



Public viewing of the documentary film The Letter (2022) on the Pope, the environmental crisis, world leaders and Laudato Si

An exhibition of photographs, audio and video by Traveller women from Limerick

IICS Event Photos 2023

Interesting Events 2024

UN International Decade for People of African Descent hosted by the IICS and MIC Chaplaincy



'In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. Around 200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent' - United Nations

- *Call for papers: Durham University Centre for Catholic Studies Early Career and Postgraduate Conference in Catholic and Theology and Religious Studies Conference on July 15-16th - Deadline for submission is April 5th*
- *Synod on Synodality takes place in Rome - Wednesday, October 2, to Sunday, October 27, 2024*
- *The 2024 Catholic Imagination Worshipping God through the Arts Conference will take place on Sept. 27th and 28th at the Catholic University of America*
- *MIC to host American Conference for Irish Studies 2024 from June 17-21. Topic: 'Embracing Change, Navigating Uncertainty: Ireland and New Beginnings'. Register on MIC's website now!*
- *Upcoming Podcast series with the IICS and Dr Jonathan Burroughs, TRS*
- *ISHWA Seminar Series on Zoom*
- *Centre for the Study of Religion at University of Galway and the Material and Cultural Heritages of Religion in Ireland research network present Remembering and Restoring the Past to Restore the Future: Religious Sites of Minneapolis and St Paul - online March 5th at 4pm GMT - contact niamh.nicghabhann@ul.ie for registration*
- *National Catholic Educational Association Conference (NCEA 2024) will take place April 2-4, 2024 in Pittsburgh*
- *European Society for Catholic Theology: Irish Section and Irish Theological Association (ITA) Conference on 'Theology, Technology, and Human Flourishing' on April 13th*
- *European Federation of Catholic Universities (FUCE) General Assembly June 5th to 7th 2024*
- *UCE Seminar on European Humanism in the Making, July 3rd and July 6th*
- *Upcoming MIC Staff Retreat*

Upcoming events to look forward to!

Exciting Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (Ireland) Research Report to be launched in April 2024.



G.R.A.C.E. (Ireland) has carried out timely and innovative research into identity and ethos in Catholic primary and post-primary schools in Ireland. Its research question focused on: Identity and Ethos in Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Ireland, Exploring the Attitudes and Behaviours of Stakeholders. This large-scale research project used mixed methods and got 4,000 responses from members of Boards of Management, Principals and Teachers and conducted 56 interviews.

The research will be published imminently and there are a number of exciting reports listed below:

Overview of GRACE (Ireland) Research Project and Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Report 1: Leaders and Staff in Catholic Schools, Demographics and Religious Profile

Report 2: Training, Knowledge and Support

Report 3: Commitment to Faith Development & Religious Practice in Catholic Schools in Ireland

Report 4: Principals as Leaders of Identity and Ethos in Catholic Schools

Report 5: Religious Education as an Expression of Identity and Ethos in Catholic Schools

Report 6: Responsibility, Oversight and Governance

The research team comprised of: O'Connell, D. (Principal Investigator, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick); Conway, E. (Notre Dame University, Fremantle, Australia), Doherty, D. (Children in Crossfire), Duffy, E. (Diocese of Achonry), McCormack, C. (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick), Meehan, A. (Dublin City University), & Ó Caoimh, B. (Independent consultant in social research, planning and evaluation).

This cutting edge research will be launched April 23rd, 2024 and the reports will be available www.mic.ul.ie/GRACE

IICS Announces New PhD Researcher, Sean Barry

In his own words: Seán Barry here, a new PhD Student at the IICS. I am from Athboy, Co. Meath, and I also work full-time as an English and RE Teacher at Scoil Mhuire in Trim, Co. Meath. I began in Scoil Mhuire immediately after graduating from Mater Dei Institute of Education, DCU, with a Bachelor of Religious Education and English in 2018.



