James McCartin: Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Jim McCartin, Director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture. It is an honor to welcome you to tonight’s distinguished panel and this year’s Russo Family Lecture: “Catholic Ireland — Past, Present, Future.”

We are especially grateful to the members of the Russo family — Bob, Cathy, and Chris Russo — for being present this evening.

Tonight the Russos’ generosity has made possible what I am confident will be a memorable evening for all of us here, no matter if our ethnic heritage be Italian or Irish or anything else.

I want to offer a special welcome to our trustees, as well as to Ambassador Anne Anderson, Consul-General Noel Kilkenny and Hanora Kilkenny, and Deputy Consul Peter Ryan. Welcome.

Allow me to ask all of you two things. First, should you need to leave the amphitheater before this evening’s event is over, please exit only through the back exits on either side, so as to avoid distracting our panelists and our guests. Second, before we begin, please do silence your cell phones.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce to you the President of Fordham University, Father Joseph M. McShane of the Society of Jesus.

The Rev. Joseph McShane: Thank you very much, Jim.

I want to add my word of welcome to the welcome that you have already received from Jim. It is a real honor to have you all here, especially I would say the cream of the Irish diplomatic corps. It really is a great joy to have you with us again, so soon after our event.
last week.

But I hope none of you will mind if I say to the Archbishop it is especially great grace to have you here. We have been looking forward with eager longing to your arrival for over a year. As the day drew near, our excitement and our anticipation got greater and greater. As I said to you upstairs, we here at Fordham — indeed everyone, I believe, in the American Church — are immensely proud of you. We are impressed by all that you have done. We see you as an inspiring figure, not only for the Church in Ireland, but also for the Church universal. So it is for all of us a great, great grace to have you here and an honor to welcome you to the Fordham family.

I cannot help but notice as I look across that Father Ryan, who maintains that his family is from Tipperary — although I have my doubts — is beaming especially brightly and warmly this evening, and he will, I’m sure, speak with you later on about some of the secrets of the Ryan family wealth and wisdom. But for now we will let him be silent.

It really is, Archbishop Martin, a great, great honor to have you here. You inspire us, you give us hope for the Church with your forthrightness, with your devotion to the Lord, and your concern for a fresh and promising start again for the Church in Ireland.

We were reminded upstairs in our conversation with the Archbishop, when someone in the room referred to the “Church of Ireland,” he stopped the conversation and said, “No, there are different crowds, you know. You must say only the Church in Ireland if you want to refer to what I do.” So we take the correction, and we take it, I hope, with good grace and good humor.

The second duty — and a happy duty it is indeed for me this evening — is to introduce to you the University’s Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dr. John P. Harrington. Dr. Harrington was educated at Columbia University — a youthful indiscretion; University College Dublin; and he earned his Doctorate in Literature from Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey — again an indiscretion, but we forgive.


Dr. Harrington also lectures frequently on theater and Irish culture in nonacademic settings, such as the Guggenheim Museum, the Lincoln Center Festival, the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Public Theater, the Dublin Theater Festival, the Manhattan Theater Club, and many others.

He is the former Chairman of the Board of the PBS stations WMHT Educational Telecommunications and a current member of the Board of Mint Theater, a professional company here in New York City.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to introduce to you Dr. John P. Harrington.

**JOHN HARRINGTON:** Thank you very much, Father. It’s very nice to lavish such an introduction on the introducer, which is all I am this evening. Very good.

I want to thank everybody who came. I especially want to thank everybody associated
with the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture for making this evening possible, a very, very promising discussion that we will have.

I was also just thrilled to meet the Archbishop. It’s remarkable. He’s very familiar with New York City and has spent substantial amounts of time in New York City, but he has never before entered the doors of Fordham University. So we’re very happy to welcome him here for the first time tonight.

Now, many of you know that the Archbishop assumed office in Dublin in the year 2004 and that this was quite a pivotal moment in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Now, you might not know that the long path of preparation he took toward that moment actually included many years of service to the Holy See in Rome, including the Pontifical Councils on Family, on Justice and People, and, as the Holy See, Permanent Observer to the United Nations and to the World Trade Organization. Today he is recognized in Ireland, not only as the Archbishop of the largest diocese in Ireland, but also as one of the most influential public intellectuals in Ireland, and what he says is heeded elsewhere too.

Archbishop Martin has written about his own ordination in Dublin by his predecessor, Archbishop of Dublin Charles McQuaid, who was a monumental figure in the Catholic Church in Ireland, and a very different Catholic Church in Ireland at the same time. So he is really very eminently qualified to discuss with us tonight the idea of change in the Catholic Church in Ireland and the idea of past, present, and future.

For the purposes of discussion, he is joined on the podium this evening by two other people who represent very distinct kinds of perspectives on our subject this evening.

The first is Dr. J.J. Lee, who is the Glucksmann Professor of Irish Studies at NYU, and he is also the Director of the Glucksmann Ireland House at NYU, where I know from long experience he really has created, through events and publications, a really genuinely original kind of integration of both the public and the academic dimensions of Irish studies. Joe is also, without question, really among the titans of the historians of 20th-century Ireland — T.W. Moody, F.S.L. Lyons, Roy Foster, and others.

It might be less obvious, actually, that Joe was for many years on the faculty at University College Cork, and in that capacity he was also the representative of the National University of Ireland to the Upper House of the Irish Parliament, Seanad Éireann.

In addition, we are joined this evening by Dr. Theodora Hawksley, who is currently completing a post-doctoral appointment at the University of Edinburgh Divinity School. She has already published quite widely on theology and her work that integrates into theology dimensions and practices of ethnography and field work. She is now working in the Center for Theology and Public Issues at Edinburgh on a project that I expect we will hear about, called Peacebuilding Through Media Arts, which has specific reference to contemporary Ireland and to the Catholic Church in it.

The Archbishop will address us first. That will be followed by comments from Drs. Lee and Hawksley, and then discussion. We all hope for disputed points to be explicated for us. Then, at the end of our discussion, we hope that you will remain in your seats while we follow the discussion with a brief ceremony.

Please welcome Archbishop Martin.

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: Good evening. They were the first words of the new Pope also to people, buono sera. [Laughter]

Ireland has changed and Ireland is changing. The other evening, I was at a lecture in the Italian Embassy in Dublin about Ireland in the Renaissance time, and I was struck by two
quotes chosen by the lecturer.

The first was from Pope Pius II, Piccolomini, arising in 1458, looking at the situation of Europe at the time. He concluded his three sentences on Ireland saying, “Since nothing worth remembering took place there during the period we write about, we hurry on to matters Spanish.” [Laughter] I can tell you that there are many things worth remembering — and maybe we prefer not to remember — that have taken place in Ireland in recent times.

The second quote was from Petrarch, who in the latter part of the 12th century noted about Ireland: “In one year you will hardly ever hear it thunder. No thunderbolts cause terror [t]here, no lightning ever strikes.” I say that quote should make anyone who still has lingering doubts recognize that climate change is a reality. [Laughter]

I entered the seminary in Dublin in 1962, just one week before the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The winter of 1962 was one of the bleakest winters in history, and I remember it particularly because the seminary was a very cold place in more senses than one.

My memory was of a seminary building, a routine, a discipline, a way of life, which seemed to have been there for decades. Even to someone who was not revolutionary like myself, it all seemed so out of touch from the world I had just come from and in which my friends were thriving. But you were not supposed to think that way. Things were done and were to be done as they always had been done. The Catholic Church was unchanging. But that was about to change.

For years people looked to Ireland as a vibrant and sustainable model for strong economic growth. Countries were told to follow the Irish example. Today the economic situation is one full of uncertainties, precisely at a moment when confidence and trust are urgently needed.

On the other hand, for decades Ireland was looked on as one of the most deeply and stably Catholic countries. Today Ireland finds itself, with other parts of Europe, being classified as post-Catholic.

