



PRESS RELEASE

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Archbishop Brady opens conference on migration: “From Pastoral Care to Public Policy – Journeying with the Migrant”

At the opening of the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants (IECE) conference on migration today in Dunboyne, entitled “From Pastoral Care to Public Policy - Journeying with the Migrant”, Archbishop Seán Brady, the Primate of All Ireland, called on legislators to consider inclusion of a provision in the proposed Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill for temporary or “bridging” visas to be made available to those migrants in Ireland who, having arrived here in good faith with offers of employment, now find themselves undocumented.

Comparing their situation to that of the undocumented Irish in the United States of America, Archbishop Brady said: “When you are weak and vulnerable as these people are, you are in no position to integrate, so it is in society’s own interest, as well as that of the undocumented migrants, to ensure that we do not allow a two-tier system to develop.”

Addressing delegates at the conference, Archbishop Brady recalled the pain of emigration that Ireland experienced over centuries and stated that Church and State, within their respective roles, share a concern and responsibility to respond to Ireland’s new situation of immigration through appropriate pastoral care and public policy. Giving particular emphasis to the provision for families to be together, he continued that: “Any law or policy that establishes divisions between family members is a serious threat to integration and undermines a very basic human right – the right to family life.”

Also addressing the conference on the challenges of integration for Ireland, the Minister for Integration, Minister Conor Lenihan said: “We have the opportunity to get things right. We can learn from the mistakes of others, but we should have the courage to develop our own Irish model.”

Minister Lenihan spoke of the “global footprint” of Irish Catholic missionaries, and praised their role in the promotion of Christian values and high standards in both education and pastoral care, the positive legacy of which he said that he had witnessed many times, and at first hand, during his previous portfolio as Minister for Overseas Development Aid.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn and spokesperson for migrants in the USA, opened his address saying that he was in Ireland: “to repay a debt of gratitude to the Irish nation and Irish Church for what has been the development of the United States.” Quoting Swiss playwright Max Frisch on the German “guest worker” programme, he summed up the Irish challenge today as follows: “We asked for workers, and we got people.” Bishop DiMarzio outlined the “eight indicators” of social integration, including labour force participation, language acquisition and education continuance. Emphasising the Church’s “imperative of welcome” throughout the world, he told delegates that: “all integration is a local process.”

Bishop Séamus Hegarty, Bishop of Derry and Chair of the IECE said: “this conference both celebrates 50 years of the Catholic Church’s pastoral work through our chaplaincies in London and elsewhere, but it also attempts to map out a strategic route – in partnership with other responsible players in Irish society – in order to formulate a sustainable public and pastoral policy, for migrants, into the future.”

Mr Francis Davis of the Von Hugel Institute in Cambridge stressed the importance of research in forming migration policy and highlighted the issues for new migrant communities which inhibit integration.

Professor Desmond Cahill of RMIT University in Melbourne discussed the risk of migration and its mitigation through public policy in his seminar this afternoon.

Also in attendance at the conference today was: His Excellency Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, the Apostolic Nuncio; Archbishop Michael Neary, Archbishop of Tuam; Bishop Michael Smith, Bishop of Meath; and, Bishop Philip Boyce, Bishop of Raphoe. The conference continues tomorrow and Friday in Dunboyne Castle Hotel, Co Meath, with a final address by former EU Commissioner, Mr Peter Sutherland.