A photograph of the College Chapel in Maynooth, Ireland, featuring a tall, slender tower and a large rose window. The building is constructed of light-colored stone and is set against a clear blue sky. The foreground is a lush green lawn.

COLLEGE CHAPEL  
MAYNOOTH



College Chapel  
Nave

## COLLEGE CHAPEL, MAYNOOTH

### BACKGROUND

Maynooth College was established following an act of the Irish parliament in June 1795 entitled 'An Act for the Better Education of Persons professing the Popish or Roman Catholic Religion'.

The Penal Code of the eighteenth century had forbidden the education and training of priests in Ireland. This led to the development of seminaries on the continent, mostly in France, where, by the late 1700s, nearly 500 men were training for the priesthood in Ireland. Political unrest in France culminating in the Revolution of 1789 saw many of these colleges shut down, and war between England and France in 1793 led to the closure of the remaining colleges there and in the Spanish Netherlands. In Ireland the population was increasing and the growing number of Catholics faced a shortage of priests to minister to them.

With the gradual relaxation of the Penal Code, the time had come for a Catholic college in Ireland. To this end the Irish bishops made an urgent appeal to the government in London. They warned of the danger of sending students to be educated in France where 'they might be contaminated by the contagion of sedition and infidelity'. They also sought the help of Edmund Burke, a pro-Catholic parliamentarian, to argue their case. Burke, in a letter written in 1795, said of the establishment of a Catholic college in Ireland: "I expect more good to come of it than from anything else that has happened in our day."

With England and France at war, the London government was amenable to the Irish bishops' representations. A Catholic college was to be established in Ireland where seminarians could be educated under the watchful eye of the authorities and far from the 'enlightenment' of the French revolutionaries. The 1795 act of the Irish Parliament finally allowed a college to be established and also set up a board of trustees to organise its foundation and development.

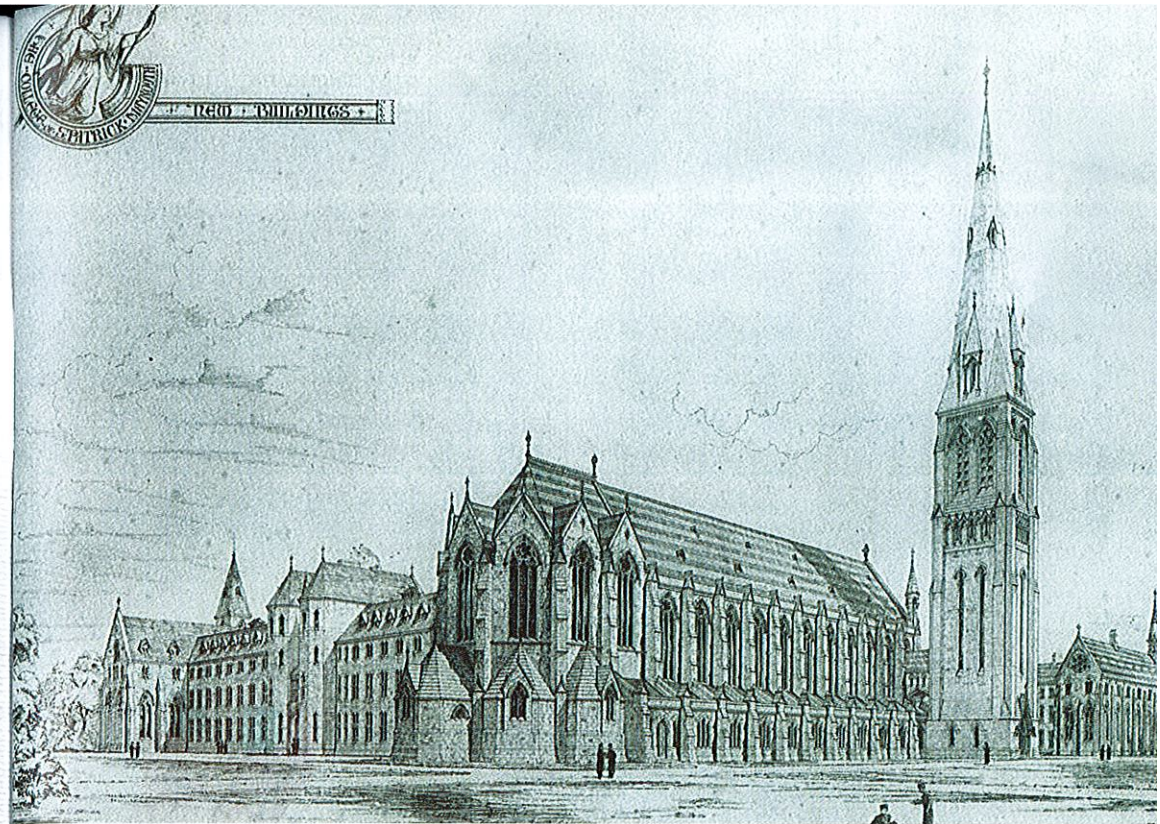
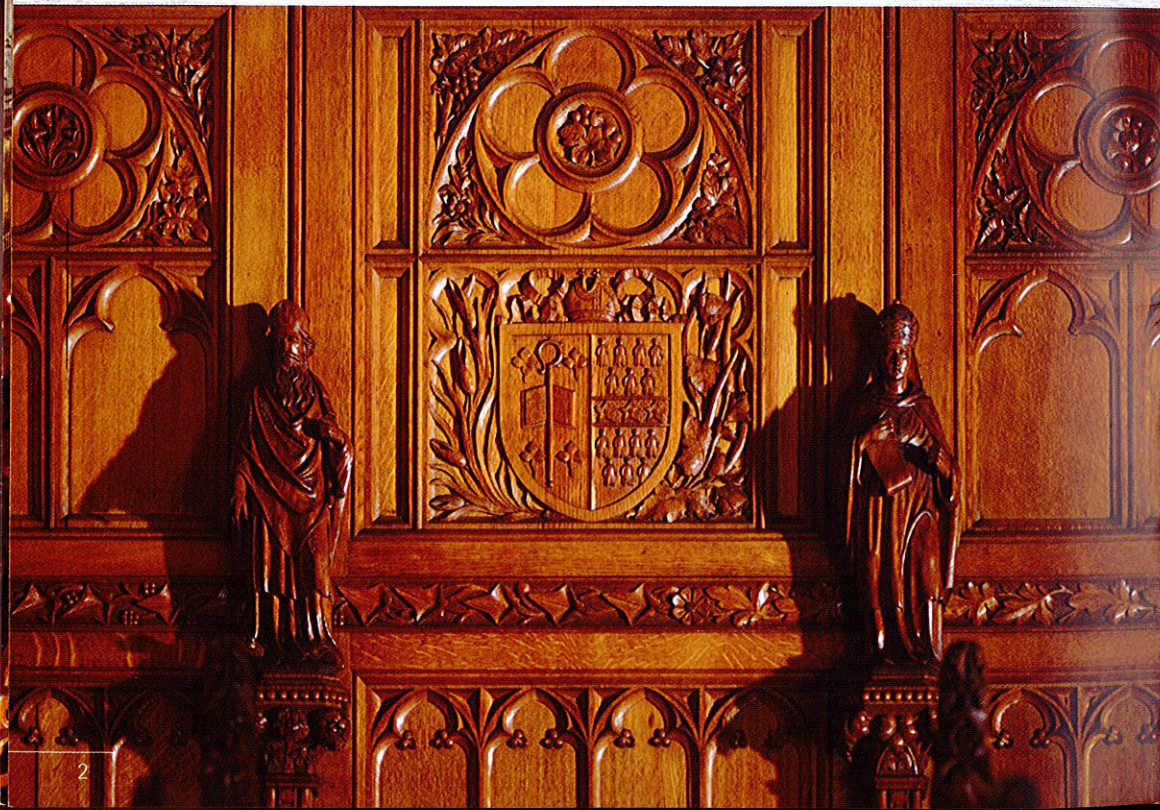


In July 1795 Stoyte House in Maynooth, property of the Duke of Leinster's Steward, was bought by the Trustees and Maynooth College came into being. It was to have an annual grant of £8,000. By October of the same year it housed forty Irish students and seven professors of whom most were French émigrés.

The College grew rapidly as student numbers multiplied in the first few years. Many lived outside the College on Parson Street. Despite the addition between 1796 and 1798 of two long wings, known as Long Corridor, on either side of Stoyte House, accommodation was wholly inadequate. A hall at the end of Long Corridor was used as a chapel. By 1803 there were more than 200 seminarians in the College. In that same year it is recorded that the second President of the College, Peter Flood, was laid to rest in the north aisle of the chapel, suggesting the hall had become an established chapel at this time.

By the 1840s, however, numbers had risen to the extent that the chapel was unable to hold the entire body of seminarians for services. Government grants, which were given until the Act of Disestablishment in 1869, were not sufficient to fund accommodation for the seminarians or to provide for a larger chapel.

*Carved oak panels above the choir stalls feature Irish diocesan coats of arms*



*Perspective drawing of proposed new chapel by J.J. McCarthy*

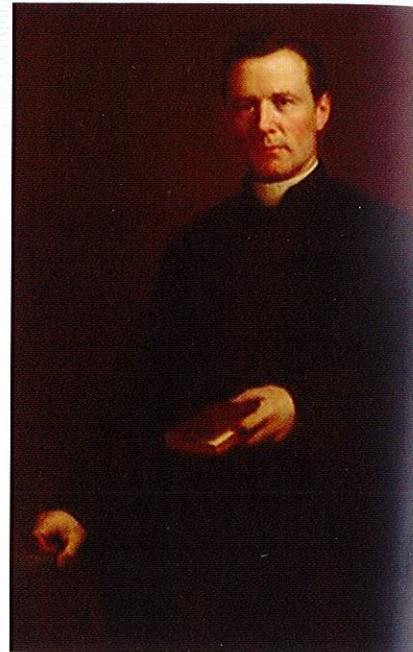
In 1845 a grant of over £30,000 was made available to the College by the British parliament at a time when the Conservative government of Robert Peel deemed it prudent to improve relations with the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland.