Here I’d issue my first warning. Everyone has his or her own definition of post-Catholic. But you can only fully define post-Catholic in terms of the Catholicism that has been displaced.

Irish Catholicism has its own unique history and culture, and renewal in the Irish Church will not simply come from imported plans and programs. Renewal in the Irish Church has to be homegrown, and you must understand where Irish Catholicism is coming from.

Ireland does, of course, share many of the same currents of secularization with other countries in the Western world, and therefore it shares many of the challenges. But there are specific challenges within Europe, there are specific challenges which are common to the English-speaking world. But there is a danger that people think that, because Ireland is an English-speaking country, it can simply be put into the same category as the United States or Great Britain.

Ireland is different. Neither the United States nor Great Britain was ever a predominantly, much less dominantly, Catholic country. The demographics and the culture and presence of Catholicism in society were different, and still remain different.

Indeed, one would have to say that today Northern Irish Catholicism is different to that in the Republic of Ireland. There are some who feel that maybe all the answers to the problems of the Church in Ireland might be solved by learning from Northern Ireland,
where years of conflict forged a tighter Catholic identity. There may be some truth in
that, but it could also be misleading, as Northern Ireland is changing.

Curiously, if anything, there is a growing difference between the social realities in Ireland
north and south because of the evolving differences in social and economic policy in the
two parts, and in the emergence of a perhaps unforeseen consequence of the peace
process, a new Northern Ireland identity — not just among golfers. [Laughter] You can
no longer simplistically equate Catholicism and nationalism in Northern Ireland. A very
large number of Northern Ireland Catholics, the majority, would favor staying in the
United Kingdom.

But what has happened? Why did so much happen so quickly in Church and in society?
How can the overall economic climate of a country change overnight? And everybody
asks, who was asleep, or were we all asleep? But the deeper question is, what were the
underlying values that underpinned the better-times Ireland, and how did we
underestimate the fact that the success of an economy, of a noneconomic model, ought to
have been evaluated in terms of the long-term social stability and sustainability of jobs, of
mortgages, of borrowing, of lifestyle, of education, of health care, and sustainable
opportunity for young people? So we ask the question, what was going on in the way in
which Catholic Ireland was thinking?

Today Ireland is picking up the pieces economically and paying the price socially. The
social effects are dramatic.

I was talking at recent confirmations with teachers, who talk about some of the hardships
that their pupils are experiencing in elementary school. In modern Ireland many
children come to school without having had a breakfast. In some schools the level of
undernourishment is such that children’s learning ability is being stultified. And there is
a growing anxiety that the austerity measures introduced to respond to the economic
crisis are now coming to a social breaking point.

At a time of rapid change, ownership of social change is vital if change is to be accepted
and fully embraced. But who wants to own policies of austerity? There is a certain flight
from political ownership. In Ireland it is very easy to put the blame on the previous
government and it is very easy to say, “This is all being imposed from the outside or by
necessity, and we would really prefer to do it differently.”

You will not generate ownership of austerity and social change if the measures imposed
are applied somewhat arbitrarily across the board and do not appear to differentiate
according to real situations, especially the situations of the most vulnerable. We see this
in Ireland in some policies regarding education, health care, and care of the aged.

Only two days ago, I attended the National Congress of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in
Dublin, where it was noted that people who one year ago were contributors to the society
are now one year later turning to the society for help.

Patience is wearing thin and it is very hard for some to hope. I believe many of our young
people lose hope. They feel they have inherited something that they can’t be proud of and
doesn’t give them the motives to go forward.

What happened to the Church? When I was asked to return to Dublin, Pope John Paul II
asked me why secularization had taken place so rapidly in Ireland. It was one of the rare
occasions on which I told the Pope that he was wrong. The roots of change in Ireland
were there. They were there for a long time but were not seen and not understood. It’s
not that Ireland today is momentarily in an out-of-the-ordinary period of its history of the
Church in Ireland, somehow temporarily adrift from what is the real default position.
The thing about Ireland is there is no default position anymore, and there hasn’t been
such a position for some time.

In many ways, the Church in Ireland had been trapped in an illusory self-image. The demographic majority which the Church enjoyed hid many structural weaknesses, and the Church had become insensitive to those weaknesses.

In the immediate post-Vatican II period, there was a moment of enthusiastic renewal in the Irish Church and a positive acceptance of change. This probably also indicated the level of dissatisfaction and desire for change that was there in the Irish Church and how the Church leadership was out of touch with the religious sentiment of its people.

The Catholic Church in Ireland had for far too long felt that it was safely ensconced in a Catholic country. The Church had become conformist and controlling, not just of its faithful, but of society in general.

I was at a seminar last week about the Church’s understanding in theological terms of a perfect society. All I can say is if anybody thought that the Catholic Ireland of the past was anything like a perfect society, they must now be very disillusioned.

Faith in Jesus Christ must open us out beyond human horizons. Christian faith requires changing our way of thinking, of trusting in God’s love rather than in the tangible securities of day-to-day life. When faith leads to conformism, it has betrayed the very nature of faith. Conformism feels that it has attained certainty, whereas faith is always a leap into the unknown and the challenge to go beyond our own limits and beyond our own narrow certainties and the distorted understanding that comes from them.

In the comments he made just three days before his election as Pope, speaking to the Congregation of Cardinals, Pope Francis spoke about the need for the Church to break out, to break out into what he called the outskirts, the frontiers of human existence. And he added that “When the Church does not break out of herself to evangelize, she becomes auto-referential and she shuts herself in.” Then he says, “The evils which as time passes afflict ecclesial institutions are rooted in self-reference, a sort of theological narcissism.”

One of the keys to understanding the mismanagement of recent child-abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland must precisely be the measure in which the Church in Ireland became auto-referential. The effects of the child-abuse scandals have had a demoralizing effect on the entire Church in Ireland, and continue to have. In one sense, the scandal crisis could not have come at a worse time, in that confidence in the Church was well on the wane. When the scandals broke, their effects were devastating.

Today Ireland has strong child-protection measures in place, and the Irish Church is a much safer place for children than in the past. The National Board for the Protection of Children, which is an independent body set up by the Church, published today six audits of different dioceses, all with a very positive outcome. Huge credit is due to that board and to its CEO, Mr. Ian Elliott, who will be retiring shortly.

But one still has to ask where the roots of this scandal and its mismanagement were to be found within the Church. Was the issue simply the action of a few deviant priests who did not represent the Church, or was there something deeper?

Certainly, the overwhelming majority of priests in Ireland led and lead an exemplary moral life and carry out their ministry with great dedication and enjoy great support and affection from their people. Those priests contribute greatly to the new ethos of child safeguarding which has been introduced in Ireland.

What is extraordinarily high are the numbers of children that were abused. We’re talking about thousands. In the case of the Archdiocese of Dublin, there were ten or twelve
serious serial pedophiles who were able to abuse hundreds of children over a long period of time. There is no way you can explain away the huge number of children that were abused and the fact that this took place undetected and unrecognized within the Church of Jesus Christ. Today we are in a safer place. But it did take decades for us to get there.

So one of the great challenges the Irish Catholic Church has to face is that of the strong remnants of inherited clericalism. The days of the dominant, or at times domineering, role of the clergy within the institutional Church have changed. But part of the culture is still there, and it reappears again and again in different forms.

We often overlook the fact that the very term “institutional Church” only has meaning in the context of clericalism. Clericalism will only be eliminated by fostering a deeper sense of the meaning of the Church. That sense of a new understanding of the nature of the Church will not come from media strategies or simply by structural reforms, but by genuine renewal in what faith in Jesus Christ is about.

If we focus only on structures and power, the risk is that clericalism will be replaced by neo-clericalism. The Christian presence in society is not achieved by the imposition of a manifesto or simply by high-profile social criticism. It’s more about the witness which people give to Christian principles and the witness they give to how these Christian principles are mediated within the particular social responsibilities that people carry.

