

St Patrick's

Spring 2025 — No 25

The newsletter of St Patrick's Pontifical University & St Patrick's National Seminary



St Patrick's day message

As this newsletter reaches you, St Patrick's Day is just around the corner—a day of deep significance for the Irish at home and the millions across the world who share in our heritage. But for us here at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, this day carries an even greater resonance. Our patron, whose mission transformed Ireland forever, continues to inspire the work we do today.

When Patrick sailed up the Boyne in 433, he came not just to proclaim the Gospel but to set hearts on fire. That same flame, first lit on the Hill of Slane, still burns here in Maynooth. Through our Seminary and Pontifical University, we form both ordained ministers and lay graduates who carry that light into their communities, making the world better—one person, one act of faith, one moment of service at a time.

Today, St Patrick's College is home to Ireland's only Pontifical University and its last remaining Inter-Diocesan

*"I arise today through God's strength to pilot me,
God's wisdom to guide me, God's way to lie before me."*

Seminary. That word—*Pontifical*—is not just a title; it expresses what we are about. It signifies our deep connection to the universal Church, our mission to engage with the great questions of faith and reason, and our commitment to forming leaders who will serve in both Church and society. I believe both the Seminary and University are called to be catalysts for the renewal of the Church in Ireland—a dynamic centre of Catholic thought, dialogue, and research.

As I grow into my role as Interim President, I am energised by the opportunities ahead: strengthening our student base, expanding our programmes, deepening our engagement with the wider community through our Centre for Mission and Ministries, and equipping people for ministry in both Church and society.

Exciting plans are taking shape for the future of St Patrick's, which I look forward to sharing in time. For now, I am grateful for the support of so many as I return to the role following a recent health setback. This moment has only deepened my conviction that our task is to be bridge-builders—between faith and action, tradition and innovation, personal calling and community need. St Patrick's must not only be a place of learning but a community of faith in action, where aspiration meets service and vocation is lived.

On this feast of our patron, I extend my gratitude, good wishes, and blessings to you all.

Rev Dr Michael Shortall
Interim President





Rev Dr Michael Shortall, welcoming students, families and guests at the annual student prizegiving ceremony.



Student Awards

Each year we get to celebrate our students and especially those who excel or go beyond in their programme of study at the annual student prizegiving ceremony. It is heart warming to be able to recognise our students in the company of their friends and families in an informal setting where we get to pause and reflect on the difference the university makes in people's lives.

Each year, Faculty invite an outside speaker to provide some context and encouragement to our students. Baroness Nuala O'Loan delivered the keynote address in which

she told our students that the skills they acquire when studying Philosophy and Theology will allow them to make a difference in a complex world. To speak the truth, to call out misrepresentations and work out the objective truth. She also said students will have the capacity to do great things and put what they've learned into practice to ultimately make the world a better place.

This year's ceremony was presided over by Acting Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Dr John Paul Sheridan and Interim President Dr Michael Shortall.

Theology Faculty update Maynooth Reflects

I am John-Paul Sheridan, a priest of the diocese of Ferns and currently (Interim) Dean of Theology and I have been a member of the faculty and community at SPPU for the past ten years. Community is an important word for me when it comes to teaching and learning. My postgraduate studies took place in a community of learning, and I saw the ability of that community to support, nurture and bolster each other from time to time.

The educational theorist, Étienne Wenger suggests that "...because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming...It is in that formation of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy." This is much of what we aspire to for our students, both undergraduate and postgraduate at Maynooth; that learning within the community of SPPU will be a transformative dynamic on

their lives and identity. This is what is at the heart of our work on student retention, on Quality Assurance, on welcoming speakers and academics to the various guest lectures – ITQ, Devlin and Corish. This is at the heart of the research seminars at postgraduate level and in the myriads of conversations over cups of tea and coffee in Pugin Hall. An innovation this year is a student journal, *The Donkey* that was written and produced by our students under the careful and dedicated curatorship of Dr Julia Meszaros.

