

Eu-Vocatio 2001 - St. Patrick's College Maynooth

The European Vocations Service hosts its annual conference Eu Vocatio 2001, this weekend at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. The delegates, who come from 20 European Countries, are the National Co-ordinators for Vocations Ministry in their own countries. This annual conference presents an opportunity for them to exchange information, and to share ideas on how a truly vocational culture can be developed within the Church. A total of 56 delegates will participate in the Conference, including lay people, priests, and religious. Among the countries represented are Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Switzerland, and all the countries of the European Union

The Conference was inaugurated by Bishop Alois Kothgasser of Innsbruck, who is the delegate of the Committee of European Bishops' Conferences. Cardinal Connell was the principal celebrant at the opening Mass on Friday celebrant at the opening Mass was Cardinal Connell. The Apostolic Nuncio, Dr. Giuseppe Lazzarotto was among the concelebrants.

On Friday morning, Bishop Martin Drennan, (auxiliary bishop in Dublin) addressed the delegates on *The call to Discipleship in the New Testament, a model for Vocations Ministry*. Among the more important qualities that vocations personnel should look for in candidates for the priesthood and religious life, Bishop Drennan included a healthy acceptance of self, the capacity to get on with people, a desire for this way of life which has been felt over a length of time, a desire to pray, and a willingness to make sacrifices.

"The two pillars of growth in discipleship," Bishop Drennan said, "are knowledge of Jesus, and knowledge of self. For most, coming to terms with mixed motives, with fears, with masked prejudices, is a painful but a freeing process.... As vocations personnel, it is our hope that those we accept into our formation programmes will joy in living their vocation, and pass on that joy through their ministry."

On Saturday morning, the delegates were addressed by Dr. Cait O'Dwyer, an Irish Sister of Mercy, working at the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian University, Rome. Her topic was *Using the Insights of Psychology in Vocational Discernment*. "It is important, she said, "to recognize that grace builds on nature or more precisely, grace builds on human nature. In the context of Christian formation therefore, it is clear that psychology as a science has much to offer towards a fuller understanding of the human person. In particular, the insights of psychology can furnish valuable information about the *level of freedom* operative in any person regarding his or her ability to choose a particular life form: it can also comment on the person's *capacity to live that commitment*."

Dr. O'Dwyer remarked that those who present themselves as candidates today are different in some respects from the stereotype that we will have of candidates in other generations. "It should not disturb us," she said, "that today's applicants are not our clones: however, we need to be aware of certain features of this generation which will need particular care and attention, as indeed each generation up to now has had." ... "Many recognise, Sr. Cait went on, "that today's generation of young people are less familiar with Church traditions and teachings than previous generations. ... Quite a number of today's youth come from families where some breakdown has occurred."

One Saturday evening, the delegates will take a break from their work to visit the the ancient monastic site of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, which is the spiritual cradle of the Archdiocese of Dublin. One of the first Archbishops of Dublin, St. Laurence O'Toole, was abbot of Glendalough in the 12th. century.