**Welcome – Pastoral Theology Department**

Welcome to the Pastoral Theology Diploma at Drumalis, validated by the Pontifical University at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. Beginning a new course brings with it excitement and sometimes trepidation and uncertainty. Whatever your situation, this will be a time of immense personal and professional learning and growth. You will find yourself challenged and will discover strengths and weaknesses that you were never aware of.

The course will take you on a journey into the world of pastoral theology. The application of theology to ministry, critically assessing religious practice and practices, articulating your own theology of ministry, developing confidence in yourself as a theologian and pastoral minister, will all be part of the journey. As well as academic texts, your own life experience will be a valuable text book which you bring to the programme. The learning and growth, both academic and personal, that you experience these years and the relationships you make will shape you as a person and a minister in the future.

All we ask is that you engage fully with the programme. The course work and pastoral placement education necessitate your full, open and willing participation. It will draw on your intellectual, professional, personal, emotional, and spiritual resources. Just as Jesus called disciples who were ordinary people, each with their own gifts and limitations, you too bring your whole self to this programme – and each person you meet in two years ahead will be enriched by you as you will be by them.

Pastoral Placement Education is a key part of the programme. The coursework and seminars and modules allow you to process and integrate theology with your experience in a supportive and stimulating learning environment.

This handbook serves three main purposes. Firstly, it presents a rationale for the course and explains the procedures and processes of your placement education and associated evaluation. Secondly, it provides you with key practical information about the course programme. Thirdly, it will be a reference resource for you and contains material for your reflection and general usage which you can come back to as the years progress.

During this course of studies, we are all on a journey of faith and companionship. It is a journey we hope will be marked by honesty, dialogue and communication. We, at Drumalis, and the faculty of Pastoral Theology at Maynooth, look forward to journeying with you.

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**Pastoral Theology**

**The Diploma in Pastoral Theology programme aims to develop and integrate the personal, academic and professional development of the student for ministry.**

Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practice love. Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community. The awareness of this responsibility has had a constitutive relevance in the Church from the beginning: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-5). In these words, Saint Luke provides a kind of definition of the Church, whose constitutive elements include fidelity to the “teaching of the Apostles”, “communion” (koinonia), “the breaking of the bread” and “prayer” (cf. Acts 2:42).

*Benedict XVI* [[1]](#footnote-1)

We see then that the task of evangelization operates within the limits of language and of circumstances. It constantly seeks to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth, the goodness and the light which it can bring whenever perfection is not possible. A missionary heart is aware of these limits and makes itself “weak with the weak... everything for everyone” (*1 Cor* 9:22). It never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It realizes that it has to grow in its own understanding of the Gospel and in discerning the paths of the Spirit, and so it always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.

*Francis* [[2]](#footnote-2)

To say that pastoral ministry is a vocation means it is a free response to God’s call in and through the community, to commit oneself in love to serve others. The communal dimension of a vocation means that the call to ministry is heard within the church, is sustained by the church, and is to serve the mission of the church.

*Richard Gula*,[[3]](#footnote-3)

Pastoral theology is a place where religious belief, tradition, and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions, and actions and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming.

*James Woodward & Stephen Pattison[[4]](#footnote-4)*

**5. Rationale for the Pastoral Theology Course**

The **Diploma in Pastoral Theology** is a qualification awarded by the Pontifical University, Maynooth.

The course forms and prepares Christians who respond to the call of Jesus to discipleship as pastoral ministers. The course serves the Christian community through sharing the good news of the reign of God, given to us by Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. This qualification enables people to play a leading role in the development of Christian mission and ministry as practitioners, educators and evangelizers with the people of God.

Addressing changes in society and in the church, this qualification is designed to meet the perceived needs in both.

At the heart of pastoral theology is the engagement between theology and ministry. The programme includes the study of topics relevant to pastoral theology and ministry from scripture, theological tradition, contemporary culture, supervision and communications.

**Course Aims**

The aim of the Pastoral theology course is to form and prepare people for ministry. In order to achieve this, the courses aim:

1. to study, reflect and experience life and ministry in the Christian tradition through integration of the human, spiritual, academic and pastoral dimensions of the programmes;
2. to combine pastoral theology and the acquisition of skills with supervised experience in pastoral placement education;
3. to deepen an understanding of the complementarity that exists between the ordained ministry and the full or part-time lay pastoral ministry in the Christian community;
4. to facilitate the development of co-responsibility in ministry;
5. to develop reflective, pro-active and evaluative skills through theological reflection, so as to enable students to relate theology and ministry to contemporary culture;
6. to facilitate the development of management and communication and leadership skills.

1. Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est,* 2006,No. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel,* 2013, No. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Richard Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry,* (New York: Paulist, 1996), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James Woodward & Stephen Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)