Luke 16 about the rich man and poor Lazarus reveals to us the harsh teaching of the actual circumstances and trajectories of the seemingly blessed 'rich man' and Lazarus. This story hearkens back several chapters earlier to Luke 6 to the Sermon on the Mount, in which - following the teaching of the Beatitudes are the 'woe to you' declarations – which are examples of oracles of prophetic justice. The parable in Luke 16 is about the reversal of the states of the rich man and poor Lazarus, and about the ultimate destiny of two very different states of life and pathways.³

These are challenging teachings – highlighting truths and features that have always been a part of our human condition. However, today we hear these God-given teachings in this time and place when humanity has the ability of an ever more devastating impact – for good or for ill.

We need the Catholic intellectual tradition more than ever! Faith and Reason need to be brought to bear on so much. And each needs the other. A key feature of this tradition is Liberal Arts education. Given the world we face, the quest to develop excellent education continues. The contemporary developments and crises in the world cause people and nations to question many things, including the real value and contribution of education.

¹ See The HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV with Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1993, pp. 1355 – 1369.

² Ibid, see pp. 2229; 2237.

³ Ibid, see pp. 1991-1992.

And what is surfacing by many higher education presidents and scholars - is that good education is about education of the whole human person – mind, heart, soul ... seeking truth & beauty, and the way of being really and fully human - including the features of generosity, compassion and service.

For example, last May (2019) the President of the University of British Columbia, Dr. Santo Ono, was speaking at St. Mark's Theological College in Vancouver. He was addressing the theme a good liberal arts education as a significant and crucial contributor to higher education today, because of its emphasis on *being wise by following the way of the heart*. He highlighted the motto *Tuum Est*, (which is also on the UBC coat of arms). It is a double entendre. *Tuum Est* means *it is yours*. This is legitimate, all be that such an interpretation is somewhat utilitarian. Dr. Ono went on to share a secondary meaning: *Tuum Est* means *It is up to you!!* He stated that this meaning refers to the blessing and gift of education and formation, which is to make a significant difference for good in the world. The blessing, the gift of having great education is a privilege, AND can only be grasped if you have a liberal arts education. *Its up to you ...* to use that knowledge for helping others, to address the most vexing challenges of the world versus merely using it for your own advantage. *It's up to up to you* to realize the blessings given to you and not to others, *it's up to you* whether you make the right decision – large or small – to be in service to others. He stated that that this is a message that needs to be impressed on students ...when they arrive ...and when they leave.

A presentation I recently reviewed highlighted four features of the life of St. Thomas More that are noteworthy for our reflection. St. Thomas More - the patron saint of lawyers, judges and politicians – show us the way of Competence, Courage, Conscience, and Virtue.⁴

1) Competence – Thomas More brings to bear personal gifts, talents, and skills – and applies and shares these in a non-egotistical manner for the benefit and good of persons and communities – and doing so in a manner that seeks excellence and proficiency in all that is undertaken precisely because it is for something greater than just ourselves.

2) Courage – which is especially demanded when what must be spoken or achieved may not be prevalent or popular, but upon honest and thorough reflection is evident and necessary, especially in a context or climate where the so-called prophet's message may render the prophet threatened. And it must be approached in a manner without bravado and in all humility, highlighting the good, the beauty, and yes, the 'truth' to be honored.

3) Conscience – an increasingly challenging issue in our day. Conscience that is not just the expression of the self-autonomous ego, but that which is formed because of right

⁴ From speech of Archbishop Thomas Collins to the Thomas More Lawyers' Guild of Toronto at their annual Red Mass dinner on Sept. 13, 2007.

reason and relationship. The "con" in "conscience": means "with".. 'science' -knowledge. Conscience must be formed rightly in accord and in relation - with reality.

4) And... Virtue. In the Old Testament – to walk in the way of righteousness was to seek the way of Wisdom – was to dare to act like God. This is only possible for the Christian in ‘having the same mind of heart of Christ Jesus.’ The interesting feature of Virtue – as we see in the life of Thomas More – is that it is evident in the lives of those whose gifts and talents are honed from being merely at the service of self and are oriented towards others. Activities and accomplishments increasingly speak not merely of my one’s own achievement, but of the privilege to be a part of something that needs us all, and points to **our** ultimate hope and absolute future. The talented, gifted and influential Thomas More certainly was tried and tested in the way of virtue – to the point that his martyrdom and death speaks far more greatly beyond his life, to an eternal reality.

Indeed, St. Thomas More holds the bar high for any higher educational institution, including this one! As I think of these qualities, I think about how they guide the person, AND the institution.

Dr. Carl Still: much discernment, prayer, and reflection has gone into this day. We thank God for bringing you to this point, and we thank you for your ‘yes’ to fulfilling this noble and needed leadership role. We all know that this was not an easy decision. Please know that you can rely on the support and service of many who are a part of the life and service of St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan.

I conclude with a few favorite anecdotes from the life of one whom the Church will soon be declaring a Saint, and who is also known for his tremendous contribution to higher learning and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Cardinal John Henry Newman will be canonized a saint by Pope Francis two weeks today, on October 13. The anecdotes and quotes I have chosen have I think special significance for college and university presidents:

Growth is the only evidence of life.

Nothing would be done at all if one waited until one could do it so well that no one could find fault with it.

A great memory does not make a mind, any more than a dictionary is a piece of literature.

Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.

The love of our private friends is the only preparatory exercise for the love of all people.

The truth has been upheld in the world not as a system, not by books, not by argument, nor by temporal power, but by the personal influence of such men & women as have already been described, who are at once teachers and patterns of it...