For generations now, the Irish Catholic Church relied on Irish society in general to be the principal instrument for passing on the faith. Day by day this is becoming less the case.

The religious culture of Ireland has changed. Many people say to me they reject the Church but they still consider themselves to be believers in Jesus Christ. The difficulty is that in such a situation, without a personal and rigorous intellectual encounter with the Scriptures and with Christian tradition, a person can drift into something which is really of their own creation rather than a challenging encounter with faith. The realities of faith, if viewed — consciously or unconsciously — through secularized lenses, can easily end up then with a distortion of faith or with an inability to understand the logic of faith.

I am not saying that we don’t need reforms of the structures — anything but. What I’m saying is that such reform without ongoing radical renewal in the faith will end up with the wrong structures, and indeed we might end up with a Church that is answering yesterday’s unanswered questions tomorrow.

Clericalism will to some extent vanish when a new culture of co-responsibility and collaboration develops. But there is a further and more vital need, that of charting a new path to allow the Church once again to impact on society and to mediate the Christian message into the broad culture of the Ireland of tomorrow.

Reform can’t be just an inner-Church reality. A Church which is trapped in inner-Church squabbles will never attract others.

I remember when I went for my ad limine visit to Pope Benedict. I had all my statistics well prepared, ready to answer, to tell him the situation of the Church in Ireland.

He sat me down and he said, “I want to ask you this: Where are the points of contact today between the Church in Ireland and those places where the Irish culture of the future is being formed?”

My statistics were absolutely useless in answering a question like that. And he asked me about theater, about literature, about the media, about politics. This is the question we should be looking at.
The Church will relinquish many of the institutional roles it has held in Ireland. But that doesn’t mean that the Church should retreat into sacristies or into private value systems. If anything, its presence must become even more vigorous within society. I am not here advocating imposing one’s beliefs on others, nor establishing a sort of Catholic mafia in public life to manipulate society. I’m not talking just about the area of sexual morality. I’m talking about the place of faith and of believers in the social, economic, political, and cultural world. I’m talking about developing the type of person that I very often encountered in international life, people who are recognized by their colleagues as people whose religious faith brought an added dimension to the quality of their professional life and to their broad humanitarian concerns.

The Catholic Church in Ireland requires lay men and women whose faith enables them to dare to hope and to challenge all of us to expand the perimeters of our hope beyond the narrow confines that each of us individually and as community, consciously or unconsciously, fix for ourselves. The Church has to re-find its ability to form leaders in an Ireland which is facing new challenges culturally, economically, politically, and religiously.

Where do we find these new leaders who will be in the forefront of the presence of the Christian message in the society of tomorrow? How will they be educated and prepared for their task? And what are those points of contact between the Church and the new culture of Irish society?

We do have men and women to take on this task in the media world. But very often our Catholic pundits and our Catholic punditry is as ideological as much of the punditry on the other side. Catholic punditry of this kind will only appear to the other side as narrow defensiveness, while the analogous secular punditry will be perceived as entrenched anti-Catholicism.

Why is it that the type of mature dialogue between believers and nonbelievers and atheists that we find in other European societies — in the academic world, in the media, and indeed within the churches themselves — why do we not find that in Ireland?

Let me take a brief look at the changed demographics of the Church in Ireland. Church attendance is very low in some areas, especially in socially deprived areas.

In Dublin mass attendance is generally highest in middle-class parishes, where parishioners are middle-class economically and liberal/middle-of-the-road on matters of Church teaching. However, these are parishes where there is a sense of community and activity. There is a growing interest in adult faith formation, but as yet generally on an irregular basis.

Irish Catholics have been generous, even in these hard times. The Dublin Eucharistic Congress was funded above all, 70 percent, by the voluntary contributions of ordinary Catholics.

The presence of young people in the life of these parishes is, however, minimal. The strong backbone of good Catholics in Ireland is an aging group.

Where there are signs of youth participation in the Irish Church, it is among the more conservative young Catholics. Is this where the future of the Church lies? I’m not sure. Many of these movements of young traditional Catholics are very limited in numbers, and they make little inroads into the lives of their peers.

When it comes to new evangelization, the Irish Church has to ask radical questions as to where it should be directing its resources.
On the question of vocations, for example, the numbers are low. The seminaries are divided between two establishments, one in Ireland and one in Rome, neither of which can really achieve its aims on the basis of such small numbers.

There are religious congregations which have not had an ordination for fifteen years and more. There are dioceses which currently have no seminarians. No one person from west of the River Shannon entered the seminaries this year. It is not a case, therefore, or a secularized urban Ireland and a healthy rural Ireland. The same cultural processes are at work across the country.

When it comes to the Archdiocese of Dublin, where about one-third of the population of the Republic of Ireland lives, we have been able to carry out detailed research based on the most recent census figures of 2011, and we have mapped them to our parish boundaries and the boundaries of the diocese. A number of interesting facts emerge.

The population of the diocese has grown significantly. The number registered as Catholics has remained at about 1,200,000 and about one-quarter of the population of the Archdiocese registered as something other than Catholic — one quarter. That is well above the national average. It is clear that of the three-quarters who ticked the Catholic box on the census form, many would not be practicing, or even have any real contact with the Church. This gives a very different picture than the one at times presented or presumed.

There are already three parishes in the Dublin Diocese where Catholics are in a minority, and it is clear that the cultural Catholicism which exists today will not continue forever.

One other significant fact is that the numbers of those under six years of age is higher than those over seventy. Ours is a young diocese. The cohort of one-year-olds and two-year-olds is larger than that of six- and seven-year-olds.

Demographers estimate that the population of Ireland could in the foreseeable future reach again that 8 million figure of pre-famine Ireland. Were that to happen, 50 percent of the population would live on a narrow strip of land along the east coast of Ireland, from Gorey to Dundalk, most of which would be within the territory of the Archdiocese of Dublin. The question arises: Will that emerging demographic reality still be Catholic Ireland?

How should the Church be looking at the faith formation of the growing number of young people? Until now, the formation of young Catholics depended in great measure on the schools. The specific preparation for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation took place almost exclusively within the schools. And at times the link between family, school, and parish was nonexistent.

Almost all Irish education at elementary level has traditionally been denominational, with Catholic schools making up well over 90 percent of such schools. There were some Anglican schools, one Jewish school, but that was it. These schools are fully funded by the state and were thus, until very recently, the only form of state school that existed. With greater pluralism, there is a growing demand, rightly, for other forms of school patronage.

But all the indications are also that a sizable number of parents wish to see high-quality denominational education remain an essential pillar, alongside other models of our national education system, to help young people to grow and flourish within the religious tradition to which they belong.

Obviously, such denominational education should not be divisive or exclusivist. But neither should religious education be reduced simply to a colorless presentation of the
The contribution of Catholic academic institutions to the good of society is not something that extinguishes the ecclesial nature and vocation of those institutions. Their Catholic identity is an essential part of the package which has built their excellence. Indeed, one could say that any downplaying of their Catholic vocation and identity could well result in a downgrading of their academic excellence. I’m sure that’s a subject we could discuss about the institutions in this country also.

In the past, if one was talking about renewal of the Church in Ireland, you naturally looked toward seminaries. This is still the case. The crisis of vocations has to be addressed. But vocations spring from within the life of believing families and communities. The renewal of the Church in Ireland and the challenge of creating a new Christian presence in Irish society tomorrow will come from a renewed generation of lay men and women who feel confident to witness to the meaning of their Christian faith and to the meaning that brings to their lives.

One of the great surprises of the recent Dublin Eucharistic Congress was the extraordinary interest in the seminars on catechesis that had been prepared. In many cases, the talks had to be repeated two or three times in order to facilitate all those who wanted to attend.

For the first time in my life, I found that hundreds of people had to be turned away from attending my initial talk at the Congress. And I have to add that on that occasion it was the only event on offer and it was raining outside. [Laughter]

There is a strong desire within Irish Catholics for a deep renewal in formation, in faith, and in prayer, and this is not being responded to sufficiently.