This semester will see the publication of the third in the series of *Maynooth Reflects...books*. This title focusses on Catechesis and the new Ministry of Catechists, which was instituted by Pope Francis with the publication of *Antiquum Ministerium* in 2021.

The book is edited by Drs Jeremy Corley, Andrew Meszaros and me. Pope Francis states, "From the beginning, the Christian community was characterised by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church."

This sentence from *Antiquum Ministerium* sums up again something of the work and mission of SPPU. The preparation of people for ministry is the present work of the Centre for Mission and Ministries, and the Theology faculty seeks to assist that work by giving the students a grounding in theology which will be the foundation and bedrock of their ministry. We hope that the *Maynooth Reflects on Catechesis in the Life of the Church* will further enhance our commitment to theology and ministry into the future.



John-Paul Sheridan
Interim Dean of Theology





Outgoing Student Ambassador and new graduate of the BATH programme, Niall Carey with Archbishop Eamon Martin, Chancellor.



Dr Gaven Kerr, Registrar, Dr Karla Broussard, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Chancellor, Rev Dr Michael Shortall, Interim President.



Graduations

Our annual Graduation ceremony took place on Sat Nov. 9th in our historic College Chapel. Master of ceremonies was Dr Gaven Kerr, Academic Registrar, assisted by Rev Dr John Paul Sheridan, Acting Dean of Theology and Rev Dr Michael Shortall, Interim President.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Chancellor of St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth addressed the gathering, including graduates, faculty members and staff of the university, family and friends.

Archbishop Martin observed the diversity of the graduating classes of 2024, including different age profiles, single and married people, and a number of different nationalities present. The Chancellor encouraged

those graduating to take what they have learned from studying Theology and Philosophy out into the world, not to hold it back for themselves. Graduates were told they can be Pilgrims of Hope, interpreting the gospel within the culture in which they live. Theology linked to prayer is a reflection on and of faith, it helps those of faith to avoid being slaves to changing fashion trends.

In offering congratulations to all, Archbishop Martin wished that graduates would express the gospel in their lives and help restore faith.

The Chancellor also thanked Rev Prof Michael Mullaney, outgoing President for his years of dedication to the college. It was noted that Rev Mullaney had guided the College through a period of change and challenge including the pandemic and that he had left the university in a positive position now that it is on the cusp of gaining QQI awarding status recognition, established the new Centre for Mission & Ministries and is introducing new programmes in response to a changing church and societal landscape.



Carol Service

Undoubtedly the high point of winter time on campus is our annual Carol Service. Described in national media as the 'hottest ticket in Kildare', demand significantly outstrips supply every year.

The event featured outstanding performances by the College Chapel Choir and Maynooth Choral Society, directed by Dr John O'Keeffe; the Schola Gregoriana, led by Dr Darina

McCarthy; and the Maynooth University Chamber Choir, under the direction of Dr Michael Dawson.

Also featured in this year's Carol Service was the first performance of neo-Old Irish hymn, written by Prof David Stifter & music by Dr Ryan Molloy, "Rétglu eter rind" (A star among constellations).

A heartfelt thank you to all the musicians, organisers, and guests who made this year's Carol Service a success, with special recognition to Caroline Tennyson for her exceptional work in overseeing the event.





The Seminary Community and guests at the Come and See weekend.



Tiernan Burke pictured with his father and Bishop Roche



Seminary Update

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – Visit to Braemor Park

On Wednesday 22nd January, the Rector was invited to preach during Prayer for Christian Unity with the community of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, Braemor Park. He was accompanied by two of the resident seminarians, Tiernan Burke (Cloyne) and Stephen Sherry (Clogher), who are both in their final year at the National Seminary. They are pictured with the Rev Dr Maurice Canon Elliott, Director and with students who are preparing for ministry in the Church of Ireland. Our sincere thanks go to Dr Elliott and to all at Braemor Park for the warmth of the welcome and the wonderful hospitality shared by all.

