

ACCORD Golden Jubilee

1962–2012

ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service (formerly CMAC) celebrates its Golden Jubilee this year. It is fifty years since the first Centre was opened in Belfast in 1962.



CATHOLIC MARRIAGE CARE SERVICE

*ACCORD actually had its origins in the British army. The parent organisation, the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, was the brainchild of a Catholic officer, Major Graham John Graham-Green. A lawyer in civilian life, his duties in the aftermath of the Second World War included helping troops in London with marriage problems. He came to the conclusion that there should be a separate organisation for Catholic personnel. By coincidence his wife Eirene, a social worker, had arrived at the same conclusion for Catholic civilians. He approached Cardinal Griffin who authorised them to form such an organisation and so the CMAC was founded. The growth of CMAC in Ireland was truly remarkable. Between 1962, when the first centre was opened in Belfast (pictured right), and 1975, when Fr Andy Kennedy became the first director in Ireland, no less than 40 centres were established with the help of CMAC headquarters in London. This is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that Ireland was a separate country with a separate hierarchy, not to mention the significant cultural differences which existed. Formal separation of the two organisations did not end their relationship. Tutors from the two countries continued to train together and conferences in each country were always attended by representatives from the other, to the benefit of both. More important was the common bond of being Eucharistic communities engaged in non-directive counselling of people with marriage difficulties in a Christian context. This unity of purpose survived the formal constitutional separation.**



In 1995 the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (CMAC) changed its name to ACCORD. The new name contained the Latin word for heart, *cor*, a very apt metaphor. The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of reason or other people. In and through ACCORD we endeavour to bring compassion to those we encounter, to those who place their faith in our service.

A series of events are planned locally and nationally to celebrate the contribution made by ACCORD in the

support of Marriage and family during those fifty years. ACCORD's Conference will take place in Belfast on 3 & 4 March offering the members of the organisation an opportunity to reflect on the past, the present and the future of ACCORD as we strive to support the thousands of couples and individuals who avail of our services.

From its humble beginnings in Belfast in 1962, ACCORD now has sixty locations throughout the island of Ireland with a presence in every Diocese. The membership of ACCORD includes our Marriage Preparation Course facilitators, our Marriage and relationship/Fertility and Well-being/Marital sex therapy/domestic violence counsellors, those involved in the provision of schools programmes, and the many others in administrative and support roles working to provide the best possible care to those who avail of our services. In 2010 ACCORD provided 60,000 hours of support to marriage and family. This included

43,000 hours of counselling and 17,000 hours of Marriage preparation.

With Centres located in every Diocese ACCORD is well placed to meet the needs of those preparing for marriage and also the needs of those couples and individuals experiencing difficulties in their relationships. ACCORD sees itself at the heart of the communities we serve, our members are drawn from within those communities and it is their volunteering spirit which has allowed the organisation to flourish over the past fifty years. ACCORD has offered its services to our clients in difficult times. Ireland in 2012 is experiencing many difficulties and these can impinge on couples' relationships. ACCORD offers a professional client-centred service at an affordable cost to the client. Those who wish to avail of our services can do so by contacting their local ACCORD Centre which is listed on our website www.accord.ie.

With sixty locations throughout the country and an increasing demand for our services some ACCORD centres are in need of new members. If you would like to become a member of ACCORD, to train as a counsellor or facilitator please contact your local centre to enquire if they have vacancies, the centres can be viewed on the website www.accord.ie.

In recalling fifty years we remember the many members of the organisation, the deceased members, those who have retired and all current members and wish them God's blessing and thanks for their dedication and service.

ACCORD wishes to thank the Irish Episcopal Conference, the priests of the Dioceses and all those who have supported and continue to support the work of ACCORD.

**taken from Like Ministering to Like (a history of ACCORD by Philip Leonard, Dublin: Columba, 1999).*

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