We have a national directory for catechesis, “Share the Good News,” which is very good and indicates what is needed at every stage in life. But its implementation is slow, and it encounters resistance to change.

Our school systems and our teachers have made an immense contribution to the transmission of the faith. But many teachers no longer practice, and there is a growing
danger that, due to curriculum pressures, catechesis will be limited to two events, First Communion and Confirmation, and nothing else.

Young people have in many cases drifted away from religious practice already before they enter second-level education, and the Church’s presence at third-level education is often limited simply to pastoral care with very minimal ideas of faith formation.

All this is taking place at a time in which there is a growing secularization of culture and politics. I could list many examples of the distance between politics and the Church, examples also of unbalanced media coverage. But to do that would probably be interpreted as me saying that it’s the politicians and the journalists and the media who are responsible for the crisis that exists in the Irish Church.

The causes of that crisis lie within the Church. Much of the heritage of Catholic-dominated Ireland still traps us, and it traps us from being free witnesses to the Christian message within a secular society which is asking questions about meaning.

So it is not a time to be lamenting. It’s a time to be rising to the challenge with courage and Christian enthusiasm.

I thank you.

J.J. LEE: Thank you very much. I hesitate to follow the Archbishop with that so wide-ranging and I think so perceptive analysis.

But I am an historian. I was tempted, when he said that Pope Benedict told him to put away all his notes and all his statistics and everything else like that, to say I would do exactly the same. I don’t actually have any with me, so I can’t very well put them away in quite the same way.

What I will do is try and give you, without boring you too much, a very brief, very rapid outline of roughly a century and a bit of Irish Catholic history, the history of Catholic Ireland, before we come to where the Archbishop engaged with, and then perhaps take up some of the points that he made and wonder where we might go from there.

Now, I see they were telling us when we came in “be sure not to speak for more than ten minutes or your life isn’t worth it,” and there isn’t a single clock around the whole place. Anyway, it’s 7:05 now. You stop me if I pass.

Let’s go back to the famine very briefly. We had just before the famine in the 1840s a priest to about every 3,500 Catholics in Ireland. By 1900 we had a priest to pretty well every 1,000 Catholics in Ireland. There was obviously a sharp drop in population, a very sharp rise in the number of clergy. The number of nuns rose from about 1,000 to 10,000. The second half of the 19th century was in fact the founding of traditional Irish Catholicism as we understood it until maybe twenty or thirty years ago.

It’s not something that goes back to St. Patrick. It is the result of a specific historical conjuncture. That historical conjuncture has ended and it is natural that there should be changes — not necessarily the changes that are happening, but there should be change as a result of a dramatic change in the raw material, the background of the place of the Catholic Church in Ireland between roughly the famine and the 1960s–1970s. So in fact it would be unnatural if there hadn’t been change.

Let me go very briefly after that. The high point, I suppose, of traditional Irish Catholicism, the celebratory high point, was the Eucharistic Congress of 1932, where in a way the papacy recognized the fifteenth centenary of 432, the alleged date of St. Patrick’s descent on Ireland. Several cardinals, etc., came, a million people had mass in Phoenix
Park in Dublin.

Eamon de Valera, who had just become the equivalent of the prime minister, greeted the visiting dignitaries. There was a spot of bother because he had been, inter alia, excommunicated ten years before. But he forgave the Pope for his indiscretion and presided over the Eucharistic Congress with great aplomb.

It was a moment of real — you can see it in the newsreels, even you can see it in the newspapers — in a sense almost elevated joy in Irish Catholicism. We had arrived. We were recognized. We were now once more at the center of the Catholic world. The marginalization we had suffered in many ways as a result of political factors was now behind us.

It was at that time the Irish Church not only was flourishing in Ireland, it had one of the biggest, if not the biggest, single missionary effort of any country in the world. Irish missionaries had spread far and wide because the number of vocations was so great in Ireland that there was a very substantial surplus. Many, of course, had come over here in the mid-19th century to cater to famine immigrants and so on.

The Irish Church was in many ways the imperial church of the English-speaking world. It sent out its priests to virtually every English-speaking area.

Officially that began — maybe unofficially — when Paul Cullen became cardinal in Ireland, or became Archbishop of Dublin in the 1850s–1860s. Cullen had been Rector of the Irish College in Rome. He had been a personal friend of the man who became Pope Pius IX, and Pope Pius IX elevated him de facto to being virtually the parallel pope of the English-speaking world. So you could hardly have a bishop appointed, even in parts of this country, in parts of Canada, in Australia, in Scotland — the English fought a bitter rearguard action to prevent the Paddies climbing up and claiming bishoprics, by and large successfully — India, etc. The Irish reach, in terms of influence in Catholicism, around the English-speaking world was quite extraordinary. And much of it continued in a more muted sort of way even after Cullen.

That lasted essentially, with massive numbers of clergy, vis-à-vis laity, massive numbers of nuns, at home and abroad, until the 1960s–1970s.

What happened then? It was bound to result in some change in Irish Catholicism. The manner that the change has taken is a matter of specifics in the last thirty or forty-odd years.

But change was bound to come of some sort because they began to industrialize, fairly rapidly by Irish standards. The population, which was roughly 3 million in 1960, is somewhere around 4.5 million today in the Irish Republic, which is tiny by New York standards, obviously, much less American standards, but it was a 50 percent increase in a country which had suffered population decrease for well over 100 years.

That population increase coincided with, because it was caused by, industrialization. Industrialization means urbanization. Urbanization means a different ethos compared with the receptivity of a rural population to the order of authority in villages and in small towns. So psychological change as well as material change was bound to happen.

The Church didn’t see it coming. The then-Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Martin’s predecessor, came back from the Second Vatican Council simply saying, “There’s nothing to worry about” — not in those words — but “nothing’s going to change.” And, of course, we were poised on the precipice of unprecedented change by Irish standards.

I would have to say it was not only Dr. Martin himself who has come along, but there has
been, in my view anyway — and this is not to palaver him — there has been a receptivity in Irish episcopate circles to actually coping with the necessity for change. This is not simply a temporary phenomenon that will blow over if you keep your head down and do nothing. This is a fundamental sociological change that has to be addressed, it has to be countered.

There will never be a going back — you should never say never — but it is highly unlikely there will be a going-back to a 90–95 percent Catholic Ireland in the sense of regular attendance at Sunday mass and a regular attendance at the sacraments and all that sort of thing.

The challenge now is for the Church to see what it can hold and what it can recover from the many it has lost without aiming at the total Catholicization as was the Church of thirty or forty years ago.

Ireland is in many ways a missionary country at this particular stage. But the Catholic Church in Ireland is not a missionary church. There is a huge disjunction between the mentality of a large number of the Catholic clergy, who are splendid people by and large, who have been badly betrayed by the small number among them who have perpetrated these horrors in the child-abuse cases and so on. They are a very fine group of people in my experience. But they are simply not psychologically attuned, and I think [inaudible] attuned — not in age terms, not in physical vigor attuned — to cope with a lot of the challenges facing them.

The Irish Church requires a policy of leadership that, except for Dr. Martin — and I better stop saying this in case somebody is reporting all this back to your colleagues, which will make you actually even more popular among them — there is a quality of leadership required that it’s hard to see where it’s going to come from, because it can’t come from just one person. One person can give a sense of direction, but there has to be a cadre of people who will respond to the challenge. That is what Ireland is lacking at the moment. Maybe it will come — please, God, it will — but it is not clear at this moment where it is going to come from.

Now, there are a number of objective reasons why the new Catholicism — “new” isn’t quite the right word — the Catholicism of the future in Ireland has to be significantly adaptive to the Catholicism of the past.

