

## Helen Buckley's LEISURE PAGE

# Our man at Maynooth: a prelate in a priori tower



Dromcollogher-born Monsignor Jeremiah Newman... greeting the world with a smile.

was forced to give up lecturing both inside and outside Maynooth. Prior to this he had lectured at the Institute of Public Administration, the Dublin College of Technology and at U.C.D.

Now his typical Maynooth working day starts around 9.30 and goes on to around 7.30.

"And often after that," he said, "I have meetings. On account of the whole developing nature of the college the whole administrative system is different to what it was when I took over. The administration in the old days was a going outfit in its humdrum way, now it's a completely new machine."

As well as his sheerly administrative duties, the president of Maynooth has the distinction of being chairman of nearly all the college's societies. The day I met him Dr. Newman had just spent two hours at one of these societies, the Finance Council, and was talking about another of his chairmanships, that of the Joint Board.

This Board, he described as: "A new idea whereby students and administration get around the table and try to work out a solution to problems in areas which might otherwise explode into bad relations."

Outside work, which Dr. Newman still engages in, includes his inter-university work on behalf of Maynooth, and work connected with his membership of the Higher Educational Authority. Within the College he is kept busy with correspondence memoranda through which he advises the trustees of Maynooth (the bishops) of the changes necessary within the college.

"I haven't got that much power really," he said. "The major decisions are made by the trustees. I spend my time writing memoranda to fill them in on ideas, but it takes time."

Monsignor Newman was fairly instrumental in drawing up the document, later passed by the trustees, which introduced lay students to Maynooth.

## Facts, figures

Three years ago the total student body of Maynooth College was five hundred. Today it is over eleven hundred. Of this eleven hundred, over six hundred are clerics or religious of some kind: nuns, brothers, seminarians and clerical students and the rest are lay students. Four orders of priests send students to Maynooth, and at the moment the construction of six hostels in Maynooth, four to be run by nuns for nuns and lay girls and two by priests for lay boys and clerics, is under way.

Of the lay pupils in the college about two hundred and twenty are doing their H.Dip. in Ed. and the rest are taking arts and science. Last year there were seventy students taking first Arts and Science. This year there are one hundred and thirty.

Speaking on the rate of increase in the Maynooth

THERE ARE few campuses, estates or rural vistas as beautiful as the offering of Maynooth College and its surrounds. Its trees with their few tenacious leaves still attached to the branches, its abundance of walks and greenery, the remnants of its summer flower-beds and disciplined lawns and its gracious 18th century (and later) architecture are the antithesis of the bustling university and seminary students it beholds; and yet are strangely compatible with it.

But for all its activity the ascetic confines of Maynooth can be a lonely place for a president full of life and still young enough to enjoy it, who grew up to be a priest and to serve the problems of parishioners and became instead an exalted gnome of knowledge in a priory tower.

The president of Maynooth College, that unique bastion of seminary and university life, is a man: extemporaneous, friendly, bubbling over with unobtrusive humanity—Monsignor Jeremiah Newman, originally from Dromcollogher, an unpretentious scholar and a student of life. And though suited throughout life for the academic platform, a forty-four-year-old man of Dr. Newman's temperament is wont to find the administrative attics of Maynooth a restive and lonely place.

"I can," he told me, "feel quite remote here from the things which attracted me to the priesthood; while at the same time preparing other people to do what I wanted to do myself."

This kind of life, said Dr. Newman, was lonelier than that of a parish priest who was dealing with people and their problems in human situations. He himself is involved "in the faculty of academic problems remote from the human area" and he further declares that he "wasn't a bit interested in academic affairs really." He just "got diverted."

## Enthusiasm, interest

But the diversion has had its results. For despite Monsignor Newman's awareness of the personal drawbacks which his position as president of Maynooth incurs he has, during his years as president and acting president of the college, showered enthusiasm and interest into it and has been greatly responsible for its successful change of format from seminary to seminary/university. The rewards of a venture like this are things which do not often accrue to a parish priest.