Maynooth Seminarians visit the Pro-Cathedral & the GPO

The seminarians of St Patrick's National Seminary, accompanied by the Rector Fr Tomás Surlis and members of the Community of Formators, paid a visit to St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin on 30th January. We were warmly welcomed by the Cathedral Administrator, Fr Kieran McDermott, who gave us an informative and interesting tour of "the Pro", which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. During our visit, we were shown some precious artifacts, including the Archbishop's Chalice, the magnificent organ and the scale wooden model which is soon to be restored and placed on public display. Providentially, our visit took place on the feast day of the Dublin Martyrs Blessed Margaret Ball and Francis Taylor at whose impressive statue the Seminary

Community paused before leaving the Cathedral precincts to make our way to the G.P.O. where we were given a tour of the museum and exhibition which gives a fascinating insight into the history of this iconic Dublin landmark.

Come and See weekend at the National Seminary

The Seminary hosted the annual *Come and See* weekend from 15th – 17th November 2024. 15 men who are discerning a vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood, together with a small number of Diocesan Vocations Directors and members of the Bishops' Council for Vocations joined the Seminary Community for prayer and social events and they also participated in workshops, during which they learned about the life of a seminarian and the ministry of a Priest in Ireland today. The weekend was a source of encouragement for both discerners and seminarians and a sign of hope for the Church in Ireland as we enter into the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025.

Ministries 2024-25

It was a pleasure to welcome the newly-ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, Most Rev Donal Roche to the Seminary on Thursday 24th October 2024 to preside at the Ministry of Acolyte. Tiernan Burke (Cloyne) received the ministry and he was accompanied by his father Donal and by the members of the Seminary Community.

Most Rev Paul Dempsey, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, presided at Admission to Candidacy on Thursday 5th December 2024. Barnabas Tumwekwase (Raphoe) and Salesians

Matthew Alfino; Jerin Anthony; Raphael Axisa; Takim Michael and Lucian Okafor were admitted as Candidates for Ordination as Deacon and Priest.

On Thursday 6th February 2025, the community celebrated the Ministry of Lector during Mass with Most Rev Niall Coll, Bishop of Ossory. Six seminarians received the ministry: Mark Caffrey (Meath); Ciarán Carragher (Armagh); Damien Kirkpatrick (Down and Connor); William O Shea (Cloyne); Patrick Ibu Oshie (Ogoja/Achonry) and Israel Etebe Osikang (Ogoja/Achonry).

January Formation Workshop and Retreat

Br John Mark Falkenhain OSB of St Meinrad Archabbey, Indiana facilitated a three-day formation workshop with our resident seminarians on formation for celibate living. He is a renowned expert in the field and it was a privilege to welcome him back to the National Seminary. The New Year retreat was directed by Fr Éamonn Bourke, a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin who is on the Chaplaincy Team in UCD and it was a great pleasure to have him with us for the three-day retreat.



Rector and Maynooth seminarians pictured with Canon Elliott and students of Braemor Park



Br John Mark pictured with members of the Community of Formators and Seminary Community



Seminary Community pictured outside St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin



Former MEP, Frances Fitzgerald addressing the conference.

Human Trafficking Conference

In late November the Pontifical University in conjunction with the Institute for Social Concerns, University of Notre Dame, the Albert Gubay Foundation and the Santa Marta Group [SMG] hosted a one day conference on Human Trafficking – Justice and Faith Perspectives. In attendance were many who are directly involved in responding to this reality across the globe. There is a growing network of criminal gangs who traffic women, men and children for exploitation either in the sex trade or in the work place. Many of those who are trafficked are from regions that are poor or devastated by conflict.

The contributors on the day included Frances Fitzgerald, former MEP, who gave a wonderful overview of the efforts in the European Parliament to curb this industry which destroys the lives of so many people. She raised important questions about the growing legalisation of prostitution in Europe and the contribution that makes to the creation of a culture where people, especially women, can be objectified and sold. Detective Chief Superintendent Colm Noonan left the conference in no doubt that human trafficking is a growing reality in Ireland both for sexual exploitation and exploitation in the labour market. He outlined in some detail the efforts of the justice system in Ireland to curb this trade in human misery and to rescue those enslaved. He too raised challenging questions about Irish culture and the societal attitudes that enable human trafficking to exist and to increase year by year while generating huge financial benefits for criminal gangs.

