Introduction of Professor Emeritus

It is both a pleasure and an honor to introduce Newman Theological College’s newest Professor Emeritus. The honor of Professor Emeritus is conferred by the College through its Academic Senate upon faculty members who have served with distinction throughout their career and who continue to serve as ambassadors. These qualities are eminently true of today’s recipient Dr. Robert McKeon.

In the Archdiocese of Edmonton and beyond Dr. McKeon’s work brings to mind the theory and practice of social justice, causes to which he has devoted is professional and personal life. In light of this some may be surprised to learn that his first degree was a B.S. in Physics completed in 1968 at Manhattan College. After serving in the United States Navy from 1969-72, he went on to further studies at the University of Wyoming and the University of San Diego, completing and M.Ed. degree at the University of Montana in 1976. Concurrently, he began studies here at Newman where he graduated with from the B.Th. and M.Th. programs. He also obtained a Ph.D. in Theology in 2003 from the University of St. Michael’s College (Toronto) with a thesis titled: “The Canadian Catholic Social Justice Paradigm: Birth, Growth, Decline and Crisis”. This is all the more impressive given that it was completed while carrying out a very rigorous teaching schedule here at Newman.

Dr. McKeon has had a very distinguished teaching career at Newman beginning in 1979 and he continues to teach academic courses as well as leading a seminar on Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si. In view of his service to the College, he was promoted to Full Professor of Theology in 2005. While rightly known for his expertise in Social Justice, it must be noted that over more then three decades of teaching he has taught courses in every department in the College. Dr. McKeon also served as the director of Field Education, the Vice-Dean of theology and a term as Acting Dean of Theology. It is only fair to say that in my own estimation his leadership in these areas helped to lay the foundation for the success the College is experiencing today. In addition to his work at Newman he has also taught at our sister institutions, St. Joseph’s College and St. Stephen’s College.

At this point it is customary to list the publications and addresses of the new Professor Emeritus. In this case, the list runs to over 10 pages so I will not recite them for you. Suffice it to say that they include many important contributions not only in the academic community, but also to the media and in the service to many ecclesial and community organizations that are carrying out the work of social justice on the ground, all of which is in addition to his well known leadership on many boards devoted to social justice in the Edmonton area.
On a personal note, I would like to say that when I arrived at Newman some eleven years ago I was very struck by Bob’s love for his students, for the College and for the Church and I consider him to be a real mentor in how to lead in all of these areas. There is no doubt in my mind that Newman Theological College, the city of Edmonton, and the Church in Western Canada are all much more vibrant and faithful for his countless contributions. For all of these reasons I am proud on behalf of Newman Theological College to confer upon you, our dear friend and colleague, the rank of Professor Emeritus with all of the rights and duties pertain thereto. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Bob McKeon.