

23rd May '99: New life in Church

Lay people took the stage again on the first anniversary of last year's international meeting of ecclesial movements and communities in the Catholic Church with Pope John Paul II in Rome. The local follow-up meeting for people involved in movements and communities present in Ireland was on Sunday 23rd May (Pentecost Sunday) from 2 - 7 p.m. in the O'Reilly Hall, UCD. The event incorporated groups involved in projects varying from working with physically and mentally disabled people to those who take care of the elderly to those involved in overseas projects, including most recently aid for Kosovar refugees.

Over 1,000 people turned up from more than 20 groups. It was a day of sharing together and an opportunity to discover more about the contribution these movements and communities have to offer, likely to take on even more relevance as the new millennium approaches.

Archbishop Desmond Connell was present for the whole afternoon.

The event last year was unprecedented and unique as the first time such groups met the Pope John Paul II together. He said that the presence of the movements represented a springtime in the Church, "it is encouraging because it shows that this springtime is advancing and revealing the freshness of the Christian experience". His invitation to present a "common witness" has echoed around the globe and is being taken seriously not least by repeating the Rome meeting at local level. The Irish event is one in a series of days entitled "Pentecost '99". Up to seventy such events are expected to take place and simultaneously to the Irish one, similar meetings will be happening in Beirut, Los Angeles and the Czech Republic.