

The Irish Catholic

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Dáil attacks on Church are leading to violence – TDs warn

Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

Verbal attacks against the Catholic Church in the Dáil are inciting violent incidents targeting churches and parishioners Irish politicians have warned, adding that the Republic of Ireland is for very many Catholics now "a cold house where they feel they have to hide their faith".

The comments come in the wake of an arson attack on a church in Kerry and the violent disruption of a Mass at an Augustinian church in Cork.

Leader of Aontú Peadar Tóibín decried the "absolutely shocking" events, saying they don't happen accidentally.

"There is hardly a day in Leinster House or in the media that there isn't some kind of verbal attack or casual slur on the Catholic Church," the Meath West TD told *The Irish Catholic*.

"I have no problem with accountability and critical analysis of any organisation. But the sheer volume and repetition of a negative message no doubt seeps into people's views and attitudes and leads to these kind of horrendous attacks. The south of Ireland is for very many Catholics a cold house where they feel they have to hide their faith," Mr Tóibín added.

Michael Collins TD of Cork South-West described the recent attacks as

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Explosion of joy...



Students and staff of Holy Family Primary School, Derry, celebrate the reception of the Diversity and Inclusion Management award, which recognises their efforts to cater for the needs of all students, January 9.

FR PAUL CLAYTON-LEA

C.S. Lewis and the 'Wee' County of Louth

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2023 – A busy year for Catholics

Dear Friends of *The Irish Catholic*,
The poet Patrick Kavanagh wrote in his poem Advent, "And Christ comes with a January flower". The miracle of Christmas is extended into the New Year, where we discover the new life in Christ in the vulnerability of a tiny snowdrop that defies the dark nights and cold weather. And so, we begin a new year with hope and trust in God ready for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

As a newspaper we said goodbye to Pope Benedict in Rome who passed into life eternal just as the year was preparing to turn after more than 70 years as a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord – almost the last ten accompanying Pope Francis in prayer from his monastery home in the Vatican Gardens.

Reliable

As a newspaper, *The Irish Catholic* was in Rome bringing you reliable, up-to-date and authentic coverage of the legacy of Benedict XVI and events surrounding his death and burial. The growing lack of knowledge of the Catholic world in the secular media was painfully obvious – and journalists from *The Irish Catholic* were called on to 'translate' the events in Rome and the significance of the life of Pope Benedict XVI to a media that during his Pontificate was often hostile, and in some places refused to see the many different sides of this complex man.

Among those we helped were CNN International,

MSNBC, BBC World News, BBC Radio Ulster, RTÉ's Brendan O'Connor Show, BBC Radio Foyle, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Wales, and iCatholic. We also covered BBC Radio Five Live and BBC World Service Radio and RTÉ's live television broadcast of the funeral.

This was all to try to help people understand the riches and beauty of the Catholic faith.

“The miracle of Christmas is extended into the New Year, where we discover the new life in Christ in the vulnerability of a tiny snowdrop”

Archbishop Dermot Farrell speaking to us in Rome said that a huge challenge for the Church in Ireland is to get the simple message of Benedict into the minds and hearts of Irish Catholics, especially young people in our schools.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, who was also in Rome, wrote last year that the synodal process revealed many challenges facing the Church. We will be exploring these challenges further in March in Prague when representatives from all over Europe meet to discuss a final docu-

ment ahead of the Synod of Bishops in October.

Point

We will also continue to hold politicians north and south to account and point out when they are not true to commitments they made – particularly when it comes to issues of concern to people of faith like homelessness, poverty reduction, the right to life and the protection of the family and faith-based schools that do so much to promote values calibrated by the Gospel.

And speaking of Gospel values, our new catechesis section 'Your Faith' is getting great feedback, and we are committed to growing and developing it so feel free to get in touch with suggestions about how we can help people take responsibility for their Faith and be confident in living and promoting it.

All of this is how we as your Irish Catholic newspaper are doing our best to promote greater understanding and love of the Catholic Faith.

As Editor, I want to ask you a question: will you join us in this exciting mission? Many of you already promote the paper amongst your family and friends, I know many others help sell and distribute the paper in your local parish or community.

Can you help us take

the next steps in growing *The Irish Catholic* to be a platform where people can enrich their own faith with a view to sharing it with others?

“Our new catechesis section 'Your Faith' is getting great feedback, and we are committed to growing and developing it”

We have exciting plans to grow our online presence and to promote adult faith formation that is lively, engaging, challenging and uplifting. Could you help us build those resources to face the challenges and opportunities this new year brings as we embrace the task of rekindling the flame of faith in Ireland?

You can make a regular donation and become a 'Friend of *The Irish Catholic*' by filling out the form on this page and returning it to us here. If you would like to discuss helping us with this mission or have ideas about promoting or distributing the newspaper in your own parish or community, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me directly via email on michael@irishcatholic.ie or telephone **01.687.4020**.

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Dáil attacks on Church are leading to violence – TDs warn

» **Continued from Page 1**

"scandalous", and that certain politicians in the Dáil are "ranting rather than talking" about the Church.

"These same individual politicians continue to criticise and criticise and it stokes up anger among some people that are fragile in the community and then they carry out these crimes. Politicians have to come off their anti-Church, personal agenda and start looking at positive rather than just negative," he said.

Clare TD Michael McNamara said there are regular attacks against the Church by TDs "in the name of tolerance".

"We all need to be careful of our rhetoric. Just because you believe you

are right does not make it correct to engage in vociferous condemnation," Mr McNamara said.

"I have found it's often those who have a 'be kind' type moniker on social media that can engage in the most vitriolic criticism and the same can be true in the Dáil. It's sometimes those who call for tolerance can be the least tolerant," he added.

Some politicians choose to forget about all the good work of priests and religious in Ireland and around the world, according to Michael Healy-Rae TD of Kerry.

He told *The Irish Catholic*: "They choose to forget all of that. They have a chip on their shoulder and of course it leads to a lack of respect for the Church, and then is it any wonder

when people go in and burn things at the altar or when they damage property?"

Churches will have to review security systems around church buildings, according to Senator Sharon Keogh.

"The Church is a very valuable group within society and I think the lack of respect that's being shown to the Church over the last decade has certainly allowed this type of anger to be amplified and that's why maybe we're getting the incidents that we're getting today."

"I certainly don't think we should rule it out. We shouldn't rule out things like this happening within our communities. I think the Church need to up their level of security on

all churches. I don't think the Catholic Faith is going to be uniquely singled out here... church buildings in general are going to become targets."

She added: "It's very, very sad, because the Church has always been a place of sanctuary, a place of peace, a place of prayer. It's encouraging people into churches that we need to be doing."

An Garda Síochána are still investigating an arson attack on St Peter and St Paul church in Ballyduff, Co. Kerry, on December 30. Three young women believed to be in their 20s were seen on CCTV entering the church – while it was still open to the public – and setting an altar cloth alight.

In a statement to this paper a

Garda spokesperson said: "Gardaí attended an incident of criminal damage that occurred at a premises in the Benmore area of Ballyduff, Co. Kerry at approximately 5.50pm on Friday, the 30th of December 2022. No arrests have been made at this time and investigations are ongoing."

On Sunday, January 8, a Mass in St Augustine's church in Cork City was disrupted by a man and a woman. The man was playing a guitar and following the woman up and down the nave while she screamed at parishioners during a reading. The Mass continued despite the disturbance, which was caught on the church's webcam.

The church is the home of Cork's Augustinian community.

Latin Mass situation is 'tricky' but not an Irish issue says archbishop

Chai Brady in Rome

The Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh has said Pope Benedict XVI's efforts to reach out to Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) enthusiasts did not work, which led to Pope Francis imposing restrictions.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Archbishop Eamon Martin said that while the Pope is concerned the pre-Vatican II Mass was creating division in the Church, it is not a "big issue" in Ireland.

The archbishop said there was a consultation

regarding the Pope's letter enforcing an array of restrictions with those concerned all over the country.

"We didn't find that same amount of division had occurred," Archbishop Martin said.

"There were small groups, stable groups of people, who wished to celebrate the Traditional Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form and it seemed to be going OK."

Issue

"So it wasn't a big issue for us in Ireland I don't think. Perhaps there are places

where it had become more of a political... row between different camps, I didn't experience that in Ireland and nor do I even today in Ireland," he added.

Pope Benedict XVI liberalised the use of the Latin Mass – known as the 'Extraordinary Form' – in 2007. However Pope Francis u-turned, saying in his *motu proprio, Traditionis Custodes* that having heard the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "I now desire, with this apostolic letter, to press on ever more in the constant search for ecclesial communion".

Archbishop Martin said Pope Benedict spoke a lot about the noble simplicity of the liturgy and that for him divine worship must always be "ordered to the glory of God and the sanctification of God's people".

"I think his own writings, for example his seminal work *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, are works that people turn to nowadays, especially those who sometimes see in the reform of the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council that we have moved away from beauty in worship," Dr Martin said.

However, he stressed that the late pope spoke about the importance of the Second Vatican Council as "not being a break with Church tradition but being in continuity".

See page 20.

Michael Flatley sings praises of strong faith



Michael Flatley in his recent movie, *Blackbird*. Photo: Twitter

Jason Osborne

Dance magnate Michael Flatley says his faith in God is deeply important to him, and that he can't help but be grateful to God for the life he's lived.

Speaking on the *Brendan O'Connor Show* on Saturday, Mr Flatley said that he's a "big believer in God" and that he's got "great faith".

Speaking to Brendan about his foray into the movie industry with his recent offering, *Blackbird*, he credited his confidence in his endeavours to his faith in God.

"Not everything I'm going to do is perfect and it certainly hasn't been in the past and it

never will be," Mr Flatley said.

"You just have to trust in God and put your faith in him and get out there and work hard and try your best. If you do that, chances are things are going to turn out alright."

Asked how he feels about his life at the moment, Mr Flatley emphasised his gratitude to God, saying that he "thanks God every day".

"I grew up in Chicago digging ditches and being in fights and silly things as well, but I grew up working hard. The fact that I'm here right now, it's a miracle from God, how could I not thank God every day for what I have? I honestly, honestly do."

'God bless the child...'



Pauric and Michelle Bolton and their son Iarlaith were one of the many the families of children who had been baptised in Graiguecullen-Killeshin parish in 2020, 2021 and 2022 who gathered for a special service on the Feast of Christ's Baptism, January 8. Parish priest Fr John Dunphy invited parents forward with their child where they blessed their child with holy water.



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Parents fear being 'railroaded' into changing their school patronage

Ruadhán Jones

Parents have expressed anger and confusion over concerns that their schools were being "railroaded" into change of patronage from Catholic to secular management.

Community meetings were held last month in eight areas across the country, including Dublin and Cork, as part of a pilot initiative to diversify patronage choices for parents.

However, in Raheny, a suburb in North Dublin which has been identified for reconfiguration, parents at one of the Catholic schools in the area – Scoil Áine – said a survey found that 83% of parents were opposed to divesting or reconfiguring the patronage of the school.

The meeting was marked by anger and confusion over schools being "railroaded"

into change, *The Irish Times* reports.

Parents across the country have also expressed concern that, should schools in their area divest, they would be left without access to a Catholic school for their children.

The fears arise due to a "discriminatory" 2018 law that bars Catholic schools from prioritising local children from Catholic families if a school is oversubscribed, the Catholic Education Partnership told *The Irish Catholic*.

"This 2018 law is a sticking point with local communities," said CEP's CEO Alan Hynes.

Parents ask, "what is the point of reconfiguring patronage" if it "only serves to fail to guarantee them choice of school ethos for their child," he continued.

"Everyone is agreed that reconfiguration has to hap-

pen... but if we want to get community buy-in, this law needs to be looked at."

Mr Hynes hit back at reports suggesting the bishops are trying to "lay down the law" to Government over the so-called "Baptism barrier".

"It's not the bishops making this a sticking point, this is something causing concern for communities," he said.

The use of the phrase "Baptism barrier" is "insulting and disrespectful" to the fundamental Christian Sacrament and "fundamentally disrespectful to all Christians," Mr Hynes said.

Reports on the pilot scheme will be forthcoming soon and *The Irish Catholic* understands that in the eight areas, a majority of school staff and parents have indicated their preference for Catholic- rather than State-run schools.

