

I understand you have been in touch with the university about my bid to become chancellor.

If you wish to know about my views on free speech may I refer you to my statement on the university website as part of the election process.

Please also see below two speeches I gave at the University in 2022 on the occasion of conferment an Honorary doctorate.

Please note this email inbox is not monitored and there will be no reply.

Anne Pringle

St Salvator's Chapel Service of Thanksgiving for Graduation 23 June 2022

My remarks today are based on Psalm 94 verse 16: "Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers?"

This is the first time I have delivered a sermon so please bear with me. I am mindful that the comedian George Burns once said that **The secret of a good sermon** is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.

I have been thinking a lot about good and evil recently as no doubt many of you have after watching horrific scenes of devastation and brutality in Ukraine. It is a rare thing to live through a moment of huge historic consequence as we do now and to understand in real time that is what it is. The conflict has reminded the West of what it represents - freedom, sovereignty and the rule of law. These values underpin the good in our societies, which are not perfect by any stretch but better than the alternatives.

I do not believe that people are born evil. There is a preponderance of good in most of us. Our inner moral compasses, value systems, circumstances, societies, friends and upbringing help keep us on a good path. In films, literature and video games we tend to see ourselves as the valiant heroes facing down nasty villains. But the dilemma we face in this world is that too many countries have nasty villains in charge. We share the planet with them and have to deal with that reality rather than a fantasy world and moral absolutes. Diplomacy is full of high ideals but sometimes messy compromises and choices which range from bad to worse.

Where tyrants are concerned - and sadly I have known a few - it seems to me that the scales tip towards evil as they grow into leadership. Their risk appetites grow as their grip on power tightens and circle of advisers narrows. They become more isolated, insecure, zealous and resentful. This tends to lead to misjudgements and a shocking lack of empathy for humanity. We have seen this again and again with Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Milosevic and now Putin. But tyrants are not alone. They require supporters to bomb hospitals, run concentration camps, kill children. If the leadership is evil, the collective operating in their name tends towards evil too. Supporters may be driven by a mixture of conviction, fear or the hope of material rewards. They may try to justify their actions by claiming that right is on their side. Others, who may not support the appalling regimes they live under nevertheless allow them to thrive by staying silent. So do some large, so-called, democratic countries, seeing trade and political advantages from refusing to take punitive action against blatant evil.

I do not underestimate how difficult it is to be courageous when living under tyranny. Thank God we do not face such existential choices in our own societies. Nevertheless, ultimately being

held to lower standards does you no favours. The question for our times remains what to do about evil tyrants and the people who support them.

After the Second World War our forebears, driven by noble ideals and vision, were determined there should be no further wars in Europe. While the perpetrators were punished, efforts were made towards reconciliation, underpinned by economic and security architecture to entrench Western values and freedoms against extremist ideologies. Then in 1975 the right of sovereign states to self-determination in their choice of partnerships was enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, signed also by the then USSR.

There was a brief window of optimism at the end of the Cold War that a Europe whole and free might become a reality. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has abruptly shattered that hope. The decades-old policy of seeking peace through engagement with Russia is gone. Some would argue it was always bound to fail. That Russia could be a democracy or an Empire but not both. Once again we are left facing tough choices.

The immediate need is to stop the war and suffering. What then? How do we restore peace in Europe, heal the rifts? What will defeat and victory look like in practical terms? That is not a question we can answer here but it matters profoundly for all our futures. The desire for vengeance and retribution is rightly strong but a poor peace and the wrong economic and security architecture will simply dampen smouldering embers as we found after the First World War.

Where do we as individuals fit into all of this? Edmund Burke once said “**The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.**” He meant all of us. The Russian opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, cited it as his reason for returning to Russia following medical treatment in Germany after the Russian authorities tried to kill him with novichok. He is now in prison.

My point is that individuals can and do make a difference, both for good and evil. It is not a given that failing democracies will degenerate forever into authoritarian states. Sometimes regimes seem to have everything they need to bolster themselves up: the weapons of fear and brutality, control of the media, police, army, intelligence services, but there comes a tipping point when ordinary people determine enough is enough. We saw this repeatedly in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and indeed in Russia in August 1991. In the end appeasement of tyrants tends always to end in the same way. Badly. When enough people are prepared to stand up for decency, freedom and integrity, the seeming strength of dictatorships can crumble quickly.

I will leave you with words from Martin Luther at the Assembly of the Holy Roman Empire in Worms in 1521 where he vigorously defended his Protestant beliefs in the face of death threats: “to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen”.

Honorary degree ceremony, Younger Hall, St Andrews 23 June 2022.

Response to Laureation address by the Principal.

Cx, Vcx , distinguished guests and graduates.

It's an honour to be with you today for your graduation from one of the finest Universities in the world.

Over 40 years ago I sat where you are sitting now wondering what life had in store.

The world looked somewhat different then: there was no social media, no iPads, no iPhones - although we did have TVs and motor cars. The West was in a nuclear standoff with the Soviet Union after failed glimmers of a thaw. The UK had just voted resoundingly to continue its membership of the European Economic Community. The Foreign Office looked different too: female diplomats were forced to resign on marriage until 1973. So there weren't many around.

I spent most of my career helping to forge closer cooperation with Europe and dealing with the consequences of the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 which few had foreseen. Like generations before us, we were driven by lofty ideals: to forge a peaceful Europe after two World Wars and to defend our freedoms against extremist ideologies. We were also realistic about the challenges.

There was a brief window of optimism at the end of the Cold War that a Europe whole and free might become a reality. We celebrated as Central European countries, the Baltic States and others chose to take their place among free nations. So did they. And they still do. We were not naive about Russia but hopeful that a more prosperous Russia, integrated into the global trading system, whose citizens enjoyed freedoms unheard of under Communism, might have a stake in a more settled European neighbourhood and in tackling global challenges together.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shattered that post-Cold War optimism and effort.

It is a rare thing to live through a moment of huge historical consequence, as we do now and try to draw the right lessons. This new age will impact all our lives.

Here are three issues for you to consider:

Firstly, liberal values really do matter. Corrupt, self-serving governments do not deliver good governance and rarely care. Extremists of any hue do not do so either.

Secondly freedom is not free. We must nurture the liberties we largely take for granted or risk seeing them snatched away.

That means paying for security and defence, supporting the rule of law, an independent media and judiciary. When Governments declare heinous acts to be red lines they should be just that. Red lines. Tyrants read inaction as weakness and will always press their advantage.

Thirdly, never underestimate the power of the individual to change the course of history for good. It was not a given that the Polish shipyard worker Lech Walesa, or the Czech playwright Vaclav Havel would become Presidents of their respective countries. They expected to be shot for resisting a Communist chokehold. Zelensky is another hero of our times. Each of you

individually can make a difference if you are prepared to speak up against what you know to be wrong.

I wish you were inheriting a safer world. However, I take comfort from the determination of many people not to be cowed; from your generation's ability to tackle the global problems we face, not least climate change and poverty, with compassion and imagination. So please take responsibility for the world around you and be as courageous as you can be.