During my first-year teaching, I completed an M.Phil in Christian Theology in the Loyola Institute at Trinity College Dublin. Most recently, from 21' - 23', I took a career break, worked at the Irish College in Rome, and completed a Licentiate in Leadership and Management in the Pontifical Gregorian University. I have since returned from Rome, resumed teaching, and now it is with great enthusiasm and excitement that I begin this PhD by research in Education, with a particular focus on Governance in Post-Primary Catholic Voluntary schools working with Dr Patricia Kieran, Dr Fiona Dineen, and Dr Timothy Murphy.

Publications of Interest

- Journal of Catholic Education is managed and edited by the University of Notre Dame and digitally hosted by Loyola Marymount University. An open access journal, it represents Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic education leaders, and scholars from a variety of disciplines who are collectively committed to contributing research and encouraging best practice. Available at <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/>.
- Global Catholic Education (2024) Global Catholic Education Blog. Available at <https://www.globalcatholiceducation.org/blog>.
- Wodon, Q. (2022) Global Catholic Education Report 2023: Transforming Education and Making Education Transformative. Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education. Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wCALvxEdNy4k-VrQRdpt1GVC5x4jgZw/view>.
- Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (2024) Journal of Catholic Higher Education. Available at <https://jche.journals.villanova.edu/>.
- Vatican News (2024) Papal Basilicas: From Tourist to Pilgrim. [Minisite and podcast]. Available at <https://basilicas.vatican.va/en.html>.
- L'Osservatore Romano (2024) Vatican City Newspaper L'Osservatore Romano. Available at: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en.html>.
- Vatican Observatory (2024) Vatican Observatory Astrophoto-Calendar 2024. Available at <https://www.vaticanobservatory.org/sacred-space-astronomy/2024-vatican-observatory-astrophoto-calendars/>.
- Kelly, J. and John, M. (eds.) (2024) The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Vol.1: Endings and New Beginnings, 1530-1640. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morrill, J. and Temple, L. (eds.) (2024) The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume II: Uncertainty and Change, 1641-1745. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chambers, L. (ed.) (2024) The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume III: Relief, Revolution, and Revival, 1746-1828. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mangion, C. and O'Brien, S. (eds.) (2024) The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism: Building Identity, 1830-1913. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harris, A. (ed.) (2024) The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume V: Recapturing the Apostolate of the Laity, 1914-2021. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friel, R. (2024) Formation of the Heart: The WHY and HOW of being a Catholic today. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Downes, P., Guofang, L., Van Praag, L., and Lamb, S. (eds.) (2024) The Routledge International Handbook of Equity and Inclusion in Education. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Ganiel, G. and Holmes, A. (eds.) (2024) The Oxford Handbook of Religion in Modern Ireland. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Torevell, D. (ed.) (2021) Literature and Catholicism in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Rowan, P. and Torevell, D. (eds.) (2021) New Insights into Literature and Catholicism in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Rowan, P. (2017) The Scrappy Evangelist: Chesterton and a New Apologetics for Today. Gastonia: Saint Benedict Press.
- Hoven, M., Carney, J., and Engel, M. (2022) On the Eighth Day: A Catholic Theology of Sport. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Science, Religion, and Education series from Conversations from the Classroom podcast with Dr David Kennedy, Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education
- Kennedy, D. (2024) Conversations from the Classroom with Dr David Kennedy, Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education. [Podcast]. Available at <https://open.spotify.com/show/4cxeoszxtNsftnlekjgSM>.

Research demonstrates how religion can impact the mental wellbeing of adolescents in Ireland

Dr Lydia Mannion, Lecturer and Educational and Child Psychologist at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

6I recently completed a piece of research involving students across ten post-primary schools in Ireland, which demonstrated that there are inextricable links between religion and the mental wellbeing of young people in this country.

The first phase of the research involved online questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed by over one hundred students in Transition Year, Fifth Year and Leaving Certificate classes, and measured three areas: religiosity, religious coping, and mental wellbeing.