Sr Ethna Regan, Professor of Theology and Ethics at DCU, engaged with the reality of human trafficking from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching. Her erudite contribution highlighted the intrinsic dignity of the human person and the reality of sinful structures and attitudes that deny that dignity. Religious sisters across the globe

have worked for decades against the trafficking industry and provide a whole network of supports and strategies that enable those trafficked to regain their freedom. Sr Abby Avelino, who is based in Rome, gave a powerful account of this ministry, 'Ambassadors of Hope', and the real challenges facing those trafficked and the religious communities working to break the cycle of exploitation.

Kevin Hyland OBE, Strategy Director of SMG gave an overview of work being done by Catholic agencies and legal systems across Europe. He also facilitated a lively plenary session.

The global reality of human trafficking and the underlying attitudes that feed this sinful industry were starkly exposed in this thought provoking conference. The relevance of *Dignitas Infinita: On Human Dignity*, issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith [2024], was starkly affirmed by the realities brought to light in this conference.



APOCALYPTIC AND ESCHATOLOGICAL SPACES: THINKING BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY



Scan here to register

International Symposium in May

On May 1-3 SPPU will host an international symposium in tandem with the annual lecture in Christian Philosophy, which will be given by Prof Emmanuel Falque (Paris). The symposium is co-sponsored as a joint initiative between St Patrick's Pontifical University, the Institut Catholique Toulouse, and the Relational Ontology Research Network based in Rome.

The collaborative event aims to strengthen interdisciplinary research relationships between our institutions and bring together leading scholars from around the globe to explore an exchange between faith and reason. Postgraduate students interested in learning more about apocalyptic discourse and eschatology from patristic sources to contemporary developments, or those wanting to identify specific pastoral challenges that invite further theological research to address real-world needs, or those seeking a model of how to improve research skills will benefit from attending this event.

SPPU systematic theologian Dr Joshua Furnal says: 'Through this initiative we hope to build from Maynooth's rich heritage and create a network of strategic partnerships around urgent questions, which also highlights SPPU as a unique place to study the Catholic intellectual tradition because it enables academic research in concert with its practical pastoral training and spiritual formation'.

Early career researchers and (potential) postgraduate students are particularly welcomed. For more info, visit: eventbrite.ie/e/apocalyptic-and-eschatological-spaces-tickets-912530151247



On 9-10 December, SPPU Systematic Theologian, Dr Joshua Furnal participated at 'The Future of Theology' conference hosted by the Dicastery of Culture and Education in Rome. The conference brought together about 500 theologians from all over the globe, and there were 29 synodal working groups assembled to discuss the overlapping challenges from each context. At the end of the final session, Dr Furnal presented the synthesis of group 18's work to the wider assembly.



Edmond J Dowling An appreciation

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Edmond, father of our good friend and IEDF Treasurer, Eddie Dowling, in New Jersey in January. To Eddie, Áine and family the St Patrick's Community extends its sympathy.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



On Sunday 10 November, we offered Mass and went in procession to the College Cemetery to pray for the repose of the souls of all deceased students, staff and benefactors of St Patrick's College and Maynooth University. This annual event gives us the opportunity to recall with gratitude and affection and is a long-standing part of the tradition of this venerable institution.

Upcoming Events

MAR — 4th ITQ Lecture – 7:30pm – Prof Christopher M. Bellitto, Kean University, New Jersey. **25th The Annual Monsignor Patrick J Corish Lecture – 7:30pm** – Prof Dale C Allison Jr, Richard J Dearborn Professor of New Testament Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey. **30th Choral Concert** – Gioacchino Rossini 'Petite Messe Solennelle'.

MAY — 1st-3rd Symposium – Apocalyptic and Eschatological Spaces: Thinking Between Philosophy and Theology.

For information on any of these events please contact specialevents@spcm.ie



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