# Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow Honorary Degree speech

Manish Joshi: It is with great pleasure. Therefore, Vice-Principal with the authority of Senate, I ask you to confer upon Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, the degree of Doctor of the University honoris causa.

Vice Principal Professor Scott MacGregor: I create you, Doctor to the University honoris causa. Many congratulations, and welcome to the University.

Magnus: It gives me just huge pleasure. I just feel deeply honored by the University of Strathclyde. This, if I am really honest, this this honor today kind of ramps up my long held feelings of imposter syndrome quite a few notches as a as a salmon farmer from Argyll who dropped out of university at 18 years of age. I can't pretend this really was ever one of my expectations.

It wasn't really one of my life goals. But I feel, I feel hugely honored. And some of my discomfort today is, I suppose, alleviated by by the understanding that I think this honor’s really for the Mary’s Meals family. This amazing movement of people all over the world who just won't accept that any child in this in this world of plenty should go a day without food.

They won't accept any child should be deprived of their education because of hunger and poverty. And we've just heard about the amazing example of the Mary’s Meals society here in the University of Strathclyde. They're incredible. They’ve inspired me so much over the years. As you heard, my my son founded the society quite a few years ago now, and it's really just gone from strength to strength.

And amongst other things, they fundraised to provide Mary’s Meals to a whole school in Malawi. Hundreds of children's lives are being transformed simply because they know that every day at school they will eat. And so they come and those meals enable them to learn. You know, and one of the one of the wonderful things about getting a bit older now is just to be able to to see how this simple thing we do one meal every day is changing things, not just the immediate things for hungry children, but but changing things in the long term.

Another person that graduated fairly recently, and my mind today is a young woman called Veronica in Malawi. Veronica was amongst the very first group of 200 children to ever eat Mary’s Meals back in 2002 in her village in Malawi. She was an orphan. She was raised by her two older sisters. She'll she tells us about the fact that sometimes they went for as long as a week home without eating a meal.

And she also tells us that she never, ever would have stepped inside the school if it wasn't for the promise of Mary’s Meals. It was the meals that took her into the classroom for the first time. And in recent times, Veronica graduated with a degree a degree in education, actually, and is teaching today in a college in Malawi.

All this work, all these years would have been worth it, just just for Veronica to see how her life has changed and to see how now she's changing the lives of others. But it's not only Veronica. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of Veronica's out there because of the work of Mary’s Meals, because of all the people that support it in so many different ways, like the Mary’s Meals society here, all over the world.

That's happening. And and thank God that is because the need for Mary’s Meals is greater than I've ever seen in all the 20 years of doing this work. More hungry children than ever. More children falling out of education because of hunger. So our our vision that every child in this world might at least eat a meal every day in their place of education, it burns brighter than ever, you know, and those of you already part of this movement, I just encourage you to go on.

Those of you who might be new to Mary’s Meals, I encourage you to join the movement so we might reach the next hungry child waiting. And today, just just finally, I know, you know, so many of you here are this is your huge day to finally graduate after all these years of study. You've done it the normal way, not the way that I've kind of come across this degree.

And I first of all, I just salute you for for grasping that gift you've been offered of an education. Because the couple of things I thought I might just want to share with you today is one is just about about how certainly myself and I think many of us can take the gift of education for granted. You know, and I'm full of shame sometimes in the years since spending time in the world's poorest communities, meeting so many young people who would do anything for that opportunity to gain an education.

You know, certainly even children of primary school age, even more children who can't go to high school, let alone those who aspire to go to university. So many young people around the world desperate for that. And it's beyond their reach. You've grasped that gift you've been given and worked for this day, and I congratulate you on that. And I suppose just the other thing, as I as I reflect on my own life, I never lose the sense of surprise.

This wasn't my plan. I was never qualified to do this work. And when I think back on myself as a young person, I was chronically shy. I was lacking in confidence. I would have just laughed if someone had suggested my life would turn out this way and I would be able to do something that would help others. And I would just encourage all of you today, because clearly so many of you already appreciate that.

The importance of education. You know, I believe that the battle with hunger actually begins in the classroom, and that's where that will be won by. I just encourage you, maybe especially any of you who might be lacking a little bit in confidence like I used to. Don't underestimate the difference you can make. You know, I think every single one of us has this opportunity, lots of opportunities, in fact, to make this world better in all sorts of different ways.

So we all have the chance to do that. And if if you want a life of of meaning, a life in which you feel fulfilled, if you want the life of adventure, I would really encourage you just to think about those opportunities and to step out and to use your gifts and this gift that you've been given of this very special education here at the University of Strathclyde.

So thank you very much for this very great honor.