

Bishop Crean, Monsignor, Rev'd Fathers, fellow deacon's – friends
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My Name is Barry Matthews I am a Deacon of the Archdiocese of Armagh. The class have asked me to say a few words today on their behalf,

Friends - after the celebration that we have just had in the College Chapel one can be in no doubt about the importance and significance of this day in the lives of both myself and my classmates.

Today is a day to celebrate – to celebrate the grace that God has given to us in bringing each of us to this point on our journey – today is also a day to celebrate all that is good about St Patrick's College, Maynooth itself –

Everyone gathered here today represents what is good about Maynooth – each person here present has journeyed with us – you have supported us in prayer as well as through your friendship and encouragement – through your love and support. Each person here represents a family, a faith community, a workplace – you represent organisations such as the St Joseph's Young Priest Society or local groups that support our formation. It is from these places that we come here to Maynooth and it is in each of these settings that we will minister into the future.

Maynooth with its huge history dating back to 1795 and its legacy of priestly formation - serving not alone Ireland but many parts of the world boils down with God's grace, to being about one person – you and me. Our journeys to date dear friends have been varied – our backgrounds diverse but through the training programme and the support of you – family, friends, staff and fellow seminarians we as a class have come to receive the grace to receive Holy Orders today.

For many gathered here today – this will be your first visit to Maynooth. You are no doubt overwhelmed by the beauty of the

campus and the warmth of the welcome. I am happy to say that I too on my first day in seminary 5 years ago was in awe at these characteristics. It is on day's like today that we as a seminary community are called to take stock and experience again the warmth that we share – living in a community of 50 plus men can at times have its ups and downs, heaven knows many of us struggle to live in harmony in our homes with 3 and 4 others! Life in seminary however offers us a unique experience – we share a unity of faith and a common call that is difficult to understand unless you experience it first-hand and what's more it is difficult to explain.

Today dear friends is a day of gratitude – gratitude firstly to God who has brought us to the beginning of our story in ministry. Gratitude also to those of you who have shared in this day with us – those who have travelled with us here in seminary and those who have travelled to be with us today.

A huge thank you goes out to all who were involved in today's liturgy – to Bishop Crean – we thank you with heartfelt appreciation for your presence here today – your gentle presence and inspiring words acted both to encourage us and to prepare us for the road ahead.

To those involved in the liturgy we owe a debt of gratitude, to the Masters of Ceremonies under the direction of Fr Liam Tracey, to our deacons, servers, sacristans, stewards, photographer, readers, those who brought the gifts and of course the choir and soloists under the watchful eye of Dr John O'Keefe – finally a big word of thanks to the staff of Pugin hall who I think you will agree have outdone themselves today - also if I may share a secret, it is the same sense of homeliness and warmth of welcome experienced today here in Pugin that we receive throughout the year – to you all, your hard work will be forever remembered.

A special word of thanks to the Seminary Council and academic staff, spiritual directors and vocational growth team represented here today.

As a class we recognise the job of seminary council and its difficulties – we thank you for the manner in which you exercise this ministry on behalf of the Church. Your guidance and friendship throughout the years is appreciated as have been the moments when you have challenged us to become the men we are today. Your encouragement and the manner you live out your priesthood have acted as models for our own ministries.

A special word also dear friends to those who are departing our community today – I won't mention you all by name but be sure that you will remain in our prayers – to the staff members who will leave we appreciate the time you have devoted to this community and to the fourth divine class we wish you every blessing in your future ministry, to others who will leave to travel a different path be assured of our prayers.

Finally friends might I ask that as we embark the next stage of our journey you would continue to keep us in prayer – I encourage you to continue to promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to let those at home know there is always a welcome on the mat here in St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Thank you