

St Patrick's

Summer 2025 — No 26

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



A name that builds bridges

St Patrick's College, Maynooth, holds a unique place in Irish life and in the life of the Church: it is the one institution with a twin mission — serving as both the National Seminary and a Pontifical University. That dual role shapes who we are and what we're here to do. Allow me to reflect a little on the Pontifical University. And it all begins with a name.

The word "pontifical" can sound formal, even a little distant. But at its

heart is something deeply human. It comes from pontifex — the Latin for "bridge-builder" — and that image captures our purpose beautifully. We aim to build bridges: between faith and reason, tradition and modern life, the Church and the wider world.

As a Pontifical University, we're entrusted by the Holy See with a particular responsibility: to teach, research and serve in communion with the Church's mission. We're also part of a global community of institutions working

together to form leaders in theology, philosophy, ministry, and service.

That mission is alive in the everyday work of our community: in our commitment to best practice through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); in the exciting development of new programmes through the Centre for Mission

and Ministries (CMM); and in the international makeup of our seminary, where students from around the world prepare for a life of service. These aren't side projects—they're signs of our purpose in action.

To be "pontifical" isn't about prestige. It's about responsibility. At a time when education is often reduced to utility or transaction, we are called to offer something more: formation that seeks wisdom, shapes character and encourages generous lives.

That's what the name reminds us. "Pontifical" connects us to a tradition that goes back centuries—and it invites us to face the future with purpose and hope.

We are proud to share something of that mission with you in this edition. I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Rev Dr Michael Shortall
Interim President



Rev Dr Michael Shortall thanking staff for their dedication and hard work at a recent on-campus BBQ.



Pictured (L-R): Dr Gaven Kerr, Collette Sherlock, Rachel Harries, Isobel Tinkler, Ruth Kelly, Rowan Egan, Rev Dr Michael Shortall and Caroline Tennyson. (Ambassadors in absentia: Caoimhe Sweeney, Christopher Lynn.)

Another year flies by!

Our student ambassador team of 2025 is coming to the end of its term of engagement. This year's team really did us proud representing the University at on-campus events. Managed by Caroline Tennyson, the team this year was asked to take ownership for specific duties, including marshalling at college chapel events, attendance at Open Days and organising student led activities to help foster a sense of community for incoming and continuing students alike.

We got the opportunity to thank our students and acknowledge their efforts on our behalf with a reception in Pugin Hall where each Ambassador was presented with a certificate of completion.

Salamanca visit to Maynooth

St Patrick's Pontifical University welcomed staff and students from Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca (Pontifical University of Salamanca) to Maynooth for the UPSA/SPPU Doctoral Seminar 2025. The seminar, chaired by Rev Prof Séamus O'Connell, Professor of Sacred Scripture, SPPU, gave the opportunity to doctoral students from both Universities to present papers to their peers.

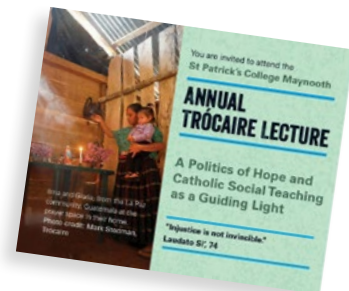


Trócaire Lecture

The St Patrick's College Maynooth Annual Trócaire Lecture 2025, "A Politics of Hope and Catholic Social Teaching as a Guiding Light" took place in Renehan Hall on campus on 11th March.

Keynote speaker was Dr Anna Rowlands, Professor of Catholic Social Thought at Durham University.

A recording of the lecture can be found on SPPU's YouTube channel.





Update from the Dean of Philosophy

Academic year of 24/25 has been a transitional year for the Faculty of Philosophy. In May 2024 two of our Faculty members, Dr Philip Gonzales and Rev Dr Simon Nolan, moved on to different appointments. Dr Philip Gonzales took a position in Baltimore and Rev Dr Simon Nolan was appointed as head of the Carmelite Order in Ireland. Nevertheless, the Faculty of Philosophy came together to prepare for the forthcoming academic year, and with the appointment of Dr Gaven Kerr as interim Dean we were prepared for academic year 24/25. There have been a number of successes in this past academic year.

Firstly, several members of the Faculty secured book contracts. Dr Gaven Kerr secured a contract with Cambridge University Press for an edited volume on Thomism; the manuscript is currently with the publisher. Dr Colm Shanahan secured a contract for a monograph with Brill. Finally, Dr Jordan McFadden secured a contract with Wipf and Stock. Not only that, academics from the Faculty of Philosophy have published and continue to publish in international peer reviewed journals. Since its refoundation in 2019, the Faculty of Philosophy has always been very active in research, and this past academic year continues that trend.

