

# 4th International Pro-Life & Family Conference 2006

BE TOGETHER  
FOR LIFE  
AND FAMILY

## CONFERENCE 2006 WAS ENERGETIC, PROFESSIONAL AND INSPIRING

A SPECIAL REPORT BY MARIA KAVANAGH, LORCAN MAC MATHUNA AND DONALD MCGUIRE WHO VISITED THE CONFERENCE FOR *THE IRISH FAMILY*

The sheer amount of hard work that went into making the *4th International Pro-Life and Family Conference* an interesting, inspirational, and informative event, paid off according to attendees who unanimously gave it enthusiastic approval.

Many people said they were most impressed by the range of topics covered by the speakers; by the diverse content that addressed a range of traditional and emerging moral issues.

Broadly speaking there were three categories of speakers. Giving their own heart-rending testimonies, which profoundly moved the packed auditorium, were Bobby Schindler and Joan Appleton. They shared with their hushed audiences the darkest experiences imaginable, and everyone present joined in hope and prayer for salvation and healing for these wonderful people.

Then there were the hugely informative talks of Dr. Seán Ó Domhnaill, Minister Ainars Bastiks, Prof. Maciej Giertych, Dr. David Prentice, John Waters, Dana Rosemary Scallon, Fiona Pinto and Andy Pollard. All these speakers clearly and succinctly presented the facts on their given topics, and many people said that they had made the conference an enriching learning experience.

The conference gave a warm opening welcome to Joe Scheidler, the father of pro-life activism, who was one of several speakers whose conviction and inspirational encouragement came from being in the front line of their apostolate. People like Reverend Pat Mahoney, Bernie Smyth of *Precious Life*, Niamh Uí Bhriain of *Mother & Child Campaign*, Brandi Swindell of *Generation Life*, Bryan Kemper of *Stand True*, Eoghan de Faoite of *Youth Defence*, and Dr. Eshan Dias whose dogged determination made him a key person in preventing the legalisation of abortion in Sri Lanka.

Pat Mahoney was exuberant on stage and, like Bryan Kemper, was visibly thrilled to be in an abortion-free Ireland. Pat continued with his own effervescent brand of inspiration which visitor Sarah Howell described as "just so with it".

Taking God's command to "go ye therefore and teach all nations" seriously, Bryan Kemper of *Stand True* said he decided to go to the most hostile audience he could find to proselytise. Bryan preaches to young people at rock concerts where, as he described, he meets some of the most opinionated, arrogant, ignorant, pro-aborts you could imagine. But he's confident and certain in his conviction and his message is delivered with all the energy and self-assurance of youth. When Ashley Mernill said he was "dead cool" she wasn't the only one. Many young people identified him as someone they could relate to.

During the conference Andy Pollard gave his opinion to this reporter that; "The conference is energetic and brilliantly presented...It is super to see young people leading the way. These are not the leaders of tomorrow they are the leaders of today." Those young leaders loved Andy Pollard and his presentation on demographics. In the words of Catherine Walsh from Kilkenny, "Andy Pollard is a legend." Edel Loughneene from Mayo said she was transfixed by what he said while Paul Ahern from Meath said it was "absolutely compelling."

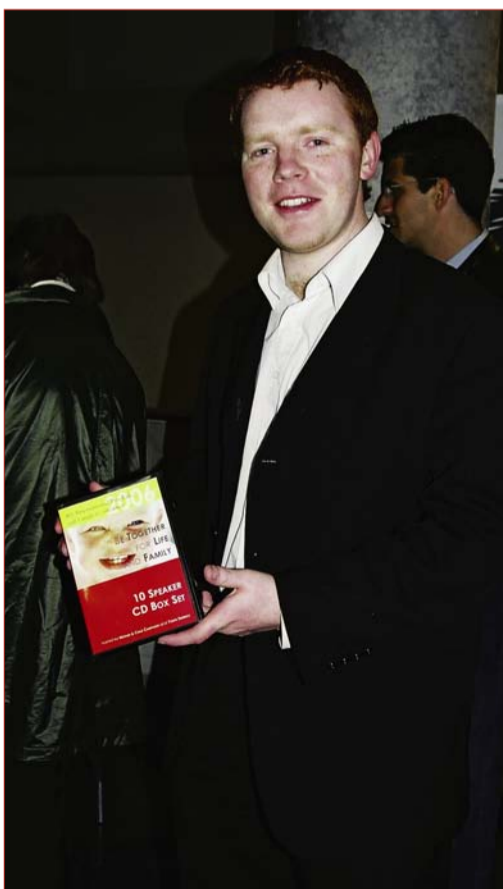
"He raised the hairs on my head" said Linda from Offaly, "when he showed us graphs of European age profiles, replacement rates, yearly births, which illustrated that Europe is dying"

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Joan Appleton, Former Abortion Nurse, Niamh Uí Bhriain of the Mother & Child Campaign (with baby Muireann) and Fiona Pinto from Alive and Kicking UK at the conference.

"It's wonderful. And it is a beginning. It's proof that the courts never had the right to decide on abortion. It should have been put to the people. It's the first step in a process that will eventually see results." - Joan Appleton, former abortion worker on the South Dakota decision to ban abortion



Adrian O'Boyle from Galway with a Conference CD Box Set of the Speakers. Order yours now! (see form on back)



Visiting one of the many booths at the conference. These were popular at break times and lots of new friendships were made

# THERE FOR LIFE AND FAMILY

People talked about the buzz they got from the organisers and the speakers. Kathy Kyle from Alabama said, "The speakers are very passionate and articulate. There was a lot of information that people don't know about. For instance, Dr. David Prentice's talk about stem-cells and bio-ethics; he made it very accessible - and these are things that are normally difficult to understand. He broke it down in a way that we could understand and be able to communicate to other people. This conference is different because you have people from all over the world and this gives you an idea what other countries are facing and it puts into context what's happening in your own country. It's a great opportunity for people to learn from others."