Including abuse victims in policy design 'positive'

Staff reporter

Leading child protection campaigner Marie Collins has said plans to include survivors and victims of clerical abuse in developing the Church in Ireland's response to victims' needs is a "positive move".

However, the former member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors warned that it would only work if it's "not just window dressing".

"It could be a positive move

so long as it's not just window dressing. The people chosen would have to be positively involved," Ms Collins told *The Irish Catholic*.

Her comments come as the Church in Ireland's national safeguarding board has called for "fresh thinking" in how the Church responds to the needs of abuse victims.

Meetings will be held early this year and will include discussion on proposals from survivors that they be included in designing Church policy, the National Board for Safeguard-

ing Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSC) announced in their December newsletter.

The NBSC met with abuse survivors and victims last year as part of plans "to put in place much more robust procedures and practices so that the response we give, recognises the depth and duration of the pain caused".

"It is important that every opportunity is provided to those who have been harmed to enable their voices to be heard," NBSC said.

Ukrainians in Ireland prayed for peace at Christmas, chaplain says



Ukrainian children perform a Nativity play during celebrations for Christmas in the Church of Our Lady of Consolation, Donnycarney, Dublin, on January 7, the day Ukrainian Catholics traditionally celebrate the birth of Christ.

Staff reporter

The Ukrainian Catholic community in Ireland prayed for peace in Ukraine and the world as they celebrated Christmas in Dublin on January 7.

The Mass was "very emotional", especially for those whose sons, brothers and husbands are still in Ukraine fighting Russia, Fr Vasyl Kornitsky told *The Irish Catholic*.

"All of us Ukrainians, in Ukraine and in

Ireland, prayed for the same thing, that Jesus the newborn king of peace may bring peace in Ukraine, the world and in our hearts too," the chaplain to Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland said.

"They all want to go home as soon as possible, but we realise it's not possible at this time," Fr Kornitsky continued. "But Jesus's birth brings hope."

January 7 is the day Ukrainian Catholics, who follow the Gregorian calendar, traditionally celebrate Christmas.

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Jean Vanier.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Franciscans leave Athlone after 800 years

The Franciscan community in Athlone, Co. Westmeath has left the town due to "rapidly aging" friars.

The order had been there for 800 years, starting in 1235.

Franciscan Provincial Aidan McGrath said on Sunday during their farewell Mass "sadly" they had to say goodbye and that

the decision was "something I have struggled with".

Out of their 76 friars in the province 50 are over the age of 75, many of whom need specialist care.

This follows the closure of another Franciscan friary in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary after 750 years.

Kerry chaplain who died suddenly buried

Fr Donal O'Connor, chaplain to IT Tralee, was described as a man who had great empathy with people in times of need, his funeral Mass on Monday heard.

Fr O'Connor passed away suddenly on Wednesday, January 4, at his home in

Shinnagh, Rathmore, at the age of 61.

Tributes to the well-known priest were paid at the Mass in Rathmore, where he was ordained in 1996.

Bishop Ray Browne was chief celebrant and priests

from across the Diocese of Kerry and further afield celebrated the funeral Mass.

"His presence lit up every occasion and we give thanks for his sense of humour," said Bishop Browne in his homily.

Harry shines a light on the importance of mothers



Mary Kenny

It would have been hard to avoid media coverage of Prince Harry's all-too-revealing autobiography, *Spare*, out this week. Aside from the un-sparing details from his private life, there is serious official concern at his apparent boast that he killed 25 Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. British security sources are dismayed that he may have made himself, and others, targets of Jihadists bent on revenge.

“An objective assessment of Diana's life might claim that she, too, made some bad decisions”

And yet, the central compelling point that Harry makes in this memoir is that the loss of a mother, especially at an early age, can be a devastating psychological wound in a person's life.

Repeatedly, Harry dwells on the death of Princess Diana when he was 12, and the way he perceived the experience as being rather coldly managed. He felt he wasn't comforted enough, and over many subsequent years, he saw his mother in his dreams, drove through that Paris tunnel where she so tragically died, tried to make contact with her spirit through the services

of a psychic medium. He describes his wife Meghan visiting Diana's grave seeking her mother-in-law's spiritual guidance.

Whatever other follies, indiscretions and petty squabbles Harry has unwisely or even recklessly disclosed, the longing for, and mourning for, his Mum rings with authenticity, and cannot but be genuinely touching.

Extension

And, by extension, Harry's message elevates just how important a mother is in a person's life, and how much we want to honour our mothers, even sometimes to the extent of erasing their faults. An objective assessment of Diana's life might claim that she, too, made some bad decisions. A harsh judge might even say she contributed to her own tragedy by her manipulation of the media – and with certain unwise relationships, too. But Harry is only human in wanting to see his Mum as perfect, and a sacrificial victim.

And he's right about this – mothers are a huge presence in the lives of their children. Yes, fathers are too: but the influence of a mother is extraordinarily powerful in so many memoirs and autobiographies. That's why mothers are sometimes idealised, and why, too, we all want mothers to be perfect.

Feminists have rejected this idealisation – “motherhood and apple pie” being



Britain's Prince Harry poses with Meghan Markle November 27 in the Sunken Garden of Kensington Palace in London after announcing their engagement. Photo: CNS/Toby Melville, Reuters

the shorthand for everything virtuous – because it seems to stereotype women. But it is a universal truth just the same: motherhood is a deeply significant calling, and there is a reason why we want to respect it.

“Even those Taliban fighters Harry killed may also have yearned for their mothers in their last moments”

Many accounts of the battlefield tell of dying soldiers calling out for their mothers as their worldly lives ebb away. Even those Taliban fighters Harry killed may also have yearned for their mothers in their last moments.

I knew that the traditional job of Britain's Lord Chamberlain was censoring theatre plays. Famed playwrights like Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan nervously sat in the Lord Chamberlain's office while he drew his blue pencil through their scripts. (In contrast, the Irish state had no official theatre censorship.)

Drama censorship finally stopped in 1968, but the Lord Chamberlain retained his role as “Senior Officer of the Royal Household”, and advisor to the monarch. Lord Camoys, who has just died aged 82, was the first Catholic Lord Chamberlain since the Reformation, appointed in 1998.

Tom Camoys came from a distinguished English Recusant family, the Stonors, whose roots go back to the Norman Conquest. They retained their Catholic faith throughout the Penal Times, often at considerable cost. He was christened Ralph Thomas Campion, honouring St Edmund Campion, who was sheltered at Stonor Park during the Elizabethan persecutions.

The hymn “Faith of our Fathers”, incidentally, was originally written about English Catholic martyrs, of the same ilk as Stonor family.

Ireland through the eyes of a British spy

Marking Ireland's 50 years in the EU last week, I alluded to the Christian and Catholic links with Continental Europe going back to the golden age of Irish monasticism.

A similar point was also made by the novelist Elizabeth Bowen, in her wartime reports from “neutral Eire” in the 1940s, which I've recently been re-reading. Bowen, from an Anglo-Irish and Southern Unionist background, was effectively

a British spy during the Second World War, despatching reports to Winston Churchill on the prevailing mood in Dublin.

She was critical of Catholicism – claiming that “the RC Church is opposed to progress”, and yet, she notes that, because of Catholic links, there is “in Dublin rather more full information as to Continental affairs ... than one would find in an English city. I would put this down to the interna-

tional element in the Roman Catholic Church.”

Elizabeth Bowen's *Notes on Eire* was brilliantly edited and published by the Aubane Historical Society at Millstreet, Cork, in 2009, and is usually available through the library system. It's a riveting picture, even given the author's biases, of Ireland in the early 1940s, and the many personalities, from John Charles McQuaid to James Dillon, with whom she had tea.

JOE WALSH TOURS

LOURDES PILGRIMAGE 2023

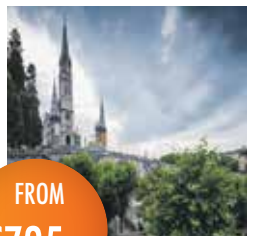


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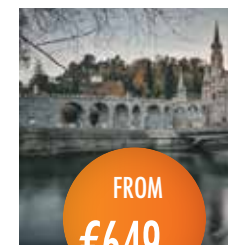


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Louth man asks Rotunda for 'whole truth' about Down Syndrome diagnoses

Jason Osborne

A young man with Down Syndrome has delivered a letter to Professor Fergal Malone of the Rotunda hospital, encouraging them to "save babies with Down Syndrome".

Conor O'Dowd, 28, from Drogheda delivered the letter by hand with his father, former mayor of Drogheda and Aontú representative Michael O'Dowd, in response to Professor Malone's comments that 95% of parents whose baby is diagnosed with Down Syndrome in the Rotunda seek an abortion.

"He asked the Rotunda to tell the truth – not suggesting that Professor Malone is telling lies – but he meant, the whole truth, the good about children with Down Syndrome as well as the medical

issues that might arise," Mr O'Dowd told *The Irish Catholic* of his son's motivation.

"Conor was upset. He's got a keen interest in news – he'd read online news on a daily basis, so we saw that and he was upset by it," Mr O'Dowd said, continuing that Conor decided to write a letter asking "why do they take away babies with Down Syndrome"?

Mr O'Dowd said that hospitals generally put "too much emphasis" on the issues that might arise and the difficulties, rather than on "integration and overcoming problems and issues and bringing them in and making them part of society".

There should be more "supportive information" made available to new parents, Mr O'Dowd said, as

well as "access to online chat groups and support groups".

Such measures would see more people choose to keep their babies following a Down Syndrome diagnosis, Mr O'Dowd said, adding that "hospitals would say that they're non-directive, but when 95% of people chose termination then it's directive in all but name.

"I think there is almost a routinisation of what happens when you get the diagnosis," he said.

"There is a major role to play here by the Government and the HSE in terms of giving the supports that are required for people with a disability, and that too would make the decision to choose life easier, I think, for parents," Mr O'Dowd finished.

Pope tells ambassadors to defend unborn life

Staff reporter

Pope Francis called on ambassadors to the Holy See to safeguard the rights of the unborn to "combat the throwaway culture".

The address to the diplomatic corp took place on Monday, January 9 and was attended by Ireland's Ambassador to the Holy See, as well as ambassadors across Europe and the US, where debates around abortion are intensifying.

He said: "Peace requires

before all else the defence of life, a good that today is jeopardised not only by conflicts, hunger and disease, but all too often even in the mother's womb, through the promotion of an alleged 'right to abortion'.

"No one, however, can claim rights over the life of another human being, especially one who is powerless and thus completely defenceless. For this reason, I appeal to the consciences of men and women of good will, particularly those having political responsibilities, to strive to

safeguard the rights of those who are weakest and to combat the throwaway culture that also, tragically, affects the sick, the disabled and the elderly," the Pope said.

The Pontiff added that states have a primary responsibility to ensure that citizens are assisted in every phase of human life, until natural death, and to do so in a way that makes each feel accompanied and cared for, even in the most delicate moments of his or her life.

Four ordinations to diaconate in one weekend



Rev. David Aksenczuk is pictured with Archbishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor and his parents Ola and Jarek following his ordination to the diaconate on Sunday, January 8.

Ruadhán Jones

Four men were ordained to the diaconate across the island of Ireland last weekend, at a time of vocations crisis in Ireland.

Two sets of ordinations took place on the feast of Epiphany, Friday January 6, in Derry and Sligo, and another on Sunday, January 8 in Belfast.

Stephen Ward was ordained by Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown in Waterside parish, Derry, while Cameroon seminarians Conrad

Forzeh and Frankline Nkopi were ordained by Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran in Sligo Cathedral.

Revs. Nkopi and Forzeh completed their formation for the priesthood in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, as part of an exchange programme with the Diocese of Elphin. They will be incardinated to the priesthood in their home diocese of Kumba, Cameroon.

On January 8, Archbishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor ordained David Aksenczuk in the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Carryduff, Belfast.

SYRIA WINTER CLOTHES APPEAL

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In Syria this winter, children are at risk of hypothermia because they do not have warm clothes. For their parents, this threat to their lives is a bigger worry than the war. Laura, a mother of a young child, is dreading the winter ahead. With the limited income of the family, she has to choose between baby milk and heating fuel. "I can choose to spend money on four hours of

heating or baby milk to stretch for a month – of course I will choose the baby milk". Millions of families like Laura face similar desperate dilemmas. They can only live in hope that the winter will not be cold or that winter is short. IJI is distributing winter clothing kits this winter to more than 2,000 children in Syria. Please donate to keep a Syrian child warm this winter.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Bible dating back to 1615 auctioned in Belfast

A bible dating back to 1615 went under the hammer in east Belfast January 10.

