



## Sydney Archbishop delivers inaugural symposium lecture in honour of St John Henry Newman

Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP has told leaders and students of Australia's two Catholic universities seven reasons why the pursuit of Catholic higher education is necessary in a world increasingly antagonistic to Christian values.

The Archbishop of Sydney made his comments at the inaugural Saint John Henry Newman Annual Symposium lecture on Australian Catholic University's (ACU's) North Sydney campus. The symposium is a joint initiative of ACU and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) and is to be held annually on or near the saint's feast day of October 7.

Speaking on the topic, *Newman and the Religion of the Future*, Archbishop Fisher identified seven reasons for the continued pursuit of Catholic higher education. This included the importance of providing a sympathetic environment to the exploration of spiritual matters; the need to provide an alternative to dominant wisdom; to be a place that produces scholars and students who have a holistic and robust understanding of Christian teaching; and to prepare and form citizens for the betterment of self and society through holistic education.

Rector of the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, Fr Thomas Joseph White OP, was invited to deliver a response.

Distinguished guests at the inaugural symposium included ACU Chancellor the Hon Martin Daubney AM KC, Deputy Chancellor of UNDA Mr Michael L'Estrange AO, Auxiliary Bishops Daniel Meagher and Richard Umbers of the Archdiocese of Sydney, UNDA Vice-Chancellor Professor Francis Campbell, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience, Professor Selma Allix, and Champion College President Dr Paul Morrissey. Representatives of Church and Catholic education from across greater Sydney, and students of both ACU and UNDA, including those from Western Australia, also attended the inaugural symposium.

St John Henry Newman is best known for his instrumental lectures and essays that culminated in his seminal work, *The Idea of a University* and his efforts to establish the Catholic University of Ireland. He is also one of the most prominent Catholic converts in England to be declared a saint.

Within ACU, St John Henry Newman is Patron of Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

ACU Vice-Chancellor Professor Zlatko Skrbis said the university was proud to partner with UNDA in honouring one of the most influential leaders of Catholic higher education.

"St John Henry Newman was relentless in his efforts to defend the need for a university that valued the development of a student's intellect, while also arguing for the role of higher education in respecting diverse opinions and expertise," Professor Skrbis said.

"St John Henry Newman also viewed the university as a fundamental instrument of the Church, an idea that was later echoed by St John Paul II's *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

"ACU is proud to partner with the University of Notre Dame Australia to pay tribute to the saint whose ideas have greatly influenced our own institutions and approaches to Catholic higher education in our uniquely Australian settings.

"We hope the Symposium will continue St John Henry Newman's legacy of bringing people and their ideas into the public square."

The University of Notre Dame Australia's Vice Chancellor Professor Francis Campbell said it was important for Australia's two Catholic universities to come together to honour St John Henry Newman - a remarkable individual whose tireless work nearly 200 years ago set the foundations for our institutions.

"His Grace delivered a deeply thoughtful and powerful speech into the remarkable achievements, vision and foresight of St John Henry Newman. He can be rightly regarded as the architect of the modern Catholic higher



education system and events like this are important in reflecting and honouring his remarkable life and contribution to society,” Professor Campbell said.

**Media Contacts:**

**ACU:** Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606 or [emilie.ng@acu.edu.au](mailto:emilie.ng@acu.edu.au)

**UNDA:** David Harrison, 0419 929 622 or [david.harrison@nd.edu.au](mailto:david.harrison@nd.edu.au)