

St Patrick's

Spring 2026 — No 28

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



Carrying faith and learning across generations

The feast of St Patrick draws us back to the quiet courage from which all lasting work begins. Patrick did not set out with certainty, but with trust, and with a willingness to be formed by what lay ahead. We are proud to be an inheritor of his name and legacy.

We stand within a tradition that has carried faith and learning across generations, yet our task is never only to preserve it. It is to steward it wisely, to deepen it honestly, and to hand it on with courage and generosity. Education and Formation, in this sense, is always an act of hope. We are blessed to have such wonderful people in our community who continue to make it real.

This year also marks a quiet milestone for us. Our strategic plan Transform to Flourish (2020–2030) has reached its halfway point. While there is still much to do, there is also much to be grateful for. The foundations laid in recent years are beginning to bear fruit, and steady progress is being made through patient, committed work.

I am continually heartened by those who walk this path with us. Your support is a form of quiet service, shaping futures we may never see, but which will bear fruit in lives of faith, leadership, and care.

With good wishes, gratitude and blessings on the feast of our patron Saint Patrick. Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig oraibh.



☘ Tarraingíonn féile Phádraig Naofa muid ar ais chuig an misneach ciúin as a dtagann gach saothar buan. Níor thug Pádraig aghaidh ar a aistear le cinnteacht, ach le muinín, é toilteanach glacadh lena dtiocfadh roimhe. Táimid bródúil as an gceangal atá againn lena ainm agus lena oidhreacht.

Seasaimid laistigh de thraidisiún a bhronn creideamh agus léann ó ghlúin go glúin, ach ní caomhnú amháin is cúram dúinn. Caithfimid é a chaomhnú go stuama, é a neartú go macánta, agus é a thabhairt ar aghaidh le misneach agus le flaithiúlacht. Is gníomh dóchais iad an t-oidreachas agus an foirmiú, sa gcaoi seo, i gcónaí. Tá an t-ádh orainn go bhfuil daoine iontacha inár bpobal a leanann an glao seo.

Tá sprioc thábhachtach á baint amach againn i mbliana, chomh maith. Táimid leath bealaigh trínár bplean straitéiseach Transform to Flourish (2020–2030). Cé go bhfuil go leor fós le déanamh, táimid buíoch beannachtach as an méid atá déanta go dtí seo freisin. Tá an bhunobair atá déanta le cúpla bliain anuas faoi bhláth anois, agus tá dul chun cinn á dhéanamh trí obair dhíograiseach sheasmhach.

Tugann na daoine a shiúlann an bóthar seo linn spreagadh dom i gcónaí. Seirbhís chiúin is ea bhur gcuid tacaíochta, ag múnú todhchaí nach bhfeicimid choíche, b'fhéidir, ach a mbeidh tionchar aici orthu siúd a leanann bóthar an chreidimh, na ceannaireachta agus an chúraim.

Rev Dr Michael Shortall
President





St Brigid's New Building update

Given that the 1st of February is the feast day of St Brigid, it is fitting to give readers an update on campus redevelopment works and in particular what will be known as St Brigid's House. Work continues on the redevelopment of the old lay professor's refectory to become St Brigid's House.

The builders are on site with an expected delivery date in summer. At time of writing, despite the cold, damp conditions the new roof is taking shape.

Christmas Celebration

In recognition of the huge effort put in all year by members of the college, the President hosted a Christmas celebration in Picadero's restaurant Maynooth. By hosting the evening in January, staff members who would otherwise be engaged at Christmas time were able to unwind, relax and enjoy the company of colleagues.





Philosophy Faculty Update

Aristotle has said that ‘wonder is the beginning of wisdom, being as it were the road to the search for truth.’ It has been a busy year for the faculty of philosophy here at St Patrick’s as we continue to introduce our students to the great wealth of the Western philosophical tradition while fostering in them an ever-increasing wonder before the immensity of creation and its divine origin. As a recent addition to the Faculty, I am delighted to serve alongside Dr Gaven Kerr, Dr Jordan McFadden, Dr Sean Palmer, and Rev Dr Patrick Gorevan.

