

President Remarks

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Introduction

I want to thank Fr. Peter Bisson for his very engaging and timely message for the future of Catholic higher education here in our archdiocese, and to thank all of you for taking time out of your Saturday to attend this event in support of the Catholic Colleges. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our host this morning, John Nixon, the President of Vancouver College, for generously offering these wonderful facilities once again for this, the largest Fundraising Breakfast in our history.

Many of you who have attended this breakfast in the past may have noticed the absence of the Corpus Christi College Chamber Choir under the masterful direction of Choir master Tony Araujo. After sixteen years leading both the College choir and the Vancouver Boys Choir, Tony has decided to move on in order to engage other projects, and we thank him for his years of dedicated service to the Colleges and wish him well in his future endeavours.

The Plan

In previous years my remarks have pointed to the importance of Catholic higher education for our archdiocese and for the Province. I have referenced the importance of the Catholic presence at the University over more than ninety years, and the now sixty years since the creation of St. Mark's College as the Catholic theological affiliate of the UBC. I have also spoken to you of the importance of Catholic higher education for our young people as future professional and social leaders. [slide #1] In speaking to you today, I want, in a sense, to move from theory to practical action by offering you highlights from our recently approved **"Be at the Centre"- The Strategic Plan of the Community of St. Mark's at the University of British Columbia, 2016-2021.**

Emerging from the Community of St. Mark's at the UBC, which includes St. Mark's College, Corpus Christi College, the undergraduate liberal arts college on the St. Mark's campus, and St. Mark's Parish, the Catholic worshipping community on our campus served by the Jesuit Fathers, the plan is the culmination of an 18-month dialogue with members of the community, faculty, staff, students, alumni, supporters, friends, and Board members. It establishes the vision for St. Mark's as the vibrant centre of Catholic higher educational and intellectual life at UBC.

The plan takes its inspiration from Pope Francis, who tells us to always seek out opportunities for what he emphasizes as **"encounter and engagement"** with the world and to **"always dialogue."** As the Catholic centre of the university, the community of St. Mark's seeks to bring its voice as well as the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition to the university in a spirit of openness and cooperation. Our faith is not something to be preserved and saved, but rather it must be proclaimed and lived joyously and always seek new expression and new life in the world in which it is a part. The Holy Father said it best last year during his trip to Cuba:

Go out to others and share the good news that God, our Father, walks at our side. He frees us from anonymity, from a life of emptiness and selfishness, and brings us to *the school of encounter*. He removes us from the fray of competition and self-absorption, and he opens before us the path of peace. That peace which is born of accepting others, that peace which fills our hearts whenever we look upon those in need as our brothers and sisters.

This is the message of the Church, and it is one that needs voice and support at the university.

The Colleges are now setting out on this new plan grounded in **five core values** that will define our mission. These include the absolute harmony of **Faith and Reason**, the encouragement of our students to achieve their **Individual Potential**, the importance of **Community, Catholic Leadership** and the need for **Encounter and Dialogue** with the world.

The plan also establishes five important goals for this community to achieve over the next five years:

To become a living and a dynamic expression of the Church's mission in higher education for the Province of British Columbia

1. To commit to the importance of student success by taking a holistic approach (mind, body and spirit) to the individual needs of our students
2. To respond to the needs of our students and network communities with relevant program and course offerings
3. To engage strategic recruitment and enrollment management practices in order to attract, retain and graduate students
4. To foster our mission through responsible stewardship of human, financial and physical resources

Highlights of Our Current Successes

These values and the goals are informed by many of the positive developments that have been taking place at both of the Colleges in recent years. These include:

- Record numbers again this year of new undergraduate students at CCC from both the Catholic and public schools of Vancouver and from across the province who are seeking the "good start" to their university studies;
- While UBC continues to be the overwhelming final destination for our undergraduate students, our graduates continue to be accepted in a variety of other Canadian universities, including McGill, the UofT and Queen's;
- The launching in 2015/16 of the new St. Mark's Public Lectures Series;
- The admission of St. Mark's first cohort in the BA program in Theology and Culture for students aspiring to become Catholic teachers, and offered in cooperation with the Faculty of Education at the UBC;
- The launch of the new Marie Anne Blondin Chair in Theology, made possible by an endowment of \$3million from the Sisters of St. Ann to continue their legacy in education and service in British Columbia;
- Continued opportunities for volunteer and service learning experiences;
- This fall SMC will be offering the academic program of studies for the third cohort of candidates for the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Vancouver;

Conclusion

As the community of St. Mark looks forward to 2021, we envision a demanding but an exciting, journey ahead to a very bright future. This strategic plan represents a significant step forwards to fulfilling our vision of becoming the vibrant centre of Catholic higher educational, intellectual and spiritual life at UBC.

This morning's event is not only our largest fundraising breakfast, but it is also our most diverse. Represented here are our alumni, parents, representatives of the UBC, honorary doctoral recipients, the various Catholic clubs and

organizations at the university, the parishes, the teachers, students and administrators of the Catholic Independent Schools, as well as members of Vancouver's Jesuit Alumni Association. Your presence here is an acknowledgement of your support for a strong Catholic centre at the UBC. This is not only vitally important for the future of the Church in British Columbia, but for the future of the university, the city and the Province. In an age that rightly emphasizes the importance of diversity and acceptance, the Community of St. Mark's celebrates these as inherently Christian tenets. A strong Catholic centre at UBC means a strong expression of our Catholic diversity at the university, shown in our open and inclusive sense of community, in our concern for the needs of the whole person – mind, body and spirit, in our intellectual tradition, in opportunities for personal growth through research and study, worship and liturgy, in spiritual direction and in our clubs and associations.

Thank you for all you have done and for all that you will do to help this community to become the Catholic centre of the University.

Be At The Centre!