Multifarious changes have taken place in Maynooth since Monsignor Newman's own student days there (1943 to 1950). Having attended Dromcollogher national school, St. Mary's College, Dromcollogher, and St. Munchin's College, Limerick, he came to Maynooth where in 1946 he took an honours B.A. degree in philosophy; in '47 an M.A. in philosophy and in '49 became a bachelor of divinity.

After his ordination in 1950 he was temporarily appointed as chaplain to Limerick's Presentation Convent and the Training College, while other priests were on holidays and took the opportunity of the spare time this afforded to learn typing.

Dr. Newman: "Dr. Lucey, the present Bishop of Cork, who was a professor at Maynooth at the time, told me that I should learn to type; that it would be very valuable for me afterwards if I wanted to do any writing. So I did and it was very useful with my books."

After the summer relief work following his ordination, Monsignor Newman was offered by the Bishop of Limerick the chance to study at Louvain University. He did so and since he already had a licentiate in philosophy returned in one year with a doctorate of philosophy.

Back again in Ireland the young priest learned that the Chair of Philosophy was vacant in Maynooth but wasn't being filled for a year. But his halcyon days were to continue for another period. The Bishop of Limerick, Dr. O'Neill, sent Fr. Newman to Oxford to study social subjects (sociology and anthropology) on a freelance, non-exam basis and the result was that though Monsignor regretted he did not take a B.Litt. while there he became a member of nearly every organisation in Oxford—so that if his social education had ever suffered from emphasis on the didactic he was certainly making up for it.

"I was young, just back from Louvain, with my chest out," Dr. Newman said laughingly. "I became a member of nearly every society in Oxford, among them the Conservative, Liberal and Labour organisations, the Newman, the Aquinas and the Nationalist organisations and several others. I learned a lot and meantime went to such lectures as I wanted."

When he returned to Ireland and was not appointed to Maynooth's vacant seat of philosophy, Dr. Newman was disappointed. One day in Limerick he went to see the Bishop about an expected appointment to St. Patrick's, but a friend who went along with him was appointed instead. The friend was Eamonn Casey, the present Bishop of Kerry, and the Monsignor was whisked off to lecture to the Northerners in his pet subject (philosophy) after a phone call invitation from Queen's University.

## Miniature TV set

Monsignor Newman now looks on his sojourn in the North as having been "very interesting."

"I remember," he said, "my mother thinking that it must have been the most awful place. I enjoyed Queen's. I still have friends there." Testimony to the friends existence is a miniature television set which stands in the president's drawingroom and was presented to Dr. Newman by one of them.

Monsignor Newman's sittingroom and, in fact, his whole suite of rooms—diningroom, library, etc.—are furnished with prints, old photographs, personal items from his home, some wonderful pieces of old furniture and very subtle wall lighting... the delight of his "ingenu." The rooms are redolent of the character of the man; the hunting print betrays his great interest in the sport and his enormous selection of subject-ranging books demonstrate both his determination to keep abreast of things and a love of literature.

This then was what he returned to in 1953. Not to the suite of rooms themselves, but to the way to them, to the Chair of Sociology.

He doesn't consider that he was "abnormally young" to accede to this position. And even when in 1968 he became president of the college (having formerly occupied the positions of registrar and vice-president, as well as acting president) he was still not the youngest president in the college's history. "I believe," he told me, "that Archbishop Mannix was slightly younger."

After his appointment as president, Dr. Newman

student population, Monsignor Newman said: "I don't want too great a rate of increase here. I want to try to keep the student number at about two thousand, otherwise it is impossible to keep the personal student relationship in an inter-academic community. We have good personal relationship here at present with each other. I would like to keep that."

But how much contact with his students does a man like Monsignor Newman, so bound up in the running of the college, actually have?

"As much or as little as I like," I was told. "In some ways I don't have the same contact as a professor. I don't lecture. I'm so busy working on the administrative end that naturally I don't have that much to do with them."