Part of a sale at Bloomfield Auctions from a private collection in a gentleman's residence, the aged tome travelled from Devon with its former owner Elizabeth Pole to what is now Massachusetts, in the US, on the Speedwell in 1633.

The edition sold by Bloomfield Auctions

was owned by Ms Pole, who travelled with her brother to the Plymouth Colony in 1633 and founded the town of Taunton, Massachusetts. She is thought to be the first woman to establish a town in North America.

The Elizabeth Pole Bible was printed in 1615 by Robert Barker, printer to Elizabeth I and James I.

Historic Dublin church on the hunt for brides and grooms



Luke Daly and Mariana Sierra are pictured after their wedding Mass in Newman University Church, St Stephen's Green, Dublin on July 2, 2022.

Ruadhán Jones

One of Dublin's historic churches has put out a call to men and women whose weddings were celebrated there to send in photos from the ceremony.

Hundreds of weddings have taken place in Newman University Church on St Stephen's Green, Dublin, since it opened in 1856 as the chapel for the Catholic University of Ireland – now University College Dublin.

The church has started a project of collecting wedding photos from those married at the church to be displayed there for St Valentine's Day, February 14.

Received

"We have already received photos from as early as the

1940's," a spokeswoman for the Dublin church told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It is heart-warming to see generations of couples come together in a shared space on such an important and sacred day."

Project

The idea for the project originated in a tradition of displaying photos of couples married in the chapel during the preceding year, chaplain to Newman University Church and Director of the Notre Dame-Newman Centre for Faith and Reason Fr Gary Chamberland CSC told *The Irish Catholic*.

"We recognised that we are one of the marriage centres in the archdiocese of Dublin, especially for graduates from UCD, over the years," Fr Chamberland said.

"We want to celebrate the role of the church in the archdiocese and the marriages of the couples who made their vows here. Responses have started to come in already, we're hoping for a big display."

Deadline

The deadline to submit a photo is February 6 and the display begins on February 12. For more information or to submit a photo, visit www.newman.nd.edu.

Couples who submit a photograph, along with their families, are invited to a celebration on February 12 at 6:15pm Mass to celebrate their marriages and to meet others who have been married at University Church or have family that have been married at University Church.

“We want to celebrate the role of the church in the archdiocese and the marriages of the couples who made their vows here”



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Vicar of Rome latest papal confidante to fall out of favour



Pope Francis seems to have a remarkable ability to drop people who were once senior aides, writes **John L. Allen Jr**

In the 1999 film *The Talented Mr Ripley*, based on Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel, Dickie Greenleaf is a charismatic and rich young socialite who's in the habit of drawing people into his orbit and making them feel special, until he loses interest and casts them aside.

When this begins to happen to Tom Ripley, the title character, Greenleaf's girlfriend Marge Sherwood expresses sympathy.

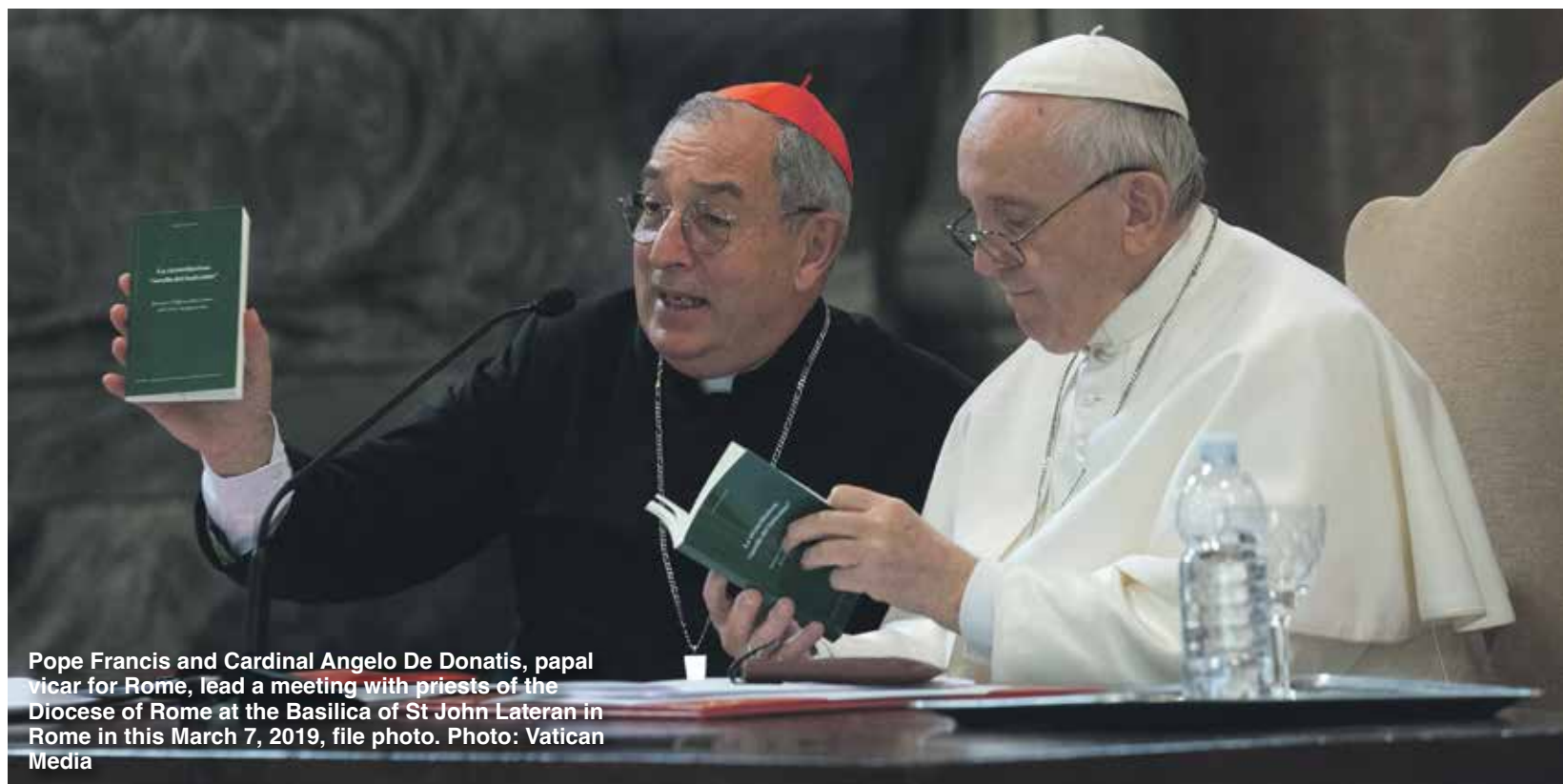
"It's like the sun shines on you and it's glorious," she says of Dickie's favour, "and then he forgets you and it's very, very cold."

As Italian Cardinal Angelo De Donatis would be the latest to tell you, there's a somewhat similar phenomenon with Pope Francis. After almost a decade in power, there's an increasingly long list of figures who were once part of the Pontiff's inner circle, but who, for one reason or another, have lost that standing.

One day after Francis laid his predecessor Benedict XVI to rest on Thursday, he effectively buried Cardinal De Donatis' ecclesiastical career by issuing a sweeping overhaul of the Vicariate of Rome, taking away most of the vicar's power and transferring it to auxiliary bishops in the Eternal City.

Initiatives

Pointedly, Francis decreed that the vicar must not "undertake important initiatives or ones exceeding ordinary administration without first having reported to me". It was a striking denouement for Cardinal De Donatis, 69, whom Francis made an auxiliary bishop of Rome in 2015. Two years later Bishop De Donatis became the vicar, and



Pope Francis and Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, papal vicar for Rome, lead a meeting with priests of the Diocese of Rome at the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome in this March 7, 2019, file photo. Photo: Vatican Media

in 2018 he became a cardinal. Also in 2018, Cardinal De Donatis was the star speaker at a Vatican press conference to present Francis' apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, suggesting the Italian prelate was being groomed for a star role.

“In 2018 Francis made Archbishop Becciu a cardinal and prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints”

Yet the wheels began to come off the relationship during Covid-19, when Francis compelled Cardinal De Donatis to reverse course on closing Roman churches, and further deteriorated when Francis imposed a Vatican financial audit on the vicariate in 2021. Perhaps the last straw was Cardinal De Donatis' recent defence of Jesuit Fr Marko Rupnik, accused of various forms of sexual and spiritual abuse; the cardinal responded by saying, "We ministers of Christ can't be less committed to the due process of law, and less charitable, than a secular state, automatically transforming an accusation into a crime". Of course, the emblematic case of someone who fell out of Francis' favour remains Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who was once the *sostituto*, or 'substitute,' in the Secretariat of State, where from 2013 to 2018 he loomed

as perhaps the most powerful figure in the Vatican after Francis himself.

In 2018 Francis made Archbishop Becciu a cardinal and prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, but in September 2020 the Pope peremptorily dismissed him as prefect and stripped him of his rights as a cardinal, setting the stage for the prelate's indictment by a Vatican tribunal on charges of financial misconduct.

Beyond Cardinals De Donatis and Becciu, others on Francis's 'Ripley List' include:

Australian Cardinal George Pell, tapped by Francis to oversee Vatican financial reform in 2014 but then progressively marginalised even before charges of sexual abuse in his home country (for which he was ultimately acquitted) compelled Cardinal Pell to take a leave of absence;

Social justice

Ghanian Cardinal Peter Turkson, once considered the Pontiff's most trusted aid on social justice issues. Cardinal Turkson's role was undercut in 2019 when Francis named Canadian Jesuit Fr Michael Czerny a cardinal and left him in Cardinal Turkson's office, and the shift in power was formalised in December 2021 when Francis removed Cardinal Turkson as prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and gave the job to Cardinal Czerny;

Cardinal Luis Antonio 'Chito' Tagle, currently prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation and widely

seen as a Francis loyalist. Cardinal Tagle had also been president of Caritas, the worldwide federation of Catholic charities, until a month ago when Francis decreed a major shake-up which included removing Cardinal Tagle from his post;

Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the closest aide to Pope Benedict XVI, whom Francis confirmed as head of the papal household in 2013 in a sign of continuity. Yet in 2020 Francis summoned Archbishop Gänswein to inform him that as of the next day, he was not to come to work any longer and would not appear with him in public, and that he should concentrate exclusively on caring for the emeritus pope;

“Ghanian Cardinal Peter Turkson, once considered the Pontiff's most trusted aid on social justice issues”

Libero Milone, a Dutch-born Italian businessman and former executive at Deloitte who was chosen by Francis in 2015 amid great fanfare as the Vatican's first independent auditor general. His expected five-year term lasted only until 2017, when he was forced out under circumstances that still remain murky;

Domenico Giani, former head of the Vatican gendarmes, who was compelled

to resign in October 2019. Ironically, his offence was publishing an internal flyer with pictures of five other Vatican employees suspended by the Pope as part of an investigation into a failed London real estate deal. When the flyer leaked to the Italian press, Mr Giani himself was out;

Controversial

Albrecht von Boeselager, a German layman and former Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Malta, who lost his job as part of a controversial new constitution for the order decreed by Pope Francis in September 2022. It was an ironic outcome, given that the Pope's involvement with the Knights of Malta began in 2016 when the pontiff ordered Mr Boeselager reinstated after a previous administration that included American Cardinal Raymond Burke tried to fire him;

It's also worth noting that while most popes have had one priest-secretary from beginning to end – think Fr Loris Capovilla for John XXIII, Fr Pasquale Macchi for Paul VI, Fr Stanisław Dziwisz for John Paul II and Msgr Gänswein for Benedict XVI – Francis already has churned through several.

Francis inherited Msgr Alfred Xuereb from Pope Benedict XVI and kept him around until 2018, when he made Archbishop Xuereb a papal ambassador to Korea and Mongolia. At the same time Francis also brought in an Argentinian cleric, Fr Fabián Pedacchio, keep-

ing him around until 2019. In April 2014 Francis also tapped a Coptic priest named Fr Yoannis Lahzi Gaid as a personal secretary, which lasted until 2020.

Today, Francis' secretaries are an Uruguayan priest named Fr Gonzalo Aemilius and Italian Fr Fabio Salerno.

What are we to make of this turnover?

“Management theorists might regard it as a strategy for ensuring that control remains directly in the Pontiff's hands”

Critics may see it as evidence of disloyalty, cutting people loose when it's convenient, or even instability. Admirers likely will style it as a sign of a strong, hands-on manager, who sets expectations for performance and holds people accountable.

Management theorists might regard it as a strategy for ensuring that control remains directly in the Pontiff's hands, by preventing anyone else from building their own empires or putting down roots too deep to dig up.

However one explains it, rotation in key posts does seem a persistent feature of the Francis era – which, among other things, may suggest a dose of caution for others in the Pope's orbit today not to get too comfortable.

C.S. Lewis and the 'Wee' County of Louth



The prolific writer had a particular love for one corner of Ireland, writes Fr Paul Clayton-Lea

While on a journey back from Australia a few months ago I tuned into one of the offerings on the television and movie menu on the aircraft. It was a new series set in the US, and it opened with a young man talking to a psychiatrist and trying to describe how grief was affecting him: "It's just as C.S. Lewis described it. Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape."

“Janie’s son Paddy and Lewis were thrown together at Oxford in 1917 as they awaited deployment during the First World War and became firm friends”

On his deathbed and worried about his alcoholic brother Warren and how he would be provided for, C.S. Lewis told his faithful secretary Walter Hooper that he feared his writing would soon be forgotten and



Author C.S. Lewis is pictured in a 1955 portrait by Walter Stoneman. Photo: CNS



The eastern ridge of the Cooley Mountains.

his brother might become destitute. Hooper disagreed and for once, as the secretary said later, he was to prove his friend and mentor Lewis wrong. With all of Lewis' books still in print 60 years after his death on November 22, 1963 and sales of over 200 million copies Lewis seems destined to be quoted for a long time to come. Attention has also inevitably turned towards his personal life even to the extent of a successful stage play *Shadowlands* (1993) by William Nicholson and transferred to the silver screen by Richard Attenborough about his marriage late in life to the dying American poet and writer Joy Gresham.

Oxford

While Lewis was born in Belfast in 1898, he spent most of his adult life living in Oxford lecturing, writing, and forming a famous circle of literary friends like J.R.R. Tolkien the author of *Lord of the Rings* and Dorothy L. Sayers, both strong Catholics. Lewis was baptised into the Church of Ireland but described himself as an atheist until he underwent a deep conversion experience to the Christian faith in 1931. This happened while he was in Oxford sharing a home with a much older woman, Janie Moore from Co. Louth, where her father, Rev. William James Askins had been Rector of the parish of Dunleer for over 25 years.

Janie's son Paddy and Lewis were thrown together at Oxford in 1917 as they awaited deployment during the First World War and became firm friends. The two teenage soldiers promised one another that in the event of either's death

the survivor would care for the remaining parent. The lot was to fall on Lewis and with his brother Warren he was to live with and care for Janie for 34 years following Paddy's death on the battlefield in 1918. There has been much speculation about the nature of the relationship between Janie and Lewis but most of the evidence including Lewis' diary *All My Road Before Me* (1922-27) points to protectiveness on his part and emotional support on hers.

“The Golden Arrow belonged to another Louth woman Vera Henry who was Janie Moore’s goddaughter and Vera looked after the brothers there during the summer”

Janie's roots in Co. Louth were later to intertwine the lives of both Lewis brothers – for quite distinct reasons – to the extent that both came to know the 'wee' county as well if not better than their native Belfast and Co. Down. In his memoir the late northern politician David Bleakly (1925-2017) a student of Lewis from Strandtown in Belfast where the writer was born recorded; "Jack (C.S. Lewis) felt as much at home in Annagassan in Co. Louth as he did in Belfast". Even more significantly from the point of view of readers of Lewis's classic children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the landscape of Ireland and in particular the Cooley

mountains and Carlingford Lough merging with south Co. Down were pinpointed by Lewis as the setting in his imagination for the mythical land of Narnia.

The place that he most

enjoyed viewing 'Narnia' from was the verandah of the Golden Arrow cottage comprised of three disused railway carriages which occupied an isolated coastal field in Salterstown, near Annagassan in Co. Louth. The Golden Arrow belonged to another Louth woman Vera Henry who was Janie Moore's goddaughter and Vera looked after the brothers there during the summer.

Legion of fans

Despite many offers from his legion of fans Lewis rarely travelled anywhere but to Ireland on summer holidays and Co. Louth was always part of the itinerary. Only after his marriage in 1956 to Joy Gresham did he finally fulfil her wish and bring his dying wife to Greece. But he had brought her to Ireland and to Annagassan twice before that happened.

Another reason for maintaining the constant link with Co. Louth which outlasted the deaths of Janie in 1951 and Vera in 1953 was the frequent alcoholic debilitation of Warren. He almost drank himself to death in Annagassan when on his own little holiday at

the Golden Arrow in 1947. Thanks to the ministrations of Mother Mary Martin (1892-1975) and her Medical Missionaries of Mary at their training hospital in Drogheda Warren recovered.

“The pope admired Lewis’ writing and was believed to have ensured it was translated into Polish”

In November 1994 Pope St John Paul II requested a visit from Walter Hooper to discuss Lewis. The pope admired Lewis' writing and was believed to have ensured it was translated into Polish. At the end of their meeting, he said to Hooper: "C.S. Lewis knew what his apostolate was – and he did it!"

Fr Paul Clayton-Lea is a priest of the Archdiocese of Armagh and author of C.S. Lewis and the 'Wee' County available from Waterstones, Veritas or directly from the author cslweecounty@yahoo.com.

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Getting over the 'Baptism barrier' myth



Catholic schools must be allowed to admit on the basis of religion, writes **David Quinn**

From time to time, articles appear in newspapers using the extremely loaded term 'Baptism barrier'.

It refers to a policy, now outlawed, which allowed Catholic schools to admit Catholic children ahead of other children in the event of over-enrolment.

All schools have admissions policies that are generally only used when a school is over-subscribed, that is, when too many children have applied for too few places.

In such circumstances, schools must decide who to enrol and who to turn down. Often the decision will be based on catchment area, that is, does the child live near the school.

Other times the question will be whether the child already has a sibling in the school, or else a parent who went there.

Usually, schools will use a combination of these criteria. When a Catholic school is over-subscribed it will use these considerations, and if need be, it would also, before the law changed, ask whether the child belongs to the religion of the school. Under those circumstances, it would then ask to see the child's Baptism certificate for the obvious reason that all members of the Catholic religion have been baptised into the faith, usually as babies.

When schools select children on the basis of living close to the school, or belonging to a family with connections to it, no-one says 'catchment area barrier' or 'family barrier'. We save the emotive term 'barrier' only for those cases where selection is done on the basis of religious faith.

When Richard Bruton was Minister for Education the law was passed that forbade Catholic schools admitting on the grounds of religion, but he did not extend that same ban to Protestant and other minority faith schools.

Treatment

This difference in treatment was justified on the grounds that Protestants, Muslims and Jews are in a minority in Ireland and their schools could quickly become swamped by children from other backgrounds meaning children of the same faith could not gain entry to schools established for them.

The Government reasoned that since Catholics in the country are



in a majority (nominal Catholics at any rate), they would not face this problem.

Mr Bruton arrived at his decision following a well organised and media-supported campaign that used the term 'Baptism barrier' with abandon.

“When Richard Bruton was Minister for Education the law was passed that forbade Catholic schools admitting on the grounds of religion”

The campaign focused on areas where schools were over-enrolled (several of them were on the south-side of Dublin where influential professionals with easy media access tend to live), and parents were found who complained about the 'Baptism barrier' and being asked whether their child had been baptised. Cases were reported of parents who had their children baptised simply to have them admitted to the local school.

The problem in those areas was not the 'Baptism barrier', as such, but the lack of school places. There is never an over-enrolment problem when a school is big enough and it so happens that nationwide there are enough school places to

cope even with the sudden influx of Ukrainian refugee children. The over-enrolment problem is very localised.

At the time of the original 'Baptism barrier' controversy a few years ago, the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA) released research, based on responses from its members, showing that less than 2% of Catholic schools were oversubscribed. In other words, the problem was being exaggerated, which severely undercut the Government's rationale for forbidding Catholic schools from admitting pupils on the basis of faith.

Report

On Monday, *The Irish Times* reported that 26pc of multi-denominational primary schools are over-enrolled versus only 6pc of Catholic primary schools.

The figures come from the Department of Education.

Multi-denominational schools are often in areas of rapid population growth and there are not too many of them, which explains the oversubscription figure.

But the amount of over-enrolment might be exaggerated because parents often apply to have their children admitted to several schools in case their first choice is turned down.

One way or another, both the Department of Education and the CPSMA are now in agreement that very few children were ever turned

away from schools because of the Baptism issue.

The Irish Times itself reported: "As a result, the inability of Catholic schools to prioritise children of their faith when offering places affects a very small minority of schools, the survey [from the Department of Education] notes."

“Multi-denominational schools are often in areas of rapid population growth and there are not too many of them”

What has the 'Baptism barrier' back in the news is the story that the Catholic bishops themselves have raised concerns in talks with the Department of Education about the fact that they cannot admit students on the basis of religion when over-enrolled.

Why would they do that if it is not much of a problem? The answer is that both the bishops and the Government want a substantial number of Catholic primary schools divested to new patron bodies. Those schools would then most likely become multi-denominational in character.

But if substantial divestment takes place, then the remaining Catholic schools ought to be allowed to admit on the basis of religion when over-subscribed.

What would be the point of them otherwise?

If in the future there are fewer Catholic schools, then there might well be more competition among Catholic parents to have their children admitted to them and it would seem both unfair and discriminatory on the part of the Government to still have in existence a law which forbids religion being used as a basis for admission when there is a shortage of place.

Discriminatory

It would be doubly discriminatory if Protestant schools were still allowed to do so, but not a diminished number of Catholic schools.

If a Catholic school was being forced to turn down Catholic children when the school was set up primarily to serve the local Catholic community, that would be extremely unfair, to put it very mildly.

Ireland has changed, of course, and is much less Catholic than it was, which is precisely why the bishops favour more divestment (even though parents in practice often resist it, when it is put to them).

But the bishops don't want to give up a lot of schools and then find they still can't prioritise the local faith community.

What does Education Minister Norma Foley, think? What about her officials? Her civil servants are the 'permanent Government', as they say, and will long outlast her. Do they envisage taking potentially hundreds of Catholic schools and giving the country's Catholics nothing back in return?

The bishops, and the Catholic education bodies, are simply asking for what is fair.

“All schools have admissions policies that are generally only used when a school is over-subscribed”

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Jesus of Nazareth: The key to knowing Benedict



Michael Heinlein

Since Pope Benedict's death at age 95 on December 31, much ink has already been spilled detailing both his accomplishments and failures throughout his long life of service to the Church. In the end, though, all the coverage boils down to one question: 'Who was the real Pope Benedict XVI?' While it will be the task of subsequent centuries to measure the full scope of the late Pope's legacy, we might make a fruitful start by considering it through the lens of his bestselling *Jesus of Nazareth* series.

It is no secret that Benedict was a first-rate scholar, and the depth of the series lays this bare. Not only was Joseph Ratzinger one of the most intellectually gifted men to occupy Peter's chair, but he was also one of the most important theologians in the Church's recent history, and he made good use of his pen to teach, too. The gifted, skilled and clear writer authored more than 60 published books.

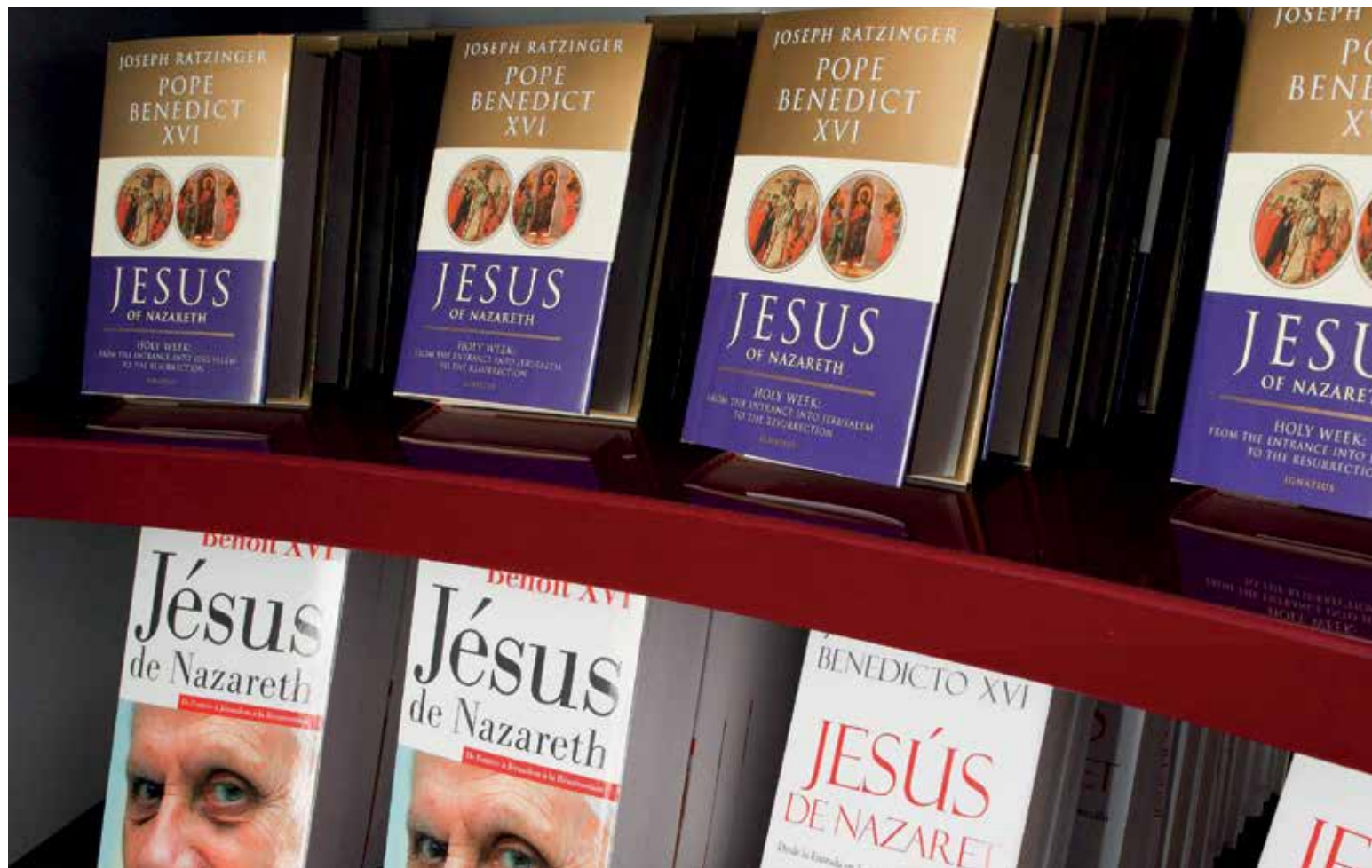
Benedict bequeathed to the Church many rich texts as part of his papal magisterium, which largely focused on the basics, although his theological acumen could zero in on the most intricate of theological questions. Think of his encyclicals on the theological virtues.

“It is said that the books absorbed whatever free time he had for many years”

This was also true of the *Jesus of Nazareth* series. This scholarly and pastoral project, to which he committed finishing as Pope though as a private theologian, focused entirely on the person and mission of Jesus Christ.

Series

In 2003 - two years before his election as Pope - then-Cardinal Ratzinger started work on what developed into the three-volume series. A lifetime of scholarship and research, meditation and prayer, dialogue and inquiry is summed up in its pages, and the breadth and depth of Benedict's faith and spiritual intellect is on full display therein. Readers catch a glimpse into his scholarly mind,



to be sure, but also get a sense of Benedict's pastoral priorities and interior depth as a disciple.

Scholarship

Effective in employing his scholarship as a pastor, Benedict masterfully connects the dots of a sweeping array of authors and sources, offering an entirely unique and comprehensive reading of the Bible and understanding of the Church's faith in Christ. The end product is a summary of Christian understanding of the Saviour, filtered through the heart and mind of a man who breathed love of the Lord, to his very end.

It is said that the books absorbed whatever free time he had for many years, and not without the misgivings of some in the curia, who criticised the studious Pope for the attention he gave to this extra writing during his pontificate. It seemed to them a distraction from the duties of governance, but Benedict saw the project as an urgent obligation and concern.

While Christian theology has trended in recent years toward

deconstruction, especially as regards the historical Jesus, Benedict sought to build and reconstruct. The motivation of his mission was simple: to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and to invite others to a renewed and deepened relationship with him.

“The *Jesus of Nazareth* series gives the most realistic and lasting glimpse into who Benedict XVI really was”

For Benedict, it's clear: the very life of the world depended upon knowing the Lord as Truth - not as an idea but as a person. This meant for Benedict that Jesus was not a mere historical figure meant to be analysed, but a living person ready to be encountered. Nor was Jesus just some political or social revolutionary, but the Son of God made man. All else flowed from this.

Like St Paul, Benedict was handing on what he himself had received - what he himself had

found through prayer, study and his own personal relationship with Christ Jesus. As he wrote in the first volume, the *Jesus of Nazareth* books contained his “personal search ‘for the face of the Lord.’” The living Jesus becomes reality to the reader, page by page, through the pen of a man truly alive in Christ. It was Christ who lived in him; it was from Christ that he received his very self, which he offered back in love. It was Christ who ordered, guided and led him. It was Benedict's own life with Jesus, shared in these books.

Friend

And so, it is clear that the trilogy is more than mere scholarly pursuit. It is the revelation of an intimate and lifelong encounter with a friend, imbued with the fruits of untold hours of contemplation. The man who often showed little concern for himself introduces readers to his Lord and Saviour, his discovery of the pearl of great price. According to his biographer, Peter Seewald, Benedict observed that working on the books was “like constantly drawing water

from the depths of the sources”.

The *Jesus of Nazareth* series gives the most realistic and lasting glimpse into who Benedict XVI really was, beyond all the narratives: the brilliant mind who pursued Christ all his life, who came to know him as a friend, and who served him as a pastor driven to help others love him more. These works will be at the crux of any attempt to understand the interconnection of Benedict's scholarly mind, his pastoral solicitude and his spiritual depth - because these above all else, belonged to Christ, and defined his mission, informed his pastoring and shaped his character.

“For Benedict, it's clear: the very life of the world depended upon knowing the Lord as Truth”

If one's last words before slipping from this earth might be any indication of who he or she really is, then it is no wonder that Benedict's have been reported to be “Jesus, I love you!” What better thing to say? What better to have lived? What better to have left behind as a written legacy?

i Michael Heinlein is author of the forthcoming *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, OMI*.

“The motivation of his mission was simple: to make Jesus Christ known and loved”

Fr Dick Mohan remembered as a pioneer at Lough Derg



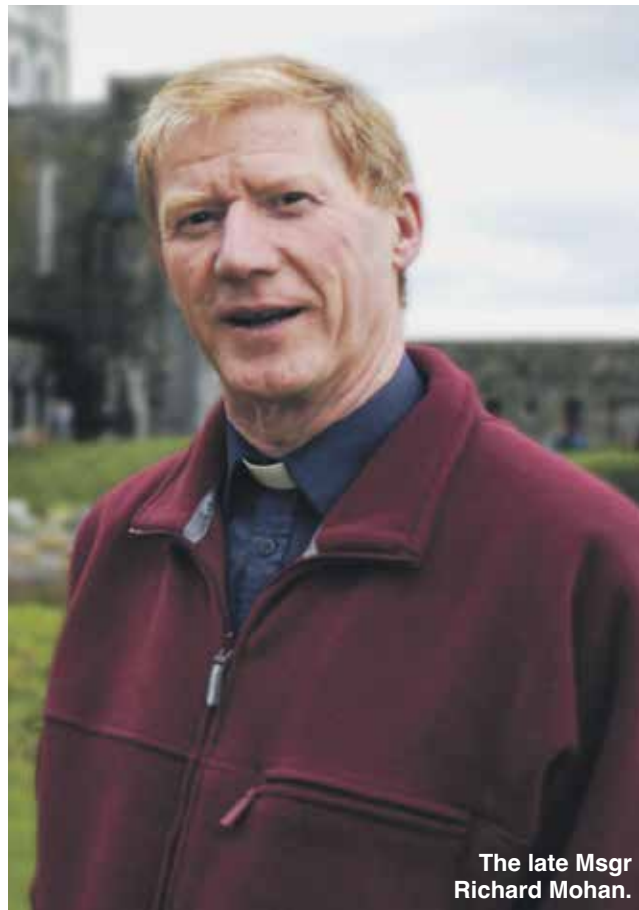
The innovative work of the late prior will ensure a bright future for St Patrick's Purgatory, writes Mary McDaid

It was with a very deep sense of sadness and loss that the death of Msgr Richard Mohan on Sunday January 1, 2023 was learned of by the staff and pilgrims of Lough Derg, by the people of Clones Parish and by a wide circle of his friends. We, the team at Lough Derg have lost a great friend, a great leader who was a man of vision, a man of compassion but most of all, a man of great faith.

Fr Dick, as he was more commonly known, was a member of the team at Lough Derg from 1974 right through until 2013, having served as prior for the last 23 of those 40 years. For all of that time his name was synonymous with Lough Derg: when you thought of the place, you thought of the man. He was known and loved in every county in Ireland and beyond. Many pilgrims from abroad maintained contact with him for years. His love of Lough Derg was so evident in the way he spoke of the island and in the commitment and dedication he gave to it.

Legacy

His legacy will live on at Lough Derg for a long time. I think his legacy is two-fold: Most obvious is the building and renovation work he oversaw during his tenure both as prior and before, working alongside Msgr Gerry McSorley. From the building of a new ladies hostel in the 1980s, a new gift shop and retreat centre and redevelopment of St Mary's Chapel in 2000s to the refurbishment of the men's hostel, staff house and lakeshore in the 1990s, he was never idle! He has ensured that the fabric of the island will be fit for purpose for many more generations of pilgrims.



The late Msgr Richard Mohan.

In 1992, in response to the changing demographic of pilgrims, he had the innovative idea of introducing day retreats on the island. These were designed to provide those unable to do the rigorous three day pilgrimage with an opportunity to pray in the very sacred place that is Lough Derg. The popularity of these days continued to grow and they are now an integral part of the calendar. He also introduced school retreats, enabling young people to visit the island for days of faith combined with fun; these too have grown exponentially with both primary and second level schools attending during the months of March, April and September. Through these pioneering initiatives, Fr Dick played another part in ensuring the future of Lough Derg.

“His legacy will live on at Lough Derg for a long time”

However, much less obvious to the eye, but much more important than the physical development, the real legacy of Fr Dick Mohan will be the memory of his pastoral support of pilgrims and staff, his deep compassion and his great welcome for all who came to Lough Derg. Without a doubt, his greatest ministry was in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He literally embraced the penitent and

their story; he gave them a profound assurance of God's love and mercy; he listened with the ear of the heart.

Initiatives

Although he retired from Lough Derg ten years ago, his legacy is still very evident and will continue for a long time to come: all the wonderful initiatives he introduced are very much part of the programme today. Building on the foundations laid by Fr Mohan and inspired by him, the team at Lough Derg under the leadership of the current prior, Msgr La Flynn, continue to add to the range of pilgrimages on offer, with the latest development being the introduction of residential retreats. Two of these will be offered during the three day pilgrimage season in 2023, one in June and one in August. These will provide an opportunity for directed retreats of four days duration, running alongside the traditional pilgrimage. Day retreats will begin on May 1 with the three-day pilgrimage running as always, from June 1 until August 15. There will be many stories of Fr Dick Mohan recounted in the coming season, all in fidelity to the great gift that he was to Lough Derg.

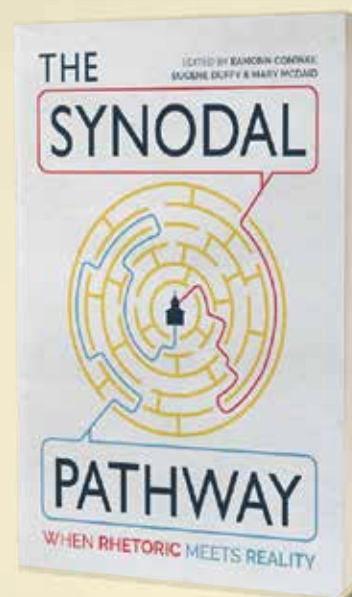
Ar dheis De go raibh a anam. Ni bheidh a leitheid ann aris.

i Mary McDaid is head of the pastoral programme at Lough Derg.

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Trying to follow conscience's



Jennifer Bryson tells **Jason Osborne** that forming a Catholic conscience was key to working in a pressure cooker like Guantanamo Bay detention camp

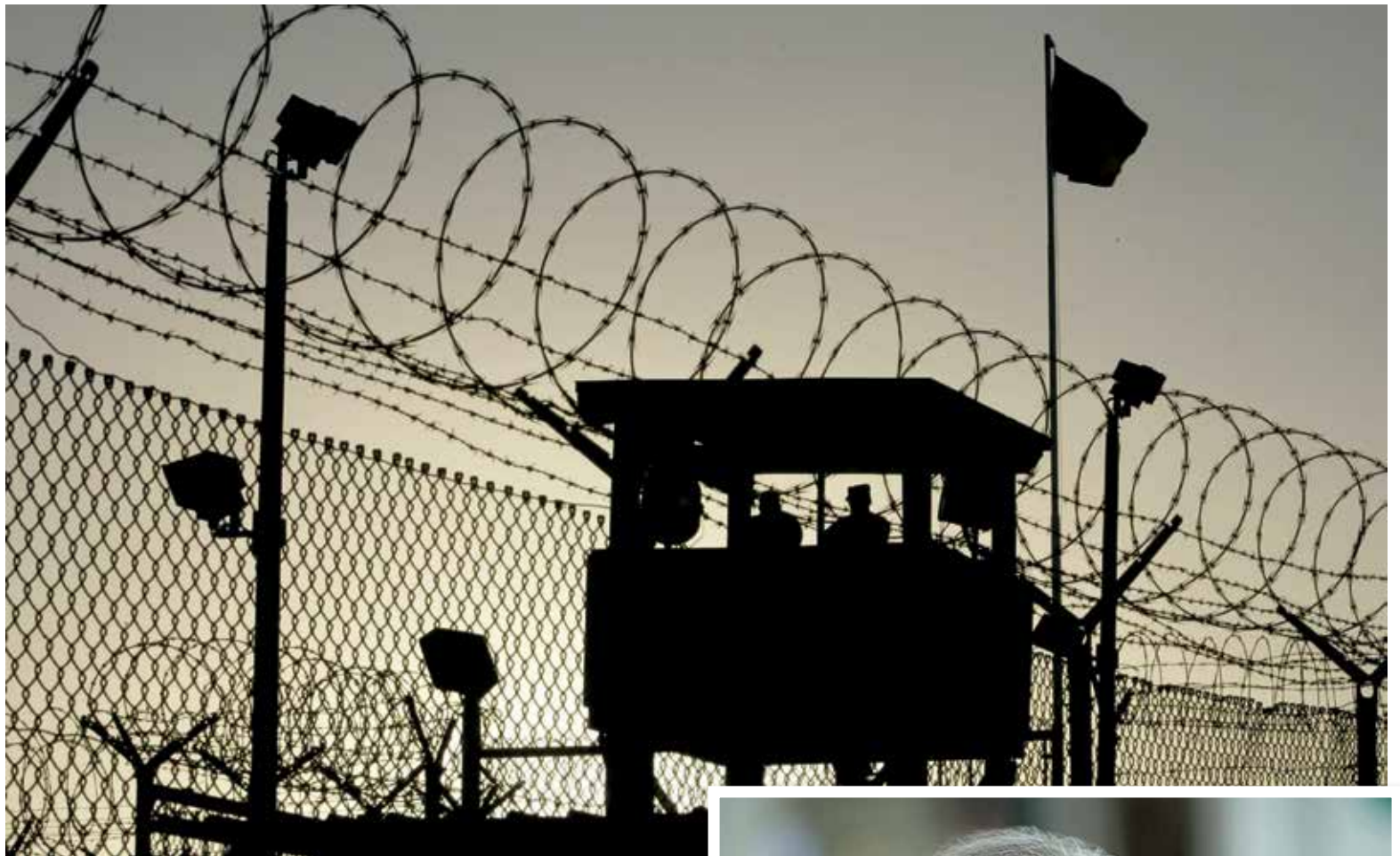
“If there is anything I learned during my time as an interrogator at Guantanamo Bay, it is the importance of a well-formed conscience. Too seldom do we use periods of ease to ready our souls for the great challenges each of us must face. I certainly didn't, and I wish I had,” Jennifer Bryson wrote in her article *Secret Tentative Intimation* for *The Lamp* magazine.

Dr Bryson is a Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre in the Catholic Women's Forum, but before this, she worked for the US Department of Defence from 2001-2008. Her assignments included strategic outreach to media and civil society institutions in Egypt and Yemen, working at the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), and serving on the policy staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defence. While working for the DIA, she was assigned a role as an interrogator at the Guantanamo Bay naval base and detention camp from 2004 - 2006.

The US's Guantanamo Bay detention facility has been the centre of considerable controversy over the past two decades, with numerous human rights groups raising objections over the issues of reports of torture, ill-treatment of detainees and more.

Candidate

Dr Bryson was not an obvious candidate for a job at the facility, and how she came to end up working there is a “long and somewhat crazy story” which is perhaps unexpectedly linked to her entry



US Army troops stand guard over Sally Port One at Camp Delta in 2006 where detainees are held at the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Photo: CNS/Joe Skipper, Reuters

into the Catholic faith, she tells me via email interview. Touching on her faith background by way of addressing the topic, she says:

“One day when I was reading an essay by Lenin on atheism in the library of the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, God burst into my life”

“By age 18, when I entered Stanford University, all that was left over from the lukewarm Protestantism and very secular education of my childhood was a disdain for religion. And in particular, I was solidly anti-Catholic, convinced Catholics were basically superstitious pagans.

“But when I was 19, one day when I was reading an essay by Lenin on atheism in the library of the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, God burst into my life. I was spending my sophomore year abroad in what was then East Germany. In that instant, I experienced and knew that God ‘is’, God is my Creator, and God created everything. I was aware then, at least vaguely, that my Crea-

tor has some sort of concern with me and everyone else too.

“That year, the witness of a few courageous, openly Catholic students, mostly from Poland, radiated a light that was the opposite of the darkness of life in East Germany. The kindness, joy and courage of these students felt true and in harmony with my experience of God in the library. But there was a problem: they were all ‘Catholic,’” she says, adding that it was an ‘oh no!’ moment for her.

“After returning to the US, came a phase as an Evangelical Christian. This changed my views on abortion 180-degrees. I now saw that the child in the womb is a creation of God and I noticed how male students saw abortion as a way to use women for sex without any ‘consequences’. Thus, I became active in the pro-life movement, where I got to know Catholics. It was obvious to me there was tremendous goodness in them; their lives spoke to me. And they evangelised, teaching me about their faith. Through them, I realised that Jesus did not write a book; he founded a Church.

Studying

“I spent a year studying medieval European intellectual history and



Jennifer Bryson

preparing to enter the Catholic Church, which I did at Easter 1990.”

How does this link to Dr Bryson's eventual work at Guantanamo Bay? Studying theology and translation provided the unorthodox bridge.

“Studying Thomas Aquinas as I was entering the Church piqued my curiosity about the transmission of Greek texts into Arabic and then Latin. I spent the next decade studying the transmission of philosophy and science in the Middle Ages, Islam, and Arabic. In 2000, I earned a PhD from Yale in Near Eastern Languages and Civilisations. This degree was viewed as odd and obscure at the time, as not much more than preparation for unemployment. Then came the attacks of September 11, 2001.”

The attacks that day shook Dr Bry-

son, as they did every American, and she says, “I wanted to fight back”.

Civilian intelligence

“I became a civilian intelligence officer for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) of the US military.

“Eventually, a senior member of DIA came up with the idea that my background studying culture, history, and religion, as well as the Arabic language, would be a good background for an interrogator at Guantanamo. This was not my idea! DIA sent me to interrogation training with the Army, which was unusual for a civilian. And then DIA deployed me to Guantanamo. I spent two years living on this tiny US Navy base in the Caribbean, working as an interrogator and an interrogation supervisor,” she says.

“The US's Guantanamo Bay detention facility has been the centre of considerable controversy over the past two decades”

guiding light at Guantanamo Bay



Protesters march with a banner calling for the closure of the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during a St Patrick's Day parade in 2020. Photo: CNS/courtesy Colleen Kelly, September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

Asked whether her faith or conscience were ready for the demands Guantanamo would make of them, Dr Bryson admits that her professional life after 9/11 became "extremely demanding," and that "the challenging experience of Guantanamo came at a time when the roots of my faith were still small and the growing conditions for them were arid".

"In my first decade as a Catholic, I had a hard time. What I found in parishes in the 1990s seemed anemic or even outright hostile to the Catholic faith. Although my heart remained in the Church, I was confused and discouraged. I went to Mass less and less often. I knew Christ's Church existed, but I wondered, 'Where is she?' Only a connection to a Benedictine monastery and a few friends kept my faith on life-support.

"I experienced interrogation as a non-violent way to prevent violence. I am proud of the work the team I supervised and I did"

"The alienation from the Church I experienced as a new Catholic had practical consequences: without a connection to any community of Catholics – to the Body of Christ – in my day-to-day life, mostly being without the sacraments, I had almost no soil to nourish the roots of my new Catholic faith. Little did I know that this decade of faith troubles, which felt difficult at the time, would prove to be more like a lull before a storm in my life," she says.

"My professional life after 9/11 became extremely demanding. The work was meaningful and often exciting but I allowed it to become all-consuming. Other than during

visits to the Benedictine monastery, I almost never went to Mass.

"I remember one time in Germany during this period: I badly wanted to go to Mass, but German Catholics were holding a protest in front of this church against American military actions, of which I was a part and which I supported. My soul was hungry, but it seemed too outrageous and absurd to me that [in] order to go to Mass I should have to pass through a political protest being done in the name of the Church targeted in part at me by Catholics; I did not go."

Important lesson

This taught her an important lesson, she says: we need to consider the impact of our political actions on souls.

"And then, suddenly, DIA informed me that my next assignment was to become an interrogator."

In the aforementioned article in *The Lamp* magazine, penned by Dr Bryson, she tells of how the interrogation training she'd received before arriving at Guantanamo didn't include some of the plans other interrogators had for sessions that she was being asked to sign off on. These included tactics that have been widely criticised in recent decades by various governmental and NGO bodies, such as interrogation sessions that would involve using a darkened room, strobe lights and harsh music at loud volumes. It was in weighing things like this that the role of conscience became so prominent for Dr Bryson. It was thanks to this that she was able to deny requests for interrogation sessions involving such methods, favouring a conversation and relationship-based approach.

"I experienced interrogation as a non-violent way to prevent violence. I am proud of the work the team I supervised and I did. But along

the way at Guantanamo, it was an incredibly difficult experience. I wrote the article *Secret Tentative Intimation* because I think there is a valuable lesson in how ill-prepared I was as a Catholic when I deployed to Guantanamo in 2004," she says.

"There is a moment in moral decision making that [Catholic writer] Ida Friederike Görres calls, 'just when it matters'. She describes wonderfully how the context of 'just when it matters' is generally a wildly complicated mess of internal and external circumstances that are far from ideal for making a weighty decision.

"In Catholic instruction, one hears... 'Pursue the good!' 'Do God's will!' This sounds wonderful. But who of us is actually prepared to do so at any given moment, at moments not of our choosing, 'just

when it matters'? Those moments may well be times when internal turmoil and external pressures point, scream, badger, and pull our conscience to go in other directions.

"I used to think 'formation of conscience' sounded like a boring topic; I'm not sure I really had much understanding of what the phrase even meant. Today, I think it is a fascinating, important topic as well as a golden opportunity. Formation of conscience matters because we cannot predict when life will demand we make decisions of profound moral consequence. And the time to avail ourselves of this opportunity is now, little by little, day by day, not to wait until 'just when it matters'."

The Catholic writer mentioned above, Ida Friederike Görres, has proven influential throughout Dr Bryson's life – to this very day, as she's currently living in Heiligenkreuz, Austria, translating her works from German to English.

"I did not expect my translation of Görres's work to intersect with Guantanamo, but it has. Görres's writings on conscience in two books I translated, *The Church of the Flesh* and in her book about St John Henry Newman (also forthcoming), have helped me make sense of the time I spent in Guantanamo," she says.

"Formation of conscience matters because we cannot predict when life will demand we make decisions of profound moral consequence"

Ms Görres teaches the importance of formation of conscience, Dr Bryson says, which is for obvious reasons of special value to Dr Bryson.

"Görres emphasises the need for formation of conscience. I value her insights about this in a special way because of my experience at Guantanamo. This staggeringly demand-

ing challenge in my life came at a time when my faith life was less than stellar. I was fortunate to have excellent training by the US Army and serve under good leadership most of the time at Guantanamo. My upbringing and my faith, even if weak at the time, provided at least some orientation for my interior moral compass toward what is good and true. But what if none of that had been so? I wonder about this sometimes," she says, adding that "A key emphasis of Görres is that we dare not assume that every conscience is equipped all by itself and at every moment to ace complicated feats of ethical gymnastics".

Ethical decisions

Even if we're not stationed in a place like Guantanamo Bay, where heavy, ethical decisions hang over you frequently, Dr Bryson says that the need to form a strong conscience in today's world cannot be overstated.

"Something Görres helped me understand more deeply is that so long as doing God's will matters, then forming conscience matters. She writes that this includes developing 'practice and depth of prayer, ... clarity of character, ... sharpness of self-reflection, ... strength to take on difficult things.' These all require time and perseverance. They cannot be left to that moment when a storm of unforeseen magnitude rages; then it may be too late.

"What has changed today in the West is how and even whether we take steps to form conscience. The 'infrastructure' that enables healthy, robust formation of conscience is weak and, more and more, under attack. Its key elements include faith-filled family life, vibrant Catholic religious orders, and local life in the Body of Christ including the sacraments. But even so, if individuals choose to ignore this infrastructure, it is of no use. If there is a marvelous autobahn but one never goes for a drive, people will stay stuck where they are," she says.

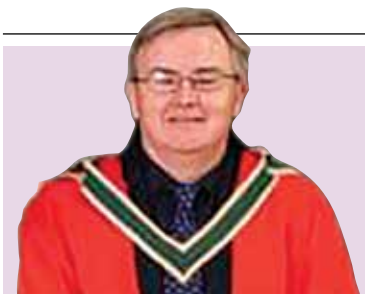


Detainees are seen inside the Camp 6 detention facility in 2009 at Guantanamo Bay US Naval Base in Cuba. Photo: CNS/Linsley, pool via Reuters

Irish human rights groups failing pro-life community



Pro-life activists display signs during the annual All-Ireland Rally for Life in Dublin. Pro-life campaigners in Ireland have criticised a Government plan that would criminalise prayer vigils outside abortion facilities, saying almost all protests are peaceful. Photo: CNS.



It is embarrassing to see human rights groups defend safe zones at abortion centres, writes Dr Leonard Taylor

Draft legislation titled the *Safe Access to Termination of Pregnancy Services Bill* (2021) is currently before Dáil Éireann, and the response of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is of concern.

The Bill intends to establish so-called safe access zones with a radius of 100 metres around designated premises or access to premises that provide termination of pregnancy services or contraceptive services.

The current bill regarding these restrictions to civil rights in Ireland is deeply concerning. The Bill seeks to restrict and indeed contract basic rights to protest, to freedoms of opinion, expression and assem-

bly, and to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in our democratic society.

IHREC, the independent public body that ought to robustly highlight these concerns and defend the scope of these rights, has instead submitted a very poor argument in support of the draft bill without any substantive analysis of the consequence on civil rights.

Proposal

The draft legislation itself is deeply concerning in its scope as an interference of the right to protest. The proposal effectively silences any public utterance of public protest, and similarly any form of communication of the protest from the event is prohibited. Furthermore, the draft bill includes restricting without limitation any public communications, including prayer or counselling.

More broadly it should be noted that our Government has sponsored and succeeded in the adoption of resolutions by the UN Human Rights Council on the growing threats to civil society space and civil society actors.

The most recent 2021 resolution, co-sponsored by Ireland, stated a significant concern about “the use of legal and administrative measures to restrict civil society activity”.

In fact, in response to the success

of the Irish-led resolution championing civil society space, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Simone Coveney said: “A strong and vibrant civil society that actively contributes to our societies and calls us to account is in all our collective interests.”

“Ireland will continue to speak out when civil society is threatened and maintain our staunch support for the protection and promotion of civil society space.”

“However, the proposed draft bill on Safe Access Zones is an example of acts repugnant to the adopted UN Resolutions”

Another peculiarity is that recent Irish Foreign Policy has prioritised creating and maintaining space for civil society, which has clearly emphasised the importance of freedom of expression, along with freedom of religion or belief, all as part of its participation on the UN Human Rights Council.

Yet this laudable international strategy appears to fall on deaf ears domestically. However,

the proposed draft bill on safe access zones is an example of acts repugnant to the adopted UN Resolutions.

Ireland’s move comes as the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association recently emphasised that there is a growing concern at the criminalisation of peaceful protests, and the stigmatisation of civil society actors by governments around the world.

Restrictions

The effect of government led marginalisation and legislative restrictions on the right to protest and the peaceful assembly of civil society actors, and the restriction of civil society space, is a serious concern.

Furthermore, the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency has detailed the nature and extent of restrictions to civil society space by governments across Europe. This is especially the case where civil society actors may hold minority views in society, hold dissenting views or belief and are in opposition to government legislation.

In fact, the European Court of Human Rights has stated that it is “unacceptable that an interference with the right to freedom of assembly could be justified simply

on the basis of the authorities’ own view of the merits of a particular protest”.

Any restriction of fundamental rights must be a last resort to the Government where all other efforts have failed but it could not be surmised that current protests in opposition to abortion reach that threshold, or that it could not be addressed by other means.

In Northern Ireland the Attorney General for Northern Ireland referred a similar bill to the UK Supreme Court. The question arose over the competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly to proposed legislation that is incompatible with the rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. While this challenge failed it would be unsurprising if this case did not move to the European Court of Human Rights.

This ought to concern any Irish Government that would contemplate similar legislation. It would most likely face similar judicial scrutiny in superior courts. It is a source of embarrassment to see the human rights community in Ireland not come out more strongly against this proposed legislation. It is great source of concern that an independent public body such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission does not respond in defence of those human rights values.

“The question arose over the competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly to proposed legislation that is incompatible with the rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights”

i Dr Leonard Taylor is a lecturer in Constitutional law and Human Rights Law at Atlantic Technological University, Sligo.

Benedict XVI: 'May your joy be complete as you hear his voice'



There is no doubt Pope Benedict will leave a lasting legacy as a teacher and theologian, writes **Chai Brady** in Rome

A misty, cold morning greeted mourners the day of Pope Benedict XVI's funeral Mass and the chill did not leave the air as thousands streamed into St Peter's Square for what would be a simple celebration – something the former pontiff specifically requested.

While the Mass was mostly solemn and understated, chants of "Santo Subito" – basically meaning "Sainthood now" – could be heard among the 50,000 attendees, who also carried signs with the same message.

The crowd erupted into clapping after the funeral ended and did not stop as Pope Francis walked from the altar to pray over Pope Benedict's coffin, before it was carried back into St Peter's Basilica.

Flags

Many German flags could be seen flying among the crowd by Benedict's proud countrymen and women, who were saying goodbye to their much-

beloved pope who died aged 95 on New Year's Eve, December 31, 2022.

Bands

A striking sight amid the tens of thousands of people attending was a huge group of Bavarian bands in traditional dress. Their resplendent clothes and sound were a reminder of the former pope's humble roots, a small town called Markt in southern Germany near the Austrian border.

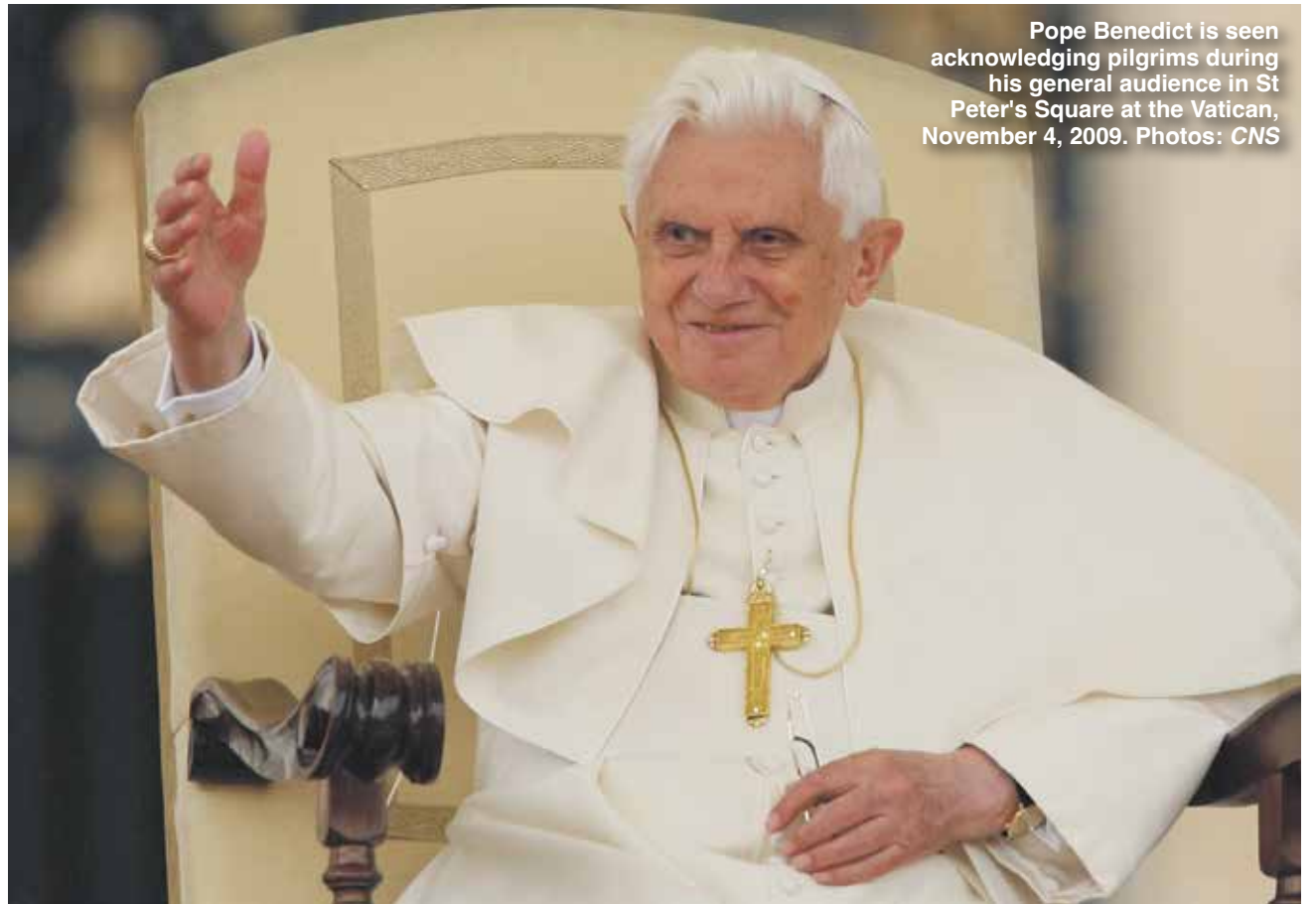
Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after the funeral Mass on Thursday just outside St Peter's Square, one young man from a small town in Bavaria, near Munich, said they feel a spiritual closeness to the late Pontiff.