Part of it is the rise of women in Irish society. I’m saying that in a purely descriptive sense. You can decide if it’s good or bad, whatever you wish to say yourselves. That arises largely from the industrialization drive and from the fact that we now have something like 40 percent of women working outside the home, maybe more in good years, compared with 5–10 percent forty years ago.

Agricultural Ireland belongs to the past in terms of employment prospects and so on. Something less than 10 percent of the total population actually lives directly from agriculture these days. Ireland is no longer an agricultural country. It has become one of the fastest industrializing countries in Europe over the last forty years.

So there is a very different social structure, very different generational structure. And Dr. Martin alluded to the youth structure. Virtually nothing changed to cope with the dramatic changes required to respond to the demands, the war(?) reviews, the perception of possibilities of these younger people.

So pretty well two generations, certainly one and a half generations, have just been lost. They have simply walked away from the Church. Now, many of them would possibly have been doing so anyway because there was bound to be change as the media changed, as Ireland opens to the world, as industrialization proceeds, as urbanization proceeds.
That’s normal.

What isn’t normal is the speed at which it happened and the extent to which it happened. That’s largely in my view the Church’s own responsibility. It bears responsibility for failing to perceive the necessity for change. And then, of course, it was, I think anyway, the abuses that gave a lot of people, who were simply waiting to find an excuse to walk away from the Church and feel good about it and portray themselves as the ethically superior, to be able to do that in the light of the way the Church failed to deal with the sexual abuses that arose.

So when you put it like that, I hope it appears to make sense, because I think it certainly makes sense to me that that is a quite likely outcome of the course of Irish history over the last forty years: dramatic social changes which resulted in Ireland, as everywhere else they have happened, in reformulation of social structures and of sharp generational differences, but an utter failure on the part of the dominant institutions of society — when I say dominant I mean psychologically dominant, value-standards dominant — to adjust to the necessity for change on its own part.

So that we are left today — I don’t want to say we are lumbered with, but I would if the Archbishop wasn’t here, but he doesn’t mind my talking about, he knows that perfectly well — that we are lumbered with a decision-making stratum at the top of the Catholic Church which is simply not fit for purpose in terms of the future of the Church over the next couple of generations. And if the next couple of generations are lost, it’s very, very hard to see how it is going to recover after that.

So Ireland is in a — I don’t want to say life-or-death — it is in a vital struggle for, literally, the soul of Ireland in terms of this generation and perhaps the next generation, or even if this generation loses, what the next generation will have to play with is very debatable.

So we are in a very, very serious situation. It’s not a situation without hope, but it is a very, very serious situation. Until it is adequately analyzed, realized, addressed, then there is no chance of recovering anything of the place the Catholic Church had in the hearts of the people, and I would say in the future has been in the minds of the people as well.

I don’t to return to the old ways. In many ways they were simply un-Christian. The individuals were Christian but the structures of authority, the structures of rule, the structures of command, were not embracing a Catholic laity in the way one has to if there is to be a viable and vital Catholic presence in the world, certainly in our part of the world, in the coming generations.

I pray to God that with the role of people like the Archbishop — and the unfortunate part is there aren’t enough like him — that in fact there will be a return to — return isn’t the right word either, but there are not a lot of right words — there will be a realization that there is no future in simply going back to the past. If there is to be a future for Catholicism in Ireland, it has to be almost seen as a new missionary endeavor.

Let me leave, Theodora, with that thought. Thank you.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Thank you, Joe. Very good.

Now we’ll hear from Theo, especially on the future, and then we can return to some of the shared topics here.

THEODORA HAWKESLEY: It’s very good to be with you. I’m grateful to Archbishop Martin for such a rich lecture and to Joe for his comments. The wisdom and experience of both surpass anything that you’ll hear from me.
I was coming to the end of an interview with a priest in Dublin who had spoken at some length about his experience of weathering the storm of the abuse crisis in his own congregation.

I decided I’d ask one last question: “What do you need and what can I do?”

He said, “Theo, we don't need people to write. We need people to listen and people to pray.” So those two, listening and prayer, are at the heart of my research and of my reflections this evening.

Without listening — and you talk about the future of the Catholic Church in Ireland risks being a sort of up-in-the-air theological sermonizing. But without prayer, it risks becoming an arm’s-length exercise in extrapolating a future from the social trends of the present.

Archbishop Martin has given us a wealth of topics for reflection, and I have time to comment on just one. So I’d like to pick up on his statement that renewal must be homegrown.

Catholicism in Ireland has its own unique culture and history, and its renewal will look different too. So during the course of my fieldwork I’ve been trying to seek out, identify, describe those places of homegrown renewal.

Where are places of life, renewal, and hope? What do they tell us about what the future of the Church might look like? I want to take you on a tour of four places that might begin to answer those questions.

The first place is Glencairn Abbey in County Waterford, which is a Cistercian monastery for women. The community currently numbers thirty-six, and they have had three postulants in 2013 already. They run a busy guesthouse, welcoming everyone from apostolic religious on retreat to seekers in search of who knows what.

So why are people attracted to that place and to other places like it? Well, I think when people are angry with the Church, it’s because they know it shouldn’t be a place of status-seeking and abuse. That conviction, “It shouldn’t be like this,” means that on some level people are in touch with or seeking for a deeper truth about what the Church should be like. They may not be able to articulate what that is, but they know it when they see it, they recognize it when they experience it.

So people are attracted to places like Glencairn, where the depth of prayer connects them to the abiding presence of God flowing underneath the turmoil of change and where the simplicity of the community connects them to that deeper truth about the Church.

As Archbishop Martin has said, genuine renewal comes not from just changed structures but from an ongoing radical renewal of faith. And that’s no mere slogan. That is happening in practice. Communities of prayer are becoming wellsprings of healing and renewal.

The second place I want to take you is Kildare and the Festival of St. Brigid, which is run by the local Brigidene Sisters each February. It includes lectures and walks and activities, many of which touch on themes of Celtic spirituality.

Now, like Brigid herself, spirituality that claims the adjective Celtic sometimes comes under suspicion for being syncretistic. All that earth connectedness and nature mysticism can sound a bit like paganism coming in by the back door, and, accordingly, it can make Church authorities quite uneasy.
But it’s worth looking closely at what is happening there. In drawing on and creating resources from Celtic spirituality, these sisters are re-scripting the connection between Catholic faith and Irish land. In the 19th and 20th centuries that connection was forged between the Church and the Irish state with some quite disastrous consequences.

The people participating in that festival are trying to access, trying to articulate, an older, deeper connection, a different way of being Catholic and Irish that also resonates with contemporary environmental concerns. So homegrown renewal, I think, is happening where people are beginning to creatively reshape that relationship between national and religious identity.

Our third place is Knock. A memorable week of my research was spent camping in a one-man tent at Knock, surviving on tinned kippers and soda bread and talking to anyone who would talk to me. During that week Knock hosted a youth festival. Some of the people had walked from Lough Derg in County Donegal down to Knock, and they had been accompanied part of the way by a bishop who walked with them.

Archbishop Martin suggested that one of the challenges confronting the Catholic Church will be those strong remnants of clericalism. Clericalism established distances between people and priests and priests and bishops, distances across which it was hard to communicate openly and honestly.

In the course of the abuse crisis, that breakdown in communication has at times been amplified. Both survivors of abuse as well as ordinary lay people have felt that their stories of hurt have not been heard. Bishops feel like nothing they can say will make any difference, and priests and religious feel stuck in the middle, unheard by anybody. Almost everyone I have interviewed has expressed a desire to be heard, for real communication, real listening, at a structural level as well as at a personal level.

So renewal is happening — trust, that is, is slowly, slowly being restored — in those situations where a new quality of relationship is developing between bishops, priests, and people. For those young people at Knock, that was happening as their bishop literally walked alongside them.

Finally then, I want to take you back to Dublin. I have spent time loitering at the back of many a Dublin church talking to folk coming and going. There is one thing I see very often, and that is grandmothers — occasionally grandfathers, mostly grandmothers — with their small grandchildren at mass, lighting candles, sitting quietly, on one occasion praying the rosary, leading the rosary together, an old voice and a young voice.

