Introduction
given by Bishop Séamus Cunningham, Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

Canon Simon Oliver has very kindly welcomed us on behalf of the Dean and Chapter and I would like to thank them for their very generous hospitality.

The Centre for Catholic Studies is an established part of the Department of Theology and Religion of the University and we mark its 10th anniversary of coming into being.

It is a great honour that the Dean and Chapter have shown the Centre by allowing this Mass of Thanksgiving to take place in the Cathedral.

The Centre is a remarkable feature of an outstanding Department and these ten years have seen fruitful growth and great achievement. By making it possible for this Mass to be here in this revered and holy place the Dean and Chapter help show that the Centre is an integral part of the University and is firmly rooted in the Christian life of the City.

It is a moment to remember the moral, financial and academic support that has made it possible for the Centre for Catholic Studies to flourish. There are many who have dug deep to make the vision of the Centre a reality and your ongoing help makes such a difference not just to the work of the Centre but to the life of the whole Church. We are truly grateful for your unstinting generosity.

I would like to thank you all for coming here this evening. We represent a diverse mixture of backgrounds, some of us are local and some from far away, academic experts and committed parishioners, laity and clergy coming together for a single purpose; to give thanks. As we begin this Eucharist, the greatest act of Thanksgiving, we begin by recognising the mercy of God.
Once again our sincere gratitude to the Dean and Chapter for giving permission for this Mass to take place in the Cathedral. This has been an occasion to touch us spiritually and emotionally and we shall always remember this most kind gesture.

Our thanks also go to quite a list of people who have played a part in making this evening possible:

The staff and administration of the Cathedral who have been so generous with their time in the planning and smooth running of this celebration and all those who have helped in stewarding.

Theresa Philips and the staff of the Centre for Catholic studies for their hard work and organisational skills.

Those who helped prepare this liturgy; Andy Doyle who put together the Order of Service, and Father Andy Downie, the University Catholic Chaplain, who did a great deal to bring things together and Father Adrian Dixon who provided support.

Fathers Christopher Warren and Peter Stott for acting as MCs.

The servers drawn from St. Cuthbert’s Parish and the Catholic Chaplaincy.

Our organist Jeremy Maritz and Philip Robinson our cantor.

Professor Paul Murray who has not only been a driving force in the arranging of this Mass and the whole Conference but especially for his vision and leadership of the Centre. Paul is a remarkable man and we are blessed to have him.