A large extension to the College was planned. Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-52), a pioneering British architect and leading exponent of the Gothic revival, also a Catholic, was employed to design and oversee the work. Pugin had extensive and elaborate plans for the College that included a library, a refectory for over 500 seminarians, class halls, accommodation for staff and students, spacious cloisters, an aula maxima and a college chapel. It was an impressive vision, both in scale and in its ornate fourteenth-century Gothic style. However, Pugin's work totalled £57,000 in estimates alone, while at the same time debts had mounted on repairs to existing buildings for which the Trustees were now responsible.

As a result Pugin's plans had to be scaled down considerably. The new building, with its Gothic quadrangle providing space, was constructed in a less ornate thirteenth-century Gothic style and, to Pugin's great regret, plans for the chapel and aula maxima had to be abandoned completely.

## PLANS FOR A CHAPEL 1858-1875

Following the Famine of 1845-8 there was widespread economic depression in Ireland. Individual donations to the Church dried up as money was scarce among the Catholic population and those who could contribute preferred to support the many famine relief schemes around the country. The provision of a college chapel was not seen as a priority for either the government or the Irish people. Its eventual realisation in 1875 came about as a result of the determination and drive of two of Maynooth College's presidents, Charles Russell (1857-1880), responsible for bringing about the building of the Chapel, and Robert Browne (1885-1894), who oversaw its interior decoration and completion.



Robert Browne

Charles Russell, professor of Humanity and then Ecclesiastical History, became President in 1857.

A prolific writer of scholarly works, he belonged to an intellectual set that included John Henry Newman. In 1858, determined to renew the drive for a suitable college chapel, Russell went to London to appeal for funding in person to Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Many Catholic churches were being built throughout Ireland, eclipsing that of the makeshift chapel in Maynooth College. Apart from its inadequate capacity, the chapel was old, dull and, Russell felt, totally unsuitable for the chapel of a national seminary. The prestige of the College, he believed, was being undermined.

In 1860 money was granted but for an infirmary only. However, debts outstanding on College repairs swallowed up most of this. The 1869 Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland Act was a further blow to Russell as it cut off state funding to the Church and the annual state grant to the College ended at this time.

Charles Russell



Stained glass window detail featuring St. Patrick (bottom left)

A lump sum was given in compensation and, more importantly, the Trustees were now allowed to use public subscription to raise funds. This opened the way for development at last. A building committee was set up and met for the first time in January 1875. It appointed J.J. McCarthy as architect.

J.J. McCarthy, Professor of Ecclesiastical Architecture at the Catholic University of Dublin, was Russell's choice to direct the work of drawing up plans for the new Chapel. McCarthy was a follower of the Gothic Revival style and an admirer of the work of Pugin. He was well regarded for his work on churches and cathedrals around Ireland, including St. Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh and St. Mary's parish church in Maynooth, built between 1835 and 1840, and his skills were in demand.

McCarthy, conscious of budget restraint, designed a basic plan for 500 students at a cost of £20,000, but the College trustees felt that something more elaborate and fitting was needed. This was to cost more and increased the onus on its Presidents to oversee the vital fundraising efforts. The long-drawn-out frustrations in building the Chapel were to become part of its history.

## BUILDING THE CHAPEL 1875-81

On 20 October 1875 the foundation stone was laid. The Chapel was to be built entirely by public subscription and funding. The estimated building cost was £25,000. Russell hoped the public would be encouraged to give donations as a thanksgiving for having been safely delivered by God from the Famine. Pugin's son had been an unsuccessful candidate for the appointment of architect and demanded that his father's work should not be used. McCarthy was advised, on legal grounds, to use none of Pugin's sketches and so was prevented from continuing with Pugin's intended thirteenth-century design. Instead he chose to build the Chapel in a more ornate fourteenth-century Gothic style. This was a fitting choice fulfilling the Trustees' desire for a more elaborate Chapel befitting the national seminary of Ireland.

McCarthy's Gothic style was innovative in its design and differed in ways from the conventional features of English Gothic architecture at the time. The planned Chapel's layout was unusual as it lacked the traditional nave and transepts found in most English Gothic churches.

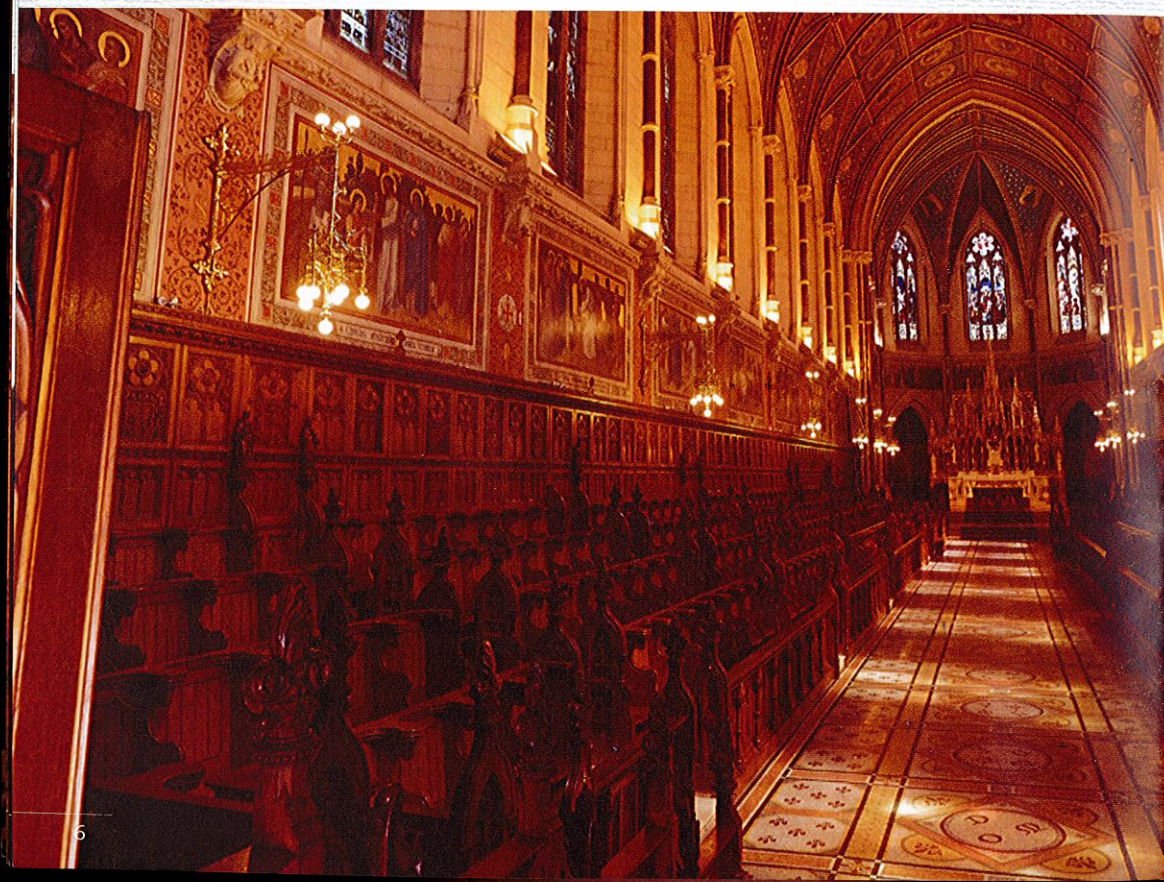
*View of Nave*



*The Miracle of Cana window*

It consisted instead of a nave and one long choir that filled the church, since the Chapel's main function was to be almost entirely for sung services. The Rose Window, traditionally found in one or both transepts, was placed in the western gable end of the Chapel, attracting the evening sunlight. McCarthy became known for this design, repeating it later in other churches in Ireland. Unusual also were the five apse chapels behind the main altar. This provided more altars for priests to say their daily Mass and Office as well as providing a distinctly different and beautiful architectural feature both internally and externally. The buttressed window divisions of the apse chapels also added strength to the structure. It was an impressive height at 70ft (21m) from floor to ceiling, 188ft (57m) long internally and 40ft (12m) wide. It was an architectural feat, having no flying buttresses to support the side walls, as Pugin had planned to include.

The building contract was awarded in September 1875 to Thomas Hammond and Son of Drogheda. Work was to begin in the spring of 1876.



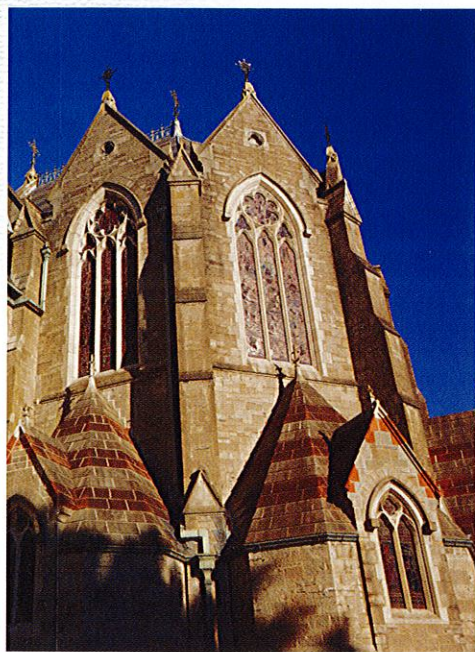


Buttressed window divisions with Caen stone on interior walls

After a wet spring, which delayed the start of construction until May, work got underway and foundations to a depth of 10ft (3m) were in place by October. Portland stone was used for the walls. This was a grey and very durable form of limestone, widely used in public buildings for its resistance to weathering. Local limestone from the College quarry and from the Hammond quarry in Athy was also used. The

interior part of the walls was lined with Caen stone from Normandy. This was a softer, cream-coloured stone that had a warmer appearance than the grey limestone and was easier to carve.