Sometimes in their desire to see the Church’s present predicament as an opportunity for renewal, theologians and commentators alike are wont to characterize the faith of previous generations as legalistic or sentimental and shallow. But the faith that I see being passed on here is no narrow devotionalism. It has been through fire.

So if we want to find the sources of renewal, we need to look to the faith of the old as well as to what young people are doing. We need to look for those intergenerational connections that are handing on as well as transforming the faith.

There is a huge amount more that could be said about all of these things, and I have only begun to explore one of the themes that Archbishop Martin has raised for us.

For your lecture and for your kind attention, thank you.

JOHN HARINGTON: Thank you very much to all three.
Archbishop, is there anything you would like to reference first from the two sets of comments?

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: I was very struck by Joe’s phrase that “Ireland is a missionary country, but the Irish Church is not a missionary church.”

I was also interested in your comments, the last one about grandparents who play an enormous role in the education of children. The big difficulty is that generation of grandparents is the last of that generation for two reasons: that their children have already drifted away; and secondly, Irish grandparents will be more and more today working grandparents and won’t have the time for these things.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Thanks very much.

I think one of the things that is getting particularly interesting coming out of discussion and what not is going to be future. While we have heard about past and present, but I wonder — certainly, what comes through in everybody’s presentation is the gravity of the situation for the institutional Church in Ireland, apart from renewal of individual faith, the question of where or how decision-making will happen and where leadership would come from.

So I wonder, Archbishop, and then Joe and Theo, if you could comment on a little bit more specifically where you would like to see that or where there is potential for it or what might be happening in terms of delivering decision-making and leadership in the short term or in the longer term.

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: I say that we have young people in Ireland that are extremely idealistic and generous. Somehow or other, that link between their generosity and faith has drifted away. I believe we should be working more and more with young people in that sense.

One of the difficulties is that the days are gone when you could gather a group of young people and give them a little pamphlet and say, “Look, read that and you’ll understand everything.” The dialogue with young people about faith is a very demanding one. Young people require time. They will not take superficial answers. But they have a deep sense of a need for meaning and hope and purpose in life. In many ways, the heritage they are getting, both from society and from the Church, isn’t the right answer for them.

When young people have to emigrate — and this is a growing phenomenon — you can understand that there is almost a certain bitterness when they see that this is something that they didn’t cause.

When I meet with young people — and I try to do this as often as I can — there are a number of questions that keep coming up. One is, Why is the Church against the gays? Again, it’s a regular question you’ll be asked. It’s a question of a real sense of justice and equality for young people which they find not so present in the Church. Young groups, as we know with women of a different age, will bring the women’s question very strongly to the fore.

The other question that I’ll be asked by young people is a question something like: Is suicide a sin? We have a very high rate of youth suicides in Dublin. It’s a very difficult question to answer because you don’t know — I mean is that question, “Has my friend who committed suicide gone to hell?” or is this person saying, “Could I commit suicide?” The experience of young people with some of the rough sides of life and human existence, something that we didn’t have in our time — there is a great sensitivity there, and we have to find ways of — I don’t believe that the youth movements we have are adequate to respond to that.
We have the largest system of Catholic schools anywhere in Europe and it is not producing the goods. Dare you say that to the school establishment, they just will refuse to listen to that. We can’t simply depend on schools which are Catholic very much in the way of cultural Catholicism of the past. Our parishes have to take on much of that responsibility. To do that we have to recruit a whole range of volunteers, of people who become active in Church life.

I lived in Switzerland. When I was there I did a lot of Confirmations. I remember going to one rather liberal parish a little bit out of Geneva. My French wasn’t all that good. I said to the parish priest afterwards, “I hope they weren’t disappointed with me.”

He said, “No, they were absolutely delighted.”

I said, “Why?”

He said, “Because every time you spoke about God, you used the feminine.” [Laughter]

JOHN HARRINGTON: Joe, where do you see potential for leadership in decision-making?

J.J. LEE: If that could be replicated in Ireland, I’d be delighted. But I rather doubt if it would be.

I think there is a real challenge. There is no longer a receptivity — and I agree entirely with what Dr. Martin said in terms of a desire among young people. I suppose every elder generation has moaned about every younger generation. But as far as I can see, the young people I know in Ireland or over here are as delightful as I thought my generation was once upon a time. Certainly I have no complaints about the younger generation. My complaints are about my generation and intervening generations, if that’s remotely fair.

I don’t think that the Irish Church as it stands — and this goes back partly to the age structure of the clergy — by and large, historically, the ultra-domination of the clergy within the Church, in terms of relations with the laity, there was very little encouragement historically given to the laity to assume active roles in the Church as distinct from supporting roles. That varies from parish to parish and priest to priest, obviously, throughout the country, but by and large that was the case, I think.

If you read through the life of Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, which was an attempt to engage the laity — and a very successful attempt in many ways — to engage the laity in active charity, Christian charity, it faced a lot of obstacles placed in its path by some of your predecessors. It established itself, but it established itself in many ways despite, rather than because of, support from those to whom it would have turned naturally for support in the first instance.

So I think the age structure of the clergy, the difficulty of adjusting to — remember, that generation has lived through extraordinary speed of change by Irish standards. It’s very hard for Americans to understand what it is like to come out of a culture that was essentially static and then to try to adapt to rapid change. America has been a country which, whether you agree with it or disagree with it, has been in the throes of constant change since its formation and conceptualization. Change in many ways is almost a religion in America. It can be good, it can be bad, but change, adaptation, is part of the American mentality.

It has not historically been part of the Irish mentality at home. Now, it would be very interesting to look at Irish-America and how it blended what it brought from Ireland with what it found here to create, I think, a quite distinctive dimension of American identity in the United States. But I won’t go on about that here.
We don’t have that dimension back home. I think we have a lot to learn from the States and from Irish-America in terms of what we might actually be trying at home. That’s not to say everything in Irish-America is lovely by any means — that’s a different matter again — but we have more to learn from Irish-America than Irish-America can learn from us in Catholic matters, it seems to me. For how long would one have said that historically, where the drift would have been entirely the other way?

So I think there is a huge learning process. I think the Irish Church — and again I keep coming back [inaudible] — is very parochial in many of its perspectives. It is parochial literally and parochial conceptually. Its experience of the world outside Ireland, apart from a much narrower area than you have had experience of, is very, very limited. What it brings back to Ireland in many ways actually reinforces the assumptions that are brought out up certain respects.

So we have a huge learning project. All of us have a huge learning project in lots of ways about lots of things. The Church has a particularly daunting learning curve, it seems to me. Where the impetus for that is going to come from, I do not know.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Theo, you were in the field. What do you see as potential and most promising?

THEODORA HAWKSLEY: I think I’m going to cut the tape on a little bit of disagreement here.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Good. We were hoping for a little more of that.

THEODORA HAWKSLEY: Joseph painted a picture, which is Archbishop Martin accepted a vacuum of charismatic leadership. I don’t think that’s quite the case. The problem is that the charismatic leadership that exists does not entirely overlap with the hierarchy.

So, for example, the Association of Catholic Priests, which leans very much to the left, has quite a lot of popular support among clergy, among religious, among lay people. There is a question of how you deal with especially Tony Flannery, one of the founders of the movement. How do you deal with the more breakaway elements in that? The Vatican thus far has chosen to play hardball. Whether that was the right decision, only time will tell.

But there is leadership there, there is charismatic leadership, and it’s a question of negotiating a very careful relationship with it.

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: I’d just say one thing that Joe mentioned there, which was about the age of the clergy. The age pyramid I gave of my diocese, that there are more people under five than over seventy, is the exact opposite to the age pyramid of the clergy.

