“Eminent Chancellor, Archbishop Smith, Bishop Bittmen, Bishop Terrio members of the platform party, distinguished guests, graduands, relatives, and friends of Newman Theological College; it is my pleasure to speak on behalf of this year’s convocation class.

We have received, researched, read, reflected and remembered the Word of God but it is futile if we fail to practice what we have learned. As we read in James 1:22 “We must become doers of the Word.”

Fellow classmates, we are here today to celebrate this milestone of achievement in our lives. It is a day filled with joy due to our accomplishments but also a time to reflect on what we are leaving behind and where God is calling us to go.

Though we were all on different paths and were in different programs, we the graduates of 2014 have had the pleasure of journeying through Newman College, this is something that will leave a permanent imprint on us as we move throughout our lives.

We have all received a great amount of support and encouragement from the staff and faculty of the College who regularly give a 110%. Whether it is noon hour sessions with Dr. Saulnier, wisdom filled chats with Doreen Bloos, or the boisterous singing of Fr. Penna in mass, the availability of any of the faculty outside of classroom time made us as students richly blessed. Newman College professors shape their students for ministry and life as Christian leaders with great dedication. We may not miss pulling late nights or all-nighters writing papers for Frs. Dave and Don, but no doubt will take what we have learned from them and share the knowledge that has deeply affected our theological development.

The seminary team members were also an important positive force on the Catholic campus. Whether courses on spirituality with Fr. Hero, pastoral counselling classes with Fr. Andrew or the chance to engage Fr. Craig on ministry questions, they all share a passion for ministry and see their vital role in formation. As Fr. Hero once said, the Catholic Campus is now providentially located on a discreet lookout above the banks of the N Saskatchewan River, and Jesus our Priest, our Good Shepherd, is the Light shining, radiating from it like a lantern.

This lantern that we call Newman College and St. Joseph’s Seminary could not exist without the generous benefactors who have made theological and religious education a reality for us teachers, lay students, and seminarians. They believed in the importance of such an education and for that we are deeply grateful, thank you.

We also cannot forget the sacrifices and support we receive from our families who have listened to us discuss von Balthasar or the theory behind Q while pretending to show interest, or for the hours they have missed us as we have poured over term papers. Their encouragement has carried us through some of the challenging times.

As we graduate, we will cherish many wonderful memories of our life at NTC and St. Joseph Seminary including communal worship over the noon hour and Student Association’s social events such as Orientation Dinners or St. Nicholas Parties. Jazz nights were also a joyful time to gather and socialize. For those of us who were new to Edmonton and away from home, Newman became like a second family, and for those of us who have family close by, it was a welcoming community that wanted to get to know us and our loved ones. Relationships have been built and life stories shared,
this speaks to why Newman is more than an academic institution, it is a place of true formation that fosters people coming together to worship and grow in faith.

Fridays at Newman were often a delight as the campus became a buzz with the teachers working on their Masters in Religious Education. Though this meant that there were no parking spots available, it was a small loss for the gain of great conversation and the extra spirit the teachers provided.

Through rich classroom discussions and interactions with people who share the same passion for Christian living, Newman encouraged in us an atmosphere of discovery and enabled us to deepen our relationship with God, no matter where we are in our life’s journey. Newman challenged each person to think about who we are and who God is for us. Newman also connected students with the outside world, helping to prepare us for ministry and enabling us to feel a part of the Christian community in Edmonton. Through learning with people of other Christian traditions, Newman facilitated a sense of ecumenism, helping us to see what we share and appreciate in one another.

I know I speak for the rest of the class when I say that I wish the very best for those students who are currently studying. I hope that your faith may be both nurtured and challenged as you grow into the person God is calling you to be. Take advantage of the gift of Newman College, engage your professors, network with people, utilize the resources at hand, and spend time in the chapel. Newman offers more than just a place to take classes, it is a spiritual oasis, where we can engage our minds and hearts as we endeavor to have “Faith Seeking Understanding”

With each end, comes a new beginning, we are now being sent forth to share the knowledge, wisdom, compassion, and love we have received from our families, communities, professors and now formally from Newman College. For some, this will take us to parishes, schools, hospitals, prisons, or the military, but as far and diversified as we may go, we can trust that the Truth and Light of Christ is with us. Wherever God calls each one of us, we will continue to reflect and be grateful for our time at Newman Theological College and for the people and spirit that makes it all that it is. May God bear much fruit through us from the seeds of faith we have had nurtured here.

In closing I would like to share with you some words of wisdom from Blessed John Henry Newman:

God has created me to do him some definite service, he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another, I have my mission, I may never know what it is in this life, but I shall be told in the next. He has not created me for nothing, I shall do good work, I shall do his work.

Thank you.