

**Press Release – Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle, Wednesday 24 August  
2016 - Immediate**

**Attn: Newsdesks, Photodesks and Religious Affairs Correspondents**

## **Trustees of the National Seminary meet in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth**

Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, this week welcomed fourteen new seminarians to start their training for the priesthood.

The Trustees of the College met yesterday in Maynooth to discuss the needs of the students and staff. They acknowledged the generosity and openness which motivates young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood and to apply themselves to the formation process. The Trustees also paid tribute to the dedication of the staff of the college for their role in formation. The Trustees offered prayers and encouragement for the seminarians and the college staff asking that this will be a time of grace and blessing.

Acknowledging the recent and extensive media coverage regarding the College, and the disquiet that it has caused amongst the faithful, the Trustees emphasise that the Church has clear instructions on the formation of seminarians. It is essential that these are observed in order to form priests "after the heart of the Good Shepherd" (cf. Jer 3.15). There is no place in a seminary community for any sort of behaviour or attitude which contradicts the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

The Trustees share the concerns about the unhealthy atmosphere created by anonymous accusations together with some social media comments which can be speculative or even malicious. Persons with specific concerns are encouraged to report them appropriately as soon as possible.

1. To this end the Trustees will:
  - Review current policies and procedures for reporting complaints with a view to adopting best practice procedures for 'protected disclosures' (whistle-blowing);
  - Request the Seminary authorities to evaluate and review the policy regarding the appropriate use of the internet and social media;
  - Assess future personnel and resource needs for the seminary.
  
2. The Trustees will request the Bishops' Conference to:
  - Commission an independent audit and report of governance and statutes in Irish seminaries;
  - Progress urgently a uniform national policy for admissions to Irish seminaries;
  - Begin planning for the introduction of a propaedeutic year (pre-seminary) for all applicants for priestly training;
  - Establish a subcommittee to examine, with relevant consultors and advisors, the pastoral needs of priestly training in contemporary Ireland noting in particular the recent recommendation of Pope Francis: "The presence of lay people, families and especially

the presence of women in priestly formation, promotes an appreciation of the diversity and complementarity of the different vocations in the Church" (*Joy of Love* n. 203);

- Conduct the triennial review of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, and of the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, in the Spring of 2017.

The Trustees are satisfied that seminarians are not asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

The Trustees accept their responsibility for ensuring that the national seminary adheres to best practice in all areas of training for priesthood and that college staff are trained to the highest level in accordance with requisite professional standards and the requirements of the Holy See.

## ENDS

### Notes for Editors

- Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, is the National Seminary for Ireland and has been forming men for the priesthood since 1795. The Trustees of the college are the governing body of the college. The current Trustees are the four archbishops of Ireland together with thirteen other senior bishops. The college comprises the seminary and the Pontifical University, which offers degrees in philosophy, theology and a combined arts and theology degree.
- This week fourteen new seminarians have begun their 'Introductory Course' for preparing for the priesthood, and after one month four will continue with their studies in Belfast. In recent years the number of new seminarians beginning their studies in Maynooth has been: seventeen in 2015; fourteen in 2014; twenty in 2013; and twelve in 2012.
- The National Seminary of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, expects 41 resident seminarians for the coming academic year. In addition, 23 non-resident seminarians will register for philosophy and theology programmes at the Pontifical University at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. Three Presentation Brothers will begin studying for a Bachelor of Arts and Theology degree in the Pontifical University and they will reside in the college for the next three years.
- At the end of the academic year 2015-16 there were 983 full-time and part-time undergraduate and post-graduate students registered for a wide range of academic programmes at the Pontifical University at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. This year, 57 CAO first round offers were made for theology and arts and eight offers have been made to mature applicants.
- Prayer for new seminarians  
*Lord Jesus, we ask your special blessing on all our new seminarians beginning their preparation for the priesthood today, their families and friends who have accompanied them. We pray that they will grow in faith, hope and charity. May their hearts overflow with your compassion, understanding and generosity, and may their desire to serve you inspire others to answer your call.*

*Lord, give our new seminarians the grace to follow you more perfectly. When they are discouraged or lonely, fill them with your peace and courage. Jesus, gentle Shepard, meek and humble of heart, make the hearts of all our new seminarians like yours.  
Lord bless the families and friends of our new seminarians and all who encourage, inspire and guide them in responding to your call to be a priest. Amen.*

**ENDS**

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