This engagement with research has some very practical consequences insofar as members of the Faculty are quite well known internationally for their work. This has translated into invitations to speak and present papers. And members of the Faculty have spoken at events throughout Ireland, the UK, and Europe in the past year.

Despite such high-level academic engagement, the Faculty of Philosophy continues to deliver on its day-to-day work of educating the students. In the past year we have seen a number of students graduate, including several doctoral and postgraduate students. Since its refoundation the Faculty of Philosophy has focussed on expanding its postgraduate community, and that focus is beginning to bear fruit now that our doctoral, masters, and licentiate students are beginning to move into the end stages of their degrees and graduate.

The Faculty of Philosophy brought to completion the long process of preparing the QQI documentation for all the programmes and modules offered by the Faculty. This was a huge task and Dr Jordan McFadden and Dr Colm Shanahan are to be commended for the work they put into it. With this documentation, not only has the Faculty of Philosophy contributed to the successful LAB application of St Patrick's, but we have also established a historical record of our offerings, so that when the Faculty expands and new people are hired, they can move into the Faculty seamlessly.

This leads to the final point in that the Faculty of Philosophy has recently advertised for a two-year tenure track position in philosophy. We are hopeful that this position will soon be filled by the appropriate candidate who will contribute in their own way to the strengths of the Faculty of Philosophy. With the appointment of a new philosopher, the Faculty can build on the strengths gained in the past academic year.

Dr Gaven Kerr
Interim Dean of Philosophy



Credit : Vatican Media

St Patrick's College, Maynooth Welcomes Pope Leo XIV

Rev Dr Michael Shortall, Interim President, St Patrick's College Maynooth, commented: 'The community of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, warmly welcomes the election of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and assure him of our prayers as he begins his ministry as Bishop of Rome.'

As the first American-born pope, a member of the Augustinian Order, and a missionary bishop shaped by decades of service in Peru, Pope Leo XIV brings a unique blend of global experience, pastoral compassion, and spiritual depth to the universal Church.

His choice of the name Leo – evoking a tradition of papal leadership rooted in both courage and care – speaks to the challenges and opportunities of our time.'

Rev Dr Tomás Surlis, Rector of St Patrick's National Seminary, Maynooth added: 'On behalf of the Seminary Community, I warmly echo the words of the Interim College President, Rev Dr Michael Shortall, welcoming the joyful news of the election of Pope Leo XIV as the new Successor of St Peter, Bishop of Rome and Universal Pastor of the Catholic Church. He follows in the footsteps of Pope Francis as Servant of the Servants of God, with a broad experience of leadership in service as an Augustinian Friar, as Director of Formation, and later as Provincial and Prior General, then as Bishop of the Diocese of Chiclayo, Peru, and latterly as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops.'

During his homily at Mass with the College of Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel on the morning after he generously and courageously accepted the Petrine Ministry, Pope Leo reminded all who preach the Gospel that they must "bear witness to our joyful faith in Christ." Pointing to the life and mission of Jesus, the Holy Father called upon all who exercise the ministry of service in the Church to imitate Jesus who is the icon of the Father, in his divinity and in his humanity.'

Full statement is available on our website at sppu.ie/news



The Seminary Community pictured prior to the End of Year Vespers and Thanksgiving meal.



Seminary Update

Easter Season

During Holy Week, large crowds joined the Seminary Community in the celebration of Palm Sunday in St Mary's Oratory on 13th April and the Easter Triduum in the College Chapel from Holy Thursday to the Easter Vigil 17th-19th April. The seminarians took a well-earned break during Easter Week and returned to their dioceses on Good Shepherd Sunday (11th May) to share their experience of formation in parishes at Sunday Mass. The community went on its annual pilgrimage to the International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine at Knock on Sunday 25th May, where we celebrated Midday Prayer with the Carmelite Sisters and later joined the Armagh and Dromore Diocesan Pilgrimage together with the Knights of St Columbanus Pilgrimage for the afternoon ceremonies in the Basilica.

Visit of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America

On Tuesday 29th April, we had the pleasure of welcoming Mr Danny

O'Connell and Mr Thomas Collins of the AOH in America for the presentation of the Order's annual donation to the Seminary. We are extremely grateful to the AOH for its ongoing support of our seminarians and the donation will be used to cover the costs of our pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi in June 2025 for the Jubilee for Seminarians.

