Message on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University

Dear Bishop Séamus, sisters, brothers, assembled staff, students, and friends of the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University,

It gives me great pleasure to be in communion with you, once again, on this wonderful occasion as you celebrate the 10th anniversary of the formal establishment of the Centre for Catholic Studies. At the dual launch of the Centre and the Bede Chair of Catholic Theology in May 2008, I described the CCS as a unique and much-needed space for research and teaching in Catholic theology and Catholic studies in the mainstream of the United Kingdom’s public academy. Well, so it has proved to be over the past decade.

With the support of the local diocese, numerous religious orders, multiple international partnerships, and generous individuals, the CCS has grown to form a vibrant and inclusive community of scholars of Catholicism and committed practitioners of Catholic theology. Housed within Durham University’s Department of Theology and Religion, which has an international reputation, the CCS provides a distinctive forum in which to pursue the difficult questions of our time with both creativity and fidelity and to form outstanding theologians and scholars who will go on to influence both the Church and the wider world.

As Patron of the CCS, I am delighted by how much has already been achieved: the endowment of the St Hilda Chair in Catholic Social Thought and Practice; the establishment of the Sweeting Fellowship in the History of Catholicism; and the launch of various interdisciplinary and collaborative research projects which engage the breadth of Catholic tradition, including: ‘Receptive Ecumenism’, ‘Boundary Breaking’, ‘The Religious Life Vitality Project’, ‘Love and Suffering’, ‘Ecclesial Learning about Women and the English Churches’, ‘Monks in Motion’, ‘Refugee Hosting in the Middle East’, to name but a few.

Of course, we cannot rest on our laurels. These are times of challenge as well as opportunity and there is still considerably more that needs to be done if these achievements are to be stabilised into the future.

I wholeheartedly commend Durham University, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, and all the religious orders, partner organisations, staff, students, friends, and individual donors for your crucial support for the CCS and I pray that through your commitment, generosity, and vision, the potential of the CCS will be fulfilled, giving it the stability and permanence it requires in service of Catholic mission in the United Kingdom.

With my every blessing,

Yours sincerely,

Walter Cardinal Kasper