

Dr. Isabel Capeloa Gil and SPCM President Rev. Michael Mullaney welcomed former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson (centre) as keynote speaker to the IFCU General Assembly.

Catholic universities debate new opportunities for faith and education

A General Assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Universities was held in Maynooth this summer. College President, Reverend Professor Michael Mullaney, who welcomed over 200 university presidents, vice-presidents and international development officers, described the hosting of this tri-annual assembly as "a huge honour" for St. Patrick's College.

"This prestigious gathering of the worldwide family of Catholic educators, academics and formation leaders represents the vibrant face of our faith" he said.



The conference was live-streamed to a worldwide audience

A common theme throughout the week-long assembly was the social responsibility that Catholic universities bear in the implementation of their triple mission; to teach, research and serve communities and the Church. International speakers critiqued and debated the future of Catholic education in discussions which were live-streamed via the internet to a large and engaged worldwide audience.

Speaking at the Assembly Professor Mullaney said, *"the complexities of globalisation and the problems of poverty, the ecological crisis and climate change, require sophisticated analysis for ethical solutions. Catholic universities like ours must play an increasing role in the development of these solutions and in equipping graduates to take their place in the promotion of the human dignity of every person and the common good of all."*

The General Assembly of IFCU ended with the election of Dr. Isabel Capeloa Gil as its first woman President and outlined a clear agenda of the new opportunities that exist between faith and education.

*Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain
Faoi Mhaise Daoibh*



*Wishing You A Blessed Christmas
& A Happy New Year*

Rector appointed to National Seminary

A new Rector with dedicated responsibility for seminary formation at Maynooth has been appointed by the Conference of Bishops. Reverend Dr. Tomás Surlis took up his new position in August. His nomination required a change to the governing structures of the college. Previously, the President of St. Patrick's College was also responsible for priestly formation at the National Seminary.

The new structure sees the National Seminary and the Pontifical University as two interrelated but distinct entities - what some have described as the "two lungs, one heart" of SPCM.

Fr. Tom Surlis began his career as a catechist and was subsequently ordained a priest of the Diocese of Achonry in 2003. Later he served as President and Principal Teacher of Saint Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen, from 2011-2017.

Three months into his new job, Fr. Surlis is excited by the challenges and opportunities of his new position. "Priestly formation has four key dimensions: human, spiritual, academic and pastoral," says Fr. Surlis. "As Rector, I share in the life of the seminarians on a daily basis. I pray with them, share meals with them and we gather together regularly to reflect on and to learn more about the life and ministry of priests."

As our Church responds to some of the most significant changes in its lifetime, the responsibility of St. Patrick's College remains unaltered. To form rounded, compassionate and committed Catholic leaders - both priests and laity - to serve in our parishes, our communities and society," concludes Fr. Surlis.



Newly appointed Rector of the National Seminary, Fr. Tom Surlis

John Gerard Acton from Galway is a 4th year seminarian.

Here he describes how his early years of formation have given him insights into himself as a person.



Seminarian John Gerard Acton: "Staff here help each person to become the best that they can possibly be."

Q. What age were you when you got the 'calling' to become a priest?

A. My calling towards discerning priesthood seriously was not a sudden one. Priesthood is something that had been in my heart and mind since I was a young child. However It took me some time to acknowledge my calling, to accept and gain the courage to take the necessary steps, to leave the familiar ground of life and my work as a Hotel Manager in the West of Ireland and essentially take a leap of faith into the unknown.

Q. Who inspires you?

A. My family have always been a great source of inspiration and support in my life. Also I have been especially inspired and encouraged by the resilience and determination of the priests in my own diocese. I have witnessed their great efforts to spread the Gospel message - in good times and in times of trial and challenge.

Q. If someone is considering whether they have a vocation, what words of advice would you give them?

A. I would encourage them to take that initial leap of faith. Life is too short for 'what ifs'. There are so many support structures in place to help people to reflect and tease out their calling, through prayer and accompaniment. One really has nothing to lose!

Q. How important was it for you to be assigned to different parishes while in the seminary?

A. It has been an honour for me to be warmly welcomed into many communities and given the opportunity to learn from them and minister to them in both the ordinariness and extraordinariness of their everyday lives. Everyday life in a parish can be quite diverse, with occasions of celebration and also of sadness.

Q. How many years in total will you have studied for, before you are assigned to a parish and what are you looking forward to most?

A. God willing, I will be ordained to the

Priesthood in 2021 after spending six years in initial formation. My pastoral placement experiences in various parishes, hospitals, schools and in youth ministry initiatives have demonstrated that we are going through an exciting period in the Church's history, where there is an abundance of potential. I firmly believe that the priest's mission in today's secularised culture is to pursue innovative ways of accomplishing Christ's mandate: "Go make disciples of all the nations."

Q. What will you miss most about Maynooth?

A. We are fortunate that liturgy is celebrated very solemnly in St Patrick's College. It is enriched by the college's sacred musical tradition. I will miss this aspect of Maynooth greatly when I leave.





"Teaching in Whitefriars is a joy, the children are so full of wonder and questions about God," says Eileen O'Driscoll

Sharing the riches of her faith

Since graduating with a Masters in Systematic Theology in 2017, Eileen O'Driscoll has been working as a catechist in Whitefriars Street parish in Dublin city centre. Here she reflects on how she came to study at St. Patrick's College and the joy she experiences from sharing her theological knowledge and the riches of her faith with others in her parish community.

Q. Why did you choose St. Patrick's College as your place to study?

A. Looking into the theology courses offered in Maynooth really triggered an interest in me. I also liked the campus, how compact it was - there was a sense of community. I experienced friendliness and helpfulness from all the people I met. The intimate class sizes made the learning more personal and engaging.