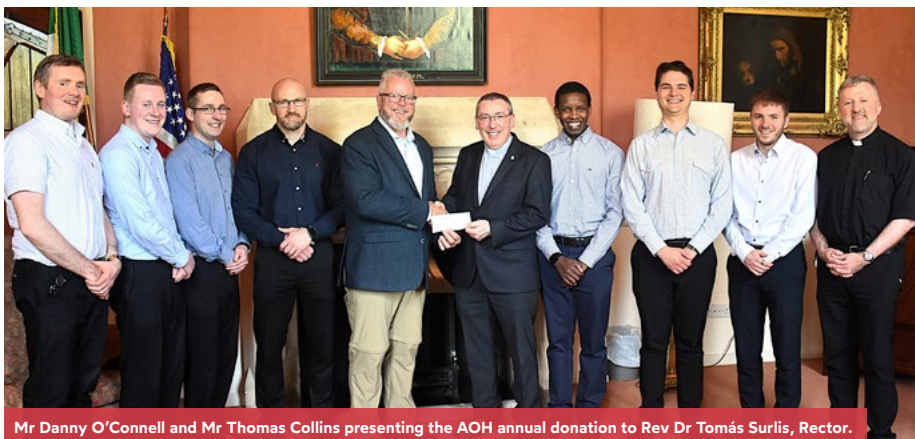
End of Year Vespers & Thanksgiving Meal

On Friday 23rd May, the College Community gathered in St Mary's Oratory to give thanks for the year that has passed. Resident Seminarians and Staff then repaired to Pugin Hall for a celebratory meal, together with benefactors and supporters of St Patrick's College, and with academic and administrative staff of the College, pastoral placement facilitators and parish priests who have collaborated with us in continuing to deliver a formation programme that is characterised by the highest standards of excellence. We also

bade farewell to those seminarians who have reached the end of their journey of initial formation at the National Seminary and who return to their dioceses to continue their preparation for ordination as Deacons and Priests in the not-too-distant future.

Ordinations 2024-25

Congratulations and best wishes to Anthony Moffett (Dromore) who was ordained to the Diaconate in Newry on Sunday 11th May by Archbishop Eamon Martin. We also congratulate Killian Heney (Cashel and Emlly) who was ordained to the Priesthood in Tipperary on Sunday 8th December 2024 by Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA and Tim Collins (Limerick) who was ordained Priest in Limerick on Sunday 11th May 2025 by Bishop Brendan Leahy. We continue to pray for Tiernan Burke (Cloyne) and Stephen Sherry (Clogher) who will be ordained to the Diaconate in their home dioceses during the Summer.



Mr Danny O'Connell and Mr Thomas Collins presenting the AOH annual donation to Rev Dr Tomás Surlis, Rector.



Easter Triduum.

Síolta 2025

The annual Seminary Journal is now available for purchase. This year, Síolta celebrates the Jubilee of Hope in Ireland, which runs from 24th December 2024 to 6th January 2026. The magazine is produced by the First Discipleship group of seminarians, and has a number of articles by students of the Pontifical University and

Maynooth University, as well as an interview with Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa; an article on synodality by Father Eamonn

Conway; an account of the visit of the relics of St Kilian by Fr Jürgen Vorndran of the Diocese of Würzburg; a tribute to the late Archbishop Noël Treanor by Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ of Down and Connor; an article on nurturing a culture of safeguarding in a time of hope by Lynn McDermott of the NBSCCCI; and a reflection on the Jubilee of Hope by Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe. Once again, this beautiful and insightful edition of Síolta presents a profound insight into the life and mission of the National Seminary and the Pontifical University at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. Síolta can be purchased in Pugin Hall or to order your copy, please contact seminary@spcm.ie Cost €7.50 each or 2 for €10 (including postage).



International Symposium

Apocalyptic and Eschatological Spaces: Thinking between Philosophy and Theology

From May 1st to 3rd an international symposium was held in Maynooth that brought together a diverse group of distinguished scholars and emerging voices to explore the profound intersections between apocalyptic thought, eschatology, philosophy, and theology.

This event was a joint initiative of St Patrick's Pontifical University, the Institut Catholique Toulouse, and the Relational Ontology Research Network. Starting off the symposium, Prof. Emmanuel Falque (Paris) delivered the Annual Christian Philosophy lecture, whose work continues to shape contemporary debates at the crossroads of faith and reason.

Over the following days, there were a series of lectures and discussions from leading academics from across Europe, the UK, and North America, each addressing urgent themes about the future of theological reflection. This collaborative gathering aimed to foster interdisciplinary research and dialogue, strengthening ties between our various institutions and building a vibrant network for ongoing inquiry. One speaker mentioned that the 'hospitality was outstanding and the conference very well organised. It has been a real blessing coming to Maynooth and see how you help keep the faith alive there. I'll keep your students in my prayers!'

