

Address to the Massey University Graduation Ceremony

by

Archbishop Sir David Moxon KNZM

May 13, 2015, at 12:30p.m.

The Regent Theatre, Palmerston North

When we need to pull together, we can be extraordinary

This is the city where I was born 63 years ago, and grew up for the first 18 of those years. Palmerston North was my world. In those days I didn't know it, but this cleared area of square and city centre, known to Maori first as "Te Papaioea", and now including "Te Marae o Hine", the sacred courtyard of the daughter of peace, was a kind of turangawāwae, or place to stand, for everything that shaped and formed me in those days. If we translate Papaioea as "How beautiful it is", then I honour the beauty of my birthplace and its rich heritage down through the decades. E Te Kaihanga o nga mea katoa, Kororia ki a koe, E Te whenua e takoto nei takoto, takoto, takoto, Ki a Ngati Rangitaane whanui, Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou. Ki nga mate o tena marae, o tena marae, o tena marae, moe mai, moe mai, moe mai, i roto i te rangimarie o Te Ariki.

This is the theatre, the Regent, where, as a boy I was first captivated by films and the wider world in pictures. This space was the visual portal into the global scene like nothing else.

And now, here in this same place roughly 45 years later, I pay tribute to one of the reasons Palmerston North has become known throughout the world as a whole: its vibrant outgoing university, dedicated to being "The engine of New Zealand", a driving force for good in these islands, helping to shape our national destiny and meaning in the world. How does it do this?

Well, it has been said

"Tell me today what the philosopher thinks, the university professor expounds, the school teacher teaches, the scholar publishes and their treatises and textbooks, and I shall prophesy the conduct of individuals, the ethics of business people, the schemes of political leaders, the plans of economists, the pleadings of lawyers, the decisions of judges, the legislation of lawmakers, the treaties of diplomats, and the decisions of state a generation hence."

Except now I would say that there is no longer a whole generational time gap of say 25 years between what a university expounds and its impact on the conduct, ethics, strategic planning, advocacy, legislation, treaties and political decisions of a nation. This enrichment can be as swift as a year or two under the right conditions. We live in a country which is capable of this kind of innovation, especially enriched by a university that has a reputation for precisely this kind of legacy and contribution, to gear itself deliberately to drive this country's best efforts in just about every aspect of our common life.

Massey University has grown from a small agricultural college in Palmerston North of 85 students in 1928, to become New Zealand's largest residential university spread over three cities. It now has three campuses in the North Island, and the highest number of extramural students, with a total of 35,000 students as a whole. The University's qualifications are recognised worldwide and several programmes have international accreditation.

It is the humanities and social sciences that we honour today. What do these contribute to the engine room of our country? What is it about these degrees that will enrich this country's destiny and meaning? We get a clue from the university's motto: *Floreat Scientia* – "Let Knowledge Flourish". This approach nurtures human knowledge for its own sake, the enrichment of the humanity of others, not only for its utility and its economic traction, as crucial as these are to an engine. People themselves can "flourish" in this way, in the light of the knowledge they gain and share.

This means that you have begun to explore language, ethics, history and culture, education, society and behaviour, through schools of Maori art, knowledge and education, through a school of humanities, a school of English and media studies, an institute of education, and a centre for defence and security studies, and a school of people environment and planning. This is a holistic community-facing education.

One of the greatest tributes I have ever read about the value of growing in this kind of whole-person learning was coined by T. H. White in his book about the education of Arthur, "*The Once and Future King*":

"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlyn, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then – to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn."

In the end the value of Massey as a learning engine will be measured by the flourishing of people's personal learning for the common good, by the intellectual, imaginative and empathetic powers it has fostered and deployed from deep within the hearts and minds of people, alongside traction in terms of dollars, technology and industry: to enrich Aotearoa New Zealand as a human community which lives for all its people.

Let me give you an example of what we are capable of when this happens, based on the qualifications and social responsibility that the humanities and social science faculties of a university like Massey fosters.

In 1995, a call went out throughout the Pacific Rim of Oceania to all people of goodwill to challenge the trial detonation of nuclear bombs in French Polynesia. Our relationships with France are nearly always respectful and we are supportive allies in many ways. However, nearly all the Churches and most of the Governments of the Pacific Islands, including Aotearoa New Zealand, were dismayed at the prospect of massive potential damage to the ecosystems of the ocean as well by the thought of rehearsal for nuclear war. The then Conference of Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ) wanted to show the Churches' solidarity with the

New Zealand peace flotilla and the New Zealand Government's intention to challenge the detonation of these bombs under Mururoa Atoll. And so I was sent to the Mururoa and Fangataufa Atolls of the Tahitian Islands on board the New Zealand Navy vessel, the "Tui".

On the "Tui" were over 40 people – journalists, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Labour and a National member of Parliament and the ship's naval community. This cross section of our country brought people from tertiary institutions like Massey with training in languages, ethics, history and culture, education society and behaviour, Maori tikanga, the humanities, media studies, defence and security, environmental studies and psychology. These are precisely the kind of degrees we honour here this afternoon.

We were a long way out in the ocean and the journey there was long and arduous. Shortly after our arrival a huge nuclear bomb was finally detonated under Fangataufa Atoll of 110 kilotons, five times the size of the nuclear bombs of the 1940s. We all went quiet then, filled with a sense of huge sadness. The day had been so beautiful. The sea was deep blue and the sky bright and clear.

We subsequently held a karakia or prayer reflection on the bridge of the "Tui" , which was translated into French, believing it was being listened to by the French Navy, who monitored all radio broadcasts anyway.

This karakia, focused on peace, the life threatening potential of nuclear war, and the huge contamination risks for the earth, the sea and the islands of the South Pacific. It may have had an effect on the French Navy. In the days that followed, for whatever reason, some French vessels which had been somewhat confrontational and sometimes even dangerous were much friendlier, and even offered to help peace flotilla yachts in difficulty.

My specifically political role was to try to encourage French church awareness and action, with New Zealand and international religious support, to influence French public opinion through broadcasts and press releases from near the nuclear bomb site. At the time, 65% of the French public were already against testing. We hoped that this would be raised to the point where five more planned detonations would be politically impossible. In the end, the last two tests were cancelled.

I learned from this experience that when we need to pull together and harness our education and training for the common good, we can be extraordinary. Which is surely the point of this graduation: to find ways of pooling your talents and knowledge for the common good, for Aotearoa as a whole, for its viability and place in the South Pacific Ocean, and finally for the health and wellbeing of the planet itself on which we live and move and have our being

Golda Mier the first woman prime minister of Israel often quoted the rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth, *"If I am not for myself, then who will be, but if I am for myself alone, then what am I?"*.

We congratulate those of you who graduate today, because your knowledge has flourished, you have made the very most of yourselves here, which is why you are being honoured today in graduation; and now you have a lifetime of opportunity before you, to make the most of this graduation for the flourishing of others.

Floreat Scientia