



Diocese of Clonfert



To Celebrate the Opening Day of Clonfert College, Ballinasloe, Co Galway.

Words of Congratulations and Thanks from the Co Patrons

On this historic day, 1 September 2025, we are delighted to share in the joy of students, staff, parents, and the wider community as we celebrate these first days of Clonfert College.

The journey to this moment began in February 2023 with a robust and comprehensive consultation on the future provision of Catholic post primary education in Ballinasloe. Led by an independent expert facilitator all stakeholders were engaged – Boards of Management, school staffs, parents, students, the parents of primary school children in the local area, the wider community and interested parties. We are deeply grateful for the enthusiastic response. It provided a strong foundation for respecting the venerable traditions of Ardscoil Mhuire and St Joseph's College, Garbally while integrating them with parity of esteem into a new, vibrant college attuned to contemporary educational needs. As Ballinasloe's newest Voluntary Secondary School under the Patronage of the Diocese of Clonfert and CEIST, Clonfert College is well placed to serve the second level educational needs of the young people of Ballinasloe and its hinterland well into the future.

Today marks an exciting new chapter in education for our community. Over the past year, tremendous work has been undertaken to bring about the amalgamation of Ardscoil Mhuire and St. Joseph's College. This vision has been realised through the leadership of the co-patrons, the Boards of Management of St Joseph's College and Ard Scoil Mhuire, the interim Board of Management of Clonfert College led by its Chairperson, Ms Eileen O'Brien, the new Clonfert College Principal, Pauric Hanlon, and his senior leadership team along with the wholehearted support of a dedicated and visionary staff, students, parents and the wider community. Instrumental in the process was the expert and hardworking amalgamation committee. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have worked with such commitment to make this day possible.

As Co-Patrons of the new school we share in the joy of this milestone. We are confident that Clonfert College, firmly rooted in the proud traditions of both schools, will honour their legacy while embracing new opportunities for learning, growth, and excellence. As Patrons of Catholic schools, it is our privilege and responsibility to ensure the continuation of Catholic education into the future. We trust and we pray that Clonfert College will stand as a shining witness to this shared mission.



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Clonfert College now opens its doors, proudly, to both girls and boys, nurturing a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-looking faith inspired learning community for generations to come.

We congratulate all who have worked so diligently to make this day a reality. May Clonfert College flourish as a place of faith, knowledge, and community, where every student is encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. We would like to finish with a word of encouragement and hope from scripture: *'For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jer 29:11.*

Your sincerely,

Maeve Mahon
Chief Executive – CEIST

Michael Duignan
Bishop of Clonfert
Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh
Apostolic Administrator of Kilfenora

A Prayer of Blessing for this Day

Loving God, on this first day in Clonfert College,
we give thanks for bringing us to this moment of joy and hope.
Bless our students, that they may grow in wisdom, knowledge, and faith.
Bless our teachers and staff,
that they may guide with patience, inspire with love, and lead with integrity.
Bless our parents and families,
whose support and care nurture the life of this community.
May this school always be a place,
where Christ is known and loved,
where faith and learning walk hand in hand,
and where every young person is encouraged to become,
the person you created them to be. Amen