

**Address at the Farewell Ceremony to Mrs Moira Najdecki, outgoing Director of
Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
Friday Evening 25 November 2016**

As Archbishop, I welcome you all to our farewell greetings to our dear Moira Najdecki as she concludes a very significant chapter of her professional life. We particularly welcome her mother, Barbara. We rejoice that four generations of her family are here today to stand alongside Moira at this important moment of her life. We particularly welcome Steve, Moira's husband, her four children and grandchildren.

When Catholic Christians start to evaluate the contribution of one of its members to our life in Christ, what criterion do we use?

Well, the criterion must always be some answer to the following fundamental question. How did our loved one express their baptism in their life? How did the Sacraments of Initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist) give full flowering to all that our loved one expressed in his/her life?

When we apply these fundamental questions to our dear Moira, we can immediately say that she has lived out her baptismal initiation in a most extraordinary and outstanding way.

So together with the whole Archdiocese, I thank you, Moira, for all that you have given us over the last forty years in Catholic education in this Archdiocese, especially the last almost ten years as Director of our education system in both Canberra and our rural areas, in both the ACT and New South Wales.

When I reflect on Moira's contribution, especially as Archbishop over the last three years, I think of three words that seem to be most prominent. All these words end with the letter "y".

The first word is competency.

It is quite clear that Moira is seen by her colleagues and those who deal with her in education as an extraordinarily competent women in Catholic education. We are both on several committees together. I think of the Australian Catholic University both in its Signadou Campus chapter, and the National Senate of Australian Catholic University. It is quite clear that educational experts throughout Catholic Australia consider Moira as an extraordinarily competent administrator of all matters educational. She always seems to have at her fingertips what are the requirements of both Church and State at both the local level and the national and international levels to all matters pertaining to the governance of Catholic education. So we thank the Lord for the great gift that Moira has offered us in this Archdiocese in the area of competency.

The second characteristic that comes to mind is the word tenacity.

Seeing Moira first hand on a number of occasions in my many one to one interviews with her over these years, I would say that Moira has a very high level of tenacity in regard to all that is asked of her.

In times of difficulty and times of stressing an important point that highlights the importance of Catholic education, I have always seen Moira in this light. She is a courageous woman of integrity.

It is always a joy to be at openings and blessings of new buildings and facilities of schools in the Archdiocese for many reasons. One reason is that Moira would inevitably give some history to the way this project has come to fruition. It has always been a battle and a challenge that she has supported at the local level. I think particularly, for example, the St John Paul II College and its development over the years. Particularly in its earlier foundational developmental years, there were constant challenges from all sorts of areas to develop the building and to secure the land etc. At all these points Moira was prominent by her presence and encouragement to work through any obstacle and to open up any locked door. Her tenacity is highly commendable.

A final but not exhaustive characteristic of Moira's good leadership as Director is perhaps the most important characteristic of all.

It is summarised in the word charity. One can have all the competency and tenacity but if one does not have charity, as St Paul alludes to in 1 Corinthians 13, everything else is of nothing.

But over the years I have never noticed a lapse of charity in the way that Moira has dealt with people or spoken to me of them. Yes, of course, there have been differences of opinion and times of great irritation and frustration. There may have been the raising of the eyebrow or two, but I have never heard any malicious words come from her. She has been extraordinarily loyal to those who work in Catholic education and has been exemplary in her charitable responses. I would like to thank her particularly for the way she has been loyal to me as the Archbishop in my role as first Catholic educator in this Archdiocese.

So as we continue on now with our celebrations, on behalf of all of us in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, I thank you most sincerely dear Moira for all that you have given us. Your competency, tenacity, and charity amongst many other great virtues which will now be expanded upon by other speakers, have given us great cause to gather in large numbers tonight and to thank you wholeheartedly for your service.

As you now begin a new chapter of your life we ask God's blessing upon you, Steve and the whole family. We pray that there will be many more chapters to be written in the book of your life. But as you look back of this chapter that is now ending, let us pray that you will look back with great affection and contentment on the contribution you have made to us in the Archdiocese.