

IRISH ADS PROMOTE RELIGION AS "GOOD FOR YOU"

Institute Backs Claim With Scientific Study

DUBLIN, MARCH 29, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Religion often gets a bad name in the media, but science shows that it can actually be good for you, says The Iona Institute.

The Dublin-based institute is taking this message to the streets with an advertising campaign that states: "Here's a little science. The practice of religion is good for you."

The ads were posted on 110 bus shelters throughout Dublin on Monday, where they will remain for two weeks, planned to coincide with the Easter season.

David Quinn, the institute's director, noted that "this campaign is unprecedented."

"Nothing like it has ever taken place in Ireland, or anywhere else that we know of," he added.

"There are now a lot of scientific studies showing that religious practice has numerous beneficial effects," Quinn stated. "The aim of the campaign is to let people know about this."

In particular, the initiative refers to a paper, commissioned by the institute and released last year, which was written by Psychiatrist Patricia Casey on "The Psycho-Social Benefits of Religious Practice."

It demonstrates, through scientific data, that religious practice is correlated with lower levels of: depression, marital breakdown, alcohol and drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

The data also shows that people who practice religion experience a faster recovery from both illness and bereavement, and have a longer life expectancy in general.

Evidence

Quinn affirmed that the aim of the campaign is to "present a positive image of religion."

He noted that "religion has a very negative image at present."

"The campaign was first conceived four years ago when books like The God Delusion were best-sellers," he explained. "We wanted to counter this negativity by pointing to the evidence that, on the whole, religious practice is beneficial both for individuals and for society."

The institute director underlined the campaign's interfaith aspect, noting that "the message of this campaign is not specific to any one denomination, or even any one religion."

Rather, he said, "it is a generic message and applies to all the mainstream religions."

For this reason, the institute asked Catholic Archbishop Diarmuid Martin as well as Anglican Bishop Ken Good of the Church of Ireland to write forewords to the paper.

Quinn expressed his hope that if the campaign gets a good response, the ads will be brought to other parts of the country in the next couple of years.

For those who see the ads and want to know more, the institute set up a special Web site for them "to examine the evidence for themselves."

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On the Net:

Campaign Web site: www.religiouspractice.ie