"I loved the conference presentation", she added, "and the atmosphere, and I was really impressed by the wide range of topics which covered all the questions you would have about pro-life issues."

Charlie Quinn, a student from Cork, also praised the weekend. "I'm very impressed and very inspired, and very moved as well, at some of the speakers speeches. I have never been at anything like this - it's amazing." Commenting on all the new people he met he said, "I met so many new people, including an opportunity to go to NY and do some pro-life work there."

But what the conference really inspired in him was "the need for people who are pro-life to become more active. To put your pro-life values into action because if you say you're pro-life and then just do nothing it's no good". "When you see the speakers speak," he added, "you can see the passion they have and how strongly they feel -it's something that really means a lot to them. A lot of them have made a lot of sacrifices to follow their conviction."

In response to this interviewer's question "Does that passion rub off"? His reply was "Yes of course it does! It's contagious".

Chris Slattery, who directs the biggest abortion-alternative organisation in New York said "I've been extremely impressed by the talent of the international speakers. It's been very inspirational, motivational, and educational. From what I can see the Irish are not complacent which is good because there are definite dangers that are present. Even though abortion is illegal now, the threat of euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research and cloning, and tactical moves to legalise abortion have to be anticipated all the time. And it's important that Ireland learn from other countries as well. But part of that moral crusade has to be led by bishops and priests"

Simon de Boyne from Nigeria, was in his own words, "blown away". He was especially impressed by Bryan Kemper's description of a stark reality of abortion. As he explained "I could just imagine, when Bryan Kemper was saying about the children that are going to be killed today in America, I was in tears for those innocent people being killed." It inspired the spirit of action in him, he

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*Bobby Schindler, Terri Schiavo's brother, moved the packed auditorium to tears as he recalled the suffering of his family during the forced starvation of his sister. Bobby had already spoken on TV and radio prior to the conference*



*Protesting outside the Marie Stopes Clinic on Friday afternoon*

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*The Youth Defence and Mother & Child Campaign Stalls were busy throughout the three days of the conference*



*Bernadette Smyth of Precious Life and Eoghan de Faoite of Youth Defence*



*Dana Rosemary Scallon speaking at the 4th International Pro-Life and Family Conference*



*Sarah, Kate and Daniel catching up at the conference*



*Little Ciara Heaney who attended the conference with her family*



*Carolyn and Eadaoin enjoying the Saturday night Ceilí which was well attended and great craic*



*Siobhán and Philippa following Eoghan de Faoite's talk on Sunday Evening*



**Dr David Prentice, whose excellent presentation lived up to his international reputation**



**Traditional musicians entertaining the crowd on Friday night of the conference**



**Susan, Prue and Anne-Marie with baby Blaise at the conference**

explained. He also liked a remark made by Dana Rosemary Scallon when she said she was causing trouble in the EU. "She is causing good trouble," he said. "The sort you need to cause when it stands against something that is evil... And I hope the people of the European Community will know the kind of people who they are sending out to represent them, and what they are representing you for."

"It was a real boost," said Oliver Doonan of the conference. "We need to act and this gets people together and really boosts them off. It's like your team winning an all-Ireland final -and hopefully that will be Leitrim." No prizes for guessing where Oliver was from.

Pat from Limerick was very impressed by Dr. Seán Ó Domhnaill's speech. He said the attack on the family has to be addressed before society loses its direction. The speakers, in his opinion, were an inspiration. On the organisation, he said, "Youth Defence and Mother and Child are doing great work. We all have to get united and row in under the one umbrella. It's like a football team; you want them all playing the one way and not have anyone scoring an own goal." "The number of young people here is great", he added.

"You can tell a lot of hard work went into it," said Blathyn from France - who was definitely impressed by the professionalism of the organisers. Like many others she found Bobby Schindler and Joan Appleton especially memorable. She also had this to say. "Being pro-life is not an easy stance to take. You get a lot of criticism so it's important to remain steadfast. Hearing all these people who have spent their lives as pro-life activists, who have stuck with it so long and remained so passionate really inspires me to make that stand."

Jeff White who has been a pro-life activist all his life was delighted to get in touch with so many pro-life friends. "This sort of thing always gets me fired up again because you get tired. I enjoyed the speakers. I enjoyed everything across the board." He said the pro-life community was like a family. "We are friends and fellow believers in the unity of our cause and that comes out in our commitment to God's children."

Michael Fitzgibbon from Tralee said he thought John Waters was an incredible speaker "his thinking was very original and very subtle." He gave his approval to David Prentice as well who "in a forty minute lecture did a summary of the whole stem cell issue which, gave a very good picture of where the whole thing is going". He thought the most positive thing about the conference was the feeling of being refreshed and being ready to start off again. "Youth Defence" he said "are leading the way. The other pro-life groups are sort of going into hibernation; Youth Defence are the only ones doing anything".

"I thought Bernie Smyth was a real inspiration," said Joe Kearney from Glasnevin, "but the real lesson of this weekend was how much we can do together. One woman told me that she had never done pro-life work before but seen an advert in Alive and now she couldn't wait to get back to her town and tell people to get involved."

"While it was great to get a chance to hear what going on in Poland and Latvia" said Pamela Harte, "I really enjoyed hearing Niamh and Eoghan fill us in on what's going to be happening in Ireland in the coming months." "What a weekend" said her friend Laura who had travelled from Kilkenny, "they should do it again as soon as possible!"

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