‘Religiosity’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘religiousness’, and refers to how religious a student is, based on their religious beliefs, how they practice their religion, and their sense of belonging to a particular faith tradition.

‘Religious coping’ refers to how young people actually use their religion to cope with daily life, and this can be either positive or negative in nature. Positive religious coping methods are generally considered to be helpful for individuals’ mental wellbeing, and involve practices such as seeking a connection with God through personal prayer or religious meditation, reading of the Bible for strength, practising religious gratitude and forgiveness, and focusing on religion instead of worrying about problems. Negative religious coping methods are considered unhelpful and involve holding feelings of anger towards God, feeling abandoned by the Church, questioning God’s love and power, and thinking that life events are as a result of punishment from God.

Finally, ‘mental wellbeing’ is used interchangeably with ‘psychological wellbeing’, and refers to a state of being well relative to the mind.

The findings showed that there is a complex relationship between religion and mental wellbeing among young people. Students who believed in God and held strong religious beliefs, were more likely to have more positive overall mental wellbeing. Similarly, greater use of positive religious coping methods was linked to a higher sense of purpose in life amongst the young people who took part. In contrast, students who tended to rely on negative religious coping methods were more likely to have lower levels of mental wellbeing.

The second phase of the research involved individual online interviews with seven students, six of whom who identified as Catholic. The participants answered questions regarding religion and what impact, if any, they felt it had on their mental wellbeing. The students who took part cited a range of benefits for their mental wellbeing arising from their religious beliefs and practice. For example, the young people reported that engaging in personal prayer, such as the Rosary and talking with God, helped them to feel calm and alleviated anxiety. Further, believing that God has a plan for their lives helped students to cope during times of stress, such as examinations and lockdowns, and to

overcome grief following bereavement and loss. Additionally, involvement in a religious community, particularly in religious youth groups, helped young people to make friends and to connect with others.

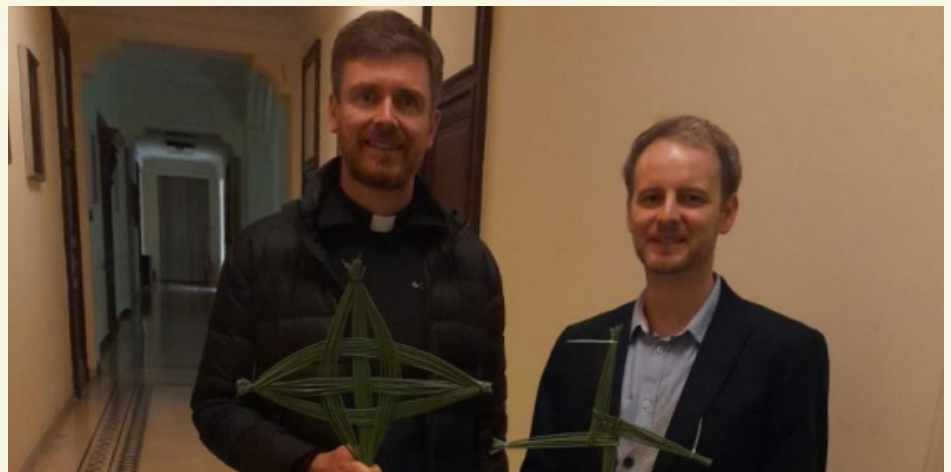
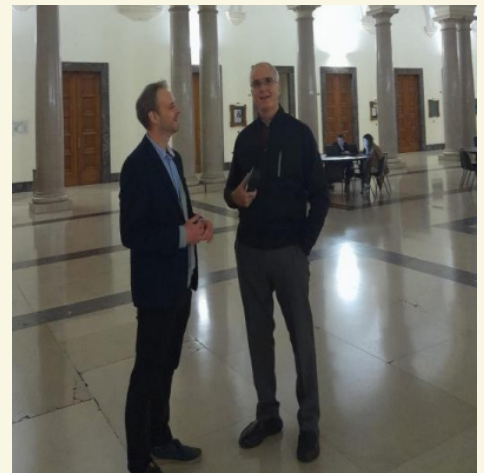
The results of the study demonstrate that religion has the potential to have a positive impact on young people’s mental wellbeing, provided that they internalise and ‘buy in’ to their religious beliefs, as well as practise positive religious coping methods. In terms of implications for individuals who work with or parent young people, either in schools or in religious communities, helping religious students to internalise their beliefs may lead to higher mental wellbeing. This can be achieved by helping young people to make greater use of the positive religious coping methods mentioned above, as well as challenging young people’s use of negative religious coping methods.

