



News

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NIMMA makes its own piece of history

NIMMA will spring a few surprises when it publishes a chapter detailing the history of mixed marriage on the island of Ireland as part of the February launch of its paperback “Mixed Emotions”.

Not least is the account of how a Roman Catholic bishop described it as “evil” and how the population in the south of this island nosedived as a direct result of Vatican decree about mixed marriage that was also instrumental in slashing dramatically Protestant support for Home Rule in Ireland in the early 20th Century.

NIMMA Chair Ken Dunn, who has written the history, said: “The Ne Temere Decree stated that all the children of mixed marriages had to be brought up as Roman Catholics and that the ‘non-Roman Catholic’ parent had to make a written promise to that effect.

Prior to that, Ireland had a tradition whereby boys followed their fathers’ religion; girls took after their mothers’. It worked well for several hundred years, as land and property stayed a constant, but Ne Temere changed everything in 1908 at a time crucial to the political future of this island.

Dr Garrett Fitzgerald has shown, wearing his statistician’s hat, that Ne Temere was the prime factor in reducing the Protestant population of the Irish Republic by 80%. At independence, there was an initial exodus, followed by the second phase of attrition using Ne Temere.

Contrary to Roman Canon Law, this was often applied retrospectively and marriages of long-standing were

“Gone are the days when Bishops described mixed marriage as “evil”



broken up. We can compare, in the same period, the 60% increase in the Roman Catholic population of Northern Ireland.

Dr Fitzgerald asked the Irish Bishops to request Rome for a relaxation of Ne Temere, but they refused. Professor Oliver Rafferty SJ, Maynooth, has said that one of the Roman Catholic Church’s most remarkable self-inflicted wounds was Ne Temere.

Prior to 1910, the Presbyterian General Assembly had 30% of its members in favour of Home Rule, after that date, just 4%!

The future Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Armagh John Gregg was then Dean in Cork. He said: “How can you expect us to trust ourselves to you? The decree is an attack on Irish Unity and can only make Protestants more irreconcilable to the idea of Home Rule”.

Ken Dunn said: “So, Home Rule became Rome Rule almost overnight and pawned a legacy of bitterness, resentment and violence.

Sadly, the rest is history, but history is so often the child of ignorance and prejudice bearing little or no relation to what actually took place.

We trust that we have gone some way to setting the record straight”.

Comment

From the Chair.....



Christmas, A time for family and reflection.....



Christmas is a time for family and a time for reflection as another year comes to a close.

This year, those two Christmas essentials are even more poignant for those of us in the NIMMA family. We have suffered sad losses in the past twelve months with the passing of mixed marriage stalwarts Rev David Turtle, Fr Michael Hurley and our first chaplain, Canon Dick McDonald. And, within only the past few weeks, our former treasurer and great friend, Nuala McGuinness.

We are sad certainly that these good people are no longer with us, but glad for the valuable service they gave to the cause of mixed marriage in this country and glad of the gift of their friendship. We remember them with great fondness.

NIMMA also has much to hope for as the New Year approaches. We have maintained a constant flow of information to our customers - that includes just about everyone in the Province and beyond - via our newsletter, although financial restrictions have forced us, like the vast majority

of charities, to release this through e-mail only. Enquiries to our hotline on Belfast 90 235444 remain constant, while statistics show that our website at www.nimma.org.uk is the first port of call for information about mixed marriage from as far away as Canada and Australia. Our public profile is strong and set to get stronger with the February/March 2012 launch of our book of real-life stories about mixed marriage.

Economic and political uncertainty continue on this island and there is much talk about our "post-conflict" society, but, while we at NIMMA acknowledge all of the difficulties faced by couples today, we remain optimistic that more and more of our young people are meeting and mixing educationally and socially. We trust that our book, with its stories of love, compromise and perseverance, will be a great help to our young people.

May I wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as we look ahead to 2012 and a more inclusive society for all of our people.

Ken



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**NIMMA
Help-line**