By 1881 the walls and roof were finished. J.J. McCarthy by this time had fallen seriously ill so it was his son, Charles McCarthy, who issued the final architect's certificate in April 1881. Russell, too, was incapacitated following a serious riding accident in May 1877 as a result of which he later died. In 1880 William Walsh became the new President but lacked the same drive as Russell. Building costs had risen to £31,000, of which £12,000 was still outstanding.

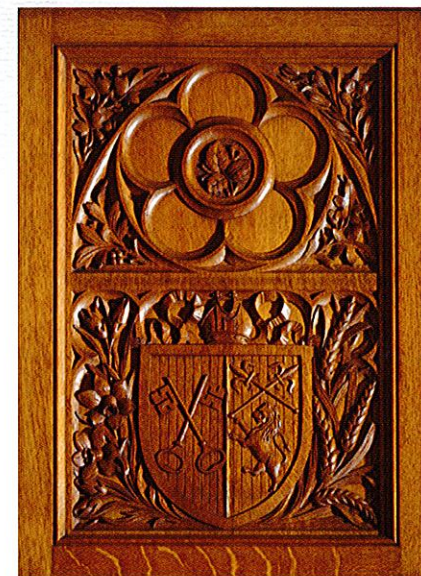


Exterior of apse chapels

## DESIGN AND DECORATION OF THE INTERIOR

Externally the Chapel was finished and it blended well with the adjacent St. Patrick's House, designed in thirteenth-century Gothic style by Pugin. The interior was still to be designed and decorated. The bare walls and plain glass windows remained to be transformed, and more money would be needed. Robert Browne was appointed President of the College in October 1885. He quickly began a search for donors and launched an appeal through collections in Ireland and the United States. He even appealed to readers through the *Freeman's Journal*. Browne was a shrewd individual and his persistence and persuasiveness slowly paid off. By 1887 funding was in place and Browne contracted architect William Hague to design and oversee the internal decoration.

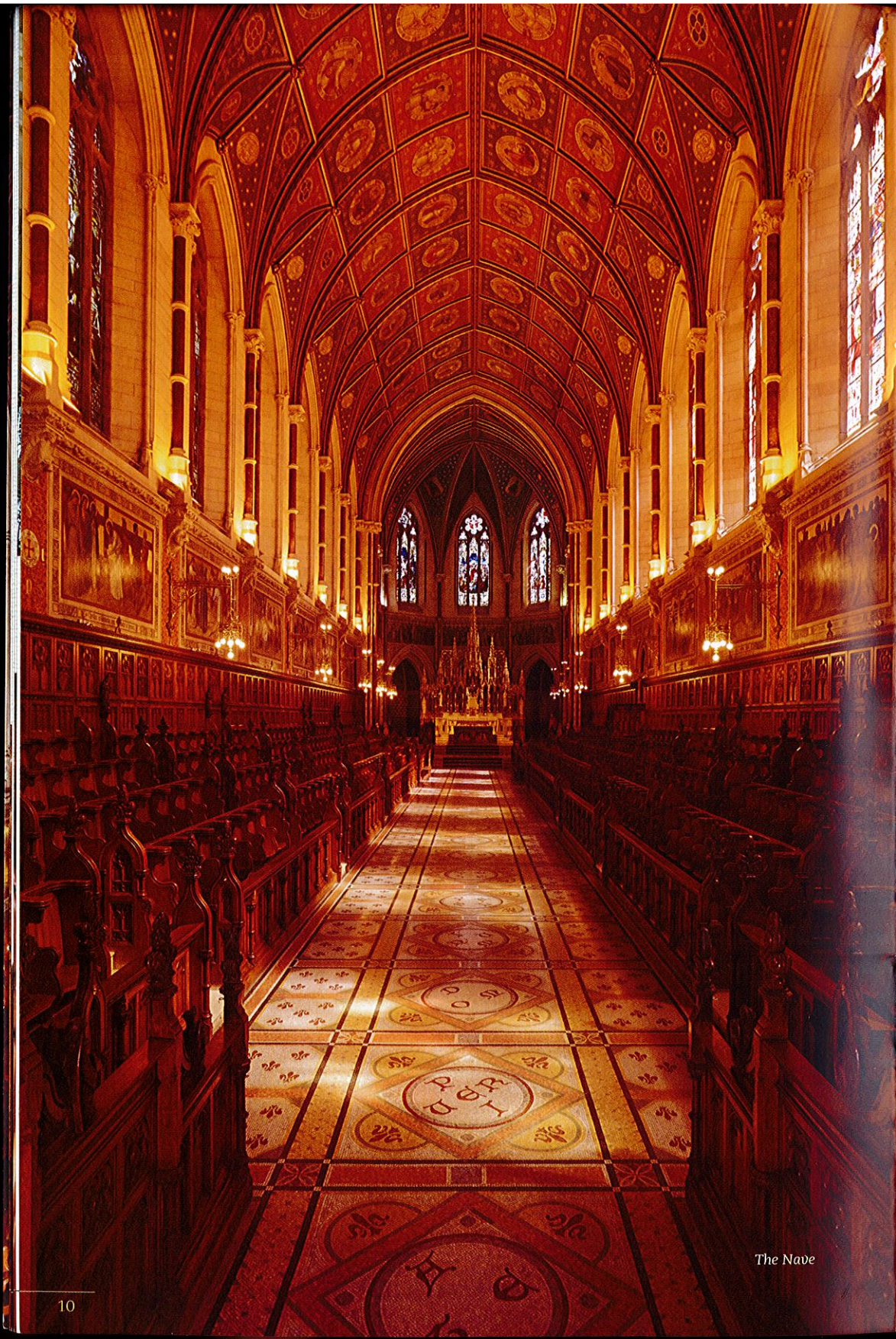
William Hague had succeeded to much of McCarthy's practice. Based in Dawson Street in Dublin, he was a well-known Catholic Ecclesiastical architect and, like Pugin, favoured the French Gothic style. A budget of £6,000 was allocated, which Hague knew was going to be tight, but even this was criticised by some bishops as extravagant. "I share the opinion of many others that Maynooth College and its students have been spoiled with too much money," wrote Bishop McGivern of Dromore. Browne and Hague were both strong-minded men and clashed on various issues but, over six years, they oversaw between them the transformation of an empty shell into a work of art.



Wall panel featuring coat of arms of Maynooth College



Wall panel featuring coat of arms of Diocese of Achonry

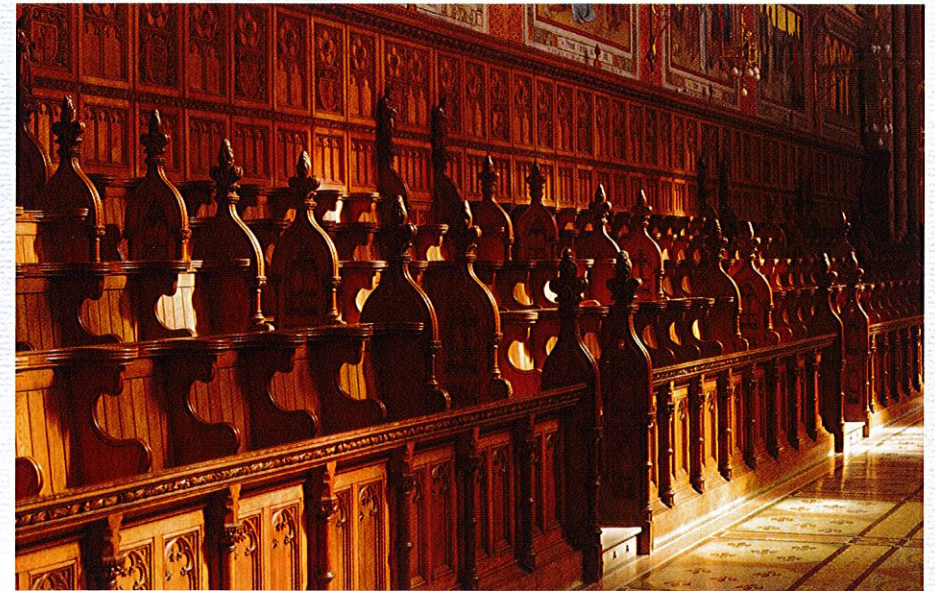


The Nave

## THE THEME OF THE CHAPEL

The theme of the Chapel is *Laus Deo*, or Praise to God. This is worked throughout the decoration. The floor mosaic contains the words of a psalm inviting young men to praise the Lord. The choir stalls hold the seminarians who sing the praises of God. The carved finials portray the plants and flowers of God's creation. Above the stalls, carved in a string course of stone, are representations of birds and animals conveying the idea that all creation should sing the praise of God.

The pointed windows, doors and arches of the Gothic architectural style together with the high vaulted roof draw the eye upwards towards heaven to which the praises of God's creation ascend.



Choir stalls

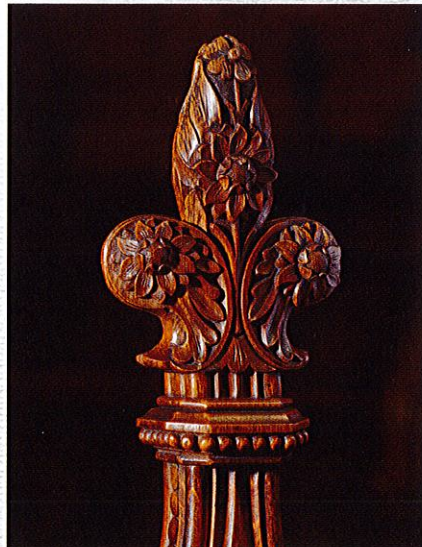
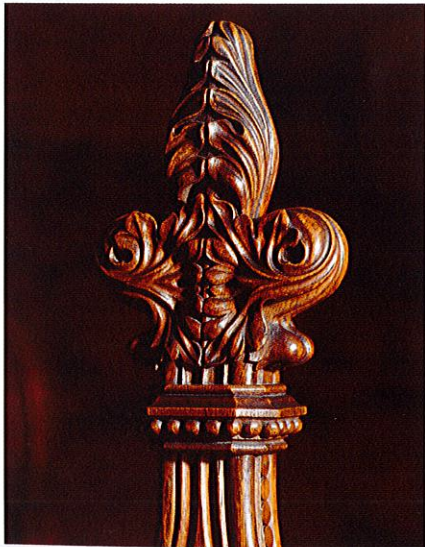
The effect is one of loftiness and ethereal beauty that is intended to create intense spiritual feeling as one enters the main door. The stained glass panels in the doors read *Porta Coeli* (the Gate of Heaven) and *Domus Dei* (the House of God).