The research project was supervised by Dr Maurice Harmon, Head of the Department of Learning, Society, & Religious Education, and Dr Trevor O’Brien, Lecturer in Inclusive and Special Education at MIC.



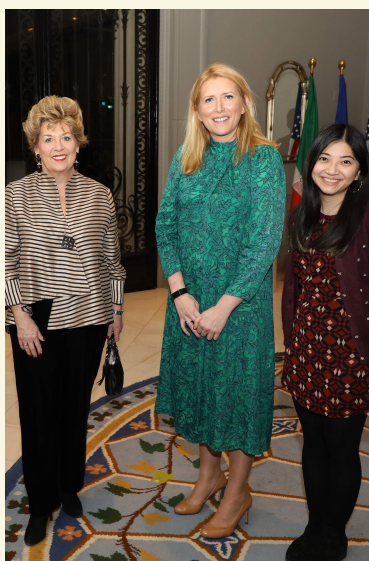
2 MIC students complete Certificate in Catholic Studies in Rome & Dr Jonathan Burroughs' meeting with Fr Paul Finnerty, Rector of the Irish College Rome and Professor Gerard Whelan Gregorian University in Autumn 2023

Michelle Murphy and Colin Moran (TRS research postgraduate students) form part of 5 Irish students studying and living in the Irish College. The Irish cohort include 4 lay Catholic Studies students in their twenties and one older postgraduate doctoral student who is a priest. Michelle and Colin are part of the inaugural cohort of 12 American and 4 Irish students taking 5 modules on the Catholic Studies programme in the Gregorian University and the Irish College. Since coming to Rome both students report having been enriched by engagement with the American and international community of students in the Irish College and the Gregorian. After meeting with students and faculty (Dr Raymond Hain) delivering the Catholic Studies Semester Abroad programme, we would recommend this course for students who are highly structured, well organised, self-motivated, confident, mature, and secure in their own identity.



Some of the outcomes of our time in Rome include an agreement with the Irish College for us to begin immediately to recruit and nominate 2 more MIC TRS/RE students for the Catholic Studies Semester Abroad programme in the Irish College and Gregorian University for Autumn 2024. Subject to MIC selecting two students who succeed at interview/application this means two bursaries worth \$20,00 per student – in total \$40,000. There was also an agreement by Frances Collins (Irish Ambassador to the Holy See) to host MIC TRS/RE staff/students at a reception in the Irish Embassy in 2024-5 when we bring our TRS/RE students on field work to Rome. In addition, there is a planned series of 4 Podcasts involving Jonathan Burroughs and Patricia Kieran on the Synod with Professor Eamonn Conway, on the Irish College with Fr Paul Finnerty, on the Gregorian University with Rev Professor Gerard Whelan, and on Catholic Studies with Dr Raymond Hain.

IICS Represented at Irish Ambassador to United States Reception in 2023 and 2024: MIC in DC



Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) February 2024.

Carleigh Garcia with Ambassador Geraldine Bryne Nason, Irish Ambassador to the USA, in Washington DC 2023.
MIC President, Professor Eugene Wall hosts reception with Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, Irish Ambassador to the USA, 2024.