JOHN HARRINGTON: I have a question, if I could just ask, and follow up with one other question, too. Joe very often in writing the history of 20th-century Ireland has come back to the question of what we are seeing in the Church in Ireland and what is specific to Ireland and what is more prevalent elsewhere, too. I wonder if each of you could say something about that. Joe has written about it. The Archbishop is looking at it. Theo, you are coming from without. What is there that we are seeing in the Church in Ireland that is prevalent elsewhere, including in the Catholic Church in America?

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: I am a strong believer that we have to find homegrown answers because they are homegrown problems we have inherited.

But the history of the Irish Catholic Church is a strange one. Before Catholic
emancipation, the level of practice in Ireland was extremely low, very, very low. Newman, when he came to found his Catholic University, hoped to meet an Irish Catholic intelligentsia. It didn't exist.

Then, Cardinal Cullen, whom people tend to lay all the blame on, certainly brought about a change in Irish Catholicism. His predecessor in Dublin, Archbishop Murray, completely changed the architectural landscape of Dublin. He built all those wonderful churches that were built immediately after emancipation. So there was a period of extraordinary renewal that took place. But it became extremely clericalized.

And then you moved from the period of Catholic emancipation into the early years of the new Irish State, where you had a strange mixture of clericalism and people in government and public administration who were clericalized in many ways, and we got this unhealthy mixture between Church and state.

So we have had this history of change, of growth, and it can happen again.

Now, what were the instruments that were used by Cardinal Cullen, for example? One was a strong emphasis on schools and education. Another was the establishment of parishes. A third one, a very interesting one which they constantly talk about, was the discipline of the clergy, that there were serious problems in discipline.

I would try to translate that today into a radical renewal of the role of the priest — that priests can understand that role, that they can be prepared for that role, and that they be disciplined in the best sense of the word in approaching that.

We have just also found ourselves in a situation of extreme individualism which has begun to mark the clergy in a sense that isn’t always positive.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Joe, would you follow up on that?

J.J. LEE: Well, I can’t disagree with anything that has been said there.

It’s a unique situation, what is confronting us. It’s a new challenge one is confronting in Irish history, that the Church is confronting and that the State is confronting and that the society is confronting, because they all interact, they all intersect. They influence one another even when they think they are moving away from one another, because Ireland is too small, too intimate a society, for significant change in any major area not to impact on the way people in other areas think, etc.

The problem with the Church — the Church is an extraordinary institution. The Irish Church is an extraordinary institution. It has done extraordinary service to the Irish people in the century and a half since the famine.

But where in the 1960s and 1970s generational change occurred, the old leadership of the independence movement back in the 1920s, that left the stage, you have a new lay leadership coming in, you also have in certain respects a new ecclesiastic leadership coming in, they did not anticipate the pace of subsequent change at all. They had grown up, been educated in, been socialized in an Ireland of very different value systems and a very different pace of life. This is not to criticize them unduly, because nobody anticipated the pace of change. Ireland is a very, very different country today from what it was fifty years ago, forty years ago.

Now, adapting to change of that speed in any society at any time requires a combination of leadership and luck, and it requires the main elements of the society. That means in the Irish case both Church and State, and increasingly, I have to say, an increasing lay power outside the State, whether it is business power, whether it is intellectual power —
[inaudible] has asked you about the cultural developments. The cultural intelligentsia today plays a quite significant role in the media in particular. It’s singularly lacking in self-questioning capacity. It has a degree of self-righteousness, in my view, that makes even the Church at the height of its capacity for self-righteousness appear actually pretty modest in that regard.

But it is influential, it is distinctive, and it needs to be debated with in a serious way, which it very rarely is, from the Church point of view, which relied for so long on authority. If you have pronounced some authority for a long time, and you are challenged, and you continue to pronounce an authority, and now you lack the power to impose authority, you become basically useless in terms of influencing public perceptions.

So we have the potential for a very lively debate in Ireland. The Church is hardly participating in the debate, which again takes me back to himself(?). There are how many church men? They are small — Theodora, you mentioned a few — of those who are largely on the periphery, who have ideas, who are interested, who want to break through within the Church to more influential positions, but they are blocked within the Church from doing so.

So there has to be change within the Church in order to allow the Church to actually mobilize its very considerable continuing talents to participate more effectively in a full public debate, it seems to me. We don’t have full public debate. We have sectoral public debate. We have media which is very young in age terms and, by and large — again, I’m not going to launch into media things — but there are quite a number of people in the media who think they can make their reputation by Church bashing or by bashing values which seem to be represented by the Church. I think the media is unbalanced in that direction nearly as much as the Church is unbalanced in other directions. We lack balance in both areas.

And the politicians maneuver and twist and turn, as is the job of politicians, to wend their way between them. Again, I don’t denigrate politicians. Politicians have a very important role to play. And believe you me, when you are hit from all angles all the time, you learn to twist and turn and maneuver. That’s what survival is all about.

If the Church were to rise to the challenge, then it deserves to have other sectors of society rise to the challenge also and have a genuine national debate that incorporates religion but isn’t confined to religion.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Theo, what do you see as unique in Ireland when you come from without?

THEODORA HAWKESLEY: A unique thing about Ireland that is helpful pointing out, particularly in this forum, is the way that Ireland did modernity. Modernity in France, in the U.S., is characterized by a separation between religion and the state, between church and state. In Ireland it is characterized by a really close, tight unity between the two.

Now, that means that the change that is happening in Ireland is that it has gone from that kind of modernity to ultra-modern. So there was never a period really where state alone was the source of authority. It was church and state, and now it is the individual as the source of authority.

Combined with that, it was quite, I suppose, a homogeneous kind of Catholicism that was the Irish Catholic. That meant that because the Church was implicated in quite a controlling mentality, theological debate within the Church, lay education, lay association, was discouraged.
I talk to people now and they say, “Well, the resources aren’t there. The lay solidarity is not there.”

So in order to cope with this, we are going to have to get some theological education, and fast, to raise the quality of debate and disagreement within the Church, because now we have lots of different kinds of Irish Catholics.

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: One point. Ireland is a very open country. It is open, because of the fact that we are English-speaking, to all sorts of cultural influences. A major decision was taken at a moment in Irish history to open our economy. This brought both prosperity and risk. Ireland is in fact probably one of the more open societies in Europe from that point of view. But it always brings with it an element of risk.

I remember when I was growing up we had “buy Irish” campaigns. These were campaigns led by a very nationalist government. I had sort of pullover sweaters. Now when I look back, they were like the suits that Soviet diplomats wore at the United Nations in a particular period — you know, it was very clear who they were.

But the courage that it took for a nationalistic government to say, “This is no longer sustainable. We are opening our markets and we are going to be flooded by materials.” These nationalistic enterprises went out of business.

Now, that economic openness actually changed very much the culture of Ireland. Openness can be very positive and openness can be very risky. If you haven’t got confidence, then you close in in the face of risk.

Irish young people today are extraordinary. The amount of traveling that they do — they study abroad, they go around Europe, in a way that — they just know how to do it. Maybe Michael O’Leary and Ryanair have facilitated that also in ways. But it is incredible to see the openness of these young people and the way they settle in in various parts of the world.

So we have that creativity, which is still there.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Let me say, partly by way of summary, after getting such a strong sense of the absolute urgency and priorities that are needed, if I can ask you to think about what you are forecasting as next steps that must happen, something a little bit more concrete, and things that you see encouraging in the next few years, for the short term or long term.

Let me go to Theo and then Joe and then the Archbishop.

THEODORA HAWKESLEY: Well, apart from education, which I’ve already mentioned, there have been for some years suggestions that there ought to be a national council of the Irish Church, some kind of synod of lay people and religious and priests together, that would be a source for the kind of next steps that you are talking about. This has been put forward a lot of times by bishops too, but has not yet come to anything. I wonder if that might be perhaps our most promising next step.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Joe?