"At the same time I don't feel one bit separated from them. There is the Joint Board where I meet them. And anyway I haven't it in my character to adopt a remote attitude to them. I resist their demands if they are unreasonable, but I know how to mix with them and feel rapport. If I were out of touch with them I would know immediately. I can't, however, meet them that much since this is not a small seminary."

The standard of discipline in the Maynooth of the old days where, it is said, boys were expelled for having a deck of cards, eating a bar of chocolate or reading a newspaper, is legendary. Today a total metamorphosis in this regard has taken place. Monsignor Newman recalls his early days in the college.

When I was a student here not only would you not dare salute the president or any member of the staff but if you had the temerity to look at him... The discipline was tightly closed as it was in most places prior to Vatican II, but it was particularly rigid here."

Ideally, Monsignor Newman would have in Maynooth, "discipline threading a sort of tightrope between freedom, and the limitations of freedom imposed by a seminary. In certain seminaries where discipline has been removed altogether the system has not been successful. I have removed as many strictures to freedom as possible."

Monsignor Newman then spoke of the peculiar combination of seminary and university existing in Maynooth and of the difficulties which evolved from this. "I have here not only a seminary but a university and I have to have one ideology as far as the seminary is concerned and another for the university. No place else in the Catholic world could you have what you have here, a mixture of students of all kinds in what is in one way a seminary."

## Clerics and laity

"You have girls mixing with clerics and both working well together. Nevertheless there are limits and problems. At an historical level we find ourselves a seminary and a seminary has to be cut off at a certain level from other school activities."

"We have to get the lay students here to help and I think they help the seminarians a lot. By and large the lay students come from the same social class, have the same family background, the same outlook and they are not going to set out to make it difficult for the clerical students."

"The result of this integration may be that we will have fewer priests ordained at the end of seven years, but they will be of a higher quality."

On the question of the greater difficulties facing a priest in the present day world, Monsignor Newman affirmed that it was more difficult nowadays for the priest than it was in the "old days," but said that it was equally so for the layman.

Up to now both have had the support of a sociological framework and have had certain accepted patterns of action to follow. Now, says the Monsignor, the framework is not there or is not in evidence to the same extent. People, he says, can now literally "go to the dogs" if they want to.

Monsignor: "The religion of the individual layman must be underpinned by personal conviction, so also in the case of the priest who must have tremendous conscious conviction. The priesthood mustn't be to him something he grabbed at because he couldn't get another white collar job."

But will the demand for higher motivation and qualities in potential priests lessen the number of them so that the result will be detrimental to the practical needs of the Catholic Church?

Monsignor: "As long as we turn out an adequate number of good priests that is all that matters. I don't think we asked ourselves in the past what 'adequate' was."

When talking on the training of young people today, Monsignor Newman confessed that he knew more about the training of young clerics than he did about the training of young lay boys. But his sociological background does give him a certain insight into the general guidance of youth.

Monsignor Newman: "Of course, though I know more about the training of clerics than of lay youth, I can't wash my hands of the latter as I have them here."

## Signs of the times

"I think young people have wonderful characteristics. My term as a professor of sociology has, I think, helped me to judge the signs of the times and what is needed to understand them."

Today's young people, said Monsignor Newman, were a questioning generation and were largely so because of the television environment they have been brought up in. They (his generation) were products of the mechanical age where everything was neatly packaged and handed out to them. Today's young people were a product of the electronic age. They watched television programmes and were forming their own critical judgment on them from the time they were able to understand.

"When we were young we were confined as far as contact was concerned to our school, priests and perhaps university. Our attitudes came from instruction in these quarters and we carried them over into life in general."

"There has been such a big difference in our upbringing that I think understanding is necessary for young people... they are not being understood by people, including university presidents!"

