

**Address given by Beatrice Hughes, Chairperson of the Board of Management
on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty first anniversary of Loreto Centre.**

Good evening everyone. You are all most welcome here this evening for this very special occasion, marking 21 years of the Loreto Centre Crumlin. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Beatrice Hughes and my connection with the Loreto Centre began about 12 years ago, when I embarked on the Women's Studies Diploma Programme, a course that was to have a profoundly positive impact on me and one that changed the trajectory of my life. Following on from this, I became a student mentor and I am incredibly proud and privileged to have gone on to become a tutor myself. Though, this evening I am here welcoming you all in my capacity of Chairperson of the Loreto Centre. A position I am very proud to hold, having benefited so much myself from the centre, I now feel most privileged to be here this evening, welcoming you all to help mark and celebrate the Loreto Centre's 21st anniversary.

Everybody here has contributed to the Loreto Centre in some way or another. Whether you provide very welcome sustenance by way of delicious home baked cakes that are enjoyed during board meetings, whether you provide beautiful displays of flowers for special occasions, whether you support and encourage daunted students and learners to believe in themselves, or whether you bear witness to clients who share their pain and anguish, whatever it is you do, you all contribute to the Loreto Centre – and this evening is about you. It's about celebrating our combined efforts and contributions – that create the wonderful community resource that is the Loreto Centre.

Many of you may be familiar with the anecdote about President John F. Kennedy, who was visiting NASA headquarters for the first time in 1961. While touring the facility, he introduced himself to a janitor who was mopping the floor and asked him what he did at NASA. He replied, after some thought, "Mr President, I'm helping put a man on the moon!"

And so it is with all of us here this evening, we may not be helping to put a man on the moon, though speaking of American presidents I can think of one we might like to, though in truth, we are doing something far more important. We are giving people back their dignity, we are giving people a second chance to learn and become educated and we are helping people to

heal from the hurts that life has dealt them. We are helping them reach their potential and what can be more important than that.

And while I can't name everyone involved in the centre from its inception 21 years ago, there are some people who deserve a special acknowledgement and thanks this evening,

I'll begin with the Trustees of the Loreto Centre, and for those of you who don't know, the Trustees are the Provincial Leadership Team of the Loreto Sisters (IBVM), Irish Province. The support of the Trustees and the provincial leaders, both former and present, can't be overstated. Without their support and vision, the Loreto Centre simply wouldn't exist. The Centre's journey began in 1997, when Sr Mary O'Kane, who was then provincial leader, asked Sr Anne O'Dwyer, both of whom are with us this evening, to do a social analysis of the area and to see if the recently vacated building, which had been the former residence of the Loreto sisters, could serve a purpose in the local community.

Following Anne's social analysis that consisted of talking to locals, visiting other centres, attending meetings and engaging with local representatives, she proposed to Sr Mary, that the house be turned into a place of healing and wholeness, an oasis where people would find rest, nourishment and support on their life's journey.

And from those humble beginnings, Sr Anne O'Dwyer, Centre Manager from 1998 – 2008, guided and nurtured the development of the centre into the oasis in the community that she had envisioned. So, thank you Anne for your vision for the centre and thank you Sr Mary for believing in that vision.

Sr Rionach Donlon was also Provincial Leader during that first decade as was Sr Teresa McPaul, who is sadly no longer with us. With their continued support and under the leadership of Sr Anne, the centre became not only a centre for community education but also a counselling service that was to be of immense value to the local community.

The range of educational courses increased to include Stress Management, Women and Health, Co-Dependency, Psychology, Therapeutic Art, Flower Arranging, Yoga, Tai Chi and Spirituality, to name but a few.

In the year 2000 the first certificate in Women's Studies began, which was run in conjunction with the Outreach programme in UCD and I am very pleased to say that this course still continues today. I would like to welcome some of the many graduates to celebrate with us here this evening, along with some present and former Tutors from CDET and UCD.

And as a former student of the centre myself, I can assure all the tutors, that the work you do is priceless in terms of second chance education and in terms of broadening horizons and fostering new interests and friendships. I would like to extend a particular thanks to Dr Aideen Quilty, Outreach Co-Ordinator from UCD for her continued commitment to delivering the outreach programme and to all the lecturers and tutors who support the learning that takes place here, both accredited and non-accredited. The tutors and the lecturers that work in the Loreto Centre are second to none. They are amazing and they do amazing and incredible work.

I would like to thank Sister Ita Moynihan, current Provincial Leader, who I have had the pleasure of working with myself who has been most supportive over the past four years, particularly in terms of providing the funding from the Trustees for very necessary upgrading in fire and safety that has ensured the future of the building and that has allowed us continue to provide these much needed services to the local community.

I would also like to mention Sr Noelle Corcaddon who was Provincial Leader following on from Sr Teresa. She understood the need to ensure that the centre would be ready for new charity legislation and during her term of office oversaw the development of a new constitution and the appointment of the first Board of Management.

The boards of management, present and former and the management committee who preceded the Board and guided the early years and initial development of the centre, provided yet another invaluable service, working in the background, ensuring compliance in

terms of governance and legislative requirements. Thank you all for the hard work that you put in that you have put in over the years. And I would like to pay a particular tribute to the current board of management, you are a great team and I am very grateful for your continued guidance and support.

I mentioned already the counselling service that the Loreto Centre provides. We have over 40 therapists who volunteer their time here annually. This centre could not offer this fantastic service to the local community without their dedication and commitment.

