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Ave Maria University to Establish Presence at Historic Mount Melleray Abbey Campus

AVE MARIA, Fla., March 17, 2026 – Ave Maria University announced today its plans to establish a new [campus](#) with a semester-long study-abroad program in Ireland at Mount Melleray Abbey, a historic Trappist monastery in County Waterford, marking a new chapter for the sacred site.

The University's Ireland study abroad program will allow students to live, study, and pray within the Abbey grounds, integrating academic coursework with spiritual formation and immersion in Ireland's Catholic heritage. Situated on Ireland's camino, St. Declan's Way, Ave Maria University will also offer year-round programming while welcoming guests and pilgrims from around Ireland and the world.

Founded in the early nineteenth century, Mount Melleray Abbey has served as a place of prayer and monastic life for nearly two centuries. Following the union of the three Irish Trappist communities, the monks now reside at Our Lady of Silence Abbey, Mountheaton. This new partnership with Ave Maria University seeks to preserve Mount Melleray's spiritual character while placing the historic Abbey campus in service of Catholic higher education.

"This initiative reflects our commitment to forming young men and women in the Catholic liberal arts tradition while building an innovative university for the 21st century. We seek to form their intellect and imagination," said Ave Maria University's Chief Strategy Officer, Daniel C. Schreck. "Mount Melleray Abbey embodies centuries of prayer and hospitality. We are honored to be a part of this tradition and community. Our partnership with the Trappist shows that, indeed, our faith makes all things new." Mr. Schreck will oversee the program from Florida while Dr. Sam Shephard, a UK native who spent years in Ireland, will run the campus in Ireland as its Executive Director.

Students enrolled in the Ireland program will earn a full semester of academic credit from Ave Maria University. Coursework will include the University's core curriculum and Irish-inspired electives taught by Ave Maria University professors, complemented by communal prayer, participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and cultural and historical excursions throughout Ireland and Europe.

Set against the Knockmealdown Mountains, the Abbey campus offers a rhythm of life shaped by prayer, study, and community. Students will reside on site, attend classes within the Abbey facilities, and engage deeply with Ireland's religious and cultural landscape.

To learn more details, please visit <https://www.avemaria.edu/ireland> and watch the promo video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PF3MNHUUG8>.

For additional information, or to schedule an interview with Daniel C. Schreck, please contact Kevin Wandra of Carmel Communications: kwandra@carmelcommunications.com or 404-788-1276.

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About Ave Maria University

Ave Maria University is a Catholic institution of higher learning located in Ave Maria, Florida. Ave Maria University was established in 2003 as a Catholic university, according to the guidelines of the Code of Canon Law by the Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane, Bishop of the Diocese of Venice in Florida. The recognition of Ave Maria University as a Catholic university is granted upon the University's commitment to continue to be guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church and faithfulness to the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Ave Maria University is committed to helping its students develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life and grow in their appreciation of truth. The goal of AMU is simple: to build the foundation of a truly Catholic university that forms future generations of truly Catholic men and women faithful to the Magisterium of the Church. For more information about Ave Maria University, please visit www.avemaria.edu.