The choir stalls form the main, and perhaps most immediately striking, part of the Chapel. The 454 carved stalls or seats, the largest number in any church in the world, face across the aisle rather than towards the altar to facilitate the recitation of the Divine Office. Carved from American oak they are an impressive feature of the Chapel and display the great skills of the craftsmen.

The stalls are individually carved and the finials, fashioned in great detail, show God's creation of plants and flowers: sunflowers, grapes, ivy, berries, oak and sycamore leaves can all be identified with no repetition of design.

The quality of carving is reminiscent of the medieval craftsman in its fine work, attention to detail and its finish. Above the choir stalls, and also carved in oak, are the coats of arms of the Irish dioceses. At the back of the stalls is a series of statues that includes Our Lord, the Virgin Mary and St. Patrick. Various saints associated with the formation and training of men for the priesthood also feature, among them St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Charles Borromeo.

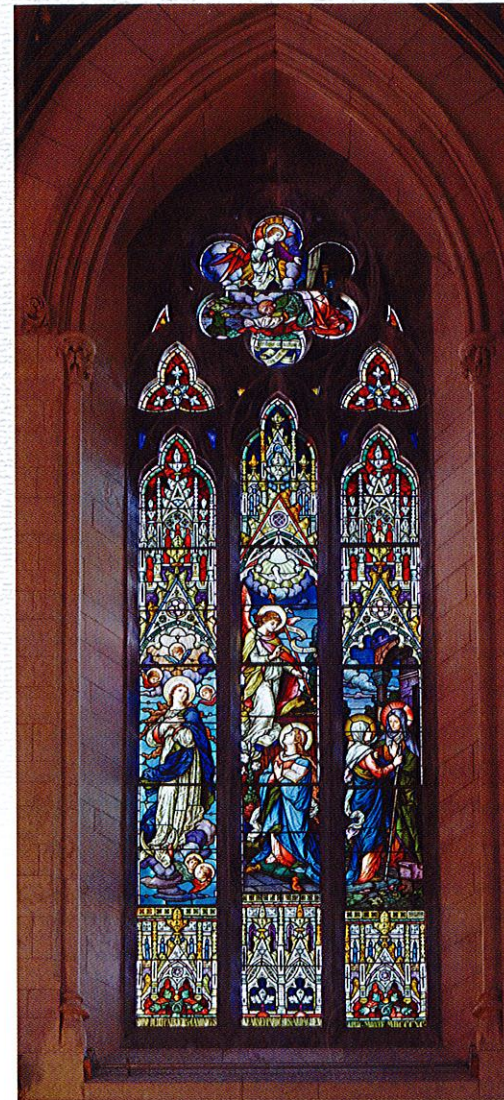
The firm of Messrs. Connolly and Son of Dominic Street in Dublin were the contractors for this work, which began in 1889 and was complete by 1891. The woodwork is attributed to Bryan Moonan and Sons from Ardee, Co. Louth, a firm of award-winning woodcarvers. There is evidence that Bryan Moonan and his family took up temporary residence in Maynooth to finish the work more quickly. The vestry bench in the Sacristy, which they also carved, carries a small brass plate identifying the makers as "Moonan and Sons, Bolton Street, Dublin".



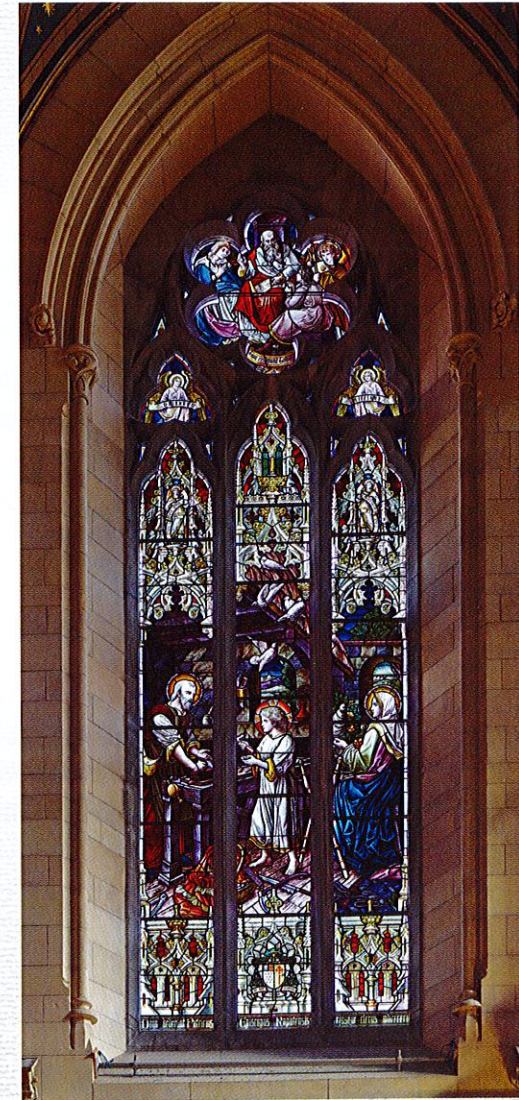
Choir stall finials

## THE WINDOWS

The Windows are arguably the most important feature in the Chapel as they determine the quality of light that illuminates the whole interior. The nineteenth century was not a period renowned for stained glass skills. However, three firms, Cox Buckley of London and Youghal, Lavers and Westlake of London, and Mayer of Munich, between them opened up the Chapel with light and colour.



The Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and the Visitation  
Sexfoil depicts The Vision of Abraham



The Holy Family  
Sexfoil depicts The Family of Tobias





The Organ Gallery  
and Rose Window

The magnificent Rose Window is undoubtedly the highlight. It was a gift of Denis Gargan, Vice-President of the College, and Gerald Molloy, rector of the Catholic University and a former Professor of Dogmatic and Moral Theology at Maynooth. Westlake (1833-1921) was a leading designer in the Gothic Revival movement. A painter, he responded to a growing market for stained glass and joined a firm of ecclesiastical designers.

The window, which demonstrates Westlake's skills in its colour and detail, depicts Christ the King in glory holding the orb of the Universe. He is surrounded by the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, the four Evangelists and the Archangels. The Apostles and Prophets form the outer ring. Facing west, it is seen to best advantage in evening light.

Rose Window





*The Holy Spirit as a dove at Christ's baptism*

To add interest all the windows have two parts – each main window shows scenes from the New Testament while the small sixfoil window above depicts a corresponding scene from the Old Testament. These are listed on the floor plan on the inside of the back cover.

Mayer's windows were created in 1890. The firm of Messrs. Cox, Sons, Buckley and Co. created the remaining four on the south side in 1891.

The windows along the nave are particularly important. They dominate the walls and provide a good balance of pictorial information and colour to attract the eye and engage the mind.

Mayer was responsible only for the first three windows. He refused Browne's request to darken glass in order to achieve greater richness of colour. Mayer argued that inevitably light would be lost. With this his contract ended.

The windows in the nave tell the story of the life of Christ. Starting nearest the sacristy, the south (pulpit) side primarily depicts His private life, while the north side shows events from His public ministry.

The windows along the north side, depicting the public ministry of Christ, were mostly the work of Westlake and were created between 1892 and 1905.

It is thought that Cox Buckley were responsible for at least one of the later windows.

Individual donors had to be found to finance each window so at the time of the Chapel's consecration in June 1891 a number contained plain glass only.

Today the two windows at either end of the organ gallery remain plain but their positions make them inconspicuous.

Above the high altar the windows represent the principal mysteries of the life of Our Lord. The central window, below that of the Holy Trinity, shows Jesus sending out the Apostles to minister to the people. The windows of the Sanctuary recall events in the life of Jesus, such as the Last Supper and the Resurrection.