Some of these therapists have been volunteering in the centre for over 12 years and I am sorry to say that we are bidding farewell to one such therapist, Jeanette Watters, after 13 years of committed service to the Loreto Centre. Thank-you Jeanette and thanks to all the volunteer therapists, who work quite invisibly in the background, doing the amazing and at times very challenging work that you do. On behalf of all the clients that you have borne witness to, that you have helped and supported over the years, a most sincere thank you.

This fantastic team of volunteer therapists has been led by Pat Colgan, who, along with Sr Brede Quirke, have built up the psychotherapy service over the past 11 years. Pat's guidance and professionalism has enabled the centre to respond to the many, varied and at times extreme emotional and mental health needs of the local community.

Brede has often said that the healing began when clients first met Pat for their initial assessment. Pat's gift for empathy and compassion, for making clients feel safe and feel heard, allowed the healing process to begin with him, before they had even attended their first counselling session. And I have learned just this week, that we will be bidding farewell to Pat also. We are immensely grateful for all that you have done for the centre Pat. A very sincere and heartfelt thanks from all at the Loreto Centre and particularly from 'one great team of therapists' as you described them yourself. Thank-you Pat for all that you have done for us.

I would also like to thank the administrative and household staff, who look after all the needs of the clients, learners and staff. You do so much of the background and at times invisible work that allows the centre to function smoothly on a daily basis. Many of you here will have

had the pleasure of visiting the Loreto Centre so you will know for yourselves, what a welcoming space it is to come into, and you are very much to thank for that. A sense of safety and openness emanates from the centre, thanks to the welcoming presence you create. I would also like to pay a special tribute to Karen Hollowed, who was a participant on the first personal development course that took place here in 1998, and continues to play a key role in the Loreto Centre today and whose commitment to the Centre is evident to all who work with. Thank-you Karen and thank you to all the administrative and household staff for the great work that you do.

And speaking of the admin and household staff, we are indebted to the JI and CE community employment placement schemes for these staff, we would be lost without them so a very warm welcome to Gladys and Barbara who are here with us this evening, representing the CE schemes.

I am also pleased to welcome here this evening Liz O'Sullivan, AEO and her colleague Mary Mc Kevitt of the CDETB who fund the majority of the tutors. Thank you for your ongoing support for the non-accredited classes.

Thank you also to Tusla, who part-fund the counselling aspect of the service. Thank you for your continued support and we are looking forward to developing a closer working relationship with Tusla into the future.

And from the wider community, we are delighted that some of the local doctors have joined us this evening. The collaborative manner in which we deliver our services, working closely as we do with local GP's, ensures a tighter safety net for the more vulnerable clients who attend the centre, so thank you for your continued support of the Loreto Centre.

I would also like to thank Rainbows Ireland and the counselling training colleges who have joined us this evening. Dublin South City Partnership were unable to send a representative due to a clash with an event they are holding but I want to thank them for their funding assistance towards our courses and for providing maintenance staff from their TUS scheme.

Again, working collaboratively with each organisation ensures that our clients have the best outcomes.

I would also like to thank the many friends of the Centre, some of whom have benefited from its services themselves, and who now give back to the centre through fund-raising, arranging coffee mornings, running mini marathons. Thank you all for your continued support.

And I would like to thank the Board and principal of the Loreto Secondary school, Mary Ellen Murphy for the use of the hall this evening- also the principals and boards of managements of the Primary and Junior Loreto Schools with whom we share this campus. We are delighted to have you here with us this evening. And thank you also to our caterers, Event Waiter, we look forward to tasting your wares very shortly.

What is really great about having so many of us here this evening to celebrate, is that an evening like this provides many of us with a rare opportunity to meet each other, that we wouldn't otherwise get. Many of us are unknown to each other, working invisibly in the background, in our own separate roles, or it may simply be a case that our paths never cross.

Though there is one last person I would like to thank this evening, who I have no doubt has crossed everyone's path at some stage or another, and that is Sr Brede Quirke,.

Taking over the centre 11 years ago and building on the very solid foundations that Anne had set, Brede has worked tirelessly to make the centre what it is today. To say that Brede runs a tight ship is an understatement. She leaves no stone unturned and when it comes to finding solutions, she is determined beyond belief. Though aside from Brede's efficient management of the Loreto Centre, Brede has managed the centre with heart, seeing each person, be they staff or volunteer, learner or client, in their full humanity. She has led the Centre most capably and ably through its second decade.

Brede, who we will also be bidding farewell to in September, on behalf of all the therapists and staff, clients and learners who have come through the centre over the last number of

years, a most sincere thank you for unwavering commitment and for all that you have done. You are an inspiration Brede and it has been such a pleasure to work with you.

But this evening is not about farewells, but rather it is about celebrating and one of the things that I have learned in my time at the Loreto Centre, a most valuable lesson, and that is to celebrate our successes, to take stock of all that we have done. Stop, take a look, pat ourselves on the back, and then, and only then, look to the future to see where to next.

We are here this evening to celebrate the first 21 years of the Loreto Centre and to welcome in the next phase. And I find it most fitting, that at 21 years, the Loreto Centre will move, having reached adulthood in human terms, from under the direct stewardship and management of two Loreto Sisters, Sr Anne and Sr Brede, who nurtured and developed the centre into what it is today.

It is now time to welcome in the next phase, under the new management of Anca Lupe, who unfortunately cannot be here with us this evening but who sends her very best wishes. So, let's make this evening about all of us here, who, through our combined efforts, dedication and commitment, have helped to create this fantastic community resource, this oasis of healing and let's make this evening about celebrating the Loreto Centre past, present and future.

Thank you