



ACEDIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPIRITUAL MALAISE

Essays in Honour of Martin McAlinden

Foreword by Baroness Nuala O'Loan, DBE

Edited by Wayne Morris

Father Martin McAlinden was a Catholic priest from the Diocese of Dromore and Director of Pastoral Theology at St Patrick's College Maynooth. Martin was studying for a doctorate at the University of Chester when, in 2016, he sadly died. His research had focussed on the spiritual malaise experienced by many priests in the Catholic Church in Ireland. In response, he developed a theology rooted in the ancient notion of acedia and he used this as a way of talking about the spiritual crises many priests experience. The ancient response to acedia, the command to stay in one's cell and pray, provided Martin with a way of speaking about how this spiritual malaise might be transformed. This book brings together a major article that has emerged out of Martin's research, together with a series of responses from many who accompanied him during his studies. It is offered to Martin's brother priests, and to the whole Church, as a gift of love that might, it is hoped, contribute to the spiritual renewal of the Church.

'It is well over 200 years since William Wordsworth – in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* – referred to poetry as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. For him, memories of daffodils could 'flash upon the inner eye, which is the bliss of solitude'. Our current activist culture is inimical to introspection and that has affected how everyone – including clergy – experiences the world. But when tranquillity, solitude and the inner eye have been relegated to the category of 'special interests', it becomes much more difficult 'with joy to draw waters from the wells of salvation'. (Isaiah 12:3). This series of reflections on acedia is both a welcome tribute to Dr Martin McAlinden and a timely examination of how we can name and tackle the spiritual malaise which so saps the energy of many who began their spiritual journey with great enthusiasm.'

Most Revd Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry

'This book captures well two aspects of theological research: that of presenting thoughtful comment and then the corresponding attentive listening and response. Martin's work on acedia is indeed a helpful lens through which to consider ministry across Ireland and as the subsequent papers contained in this book illustrate, his work also acts as a stimulating conversation partner, to aid reflection on various contemporary issues. I trust you will be thoughtfully challenged as you read this book, just as I have been by Martin's presentations, papers, his conversations and indeed his life.'

Helen Warnock, Principal of Belfast Bible College and fellow DProf student with Martin

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