Q. What did you most enjoy about your time studying here?

A. I loved that sense of being part of a greater community and the companionships that were created between students. Every time I walked into St Patrick's College, I always met someone I knew and saw familiar faces. Companionship was built through chatting about what we were learning with one another and through extracurricular activities and events. It's especially important as a student to have spaces to share with people who have similar values. It helps you to grow and develop as a person.

Q. Has what you've learned been useful in your career as a catechist?

A. On a personal level, my theology studies gave me a deeper understanding of my own faith and that helps me as a parish catechist when I'm working with adults and also primary school children through catechesis. I'm involved in the preparation of children for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. It's a really special time because the children are full of wonder and questions about God.

My studies in St Patrick's College has given me a theological understanding of the sacramental preparation process and the faith. All the time people are reaching out and want to know that they are never alone, there is a desire for belonging. What graduates of theology can share is incredibly valuable to any community that they find themselves working in after college.

Q. What impact can St. Patrick's College Maynooth have in the world?

A. SPCM can have a significant impact because its graduates are specifically encouraged to go out into different workplaces and communities and to make a difference. We are often affected by people's example and personal witness to the faith and this can be equally true in the workplace. The word "Theology" means "faith seeking understanding". When we encounter people every day wherever we may be, we have the opportunity to invite them to join us on the journey of faith or to help them to discover their faith for the first time.

There is always an opportunity to touch hearts and to have a listening ear - which is often what's needed the most in our busy world. Theology is so life-affirming - it's something that can be shared with everyone, providing a light of hope in difficult situations.

Q. What are your abiding thoughts from your time at Maynooth?

A. Each person has unique gifts and qualities that are needed in our society. The study of theology is a gift to a world that's always searching and longing for something more. Theology enables us to look at who we are, for what have we been created and why. These questions are incredibly important because people are hungry to know their true worth and their purpose. Each person has been created for a unique purpose by a loving God. When we come to that self-realisation, then there's so much each of us can contribute to our world.

High calling for confident articulate communicators

Today more than ever, the Church needs confident, articulate voices who can communicate their faith in a credible and coherent way. That's the view of Professor Declan Marmion, Dean of the Faculty of Theology who is responsible for the academic life of the Pontifical University at St. Patrick's College.

"In an era where faith and religion are being pushed more and more to the margin, it is vital that our graduates can engage in the public sphere in a dialogical and respectful manner", says Professor Marmion. *"We need to present something of the beauty of Christianity and its wisdom to a society in need of such a vision",* he continues.

"At St. Patrick's, our aim is to produce graduates – lay and cleric, male and female – who are fluent in the Catholic intellectual tradition, open, integrated and socially engaged. All our modules and programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate have this goal in mind", he explains.

Dr. Marmion believes that Maynooth graduates make an important contribution to debates concerning the dignity of the human person, the need to protect nature and the environment, as well as promoting justice for the poor.

"We are preparing the next generation of Christian leaders. Our students will work as teachers in schools, as parish pastoral workers, chaplains and elsewhere in the public service, while ordained ministers serve as pastors in Ireland and abroad. We help our graduates to develop a love of the Church while at the same time being aware of its faults and limitations. Their job is to help bring about a new kind of Church: more inclusive, evangelising, and engaged with today's world", concludes Professor Marmion.



St. Patrick's College Maynooth

A unique institution with a special heritage



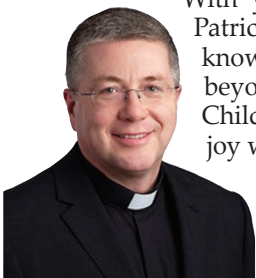
A message of ambition and optimism for the future

As we prepare to encounter the Lord anew this Advent, I would like to thank you sincerely for your ongoing interest in and support for our unique institution. As the National Seminary of Ireland for more than two hundred and twenty years and a Pontifical University of international renown since 1896, St. Patrick's College Maynooth has played a central role in the life of the Church in Ireland and other countries all around the world.

Given our ambition to be at the forefront of positive developments, during 2018 we embraced organisational change within our college community. The appointment of Fr. Tomás Surlis as Rector of the National Seminary, with responsibility for priestly formation, sends a clear message of optimism for a vibrant and successful future. Fr. Surlis and myself are strongly committed to working closely and collaboratively. His new position also allows me to focus solely on my role as President and to demonstrate leadership in the development of a clear over-arching vision for St. Patrick's College.

I am also delighted that Prof. Declan Marmion has agreed to an additional term as Dean of the Faculty of Theology. The continuity that comes with Declan's re-appointment allows us to build on the progress we've achieved so far in re-affirming the Pontifical University as an ecclesiastical centre of excellence in teaching, learning and research.

With your ongoing support, I am confident that St. Patrick's College will continue to promote theological knowledge and priestly formation in Ireland and beyond in the years ahead. In welcoming the Christ Child during this coming Christmas, it is my wish that joy will be reborn in your hearts.



*Rev. Prof. Michael Mullaney
President, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth*

Calendar of Events

July 2018

The 26th General Assembly of IFCU is held in St. Patrick's College Maynooth



August 2018

Delegations from the developing world attending the World Meeting of Families are hosted in SPCM



Maynooth's Director of Sacred Music, Dr. John O'Keefe directs the 3000 voice choir for Pope Francis's mass in the Phoenix Park



November 2018

Graduation and Prize Giving ceremony

A collection of new liturgical music for parish choirs, congregations and cantors - Feasts & Seasons 2 is published



December 2018

2,000 guests attend Christmas Carol Services in the College Chapel



March 2019

Annual Corish Lecture will be given by renowned professor, author, and moral theologian Rev. David Hollenbach SJ, Georgetown University, USA



St. Patrick's College welcomes your support.

For more information:

<http://maynoothcollege.ie/giving>

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