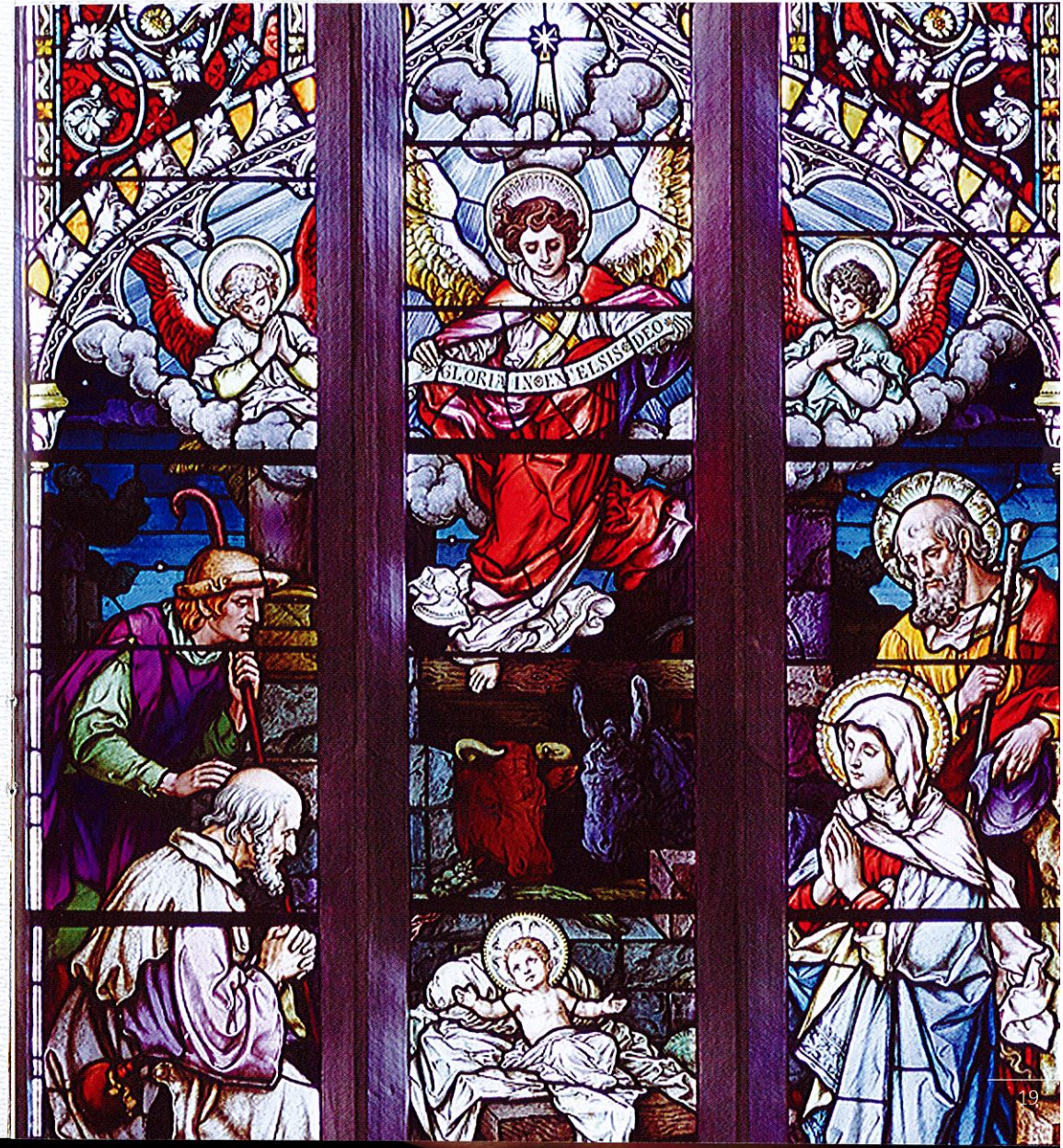
*Miracle of Cana*



Christ teaching to the doctors

The three firms left an impressive legacy of stained glass work that did not imitate past works, as was most often the case, but was innovative and compelling in its own right: "true stained glass", antique "glass of the finest colours", as Buckley referred to it. The windows, with their imposing height, draw the eye upwards to the magnificent ceiling. Here the work of Nathaniel Westlake as painter can be seen in all its glory.

The Nativity



## THE CEILING

The ceiling of the Chapel is the joint work of two highly skilled craftsmen, Nathaniel Westlake and Robert Mannix. The College President, Robert Browne, wanted Mannix, a Dublin-based artist and a craftsman of repute, to do the work. William Hague, the architect, favoured Westlake, a London-based craftsman whom he thought was a better, more skilful designer. It was Westlake's knowledge of medieval art and the pre-Raphaelite style that brought him to prominence in the 1860s. A compromise was reached in which Westlake designed and painted the panels and Mannix carried out the decorative work around them. The result was a highly successful combination of talents producing a masterpiece evoking the pre-Raphaelite era.

Westlake's haloed figures are emotionless and flat. Each is backed in gold and set in a panel with a single colour of vibrant red or blue, typical of the fifteenth-century pre-Renaissance style he was trying to reproduce. Mannix's gold embellishments create a sense of the stars and the heavens.

The work began in March 1888 and was completed by the end of the year. The ceiling creates a beautiful scene of angels and saints in heavenly procession moving towards the high altar of God. Some carry lighted torches, some symbols of the Passion, others carry musical instruments sounding their joy and praise to God. In their midst is an angel hiding from the sight of Judas's betrayal.

The panels are canvas on the wooden ceiling. Westlake designed and painted the medallion panels and sent them to Maynooth.



Betrayal panel



Angel with harp panel



Canvas medallions on the ceiling



Figures depicted on the canvas medallions include St. Joseph, St. Kilian, St. Laurence O'Toole, St. Brigid, the only female saint, and St. Patrick, representing monastic, pastoral and missionary life.

Robert Mannix installed and ornamented the panels. Around each medallion in Gothic character is painted a sentence from one of the three major hymns of praise: *Te Deum*, *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*. Mannix greatly overspent on the gilding budget, causing a dispute with the architect Hague, but it is said that Browne was secretly delighted with the effect and turned a blind eye.

The ceiling is vaulted or arched, creating a sense of great height. The vaults sweep down to corbels or stone projections on the side walls that support the weight of the ceiling. This removes the need for supporting columns within the church and creates a wide span, giving greater internal space and much better light. Immense skill was required in cutting the stone but it provided good economies of material and labour. Angels have been carved into each corbel creating a decorative appearance. The angels are holding objects, including a stole, a missal, cruets and a chasuble.

Ceiling panels:  
St. Patrick  
is depicted  
holding  
his crozier



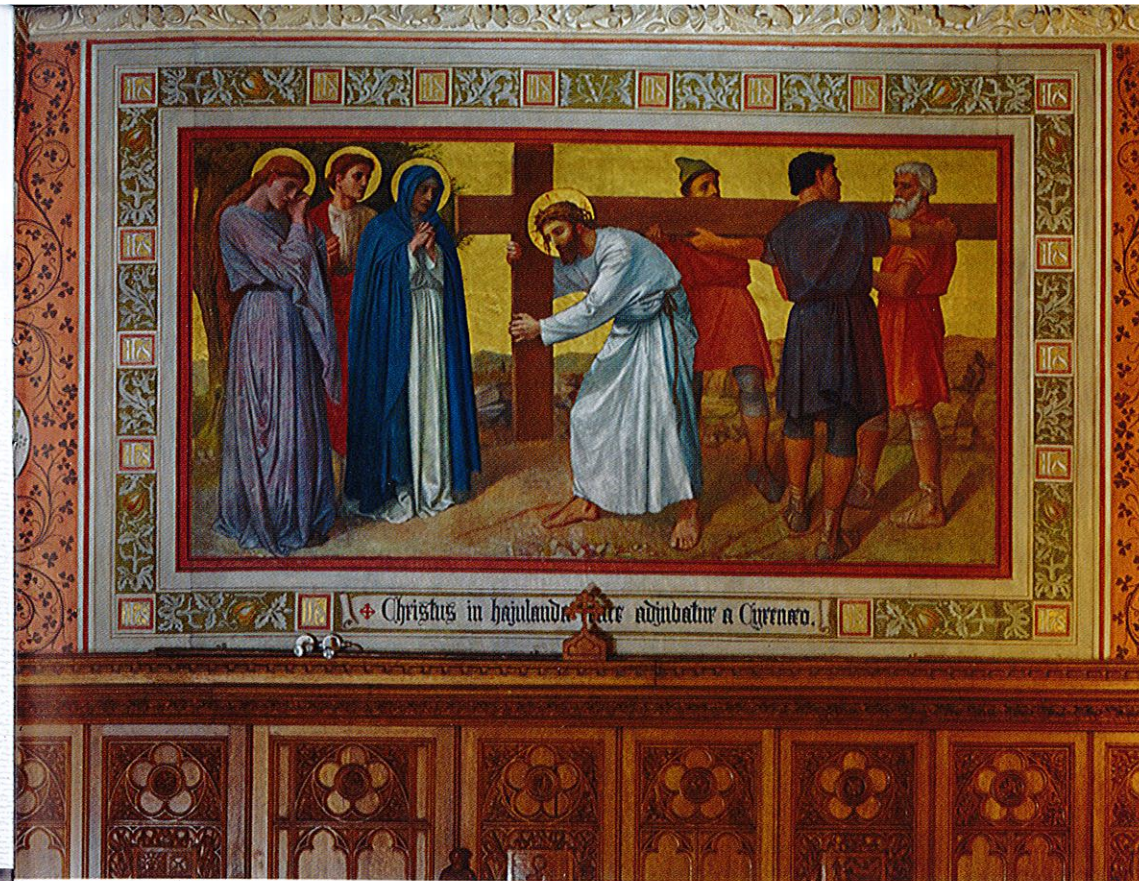
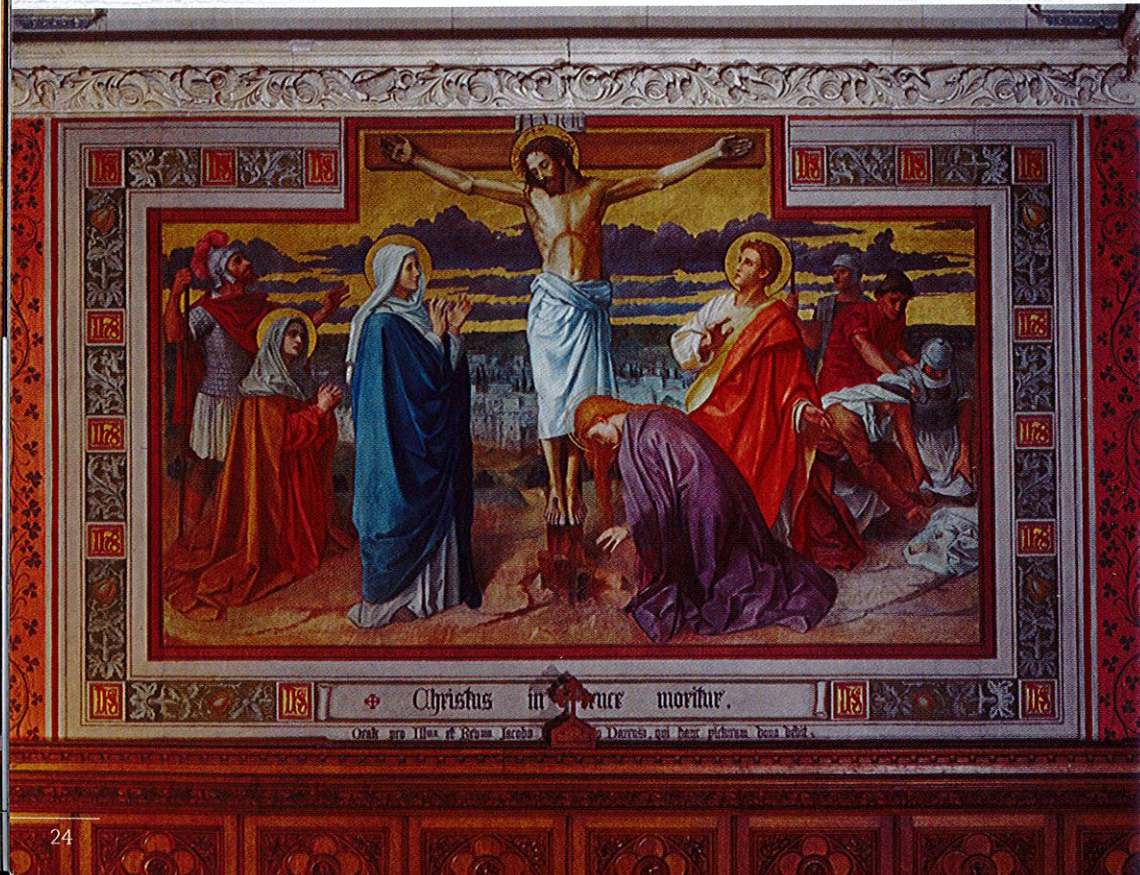
Corbels with angels holding a chalice and a bible