It was especially beneficial for visiting postgraduate students and early-career researchers like one



UCD doctoral student who wrote: 'St Patrick's Pontifical University is one of the very few places in Ireland willing to put such religious discourse and tradition, into dialogue with secular intellectual culture, and this is something that should be grown and fostered. I hope that the event is seen as an example to follow. St Patrick's Pontifical University is the perfect venue for bringing many international scholars to Ireland, and it allows for a real exchange of views, theological traditions and philosophical styles. Were such events to be expanded it would only allow for more voices to be heard, drawing ecumenical scholars from all three branches of Christianity, as well as Jewish and Muslim scholars.' The student concluded: 'Amidst the ongoing crises within the academic Humanities, in particular, and the challenges universities face by changing technological and political pressures, it is vital that there be a place where these issues can be discussed at a serious theological and philosophical level, and where deeper moral and spiritual questions can be raised.'

Faculties of theology, philosophy, and religious studies are among the only places where this is possible, and nowhere is it more important than in pontifical institutions that truly represent the intellectual aspect of the Catholic faith.'



Dr Philip Gonzales, ex SPPU Faculty of Philosophy was welcomed back by colleagues to the symposium.



Dr Joshua Furnal organiser of the International Symposium commencing proceedings.





Pope Francis

1936-2025

With deep sorrow, St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth, joins with the Church throughout the world in mourning the death of Pope Francis.

A shepherd of profound humility, courage, and compassion, Pope Francis led the Church with a heart attuned to the cries of the poor, the earth, and those on the margins. His papacy called us to rediscover the joy of the Gospel, to walk together in synodality and fraternity, and to bear witness to mercy.

Rev Dr Michael Shortall, Interim President, SPPU, commented: 'As a Pontifical University under his authority, we give thanks for his life, his teaching, and his unyielding hope in the transforming power of God's love. To university students, he once said "Replace fears with dreams. Do not be managers of fears, but entrepreneurs of dreams" (2022).'

Rev Dr Tomás Surlis, Rector of St Patrick's National Seminary added: 'It was with great sorrow that we learned of the death of the Holy Father on Easter Monday morning. On behalf of the Seminary Community, I offer condolences to His Excellency Archbishop Montemayor, the Apostolic Nuncio in Ireland, together with the assurance of prayers for the happy repose of the Pope's soul.'

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



Memories of SPPU faculty meeting Pope Francis, clockwise top left: Prof Tobias Winright, Dr Joshua Furnal, Rev Prof Michael Mullaney, Rev Dr Michael Shortall.



Good Friday Agreement

Ruth Daly, School Liaison Officer SPPU, kindly loaned a signed copy of the Good Friday Agreement to the Russell Library in St Patrick's College, Maynooth on a long-term agreement. Given that we are in the 27th anniversary year since the signing of the agreement, it is a very fitting addition to the library's collections and will be a physical exhibit for use in educational initiatives. Pictured left to right is Alexandra Caccamo, Assistant Librarian with responsibility for Special Collections and Archives, Ruth Daly and Rev Dr Michael Shortall, Interim President, SPPU.



Prof Tobias Winright, Rev Dr John Paul Sheridan, Prof Salvador Ryan, Prof Christopher Bellitto, Dr Andrew Meszaros, Dr Aoife McGrath.

ITQ lecture

4 March 2025: Prof Christopher Bellitto, Kean University, New Jersey, delivered an Irish Theological Quarterly Lecture on "Humility versus Clericalism: Juan de Avila and Pope Francis on Spiritual Formation and Reform". The lecture will be published in the August 2025 issue of Irish Theological Quarterly.



Rev Prof Séamus O'Connell, Prof Salvador Ryan, Prof Dale C. Allison Jr, Rev Dr John Paul Sheridan.

Corish lecture

25 March 2025: Prof. Dale C. Allison Jr. (Princeton Theological Seminary), "From Jesus to the Gospel of John: the Evolution of Eschatology". Annual Monsignor Patrick J. Corish Lecture. The lecture will be published in the November 2025 issue of Irish Theological Quarterly.



Obituary Geraldine Walsh

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Geraldine (Gerry) Walsh, long-time supporter and friend of St Patrick's. To Eamonn, and family the St Patrick's Community extends our sympathy.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.



Charles Seaman and team.

Daffodil Day

There was a tremendous turnout again this year in Pugin Hall for the St Patrick's College Daffodil Day fundraiser. Pictured is Charles Seaman and colleagues with the impressive array of home baked goodies supplied by staff. Many thanks to the staff of SPPU and MU for their support.

We are delighted to support such a worthy cause each year.

Congratulations to Charles Seaman and colleagues on raising over €2000 on the day for the Irish Cancer Society.



A large attendance in Pugin Hall for Daffodil Day on behalf of the Irish Cancer Society.



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