J.J. LEE: I would be very sympathetic to that approach because one of the challenges we have had — we had very strong Church leadership for a long time, then it faltered, one has to say. But that Church leadership was from the bishops down. It was a pyramid with a narrow top.
I think — in retrospect it’s very easy to be wise — one of the unfortunate decisions that was made when the National University of Ireland was established, which was effectively a Catholic university, in 1949(?), was that there should be no theology departments, no theology to be taught outside of seminaries basically. So the theology that was taught to all priests, presumably, was a theology that wasn’t challenged in any serious sort of way from outside. In fact, my understanding is — you may correct me — that those clergy within the Church, including very distinguished minds, that sought to broaden debate within the episcopacy itself or at the higher levels was not encouraged to do so, to put it politely.

So in fact the channels of debate within the higher echelons of the Church were very, very narrow, and, therefore, diversity of viewpoint was almost regarded as treachery. You might debate internally, for all I know — and I presume there was internal debate — but once a decision was taken, then it was simply the Politburo or whatever it was that [inaudible] you got in line.

I exaggerate only slightly. What you would hear privately from those who were involved in the discussion and what the public façade, public face, was, was very different. Now, that happens in all movements, it happens in political parties and all the rest of it. But a church is different. A church is not a political party. The Church professes to stand over eternal truth in various ways — how that will be applied, how that will be interpreted.

I do think that if there were mechanisms by which respected ecclesiastical opinion could be allowed to voice a variety of viewpoints without appearing to betray some single fundamental, unalterable, etc., truth, that a lot of what we regard as that are in fact issues of the debate which were deemed to be that at one stage — God knows how many centuries ago — have not been adapted to changing waters, how can they be best adapted, as distinct from how do we simply dig in and say “no change” because that’s what was decreed God knows when. I think if there were mechanisms for that, and if that was even an integral part of the function of Catholicism in Ireland, that there would be much more receptivity to the possibility of varieties of viewpoints.

JOHN HARRINGTON: That would be new.

Dr. Martin?

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: One of the things that is said of meetings of Irish bishops is that the bishops are disunited and that’s not a good thing. I always say there is one thing worse than the bishops being disunited, and that is the bishops being united. [Laughter]

The history of the Irish Church is that we have had throughout our history some very strong figures in the Irish episcopate and the temptation always is to close ranks and make sure that nobody speaks out of tune. The institution as it is is really not fit for purpose. That’s one of the big challenges.

From my point of view, I am getting older. I say to children at Confirmation, “I was confirmed fifty-four years ago,” and they really think I’m from another planet. We need to generate a new generation.

I’ll tell you a story. There was a professor of canon law in Maynooth called Creman [phonetic]. He arrived into Maynooth and introduced himself to the other students and said: “My name is Creman, Kerry” — which is where he was from — “third place in Ireland in the Leaving Certificate.” He went around until he met a man who said: “Ahern, Cline, first place in the Leaving Certificate.” That story is told about rivalry.

But I change it, because probably the person who got second place in Ireland in the Leaving Cert. was also in Maynooth. Today, of the candidates I have, less than 50 percent
would qualify to enter the university.

I’m not saying that intellectual ability is a criterion of holiness or of goodness. But we do have a challenge there. The problems we are facing are not administrative problems, they are not things that can be fixed by spin doctors. We need an Irish Church which has the capacity to enter into dialogue with all those areas in which the future of Irish culture is taking place. We have fewer priests and we don’t have those with that ability. That’s a big challenge as well.

JOHN HARRINGTON: Thank you very much.

At this point we move into a different part of our program, after which there might be time for some side conversations as well.

First of all, I want to ask you all to please thank the panelists.

Now it is my distinct pleasure to call Archbishop Diarmuid Martin forward. I also want to invite to the stage the Chairman of the Fordham University Board of Trustees, Robert Daleo, Father McShane, and a faculty representative this evening, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ.

ROBERT DALEO: Good evening. Rev. Father President, I present to you Archbishop Diarmuid Martin to be awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

In the words of Most Reverent Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, “The human person is greater than politics or economics.” That simple truth captures much of his work as an international representative of the Holy See and the leader of Ireland’s Catholic Church during one of its most difficult periods.

Our honoree has made a career of confronting urgent and challenging problems around the world. A graduate of University College Dublin and Holy Cross College Drumcondra, he was ordained a priest in 1969 and entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1976, serving in the Pontifical Council of the Family before becoming undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. There he provided a forceful and persuasive voice on issues of poverty, human rights, and social justice, and was nothing less than a guiding light, as described by the journalist John Thavis.

He traveled on conflict-resolution missions to East Timor, Sarajevo, and Rwanda, and later became known as a leading international voice for debt relief while serving as Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the United Nations in Geneva.

As Archbishop of Dublin since 2004, he has continued to work for social justice and societal harmony while striving to restore the Catholic Church’s esteem and respect in Ireland. He has been unsparing in condemning clerical offenses and calling for their redress, and also humble and compassionate towards their victims. He continues to inspire the people of Ireland through his trademark affability, which we have seen in great use tonight, generosity, and eloquence, and through his untiring efforts to heal and renew the Church in Ireland.

THE REV. JOSEPH McSHANE: For his efforts on behalf of social justice around the globe and his enlightened leadership of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we, the President and Trustees of Fordham University, in solemn convocation assembled, and in accord with the chart of authority bestowed upon us by the Regents of the University of the State of New York, declare the Most Revered Diarmuid Martin a Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa, and that he may enjoy all the rights and privileges of this, our highest honor, we have issued these letters patent under our hand and under the corporate seal of the University on this, the 24th day of April in the year of our Lord 2013.
Your Excellency, as you probably know, it is customary in American academic circles, when one is made an Honorary Doctor of a University, to receive not only the diploma but also a hood. But here we decided that we would not give you a hood, but rather something that we hope would be more useful.

You will notice that there are men in blue walking down the steps to my right. They are members of our carpenters’ staff. They have fashioned in our carpenters’ shop, we hope, a crozier that you can use in Dublin. You will look on the node and you will see there is the Seal of the City of Dublin, the Irish Harp, the Seal of the Society of Jesus, and Martin’s Cross, and in the crook there are shamrocks. This is a labor of love that was done by the men who surround you right now.

We at Fordham hope that when you are making your rounds and confirming and when you are ordaining you will have on occasion the opportunity to carry this crozier, and when you do, remember the great affection, the great respect, and the great esteem that we at Fordham have for you and all that you have done, not only for the Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin and the Church in Ireland, but the Church throughout the world.

Finally, if you don’t mind, you may recall that at the Chrism Mass in Rome Pope Francis famously said, “The priests must be out among their sheep and come back with the smell of their sheep on them, because that will show that they truly care about those who are entrusted to them.”

We know that you already are among your sheep. We hope that the crozier will come back with the smell of the sheep and also with the love that the sheep have for you.

Congratulations and welcome to the Fordham family.

ARCHBISHOP MARTIN: I’d like to thank those who made this. They say they’ve been working on it since January.

One of the things I have got a great interest in is workmanship. If I go to open a new school or a new church, you can see the difference that handwork means, something that today we tend to downplay. The real creativity and commitment that people put into doing a job well is something we really need to see more of. This is really an extraordinary example.

That said, I have to tell one other story about confirmation. It was in Switzerland again. I came from Rome and I arrived in a parish in the German-speaking part.

They said, “Have you got a crozier?”

I said, “You couldn’t go around with a crozier in your suitcase going through an airport.”

They were very disappointed altogether.

Somebody said, “Look, the Monastery of Einsiedeln is just fifteen minutes away.”

Off they went, and they arrived back with a crozier.

I said to them, “Is that from the abbott?”

They said, “No, no, from a statue.” [Laughter]

THE REV. JOSEPH McSHANE: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being with us.

As we end, I do want to thank the boys in blue, as we call them, for the work they did.

I also want to present to you now, under a new title, The Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, who is the Archbishop of Dublin, the Primate of Ireland, and a Doctor of
Fordham University.