Below the corbels are the large, life-size Stations of the Cross. These were painted on canvas by Nathaniel Westlake. They cleverly give the impression of being frescoes. The gold background also suggests Renaissance influence. Here, Westlake demonstrates his true skills as a painter and craftsman.

On the south side the carved wood pulpit, along with paintings of St. Peter and St. Paul, adorn the wall together with the seven Stations. On the north side, next to the remaining seven Stations, are paintings of the prophets Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah. Each Station required an individual donor for funding and the full set was completed in 1894, three years after the Chapel's consecration in 1891. The names of the donors are given in Latin below each Station.

Stations of the Cross: Christ dies on the Cross



Stations of the Cross: Christ is helped by the Cyrenean to carry the Cross

Above the Stations, and somewhat difficult to see, is a carved stone string course or projecting horizontal line of mouldings extending along the face of the wall. This runs across the feet of the angels in an uninterrupted flow along both sides of the nave. Representing the animal kingdom, a careful inspection will reveal, amongst the foliage, several birds and animals of God's creation. These include a rabbit, monkey, pig, swan and peacock along the north wall, and a squirrel, dog, fox and turkey on the opposite wall. Numerous small songbirds feature on both sides.



String Course detail: a sheep



String Course detail: a swan

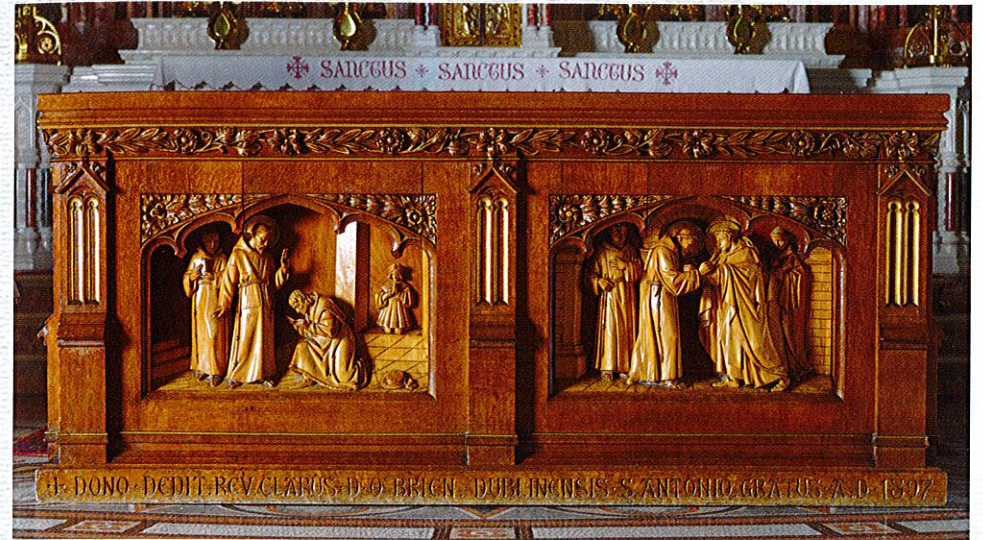


String Course detail: an owl

## SANCTUARY

The High Altar, on a raised pediment, dates from 1911. With the five apse chapels behind, it creates a sanctuary visually dramatic and structurally elegant at the eastern end of the Chapel. The ceiling spreads like a large blue canopy over the Sanctuary and contrasts with the pink and white marble of the altar below. It is decorated with pictures of the patriarchs and apostles. Small motifs run along the lines of the vaulting.

High Altar



Wood carving depicting scenes from the life of St. Anthony

The original altar had been designed by JJ. McCarthy, working to a budget. Although it allowed the apse chapels behind it to be seen, it was small and lacked the grandeur befitting the new Chapel. The opportunity to replace it came in 1906 when the College was left a considerable sum by Gerald Molloy who had co-funded the Rose Window. Made largely of Italian Carrera marble, the new altar was designed by Irish architects Ashlin and Coleman and built by Early and Co. It was consecrated on 6 February 1913 by the former President, Archbishop Daniel Mannix, before he left to take up his new role as coadjutor archbishop of Melbourne. Mannix had been succeeded as President by John Hogan in August 1912.

The centre piece is a reproduction in marble of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. In flamboyant style, popular at the time, the pink-tinged marble pinnacles of the altar rise upwards dramatically while an intricate lace-effect, carved in the marble, allows light through to the five small chapels behind.



Carved wooden Ambo



Sanctuary ceiling

The wooden altar, in front of the marble high altar, dates back to 1897. It is carved in oak and was originally in the north cloister where College priests said Mass individually every day. It was moved onto the main altar in the Chapel in the 1960s when changes made by Vatican II required the priest to face the congregation when saying Mass. The ambo (lectern) beside it was part of its oak reredos or screen that was originally behind the altar in the cloister and was also carved in 1897. The reredos was remade into the matching ambo by Joseph McArdle, the College carpenter, and was moved to the Chapel at the same time.

The five apse chapels behind the main altar were constructed between the buttresses of the apse. They are an unusual feature, more common in mainland Europe than Ireland. Apart from creating a feeling of space and grandeur, the chapels had a practical use providing extra altars for priests to say their daily Mass. The windows in the apse were installed by Cox Buckley who also decorated the walls and ceiling. Beneath the windows is a series of six paintings depicting the lives of Irish saints: St. Columba, St. Columbanus, St. Patrick, St. Malachy, St. Brigid and St. Laurence O'Toole.

The decoration of the walls and ceiling of the chapels was hampered by lack of funds, much to Robert Browne's disappointment. He described the stencil work as unimaginative and stereotyped. The job was rushed and not completed until after the consecration of the Chapel in 1891. The main problem was with the porous roof tiles that were to cause a major and persistent problem of dampness.

The central chapel, in blue mosaic, is by far the most impressive of the five. This is the Lady Chapel, dedicated to The Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1914, shortly before World War One, the President, John Hogan, secured money from the Trustees to redecorate the walls of this chapel.



Lady Chapel



Italian glass mosaic was used to depict four principal mysteries of the rosary associated with Mary: the Annunciation, Nativity, Assumption and Coronation. Around the walls, beneath the ceiling, the words of the *Ave Maria* are worked into the mosaic.

The work was designed by architects Ashlin and Coleman and carried out by Early and Co. The ceiling was eventually decorated in 1927 when it was thought the problem of damp had been solved. The Dublin firm of J. Clarke and Sons created a strikingly beautiful effect in cool blue with pictorial panels. Harry Clarke, son of Joshua Clarke, almost certainly contributed to this work as Joshua died in 1921, leaving the business to Harry and his brother Walter.

In 1963, while staying in Carton House in Maynooth, Princess Grace and Prince Rainier of Monaco attended daily Mass in the Lady Chapel along with their children.

To the side of the main altar, on the wall directly opposite the Sacristy, there is an illustration of an angel with a scroll. The scroll is inscribed with the words *Laus Deo*, the theme of the Chapel. Underneath are the letters I.H.S. from the Greek IHESOS HUIOS SOTER, meaning Jesus, Son, Saviour. Below these windows the wall is decorated in a rich red pattern of Gothic Revival motifs. The initials SP for Saint Patrick are a dominant feature. The lower part of the wall is painted predominantly green. Browne, however, was not pleased with the effect, designed by Cox Buckley, and described it as being too fussy in contrast to the work of Westlake in the Nave.



Decorative  
SP initials

## FLOOR OF THE NAVE

Between the altar and the main door, or *Porta Coeli*, the mosaic floor calls the young seminarians to worship God as the scroll proclaims. Worked in Gothic lettering in circular patterns into the mosaic are the words of a psalm:

*Laudate pueri Dominum*

*Young men praise the Lord*

*Psallite Deo psallite*

*Sing psalms to God, sing psalms*

*Quoniam rex omnis terrae Deus*

*For God is king of all the earth*

*Psallite sapienter.*

*Sing psalms in wisdom.*

Along the margins are patterns of fleur-de-lys, a motif typical of the Gothic Revival style. Its three stems represent the Holy Trinity and it is associated with the Virgin Mary. The fleur-de-lys also calls to mind the College's early French connections. The work was executed by the Burke Brothers of London and Paris.