"You have got," said Dr. Newman, pointing out to me rows of books he has read and studied on student unrest and rioting (e.g., books on the riot of students in Columbia University). "To appreciate the fact that there is a lot of good in young people. They have more idealism than the people before them had. They may be unrealistic, however, and it is difficult to make them face facts of a kind which one

CONTINUED ON OPPOSITE PAGE

Our

COI

learns on

they have

As k

ical facult

in Monsig

he describ

forced ph

equipped

than they

"You

sponsible

a young

young pec

erly. They

arily havi

For s

ing to ge

The main

to avoid

ing probl

On t

youth, wh

rejection

Newman

of situati

They are

cluded. It

might be

approach

Mons

lems and

relatively

upheaval

upheaval,

"The

the proble

fantastic

I am glia

that it wa

"It is

at times,

it should

Spirit an

setting th

ension of

The

which ost

cision to

country h

ductive far

a wish to

signor Ne

touch. I

"Sir" and

ridors dro

ing somet

of that a

Quaid. Ar

academic

literary

But he is

enjoying

across th

Mons

of oursel

room.

"I wa

of your w

"Not

teaching

it can

any or

robust

a DS;

The D

truly i

SEE THE

Guaran

R

A

All si

(12-195)

I

New

GALV

In inter

stating

(12-195)



## Our Man at Maynooth

CONTINUED FROM OPPOSITE PAGE

nor Newman said: "I don't increase here. I want to try at about two thousand, to keep the personal student demographic community. We have here at present with each that."

t with his students does a an, so bound up in the run-ly have?

as I like," I was told.

it have the same contact ture. I'm so busy working that naturally I don't have

on't feel one bit separated Joint Board where I meet en't it in my character to o them. I resist their de-nable, but I know how to rapport. If I were out of know immediately. I can't, much since this is not a

ipline in the Maynooth of aid, boys were expelled for uting a bar of chocolate or legendary. Today a total ard has taken place. Mon-s early days in the college. t here not only would you ent or any member of the nerity to look at him... ! closed as it was in most out it was particularly rigid

swman would have in May- ng a sort of tightrope be- limitations of freedom un- tain seminaries where dis- altogether the system has ve removed as many stric- le."

hen spoke of the peculiar and university existing in ulties which evolved from a seminary but a university ology as far as the semin- her for the university. No- world could you have what of students of all kinds in nary.

### laity

ing with clerics and both vertheless there are limits ical level we find ourselves ry has to be cut off at a hool activities.

lay students here to help seminarians a lot. By and me from the same social ily background, the same going to set out to make it dents.

tegration may be that we dained at the end of seven a higher quality."

e greater difficulties facing ay world, Monsignor New- more difficult nowadays for the "old days," but said r the layman.

had the support of a socio- ive had certain accepted ow. Now, says the Mon- not there or is not in evi- People, he says, can now if they want to.

learns only through longer experience of life than they have had."

As long as they develop it properly, a good critical faculty is healthy in students and in young people, in Monsignor Newman's opinion. Many young people he describes as being 'pre-mature'; as being like forced plants in a modern environment, and as being equipped with an adult attitude towards things earlier than they were before.

"Youth," said the Monsignor, "should be irresponsible and gay, they can't be later on. When I was a young fellow I didn't know what Biafra was. The young people of today are not living their youth properly. They have an old man's outlook without necessarily having the head to make the decision."

For a man in Monsignor Newman's position, trying to get through to young people can be difficult. The main thing is, he says, for a person in authority to avoid making issues of things and to avoid isolating problems in their individual nakedness."

On the question of criticism of the Church by youth, which is prevalent today, and of the part-time rejection of Catholicism by many young people, Dr. Newman says: "It is a facet of the generation, a kind of situation which young people find themselves in. They are critical of everything and the Church is included. It might have a good lasting effect. The Church might become less institutional and legal in its approach and become more understanding."

Monsignor Newman argues that the general problems and upheaval of the Church in the world are a relatively healthy sign since the world is in a state of upheaval and the Church, if it did not share in this upheaval, would be stagnant.