Though we are a small faculty, our undergraduate and graduate courses are made up of students coming from all five continents, with some just beginning their philosophical studies at certificate level, while others are completing their studies with doctoral dissertations in a wide variety of topics. These students are the heart of what we do at St Patrick’s—it is how we serve the needs of the Church in Ireland through our seminarian and religious undergraduate students, and the Church universal, especially the USA and Africa, where many of our postgraduate students return to serve the needs of the Church in their own nations. Philosophy is a real need for the Church in the 21st century and we are happy at St Patrick’s to serve so many young people as they are formed in the philosophical wisdom of the Western tradition.

Our faculty are also involved in intensive research, this past year delivering papers at international events, where new research is offered for peer critique (in Ireland, USA, Rome, and Czech Republic), and providing presentations for the general public, where philosophical themes are applied to human life and its pressing needs (at Dublin, Galway, and Mayo), and to Catholic university students who are

searching for deeper meaning while navigating university life in the 21st century (at Galway, Belfast, London, and Edinburgh). Our talented faculty also continue to publish their research in academic books (with two forthcoming in top tier academic presses), in peer reviewed articles in international journals (such as *The Thomist*, *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, and *Theology of Science*, among others), and in book chapters of edited volumes on particular topics and thinkers of contemporary interest.

We welcomed a number of guest lecturers over the past year, including Dr Brian O’Connor of University College Dublin, Ireland, Dr Stacy Trasancos of Holy Apostles College, USA, and Dr Mette Lebech of Maynooth University, Ireland. This coming year we welcome Dr Patrick Zoll of Munich School of Philosophy, Germany, Dr Jason Reed of Divine Word College, USA, Dr Anthony Jensen of Providence College, USA, and Dr Matthew Levering of University of St Mary, USA. Keep a look out on social media for announcements of dates, times, places for these events.

Looking ahead to the coming year, in addition to continuing to serve our undergraduate population, we are on track to welcome a large group of talented students to our license and doctoral programs, who we will help to hone their research capability so that they may become key contributors to the Christian philosophical tradition in the present and into the future. Finally, a note of congratulations should be sounded for the recently minted Dr Sean Palmer, who recently successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at St Patrick’s (under the title, ‘A Hermeneutics of Evil: A Synthesized Approach to the Philosophies of Paul Ricoeur and René Girard’), and is now a member of our faculty teaching across the broad range of graduate and undergraduate courses we provide.

**Dr Robert McNamara,
Head of Philosophy**



Fr Emmanuel Ibitoye

An international perspective from one of our Postgraduate students

I arrived at SPPU from a little but lively, faith-filled community in Niger State, Nigeria (Minna Diocese), where I serve as a priest. My journey here was inspired by a desire to combine spiritual leadership with high-level academic rigour. What initially attracted me to

SPPU was its global reputation for excellence and its unique ability to host a melting pot of cultures, providing the perfect backdrop for scholarly growth and cross-cultural dialogue. It is only a bonus that my brothers who were studying here before my arrival were waxing lyrical about the beauty of SPPU.

What I particularly love about being here is the profound sense of hospitality. Despite being thousands of miles from home, the warmth of the lecturers and the camaraderie

that exists between my peers have made this environment feel like a second home. The campus atmosphere offers the serene quietude necessary for deep research. Having already completed my Master’s in Liturgy, I am currently in my second year of a Doctorate in the same field. I plan to use this specialised knowledge to enrich the liturgical life of the Church in Nigeria, ensuring our sacred celebrations are both deeply rooted in tradition and meaningfully engaged with contemporary life. I am also looking forward to passing on the knowledge to the next generation, either in the Seminary or at any higher institution.

To my fellow international students or those in religious life considering a similar path: do not hesitate. I was terrified to leave my comfort zone, but that decision is daily leading to my growth here at SPPU.

Fr Emmanuel Ibitoye



Seminary Update

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – Evening Prayer in the Armenian Rite

On Thursday 22nd January, the Seminary Community celebrated Evening Prayer for Christian Unity according to the Armenian Rite, using resources compiled by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity together with the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The theme of the prayer was Light from light for light, the attribute of Christ adopted by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

The Homily was preached by Fr Anish John, who took his cue from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: **"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling"** (Eph 4:4).

The light of Christ spread through St Mary's Oratory as it was shared during our prayer from the central candle which was placed in the midst of the praying assembly. All were inspired by the words of the homilist to carry our prayer into active work for the restoration of full unity between all the followers of Christ in order to bear more effective witness to our common mission to be light for the world.