Floor of Nave mosaic detail

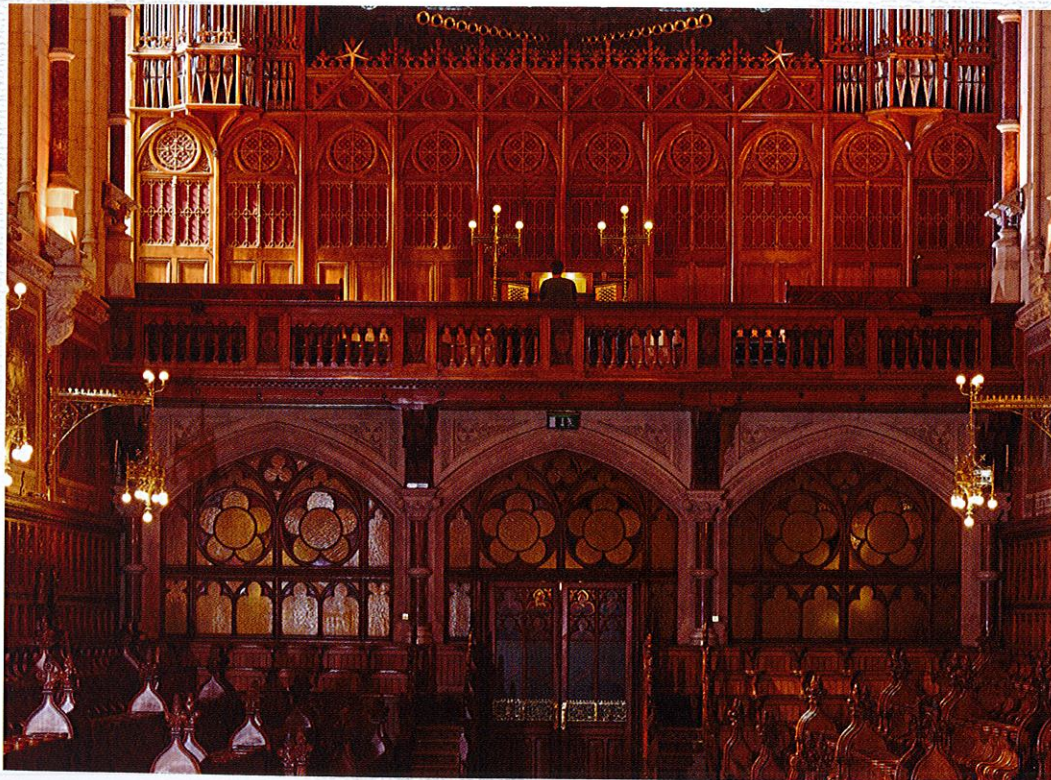


## CHANT AND ORGAN

Music was at the centre of religious service and devotions in Maynooth. However, up to 1888 there were only part-time organists, and church chant was often taught by students. With over 500 seminarians, Browne decided that a resident clerical choral master was now necessary. Heinrich Bewerunge, a German organist and choirmaster based in Cologne, was recommended.

Bewerunge was appointed to Maynooth as the first Professor of Church Chant and Organ in June 1888, at the age of twenty-six. One of his initial tasks was the installation of a suitable instrument for the new Chapel. In 1889 he commissioned the German organ builder George Stahlhuth and his son Eduard, whose workshop was in Aachen (Aix la Chapelle), to carry out the work.

The organ was installed in 1890 in time for the formal consecration of the Chapel on 24 June 1891. This was to be an international event attracting many ecclesiastical and other visitors. The standard of music at such a ceremony had to reflect the prestige of the College.



*Organ and Gallery*



*Organ console*

The consecration was performed by Archbishop Logue of Armagh. Archbishop Walsh of Dublin sang the Mass. Bewerunge conducted the choir and Eduard Stahlhuth played the new organ. It was described as the "greatest day in the history of the College since its foundation stone was laid on 20 April 1796" and the *Freeman's Journal* wrote that the Chapel was "as beautiful a church as any that has been erected since the renaissance of our people".

The College Chapel organ was considered a revolutionary instrument for its time with its new electro-pneumatic action, the first in Ireland. It was small in size, lighter to the touch and, most usefully, allowed the console or keyboard to be located at ground level. This was placed at the western end of the Chapel by the main door, where a wooden plinth with a commemoration plaque to mark Pope John Paul's visit in 1979 now stands.

The organ was housed in two Gothic-style cases, made by Cox Buckley, that framed the beautiful Rose Window. The distance covered between player and instrument, though a great technical feat, caused problems, especially of time lapse, that were not overcome until the console was moved up to the organ gallery in the 1970s.

By the 1920s work was needed on the organ. Bewerunge was on holiday in Germany when World War One broke out and he was prevented from returning to Maynooth until 1921. The organ deteriorated in his absence, requiring a rebuild between 1928 and 1929. This was carried out by Henry Willis and Sons of London.



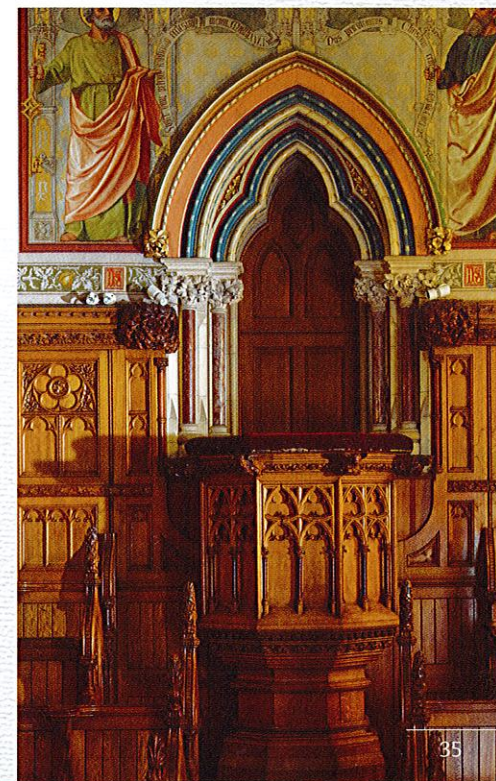
*The Zimbelstern,  
bells with  
rotating stars*



*John O'Keeffe, Director of Sacred Music, conducting at the annual Carol Service*

Pipework was rescaled and a choir organ added. To avoid obstructing the view of the Rose Window many of the larger pipes were laid horizontally. In 1978 another rebuild was undertaken to increase and improve the organ's performance. It was at this time that the console was moved up to the organ gallery. Kenneth Jones & Associates from Co. Wicklow were awarded this contract.

The most ambitious work took place between 2011 and 2013, following the identification of structural problems. The contract was given to Fratelli Ruffatti of Padua, Italy. The organ was fully dismantled and much of it was sent to Italy where integration of old and new pipework could be carried out. Gerard Gillen, Professor of Music at NUI Maynooth, oversaw the project along with John O'Keeffe, Director of Sacred Music at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. The organ now consists of over 3,000 pipes, a Herald Trumpet and a novelty set of 12 bells, the Zimbelstern, with its rotating stars. It was officially blessed in December 2013 by the College President, Hugh Connolly. An impressive series of organ recitals was held in spring 2014 to demonstrate the superb qualities of the new organ.



*The Pulpit*



The College  
Spire

## THE SPIRE

In 1875 J.J. McCarthy had included a tower and spire in his design for the College Chapel but finance meant construction did not proceed. Preparations in 1895 to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the College saw a drive to 'finally complete the Chapel' by building a spire as a fitting mark of the occasion. This project was spearheaded by the President, Denis Gargan. In October 1898 William Hague, the architect who had completed the Chapel in 1891, was asked to oversee the work. Building did not begin until March 1899 due to shortage of finance and it was to be built in phases to allow money to be raised for each stage. This proved an impossible task for the builders so construction work pressed ahead and debts were paid off at a later point. The Spire was finally completed early in 1902.

At a height of 273ft (83m) it was the tallest building in Leinster at that time. The staff celebrated by taking the then eighty-three-year-old-year-old President to dinner. It was reported to have been a 'slightly boisterous affair' but the Spire was to be his lasting memorial as he died in August 1903. The Spire was still not yet fully paid for.

In recent years the Spire has become a vantage point for a peregrine falcon.

## RESTORATION

Renovation work began on the paintwork and decoration of the College Chapel prior to the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979. In 1980 the 'Friends of Maynooth' initiative set out to raise set up to raise funds in Ireland and the United States. Its success allowed badly needed repair work to be financed.

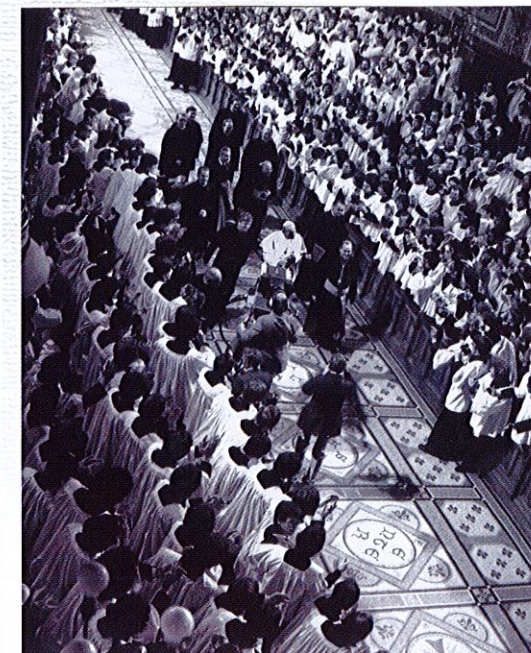
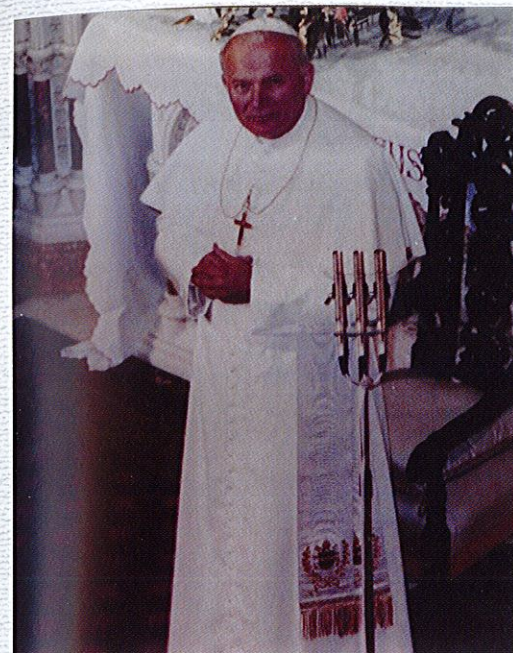
The Bicentenary in 1995 led to a programme of large-scale restoration work on the Chapel. This included elimination of dampness in the apse chapels and cloisters, restoration of some of the windows, re-roofing of the Chapel and Spire, along with the installation of the Ruffatti organ in 2013. The programme has seen the Chapel restored to its 1891 condition, described at the time as being a 'credit to the artistic skill and ornate taste of the Irish people'.

