



To all the faithful of the Archdiocese of
St Andrews & Edinburgh

Edinburgh, 15 March 2020

Dear friends,

St Mary's University, Gillis Campus, Edinburgh

During Lent we try to find ways to strip back and simplify our lives. It seems natural to me that one offshoot of such a process of stripping back, of simplification, will be an added degree of reflection. Freeing ourselves from various indulgences and vanities, which can consume our time and energy to not much good effect, we have the chance to take a deep breath; to think about the direction of our lives and about how we might live more purposefully, as more committed Christians.

With this in mind I am very pleased to tell you about a development that I hope will give all of us in the Archdiocese an opportunity to live more committed lives as Christians, enabling us to understand the Word of God more deeply and to share that Word with our neighbours with greater confidence and deeper vigour.

Later this year, in a joint venture with the Archdiocese, St Mary's University, Twickenham, the leading Catholic university in the United Kingdom, will open a new campus in Edinburgh at the Gillis Centre, whose facilities I have made available for their use.

For over a century and a half, the Gillis Centre site was home to St Margaret's Convent and School and, more briefly, to the senior seminary of the Archdiocese. It is, I believe, a cause for great rejoicing that this site will soon resume a prominent role in the provision and advancement of Catholic education in Scotland.

St Mary's University has long been a beacon of excellence in Catholic education. It was founded as a teacher training college by the Catholic Poor Schools Committee in 1850; and it has never abandoned this mission to bring the benefits of education to where they are most needed. Indeed, this mission has flourished, and St Mary's is widely recognized as one of the very best providers of teacher training in the country. Equally, St Mary's has its own Institute of Theology, as well as research centres devoted to the study of, among other things, modern slavery, theological literacy, bioethics, and religion and society.

For all of these reasons, there is no doubt in my mind that our partnership with St Mary's will create an invaluable addition to the Church in Scotland – invaluable, above all, for what it can offer to you, our Catholic lay men and women. I have written to you previously about how you, as lay Catholics, through your words and actions, your presence and witness, are called to permeate society with the grace and truth of Christ. The arrangement that we have made with St Mary's will provide an invaluable means for Catholics to grow in the knowledge and love of their faith. In this way we are also responding to Pope Francis' call to invest in the intellectual formation of the laity, and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life.

I want to encourage you all, therefore, to think seriously about the opportunities that will become available when St Mary's opens its doors at the Gillis Centre later this year. From September, at Gillis, there will be a programme of part-time courses in theology and Catholic education. Information on these is now available on the St Mary's University website. If you are a teacher or a leader in a Catholic school, or if you are a graduate keen to return to study in ways that will deepen your faith and strengthen your capacity to serve the Church and the world, or if you have friends or relatives who belong to either of these groups, please think about the new opportunities that will soon unfold here in our Archdiocese. And please spread the word.

The riches of our faith, and of the Catholic intellectual tradition, are enormous. Together, let us make the most of what our friends at St Mary's will soon lay at our feet here in Edinburgh.

With my prayers for you all in this holy season of Lent and asking that you pray for me, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Leo Cushley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

+Leo Cushley
Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh