

# The Irish Catholic

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## Tourism job losses 'frightening' for coastal communities, parishes warn

Ruadhán Jones

The loss of thousands of jobs from Ireland's tourism sector is "very frightening" for families and communities, mostly rural and coastal, who are very reliant on the sector for jobs and income, parishes have warned.

The warning comes after the Government estimated 10,000 jobs were lost due to the lack of hotel accommodation for tourists in the first four months of this year. Regions in the west are particularly affected, with Killarney losing an estimated €100 million compared to 2019.

The crisis is being acutely felt all across tourist hotspots where job losses are mounting up.

"It is very frightening for communities who have already been stripped of traditional industries," Fr John Joe Duffy CC Creeslough, Co. Donegal, told *The Irish Catholic*.

"Small rural areas are almost totally dependent on tourism," he continued, because industries like inshore fishing have been decimated.

He fears that such areas "will see a greater exodus of people leaving the country" if tourism is effectively shut down.

"That is the big danger for us, that rural populations are in serious decline and impacts on tourism are going to further that decline," Fr Duffy said.

In Portmagee, Co. Kerry, the effects are already being felt, with a

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### 'Take and eat'



Fr Gerry Comiskey PP, Drumlane, Co. Cavan gives Communion to Saoirse McDonagh, one of 20 children from Milltown National School who made their First Communion at St Patrick's Church, Milltown on Saturday, May 6. Photo: Lorraine Teevan.

## Missionary condemns hundreds of Church attacks in Nicaragua

Chai Brady

The scale of the persecution of Catholics under the regime of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua has been laid bare by a new report chronicling 529 attacks in the last five years alone.

Jesuit Fr Kevin O'Higgins, who spent decades working in Latin America, told *The Irish Catholic* the report is "vital" in highlighting the crisis and urged Irish Catholics to keep the situation in the public eye. He also said the report could aid future prosecutions of the perpetrators.

Mr Ortega's dictatorship is accused of 90 attacks this year alone in its crackdown on the Church – more than in any previous year since 2018.

Fr O'Higgins insisted that "it is vital that the names and faces of victims of the persecution should be known".

"The global Church community beyond Nicaragua's borders may not be in a position to do much in terms of direct action. But all of us can at least keep these brave fellow believers in our prayers, not as anonymous, faceless statistics, but as unique individuals, with names, faces, families, dreams just like us," he said.

He said people should keep informed about the situation and share it with family and friends, because "a regime like [Daniel] Ortega's likes to believe that it can persecute its opponents with impunity because the outside world really doesn't care. By directing people's attention to what is happening in Nicaragua, we can help to ensure that this is not the case".

The 232-page report was released in Spanish and contains first-hand accounts of violence against the Church. Named *Nicaragua: A Persecuted Church?*, the report was compiled by lawyer and human rights activist Martha Patricia Molina Montenegro.

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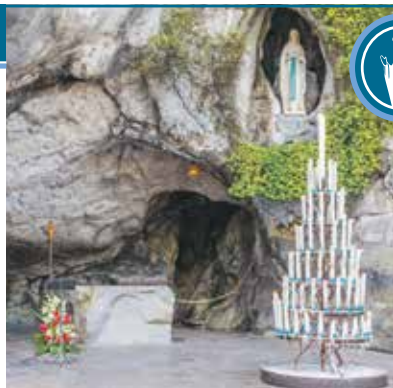
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## Tourism job losses 'frightening' for coastal communities, parishes warn

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decline in bookings due to a lack of accommodation impacting "very severely" on the local economy, according to Fr Patsy Lynch. The town is a launching point for boats going to the ancient monastic Skelligs, which are a "big, big pull for tourists".

The drop affects the whole community, "especially this time of the year, especially in Portmagee, where so many livelihoods are connected with tourism", he added.

There is "so much to be able to see here...but if the accommodation isn't sufficient, the whole community is affected".

In Ennis, where an estimated 415 jobs have been displaced, Fr Tom Ryan warned that people's standard of living is on the line.

"Tourism is a very important part of the lives of people in our community and parish," he said. "We do rely on tourism, we rely on people to be with us

and support us."

The decline in Ennis affects surrounding areas too, as many use Co. Clare town as a hub from which to explore the west coast and midlands.

"The east and west lose out on resources and we would lose out because of our lack of foot-fall," Fr Ryan said.

The job losses are spread out, with most towns losing less than 500 jobs. However, while that might not seem much for a big city, for a small town "that has a major impact", said Fr Seamus O'Rourke, who is based in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

Wexford is looking at a fall of 528 jobs, a fact that has locals "deeply concerned", Fr Billy Swan said.

"Faith communities beside the sea always benefit from a... swell during the summer months, so the negative effects of those not coming or coming in reduced numbers is a concern."

# A synod dominated by elites will do nothing to transform the Church

**W**ealthy Catholics in Germany seem set for a collision course with the Vatican, and the rest of the Church over their push to change basic Catholic doctrines and practices.

Pope Francis has long warned of the danger of the synodal process being hijacked by elites pushing an agenda. It's hard to think of a more accurate description for what the Pontiff warns of than *Der Synodale Weg* (the 'synodal path' or 'synodal way' in English) — an initiative that has taken place in the Church in Germany over the past few years and has been a source of great controversy for many Catholics.

This is because the participants in the synodal way have expressed views and ratified proposals that contradict Catholic doctrines and practices in areas such as the male-only priesthood, sexual morality, and authority in the Church.

“It is a so-called synodal path, but not one with the totality of the people of God, but one made by the elites”

At the weekend, a body with the lofty title of 'The Central Committee of German Catholics' reaffirmed a demand that these resolutions be implemented in full in all German dioceses, despite the fact that Rome has warned Church leaders in Germany not to defy Catholic doctrines.

*Der Synodale Weg*, much like our own 'synodal pathway', is not formally part of the global synod that is currently taking place in the universal Church. It began well in advance of the synod on synodality.

Pope Francis, at least for now, seems content to let things in Germany play out ahead of the Rome-based synod in October. There is little sign that he will move to stop what is going on in Germany, but he is critical of the process. Earlier this year, he said, for example: "the German experience does not help, because it is not a synod, it is not a serious synodal path. It is a so-called synodal path, but not one with the totality of the people of

God, but one made by the elites."

He went on to say that the synodal way is "a bit elitist, and does not have all the procedural consensus of a synod as such".

Germans evidently love committees, and another committee that is deeply involved in the synodal process there is the 'Federal Pastoral Council for Catholics with Other Mother Tongues and Rites'. In short, it represents the growing number of Catholics in the country whose mother tongue is not German — in other words, Catholics who are immigrants or from immigrant backgrounds.

Dr Emeka Ani is chairman of the body, and in a recent interview with *The Pillar* he had interesting things to say about his experience of the German path.

### Splitting

"It is apparent," he said, "that the Church in Germany is splitting. One notices that the divide is widening between the 'lay elite,' who are increasingly committed exclusively to matters of ecclesiastical politics, and local Church members, who are interested in pastoral matters. It is important to keep both aspects in proper balance so that everyone finds their place in the Church.

"Even the largest lay body in the Church in Germany, the Central Committee of German Catholics, does not seem to notice how, in the search for solutions to the problems, it is gradually developing in such a way that it can hardly be distinguished from a normal political institution. Often one gets caught up in self-pity for Church structures and yet with conspicuous overconfidence in terms of one's influence and representative role for local Church members," he told *The Pillar*.

A record 359,000 Germans officially disaffiliated from the Catholic Church in 2021, far surpassing the previous record of 221,390 defections in 2020. Figures for 2022 are expected to show the same trajectory. At the same time, the proportion of Catholics with other mother tongues in Germany has risen to a remarkable 16.7%. In some

## Editor's Comment

### Michael Kelly



dioceses, for example in the Diocese of Limburg, the proportion of Catholics with other mother tongues is more than a quarter.

“Some of these Catholic communities are amongst the most vibrant while many of our parishes struggle, and yet they are largely absent from the Irish synod process”

We don't have accurate statistics for the Church in Ireland, but we know that most of our parishes have been enriched by the presence of Catholics from other parts of the world.

In the Republic, almost 14% of the population were not born here, many

of these people are from countries with huge Catholic populations such as the Philippines, Brazil, Poland, Nigeria and Lithuania. Some of these Catholic communities are amongst the most vibrant while many of our parishes struggle, and yet they are largely absent from the Irish synod process.

### Dominated

A process dominated by what Pope Francis calls "elites" will never bear fruit that will be worthwhile or enrich the life of the Church in Ireland. Nor will petty squabbles about Church politics or fretting about who is in charge of what committee.

Synodality is a call to pastoral conversion, and only people who are converted will be able to transform the world and present a credible face of the Church.

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# Call to make couples aware of non-Mass marriage ceremonies

**Jason Osborne**

In light of a changing culture in Ireland, priests have said that engaged couples should be made aware of the fact that the Sacrament of Marriage can take place as its own rite, without requiring the celebration of the Eucharist.

This comes following the continued general decline of religious weddings in Ireland, with two in five couples who got married in Ireland in 2022 opting for a Catholic ceremony.

Among mixed-sex couples, Catho-

lic ceremonies were chosen by 42% (or 9,376), followed by a civil ceremony at 5,767 or 26%.

The popularity of these two forms of ceremonies has been in decline since 2014, when they accounted for 87% of all marriage ceremonies.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Dublin city centre-based priest Fr Enda Cunningham said that because many adults are at an "in-between stage" in their faith lives, meeting them where they're at could involve making them aware that the Sacrament of Marriage can be celebrated in its own rite, aside from the

celebration of the Eucharist.

"They are aware of their Catholic background, they're aware that this marriage is significant and they want to honour it as such, and yes, there is a dimension of the sacred, of the religious, that they want to honour and respect," Fr Cunningham said, continuing, "however, the difficulty is they have become unfamiliar, for any number of reasons, which is a whole other question, their celebration of Eucharist has become such that that's something that they only attend in the context of somebody else's main event".

As a presider, Fr Cunningham said that this alternative experience can very often be "more enjoyable and less stressful than celebrating marriage where the Eucharist is to be celebrated, for a congregation, where clearly the majority give every indication of being unfamiliar with the ritual".

It "frees the celebration and it allows just a focus on the ceremony itself," Fr Cunningham said.

Dominican priest Fr Conor McDonough OP said that it's "important" for couples to know that there's a rite of a Catholic wedding, outside

of the Eucharist, that is sacramental, and is "perfectly appropriate", and that the Church offers this rite for use in certain circumstances.

"It's very appropriate in circumstances where we judge it... best to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage outside the context of the Eucharist, especially when a large number of people at the celebration are not regular Massgoers," Fr McDonough said.

"For Catholics, there can be a fear that this is not really a Catholic marriage, if it's not in the context of the Mass, but it really is. The Church offers us this rite," he added.

## Tribute paid to 'saintly' Omagh priest

**Chai Brady**

A priest who became known around the world for his ministry at the time of the 1998 Omagh bombing has been remembered as a warm-hearted pastoral man.

Fr Kevin Mullan died in the early hours of Saturday morning and was buried following Requiem Mass in his native Omagh on Tuesday.

In a demonstration of the strength of feeling for Fr Mullan, people lined

the streets of his current parish of Drumquin as his remains were brought to the parochial house on Saturday.

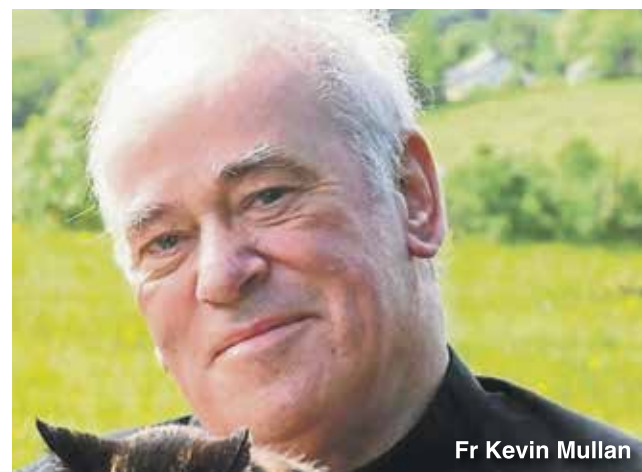
Fr Mullan served in many parishes across the Derry diocese including Limavady, Galliagh, Pennyburn, Castlefin, Omagh and latterly in Drumquin.

In a ground-breaking gesture at the height of the Troubles in 1984, Fr Mullan and Presbyterian Rev. David Armstrong shook hands outside their churches in Limavady. Rev. Armstrong later received loyalist death threats and had to flee to England.

Fr Mullan ministered to the dead and dying following the Real IRA bomb in Omagh in 1998, and was a passionate believer in cross-community work.

Fr Mullan received the British Empire Medal (BEM) for his work for peace and reconciliation. In a message of condolence on Behalf of Britain's King Charles III, the Lord Lieutenant for Tyrone described Fr Mullan as "a saintly man who always found the best in people".

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Fr Kevin Mullan

## Christians targeted for the Faith 'nothing new' – actor Chris Pratt



American actor Chris Pratt.

**Staff reporter**

Well-known American actor Chris Pratt has said the example of Christ's suffering has helped him deal with criticism about his Christian faith.

At a screening for *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, Mr Pratt said that criticism of Christian beliefs is "nothing new".

"That's the way it is, nothing new, 2,000 years ago they hated him [Jesus], too," Mr Pratt said.

He also quoted from the Bible, saying: "If I was of this world, they would love me just like that but as it is, I've chosen out of this world.

That's John 15: 18 through 20," he said.

There were calls in 2019 for Mr Pratt to be removed from his role as 'Star Lord' in the Marvel franchise *Guardians of the Galaxy* when it was alleged he attended an 'anti-LGBT' church. However, the director was clear they would not be continuing without Mr Pratt.

Responding to criticism at the time, he wrote on social media: "It has recently been suggested that I belong to a church which 'hates a certain group of people' and is 'infamously anti-LGBTQ'. Nothing could be further from the truth. I go to a church that opens their doors to absolutely everyone. My faith is important to me but no church defines me or my life."

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# Church safeguarding body's 'secrecy' counterproductive says abuse survivor

**Ruadhán Jones**

Claims that the Vatican's chief safeguarding body is experiencing "growing pains" as it develops a new methodology have been knocked down by a former member and survivor of clerical abuse.

No one knows what the Commission for the Protection of Minors is doing, who is driving change and where financing is coming from because "it's

so secretive now", according to Marie Collins, who served on the commission before resigning in 2017.

"Secrecy and a lack of transparency have always been counterproductive in this issue," Ms Collins told *The Irish Catholic*. "That's how abuse came to be such a horrendous crisis..."

"I don't think the commission should be following on the same direction. It should be open and transparent about its

work, about who is doing what, its plans," she added.

Her comments come after the head of the Vatican commission claimed on Monday that the organisation is undergoing "major" developments to meet "the urgency of challenges" it is facing.

"These developments represent a major shift towards a more impact-focused direction for the commission," Cardinal Seán O'Malley OFM Cap. said on May 8, after the commission

met from May 3-6.

"At this time, this new direction has been both steep and fast", he added, causing "growing pains".

Ms Collins criticised the statement, saying it doesn't answer questions raised by the resignation of a leading expert on abuse in the Church, Fr Hans Zollner SJ.

Announcing his departure on March 29, Fr Zollner said it was "impossible" to continue given mounting concerns "in

the areas of responsibility, compliance, accountability and transparency".

He further noted that there had been a lack of clarity regarding "the selection process of members and staff and their respective roles and responsibilities".

To dismiss Fr Zollner's concerns around financing and responsibilities as "growing pains" is "disrespectful", said Ms Collins.

"What are their plans?"

What do they hope to achieve and how are they going to do it... if you're making new plans and changing direction, why can't they be set out and revealed to the Church and to the public," she said.

"We don't know what's happening because it's so secretive now, and secrecy and a lack of transparency can only be a negative thing as we've seen in the past."

**i** See page 10.

## Euthanasia pushes elderly to 'dispose themselves' – Aontú

**Chai Brady**

The legalisation of euthanasia puts pressure on the elderly and people with disabilities to "simply dispose of themselves", political party Aontú has insisted in their manifesto released this week.

Aontú launched the party's local election 2023 manifesto on Tuesday in Belfast. It also highlights the political

crises facing the North and the need to push for a functioning Stormont.

Regarding euthanasia, it stated: "Euthanasia is not the answer to investment failures in palliative care. Euthanasia is not the answer to the limitations on our capacity to treat and heal. Assisted suicide recommitments elements of our healthcare service to ending life – not preserving and prolonging life."

On abortion the party reiterated their pro-life stance and that parents need economic supports to raise their children. The party said it opposes abortion because it "ends the lives of human beings. Abortion targets the poorest, those with disabilities and females in particular. You are far more likely to be aborted if you are female, have a disability or are from a poor socio-economic background".

Speaking at the launch, party leader Peadar Tóibín asked that in the context of an economic crisis, "How is it acceptable that the Stormont political establishment, in the jaws of an cost of living crisis, do not turn up yet take a wage and drastically hike up rates on struggling families? Aontú condemns the increases in the rates and commits to not increasing rates during the cost of living crisis."

## Some parents feeling pressured to have abortions

**Jason Osborne**

Parents of children diagnosed with terminal conditions feel like the first thing that's being offered to them is abortion, according to a spokesperson for Every Life Counts.

Vicky Wall, speaking on behalf of the support network for families whose child is diagnosed with a life-limiting condition, confirmed that this can deprive parents of the opportunity to know and love their child, even for a short time after birth.

"It was horrifying to see that again

there was no mention of the baby that was misdiagnosed, and before the review came out, we heard that there were two other people, plus baby Christopher's parents, which makes three now in total, that had a case against the HSE for abortion after misdiagnosis, which is absolutely hor-

rific," Ms Wall said.

"There was no mention of that, no mention of safeguards."

Criticising the review as "incredibly one-sided," Ms Wall said that to her, the abortion review was "absolutely about increasing abortion numbers – how can we get more abortion?"

### A higher cause...



Members of the Irish Defence Forces present arms during the annual 1916 rising commemorative service at Arbor Hill, Dublin, on May 5. Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll celebrated Mass to mark the occasion, saying the 1916 revolutionaries were inspired by a "higher cause". See page 12.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Franciscan auction in aid of Ukrainian refugees

Franciscan Brothers are set to auction off more than 800 ecclesiastical lots to help refurbish accommodation for Ukrainian refugees.

The lots are valued at more than €200,000, and come from the Franciscan College in Gormanston, Co. Meath, as well as from friaries in Athlone, Co. Westmeath and Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.

A varied selection of items, it includes Persian and Afghan wool rugs, ecclesiastical art, statues, furniture and more.

The lots go under the hammer May 16 and 17.

#### Rome airport displays Baroque Christian masterpiece

Alongside departure listings and boarding gates, the 35,000 passengers who walk through Terminal 1 at Rome's largest airport each day can also see a marble masterpiece of Christ on their way to catch a flight.

"Salvator Mundi" or "Saviour of the World," which depicts Christ raising his hand in blessing, was sculpted by Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini in 1679. It was the artist's final work and is considered his spiritual testimony.

And until July 12, it stands over a sea of curious recent arrivals to the Eternal City and bored departees lazily awaiting flights. The temporary display was launched April 12 by Rome's Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport in partnership with the Italian Ministry of Culture.

"We are the city of Rome, which contains Vatican City in our territory, so of course Catholicism is part of our culture," said Veronica Pamio, vice president of external relations at the airport, on the selection of the sculpture.

# The congregation of widows

The woman in the pew just behind me smiled pleasantly at the “sign of peace” and I returned her friendly greeting. I didn’t know her well, but had occasionally encountered her locally.

Later, after Mass, she spoke to me some more. An attractive lady in her 60s, she had recently been widowed, after many decades of marriage. She felt, at first, that she “didn’t know what to do with herself”. But she thought she’d return to a more regular attendance at Sunday Mass anyway. “To be honest, it’s partly that I’m lonely.”

## Honest

And that, I thought, was indeed honest of her, and I didn’t see anything wrong with admitting it, either. It was nice to see her, I said. Privately, I thought of the AA mantra about attendance: “Keep coming back. It works if you work it!”

I do find, as the years pass, that I am ever more frequently in the company of widows, like myself. Eight years ago, when my husband died (after the long effects of a stroke), many of my friends and contemporaries were couples – although by no means all. The married couples often seemed to be very close – perhaps closer, even, than they had been when young.

If you’ve stuck together for 30 or 40 years, the relationship is likely to have grown richer and mellower, after the early years of nest-building, focusing on children, perhaps, even – when



Mary Kenny

hitting a rough patch in the marriage, which often happens – considering separating, or attracted to another relationship. But these hurdles surmounted, I noticed that the seasoned couples were often more inseparable, had more jaunts and activities together, and were maybe even more supportive of one another as they aged.

**“The widow in history is not an invisible woman. She appears in the Bible – Ruth and Naomi are widows from the Old Testament who inspired painters”**

And then, in recent years, I’ve seen one of the couple pass, depart through the gate of worldly existence, while the other lives on. In the last six months, three of my friends have become widows (I also know friends who are widowers, although it is still more usual for women to survive longer).

The life of a widow is a changed life. Some women find themselves bewildered; others throw themselves into a frenzy of busyness; others

find they have to master skills previously done by their other half – changing ceiling bulbs, managing tax and insurance, maintaining the car. Some find it hard, and lonely, to adjust to life as a singleton after being part of a couple.

The widow in history is not an invisible woman. She appears in the Bible – Ruth and Naomi are widows from the Old Testament who inspired painters. The widow’s modest financial contribution in the New Testament – “the widow’s mite” – is just as honoured as any other donation.

## Powerful

Widows were powerful financial supporters of the building of the great cathedrals of Europe. On a lighter note, three French widows pioneered the development of champagne – the most famous, La Veuve Clicquot, still bearing her name. Younger widows might be considered “merry”, as in the operetta by Franz Lehár.

Widows no longer wear the dark “widows’ weeds” of yore, which often brought a sombre appearance to a community dominated by widows, often seen in Mediterranean countries, where widows in black gathered together. But we often do need to develop a new phase of life in widowhood; and maybe the Church is the very place to support a woman in framing this new chapter.



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● I respect Peadar Toibín as a politician of principle, but his suggestion that Dublin should return its statue of Prince Albert to King Charles seems philistine.

Sculpted by the renowned Irish sculptor John Henry Foley, the effigy is so well-hidden behind foliage in the grounds that most people don’t know it is there.

It marks the German-born Albert’s encouragement of industry, crafts

and the arts. Albert – Queen Victoria’s husband – was also a supporter of the revival of the Irish language, an opponent of slavery, and an admirer of William Dargan, the railway innovator, whose own statue stands outside the National Gallery.

Ireland has retained plenty of “royal” heritage, by the way, including the RDS and the Royal Irish Academy. History is broad.

## Wheel re-invented once again!

The “gut guru” Dr Will Cole – Gwyneth Paltrow is his client – teaches his followers to achieve a healthy digestive system by understanding their “gut”. The gut controls much of our body and well-being – from inflammation to depression.

Dr Cole’s advice includes “sealing a meal” with “a moment of gratitude”, expressed “to the universe, a deity, the source of life or your higher self”. After eating, sit and have thankful thoughts.

Another item for my collection of “reinventing the

wheel”. Yes, we previously practiced this “sealing a meal” moment. It was called “Grace after meals”.

Now it turns out to be a good for your digestion, your reflection and your psychological well-being. Wheel re-invented once again!

# 'Loose language' in hate speech bill dangerous

**Chai Brady**

The Government's hate speech bill has the potential to cause "immense damage" to free speech and democracy in Ireland, according to the former Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan, a member of the House of Lords, has said the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or

Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 will create great uncertainty about what constitutes a crime.

Writing in *The Irish Catholic* this week, Baroness O'Loan said: "For example, it appears that this bill will make it a crime to assert opinions which are likely to result in 'hatred' towards people who are biologically male, but who want access to women's changing

rooms and sports because they feel that whilst born male, they are in fact female.

"The maximum penalty for this offence is five years in jail. This bill may be well intentioned, it has a wider application, but it contains some very questionable provisions. It is described as a bill to protect, but it has the capacity to do immense damage to free speech and democracy Ire-

land," she said.

The bill aims to amend the law relating to the prohibition of incitement to violence or hatred against people on account of 'protected characteristics' of a person or group of people. Currently in the legislation it states these are: race, colour, nationality, religion (including absence of religious belief), national or ethnic origin, descent, gender, sex char-

acteristics, sexual orientation, or disability.

Baroness O'Loan warned that increasingly she believes the rights of freedom of speech and expression are being undermined by governments and "movements which seek to articulate a particular ideology to the exclusion of all others".

Giving the example of transwomen competing in female sporting competitions she said

that "It has been reported that many women competitors are afraid to speak out because of the reaction which their comments might receive. They feel intimidated".

Baroness O'Loan described the language of the bill as being "so loose that it will introduce great uncertainty about what actually constitutes a crime".

See page 7.

## Half of Irish adults interact with charities by attending religious services

**Ruadhán Jones**

Almost half of Irish adults interact with charities through attending a religious service, a new study from the Irish Charities Regulator shows.

At 47% of Irish adults, attending a religious ser-

vice is second only to buying from a charity store (54%) for involvement with charitable organisations, research from Amárach released Tuesday shows.

People over 55 have the highest incidence of attending a religious service, while 35-54-year-olds are more likely to have visited herit-

age buildings/sites, a community centre or have a child in scouts/guides, with the youngest age group (18-34s) having the highest incidence of visiting a museum/gallery and attending university.

The number of people listing 'religious belief/values' as the main reason for donating has remained steady since the

last study conducted in 2020 at 7%.

Medical or health related charities continue to be the most reported type of charity supported, at over 40%, while the number of people donating to religious organisations is 15%, no change from 2020.

Raffles and charity lottery tickets remain the most pop-

ular means of donating, but the number of people who made financial contributions to charities declined from 74% to 59%, while the numbers donating goods increased from 43% to 57%.

Nine out of ten adults in Ireland donated to a charity over the last year, according to the study.

## £70 million earmarked for shared education campus

**Staff reporter**

The Department of Education in the North will invest £70 million in building a shared education campus in Ballycastle, Co. Antrim.

The "state of the art" education

facilities will be shared by Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College – a controlled or Protestant ethos school and a Catholic school.

The scheme marks a new era for the two schools, Permanent Secretary Dr Mark Browne said in a statement on May 4.

"These two schools have a long and successful history of working together for the benefit of their pupils and the wider community.

"While both schools will continue to retain their own individual identities within the new campus, the modern fit-for-purpose accommodation

will further enhance shared delivery of the curriculum."

The principals of the two schools expressed delight at the development of the shared campus, which "protects the history, as well as the futures, of both schools", said Geraldine Duffy, principal of Cross and Passion College.

### 'Feed my sheep'



Newly ordained Fr Carlos Esteban is pictured with Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin and his family and friends after his ordination in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, on Sunday May 7.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Opposition bill seeks to fully decriminalise abortion

The so-called 'Pro-Choice Bill' proposed by Brid Smith TD seeking to remove nearly all remaining restrictions on abortion aligns with the recommendations of the recent abortion law review, which has been criticised by pro-life groups.

The bill will be given its second stage reading in the Dáil on Thursday, May 25.

The draft text would abolish the 3-day waiting period, which they call "patronising and unnecessary".

It would also remove the 12 week time limit for accessing an abortion on request; it would extend the 28-day mortality limit in cases of a serious life-limiting condition to one year; and it would remove the criminal penalties for illegal abortions.

#### All-Ireland Concern debates champions crowned

A Monaghan secondary school team won the All-Ireland Concern Debates final on Thursday, May 4, after a debate about international support for the world's poorest countries.

The Largy College debaters from Clones lifted the Concern Debates Perpetual trophy at The Helix venue in Dublin after the final against The High School from Rathgar.

"All the hard work has paid off," said Largy's team captain Amy-Jo Kierans.

"I am so proud of my teammates, our researchers and teachers like Sascha Cumiskey and the whole school. This means so much to us. To get this far and to win is just amazing. Our opponents The High School were incredible."

## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# A bill threatening immense damage to free speech

The rights to freedom of thought, expression and belief were accepted by countries as part of their international legal obligations under the UN Declaration of Human Rights 75 years ago. It was followed in 1957 by the European Convention on Human Rights. In the 50 years before the universal declaration, there had been two world wars which left a legacy of death, destruction, life changing injury, post-traumatic stress, economic devastation and so much more.

### Universal rights

The governments of the world joined together to try and ensure that countries signed up to universal human rights laws which would protect fundamental freedoms, in an attempt to ensure an internationally agreed understanding of people's rights and obligations. Most countries in the world are now signatories to one or both of these two fundamental statements of rights.

As we have watched recent developments, we have seen the restrictions on the right to freedom of speech and expression emerging not only from governmental action but also from movements which seek to articulate a particular ideology to the exclusion of all others. Those rights, so vitally important to the operation of democratic societies have been incrementally undermined particularly during the last few years.

The Irish Catholic columnist Breda O'Brien was among speakers who were 'cancelled' by student activists in British Universities: she was to speak in Oxford on the right to life of the unborn. Many others were effectively denied a platform, silenced or rejected because they sought to assert their right of freedom to speak. JK Rowling, the author who created Harry Potter, was subjected to a vicious campaign of hate because she said that transwomen were not women – she said that they should be able to live their lives “in peace and security” but also said that women working in universities as academics should not be forced out of their jobs for stating that sex is real and does exist.

The reality is that there is a movement which seeks to limit our use of language in certain ways and which is part of a culture war – for



Author of the Harry Potter novels, JK Rowling, who has been under fire due to her views on sex and gender.

example the recent Oxfam Guide to Inclusive Language states that the word “mother” should not be used: the word “parent” is to be preferred; this from an organisation which exists, among other things, to help those mothers who struggle in terrible situations to provide food, water and safety for their families, especially their children! When I saw that guide I decided that I would never again donate to Oxfam.

### Women's sport

The world of women's sport has been torn apart by the admission of transwomen to women's competitions in which they have an immediate advantage by reason of their physique. It has been reported that many women competitors are afraid to speak out because of the reaction which their comments might receive. They feel intimidated.

**“What happens to a child who is told at a very young age that there are over 80 types of gender and gender identities?”**

There are many more examples of the situations in which people can be stopped from speaking freely and from exercising their rights to freedom of speech, expression and belief.

Those situations have consequences.

A recent report in *The Sunday Times* by Hadley Freeman spoke of the establishment in the UK of the Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender which was set up three years ago

for clinicians in the UK and Ireland. She stated that “it's a group of medical professionals who are so concerned that the creep of gender ideology into their profession is compromising their duty to do no harm”, and reported that the Royal College of Psychiatrists rebuked its members for questioning the content of a training session in which it was claimed, among other things, that biological sex is “socially contrived” – as opposed to scientific fact.

Those who opposed the introduction of abortion in Ireland and sought a freedom of conscience exemption in the law to allow medical practitioners to decline to be involved in abortions were very often pilloried as tramping over women's rights. No regard was had to what actually happens during an abortion – the termination of the life of a living human being. Now extended access to abortion is being sought, both in terms of access at a later stage of pregnancy and greater access geographically. The reality is that many medical practitioners in Ireland do not want, for conscience reasons, to be involved in abortions, and therefore it has not been possible to roll the service out across the country.

### Assisted suicide

There is an ongoing movement which seeks to introduce assisted suicide or euthanasia to our country – this, like abortion, is presented as a human right, but there is in fact no human right to abortion or to euthanasia. Rights to the exercise of individual conscience, and not to participate in such procedures are increasingly challenged or not fully provided for in legislation. The consequence is that medical practitioners will not participate in such areas of medicine

and there will be increasing shortages in areas such as obstetrics and gynaecology and palliative care. Should not a civilised society provide for individual rights of conscience?

**“The language of this bill is so loose that it will introduce great uncertainty about what actually constitutes a crime”**

Some of the most fundamental tenets of our society are being challenged. Growing up in the modern world must be very difficult with all the pressures which now exist, especially through social media. Children learn about themselves as they grow and in learning they begin to have a sense of their

identity which is predicated upon many factors, one of which is gender. What happens to a child who is told at a very young age that there are over 80 types of gender and gender identities? What does that do for the child's understanding of him/herself?

These are profound questions for any society to ponder. In so doing, it is essential to do so with care and compassion for all those who may be affected, and also to be honest about all the issues.

### Gender

Ireland's recent Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) bill is now before the Seanad. It will expand the current law and introduce new criminal offences resulting on conviction in lengthy prison sentences. In particular it introduces extended protected characteristics including “gender, sex characteristics, and sexual orientation”, it describes gender as

that “which a person expresses as the person's preferred gender, or with which the person identifies, and includes transgender, and a gender other than those of male and female”.

The language of this bill is so loose that it will introduce great uncertainty about what actually constitutes a crime.

For example, it appears that this bill will make it a crime to assert opinions which are likely to result in ‘hatred’ towards people who are biologically male, but who want access to women's changing rooms and sports because they feel that whilst born male, they are in fact female.

The maximum penalty for this offence is five years in jail. This bill may be well intentioned, it has a wider application, but it contains some very questionable provisions. It is described as a bill to protect, but it has the capacity to do immense damage to free speech and democracy Ireland.

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Prof. Massimo Faggioli

Professor of Historical Theology Villanova University USA. He is also a columnist for *La Croix International*, and contributing writer to *Commonweal*.

Prof. Myriam Wijlens

Professor of Canon Law Erfurt Germany. She is a member of The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, an advisor to ARCIC III and a Co-Moderator of the Peter and Paul Seminar.

Prof. Eamonn Conway

Is a priest of Tuam archdiocese and Professor of Integral Human Development in the School of Philosophy & Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia.

Mr. Christopher Lamb

Is a British journalist who is the Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*. He is a contributor to the Vatican Insider page of *La Stampa* and a regular commentator for the BBC on Vatican and religious affairs.

Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ

Is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus, director of the Religious Life Institute and senior lecturer in pastoral theology at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge. She teaches Christian spirituality at the Cambridge Theological Federation.

Prof. Maria Cimperman RSCJ

Is the Associate Professor of Catholic Theological Ethics. Founding Director, Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (2014-2022) and Associate Professor of Consecrated Life Catholic Theological Union (Chicago, USA).

Prof. Vimal Tirimanna CSsR

Is Professor of Moral Theology at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Kandy, Sri Lanka and the Pontifical Alphoncian Academy, Rome.

# ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’



Fr Kevin Mullan lived out his priesthood in the service of others, writes **Michael Kelly**

**L**ike many people across the island of Ireland, I was sad to awake on Saturday morning to the news that Fr Kevin Mullan had died during the night. It brought to mind the words from the Second Book of Samuel: “Do you not know that in Israel, a prince, a great man, has fallen today?” (II Samuel 3:38).

Ordained from the national seminary St Patrick’s College, Maynooth in 1971 ‘Fr Kevin’ – as he was universally known – served as a priest of the Diocese of Derry for over 50 years. He never reached (or sought) high office in the Church, but like so many priests his greatest desire was simply to be a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord and in so doing he transformed many lives.

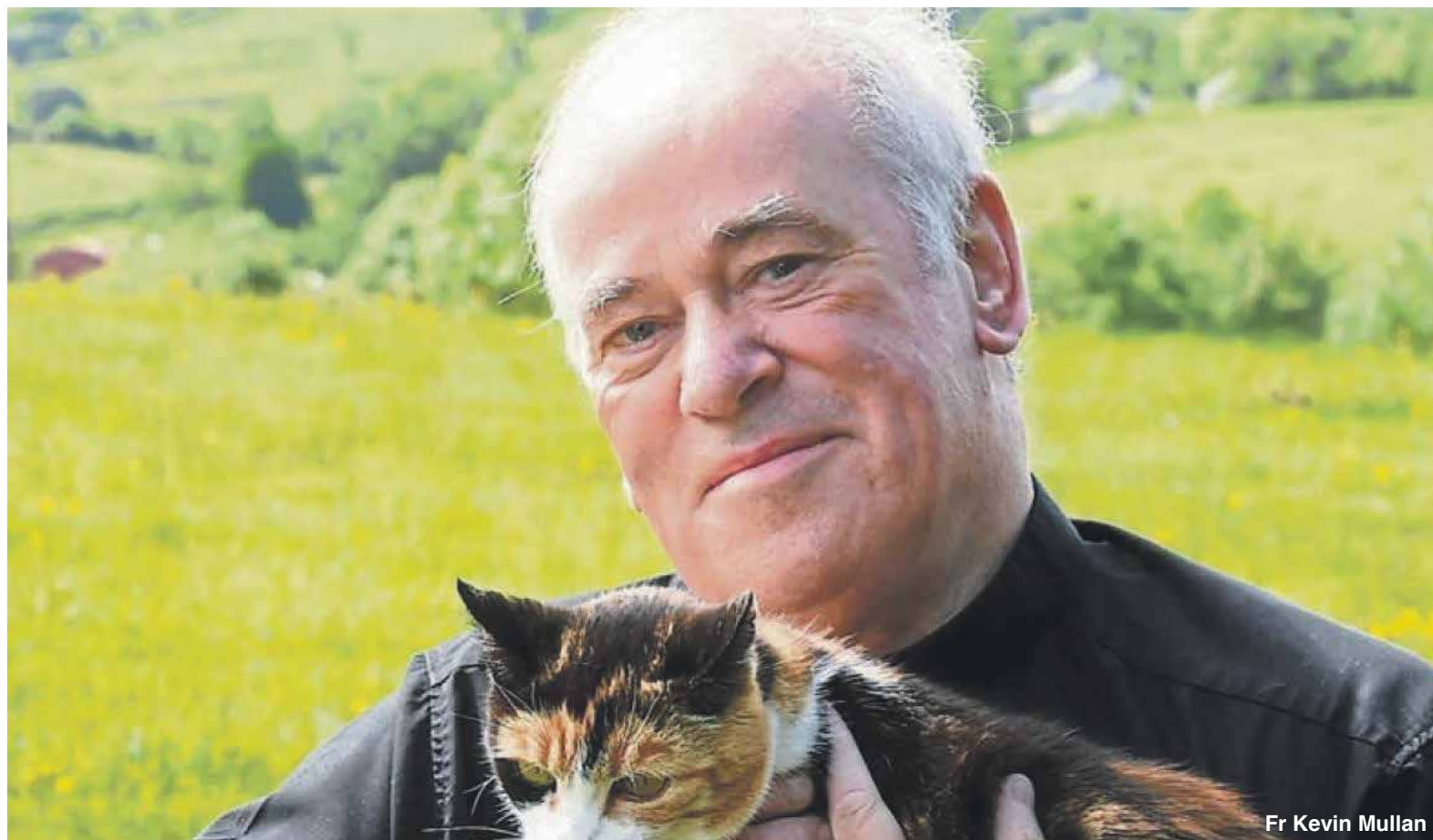
On the national, and indeed international, stage, he is probably best remembered for his ministry in his (and my) hometown of Omagh in the wake of the 1998 Real IRA bombing which claimed the lives of 29 people including a woman pregnant with unborn twins. In the wake of such evil, he seemed to articulate the pain, faith and quiet resilience of a community so sorely bruised and so in need of peace.

**“Fr Kevin passionately believed that division was not inevitable, nor was it the destiny of the Christian people who came from two traditions to be enemies”**

He was ordained from Maynooth in the early and turbulent years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and was an enthusiastic son of that council, and apostle for its reforms.

But at that time, there was more happening than heady ecclesiastical debates. Fr Kevin was ordained as the civil conflict we euphemistically call ‘the troubles’ was spiralling into an endless cycle of violence.

Decades of discrimination and the often-brutal repression of civil rights campaigners had spilled over and London was forced to suspend the local government and



Fr Kevin Mullan

put troops on the streets, ironically in the first instance to protect Catholics.

## Derry

Perhaps nowhere in the north was that sense of injustice more acutely felt than in the Derry where Fr Kevin first ministered in the early 1970s. The majority-Catholic city was dominated by a Protestant ruling elite and discrimination in terms of jobs, housing provision and local services was rampant.

It was Derry too where one of the most brutal episodes of the troubles played out, just months after Fr Kevin was ordained, on Bloody Sunday 1972 when 14 innocent civil rights marchers were shot dead by the British Army.

Fr Kevin passionately believed that division was not inevitable, nor was it the destiny of the Christian people who came from two traditions to be enemies. He was an early pioneer of the ecumenical movement and believed in the importance of friendship across the divide, even where there could be no theological agreement.

Fr Mullan died just hours before he would’ve witnessed Sinn Féin’s Michelle O’Neill attend the coronation of Britain’s King Charles III – he would’ve loved that, and he was both a huge fan of such occasions and of genuine reconciliation.

It scarcely seems believable it such a context, but an instinctive handshake in 1984 caused consternation when Fr Kevin was stationed in Limavady. On Christmas Day, he decided – which the support of his congregation – to go and shake hands with the local Presbyterian minister Revd David Armstrong as a gesture of goodwill. Revd Armstrong was delighted, but his congregation less so. He faced huge opposition, and eventually

had to flee to England with his wife and children due to loyalist threats.

Fr Kevin was one of many pioneering clerics from both sides who reached across the divide. He worked with the Ulster Project which every summer sought to bring teenage future leaders from the north to the United States in a spirit of friendship where they could learn to be together and hopefully bring this home. Fr Kevin was at heart, a peacemaker.

**“His idea of priesthood was always a life spent in the service of others. He wouldn’t have been capable of living his priesthood in any other way”**

August 15, 1998 was to be a defining moment in his ministry. It was carnival day in Omagh, and the atmosphere was good – but that was shattered by the bombing at 3.10pm.

Characteristically, Fr Kevin ran to the carnage without any consideration for his own safety. I vividly remember that scene of devastation and watching him blessing the dead, anointing the dying and reaching out an arm of comfort to those whose lives would be changed forever.

It took a huge personal toll on him, both physically and emotionally – but his idea of priesthood was always a life spent in the service of others. He wouldn’t have been capable of living his priesthood in any other way.

Only those touched by Fr Kevin’s quiet ministry know the inner

depths of strength and faith that he was able to rely on. In every parish he ministered in, people tell stories of him arriving at the house just before midnight – dog often in-toe – for a cup of tea and a chat. He sat at so many bedsides as people suffered and eased their pain and comforted their families.

Ecclesiastically, he embraced reforms particularly around the liturgy, and was a strong supporter of the Irish Church Music Association (ICMA) and encouraged that hitherto unheard-of thing in Catholic churches: congregational singing.

## Liturgy

Fr Kevin sought to bring the liturgy to life, and so Palm Sunday, for example, was not a liturgy to be merely observed from our seats while meekly gripping our palm branches: no – there was to be a full procession around the area, donkey and all, with enthusiastic palm-waving. Good Friday saw him gather parishioners to observe the Stations of the Cross at a time long before such events were popular.

Just like his faith, he wore his heart on his sleeve – this meant he could sometimes be hurt by people he was ministering to the most. But, he soon dusted himself down – there was always more work to be done, more wounds to be minded.

His parish newsletters were the stuff of legend. He transformed bland bulletins into must-read parish circulars, but more than a few people down the years will have blushed from a passing reference to them in the newsletter – the content was never dull.

Ill-health in recent years meant that he no longer had the strength to carry out the frenetic ministry that he did when he was younger, but he was present at his post to

the end. Many a willing younger priest who came to Drumquin in recent years was soon thanked but sent packing, Fr Kevin wanted to be with his people.

**“Like the Pope, Fr Kevin believed with every fibre of his being that nothing could separate people from the love, mercy and tenderness of God”**

I remember visiting him just before Christmas when there was snow and ice. The frosty conditions had made the parish church too difficult for people to reach and there were baptisms to be done for families who would soon return to far-flung parts of the world. Undeterred, Fr Kevin turned his kitchen into a makeshift oratory and with the assistance of his ever-loving sister Joan, devised a makeshift baptistry so the ceremonies could go ahead while a pot of soup bubbled away on the nearby stove. It was typical of his resourceful, if sometimes unorthodox, approach to liturgy.

Fr Kevin loved Pope Francis, and was particularly touched by gestures such as when the Pontiff married a young couple of flight attendants onboard a plane who didn’t have the money for an elaborate ceremony. Like the Pope, Fr Kevin believed with every fibre of his being that nothing could separate people from the love, mercy and tenderness of God.

If ever a man deserves his rest, it is Fr Kevin Mullan.

*Ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis, placuit Deo, et inventus est iustus. (Behold the great priest, who in his days, pleased God, and was found to be just.*



# THE SYNODAL TIMES



**MAY  
2023 ISSUE**

One year on from the Synodal Listening process, Editor Garry O'Sullivan pleads with Irish Archbishop Eamonn Martin as Chair of the Irish Bishops Conference to try unite the Irish bishops and their priests if the national synod in Ireland is to have a chance. He calls for professional change managers to be employed and for resources to be deployed for any chance of a synodal success story. New wine for new wine skins he says.

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# Pope's abuse commission 'secretive' about finances and control



Secrecy around major changes in the Vatican's safeguarding body counterproductive, Marie Collins tells **Ruadhán Jones**

**C**laims that the Vatican's chief safeguarding body is experiencing "growing pains" as it develops a new methodology have been knocked down by a former member and survivor of clerical abuse.

No one knows what the Commission for the Protection of Minors is doing, who is driving change and where financing is coming from because "it's so secretive now", according to Marie Collins, who served on the commission before resigning in 2017.

"Secrecy and a lack of transparency have always been counterproductive in this issue," Ms Collins told *The Irish Catholic*. "That's how abuse came to be such a horrendous crisis..."

"I don't think the commission should be following on the same direction. It should be open and transparent about its work, about who is doing what, its plans," she added.

Her comments come after the head of the Vatican commission claimed on Monday that the organisation is undergoing "major" developments to meet "the urgency of challenges" it is facing.

## Developments

"These developments represent a major shift towards a more impact-focused direction for the commission," Cardinal Seán O'Malley OFM Cap. said on May 8, after the commission met from May 3-6.

"At this time, this new direction has been both steep and fast", he added, causing "growing pains".

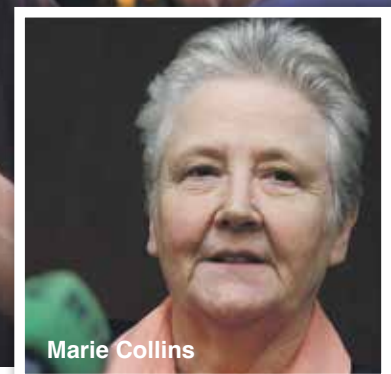
Ms Collins criticised the statement, saying it doesn't answer questions raised by the resignation of a leading expert on abuse in the Church, Fr Hans Zollner SJ.

"Why is one of the most respected members of the commission having to resign and asking to have concerns addressed? I'm sure he must have done it privately before he did it publicly. This statement from O'Malley hasn't addressed these concerns," Ms Collins said.

To dismiss Fr Zollner's concerns



Boston Cardinal Seán O'Malley, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, speaks with reporters in Asunción, Paraguay, March 13. Photo: CNS.



Marie Collins

around financing and responsibilities as "growing pains" is "disrespectful", said Ms Collins.

"What are their plans? What do they hope to achieve and how are they going to do it... if you're making new plans and changing direction, why can't they be set out and revealed to the Church and to the public," she said.

"We don't know what's happening because it's so secretive now, and secrecy and a lack of transparency can only be a negative thing as we've seen in the past."

**“The best way to heal and care for survivors is to ensure that no more are created. We're not hearing anything about that, we're hearing about this change in direction”**

Announcing his departure on March 29, the Fr Zollner said it was "impossible" to continue given mounting concerns "in the areas of responsibility, compliance, accountability and transparency".

He further noted that there had been a lack of clarity regarding "the

selection process of members and staff and their respective roles and responsibilities".

These criticisms were echoed by Ms Collins, who said the commission has "changed dramatically" from the way it used to work, highlighting changes in focus and governance.

"It was about procedures and policy to protect minors," according to Ms Collins. "It appears now that there's a great move towards healing care for survivors, which is a good thing."

"But the best way to heal and care for survivors is to ensure that no more are created. We're not hearing anything about that, we're hearing about this change in direction," she said.

Last June, the commission was placed under the control of the Church's doctrine office, the Dicastery for Doctrine of the Faith (DDF). This raises questions around who is driving change within the commission, Ms Collins said, and also about the integrity and independence of its work.

## Control

"Who is in control? That's what's important to know. It was moved into the curia, we were told it would still be independent. Is it? We still don't know. Why are all these changes happening," Ms Collins said,

expressing her frustration at the lack of transparency.

"My resignation was because the curia were resisting cooperation because they wanted to control the commission – my worry now is that they have much more control."

"We know there's a reluctance there to make all the changes that are needed within the Church, it's not driven by malice or anything like that, it's driven by tradition and resistance to change."

**“If a bishop has been negligent in child protection, there's a resistance to sanctions because it would do reputational damage to the bishop”**

In addition, she highlighted problems with Pope Francis's signature clergy sex abuse law, *Vos Estis*, which was established to hold bishops and religious superiors accountable for abuse that they commit or cover up and tasked the commission with its implementation. The Pope made this law permanent earlier this year.

"Something that Fr Zollner said is *Vos Estis* is not working. He said

it isn't working because some of the leadership still don't want reputational damage to Church leaders," Ms Collins said.

## Negligent

"For example if a bishop has been negligent in child protection, there's a resistance to sanctions because it would do reputational damage to the bishop. If that's why some of what *Vos Estis* is not being implemented, then there's a problem."

If *Vos Estis* is not working and the commission is supposed to be overseeing its working, what's being done, Ms Collins asked.

"We haven't been told what the commission is doing or how it's working. Simply that it's going to be much bigger and much more wide-ranging."

When Ms Collins says 'we', she means the whole Church, not just survivors: "We're nowhere unless we know what's happening... What exactly do you see as needed in the Church in order to make it safer? And what are you working towards achieving? Is there any reason to keep that secret?"

Abuse in the Church is not a new issue, but still we "get promises of action, promises of things changing" and no transparency about what is actually to be done to eradicate the issue from the Church, Ms Collins said.

# Hate crime law will end up curbing free speech



Anyone who falls foul of present orthodoxies is at risk under new laws to prosecute people accused of undefined 'hate', writes **David Quinn**

One of the most overused words in politics today is 'hate'. When someone disagrees with you, it isn't enough to simply say you are wrong. You must also be condemned as a 'hater' and a 'bigot'. This tends to bring debate to a shuddering halt. Who wants to be accused of such things? Most ordinary people will, therefore, steer well clear of discussions that seem remotely contentious. Only the most brass-necked, or foolish, will step in.

**“Mary, who rose to prominence as a feminist campaigner in the 1970s, was due to address the topic of diversity of opinion within feminism”**

As a rule, it is only certain types of opinions that open you up to accusations of 'hate'. Broadly speaking, the insults fly if you say anything deemed critical of certain minorities, and therefore you learn to be very careful before you say something critical about Islam, or LGBT issues, or immigration and so on.

Recently, *The Irish Catholic* columnist, Mary Kenny, had her invitation to speak at a lunchtime gathering at the University of Limerick cancelled by the organisers. Mary, who rose to prominence as a feminist campaigner in the 1970s, was due to address the topic of diversity of opinion within feminism. The occasion was International Women's Day. But Mary has said critical



things about aspects of the trans agenda, although nothing that would strike any reasonable person as inflammatory. If I understand her correctly, she questions the effects of the agenda on women's rights when a man claiming to be a woman is admitted to women-only spaces like toilets, prisons, changing rooms and sports teams.

She has also criticised treatment offered to 'transitioning' children at the Tavistock clinic in the UK, which can include puberty blockers, sex hormones and even surgery.

In any case, when some students spotted that she was due to speak at the lunch, they organised a campaign against her. Inevitably, Mary was accused of being 'transphobic'. The university authorities shamefully crumbled in the face of the criticism, and disinvited Mary because they could not guarantee her safety.

That alone is incredible. Why would she be unsafe? If Mary was going to be severely harassed, or even physically attacked, then who was really guilty of hate?

## Cancellation

Mary's cancellation attracted very little media attention, as though it is the most normal thing in the world for a university to cancel a well-known speaker because she has views on gender ideology most people would find perfectly reasonable, but a mob of student militants do not.

What happened to Mary could take a far more sinister

turn when a new 'hate crime' law currently before the Oireachtas is passed. The Dáil has already voted in favour of it by 110 votes to 14.

The intention of the proposed law, which is called the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill, is to make it easier to prosecute people for 'hate'. It will replace the current law against incitement to hatred.

The bill does not define 'hate', so we are left to guess how a judge might do so. Certainly, it will be easy to make a complaint to the Gardaí if someone says something you deem to be 'hateful'.

**“In 2021, Prof. Richard Dawkins, the famous atheist, was due to speak at the Historical Society at TCD”**

It is easy to imagine the militants who complained about Mary and accused her of 'transphobia' making a formal complaint to the gardai that she should be prosecuted for a 'hate crime' once this bill becomes law.

We don't know what would happen then. Would the gardai seriously entertain the complaint? Would they send a file to the DPP? Would the case go to court? What would a judge decide?

My guess is that Mary's comments about gender ideology would be seen as a "reasonable and genuine contribution" to public discourse, to quote from the

really is a woman. He was accused of a 'non-crime hate incident'.

He took a case against the police and won it in December 2021 on free speech grounds. We do not know what would happen here under similar circumstances.

A hate crime bill was passed in Scotland in 2021. One of the opponents was the Catholic hierarchy there. They feared that parts of the Bible, the catechism and other texts such as bishops' conference of Scotland submissions to government consultations, would be seen as 'inflammatory' under the new provision.

**“Even if the law is used sparingly, the effect will be to make people even more afraid to speak their minds”**

Although the bill is now law, it has not yet come into force, so we do not know how it will operate.

The Irish hate crime law is bound to be passed in the

coming weeks or months. Once it comes into force, its effects will be unpredictable. It will all come down in the end to how the new law is interpreted by judges.

But we can be fairly certain that accusations of 'hate' will be made against individuals who fall foul of certain groups. Attempts will be made to have such people prosecuted. It could be me. It could be Mary Kenny. It could be a priest or bishop. It could be anyone who falls foul of present orthodoxies.

Ironically, it might also backfire on some of the backers of this law who often say the foulest and most hateful things about priests and religious.

We can be fairly certain of something else. Even if the law is used sparingly, the effect will be to make people even more afraid to speak their minds. They will calculate it is not worth the risk. Genuine hate will be curbed, but so might opinions that are merely controversial, and that some people find 'offensive' and therefore 'hateful' as well.



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# 1916 revolutionaries rooted in 'higher cause'

Ruadhán Jones

The actions of Ireland's 1916 revolutionaries were rooted in a "higher cause", Bishop Niall Coll said during Mass for the Annual State Commemorative Ceremonies for the 1916 Easter Rising.

Their cause required "the selfless sacrifice of their own lives in the cause of Irish freedom", the bishop of Ossory said in Arbour Hill, Dublin, on May 3.

"Two fundamental duties are being observed by us this morning," Bishop Coll told the gathered dignitaries, including President

of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Tánaiste Mícheál Marti.

"First, the annual commemoration at Arbour Hill is the longest-running State ceremony to commemorate the Easter Rising.

"Second, we do so, as has always been important to the 1916 families, in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist, that great act of thanksgiving to God."

Arbour Hill is the final resting place of the seven signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic, including Padraig Pearse and James Connolly, as well as other executed 1916 leaders.



Some of the chaplains to the Irish defence forces pictured during the 1916 leaders commemoration at Arbour Hill



Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll speaks to Tánaiste Mícheál Martin.



Fr Des Campion SDB CF, chaplain to students and staff at the National Maritime College of Ireland.



Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll gives his blessing.

# Education can't be 'value-free' on pornography



Parents should demand to see the content of education on porn, writes Fr Chris Hayden

A couple of months ago, an episode of RTE's 'Upfront' programme with Katie Hannon caused consternation, with many viewers expressing surprise at how widespread pornography has become, and at how many children are viewing it.

The facts are indeed troubling, but are they surprising? It's been all of seven years since Enda Kenny urged us to engage in a 'national conversation' about pornography.

**“Any child who may conceivably have access to anyone's smartphone may be exposed to pornography”**

The then Taoiseach expressed his concern that young people were being “tainted and corrupted” and “growing up imagining that what they see on a screen might be normal sexual behaviour”.

Granted, Mr Kenny hadn't adverted to children as young as eight becoming enmeshed in pornography, whereas some of those who spoke on the 'Upfront' broadcast made it clear that this is the case. And yet, the surprise expressed after that broadcast seemed to point to a failure to face reality.

Any child who may conceivably have access to anyone's smartphone may be exposed to pornography. We can't plead ignorance of this, and given what we know, there is a child protection and child welfare issue here that we can scarcely ignore. There is a moral burden on us to ensure that this matter is addressed.

Here we run up against another concern: a remarkably poor capacity for moral reflection. One of the most striking comments on the

'Upfront' programme was to the effect that teaching children about pornography must not be a matter of imposing a morality on them.

This reservation suggests that moral principles are not related to human flourishing, but are invoked as a smokescreen by those who wish to control the behaviour of others, bringing it into line with their own petty, restrictive notions.

The truth is, however, that if we dismiss moral education as a matter of imposing values and limiting freedom, then our ability to address pornography will be hobbled from the start. Pornography is a moral issue. The protection of small children from pornography is a moral obligation.

We can talk endlessly about the need to educate children regarding pornography, but unless we are clear about the content of that education, about what it is we wish to communicate to children and why, then our best efforts are unlikely to be of much help.

Does pornography undermine certain values and teach others in their place? Undoubtedly. Can we address it in a value-free manner? Certainly not. Those who say that pornography education can or should be value-free must be called out. Their sheer illogicality must be exposed, for the good of children and adolescents. The anti-values of pornography cannot be corrected in a value-free way.

Values are conducive to human flourishing; false values and anti-values hinder it. But how do we recognise human flourishing? What, for instance, does a wholesome and healthy approach to sexuality look like? If we have no answer to this, then how can we presume to offer guidance to children?

And if we have no shared answers, no answers as a society, then what hope have we of forging educational policies based on anything other than value-neutral damage minimalisation?

## Digital media

Consider the NCCA's Draft Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course Curriculum Specification, published last July. It states that students should be able to “investigate the influence of digital media (in particular, the influence of pornography) on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression”. This sounds quite neutral.

Crucially, it sounds



neutral regarding human values. But there is a world of difference between stating that pornography will be addressed in the classroom, and stating how it will be addressed, and in accordance with what values, with what understanding of human flourishing, of human relationships, of human sexuality.

Parents should be demanding to access and read for themselves the detailed content of any proposed curricular programme. There should be complete and willing transparency regarding what is to be taught in schools.

**“We don't know everything; some research is in its infancy; but we know enough to oblige us to act”**

I would suggest that parents adopt a position of: 'If you're going to speak to my child about pornography, I want to see your script.' What could be more reasonable! Parents should not tolerate any hesitancy to communicate, or any dismissive suggestion that experts know best.

But is pornography all that harmful? Yes, and the jury is in. The moral prevarication that dismisses concerns as anecdotal or scare-mongering should be seen for what it is.

Try dismissing expressions of concern regarding

child sexual abuse as 'merely anecdotal,' and you're liable to find yourself on the wrong side of the 'reckless endangerment of children' provisions of the 2006 Criminal Justice Act.

## Infancy

We don't know everything; some research is in its infancy; but we know enough to oblige us to act. We know too much, as a society, as parents, as concerned adults, to invoke ignorance as a defence. Surprise has run out of road.

Let's not be optimistic that a sane response to pornography can be forged in the absence of a sane answer to the question, 'What is human sexuality for?' Truth to tell, there is little sign of a shared societal answer.

Let's not be fatalistic, but pending a sane, shared answer to that most fundamental of questions, whenever there is talk of pornography education in our schools, parents should demand to see the content, all the content, at every step of the way.

**i** On Saturday, May 13, Fr Chris Hayden will be participating in 'The Trouble With Porn,' a conference hosted by Radio Maria from 12.30-3pm. It will be live on Saorview channel 210, streamed on Radio Maria Ireland's Facebook and YouTube Channels, and available at [www.radiomaria.ie](http://www.radiomaria.ie), and the mobile app Radio Maria Ireland, or listen via radio feed, on 01 437 327.

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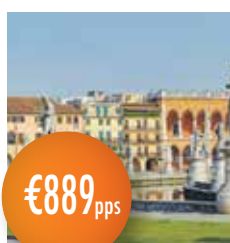
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# Thousands attend Dublin diocese's Knock pilgrimage

Ruadhán Jones

**M**ary is the model for walking with Jesus, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell told the more than 2,000 people from his diocese who made the pilgrimage to Knock on April 29.

Over 2,000 people from across the diocese attended the pilgrimage and travelled to the shrine on various forms of transport including 26 buses. Before Mass celebrated by Archbishop Farrell the Sacrament of the sick took place along with workshops on various topics.

"To come here on pilgrimage is to risk being inspired by her, by her faith, her trust in God's word, her confidence in God's power," Dr Farrell said in his homily in Knock Marian and Eucharistic shrine's basilica.

"It is to risk turning again, and turning more deeply towards the Lord."



On Saturday, April 30, Archbishop Dermot Farrell led the annual Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock. A group from Greystones and Kilquade parishes with Archbishop Dermot Farrell in Knock. Photos: John McElroy.



Andrew and Vivien Idogho in Knock on Saturday, April 29.



Brigid Mulvany, Kay Mooney and Anne Mahon from St Martin de Porres parish in Old Bawn.



Ancy Jose and Joanna Cletus take part in Dublin diocese's pilgrimage in Knock on Saturday, April 29.



Pilgrims from Portmarnock and Malahide make their presence known on Saturday, April 29.



Chris and Pat from Maynooth get holy water in Knock.



A group from Navan Road, Mulhuddart and Laurel Lodge parishes attend Dublin diocese's pilgrimage to Knock.



Men and women from Our Lady of Victories parish Ballymun Road enjoy some refreshments in Knock.



Pilgrims from Inchicore are pictured in Knock.



Jieba Jose, Marykutty Jose, Rosemaria Biju, Elaina Biju and Bijumon Joseph from Celbridge enjoy the diocese's Knock pilgrimage.



Holy Faith's past pupils choir provided the music for the Dublin diocese pilgrimage to Knock.

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# ‘Irish missionaries gave us Christ deep in our souls’



‘The Pacesetters’, former students of Our Lady of Lourdes College, Bemenda, Cameroon, are pictured with the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary on Friday, April 28.



## The legacy of Irish missionaries are women of substance and faith, Ruadhán Jones hears

Friday morning, April 28, was one of those rare experiences of unadulterated happiness for the Church in Ireland. In a spirit of festivity and love, the works of Irish missionaries were praised in song by some of the women they had dedicated their lives to.

“Holy Rosary sisters, we have come here to say thank you,” sang ‘the Pacesetters’, a group of 21 former students of Our Lady of Lourdes College in Bemenda, Cameroon. “Holy Rosary sisters, we love you and that’s why we’re here to say thank you.”

The song was composed especially for the occasion and ended with rapturous applause from the Paceset-

ters and tears from the sisters, including former principals Sr Mary Neville and Sr Nuala Lahert and art teacher Sr Marie O’Shea. Between them, they had given more than 100 years of dedicated service to the men and women of Africa.

The celebratory gathering took place in the front room of the Artane convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary sisters. The morning was given to song and speeches; the afternoon to Mass, lunch and some cultural flavour in the form of dancing and more song.

At the end of the morning, Sr Neville (89) got up to address the students, some of whom she hadn’t seen since she finished her tenure as principal back in the 1980s. She was visibly moved, saying she was “overwhelmed and humbled and grateful to God for the gifts he gave me to do what was passed on to you”.

### Role models

“I thank God that I’ve been able to live to see this day. You are role models for women everywhere. I see that people are stopping to listen to you and see you – God hasn’t stopped giving you gifts. Even if things are difficult or hard for you, he is with you.

“We have to go to Christ through the Crucifixion – many of you have known hardships, have had bereavement, but you have survived it,” Sr Neville continued. “It’s a wonderful grace. Thank you for being the instruments in showing God’s love to me. People say, do you have children – I say I have many



Sr Mary Neville (89) is pictured with past pupils Vera Chilla and Judith Mbuy Nwana in St Brendan’s Church Hall.

hundreds of them!”

There wasn’t a dry eye in the room. It was hard not to be moved, not only for the heartfelt words of Sr Neville, but also for what she represented. Her thanks to these 21 women was, symbolically, addressed to the millions of the “children” Irish men and women religious have cared for and nourished in some of the most neglected parts of the world. It is a care they continue to give to this day. The legacy of Irish missionar-

ies will stretch much further in time and space than even these millions they serve directly. The men and women they educated and evangelised have spread throughout the world, and with them goes the spirit of those same missionaries.

### Dedication

I spoke to four of the 21 students who visited Ireland to thank the sisters for their dedication. Of the four, one works in the

United States, one in the UK, one in Ireland and one in Cameroon.

“We are simply elated, it’s been magic” says Dr Claire Che Minang, one of the students, when asked what it was like seeing her former principals and teachers. “Looking back, they must have just been in their 20s and 30s” when they taught us, she told *The Irish Catholic*. “They’ve given up their lives and we have come now to see

them – it’s been so fulfilling for us.”

Dr Minang is a pharmacist working in the United States and says that what she is now, she owes to the “immense” influence of the sisters. “A lot of the values we hold, the things we do, the character and integrity we uphold, we have thanks to them,” she says.

Our Lady of Lourdes was a boarding school, which the young women attended from the age of 10 to 17



Holy Rosary Sisters and past pupils celebrate in the Artane convent on Friday, April 28.



or so. In addition to their regular lessons, each Saturday morning Sr Neville used to give the girls etiquette classes, Dr Minang recalls.

**“Especially today when religion is starting to be so questioned by so many, and there’s a lot of pull-out for various reasons, we are grounded in our faith”**

She taught them “how to act like a lady, how to walk, how to sit, how to cross our legs, how to eat like a lady, how to talk like a lady... It’s not just about the biology and chemistry – outside of that stuff, we had a whole lot of life lessons, which we are living with”.

And of course, there was the Faith, which the sisters witnessed to in a powerful way, says Dr Minang. Learning wasn’t enough, the sisters taught them how to put faith into practise.

“And so, especially today when religion is starting to be so questioned by so many, and there’s a lot of pull-out for various reasons, we are grounded in our faith,” the US-based pharmacist says.

“Despite everything else that is going on around religion, we have something to hold on to, because they made us feel it deep in our souls, that there is that person, God, and we believe in him and we believe in Christ,” she finishes.

Another graduate of the class of ’86, Evelyn Njingu, was also deeply affected by the faith of the Irish missionaries. “I actually wanted to be a reverend sister when I left school,” she confesses, “but it didn’t work.”

Still, the desire to serve others stayed with her and today she works as a social worker in Luton. Ms

Njingu cares for adults with learning and physical disabilities. Much of her work revolves around protecting people who lack mental capacity when they go through the courts.

“Everything I am today was from that formation,” says Ms Njingu. “From that age, there was not much we knew. They taught us academically, etiquette, manners, social interaction, all of that. I watched my first movie, *The Sound of Music*.

“Sr Mary was a fan of Abba, so every Thursday we were in the library, we would watch an Abba video, we would watch *Oliver Twist* and all the British films at the time. We had a really balanced school curriculum.”

Among ‘the Pacesetters’, one did join the Holy Rosary sisters. Sr Angèle Nkamsi MSHR represents a sea-change for the Irish-founded missionary orders. The Holy Rosary sisters took in their first African vocation 60 years ago; now, they have hundreds and Sr Nkamsi sits on their leadership team.

The seventh in a family of nine, Sr Nkamsi’s father was keen that she would attend a Catholic school, because he himself was a Catholic.

“He sent us to Our Lady of Lourdes College, and when I got there, the sisters I felt were replicating the upbringing I was having from home, this discipline, the Catholic ethos, so loving and peaceful,” she tells me. “I could see they were strict and firm with us, but I felt that love deep within me coming from them.”

### Love

Seeing this love, Sr Nkamsi was inspired to pass it on to others. While she was at the school, she felt drawn to the sisters because of the values they were instilling in her and her classmates.

“I felt called to serve and to serve in religious life,” she explains. “When I was looking at where to go, the sisters attracted me because all I had received with them.

That’s how I began my journey with them.

“I made first profession in 1995 and final profession in 2002. In 2013, while I was on mission in Kenya, I was elected to the leadership and came back to Ireland on the last day of August in 2013.”

**“We really owe a lot to them. Today we are women of substance, I don’t doubt that, and it’s thanks to what they taught us”**

It never crossed her mind that, having been taught by Irish sisters, she would one day make Ireland her home. But now, “I’m an Irish citizen, I’m proud to say that,” Sr Nkamsi tells me. “The sisters have been amazing, they’ve been wonderful, so loving – I feel really blessed to belong to this loving congregation.”

The sisters were teachers and, given the influence they had on their students, it would be a surprise if one of them didn’t follow in their footsteps. Pamela Bijingsi is an English teacher in Cameroon and says she feels “indebted” to the witness the sisters gave her. “That’s why I can be a teacher today,” Ms Bijingsi says.

The lessons on etiquette, the prayer life, the ethics, the morals; all of this made her the woman she is today, Ms Bijingsi says. “We really owe a lot to them. Today we are women of substance, I don’t doubt that, and it’s thanks to what they taught us.”

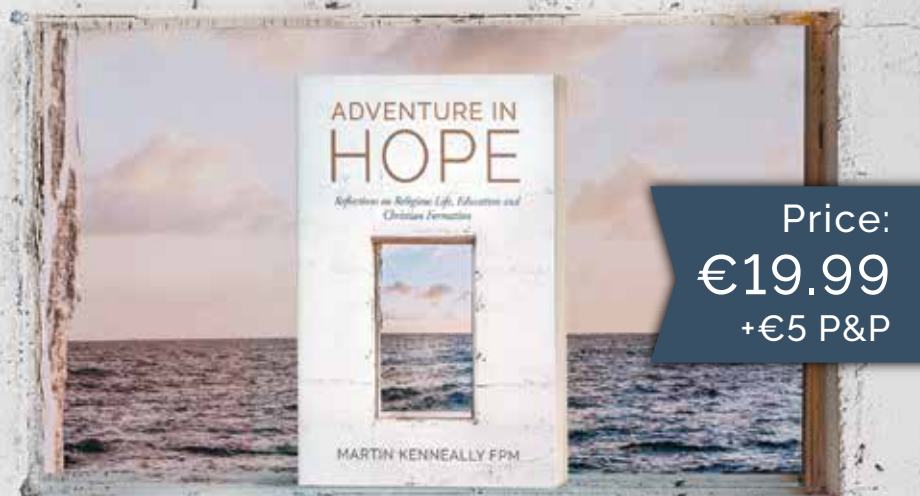
Sr Neville lamented at the beginning of her address that she had seen them budding, but until now she hadn’t seen the fruits. Seeing them, she saw the legacy of the Irish missionaries: women of substance and women of faith, a role model for women everywhere.



Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary Srs Mary Neville and Angela Morgan celebrate their 90th birthdays with a special cake prepared by the past pupils of Our Lady of Lourdes College, Bemenda, Cameroon. Photos: John McElroy

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# Now is not a time to lose our nerve



A co-responsible Church will only thrive if priests facilitate, nurture and encourage it, writes **Bishop Niall Coll**

**T**he line from Scripture which I chose recently as my episcopal motto springs readily to mind – ‘Christ Jesus our hope’. It is in our shared hope, in our faith as it looks to the future, that we clergy find the motive and confidence to reaffirm now in this liturgy our commitment to Christ and to our share in the priestly ministry which we carry out in his name...serving the people in the life and work of the parishes and pastoral areas of the diocese.

That line found in Isaiah and taken up again in the words of Jesus in the Gospel – “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me” – was surely part of our original discernment of our priestly calling. Whatever the ups and downs, it has been a sustaining conviction since allowing us to persevere in ministry, in service of the Lord and his people.

**“My dream would also be that priests would be able to focus more on being true pastors to their flocks and be recognised more and more as men of spiritual depth, seats of wisdom in the ways of God”**

In saying that, I am not seeking to overlook or diminish the bewilderment and loss of confidence that many of us – priest and people – have experienced over the last few decades in the shape of secularisation, the abuse crisis and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Choice

All of us, priests and people, know that in the face of such ordeal and anxiety that we have a choice. Either we surrender to despair or choose to hope against hope that



the life of faith will endure, that mercy upon mercy will lift us up.

Truth be told, some of us may have been on the verge of losing our nerve or tempted to despair. Some indeed have been overwhelmed. We need to be reminded over and over again that in the power of the Spirit nothing can separate us from Christ's abiding love and the saving promise of our God.

In this abiding love and saving promise ... we look, without fear, to the renewal and ongoing transformation of the diocese. I invite us all to put our hearts and souls into renewing our own ministerial gifts and promoting those of the lay faithful in the new pastoral areas which will become the main hubs of worship and experience of Christian life and community in the years to come.

## Gatekeepers

We know that behind the changing face of parish and diocese remains the same Lord Jesus, the alpha and the omega. In his service the priests, whatever their age, are the gatekeepers to the future that is opening up. Whatever new developments...I am convinced that it will only thrive to the extent

that we priests facilitate, nurture and encourage it...allowing it to germinate, take root and flourish.

Not just gatekeepers...it seems to me that in conjunction with the lay faithful, we clergy must also be the architects and artisans of this new expression of faith and Church, and, thankfully, this work is already underway in many hearts and communities.

**“Ultimately, our priestly identity is a way of loving both God and the people entrusted to our pastoral care”**

This vital work of transformation means stepping into a vulnerable place, not seeking to be in control...sharing authority as appropriate...allowing co-responsibility with our people to emerge in terms of pastoral councils, liturgy committees, pastoral ministry, finance committees and so much more...

Developing people and structures to facilitate the nurturing of faith and catechesis, and not just

for children, but also for young adults and indeed for the not so young who hunger to deepen their lives of prayer and knowledge of the faith...I think this is a very large part of what journeying along Pope Francis' synodal way means in practice.

As I look to the future, my dream is that the ordained priest will be largely freed up from routine administrative and management duties, work which can be done better by others better suited to it. My dream would also be that priests would be able to focus more on being true pastors to their flocks and be recognised more and more as men of spiritual depth, seats of wisdom in the ways of God.

Ministers whose main focus will be on helping people deepen in their lives of faith so that we may form communities of 'missionary disciples' everywhere as Pope Francis constantly urges.

All this presupposes, of course, that each priest must cultivate and take care of his own spiritual life, the indisputably necessary anchor to a fruitful priestly ministry. Put simply we must find space to pray.

## Spiritual direction

Meeting regularly with a spiritual

director really helps. We must know and love our people. We should reflect on God's Word and read widely and deeply in the related fields of theology, spirituality and pastoral care so as to be constantly forming and updating our priestly identity.

Ultimately, our priestly identity is a way of loving both God and the people entrusted to our pastoral care. And real love, in all dimensions of life demands sacrifice, a concept which is decidedly unfashionable in modern life.

As the former UK Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, observed: “Now... the idea of love-as-sacrifice has grown thin in many areas of life. We see this specifically in relationships...Lose the concept of sacrifice within a society, [he goes on] and sooner or later marriage falters, parenthood declines, and the society slowly ages and dies...”

A spirit of sacrifice is no less essential to priestly life than it is to marriage and in pursuit of anything truly good and lasting in this life.

**i** This is an abridged version of a homily preached by Bishop Coll at the Chrism Mass with the people and priests of Ossory on Holy Thursday.

# Out&About

## Following St Francis



**OFFALY:** Galway Franciscan friars are pictured with a group of young adults, who meet in the Galway Franciscan friary, on a pilgrimage to the ancient Christian site of Clonmacnoise.



**DERRY:** Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown blesses a statue of teenage Blessed Carlo Acutis, installed in St Eugene's Cathedral in a May 3 ceremony.



**DUBLIN:** Members of the Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights (ICBHR), including Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra and Oxfam CEO Jim Clarken (front left) highlight the issue of palm oil plantations around the world as leading NGO's and civil society groups take part in a satirical stunt to highlight its opposition to plans to create a palm oil plantation in Dublin's St Stephen's Green on May 2. Photo: Mark Stedman.

### IN SHORT

#### Tánaiste welcomes international Catholic award winner

Tánaiste Mícheál Martin welcomed the winner of the 2022 Spirit of Francis Award from Catholic Extension, Loretta Brennan Glucksmann, to thank her for her commitment to peace in Ireland.

The Irish-American philanthropist, together with her late husband Lew, has been involved in philanthropic initiatives for over two decades, focusing on education, the arts, healthcare and peace initiatives in both the United States and Ireland.

Mr Martin praised Ms Glucksmann for being "a steadfast friend of Ireland for many years".

"This gathering is an opportunity to

acknowledge the longstanding contributions made by Loretta, and other friends of Ireland in the United States, to peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland, as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement," Mr Martin said on May 2.

#### Communities 'under attack' for palm oil plantation

Communities around the world are "under attack" by companies pushing palm oil plantations, the CEO of Trócaire has said.

Under a banner saying 'Don't Dig up the Green', CEO Caoimhe de Barra was part of a coalition that marched in opposition to plans by a fictitious company 'Sham Palm Industries

Limited' to create a five-acre Palm Oil plantation in Dublin's St Stephen's Green.

The coalition, made up of 20 leading civil society organisations, unions, leading business, and human rights academics, staged the event as part of a campaign to put pressure on Irish MEPs to take action ahead of the upcoming key vote on the EU corporate sustainability due diligence directive in the European Parliament.

"Of course, there's no actual plans to dig up St Stephen's Green for a palm oil plantation, that would be absurd," Ms de Barra said at the May 2 event.

"But what's even more absurd is that many of the communities we work with around the world are under attack, being forced out of their homes and are losing their land, all to satiate the global demand for palm oil."

#### Galway Poor Clare celebrates 70th anniversary

Galway Poor Clare Sr Louis celebrated the 70th anniversary of her profession to the order on Sunday, April 30.

Her sisters joined in a day of "great rejoicing and thanksgiving for the witness that Sr Louis has given over the last 70 years", the order wrote on Facebook.

In recognition of her many years of service, she received a special letter of thanks and congratulations from Bishop of Clonfert and Galway Michael Duignan.

Sr Louis was also enrolled into Galway Cathedral's 'Golden Book of Remembrance'.

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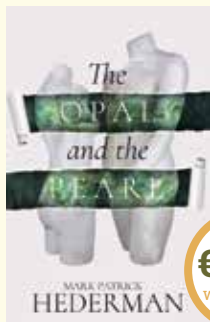


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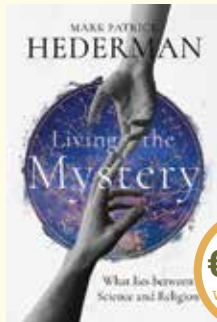
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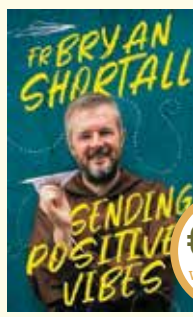
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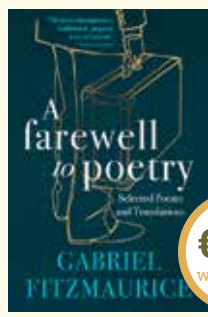
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**CARLOW:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty is pictured with Borris PP Fr Rory Nolan and the Kavanagh family after celebrating Mass on Sunday, April 30, to mark the launch of the 'Year of prayer for the diocesan priesthood'.



**CARLOW:** Bishop Nulty is pictured with Fr Phil O'Shea and the O'Shea family in Borris parish church on April 30.



**GALWAY:** Poor Clares Sr Colette and Sr Faustina join Sr Louis to celebrate the 70th anniversary of her profession on Sunday, April 30.



**DUBLIN:** Bishops, priests, religious and laity visited RTÉ's studios to celebrate Mass for Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, to mark the official opening of the Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood.



**LIMERICK:** Fr Krzysztof Tyburdowski (Polish Chaplain), Urszula Rogoza (Polish) and Glanna Kachan (Ukraine) are pictured outside St Michael's Church.



**LIMERICK:** Fr Leo Mc Donnell PP St Michael's, Denmark St, Seamus Tobin and Gerry O'Brien are pictured at the switching on of the lights to illuminate the statue of the Archangel Michael at the top of St Michael's Church, Denmark St.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**DUBLIN:** Fr Colm O'Mahony OSA, Archbishop of Cashel Kieran O'Reilly SMA and Fr Malachy Thompson OCSO are pictured at the launch of Vocations Ireland's 'Year of Vocation' on Saturday April 29, in Whitefriar St Church.



**BELFAST:** A delegation from the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) visited St Mary's University College Belfast to plan exchange of student teachers and between Belfast, Perth and Sydney, as well as inter-institutional co-operation in continuing professional development for Catholic teachers. Pictured are Prof. Peter Finn, Principal of St Mary's with UNDA staff Deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. Elizabeth Labone, Profs. Eamonn Conway, Renée Köhler Ryan and Dee O'Connor, and Dr Tony Curry of the Catholic Education Service Western Australia, with Dr Martin O'Hagan, Head of Education at St Mary's. Student teachers Marcella Kelly from Ballinascreen, Co. Derry and Peter McKenna from Augher, Co. Tyrone welcomed them with a traditional music performance.



**DERRY:** Students from Holy Family PS take part in their 'Derrymino', a mini pilgrimage to local holy places. They are pictured at St Joseph's retreat centre on April 28.



**DERRY:** Marie Horton, a former shirt factory worker, is pictured with a chasuble she created to remember and celebrate the women of Derry who worked for so many years in the shirt making industry, on April 27.

**ANTRIM**

Lectio Divina prayer and scripture reflection takes place in St Comgall's parochial house after 10am Mass on Monday May 15 and in St Joseph's parochial house after 7pm Mass on Friday May 12. Each session lasts one hour.

**ARMAGH**

As part of St Patrick's Cathedral's 150 anniversary celebrations, all religious of the Archdiocese of Armagh are invited to 12 noon Midday Prayer followed by a presentation on the history of St Patrick's Cathedral on May 12. Refreshments to follow in The Synod Hall.

**CAVAN**

Christian meditation takes place every Thursday evening at 7pm in the Conference Room at the back of Cavan Cathedral.

**CORK**

The rosary will be prayed every night during May at 9pm at Ballinspittle grotto and Sundays 3-4pm until the end of October.

**DERRY**

A Holy Hour for vocations will take place in St Eugene's Cathedral on Friday May 12 at 8pm and will be led by Fr Patrick Lagan CC, Waterside.

**DONEGAL**

Young adult prayer meeting (18-40) takes place every Wednesday at 8pm in the meeting room upstairs in Mountcharles church.

The rosary will be prayed every Monday evening in May at 7:30pm in Letterkenney Town Park.

**DUBLIN**

The Carmelite Third Order/Lay Carmel meet on the third Saturday of every month in the Oratory of Whitefriar street church at 3pm. New members welcome.

Final talk of 'Life in the Spirit' seminars takes place in the Ignatian chapel at Gardiner Street Church on Monday, May 15 from 7-9.30pm.

**GALWAY**

Eucharistic adoration takes place in Galway cathedral from Monday to Friday from 11:30am-6pm and on

Sunday from 1.15-6pm.

**KILDARE**

Naas parish to pray the rosary at the grotto outside Our Lady and St David's Church at 8pm each evening in May, culminating with the 'Prayer for Life' Novena for the last nine days of May.

**KILKENNY**

Conversations with women in the Bible, a day to explore insights from their stories and God's transforming presence in their lives takes place in Pembroke Hotel on Saturday, May 13. Speaker is Sr Therese Fitzgerald SND.

**LEITRIM**

Daily Rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

Ballinamore parish pastoral council and community to host a Padre Pio healing Mass in St Patrick's Church, Ballinamore, on Thursday May 25 at 7pm. Fr Bryan Shortall, National Director of Padre Pio Ministry, and Bro James Connolly in attendance. There will be individual blessings after the Mass with Relics of St Pio.

**LIMERICK**

Our Lady of Limerick Triduum festivities take place in St Saviour's Dominican Church, beginning Thursday May 25 with a young adult pizza night and discussion at 7pm, followed by candlelight compline.

**LOUTH**

Pentecost programme in Bethany house takes place Monday nights, 8-9:30pm beginning on May 15 at Bethany House of Prayer, 34 Point Road, Dundalk, A91WOC9.

During the month of May the rosary will be prayed at Our Lady's Grotto St Oliver Plunkett Church, Blackrock, every evening at 7pm.

A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

**MAYO**

A public rosary takes place in Castlebar Market Square on Saturday, May 13 at 2:15pm to mark the feast of Our Lady of Fatima.

**MEATH**

Eucharistic adoration in Navan parish takes place in St Mary's, Monday to Saturday, 11am-9pm and 2-9pm on Sunday. Adoration takes place in St Oliver's on Saturdays 11am-6pm.

**SLIGO**

A Youth 2000 prayer gathering for young adults aged 18-35 takes place in the side chapel of St Anne's Church, Cranmore Road on the first Monday of every month at 8pm.

**TIPPERARY**

Evening of prayer and fellowship for women on the first Monday of every month at Holy Family Mission, Glencomeragh. Begins with rosary at 7.30pm, Mass at 8pm followed by tea/coffee and lots of chat.

**TYRONE**

The Seven Joys of Our Lady fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order meets each second Tuesday of the month in St Brigid's chapel, Brocagh, Clonoe Parish, at 7pm followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8-9pm.

**WATERFORD**

The Edmund Rice Chapel is hosting a day of talks and prayer on Pentecost Sunday, May 28 from 10.30am-5.30pm. Guest speaker is Fr Pat Scanlan, Cork. Contact Síle 086 8590394.

Encounter experience for young adults 18-35 takes place Friday May 12 at 8pm in St John's Church, Parnell Street. Inspiring talk, followed by a short time of prayer, music then refreshments and fellowship.

**WESTMEATH**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, Monday to Friday from 2-7pm.

**WEXFORD**

Rosary and devotions continue every Tuesday at 2.30pm at Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford until the summer.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Church in Nicaragua suffers 90 attacks in 2023 alone

● Researcher and lawyer Martha Patricia Molina on May 3 presented the third instalment of her report “Nicaragua: A Persecuted Church?”

The document gives an account of the at least 529 attacks perpetrated by the Daniel Ortega dictatorship in the last five years with 90 committed so far in 2023.

In her Zoom presentation made from exile, the researcher exposed the “hostilities, persecution, sieges, desecration, destruction, robbery, expulsions, and confiscations” perpetrated by the dictatorship.

Ms Molina also condemned the “imprisonment of committed religious and lay leaders” of the Church in Nicaragua.

### Order of Malta elects Canadian lawyer 81st grand master

● The Order of Malta this week elected Fra' John Dunlap as prince and 81st grand master of the Order of Malta.

He was sworn in on May 3 and will hold the office for 10 years.

Dunlap, 66, is Canadian and the first professed knight

from the Americas to lead the sovereign state and religious order. He is a lawyer by profession.

The position of grand master of the Order of Malta has been vacant since the death in 2020 of Fra' Giacomo dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto.

### US state's bill protecting minors prompts porn site block

● A Utah bill that is designed to prevent minors from accessing pornography online went into effect May 3, leading the website Pornhub to block access to its website in the entire state.

The legislation, which Gov. Spencer Cox signed in March, requires commercial entities that provide pornography or other material harmful to minors to verify a person's age before the person can access the material. It also holds publishers and distributors liable if they fail to comply with the rules.

When the bill goes into effect, pornographers will need to verify a user's age in one of a number of ways.

### US Surgeon General says religion can help loneliness epidemic

● Loneliness is a risk factor for many serious — even deadly — health conditions, and the antidote is social connection like that found in religious groups, the US Surgeon General has said in a new report.

“Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling — it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death,” Surgeon General Dr Vivek H. Murthy said in a letter introducing his new report, “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation”. The advisory report discusses “the healing effects of social connection and community”.

“The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity,” Dr Murthy said.

### World Youth Day prep advice from Pope: speak to your grandparents

● Just under three months before World Youth Day gets underway in Lisbon, Portugal, Pope Francis said young people should consult their grandparents about how to prepare.

In a two-minute video message recorded in Spanish and published May 4, the Pope urged young people preparing for World Youth Day to “look toward your roots”.

“Try to spend time with the elderly. Many of you have grandparents; visit your grandparents,” he said, and ask them “what do you think I must do?” to prepare for World Youth Day. “Talk a little with your grandparents. They'll give you wisdom, but always go forward,” said the Pope.

## Serbian archbishop: ‘Radical measures’ required after school shooting

Archbishop Ladislav Nemet of Belgrade, Serbia, told *OSV News* that “no child should be a victim of violence,” following a school shooting in that city that left eight children and one security guard dead, with six students and a teacher injured.

On May 3, a 13-year-old male student at the Vladislav Ribnikar Elementary School opened fire on his classmates, armed with two guns owned by his father, as well as two pistols and four Molotov cocktails that were later found in his bag.

The shooter, Kosta Kecmanovic, called police after the attack, telling them what he had done and saying “he is a psychopath who needs to calm down,” senior police official Veselin Milic told media the day of the shooting, adding that Kecmanovic said he “was caught by fear and panic and funny breathing” following the killings.

Authorities also discovered sketches of classrooms and a list of intended targets. Kecmanovic had created prior to the attack.

All but one of the dead were girls, one of whom held French citizenship, French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre told media, without providing details.

Kecmanovic, who is too young to be criminally charged under Serbia's legal code, will be placed in a psychiatric institution, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic



People react as they pay tribute to victims following a school mass shooting where a boy opened fire on others, killing fellow students and staff, in Belgrade, Serbia May 4. Photo: OSV News/Reuters, Zorana Jevtic

told media. He described the day as “one of the toughest ... in Serbia's modern history”.

The teen's father has been arrested, along with Kecmanovic's mother.

Serbia will observe a three-day period of mourning beginning May 5, authorities said.

No motive has been provided for the attack, which has stunned a nation with high levels of gun ownership — 39 per 100 persons, according to the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey

research firm — but few mass shootings. The last such attacks occurred in two separate villages in 2013 and 2007.

Thousands gathered outside the elementary school to leave flowers, candles, teddy bears and other tokens in honour of the victims. The majority of mourners were reported to be students from other Belgrade schools.

Children and teens should experience school as “a safe and stimulating place for learning and development,” said Archbishop Nemet in a

May 4 email to *OSV News*.

The tragedy “calls us all to the importance of radical measures in the prevention of violence in schools and among children,” he said.

Masses throughout the archdiocese were offered for the victims, the archbishop added.

“May the Lord grant peace to the innocent souls, murdered students and security workers in the hope of a blessed resurrection, and to all families, relatives and friends, strength and comfort in these difficult times,” he said.

## Details murky on Pope's push for peace in Ukraine

When Pope Francis told reporters the Vatican had some kind of “mission” underway to promote an end to the war in Ukraine, journalists naturally were intrigued.

The mystery grew when Ukrainian and Russian officials said they did not know what the Pope was talking about.

And then the Vatican secretary of state said they did.

Ukrainian “President (Volodymyr) Zelenskyy has not consented to any

such discussions on Ukraine's behalf,” a Ukrainian official described as being “close to the presidential office” told CNN May 1. “If talks are happening, they are happening without our knowledge or our blessing.”

Asked if the Russian government had been informed or involved, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded May 2: “No, nothing is known.”

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, told reporters May 3

that he was “surprised” by those statements. “To my knowledge, they were and are aware” of what the Vatican is doing.

The cardinal did decline, however, to provide more details.

“The Pope said there will be a mission that will be announced at the time it is public, and I repeat the same words he used,” Cardinal Parolin said. “I will not go into details. The Pope spoke in these terms, let's leave it to him to give any further information.”

## Bishops of Chile and Peru call for dialogue to resolve migratory crisis

The bishops of the dioceses of Tacna, Peru, and Arica, Chile, have called on the authorities of both countries to seek a solution through dialogue to the migration crisis that is currently taking place at the border.

For the last two weeks, hundreds of migrants — mostly Venezuelans but

also Colombians and Haitians — have been trying to leave Chile and enter Peru because Chile has toughened its immigration policies. The foreigners state that their ultimate goal is to return to their countries of origin.

However, according to the minister of the interior of Peru, Vicente Romero,

only those who present their immigration card, visa, and passport are being accepted. The rest have remained on the border between the two countries, enduring the inclement weather of the desert, with some of them engaging in confrontations with the police.

Given the situation,

the Peruvian government declared a state of emergency last week at most of its border crossings in order for the armed forces to support the police. For its part, the Chilean government ordered the militarisation of its northern border in February to prevent more migrants from illegally entering the country.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## The heart of the universal Church



Pope Francis greets young adults from Uganda at the end of his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican May 3. The young people participate in programs offered by Africa Mission Cooperation and Development, an Italian-based organisation promoting education and development. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

## EU Parliament criticised for displaying 'vulgar' depictions of Jesus and apostles

An art exhibit at the European Union's Parliament building in Brussels, Belgium, has prompted criticism from conservative politicians in Italy for its display of a blasphemous depiction of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

The artwork, a series of photographs by lesbian Swedish photographer Elisabeth Ohlson, includes one of a man who is meant to represent Christ wearing a white robe and a halo made out of stars above his head. The man is surrounded by seven men who are wearing leather-based fetish clothing associated with BDSM fetishism.

Ms Ohlson said the pho-

tographs are meant to depict Christ supporting homosexual rights.

"There [are] a lot of pictures of Jesus with heterosexual [people]," she said on Twitter. "Millions, billions of paintings, famous artists. But this is just 12 pictures of Jesus loving the LGBT rights, so 12 pictures should not be so scary for them."

The photos have faced backlash from conservative members of the European Parliament, some of whom accused the depiction of being disrespectful.

The exhibit, which opened on May 2 and runs through May 5, kicked off with a recep-

tion hosted by Malin Björk, a member of the European Parliament for the Swedish Left Party.

Some Italian lawmakers took to social media to voice their objections.

"Art?" Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said in a Facebook post. "No, just vulgarity and disrespect."

Jorge Buxadé, an Italian member of the European Union Parliament, called the display "disgusting and miserable" in a tweet. "The European Parliament has become a space of impunity for the LGBTIQ+ lobby with the complicity of the left ...

and liberal," Mr Buxadé said. "My infinite contempt for the author, the promoters and those who have allowed it."

Maria Veronica Rossi, another member of the European Union Parliament, told *Press Italy 24 News* the display lacked respect.

"It is legitimate to address issues of all kinds in institutional settings, but exploiting a religion is an intolerable lack of respect for millions of faithful throughout Europe," Ms Rossi said. "Other than cultural insight, this appears as a gratuitous provocation: Why offend and lack respect?"

## US feds back off demand that Catholic hospital extinguish chapel candle

Federal government regulators backed off their demands that a Catholic hospital extinguish its chapel candle after the Oklahoma hospital's lawyers argued that their client's religious freedom was being violated.

The hospital was informed that it will receive a waiver, provided it posts signs warning about keeping oxygen equipment away from the tabernacle candle, which is already enclosed and on a wall six feet off the ground.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had ordered Saint Francis Health System in Oklahoma to snuff out one of its hospital's sanctuary candles after one of its contractors responsible for accrediting hospitals deemed that it represented a fire hazard. The hospital group was informed that it would lose its accreditation if it failed to comply.

"The government has seen the light and has abandoned its attempt to force

an Oklahoma hospital to blow out a small candle or stop serving elderly, disabled, and low-income patients," Lori Windham, vice president and senior counsel at the Becket religious liberty legal group, said May 5 on Twitter.

She said the US Department of Health and Human Services has told St Francis of Assisi "it can keep its living flame — a sacred candle housed in the hospital chapels".



## Pope Francis greets Russian Orthodox metropolitan after audience

● Pope Francis greeted the chairman for external Church relations of the Russian Orthodox Church after his weekly public audience May 3.

The brief encounter in St. Peter's Square with Metropolitan Anthony comes amid heightened scrutiny of diplomatic signals involving the Holy See's desire to broker a peaceful settlement to the ongoing fighting in Ukraine.

In his press conference on his flight back to Rome from Budapest, Pope Francis told reporters that the Holy See is involved in a secret peace mission to end the conflict. Both Ukrainian and Russian officials were quick to deny that negotiations were taking place, but a close papal aide confirmed the Pope's statement in an interview with an Italian news outlet published Wednesday.

In the livestream video of the May 3 general audience, Metropolitan Anthony, 38, could be seen approaching the Pope and shaking his hand. Francis kissed the bishop's pectoral cross. The two spoke for just under one minute and exchanged small gifts.

## Pope: Church must protect its huge audiovisual and media assets

● There is real "cultural urgency" for the entire Catholic Church to preserve its audiovisual, documentary and other media archives and assets, Pope Francis said.

Even recently created materials are "a fragile asset that require constant care," he wrote.

"The Catholic Church has already unfortunately lost a major part of the audiovisual documentation that recounts her 19th- and 20th-Century history, as a result of neglect and a lack of resources and skills."

The Pope's comments came in a written message to the recently established *Fondazione MAC – Memorie Audiovisive del Cattolicesimo* (The

Audiovisual Memories of Catholicism Foundation).

The message, dated March 3, was published by the Vatican May 2 as foundation members held their first plenary meeting at the Vatican Library.

The technology used in producing audiovisual media "has travelled at great speed, creating a quantity of sounds and images unimaginable a few years ago, documenting the history of the world and of the Church," the Pope wrote.

"Today, therefore, it is also time to stop to gather and protect this enormous audiovisual patrimony to embark on a new great process of building a collective memory."

## Pope Francis praises NFP method as 'valuable tool'

● Pope Francis has praised the Billings method of natural family planning as "a valuable tool" for married couples that also provides needed education about the meaning of the conjugal act.

"In the second half of the last century, as pharmacological research for fertility control expanded and the contraceptive culture was on the rise, John and Evelyn Billings conducted careful scientific research and developed a simple method, accessible to women and couples, for natural knowledge of fertility, offering them a valuable tool for the responsible management of procreative choices," the Pope said in an April 28 message to a conference on the Billings method.

"In those years, their approach might have appeared outdated and less reliable in comparison with the purported immediacy and security of pharmacological interventions," he added. "Yet in fact, their method has continued to prove timely and challenging."

Francis said the Billings method of natural family planning has spurred "a serious reflection" on "the need for education in the value of the human body, an integrated and integral vision of human sexuality, an ability to cherish the fruitfulness of love even when not fertile, the building up of a culture that welcomes life and ways to confront the problem of demographic collapse".

# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

## Modern papal contender invokes ancient Roman legend on abortion

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, president of the powerful Italian bishops' conference, comes off as a very modern figure. His roots are in the Community of Sant'Egidio, a new movement in Catholicism that dates just to 1968, and he's a key ally of Pope Francis in his effort to promote a 21st century global Church.

Yet to express his position on abortion and the civil law, Cardinal Zuppi, 67, recently invoked an ancient Roman legend, and his choice says a great deal about the worldview of this key prelate and *papabile*, meaning a candidate to be Pope.

With regard to debates over Italy's Law 194, adopted in 1978, which legalised abortion in the first 90 days of pregnancy, Cardinal Zuppi said it's important to "succeed in exiting from the scheme of the Horatii and Curiatii".

For emphasis he repeated the point, insisting that "we have to exit the Horatii and Curiatii".

To which many non-Romans might well be forgiven for asking, "What?"

### Kingdom era legend

The reference is to a legend from the kingdom era, the earliest period of Roman history dating to the Eighth Century BC, and is recounted by the author Livy. In brief, a conflict supposedly had arisen between the Romans and the Albans, meaning residents of the settlements around Lake Albano (where the papal summer residence of Castel Gandolfo would later be located).

Romans and Albans agreed that a war would leave both vulnerable to an invasion by the Etruscans, so they opted to settle the dispute with a fight to the death between three representatives of each side – the Horatii brothers for the Romans and the Curiatii for the Albans.

In the end, Publius, the last of the Roman fighters, slayed all three wounded Albans and thus claimed victory.

In Roman idiom, referring to *gli Orazi e i Curiatii* (which is how the names are expressed in Italian) is a metaphor for an "us v. them" logic, with a connotation of seeking not merely to win but to utterly annihilate one's enemies. (Publius, by the way, not only killed the Curiatii but also his own sister, whom he caught weeping for one of the fallen Curiatii fighters to whom she'd been engaged).

By invoking the Horatii and Curiatii, Cardinal Zuppi was saying we need to set aside absolutist us v. them ways of framing the abortion issue, and instead make peace with



Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson. Public domain

### His emphasis is on trying to create social conditions under which women will be less inclined to exercise that right

complexity.

His comments occurred in the context of a 45-minute conversation with editor and journalist Stefano Feltri as part of a public event sponsored by the Italian newspaper *Domani*.

### In Italy, there was a national referendum in 1981 and limited abortion rights scored a decisive victory, leaving no political force eager to revisit the question

At one point Mr Feltri asked Cardinal Zuppi about parenting via surrogacy, a hot topic at the moment due to a proposal by the country's conservative government to impose criminal penalties on couples who go abroad to have a baby via surrogacy, which is already illegal in Italy. The bill is seen as a crackdown on gay couples, who tend to be most likely to pursue surrogate births.

Cardinal Zuppi began by insisting that the Church is not an enemy of

individual rights, citing its support for rights to education, food and elder care.

"Then there's the aspect, I'd say ... how to put it? ... grey, which has to be found between convictions, doctrine, and civil rights," Cardinal Zuppi said.

### A painful law

"I'll give an example ... the law on abortion, 194, which I think is a painful law, but which, it seems to me, guarantees – some say too much and others not enough – but which [guarantees] an important secular solution, so much so, I think, that no one intends to call it into question," he said.

Note that Cardinal Zuppi wasn't actually asked about abortion, but brought it up on his own.

Mr Feltri pressed Cardinal Zuppi, saying that Italian conservatives often insist they're not questioning the law, but they tend to emphasise its provisions regarding the prevention of abortion. His reference likely was to a comment by a senior member of [Italian Prime Minister] Meloni's party who said "we want to give women the right not to have an abortion, for example for financial reasons".

It was at this point Cardinal Zuppi veered into Roman mythology.

"If we can succeed in exiting from the scheme of the Horatii and Curiatii," he said, "because every now and then we risk becoming like this ... I think for instance the dissuasive part [of the law], the part to avoid a suffering of the woman, the consultants, certainly is something that can be applied more".

The mention of "consultors" refers to a network of family consultants created in 1975. Under the 1978 abortion law, they also have the role of informing women about alternatives to abortion and assistance available to them should they chose to have the child.

### Too lightly

Mr Feltri replied that the premise of such talk about prevention is that women are having abortions too lightly.

"Again, we have to exit the Horatii and Curiatii," Cardinal Zuppi said. "It seems we have some gladiators, even among you. I'd put all the gladiators to the side, because they're the ones who always seem convinced, who don't care ..."

Leaving behind that logic isn't easy, Cardinal Zuppi added, because

"sometimes we reignite all the enemies, we have to start over from the beginning, and it's not worth it".

Cardinal Zuppi's comments have sparked a mini-tempest in conservative Catholic circles, though in fairness his observation – to wit, that "no one intends to call into question" the substance of the abortion law – could be taken as a descriptive statement about the realities of Italian secular politics, not Catholic moral teaching, and at that level, it's perfectly accurate.

### In the US, abortion remains a contested issue because it's never been settled democratically, with national policy driven by competing Supreme Court decisions

Given that Cardinal Zuppi is already the president of arguably the most influential bishops' conference in the world, and also a plausible prospect to become pope one day, it's worth identifying the principal take-away here.

### Strategic retreat

In effect, Cardinal Zuppi has signalled a strategic retreat on the wars of culture. Rather than fighting over the legal and political question of whether the civil law should recognise a "right" to abortion – a battle he clearly sees as already lost – his emphasis is on trying to create social conditions under which women will be less inclined to exercise that right.

This may be a peculiarly European perspective, given the differences on abortion between the two sides of the Atlantic. In the US, abortion remains a contested issue because it's never been settled democratically, with national policy driven by competing Supreme Court decisions. In Italy, there was a national referendum in 1981 and limited abortion rights scored a decisive victory, leaving no political force eager to revisit the question.

Whether Cardinal Zuppi's position amounts to a realistic realignment of the pro-life cause, or a supine surrender to the culture of death, is a matter for debate – perhaps especially among the modern analogues of the Horatii and Curiatii, still itching for a grand brawl to settle it all.

John L. Allen Jr. is editor of *Crux*.

# Religious Freedom Commission calls out India, Nigeria and Vietnam for abuses



John Lavenburg

**A** US-government commission tasked with monitoring religious freedom abroad has recommended the State Department designate five new countries as “Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs)” because of their engagement in, or toleration of, “particularly severe” religious freedom violations, including against Christians.

In its 2023 report released on May 1, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended the State Department designate Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, Syria, and Vietnam as CPCs, in addition to the twelve other countries it gave the designation in November.

The 12 countries the State Department has designated CPCs are: Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Across those 12 countries, and the five new recommendations, the report outlines many instances where religious persecution by government entities, and extremist groups has led to death, suppression and displacement of many religious persons and communities.

A CPC designation, as outlined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, leads the government to attempt non-economic policy options to end a country’s religious freedom violations, and impose economic penalties thereafter if the non-economic attempts fail.

The report also recommends countries for the State Department to add to a “Special Watch List.” In essence, this is just down from a CPC designation, and it’s reserved for countries that commit “severe” religious freedom violations.

USCIRF recommends that the State Department keep Algeria and the Central African Republic on the list after their 2022 designation, and that the State Department add Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Uzbekistan. The commission recommends dropping Comoros and Vietnam from the list, though Vietnam it



Bishop Jude Arogundade of Ondo, Nigeria, visits a victim of the attack on St Francis Xavier Church on Pentecost Sunday 2022. Photo: CNS/courtesy Aid to the Church in Need

recommended receive a CPC designation.

The commission also recommended seven nonstate actors receive the “Entity of Particular Concern” designation: al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Houthis, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State in West Africa Province, Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, in addition to current CPCs the Taliban and the Wagner Group.

USCIRF is the government body charged with making policy recommendations to the president, Secretary of State and Congress – including recommending countries for a CPC designation – related to religious freedom violations. The State Department is not obliged to take USCIRF’s recommendations. The commission, created by the IRFA, is independent and bipartisan.

Here’s a look at Nigeria and Nicaragua, two countries USCIRF recommended in its 2023 report that the State Department either designate or redesignate a CPC that have particularly persecuted Christians, and a look at why the commission recommends Afghanistan, India, Syria, and Vietnam receive the CPC designation.

## Nigeria

USCIRF called it a “tremendous disappointment” that the State Department failed to designate Nigeria a CPC in 2022, and called on the US government to do so, as well as appoint a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin to maximise diplomatic efforts. The commission also recommends Congress investigate the effectiveness of US

efforts to address the issue.

A report published by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety) titled *Martyred Christians in Nigeria* states that at least 52,250 people have been killed in the last 14 years in Nigeria for their Christian faith, 30,250 of those since 2015.

**“Ortega also reportedly banned outdoor Holy Week celebrations and processions, and two women religious and a priest were recently expelled from the country”**

There were 1,041 “defenceless Christians” killed in Nigeria in the first 100 days of 2023, the report states. And under President Muhammadu Buhari, who came into power in 2015, there have also been about 18,000 Christian churches, and 2,200 Christian schools destroyed.

In 2022, mob violence in Zamfara killed Christian university student Deborah Yakubu due to blasphemy

accusations, and Christian healthcare worker Rhoda Jatau for blasphemy comments on her social media in the aftermath of the violence, according to the USCIRF report.

There was also an attack on a Catholic Church in Ondo State during Pentecost Sunday last year, in which 40 people were killed. The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) extremist group claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Intersociety report claims that because of the violence against Christians over the years, around 8 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and at least 14 million uprooted.

The USCIRF report notes that while federal authorities have worked to address the violence impacting religious freedom, there are questions about its effectiveness and how serious the efforts are taken at the state and local level.

“Rampant violence and atrocities across Nigeria continued to impact freedom of religion or belief, including militant Islamist violence; some forms of identity-based violence; mob violence; and criminal, political, and vigilante violence impacting worship,” USCIRF states.

## Nicaragua

Last year was the first time the State Department designated Nicaragua as a CPC, and USCIRF has called on the US government to redesignate Nicaragua this year, impose targeted sanctions on Nicaraguan government agencies and officials responsible for the violence, press for the release of religious prisoners, exercise increased scrutiny of financial assistance.

The commission also calls on congress to hold a public hearing “to amplify congressional concerns over religious prisoners of conscience in Nicaragua”.

Persecution of Catholics has increased significantly in Nicaragua since 2018, when Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega accused Church leaders of attempting to overthrow the government when they acted as mediators after deadly protests broke out that left more than 300 people dead.

On February 10, Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa was sentenced to 26 years in prison, stripped of his citizenship, and given a large fine on charges of treason, undermining national integrity and spreading false news. Ortega also reportedly banned outdoor Holy Week celebrations and processions, and two women religious and a priest were recently expelled from the country.

USCIRF notes that in 2022 “the Nicaraguan government heightened its crackdown against members of the clergy,” including for the first-time imprisoning clergy. The regime also engaged in widespread hate speech against clergy and expelled priests or prevented them from returning.

Further, in 2022 the Nicaraguan government shutdown over 3,000 nongovernmental organisations, revoked the legal status of a Catholic university, stripped funding from another, and approved a law that strengthens its control over educational institutions.

“In 2022, religious freedom conditions in Nicaragua worsened considerably,” USCIRF states.

“The government of Nicaragua ... escalated its cam-

paign of harassment and severe persecution against the Catholic Church by targeting clergy, eliminating Church-affiliated organisations, and placing restrictions on religious observances,” it continues.

## Persecution

Not only did USCIRF recommend the four countries above and Nigeria be designated CPCs, but it did so last year as well – a recommendation that was ignored by the State Department. The government was a driver of religious persecution in each country.

In Afghanistan, the USCIRF report highlights that religious freedom in the country continued to worsen, as it has since the Taliban seized control of the country in August 2021. The commission reports that the Taliban has ruled in a “deeply repressive and intolerant manner,” and has maintained a rigorous enforcement of Shari’a that has violated freedom of religious minorities, including Christians, and members of the LGBTQI+ community and women.

In India, the commission reported that throughout 2022 the government – national, state, and local – promoted and endorsed religiously discriminatory policies that impacted Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, Adivasis (indigenous peoples and scheduled tribes).

The report states that religious freedom conditions in Syria remained poor amid the ongoing civil war, political fragmentation, humanitarian crises, and contested governance. Non State actors, including US designated terrorist group Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, have also perpetrated many violations against religious minorities, in particular Christians and Druze.

And in Vietnam, USCIRF reports that much of the same happened as in the other countries – the government intensified its control and persecution of religious groups, especially those that are unregistered, independent communities. The persecution has included harassment, imprisonment threats, fines, and coercion to denounce or leave their religious denominations.

Outside of Vietnam, a key recommendation from USCIRF to the US government to address the religious freedom violations in each country is imposing targeted sanctions on government agencies and officials responsible for severe religious freedom violations.

**“A report published by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law ... states that at least 52,250 people have been killed in the last 14 years in Nigeria for their Christian faith, 30,250 of those since 2015”**

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Diminishing the value of human life

**Dear Editor,** Jason Osborne reported [*The Irish Catholic* – April 27, 2023] that pro-life politicians criticised the review of the State's abortion law claiming that some of its recommendations violated a promise given at the time of the referendum. Mattie McGrath, for example, said “the report resembles the slippery slope that I and my colleagues warned about in the Dáil and during the referendum”.

The original UK Abortion Act of 1967 permitted terminations within strict parameters, primarily where there was evidence of a serious abnormality of the foetus or a risk to the life of the mother. This has gradually been

expanded in response to various campaigns leading to the situation where the UK now records approximately 200,000 terminations a year. This is an example of the law of gradualness whereby a relaxation in law can lead to the gradual erosion of the values the law was designed to protect.

Ruadhán Jones [*The Irish Catholic* – April 20, 2023] reported that Michael Collins TD criticised the HSE for smearing pro-life counselling services. The TD claimed that last year 8,500 abortions were carried out in Ireland. Seemingly the review of the State's abortion law recommends making it easier to get a termination. The slip-

pery slope that Mr McGrath refers to is seen in the gradual demand for easier access to abortion in Ireland as occurred in the UK. Once we relax our protections for human life, including the life of the unborn, we are in danger of diminishing the value we place on all human life. Such changes in law can have unforeseen consequences. The Constitution upholds the right to life, and governments need to be very careful when diluting laws that are expressions of our cultural value systems.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Brendan Kennedy**  
Belfast, Co. Antrim

### Are there any stand-up Catholics in Ireland?

**Dear Editor,** Joe Biden is a scandal to all American Catholics as I (and our very large pro-life USA family) know.

Biden is unremitting in his hunt to kill unborn babies. In the two years of his war on innocents, nearly two million have been brutally slaughtered in the USA.

Then he presents himself as a ‘Catholic’ to the fawning Mayo journalists and politicians while desecrating the holy place of Knock! Aren't there any more stand-up Catholics left in Ireland. My Mayo grandfather is turning in his grave.

Biden is not a “silly old man”. Biden is a very dangerous and old man.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Jim O'Boyle**  
Windsor, Connecticut, USA



### Healthy relationships with integrity as a core value

**Dear Editor,** The controversy about changes to the Junior Cert relationships and sexuality programme erupted again this week and progressed along predictable lines. Those activists in favour present it as merely children dipping their toe into the ‘real world’: pornography, consent, and gender identity ideology.

I suspect that the vast majority of parents would like a holistic approach,

having healthy relationships with integrity as a core value.

Instead of ‘examples’ of pornography, we need modesty appreciation (i.e., awareness, respect, and reverence of our inherent value).

Instead of ‘consent’ training where we ultimately collude with peer expectations, the vision of marriage in its fullness ought to be presented.

Finally, instead of defining our-

selves so as to fit in with the latest gender ideology fad, we need to recognise our identity as moral beings, capable of weighing up the consequences of the various alternatives. We owe it to the next generation to help them make better choices.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Gearóid Duffy,**  
Lee Road, Cork

### Judging the people and institutions of the past

**Dear Editor,** The organisers of the recent conference, entitled ‘The Future of Christian Identity’ in Ireland (advertised in *The Irish Catholic*, held at All Hallows campus, DCU), seemed – to me at least – blithely indifferent to the danger inherent in such events, which is, the tendency to genuflect before the values of the environment in which such conferences are held, typi-

cally that of the university and the neighbouring media establishment, not forgetting the parliament.

As a consequence it seemed much of the time a case of here we go again, the familiar tendency to judge the people and institutions of the past whilst giving a silent nod in the direction of contemporary attempts to reshape concepts such as family, mascu-

linity, what is taught our children in schools, what is a woman, and so on.

Your columnist Mary Kenny bucked the trend for me, noting how convents introduced great European art to their students, how John F. Kennedy's election opened the door for a world view free of WASP prejudice; and she had the courage to call out some of our prize-winning authors for

their hatred of the Ireland of long ago.

Admittedly I bailed out before the final session, but the tone had been set: too much that was likely to put a smile on the faces of those who restrict debate and yet control our airwaves.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Gerald O'Carroll**  
Ballylongford, Kerry.

### Constant attacks on the Church in Ireland

**Dear Editor,** Reading David Quinn's column [*The Irish Catholic* – April 13, 2023] on the constant attacks on the Church and those within it, by leading figures. This is reminiscent of the attacks on the Jews in Nazi Germany, which started as rhetoric, then violence, then death.

It also creates a great distraction from the abuses of today. There has been very little discussion on the great number of deaths of children in the care of the HSE, many by suicide, or of the great number of babies killed by abortion to mention just two.

*Yours etc.,*  
**David Kelly**  
Crumlin, Dublin 12

### Turning pages of history rather than tearing them out

**Dear Editor,** In his ‘Notebook’ column, Fr John Harris OP rightly waxes lyrical on the beautiful ancient basilica and convent of San Clemente in Rome [*The Irish Catholic* – April 27, 2023]. Under the Fourth Century church there is a Second Century Mithraic temple.

It was found in a First century Roman house which Fr Harris does mention. This oriental cult became one the most influential religions in Rome and across its empire. While the Dominicans are custodians of a Fourth Century church, they who were famed for their preaching against paganism, are custodians of a pagan temple too. As Fr Harris quotes Douglas Hyde, “It's better to turn the pages of history than tear them out.”

*Yours etc.,*  
**Garry O'Sullivan**  
Shankill, Dublin 18

### A push to expand the abortion floodgates

**Dear Editor,** In four short years since the repeal of the Eight Amendment of the Constitution, we now have more than 28,000 abortions, 98% are healthy babies and mums, 50% are female. 95% of Rotunda hospital Down syndrome babies are now killed by abortion. Eugenics at work.

Now, ‘repealers’ push to expand the abortion floodgate they opened, to even more death. It's time to rethink the repeal abortion slaughter, and the repeal cheerleader TDs, celebs, who led it. It appears that the much derided pro-lifers predicted human death toll was correct, after all. How much more?

*Yours etc.,*  
**Oliver Maher**  
Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W

### Letters to the Editor

All letters should include the writer's full name, postal address and telephone numbers (day and evening). Letter writers may receive a subsequent telephone call from *The Irish Catholic* as part of our authentication process which does not amount to a commitment to publish.

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the

merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as “name and address with editor”. We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements.

# Your Faith

Questions  
of Faith

Praying for the souls  
of the dead

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The Irish Catholic, May 5, 2023



## Letting Mary untie the knots...



**'M**ary Untier of Knots, pray for us' would be a strange-sounding invocation in the Litany to Our Lady to which we are so accustomed. In fact, devotion to the Blessed Virgin under this title has been common in parts of Germany for centuries.

In the 1980s, while doing his doctoral studies in theology in Freiburg, Germany, as a Jesuit priest, Jorge Bergoglio saw a painting in a church in Augsburg entitled 'Mary Untier of Knots'. He was so impressed by its stark symbolism that he took postcards of the image back with him to his home province of Argentina. He used to enclose copies in every letter he sent out. An Argentinian



artist-friend of his made an oil-on-canvas miniature painting of the picture, which was hung in the chapel of Colegio del Salvador in Buenos Aires where Fr Bergoglio was then posted. The college staff was so attracted by it that they persuaded the local pastor to get a larger copy made. This was displayed in the parish church of San José del Talar, in 1996. Eventually, devotion to Mary under the title

**Pope Francis carries with him a particular fondness for a Marian devotion that he had encountered in Bavaria, writes Fr Hedwig Lewis SJ**

'Untier of Knots' spread across Latin America.

Shortly after Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope, as Benedict XVI, the then-Cardinal Bergoglio presented the German-born Pope with a silver chalice engraved with the image of Mary Untier of Knots along with that of Our Lady of Luján, a popular Marian devotion in Argentina.

The original Baroque paint-

ing of 'Mary Untier of Knots', by Johann George Melchior Schmidtner, dating from around 1700, is found in the church of St Peter am Perlach, in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany. It measures six feet (182cm) in height and almost four feet (122cm) in width.

### Heaven and Earth

The painting depicts Mary suspended between heaven and

Earth, resplendent with light. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is above her head, reminding us that she became Mother of God and full of grace by virtue of the third person of the Trinity. She is dressed resplendently in crimson, and a deep blue mantle representing her glory as Queen of the Universe. A crown of 12 stars adorning her head signifies her Queenship of the Apostles. Her feet crush the head of the serpent indicating her part in the victory over Satan. She is surrounded by angels, signifying her position as Queen of the Angels and Queen of Heaven. In her hands is a knotted white ribbon, which she is serenely untying. Assisting her at the task are two angels: one pre-

**“Fr Rem, in a solemn ritual act, raised the ribbon before the image of ‘Our Lady of the Snows’, while at the same time untying its knots one by one. As he smoothed out the ribbon, it became dazzling white”**

sents the knots of our lives to her, while another angel presents the ribbon, freed from knots, to us.

**“The painting has survived wars, revolutions and secular opposition, and continues to draw people to it”**

A German nobleman, Wolfgang Langenmantel (1568-1637) was distraught when his wife Sophia was planning to divorce him. To save the marriage, Wolfgang sought counsel from Fr Jakob Rem, a Jesuit priest, respected for his wisdom and piety, at the University of Ingolstadt. On his fourth visit there on September 28, 1615, Wolfgang brought his ‘wedding ribbon’ to Fr Rem. In the

marriage ceremony of that time and place, the maid-of-honour joined together the arms of the bride and groom with a ribbon to symbolise their union for life. Fr Rem, in a solemn ritual act, raised the ribbon before the image of ‘Our Lady of the Snows’, while at the same time untying its knots one by one. As he smoothed out the ribbon, it became dazzling white. This was taken as confirmation that their prayers were heard. Consequently, the divorce was averted, and Wolfgang remained happily married!

#### Commemorate

To commemorate the turn of the century in the year 1700, Wolfgang’s grandson, Fr Hieronymus Langenmantel, Canon of St Peter am Perlach, installed a family altar in the church, as was customary then. He commissioned Johann Schmidtnr to provide a painting to be placed

over the altar. Schmidtnr was inspired by the story of Wolfgang and Fr Rem, and so based his painting on that event. The image came to be venerated as Mary Untier of Knots. The painting has survived wars, revolutions and secular opposition, and continues to draw people to it.

In the 18th Century the devotion to Mary Untier of Knots was localised to Germany. The devotion was augmented during the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster (1986), when victims sought help through the intercession of Mary Untier of Knots. The first chapel to be named ‘Mary Untier of Knots’ was constructed in 1989 in Styria, Austria. The image of Mary Untier of Knots at the main altar of the chapel was created by painter Franz Weiss, using the technique of painting under glass. It differed from the original, because the artist took as his theme the Chernobyl tragedy.

**“The ‘knots’ Mary can untie...are problems and struggles we face for which we do not see any solution”**

On December 8, 2000, a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary Untier of Knots was inaugurated in Formosa, Argentina. Since 1998, the devotion has been spreading in South America thanks to the booklet *Mary, Undoer of Knots Novena*, published with ecclesiastical permission by Denis and Dr Suzel Frem Bourgerie. It has been translated into 20 languages. The couple founded the National Sanctuary of the Virgin Mary Untier of Knots in Campinas (Sao Paulo), Brazil, in 2006.

The website ‘Mary Undoer of Knots’ explains that the ‘knots’ Mary can untie...are problems and struggles we face for which we do not see any solution...Knots of discord in our family, lack of understanding between parents and children, disrespect, violence, the knots of deep hurts between husband and



Pope Francis seated before an image of Our Lady, Undoer of Knots. Photo: CNS



An image of Our Lady, Undoer of Knots, which was carried during an evening Marian prayer service led by Pope Francis in the Vatican Gardens on May 31, 2021. The service finished a month-long rosary marathon to pray for the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo: CNS

wife, the absence of peace and joy at home. They are also the knots of anguish and despair of separated couples, the dissolution of the family, the knots of a drug addict son or daughter, sick or separated from home or God, knots of alcoholism, the practice of abortion, depression, unemployment, fear, solitude...

#### Inspiring

An inspiring prayer that opens the above-mentioned novena sums up the role of the Virgin Mary Untier of Knots:

Holy Mary, full of God’s presence during the days of

your life, you accepted with full humility the Father’s will, and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion. Once with your son you interceded for our difficulties, and, full of kindness and patience you gave us example of how to untie the knots of our life. And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make clearer the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God, and our Mother, to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life, we pray to you to receive in your hands [name of person], and to

free him/her of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks. Through your grace, your intercession, and your example, deliver us from all evil, Our Lady, and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God, so that we, free from sin and error, may find Him in all things, may have our hearts placed in Him, and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen.

**i** Fr Hedwig Lewis SJ, a former principal of St Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad, India, is a writer and the author of psycho-spiritual and professional books.

# Eleazar, consistency of the faith, honourable inheritance



## The wisdom of Pope Francis

**O**n the path of these catecheses on old age, today we meet a biblical figure — an old man — named Eleazar, who lived at the time of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. He is a wonderful character. His character gives us a testimony of the special relationship that exists between the fidelity of old age and the honour of faith. He is a proud one! I would like to speak precisely about the honour of faith, not only about faith's consistency, proclamation, and resistance. The honour of faith periodically comes under pressure, even violent pressure, from the culture of the rulers, who seek to debase it by treating it as an archaeological find, or an old superstition, an anachronistic fetish, and so on.

The biblical story — we have heard a short passage of it, but it is good to read it all — tells of the episode of the Jews being forced by a king's decree to eat meat sacrificed to idols. When it is the turn of Eleazar, an elderly man in his 90s who was highly respected by everyone — a person of authority — the king's officials advise him to fake it, that is, to pretend to eat the meat without actually doing so. Religious hypocrisy. There is so much religious hypocrisy, clerical hypocrisy. These people tell him, "Be a bit of a hypocrite, no one will notice". In this way, Eleazar would be saved, and — they said — in the name of friendship, he would accept their gesture of compassion and affection. After all, they

insisted, it was a small gesture, pretending to eat but not eating, an insignificant gesture.

It is a small thing, but Eleazar's calm and firm response is based on an argument that strikes us. The central point is this: dishonouring the faith in old age, in order to gain a handful of days, cannot be compared with the legacy it must leave to the young, for entire generations to come. But well-done Eleazar! An old man who has lived in the coherence of his faith for a whole lifetime, and who now adapts himself to feigning repudiation of it, condemns the new generation to thinking that the whole faith has been a sham, an outer covering that can be abandoned, thinking that it can be preserved interiorly. And it is not so, says Eleazar. Such behaviour does not honour faith, not even before God. And the effect of this external trivialisation will be devastating for the inner life of young people. The consistency of this man who considers the young, considers his future legacy, thinks of his people.

### Beautiful

It is precisely old age — and this is beautiful for old people — that appears here as the decisive place, the irreplaceable place for this testimony. An elderly person who, because of his vulnerability, accepts that the practice of the faith is irrelevant, would make young people believe that faith has no real relationship with life. From the outset, it would appear to



Pope Francis bows in his head in prayer at the Basilica of St. Stephen in Budapest, Hungary, April 28, 2023. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

them as a set of behaviours which, if necessary, can be faked or concealed, because none of them is particularly important for life.

The ancient heterodox 'gnosis,' which was a very powerful and very seductive trap for early Christianity, theorised precisely about this, this is an old thing: that faith is a spirituality, not a practice; a strength of the mind, not a form of life. Faithfulness and the honour of faith, according to this heresy, have nothing to do with the behaviours of life, the institutions of the community, the symbols of the body. The seduction of this perspective is strong, because it interprets, in its own way, an indisputable truth: that faith can never be reduced to a set of dietary rules or social practices. Faith is something else. The trouble is that Gnostic radicalisation of this truth nullifies the realism of the Christian faith, because the Christian faith is realistic.

Christian faith is not just saying the Creed: it is thinking the Creed, it is understanding the Creed, it is doing the Creed. Working with our hands. Instead, this gnostic proposal is to pretend. The important thing is that you have spirituality, and then you can do whatever you please. And this is not Christian. It is the first heresy of the gnostics, which is very fashionable at the moment, in so many centres of spirituality and so on. It makes void the witness of this people, which shows the concrete signs of God in the life of the community and resists the perversions of the mind through the gestures of the body.

### Temptation

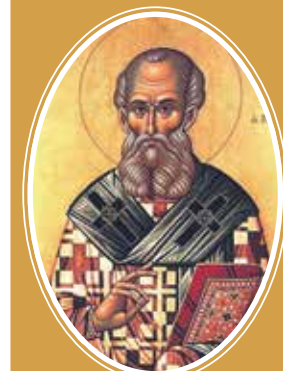
The gnostic temptation, which is one of the — let us use the word — heresies, one of the religious deviations of this time; the gnostic temptation remains ever present. In many trends in our society

and culture, the practice of faith suffers from a negative portrayal, sometimes in the form of cultural irony, sometimes with covert marginalisation. The practice of faith for these gnostics, who were already around at the time of Jesus, is regarded as a useless and even harmful externality, as an antiquated residue, as a disguised superstition. In short, something for old people. The pressure that this indiscriminate criticism exerts on the younger generations is strong. Of course, we know that the practice of faith can become a soulless external practice — this is the other danger, the opposite — but in itself it is not at all so. Perhaps this very important mission is precisely up to us, older people: to give faith back its honour, to make it coherent, which is the witness of Eleazar: consistency to the very end. The practice of faith is not the symbol of our weakness, no, but rather the sign of its strength. We are no longer youngsters. We were not kidding around when we set out on the Lord's path!

Faith deserves respect and honour to the very end: it has changed our lives, it has purified our minds, it has taught us the worship of God and love of our neighbour. It is a blessing for all! But the faith as a whole, not just a part of it. We will not barter our faith for a handful of quiet days, but will do as Eleazar, consistent to the very end, to martyrdom. We will show, in all humility and firmness, precisely in our old age, that believing is not something "for the old", but a matter of life. Believing in the Holy Spirit, who makes all things new, and he will gladly help us.

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Athanasius

## St Athanasius I: The 'Pillar of the Church'

**A**thanasius I of Alexandria (c. 296–298 – 2 May 373), also called Athanasius the Great, Athanasius the Confessor, or, among Coptic Christians, Athanasius the Apostolic, was a Church Father and the 20th Pope of Alexandria.

His intermittent episcopacy spanned 45 years (c. June 8, 328– May 2, 373), of which over 17 encompassed five exiles, when he was replaced on the order of four different Roman emperors. Athanasius was a Christian theologian, a Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, and a noted Egyptian Christian leader of the Fourth Century.

Conflict with Arius and Arianism, as well as with successive Roman emperors, shaped Athanasius' career.

Arian theology held that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was begotten by God the Father with the difference that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten/made before 'time' by God the Father; therefore, Jesus was not coeternal with God the Father, but

nonetheless Jesus began to exist outside time as time applies only to the creations of God.

Arius' trinitarian theology, later given an extreme form by Aetius and his disciple Eunomius and called anomoean, asserts a total dissimilarity between the Son and the Father. Arianism holds that the Son is distinct from the Father and therefore subordinate to him.

In 325, at age 27, Athanasius began his leading role against the Arians as a deacon and assistant to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria during the First Council of Nicaea. Roman Emperor Constantine the Great had convened the council in May–August 325 to address the Arian position that the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, is of a distinct substance from the Father. Three years after that council, Athanasius succeeded his mentor as Pope of Alexandria. In addition to the conflict with the Arians (including powerful and influential Arian Churchmen led by Eusebius of Nicomedia), he struggled against the Emperors Constantine, Constantius II, Julian the Apostate

and Valens. He was known as *Athanasius Contra Mundum* (Latin for 'Athanasius Against the World').

Nonetheless, within a few years of his death, Gregory of Nazianzus called him the 'Pillar of the Church'. His writings were well regarded by subsequent Church fathers in the West and the East, who noted their devotion to the Word-become-man, pastoral concern and interest in monasticism. Athanasius is considered one of the four great Eastern Doctors of the Church. Some argue that, in his Easter letter of 367, Athanasius was the first person to list the 27 books of the New Testament canon that are in use today. Others argue that Origen of Alexandria was the first to list the twenty-seven books of the New Testament in his Homilies on Joshua.

Athanasius is venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion, and within Lutheranism.

# How can we respond to the Gospel call to serve our neighbour?



On the night before he entered into his Passion and death, Jesus gave all of us a compelling model to follow. Serve as Christ serves; give as Christ gives, freely and fully.

Jesus asks us - priests, deacons, religious, married, single - to follow in his footsteps. We know that Jesus' footsteps led him to the cross and to resurrection. As members of Christ's body, we must give of ourselves as Jesus did: Care for others with compassion, offer hospitality, share food with the hungry, provide clothing to those who have little. Surely, we will experience crosses along this way, but we know the way also leads to resurrection, to renewal - of both our world and ourselves.

**“Consider serving in your parish, neighbourhood or town and you may find yourself being enriched in ways you would never have thought possible”**

Are you a person who gives of him- or herself in service to others?

We are shown the depths of God's love in Christ, who came to bring us the fullness of life, and to show us God's way of living. The more we come to know Christ, the more we recognise that all we are, all we have and all we will be is purely a gift from God. Our response to this generosity, as we follow in Christ's footsteps, is to give freely and generously to others.

Sometimes what's possible for us to give, and do, seems insignificant. Giving of ourselves in ministry, in service, or simply by assisting those who need it the most - while rewarding in and of itself - can seem to be like trying to 'bail out the ocean with a teaspoon.'

But those of us who become involved in voluntary service, be it at church or for a charity or organisation of some other kind, soon learn that that's not the case. We see with our own eyes evidence that one person really can make a difference. Jesus knew this when he called us to serve others. Even more important, he knew that when we

respond to his call, our service, offered with a generous spirit, changes not only those we serve but those who serve.

Consider serving in your parish, neighbourhood or town and you may find yourself being enriched in ways you would never have thought possible.

Making the decision to offer service is an important step for us. It is the moment in which we say that our faith really does guide us, and that Jesus' way is the most important priority in our lives. This decision brings joy - but it also brings questions with it. No doubt, the need for your service is great. But where can you best serve?

That's a question you can best answer with honest self-examination and prayer. Is there a ministry in your parish that could use your talents and abilities? A charity near your home or work that needs helping hands? Are there particular causes to which you feel a sense of commitment? Answers to these questions can provide clues of where you can do the most good.

What talents do you bring to service?

Each of us has been given talents, ways of interacting with information or with people that come naturally to us. We have a responsibility to develop those talents and use them throughout our lives, particularly in service. Indeed, countless people have learned through the years that the best way to find passion and purpose is in using their God-given talents in service.

What talents have you been given?

What kinds of activities seem to come naturally to you?

What do other people say you do well?

What skills do you use at your place of work or in your family that you could offer to your parish?

Do you have a hobby, or a skill you've developed 'just for fun,' that could also be offered in service?

How might you apply your talents to the areas of service to which you feel called?

What time will you offer?

Each of us has been given a particular span of years by our God, and how long a time we have, we don't know. What we do know is that time is a precious gift - not to be taken lightly, nor hoarded or wasted. We need to remember to stay balanced, to allow for the many other commitments we

already have:

What responsibilities do I have in my life, and for whom?

What time do I set aside for nurturing my family and my relationships?

How much of my time is committed to work?

What commitment do I make to caring for my spiritual, mental, physical and emotional well-being?

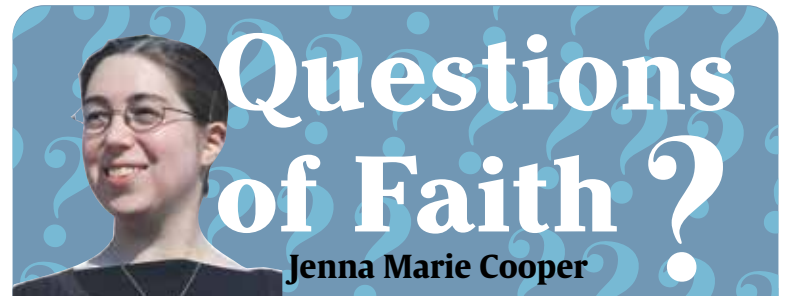
What portion of my time am I prepared to give in service of others?

Once all the questions have been asked, and the answers discerned, it's time for action. Often, it helps to put your commitment in writing. You might want to post your commitment in a place where you will frequently see it, or make a note on your calendar that periodically reminds you to evaluate your progress on that commitment. We are less likely to excuse away inaction when we see our commitment from time to time; placing your signature at the conclusion of your commitment is like saying 'Amen!' 'I will do this!'

**“Many parishes have an annual opportunity to sign up for a ministry or organisation”**

Some people find that sharing their commitment with another boosts the likelihood that they will follow through. If you are new to volunteering or to offering yourself in ministry, or if you know yourself to be a person for whom accountability is beneficial, invite a family member or friend to witness your commitment, perhaps while sharing his or her commitment with you. Pray for each other and ask God to give each of you the strength and wisdom to act with love and compassion.

Many parishes have an annual opportunity to sign up for a ministry or organisation. Whether you take advantage of that opportunity, simply talk with a staff person or a parishioner who coordinates service in your parish, or get in touch with a local organization or service agency, the important thing is to act without hesitation. Someone is waiting for your service...in Christ's name.



## Do Catholics pray for the souls of the dead to save them from hell?

Catholics don't pray that souls in purgatory won't wind up in hell, because hell is no longer a possibility for them. We do pray because we hope that, through our prayers and sacrifices, the sufferings of their purgation might be eased and their journey to heaven might be hastened.

**“Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the ‘eternal punishment’ of sin”**

Let us recall that heaven is a state of eternal happiness arising from perfect union with God, and hell is a state of eternal suffering arising from one's freely-chosen rejection of God. It is by God's grace that heaven is possible for us in the first place, but to a great extent where we spend eternity depends upon us. We can choose to reject God through our sinful actions, or we can choose to accept God's gift of eternal life by striving for a life of virtue and in repenting from our sins.

Whether we go to heaven or hell is decided at the point of our death. But we know that God is merciful and wants us to be in eternity with him. God is therefore very forgiving and will save even the most sinful soul - even if that person only repents at the last minute! Think for instance of St Dismas, the 'good thief' who was crucified next to Jesus, and to whom Jesus promised paradise (Luke 23:39-43).

However, not everyone ultimately destined for heaven will be ready to meet the all-holy God face-to-face immediately upon death. Catholics believe in a state called purgatory, which is a place of purification specifically in preparation for heaven.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: "It is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of

communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin." (CCC 1472)

In other words, all sin leaves some damaging effect on our souls which can often last even after we have repented or sought absolution in the sacrament of penance. Purgatory is a time of repairing this damage. We understand purgatory to be a finite period of suffering, often described or depicted artistically as a purifying fire. Still, the suffering of purgatory is of a radically different nature than the torments of hell, since the souls in purgatory have the joy of knowing that they are on their way towards God.

### Salvation

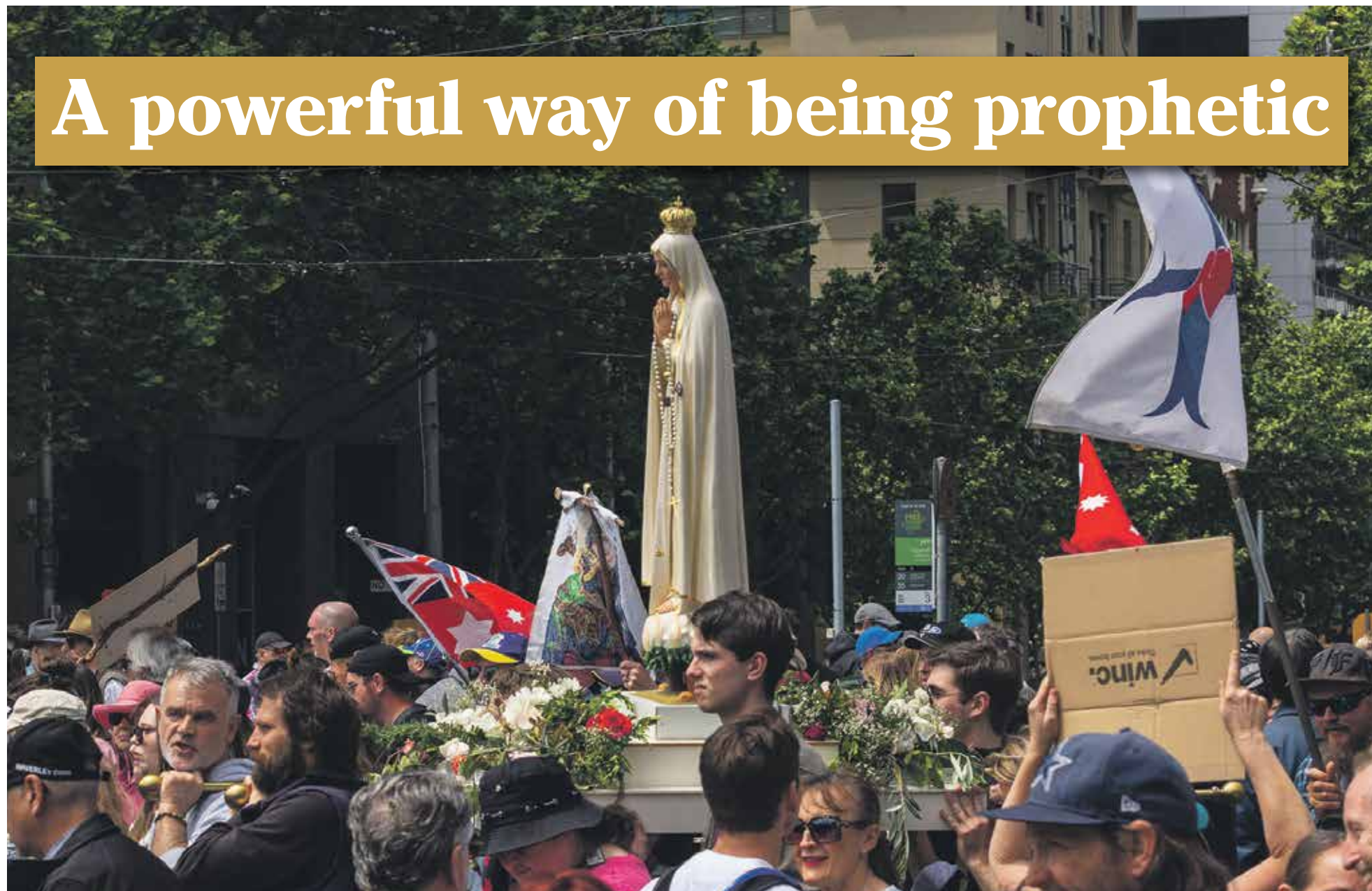
Incidentally, we can pray for the dead even if we personally have doubts about an individual's salvation. While a soul in hell can no longer benefit from prayers, we never know what happens between a soul and God in the final moments of life. Prayers for the dead are never wasted.

There are several biblical citations referencing prayers for the dead, most famously, II Maccabees 12:44-45: "For if [Judas Maccabee] were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."

**i** Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist.



# A powerful way of being prophetic



Christian discipleship calls all of us to be prophetic, to be advocates for justice, to help give voice to the poor and to defend truth. But not all of us, by temperament or by particular vocation, are called to civil disobedience, public demonstrations, and the picket lines, as were Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Daniel Berrigan, and other such prophetic figures. All are asked to be prophetic, but for some this means more wielding a basin and towel than wielding a placard.

**“A prophet takes Jesus seriously when he asks us, in the face of violence, to turn the other cheek”**

There is a powerful way of being prophetic that, while seemingly quiet and personal, is never private. And its rules are the same as the rules for those who, in the name of Jesus, are wielding placards and risking civil disobedience. What are those rules, rules for a Christian prophecy?

First, a prophet makes a vow of love, not of alienation. There is a critical distinction between stirring up trouble and offering prophecy out of love, a distinction between operating out of egoism and operating out of faith and hope. A prophet risks misunderstanding, but never



## Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

seeks it, and a prophet seeks always to have a mellow rather than an angry heart.

Second, a prophet draws his or her cause from Jesus and not from an ideology. Ideologies can carry a lot of truth and be genuine advocates for justice. But, people can walk away from an ideology, seeing it precisely as an ideology, as political correctness, and thus justify their rejection of the truth it carries. Sincere people often walk away from Greenpeace, from Feminism, or Liberation Theology, from Critical Race Theory, and many other ideologies which in fact carry a lot of truth because those truths are wrapped inside an ideology. Sincere people will not walk away from Jesus. In our struggle for justice and truth, we must be ever vigilant that we are drawing our truth from the Gospels and not from some

ideology.

Third, a prophet is committed to non-violence. A prophet is always seeking to personally disarm rather than to arm, to be in the words of Daniel Berrigan, a powerless criminal in a time of criminal power. A prophet takes Jesus seriously when he asks us, in the face of violence, to turn the other cheek. A prophet incarnates in his or her way of living the eschatological truth that in heaven there will be no guns.

**God's voice**

Fourth, a prophet articulates God's voice for the poor and for the earth. Any preaching, teaching, or political action that is not good news for the poor is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, to “widows, orphans, and strangers” (biblical code

for the most vulnerable groups in society). As Pastor Forbes once famously said: Nobody goes to heaven without a letter of reference from the poor. We are not meant to be the Church compatible.

Fifth, a prophet doesn't foretell the future but properly names the present in terms of God's vision of things. A prophet reads where the finger of God is within everyday life, in function of naming our fidelity or infidelity to God and in function of pointing to our future in terms of God's plan for us. This is Jesus' challenge to read the signs of the times.

Sixth, a prophet speaks out of a horizon of hope. A prophet draws his or her vision and energy not from wishful thinking nor from optimism, but from hope. And Christian hope is not based on whether the world situation is better or worse on a given day. Christian hope is based on God's promise, a promise that was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus, which assures us that we can entrust ourselves to love, truth, and justice, even if the world kills us for it. The stone will

always roll back from the tomb.

Seventh, a prophet's heart and cause are never a ghetto. Jesus assures us that in his Father's house there are many rooms. Christian prophecy must ensure that no person or group can make God their own tribal or national deity. God is equally solicitous vis-à-vis all people and all nations.

**“This last counsel is, I believe, the one most challenging for ‘quiet’ prophets”**

Finally, a prophet doesn't just speak or write about injustice, a prophet also acts and acts with courage, even at the cost of death. A prophet is a wisdom figure, a Magus or a Sophia, who will act, no matter the cost in lost friends, lost prestige, lost freedom, or danger to his or her own life. A prophet has enough altruistic love, hope, and courage to act, no matter the cost. A prophet never seeks martyrdom but accepts it if it finds him or her.

This last counsel is, I believe, the one most challenging for “quiet” prophets. Wisdom figures are not renowned for being on the picket lines, but in that lies the challenge. A prophet can discern at what time to park the placard and bring out the basin and towel – and at what time to lay aside the basin and towel and pick up the placard.

**“There is a critical distinction between stirring up trouble and offering prophecy out of love, a distinction between operating out of egoism and operating out of faith and hope”**

# A 2,000 year-old promise that is kept...



May 14, 2023 - Sixth Sunday of Easter  
 Acts 8:5-8, 14-17  
 Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20  
 I Peter 3:15-18  
 John 14:15-21

A few years ago, a colleague of mine made a pastoral visit to one of the forgotten corners of the world: Armenia. Here is a country suffering from devastations most of us can only imagine – genocide, war, earthquakes, economic disaster. It's all taken a toll. The young have left, looking for better opportunities. Many of those left behind – the elderly and even some young mothers with children – live in what my colleague called “grinding poverty.”

Their homes are tin sheds with no running water. Indoor plumbing is a hole in the floor. These are people who once had lives and careers, families

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



and businesses – and now they have nothing. Some collect a small pension, but many are barely able to live.

**“In just a couple weeks, we will celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit fell like fire upon the apostles”**

Reflecting on all this, my colleague emailed me, “I know God is everywhere, but it seems sometimes that he is nowhere.”

His unspoken question seemed to be: “Where is God?”

It is a question that has been asked again and again throughout history – many asked it, I remember, after the tragedy of 9/11. When things seem most bleak, when the world is wracked by despair, where is hope? Where is faith?

Where is God? Cynics may scoff. Doubters will shrug. But you don't have to look far to find an answer; we find one in this Sunday's Gospel. Just before he ascends to the Father, Jesus tells his disciples: you will not be alone.

“The Father will give you another Advocate to be with you always,” he says, “the Spirit of truth... you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

The Advocate, of course, is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is coming, Jesus says. You will not be abandoned or alone.

Who would dare to disbelieve him?

In just a couple weeks, we will celebrate Pentecost,

the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit fell like fire upon the apostles.

It can be easy for us to forget: That fire is still burning. Even now, the Advocate continues to advocate for all of us.

**“He is everywhere the light of Christ continues to burn – the light ignited at the Easter Vigil in millions of candles around the world”**

To those who ask, “Where is God?,” the simple answer is: “Look around you.” God is wherever the Holy Spirit is at work.

In Armenia, he is in the hearts of those who are caring for the sick, the elderly, the poor, the helpless. He is in the arms that embrace children who have been pushed aside.

He is everywhere the light of Christ continues to burn – the light ignited at

the Easter Vigil in millions of candles around the world.

Seek that, I believe, and you will see the face of Christ – and with that, the ongoing advocacy work of the ultimate Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

Whether we realise it or not, God lives on around us and within us. Love prevails. Hope endures.

## Hope

The letter from Peter this week exhorts us: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” Here is my explanation, one astounding reason for hope: It is Jesus Christ! It is God's son showing us, with open arms on the cross, just how wide is the breadth of his love.

It is the Word made flesh keeping his word. Again and again, in ways both visible and invisible.

It is the joy and certainty of a 2,000-year-old promise that has been kept – of love enduring, compassion

spreading, inspiration and hope prevailing, in spite of everything.

It is the continuing presence of the Advocate. Yes. There is a reason for hope!

**“Trust and believe: We are not orphans”**

It's there every Sunday in the tabernacle. It's in the pews, in the quiet work of people we know and strangers we don't.

It's within us all, burning with the glow of one candle that ignited countless more fires, in humbling and inexpressible ways.

Trust and believe: We are not orphans.

**i** Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, *The Deacon's Bench*. He serves in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Coronation focus on duty was welcome in a cynical age

I often think that it should be possible for there to be authoritarianism, dogma without dogmatism or pomp without pomposity.

**Nine News** (RTÉ One, Saturday) referred to the “pomp and ceremony” at the coronation of Britain’s King Charles III. It wasn’t short of either of those, but was it pompous? I’ve seen worse in an episode of **Downton Abbey!** I wasn’t interested enough to watch the live coverage, and I couldn’t work up any enthusiasm for the debate as to whether RTÉ should have broadcast it. Whatever the case, what I did see had plenty of seriousness and consciousness of duty and service, welcome at a time when cynicism is so pervasive. There was a positive attitude to religion and the Bible was respected – kissed by the king! It was mainly about the monarchy supporting Protestantism, somewhat disconcerting perhaps for Catholic citizens in the UK, but there were nods to ‘all faiths’ as well. And yet I’m uneasy with this strange combination of Church and State that marks the English system of government – such alliances are not always to the advantage of either entity.

One interviewee on that News programme called the monarchy an “affront



King Charles III sits on the throne after being crowned with St Edward’s Crown by Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury during his coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey in London. Photo: OSV News, Aaron Chown, Reuters

to democracy”, which was echoed by a contribution from activist Peter Tatchell, reported on Times Radio. I don’t agree with him on very much, but he too seemed to see it as contrary to the values of democracy to have an unelected head of state and he certainly had a point. All the media discussions surrounding the event made me reflect on the broad church republicanism can be – from Mr Tatchell

and the anti-monarchist, via Donald Trump and the US Republicans to Irish republicans represented for example by Michelle O’Neill of Sinn Féin, who was, surprisingly, in attendance at the coronation – in her capacity as First Minister Designate in Northern Ireland, if only the Assembly up there would actually meet and function.

And so, from the sublime to the ridiculous,

I found myself watching **Killinaskully** (RTÉ One, Saturday) – you’ll notice how I’m trying to avoid responsibility and shame! I used to like Pat Shortt when he was part of **D’Unbelievables** with Jon Kenny, and his series **Mattie** wasn’t terrible, but the **Killinaskully** shtick surely is, though I realise comedy is a rather subjective thing. It is more amateurish and flakier than **Father Ted**, and last week’s episode derived much of its attempts at humour from that other clerical show. Local priest, the dopey Fr Philip is representing the parish in an all-priests race. His opponents are an ancient priest who collapses when the starting pistol is fired, a painfully unfit chain-smoking priest who doesn’t get far and a sleazy fashion-driven priest just back from the missions with a pretty housekeeper. I’ve heard of ‘parish pump’ politics, but this is ‘parish pump’ drama. The humour, such as it is, when it’s not about bodily functions, is sometimes crude in a naughty ‘carry on’ kind of way. This was a repeat of course, and I doubt it would get made today, but scarce RTÉ funding is given for worse.

There was more of a focus on real priests on **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk) last Monday morning. Unlike RTÉ’s recent report on the ‘Year of Vocations’

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### NIGHT OF THE PROPHET EWTN Sunday May 14, 9pm

Through the eyes of a Roman journalist, a dramatisation of Padre Pio, who is unveiled as a man of purity and Christian charity.

#### INSIDE THE HOSPICE Virgin Media One Monday May 15, 9pm

A series dealing with death and grief in Ireland through unprecedented access to terminally-ill patients on their journey from diagnosis to final days in Our Lady’s Hospice in Harold’s Cross.

#### INIÚCHADH TG4 Wednesday May 17, 9.30pm

Kevin Magee investigates the human impact behind Ireland’s housing crisis. He travels around the country to find out the impact the housing shortage is having on communities and families.

this one came with a dig at the fact that vocations to the Catholic priesthood are for males only. This was stressed, at least three times in the promos for the item, and in a way and tone that felt like a cheap shot. Things were better when it got to the actual item, an interview with Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore. I thought Pat Kenny was inclined at times to conflate the issues of celibacy and the male-only priesthood, without an appreciation of the different kinds of Church teaching involved. To the presenter’s suggestion that Jesus, in calling men only to the priesthood,

was just following the *morés* of the time, Bishop Cullinan pointed out that in that region the concept of priestess was familiar in other religions. More fundamentally he said that taking on any lifelong commitment was decreasing generally and that it was “difficult to hear the voice of God in today’s society”. Yet, he felt, there were vocations out there. The new campaign proposed that career guidance teachers in schools should include the suggestion that priesthood was an option – a modest proposal.

# Music

Pat O’Kelly



## A finale tribute to Rakhmaninov

Earlier in the year, I mentioned 2023 being the sesquicentenary of the birth of Sergey Rakhmaninov in Semyonovo in Russia. While anniversary performances of his music take place in a number of venues, there will be a major celebration on Friday May 26 when the National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus end their 2022/23 series of subscription concerts at the National Concert Hall with his tone poem *The Isle of the Dead* and his choral masterpiece *The Bells*.

Rakhmaninov’s inspiration for *The Isle of the Dead* came from seeing a black and white reproduction of Swiss-born symbol-



Tenor Valentyn Dytiuk. Artist painter Arnold Böcklin’s work in Paris in 1907. The resultant tone poem dates from early 1909 with the

first performance taking place in Moscow the following April. The composer then made a number of revisions until he was completely satisfied and allowed *The Isle of the Dead* to be published.

It is interesting that when Rakhmaninov eventually saw the Böcklin canvas he was disappointed going so far as to say that if he had seen the original painting in the first instance he probably would not have written the tone poem at all. “I like it in black and white”. Other composers motivated by Böcklin include Gustav Mahler and Max Reger.

Rakhmaninov’s choral masterpiece *The Bells* – a work for which he held a

particular affection – dates from 1913. It had its première in St Petersburg on November 30<sup>th</sup> that year. Loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe’s poem *The Bells*, the text Rakhmaninov used came from a Russian translation by symbolist poet, Konstantin Balmont (1867-1942).

The Tridentine Requiem Mass sequence *Dies Irae*, one of Rakhmaninov’s favourite chants that found its way into a number of his compositions, not least his Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, is used frequently throughout *The Bells* score.

In the first movement, which reflects Poe’s *Silver Sleigh Bells*, Rakhmaninov’s

*Allegro* responds with a tenor solo in music that is ‘full of youthful verve, joyfulness and optimism’. The composer gives the bell chimes to woodwind, piano and triangle.

The second movement – a soprano solo with choral interjections – finds Poe associating marriage with *Mellow Golden Bells* with Rakhmaninov providing sumptuous orchestral writing that indicates a passionate concept of marriage that is also expressed in the soprano’s lyrical lines.

The third movement is a brilliant choral presto. Possessing something of a diabolical character it shows an almost instrumental treat-

ment of the voices that is exceptionally difficult for any choral group. Rakhmaninov follows Poe’s *The Loud Alarum Bells* with restless obsessive motion.

The finale is marked *Lento lugubre*. *The Mournful Bells* are introduced by a plaintive cor anglais melody eventually taken up by the baritone solo. Great emotional intensity leads to a climax of terror before *The Bells* subside as the Soul finds peace in death.

Rakhmaninov died at his home in Beverly Hills, California on March 28, 1943.

Estonian maestro Mihhail Gerts returns to the NCH rostrum to conduct this commemorative performance of *The Bells* with visiting soloists Mirjam Mesak, soprano, Valentyn Dytiuk, tenor and Andrei Bondarenko, baritone.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## ‘Letters from the past’: Missionary life in the troubled Chile of 1985

J. Anthony Gaughan

Recently I came across in my files this letter which I received in February 1985 from my classmate and much-treasured friend, Fr Peter Lemass. Peter set out at the end of 1984 to join the Columban mission in Chile. Before his departure he promised his classmates to keep us informed on his experiences and the challenges of the mission in Chile. This letter was one of a series in which he fulfilled his promise.

Peter's letter, written in 1985, illustrates the truth of the aphorism *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Peter records an

earthquake, the evil influence of a dictator, poverty and class-distinction – all realities still with us.

The particular situation in Chile that year arose from the earlier political and social movements in the country. The socialist president, freely elected in 1970, was deposed by the army and died by his own hand in the siege of the presidential palace in September 1973. He was followed by the rigid dictatorship of General Pinochet, which lasted down to March 1990. The period, when Peter Lemass was in Chile, was one of the darkest periods of Chile's history, one involving great social inequalities.

**D**ear Tony, It's been an eventful few weeks here in Santiago. First there was the sudden news of (former Archbishop of Dublin) Dermot Ryan's death. My brother phoned the Columban's to let me know, and (Fr) Jimmy Prendiville broke the news to me. Dermot had been a good friend over more than 30 years. It was he who introduced me to Clonliffe. It was a friendship that endured his being my archbishop, occasional sharp differences of opinion, and the distance of the Atlantic. I always regarded him first as a friend. I miss him.

**“Windows of high-rise buildings fell out, and shot across the streets, blinding, cutting and, in some cases, killing people”**

The other event was the earthquake. It happened last Sunday night at seven minutes to eight. I was travelling to visit Matt McMahon, an agronomist from Kerry, who has been working here for several years, and had a motor accident last week. Jimmy Prendiville and (Fr) Peter Hughes, (my PP) were in the car. We had stopped to turn left when it happened.

I thought a car from behind had run into us, but when I looked around there was no car, and ours kept bucking and rocking.

Then we realised what it was and jumped onto the street. It was quite hard to stand, you had to hold on to the car. In about three minutes it stopped. We were in a ritzier part of the city, where buildings were new and strong, so the full extent of the damage did not immediately appear. But hardly a single house was unaffected by it. Hundreds fell, especially in the old sectors, or roofs, and part or whole walls. Parapets fell and killed passers-by. Windows of high-rise buildings fell out, and shot across the streets, blinding, cutting and, in some cases, killing people.

Road subsidence's did more damage; some cars simply drove into a hole 20 feet deep, which had opened in front of them. Thousands slept out in tents. Many still are doing so.

### Collapsing

In our parish we were lucky. A baby was killed in the Pentecostal church when part of the roof fell in. Her mother was injured badly. Apart from that, the damage was slight, walls down, ceilings collapsing, nothing more serious. But we used the Mass in time of earthquake at the back of the Missal – I always thought I wouldn't be using that!



An impoverished town in Chile contrasts the skyscrapers in the background.

The fact that the group was multi-national, Australian, New Zealand, American, Scottish, English and Irish, causes some misunderstandings and certain differences of approach but I think on the whole it makes for greater tolerance of one another's views. There does seem to be a good deal of unanimity in the group, which impressed me. They have been through a lot together. One was expelled last year and four arrested.

**“Most of the funerals are done by lay people from the area where the person dies. It is unusual for the body to be brought to church”**

The work is fairly different from at home. We are just beginning enrolments

for First Communion, marriages and baptisms. All the people involved in these will have to do courses of preparation, and these will all be run by lay people from the parish. My job as the priest will be to visit these groups and keep them in good heart and shape.

We have five chapels in the parish, with four Masses each Sunday. In the fifth chapel which varies each week, a lay man holds a service of the Word and Eucharist. The number who come to this would be little, though not much less than Mass. Most of the funerals are done by lay people from the area where the person dies. It is

unusual for the body to be brought to church.

### Music

The music is good and there is always music at Mass. There is usually a shared homily and the prayers of the faithful come from the floor, not from the altar (but then all our chapels are small enough for the people to be heard).

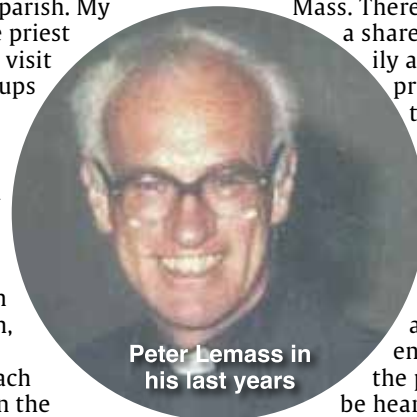
It is an interesting experience settling into parish life here after 27 years of it at home. In some ways it is like starting off again. I thought I would regret being so old coming out here, and while there are problems in this – my memory is not so sharp

for the language, or names – the fact of having a fair bit of pastoral experience helps in making judgements on the situation here. Otherwise, I might have been inclined to think this was the only way of evangelising people.

For instance, there is no daily Mass in many of the parishes here. Mass is celebrated on Sundays only, and then with plenty of effort and participation. I am saying Mass each week-day during Lent, and getting a good attendance. The Mass takes nearly an hour, as they sing about five verses of every hymn and sing all they possibly can. Then at a time like this, with the earthquake, the prayers of the faithful go on, and on.

### Divided

The Church seems to be pretty divided. The Columbans are in poor areas, the locals (diocesans) in



Peter Lemass in his last years

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.



Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

**“The cards bore the words, ‘we wish you a Christmas without torture’ and when the people saw this they started to hit the priest. The local PP stood by without interfering and the police were called”**

the high-class ones. There does not seem to be much dialogue between the two. An American Columban was arrested when he was selling Christmas cards outside a parish church in the Barrio Alto (high class area). Some parishioners were coming out of Mass. The cards bore the words, “we wish you a Christmas without torture” and when the people saw this they started to hit the priest. The local PP stood by without interfering and the police were called. The Columban was later deported.

**“The present man is talking of reconciliation which, in practice, seems to mean appeasement of the Pinochet regime”**

I heard the PP was furious at the Columban selling outside his Church without his permission and ‘upsetting’ his people. There is talk now of trying to arrange a meeting between these priests and the Columbans. Should be interesting.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that while the former Cardinal (de Silva) was clearly against the government and on the side of the oppressed, the present man is talking of reconciliation which, in practice, seems to mean appeasement of the [President Augusto] Pinochet regime.

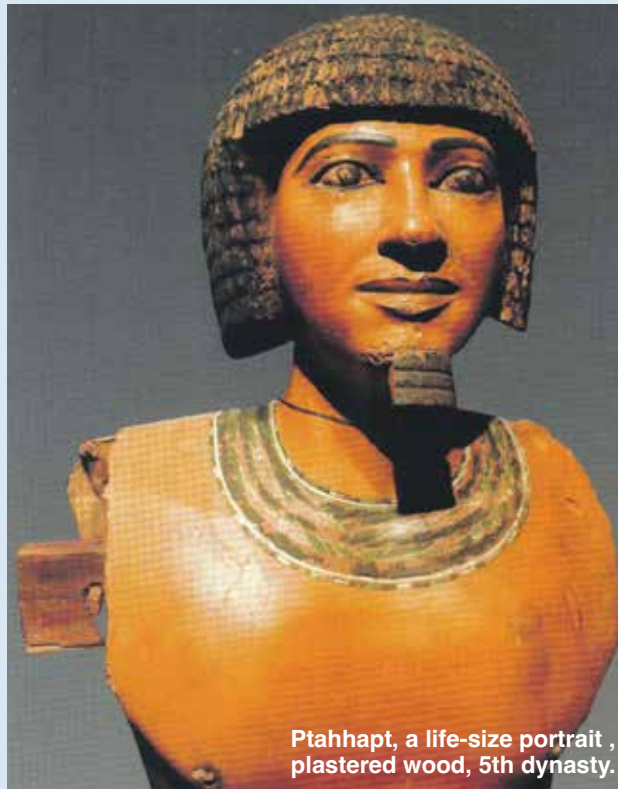
It leaves those who are in the van of the struggle for human rights, and against torture in a less secure position. Last week the medical council expelled one of its members, a doctor, for participating in torture. They said they were investigating a further three doctors for the same offence. Yet in some Church circles there seems to be a denial of its existence.

All of which, plus earthquakes, means that we shall hardly die of boredom...

**i** Copyright (c) The estate of Fr Peter Lemass, 2023. Published by permission.

Diagnosed with a terminal illness, Peter Lemass returned to Ireland. He died on 22 January 1988, and so he did not live to see the end of Pinochet’s rule two years later.

# Wise words from Egypt of 4,000 years ago



Ptahhapt, a life-size portrait, plastered wood, 5th dynasty.

**The Oldest Books in the World: Philosophy in the Age of the Pyramids,**  
by Bill Manley  
(Thames and Hudson,  
£25.00/€29.00)

**Peter Costello**

**H**ow could any literate person resist the appeal of a title like this? Here for once they will find their expectations brilliantly fulfilled.

This is indeed a most interesting book, but more than that it will I suspect be a book of some future importance to those interested, not just in ancient Egypt, but also concerned with the origins of philosophy, as well as the influence, so little considered in the past, on the emergence of Christianity in

its first centuries. But the key to the matter is the sudden introduction of writing, and its rapid adoption.

Bill Manley is a well-established academic having taught the languages of ancient and Christian Egypt, over 30 years at London University, Glasgow and Liverpool, among a variety of related activities as curator and popular lecturer. I say this so as to reassure readers that this is not what my son calls “a crank book”.

## Details

Far from it indeed. Page after page is filled with mind-changing details. Take for instance the fact adduced here that this earlier book of all conceives not an array of gods, but a single creator.

Manley presents Akhenaton, far from the manipu-

lated legend of being “the first individual in history” and all the familiar tropes we find in Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud and others.

It seems we may have to rethink the common view about the mental life of the Egyptians. Monotheism seems to have an earlier horizon than usually thought, moving back into the Neolithic. But first the background, which is fascinating.

The period here is circa 2400BC. What the author describes as the world’s earliest book is *The Teaching of Ptahhapt*. This, in the form of Papyrus Prisse, was first printed in Paris in 1858, but ever since, aside from a very few scholars, has been ignored. Most scholars ignored it, or said it impossible to translate and was unintelligible.

It is a collection of maxims rather than a discussion or essays, such as we are familiar with in Greek or classical philosophy generally. It bears no resemblance to the polytheistic or even occult nature of what people imagine Egyptian literature to consist of.

It provides counsels of action and for living which are very clear. One of his main thoughts is to avoid purposeless debate or angry exchanges – with which we are now over familiar – as they are quite fruitless. We should learn continually from others, and not always seek to impose our notions on others. It even gives advice for office life, and bosses should act, for the *litterateurs* at that date were largely engaged in the administration of the state for the pharaoh. This maxim could apply today.

But aside from maxims of good counsel, the present book includes, from another papyrus, a new translation of

*Why Things Happen*, about the nature of the physical world, and the creation of the world and how it works in an ordered, creative way.

Manley argues that writing was a sudden introduction, and that Ptahhapt is the first named writer in the world. The new invention of writing changed the Egyptian world. Just as the PC spread in a couple of decades, so too writing seems to have suddenly and shockingly emerged as the major influence on society. Already the writer could challenge the kings of the world.

It is surprising to read this, for having always been taught that the Egyptians were polytheistic we find in fact the authors of these texts conceived of, not countless gods and spirits, but essentially a creator above and beyond the deities of the Nile Valley. Essentially Ptahhapt was a monotheist.

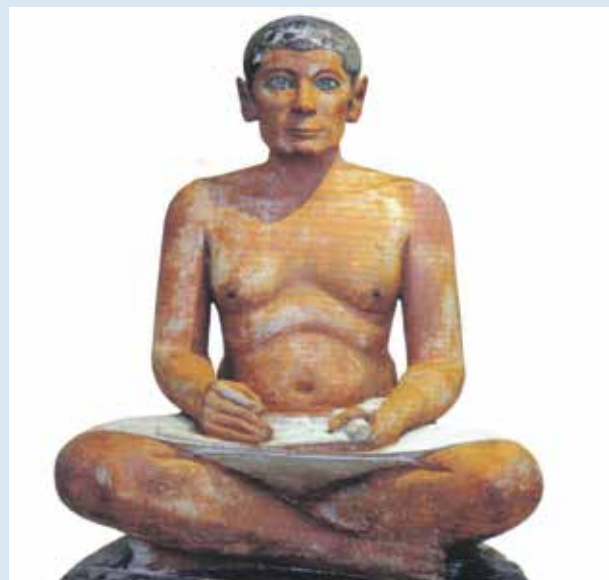
## Connects

This connects him forward in time, as Manley observes, with the author of *The Gospel* according to John, especially its opening passage.

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God”: that so familiar locution, it seems, was basically an Egyptian expression of belief.

This set me off on a line of thought which I have little room to discuss here, of the unsuspected influence on Jewish and Christian thinking; another day perhaps.

In these matters there is, it seems, even after four millennia, a lot to learn, and perhaps to unlearn. Bill Manley’s book can be warmly recommended to adventurous readers who delight in new insights.



An ancient Egyptian scribe at work, pen in hand.



Fragment of a Ptahhapt scroll.

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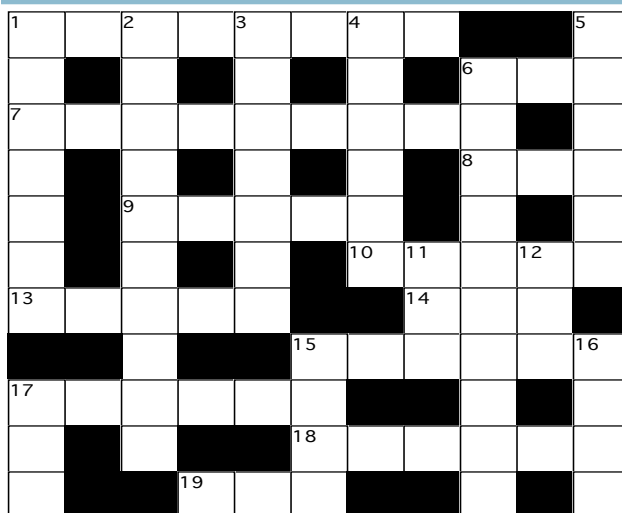
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### Crossword Junior

Gordius 482



#### Across

- 1 Vegetable with green florets (8)
- 6 The audience might make this sound if they don't like what they see (3)
- 7 Add eighteen and four to get this answer (6-3)
- 8 Can (3)
- 9 One of a bunch which may be used to make wine (5)
- 10 You pass the baton in a \_\_\_\_\_ race (5)
- 13 Chambers (5)
- 14 Allow (3)
- 15 One, two or three, maybe (6)
- 17 A very gentle wind (6)
- 18 Wrote your name (6)
- 19 Strike (3)

#### Down

- 1 Person who cuts and sells meat (7)
- 2 They protect your hands if you want to take out a hot roast (4,6)
- 3 Pirate's sword (7)
- 4 Put a stamp on the envelope before you post this (6)
- 5 Offaly or Tyrone, perhaps (6)
- 6 Bring glass here for recycling (6,4)
- 11 Large type of tree (3)
- 12 Had some food (3)
- 15 Bird's home (4)
- 16 Impolite (4)
- 17 The only mammal that can truly fly (3)

### SOLUTIONS, MAY 04

GORDIUS NO. 609

**Across** - 1 Backstroke 6 Fact 10 Loner 11 Modernise 12 Kingdom 15 Magna Carta 17 Asia 18 Leer 21 Private 24 Opal 25 Real 26 Coves 28 Swallow 34 Glaze 35 Soak 36 Tenderness

**Down** - 1 Ball 2 Confident 3 Shrug 4 Romeo 5 Kids 7 Aping 8 The parable of the Lost Sheep 9 Grimace 13 Dear 14 Marvels 16 Blood cells 20 Reprobate 21 Persist 22 Tuna 27 Vesta 29 Wiped 30 Lager 31 Gene 32 Weds

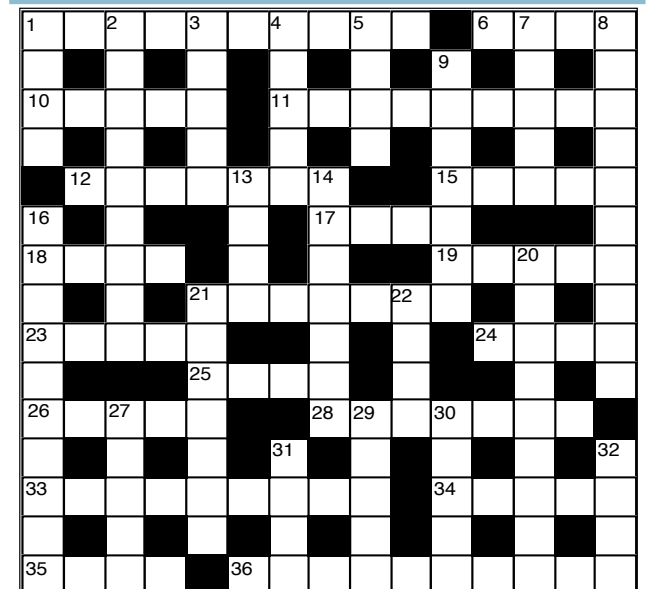
CHILDREN'S No. 481

**Across** - 1 Reversing 7 Ole 8 Billy 9 Assists 12 Nearly 13 Caesar 14 Owls 16 Eliminate 18 Cover 19 Kiss

**Down** - 1 Robin Hood 2 Valuable 3 Royal 4 Imps 5 Gods 6 Less 10 Sycamore 11 Tractors 15 Slave 17 Neck

### Crossword

Gordius 610



#### Across

- 1 Structure you may place in your garden to house our wild feathered friends (7,3)
- 6 Retail outlet (4)
- 10 Garment worn around the shoulders and over the head (5)
- 11 & 12 She appeared to St Bernadette in France (3,4,2,7)
- 15 Dawn (5)
- 17 Light around a saint's head (4)
- 18 Strikes (4)
- 19 Incites, presses (5)
- 21 Try (7)
- 23 Underground tomb (5)
- 24 One due to inherit (4)
- 25 Pleat (4)
- 26 Surplus (5)
- 28 Angels of the higher order (7)
- 33 Verdi opera (9)
- 34 & 14d Town at the mouth of the Tyne river (5,7)
- 35 Obsessive type of the computer world (4)
- 36 Ancient Greek who famously shouted 'Eureka!' (10)

#### Down

- 1 American space agency (1,1,1,1)
- 2 Shipshape, in condition to

#### make a voyage (9)

- 3 One who perpetually lazes about (5)
- 4 Mitten (5)
- 5 Rowing implements to make one soar around (4)
- 7 Austrian composer of the 'London' and 'Clock' symphonies (5)
- 8 Flaky creation featuring in Beef Wellington and Pastel de nata (4,6)
- 9 Faint, swoon (4,3)
- 13 Attempt to lose weight (4)
- 14 See 34 across
- 16 Hen enclosure (7,3)
- 20 Dog bred for racing (9)
- 21 Culpable, responsible for a problem (2,5)
- 22 The sound of a contented cat (4)
- 27 Striped predator (5)
- 29 Age, era (5)
- 30 State in India noted for its tea plantations (5)
- 31 Actor who scatters rats (4)
- 32 Therefore (4)

## Sudoku Corner

482

Easy

2			4		8	6		3
		6		9		7		
8	3		1				4	
1			3		9			7
	5	8				4	3	
3			8		4			1
	2			8			7	5
		5		3		1		
7		3	9		5			6

Hard

	2			6				
1	4					5		
			4			9	8	
		8	2	9				
4								7
				1	5	3		
	3	4			7			
		5					2	3
					1			6

### Last week's Easy 481

1	8	2	5	7	6	3	9	4
6	9	7	8	3	4	1	5	2
3	5	4	1	2	9	6	8	7
9	6	1	3	5	7	4	2	8
7	3	8	2	4	1	9	6	5
4	2	5	6	9	8	7	1	3
8	7	9	4	6	2	5	3	1
5	1	6	7	8	3	2	4	9
2	4	3	9	1	5	8	7	6

### Last week's Hard 481

2	4	5	6	9	1	8	7	3
7	1	8	3	4	2	9	5	6
3	9	6	8	5	7	4	2	1
9	8	4	5	2	6	1	3	7
1	7	2	4	8	3	6	9	5
5	6	3	7	1	9	2	8	4
4	2	1	9	7	5	3	6	8
8	3	7	2	6	4	5	1	9
6	5	9	1	3	8	7	4	2

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



# A new parish name for a family of parishes

We have a name! (Or, *Habemus nomen* as the cardinal who announces a new pope might put it). At last, our family of parishes has a name of its very own. Since last September, when I took up my new West Cork coastal appointment, our pastoral unit has had the somewhat unwieldy title of “The parishes of Aughadown, Castlehaven and Myross, Kilmacabea, Rath and The Islands, and Skibbereen”.

We used that title on our communal newsletter, since otherwise we would have quickly become the ‘Skibbereen Family of Parishes’. This might have been convenient, but would be guaranteed to put many noses out of joint in the surrounding rural parishes. So we began a search of a new name (and a crest to grace our newsletter’s masthead).

We were fortunate to have the help of students at the central Skibbereen Community School. They were our inspiration. Fr Terry O’Brien worked with students in one of the religious education classes there, under the guidance of school chaplain, Rosie O’Brien. The name of ‘St Ciarán and All Saints’ was the result. The stu-



dents also designed a crest for our newsletter, depicting a boat sailing in choppy waters, an image of the Church. The anchor by its side represents Christ, on whom we rely to keep alive our hope of safely reaching our destination.

### New patron

Our new patron, Ciarán, is an ancient Irish saint, and a native of our area. Born on Cape Clear Island in AD 352, he studied in Rome before returning to preach in AD 402, first in his island home and then all over the area of south Cork that includes our five parishes. As these dates testify, the local belief is that Ciarán preached

Christianity before Patrick.

Later he travelled on to his father’s home place in Seir, Co. Offaly, the place of his burial. It is said that he founded Christianity in both the Diocese of Ossory and of Ross. Ciarán is venerated also in Cornwall (as St Piran), Wales, Scotland and Brittany. Everywhere, he is likened to Francis of Assisi, in his love for animals and birds: his faith, his simple lifestyle, and his love of all creation continue to inspire.

We have to give our bishop some credit in the choice of patron. When Bishop Fintan established families of parishes in 2022, he challenged us all to be missionary disciples, quoting the Lord’s call in Luke 5:4: “Put

out into deep waters.”

St Ciarán was our original missionary disciple, leaving his home on Oileán Cléire to bring the Faith in many other parts. He seems an apt patron.

### All Saints

To his name we have added ‘All Saints’, because eight of our ten churches have saintly patrons: St Mary, St Patrick, St Brigid, St Fachtna, St Barrahan, St Comghall, St Mona, and of course St Ciarán on Oileán Cléire. We are also encouraged by our saintly ancestors, including the famine dead of Skibbereen and its hinterland, 9,000 of whom are buried in Abbeystrewry graveyard alone, all saints surely. May they all pray for us.

### Just like in Covid times...

● Bishops love confirming, or they must. Covid turned Confirmation into a lovely low-key sacrament, presided over by the pastor, with just immediate family members. The feedback was good, and much of the excessive ‘pizzazz’ disappeared.

But now it’s back, as bishops lead high-octane liturgies all over the place. And Lent takes over from Easter as the season of initiation.

It would be lovely if families got a choice: to attend a central celebration with their bishop — or to be able to choose a local celebration at Easter or pentecost, just like Baptism or First Communion. Just like in Covid times....

### Another liturgy challenge...

I haven’t often quoted Pope Pius XI. In fact I’ve rarely read anything he wrote, but I came across a lovely quote in J. D. Crichton’s 1983 book on ‘The Liturgy of Holy Week’.

Pius XI was a fan of teaching through the liturgy. As he put it, people learn more about the truths of the Faith by the annual celebration of the sacred mysteries that by any pronouncement of the teaching of the Church: “Such pronouncements reach only a few and the more learned among the Faithful; feasts reach them all.”

Yet another challenge to celebrate liturgy well...



## A PLEA FROM HONDURAS:

PLEASE HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR FAMILIES AND THE ABANDONED LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

The Missionary Sisters of Christ the Master in Comayagua, Honduras are counting on our help to bring vital food, medicine and other assistance to more than 800 people. Sister Alba Moreles Galvez has written to THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION: “We have been working in this extremely impoverished area for ten years, where families live in wooden shacks in very basic conditions. I hope that the Little Way will assist us with five programs. These are: 1) Comprehensive Nutrition. We need to provide food to three groups, as well as training in gospel values and the development of agricultural projects. 2) A group of girls live and are educated at a Home run by our Sisters. They have nowhere else to go. 3) We wish to provide food and medical aid to older adults, who are often abandoned. 4) Provisions are needed by extremely poor families, as well as training in literacy, to give the young especially a better chance in life. 5) At San Isidro Farm we hope to expand self-sustaining agricultural projects, such as egg production.”

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez recommends that we help the Sisters, whom he knows well. He asks for as much as we can send these communities living in extreme poverty.

**This Lent, we urge you to give alms to our fund for the hungry, sick and deprived.**

**Without any kind of deduction for administration, this fund is used to support missionaries providing life-sustaining assistance to destitute families and individuals.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
 Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
 (Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**

€..... **TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL**

€..... **WELLS AND WATER**

€..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
We ask for a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) \_\_\_\_\_ (Block letters please)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

IC/05/11

To donate online go to [tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**



Sr Alba writes: “We provide education, complete formation, to children and young people in situations of extreme poverty, we take care of the abandoned sick and we go where no one wants to go to evangelize.”

**In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.**

**Every euro you send will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction.**

**Little Way benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions in the Missions.**



“We can never have too much confidence in our God Who is so mighty and so merciful.”  
 - St Therese

### LENT WITH ST THERESE

In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine: “Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight.”

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: “Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.”

### WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries repeatedly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean, safe water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

**Can you help provide a well?**