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In the spirit of the late Cardinal's renowned commitment to the role of the Catholic Community in the promotion of the common good for Scotland, it was a particular privilege to invite and welcome the Right Honorable Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland to give the 2018 Cardinal Winning Lecture.

Over the course of almost 20 years this lecture series has sought to project the work, faith and witness of Catholic Education in building a society in Scotland fit for all its members. Hence lectures delivered by a distinguished lineage of Catholic Educators have also been enriched by the voices of leading politicians and public figures responsible for sustaining the vision of Scottish education nationally and globally. The gathering on June 2nd in the University's historic Bute Hall was another opportunity to take forward this work in a fashion that Thomas Winning, I am confident, would have supported and encouraged.

The Catholic Education Week Lecture, subsequently named in honour of the late Cardinal Winning, was instituted to showcase leading international thinkers and practitioners in Catholic Education. On a number of occasions important politicians have been invited to deliver the lecture in relation to major landmark events in the life of the Catholic community. In 1999 First Minister Donald Dewar gave the lecture in recognition of the constitution of the Scottish Parliament and the transfer of full legislative responsibility for Catholic Education to Holyrood. In 2008 First Minister Alex Salmond gave the lecture following the formation of the first Scottish Executive led by his party. 2018 marks the centenary of the 1918 Act, which constituted Scottish Catholic education in the form we know it today. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was invited to deliver the Cardinal Winning Lecture in recognition of the importance of this anniversary for relations between Catholic Education and the state and, as Director of the St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education, I considered it to be a most appropriate choice of speaker for this, the highlight of a range of events planned by the Foundation to mark this landmark year.

My choice, needless to say, was met with some opposition. Giving a platform to a party leader who, just the week before the lecture, tweeted her delight in the Irish referendum outcome, celebrating the victory in favour of changing Ireland's abortion laws, was perceived by some to have been misjudged. Others argued that if Nicola Sturgeon were to be given a platform then all other political party leaders should be invited too. However, in recognising her Office as First Minister of Scotland, and her responsibility for state Education in this country, which includes legislative oversight of Catholic schools, there was overwhelming support for her contribution to the 2018 celebrations-- including that of the Bishops' Conference. Six of Scotland's eight Bishops were in attendance on the day.

Reflecting on this historic event, there are a number of vital messages to be taken from the First Minister's speech. First and foremost, is the unreserved support of the Scottish Government for Catholic schools. This was clearly stated by the First Minister: *'The Scottish Government is an unequivocal supporter of Catholic schools. We value the contribution that Catholic schools make to modern Scotland. We want that contribution to continue in the years ahead.'* Alex Salmond was

lauded for his resounding support of Catholic schools after he gave the 2008 Cardinal Winning Lecture. Mr Salmond is of course very different from Ms Sturgeon. He is a man of faith and was known to have had a positive working relationship with the Bishops' Conference. His speech is still hailed as a milestone moment for Catholic Education in Scotland (and, indeed, for an increase of the Catholic vote for SNP.) Nicola Sturgeon is very different person from a younger generation and, in anticipating the content of her speech, there was some apprehension about what she would or would not say. Critically, however, her strong statement should end any doubt that the Scottish Government *is* a supporter of Catholic schools and their continuation into the future. Therefore a line ought now to be drawn under this question.

Another key theme was the recognition that Catholic schools are committed to social justice and the First Minister compared the ethos of Catholic schools to some of the most important expressions of progress in contemporary Scotland. *'If you look at Catholic education today, I think it's striking how closely the ethos of faith schools matches some of the key developments in Scottish society and Scottish education in recent years.'* What was missing from this affirmation, however, was any articulation that the success of Catholic schools' part in promoting social justice is as an expression of faith and the living out of Gospel values. For the Catholic school, everything is and should be connected to faith. Everything is and should be connected to Christ. To expect the First Minister to articulate this would have been a big ask and, admittedly, was not anticipated from a secular politician, but the open recognition of the worth and success of Catholic schools enables those attending, leading and teaching within them to reflect on what is at the core of our educational excellence.

Tom Devine has often spoken of the social mobility of the Catholic community as a result of the 1918 Act, but there are still very real challenges and in 2018 there remain many parallels with the situation of the schools in 1918. Scotland is still haunted by capitalist inequality, social exclusion, poor housing and disadvantage for many children--and therefore 100 years on from the 1918 Act the mission of Catholic schools has never been more urgently needed. Catholic schools *are* excellent at the promotion of social justice but this is often more easily spoken about than faith. A challenge as we enter this next century is to show that the positive contribution Catholic schools make in the name of social justice is always motivated by faith. In 2013 Pope Francis reminded us that the Church '*is not a humanitarian agency*' or '*an NGO*' but rather, '*the Church is sent to bring Christ and his Gospel to all*' (General Audience Oct 23, 2013). The continuing challenge, then, is to ensure and proclaim that faith is the central experience that underpins all that we do and demonstrate that Catholic schools are committed to social justice *because* of their belief in the divine origin and eternal destiny of every human person. The First Minister may not have spoken much about faith, but her recognition of the outstanding contribution that our Catholic schools make to Scottish society was a central theme. As we journey forward into the next century, those leading and teaching within Catholic schools should continue to look to Christ the Teacher for guidance, inspiration and love.

Unsurprisingly another subject to emerge was the Scottish Government's expectation that Catholic schools engage with LGBT inclusive education developments and initiatives. This has been a repeated request at numerous Catholic Education events or conferences where a Scottish Government representative has been invited to speak. The First Minister welcomed the Church's involvement in Scottish Government working parties on this matter and valued it as a key partner as Scottish education '*adapts to the times*'. Indeed, positive steps have been taken in this area by the Church and, in particular, by the Scottish Catholic Education Service and a respectful working relationship has been established.

What is important to note is that whatever national initiatives develop as a result of these working parties, that which is produced is required to be inclusive for Catholic schools. Catholic schools, are part of the state system, and have a set of values and beliefs that are required to be taken into account when considering any state school developments. This is a challenge and boundaries need to be clearly defined. Excellent progress has been made in the area and, under the guidance of the SCES, schools are being provided with relevant knowledge and applicable skills to enable appropriate support. The St Andrew's Foundation has also identified this responsibility as a key area for research in the faith schools' context and is currently collaborating with international partners in the field. The clear recognition of the First Minister that the Church is viewed as a key partner in LGBT developments related to education is testimony to the positive working relationship that has been developed between Church and state in this country over the last 100 years.

Finally, the announcement of additional funding for the University of Glasgow to support the education of Catholic teachers across the country was the Scottish Government's main headline for the event. While modest in financial terms, this is symbolic of a commitment to the work of the St Andrew's Foundation in the School of Education as we embark on initiatives to increase the supply of appropriately qualified Catholic teachers across Scotland.

The Cardinal Winning lecture is an academic lecture and politicians don't often get such opportunities, therefore how they use them are absolutely crucial. Mr Salmond used his opportunity to suggest the debate should be shifted from defending to celebrating Catholic schools. Ms Sturgeon took this one step further. Her speech clearly articulated her Government's commitment to the *future* of Catholic education and recognition of the need for a strong partnership between Church and state to secure this. So, in this instance, did the First Minister connect? Yes she did. The 2018 Cardinal Winning lecture was a major success for Catholic education and it was a success for the Scottish Government.

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