"The problems of the Church in the world are the problems of the world. The world is undergoing fantastic change and the Church couldn't but change. I am glad it is changing; if it didn't it would mean that it was isolated from the world."

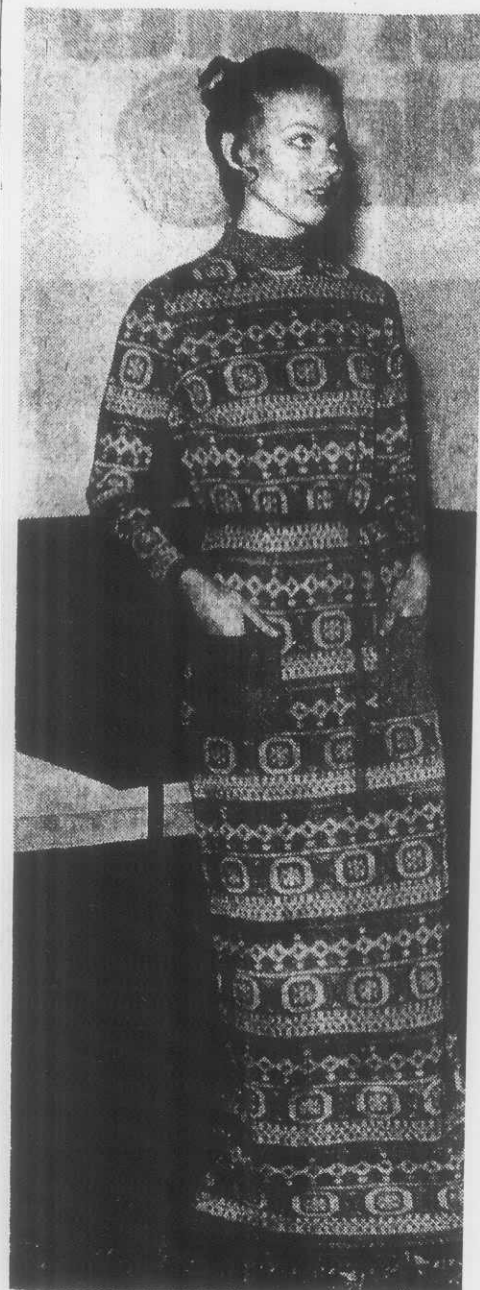
"It is better that the Church should be in trouble at times, like any human institution, rather than that it should be dominated by the power of the Holy Spirit and have its free will limited. The troubles besetting the Church today are merely the religious dimension of the human condition."

The atmosphere, circumstances and fragments which ostensibly influenced Monsignor Newman's decision to become a priest are typical of the era and country he was brought up in. They include the inductive family atmosphere, the cousins in religion and a wish to serve. Even today with his students Monsignor Newman has not lost his "homely" ego servam touch. He addresses them intermittently as "Sir" and rushes through the public halls and corridors dropping smiles and words instead of portraying something of the ascetic, slightly dyspeptic look of that arch-academician, the Rev. John Charles McQuaid. And yet Jeremiah Newman lacks little of the academic distinction of the latter. Even in the field of literary publication he has produced eleven books. But he is still capable of relaxing with a smile and enjoying the sight of mini-skirted females walking across the quad with "sountaned" young clerics.

Monsignor Newman and I laughed at the picture of ourselves looking down at them from his dining-room.

"I wonder what they think of a girl peering out of your window with you?", I asked.

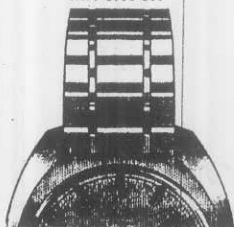
"Nothing at all," he replied. "That is what we are teaching them here."



Mary, wearing a Susan Small casual m Tom's Boutique fashion show.



REF. 5901 300



*Certina-DS Automatic,  
with day and date, stainless steel,  
super-shockproof, super-waterproof*

5901 300 Day-Date Automatic,  
£52.10.0

5801 300 Date, Automatic,  
£47.15.0