

**OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND**

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:

**AN tOLLAMH NOLLAIG MAC CONGÁIL**, Registrar and Deputy President, NUI, Galway on 2 December 2013 in the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa*, on **VAL NOONE**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Tá scaipeadh is fán ar an gcine Gael le cianfhada d'aimsir. Ó tharla gairmscoil curtha orthu i mbliana go ceithre chúinne na cruinne, á mbrosalú le cuairt a thabhairt ar a bhfód dúchais tráth dá stair, is tráthuíl agus is mithid ár gceangal leo a scrúdú agus a dhlúthú. Tá stair fhada chasta ag baint lena n-imirce ó thír go tír, ó aois go haois, agus ní féidir a scéal a ríomh le haon bhail amháin a thabhairt orthu uilig. Tá de cheangal



againn leis na milliún d'iaróibh Éireannach go bhfuil gaol fola againn leo agus dáimh dá réir againn lena stair. Is mithid athmhuintearas a dhéanamh leo.

This, the designated year of the Gathering, affords us the opportunity to re-establish and re-evaluate our connection with our celebrated diaspora who have carried our genes to the four corners of the earth. Their histories, varied and

often traumatic, are inextricably linked with the history of the stay-at-home Irish and equally worthy of mention and celebration. It is a chequered history and one which repeatedly emphasises the fact that Ireland is a small island on the periphery of Europe which, because of its geographic location, its paucity of material resources, its continuous fertility rate, will always have a very vibrant emigration dimension to its history.

One destination of Irish people for generations is Australia. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Irish have gone to Australia in waves and have made a significant contribution to Australia's development and permeated the whole of its society.

Dr. Val Noone was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1940, the eldest of five children born to Michael Noone and Margaret Bannon. Of his eight great-grandparents six were born in Ireland, and were migrants of the two decades following the Famine. They all lived around Melbourne and were inner-city people. They married people from a variety of counties: Galway, Limerick, Clare, Dublin, Offaly, Antrim and were all Catholics.

Val was raised at Bentleigh in the city's south-east and gained a scholarship to De La Salle College the mission of which is "to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor." He then progressed in 1964 to Corpus Christi College, Melbourne (founded, incidentally, by Archbishop Mannix) and gained a B. Theol., first class honours. From 1965 to 1970 Val served as a Catholic Priest in the Archdiocese of Melbourne Victoria, Australia. Between 1970 and 1976 he expanded his vocation and worked as a member of

an open house for homeless people in Fitzroy. In 1974 he married Mary Doyle, a social worker and they had two children, Michael and Catherine.

In the 1980s both Val and Mary were founding members of a peace action group (Catholics for Peace) in Melbourne. They supported this large community group and took a strong public stance for Nuclear Disarmament at that time.

For some years Val held various jobs and then, for a decade, worked in the printing industry before returning to study as a mature student at La Trobe University where he graduated with a MA, first class honours, in 1988 followed by a PhD in Religious Studies, in 1991 on the topic of religious attitudes to war. His book, based on this area of interest, was published as *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam* (Spectrum, 1993). Val was strongly involved in the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign and was an organiser of the Committee for the Anti-Vietnam War movement in Australia.

Despite the physical disconnect with Ireland over many generations and the fact that he never visited our shores until the nineties, Val has always had a great affinity with Ireland, its history, language and culture which he has progressed in many practical ways over the years. He has written extensively on social history and his most recent book is *Hidden Ireland in Victoria*, an overview of the history of the Irish culture and language in the State of Victoria, Australia.

Val was also the founding editor and publisher of the scholarly journal of the Irish-Australian network called *Táin* from 2000 to 2007 (forty-five issues in all). The new on-line magazine **Tinteán** evolved from the success of *Táin*. Val has also been a co-contributor to historical articles in Irish, published in Ireland by

the Conradh na Gaeilge journal *Feasta*. He is currently a committee member of the Irish Language Association of Australia and a member of the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand. Val is also a key contributor to the Melbourne Irish Studies Seminar Group. He has been a Board member and a support for the cultural activities of the Celtic Club in Melbourne for many years, the Higgins Chair of Irish Studies at University of Melbourne, the Newman-St Mary's Academic Centre and the Australian Irish Heritage Association. It was in recognition of this involvement and of his contribution to Irish Australian culture and language that Val received the Dr Michael Sullivan Award in 2006.

Val has instigated and supported many community groups over the years in their social justice activities. One such group was the Melbourne Irish Famine Commemoration Group which was responsible for the establishment of a large memorial to the Irish immigrants who came to Melbourne, Australia. Unveiled in 1998, the memorial commemorated, in particular, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of 191 Irish orphan girls on the ship the Lady Kennaway.

Over the years, Val has been a consultant, lecturer, convenor etc. of many academic, historical and political activities relating to the full spectrum of Irish matters in Australia. His Irish-based interests have also informed and encouraged his interest in and advocacy for minority groups in Australia, including those of Vietnamese, Chinese and Turkish extraction. In 2009 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to education and to the community.

With the award of this doctorate, Val joins the elite and exclusive club of only two Australian NUI honorary doctors, Tom Keneally in 1994 and Cardinal Gilroy in 1950. In awarding this doctorate we are acknowledging the positive gene element of the Irish diaspora and a life of service and contribution by Val in areas which resonate in particular with the NUI charter in terms of academic activity and output, Irishness and humanitarianism, especially in relation to the underprivileged and unrepresented.

Go maire tú do chéimíocht úr agus rath agus bláth ort anois agus feasta *ad multos annos* i gcuideachta do lucht gaoil agus aitheantais.

**PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:**

**Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Litteris, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.**