

# Questions and Answers on Catholic Comment

## Why do we need Catholic Comment?

The Catholic Church's teachings, ideas, and values have never been more relevant, never been so important, for our country and our world.

But the Church's mission in Ireland has been compromised by the scandals and their impact, and by powerful competing voices of secularism, relativism, individualism etc.

While all this is going on, thousands of people are watching, listening and looking for answers to life's questions.

We could see all this as a deep crisis for the Church. Or we can see it as a time for authentic Catholicism to bring hope to our society.

Most of us have heard media reports on the Church which have left us dissatisfied. We want to hear more credible and informed Catholic voices speaking fairly and truthfully.

Church spokespersons play an important role, but they can only be part of the solution. Listeners and viewers want to hear independent persons speaking from their hearts. They want to hear from people like themselves.

Ireland has thousands of committed lay Catholics in all walks of life. Many would be willing to speak as Catholics in the public forum but have not had the opportunity or perhaps feel unprepared or unsure of the arguments.

**Now is their time.**

## What will be involved?

Catholic Comment will meet interested people and interview them in individual and group discussion phases. We will initially select a small group of speakers to whom we will offer training. They will come together to reflect on the task, get briefed on the issues, and gradually develop their media skills. We will make their names available as independent, informed and articulate lay Catholics for broadcast, print and new media.

People can assist us in other ways too, e.g. with research, networking, fundraising and prayer.

## What kind of people?

Catholic Comment will work with people who:

- Subscribe to Catholic teaching and values: This is not a 'spin operation'. We will help people acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate clearly and competently in the media. But the intellectual and spiritual commitment to Catholic values must come from people themselves.
- Reflect on their faith and work to increase their knowledge of the Church's history, structure, mission and teachings - particularly in areas of controversy.
- Aim to improve their competence in public communication. Performance in the media requires continual openness to learning.
- Want to share their Catholic worldview in an open, confident, friendly and respectful way. There is never any reason for Catholics to speak offensively or act defensively. Our hope is greater than any of the challenges we face.
- Are willing to be available at short notice, to speak in the media on issues relevant to Catholicism. Catholic Comment's success will depend on its ability to provide speakers when asked.

## Who is behind Catholic Comment?

Catholic Comment is an initiative of a group of interested, mainly lay, Catholics, acting in their personal capacity. See below for a list of its founder members, directors and advisers. People from different Catholic congregations, movements and organisations are invited to be involved in their personal capacity.

We are independent, having been neither prompted nor mandated by the Catholic Church leadership in Ireland. But we are very glad to have their encouragement and blessing.

Catholic Comment directors: Caitriona Curran, Maura Garrihy, Rónán Mullen, Lorcan Price.

Other founder members: Gearóid Barry, Gene Dalton, Tom Finegan, Declan Moylan, Maria Steen.

Expert advisers/consultants will include: Bruce Bradley SJ, Dr Patricia Casey, Breda O'Brien, David Quinn.

## What does Catholic Comment stand for?

Catholic Comment is faithful to the mission and teachings of the Catholic Church. In matters of controversy, we will always seek to be fully informed and fair to all parties. We will not get involved in internal Church disputes. We want to promote better understanding of the teaching of the Church, its wisdom and heritage.

## Who is funding Catholic Comment?

Catholic Comment is being set up as a charity, and we hope to attract donations from ordinary Catholics who want to help us cover our expenses. We may conduct occasional fundraising initiatives to support our activities.

## How can I help?

As mentioned above, we are hoping that you will send us an email with one of the following responses in the subject bar:

- I am interested in this project - please keep me informed
- I might like to train as a speaker
- I might be willing to make a donation to help get the project off the ground
- I may be able to help as an organiser/adviser on topics
- Please leave me OFF the mailing list for this

If you apply to become a speaker and are selected, we will offer you training and support to enable you to speak as an informed Catholic about various issues.

As the number of people who we can train initially will be limited, we hope to provide material on [www.CatholicComment.ie](http://www.CatholicComment.ie) that a wider group of people can use in their daily work for the Church, e.g. in conversation with friends, family and school discussions, letters to newspapers etc.

You can also become a 'finder', i.e. help us reach people with the potential to join our panel of speakers.

If you make a donation, you will be helping us to defray the costs of managing the project, correspondence with speakers, media, donors and supporters, training sessions for speakers and maintaining our website and blog.

Finally, please remember the project and all its participants in your prayers.