## VISITORS

Maynooth College has welcomed many visitors. In the nineteenth century it was probably the most visited place in Ireland. It is associated with writers William Thackeray and Walter Scott, as well as British monarchs King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra who visited in 1903 and King George V and Queen Mary in July 1911. Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco visited in 1963, and, more recently, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain in 1986. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden visited Maynooth for a World Scout Foundation function in October 1995. Possibly the most flamboyant visitor to the College was the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, known as Sisi, who, in 1879, famously strayed into the College grounds while out riding. She was treated so well by the President and staff of the College that she made another visit in 1880. On her return home she sent a gift to the College of gold-embroidered vestments decorated with shamrocks. The use of Ireland's traditional shamrock was possibly to make up for the *faux pas* of the previous gift following her first visit, which was a beautiful silver statue of St. George and the Dragon. Both are still in the possession of the College.



The Flight into Egypt by Villavencenzo



Visit of Pope John Paul II, 1 October 1979

Another splendid gift was a painting by the artist Villavencenzo, *The Flight into Egypt*. This was given to the College by Hermione, fifth Duchess of Leinster, to celebrate the opening of the new Chapel in 1891. The painting had been in the gallery at Carton House, Maynooth. In retrospect it was a poignant gift as Hermione died of tuberculosis in 1895 aged thirty. The painting hangs on the cloisters, outside the sacristy door.

On 1 October 1979 Pope John Paul II came to Maynooth College as part of his Irish visit. Throughout the preceding night many people gathered to take part in an all-night vigil in the College Chapel and grounds. The Pope met with seminarians and staff in the College Chapel before giving his blessing to a vast crowd in the extensive parkland at the back of the College.

Maynooth College has seen the ordination of more than 10,000 priests in its two-hundred-year history. At its height more than 500 seminarians lived and studied here. In the late 1960s lay students were admitted to the Pontifical University and in January 1988 the first honorary conferring of the Pontifical University took place in the College Chapel.

Today the College Chapel is used for a variety of functions. As well as religious services, Holy Week being especially important, conferrings and organ recitals also take place there. Each December the annual Carol Service combines the College Chapel Choir, University Choral Society, Chamber Choir and the Schola Gregoriana, while a major choral work is performed every spring. These have included Handel's *Messiah*, the *St. Matthew Passion* by J.S. Bach, Dvorák's *Requiem* and the *Petite Messe Solennelle* by Rossini.

In September 1995 the poet Seamus Heaney gave a public reading in the College Chapel, a week before he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Denis Meehan said in 1948 that "the College Chapel must be regarded as a fine specimen of ecclesiastical art – an invaluable treasure in the great educational institution of which it forms so useful a part."

The BBC series *Great British Railway Journeys* featured the College Chapel in 2017. The presenter, Michael Portillo, described it as "a glorious hidden wonder ... truly spectacular" and said "the Chapel is one of the finest I have seen."



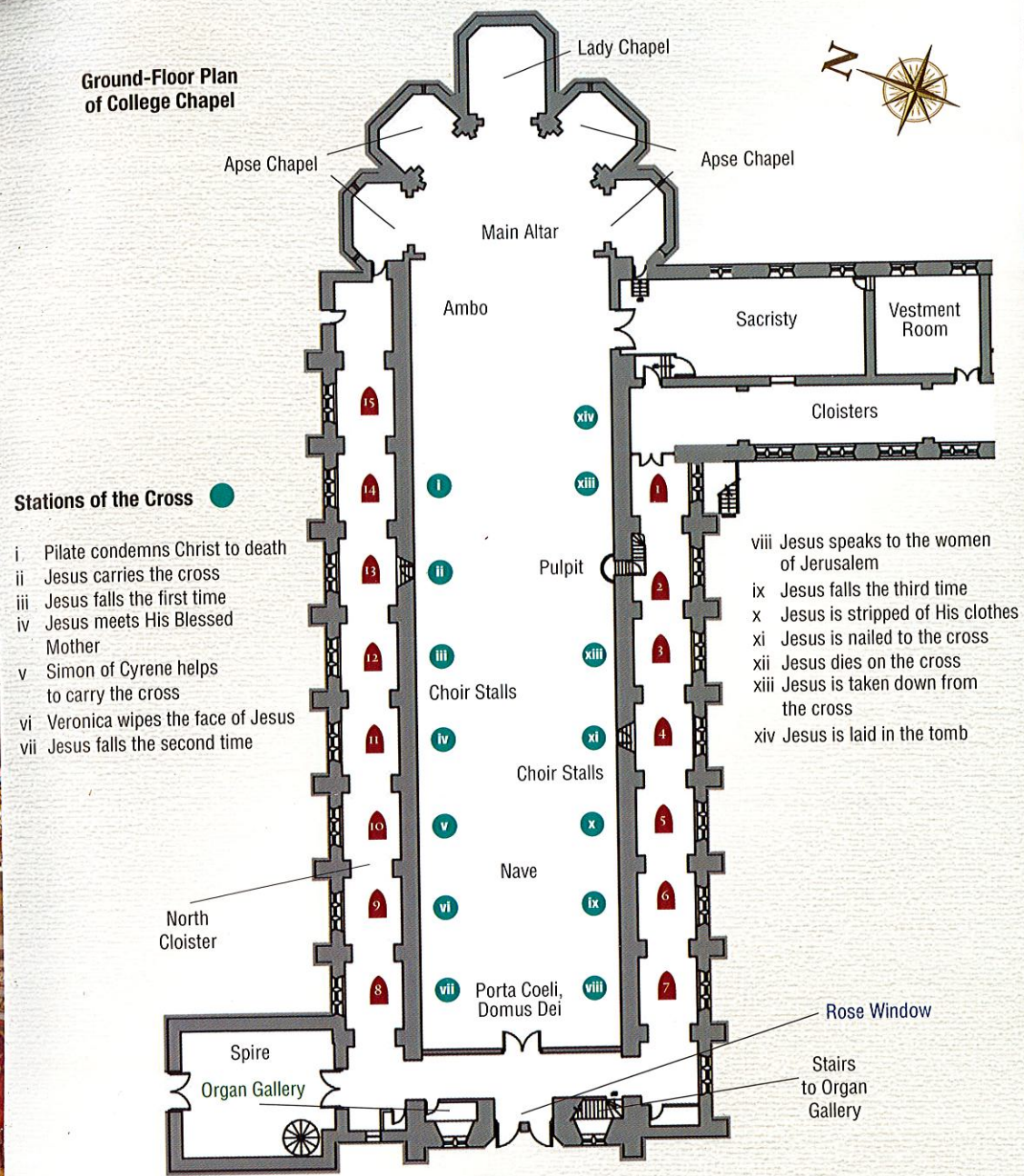
Stained glass window detail showing St. Patrick

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Text by Pat Watson  
Photography by Gillian Buckley  
Photograph of Carol Service by Stuart McNamara  
Design by Eamon Sinnott & Partners

First published March 2017  
College Chapel, Maynooth is the first in a series published by Visit Maynooth  
Series editor: Bill Tinley

ISBN: 978-0-9957393-0-7

### Ground-Floor Plan of College Chapel

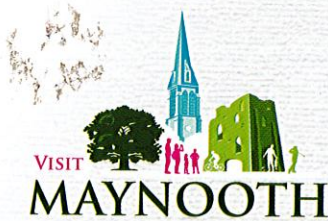


#### Stations of the Cross

- i Pilate condemns Christ to death
- ii Jesus carries the cross
- iii Jesus falls the first time
- iv Jesus meets His Blessed Mother
- v Simon of Cyrene helps to carry the cross
- vi Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
- vii Jesus falls the second time
- viii Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem
- ix Jesus falls the third time
- x Jesus is stripped of His clothes
- xi Jesus is nailed to the cross
- xii Jesus dies on the cross
- xiii Jesus is taken down from the cross
- xiv Jesus is laid in the tomb

#### Stained Glass Windows

- 1 Immaculate Conception, Annunciation and Visitation  
*Vision of Abraham*
- 2 Nativity  
*Finding of Moses*
- 3 Presentation of Our Lord  
*Presentation of Samuel*
- 4 Holy Family  
*Family of Tobias*
- 5 Christ teaching to the doctors  
*Daniel interpreting dream of Belshazzar*
- 6 Holy Spirit as dove at Christ's baptism  
*Dove indicating end of flood*
- 7 Miracle of Cana  
*Moses striking rock*
- 8 Christ and Samaritan woman  
*Solomon and Queen of Sheba*
- 9 Miracle at pool of Siloe  
*Naaman cleansed in Jordan*
- 10 Christ raises widow's son  
*Elijah raises widow's son*
- 11 Mary Magdalene washes feet of Christ  
*Ruth at feet of Boaz*
- 12 Peter sets sail with Jesus  
*Tyrian sailors take Solomon's ships to sea*
- 13 Miracle of loaves and fishes  
*Miracle of jar of meal and of oil*
- 14 Peter receiving keys of Heaven  
*Moses receiving Law of God*
- 15 Transfiguration  
*Moses veiling his face before God*



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ISBN 978-0-9957393-0-7



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