First Priestly Ordination of 2026 from St Patrick's National Seminary

Warm congratulations to Fr Anthony Moffett who was ordained to the Priesthood by Archbishop Eamon Martin for the Diocese of Dromore in St Colman's Church in his home parish of Dromore on Sunday 11th January 2026 - the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.



Liam Coyle (Raphoe), Patrick Fiehn (Dublin) and Martin Smith (Meath) pictured together with the Community of Formators and Bishop Roche

The Seminary Community wishes Fr Anthony abundant blessings in his priestly ministry in Dromore Diocese in the months and years ahead. Ad multos annos!

Ministries 2025-26

It was a pleasure to welcome Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, Most Rev Donal Roche back to the Seminary to preside at Admission to Candidacy on Thursday 4th December 2025. Six seminarians were admitted to Candidacy for Ordination as Deacons and Priests: Liam Coyle (Raphoe); Patrick Fiehn (Dublin) and Martin Smith (Meath), together with Salesians of Don Bosco Jithin J. Kalathil; Aswin Pilavendran and John Prajwal. We pray God's blessing upon them as they continue on the journey to Holy Orders.

Prayers for Deceased Students, Staff and Benefactors of the College

On Sunday 9th 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.



Fr Anthony Moffett pictured with Archbishop Eamon Martin, Apostolic Administrator of Dromore following the Ordination Mass.



January Formation Workshop, Day Trip and Retreat

The 2026 January Formation Workshop centred on the theme of Encountering the Beauty of Faith: The Arts in Seminary Formation. Over the course of three days, the theme was opened up by Dr Jessie Rogers (Centre for Mission and Ministries) who worked with the seminarians in the Stage of Discipleship on Godly Play; Fr Luke Macnamara OSB (Dean of Theology) on Encountering Christ through Text and Icon; and Fr Paul Murray OP on The Arts, Beauty and Formation: The Role of Literature – Radiant Lives, Radiant Words: Writers, Heroes and Saints of the Eucharist.

On Monday 26th January, seminarians in the Stage of Configuration enjoyed a practical cookery course at Meath Cookery School, Lismullin, as well as a visit to the Hill of Tara. Following a highly informative and enjoyable visit to Glasnevin on Thursday 29th January, the Seminary Community had the pleasure of welcoming Professor Paul O’Callaghan (Santa Croce University, Rome) who directed the retreat in preparation for the second semester of the academic year 2025-26, during which the community celebrated the Feast of Ireland’s Secondary Patron, the Abbess St Brigid.

Carol Service



Always a significant time of year in Maynooth and wider afield, our Carol Service was a tremendous success again this year. Such is the demand each year that the service was expanded to three nights and spare tickets were still nowhere to be found. Described in the past by media as ‘Kildare’s hottest ticket’ at Christmas time, the Carol service signals the commencement of Christmas celebrations for many.

The three evenings 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. Superb event management provided again this year by Caroline Tennyson of SPPU.



Running for Good

‘I invite you to offer your moral and/or financial support as I train to run the 2026 Irish Life Dublin Marathon at the end of next October.

As many of you may know, in 2012 I fell, fractured my skull, and suffered a traumatic brain injury. Nearly 14 years later, my daily running is healing ‘medicine’.

Therefore, I am running for Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, which has asked me to raise €1500 (approximately US \$1750) for this charity. Thank you.’

Donations can be made through: eventmaster.ie [Fundraising page of Tobias Winright](#)

Prof Tobias Winright, Faculty of Theology.



Rector, Directors of Formation and College MC pictured with Fr Anish John of the Malankara Orthodox Church, together with his wife and members of his parish community.



Undergraduate life at SPPU

Rachel Harries is an undergraduate Theology and Gaeilge (Irish language) student from Carlow in Ireland. Rachel is a former student of St Leo's College, Carlow.

Rachel performs an active role in the St Patrick's community and for the past two years has been a Student Ambassador. Ambassadors are a vital link for incoming students, assisting with orientation activities, providing campus tours and being on hand with advice and recommendations on how best to transition from second level into life at university. The Student Ambassadors also assist at university events throughout the year passing on their firsthand experiences of life at St Patrick's Pontifical University.

