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Maynooth seminary head objects to Kennedy's portrayal

Dennis Coday | Feb. 20, 2012 NCR Today

NCR received a letter from Msgr. Hugh G Connolly, president of Saint Patrick?s College Maynooth, the national seminary of Ireland. Msgr. Connolly objected to a web column by Eugene Kennedy, which was posted to our website Jan. 19. That column is here [1].

Msgr. Connolly requested the opportunity to respond to Kennedy?s column. To meet that request, I am printing in full Msgr. Connolly?s written statement that gives his account of the changes at the college, which were the focus of Kennedy?s column.

> Around 3 years ago the foyer at the rear of St Patrick's College Maynooth was re-modelled. It was a very modest project which gave the principal entrance to the seminary area a much-needed face-lift. The recent provision of new doors on the cloister complements and completes the project and allows seminarians residential quarters to be access restricted from the late evening until early morning. Access is by swipe-card and is a familiar and user-friendly arrangement in use in many millions of residential and educational institutions across the globe. The project effectively gives the seminarians' residential space a modicum of privacy and an area to call their own in a busy campus of more than 8,000 students.
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> On the question of separating seminarians from lay students, there seems to be have been a lot of fanciful speculation here. For that reason I wish to make it clear that there are absolutely no plans to alter the daily interaction of our clerical and lay students. Indeed Maynooth is proud of the unique formation possibilities for diocesan ministry provided by the location of the seminary at the heart of a university campus. It is only right however that resident seminarians should have an appropriate residential space to themselves where they can retire from the busyness of campus life and share their prayer and other key formational commitments together in an atmosphere of quiet and calm.
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> Seminarians at Saint Patrick's College Maynooth live in a healthy environment where they share dav-¬time facilities with their lay student colleagues. There are no projects to change any of this. While in the past seminaries were seen to be somewhat cloistered places, the environment at Maynooth today is very different. The decision by the Trustees { Our Management Board }to open the college to a broader student body almost four decades ago means that the seminary is now at the heart of a bustling and busy university campus. While this can have some disadvantages in terms of the need for occasional peace and calm notably during retreats and days of recollection, the benefits in the area of human development are considerable.
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> Seminarians, whether in their early years in Philosophy and Arts at National University of Ireland Maynooth or in their later theological studies at the Pontifical University share their lecture halls and tutorial sessions and library with lay students. They are exposed to a broad range of ideas from a wide-ranging and diverse array of faculty members both male and female. This is healthy and welcome. Both male and female support staff works with seminarians. Seminarians may also involve themselves in a wide range of sporting and social clubs and societies in the life of the University. They are sent on

pastoral placement to a broad spectrum of field work assignments including hospitals, nursing facilities, drug rehabilitation projects and AIDS victims throughout the local area and on their return attend group sessions facilitated by male and female, lay and cleric adjunct staff.

In this context, the recent refurbishment of the main entrance to the seminary area and the provision of an electronic security door to restrict access to sleeping accommodation between the hours of 9pm and 6am is simply good house-keeping and on a par with the provisions already in place for our residential lay students. While healthy debate on the various models of priestly formation is salutary and wholesome it is regrettable that such a simple and sensible infrastructural adjustment should prompt misinformed, speculative and damaging comment that is injurious to the morale of our hard¬-working staff and students.

Source URL (retrieved on *07/10/2014 - 08:32*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/maynooth-seminary-head-objects-kennedys-portrayal

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/28543