On studying at SPPU, Rachel said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in St Patrick's so far. The opportunity to study both Theology and Gaeilge allows me to combine two areas that I love and am passionate about. I am always made to feel welcome on campus by fellow students and lecturers. Being a BATH student has gifted me with being able to attend two universities and living on campus with fellow students is a truly unique opportunity that we have."

After graduation, Rachel intends to continue her studies with a master's and pursue a career in teaching.

Is mac léinn Diagachta agus Nua-Ghaeilge í Rachel Ní Éarchaí ó Chill Dara. Is iardhalta de chuid Choláiste Naomh Leoin i gCeatharlach í Rachel. Tá ról gníomhach ag Rachel i bpobal an choláiste le dhá bhliain anuas agus tá sí ina hAmbasadóir Mac Léinn.

Is nasc ríthábhachtach iad na hAmbasadóirí do mhic léinn nua, agus bíonn siad ag cabhrú le himeachtaí sheachtain an ionduchtaithe, ag tabhairt turas timpeall an champais agus ag cuidiú le mic léinn agus iad ag aistriú ón dara leibhéal go dtí saol na hollscoile. Bíonn na hAmbasadóirí ag cuidiú le himeachtaí ollscoile i rith na bliana agus ag roinnt a dtáithí féin ar shaol an mhic léinn in Ollscoil Phontaifiúil Naomh Pádraig.

Ag labhairt faoina taithí féin san ollscoil, dúirt Rachel: "Bhain mé an-taitneamh as mo thréimhse i gColáiste Phádraig go dtí seo. Tá an t-ádh orm go bhfuil an deis agam staidéar a dhéanamh ar dhá ábhar a thaitníonn go mór liom agus go bhfuil mé paiseanta fúthu, an Ghaeilge agus an Diagacht. Mothaím i gcónaí go bhfuil atmaisféar breá fáilteach ar an gcampas a bhúí sin leis na mic léinn agus na léachtóirí freisin. Mar mhac léinn BATH, tá an deis agam freastal ar dhá ollscoil éagsúla agus is deis ar leith é a bheith i mo chónaí ar champas le mic léinn eile".

Tar éis di a céim a bhaint amach, tá sé ar intinn ag Rachel máistreacht a dhéanamh agus a bheith ina múinteoir sa toadhcháí.

Upcoming Events

24th February - Irish Theological Quarterly Lecture - 'Shared Scriptures, Shared Questions: Jewish readings of the Christian Testament' by Prof. Adele Reinhartz, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa.

3rd March - Trócaire annual lecture - "Care for Creation Amidst the Cries of War ~ Working for Peace in the Earth Community" Keynote speaker: Dr Hugo Slim, Director of the Las Casas Institute for Social Justice at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford.

12th March - Patron's Day & Awarding of the inaugural John Bruton Award for Leadership in Faith and Public Life

12th March - Staff Daffodil Day Fundraiser on campus for the Irish Cancer Society.

26th March - Formators & Partners meeting

22nd April - Book launch - Dr Joshua Furnal, lecturer in Systematic Theology at SPPU, will launch his new book "Being before God"

26th April - Annual Choral Concert

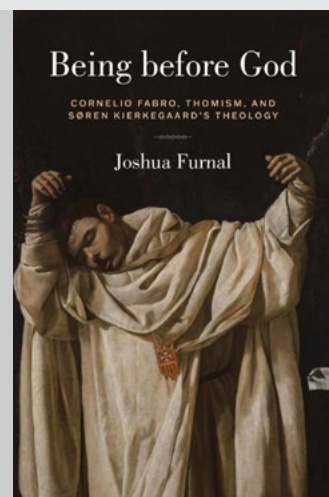
Book Launch and Discussion

22nd April 2026 in Renehan Hall (19:30 start)

Join us for an enlightening discussion about how the Italian Thomist Cornelio Fabro brought together the metaphysical depth of Thomas Aquinas with the existential urgency of Søren Kierkegaard.



Drawing on rare archival materials, this groundbreaking work reveals an overlooked giant of 20th century theology and philosophy.



Save the date Tuesday 9th June 2026

MAYNOOTH UNION 2026

Special invitation to the following Jubiliarians: Diamond (1966), Golden (1976) and Silver (2001) and classes of 1956, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

More details to follow, visit: seminary.maynoothcollege.ie



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