Andreas Schulze said Benedict is "famous" in the majority Catholic area of Germany. "We have come on five buses from Bavaria, we come to Rome to give him the last goodbye," he said, "There is a great feeling from all these people, from the Catholic Church, and so this is so good."

“A striking sight amid the tens of thousands of people attending was a huge group of Bavarian bands in traditional dress”

Irish attendance was sparse, sources in Rome said it's understood no large groups or politicians from Ireland went to the funeral. However, Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin attended.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* in Rome, Archbishop Farrell said that while there were many Irish people who weren't able to travel to the Vatican



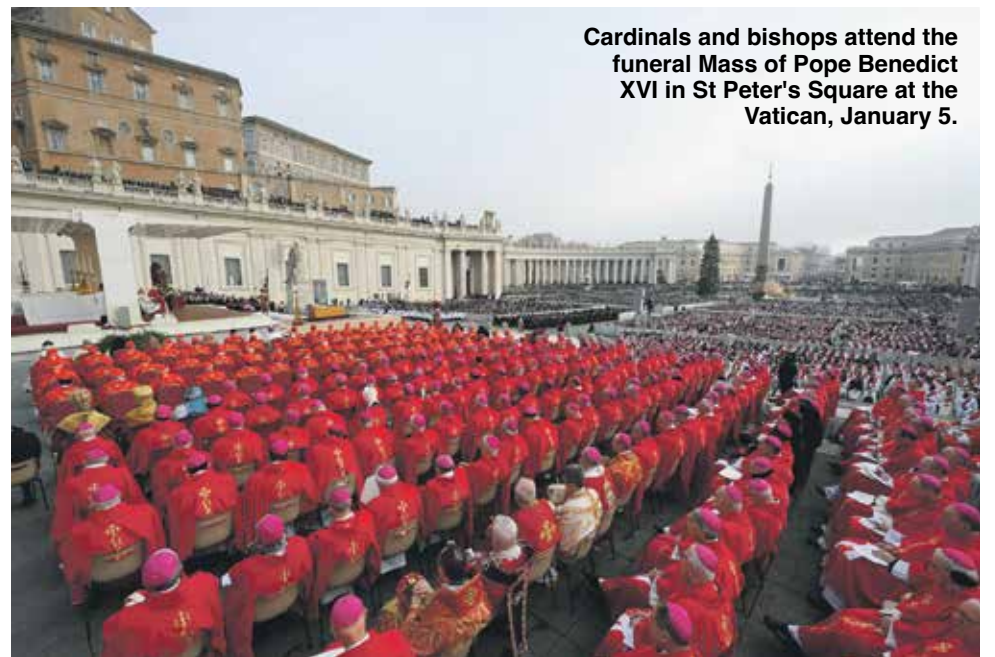
Pope Benedict is seen acknowledging pilgrims during his general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, November 4, 2009. Photos: CNS

they [the archbishops] were "representing the Irish Church and bringing the prayers and the petitions of people who would have liked to have been here but weren't able to be, but yet want to pay their respects to Pope Benedict".

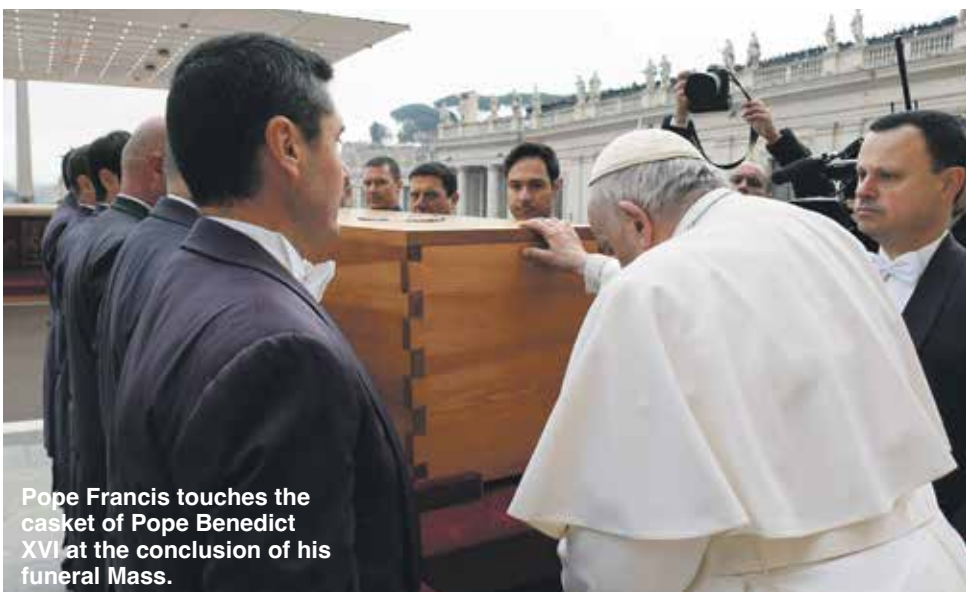
Last Wednesday the two archbishops had lined up with everyone else visiting Pope Benedict, who retired as pope in 2013, while he lay in repose in St Peter's Basilica. They decided not to use their position as archbishops to skip the main queue.

Remains

After Pope Benedict's death his remains were moved on Monday morning, January 2, to St Peter's Basilica, where he lay in state until Wednesday, January 4.



Cardinals and bishops attend the funeral Mass of Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, January 5.



Pope Francis touches the casket of Pope Benedict XVI at the conclusion of his funeral Mass.



People hold up a sign saying 'Santo Subito' (Sainthood Now) at the end of the funeral Mass.

Over the three days almost 200,000 people paid their respects. There were long lines of people constantly flowing into St Peter's Square and a huge amount of the Italian police, as well as the army, were in attendance due to heightened security measures. No liquids were allowed and hundreds of bottles could be seen just beyond security positions. People were allowed to retrieve them when they were leaving if they could find them again.

Some tourists seemed perplexed by what they thought were extreme security controls in the area.

“The former pope's cypress casket was wrapped with red ribbon, which was affixed to the wood with red wax seals”

The Basilica was closed at 6.30pm on Wednesday evening, in preparation for the funeral the following day.

In the early morning of Thursday, on the colonnade up high on the left side of St Peter's Square – if you're facing the basilica – journalists from all over the world swarmed in the allocated press area, trying to get the best position. Complaints could be heard as cold fingers typed on laptops and photographers and videographers stoically held their hard-won angle against the railings beside statues of great Church leaders.

Funeral

Pope Francis presided over the funeral of another pope, a first in modern times. Pope Benedict was the first to retire in 600 years.

It has been 200 years since a pope celebrated the funeral of his predecessor. Pope Pius VII presided over the funeral of Pius VI in 1802 after his remains were returned, as he died in exile in France in 1799.

In his homily during the Mass, the Pope said of Pope Benedict: “Holding fast to the Lord's last words and to the witness of his entire life, we

too, as an ecclesial community, want to follow in his steps and to commend our brother into the hands of the Father. May those merciful hands find his lamp alight with the oil of the Gospel that he spread and testified to for his entire life (cf. Mt 25:6-7).”

Pastoral rule

He said: “At the end of his pastoral rule, St Gregory the Great urged a friend to offer him this spiritual accompaniment: ‘Amid the shipwreck of the present life, sustain me, I beseech you, by the plank of your prayer, that, since my own weight sinks me down, the hand of your merit will raise me up.’”

“Here we see the awareness of a pastor who cannot carry alone what in truth he could never carry alone, and can thus commend himself to the prayers and the care of the people entrusted to him. God's faithful people, gathered here, now accompanies and entrusts to him the life of the one who was their pastor. Like the women at the tomb, we too have come with the fragrance of gratitude and the balm of hope, in order to show him once more the love that is undying. We want to do this with the same wisdom, tenderness and devotion that he bestowed upon us over the years. Together, we want to say: ‘Father, into your hands we commend his spirit.’”

“Benedict, faithful friend of the Bridegroom, may your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever!” he finished.

After the funeral Archbishop Eamon Martin said it was “a great privilege and very special indeed” to be present in St Peter's Square concelebrating.

“The words that come to my mind are solemn, simple, prayerful and I think that's something he would have appreciated. He himself often spoke about the noble simplicity of the liturgy and in his own case, for a man who was humble, gentle, calm: this is what we might have expected from his funeral rites.”

“The man himself has clearly had an influence in



Pallbearers carry the casket of Pope Benedict XVI.

how his funeral would have been celebrated and then also of course given that this is a retired pope rather than a sitting pope, it was a little bit less complicated,” he said.

The archbishop likened it to a funeral Mass Irish people might have in any parish at home.

“Here we see the awareness of a pastor who cannot carry alone what in truth he could never carry alone”

“The readings, the prayers, the commendation are exactly what we would expect and what we would do for any of our own loved ones.”

Reflection

He added it was “sad”, a “day for reflection” and a day to give thanks for his “dedication and service”.

A highlight of the Mass for many Irish people, particularly those from Donegal, was that Letterkenny native Mary Maguire gave the second reading from the first letter of St Peter at the funeral. Part of which reads: “Through your faith, God's power will guard you until the salvation which

has been prepared is revealed at the end of time.”

“This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials; so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold – only it is more precious than gold, which is corruptible even though it bears testing by fire – and then you will have praise and glory and honour. You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him, you are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described, because you believe; and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls.”

Ms Maguire is a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul and was chosen for her work in the cathedral parish of the Diocese of Raphoe.

She told RTÉ that it was “such a shock” when she was asked to read at the funeral and her initial reaction was to say no, but after speaking to her family they encouraged her, saying it was a wonderful opportunity and “such an honour”.

“I know myself now it was such an honour and today when I was reading there, I just had so much joy in my heart afterwards, real, real joy. Although it's a sad occasion I just felt so much joy – an honour to be here,” she said.

Delegations

As Pope Benedict requested a simple funeral, and the fact that he wasn't a head of state as a retired pope, it was just Italy and Germany who were invited by the Holy See to lead delegations to the funeral.

Despite this there were many dignitaries including King Philippe of Belgium, Queen Sofia of Spain, presidents and government ministers representing more than a dozen nations including Hungary and Poland who attended. The majority were ambassadors to the Holy See, including

Ireland's Ambassador Frances Collins who just recently presented her credentials to the Pope at the end of November, 2022.

Representatives of the Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim faiths also sent delegations.

Media professionals, including journalists, photographers and videographers, numbering more than 1,000, were accredited to cover the funeral.

There were about 120 cardinals, 400 bishops and 3,700 priests who concelebrated.

Burial

Pope Benedict was taken for private burial in the grotto of St Peter's Basilica in the same tomb that held St John Paul II before his beatification.

In his tomb there was placed the ‘rogito’, a document which is placed in a metal tube in the casket which contains his biography and a legal document regarding his death and burial. There were also coins and medals put in the casket which were minted during his eight-year papacy.

It was Archbishop Gänswein and Msgr Ravelli who put a white silk cloth over the pope's face. He had a rosary and a crucifix in his hands and wore a chasuble he had on for Mass at World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008. His casket was buried in the chapel in the crypt of St Peter's Basilica.

The chapel is close to the Irish Chapel of St Columbanus. During the holy year of 1950, Pope Pius XII gave his assent to the request by the Knights of Columbus to commemorate – in the vicinity of St Peter's tomb – the evangelising work carried out in Europe by the Irish monks starting from the 6th Century. This seems particularly appropriate considering St Columbanus evangelised in what would become Germany today.

Cardinal Re led prayers and blessed the remains during the burial which was attended by some senior cardinals.

The former pope's cypress casket was wrapped with red



ribbon, which was affixed to the wood with red wax seals, then placed inside a zinc casket soldered shut and put inside a larger casket made of oak. The tops of both the zinc and oak caskets were decorated with a simple cross, a bronze plaque with the pope's name and dates of birth, papacy and death, and his papal coat of arms.

“The archbishop likened it to a funeral Mass Irish people might have in any parish at home”

While there were similarities to a reigning pope's funeral, there were crucial differences, particularly the fact that he has not left behind a state of *sede vacante*, loosely translated as meaning ‘the chair being vacant’ or ‘the seat being vacant’, as Pope Francis is the current Vicar of Christ. There will, of course, be no papal conclave either.

However, as Matteo Bruni, the director of the Vatican press office told journalists on January 3: “The liturgical celebration follows the model of a funeral service for a supreme pontiff, broadly speaking.”

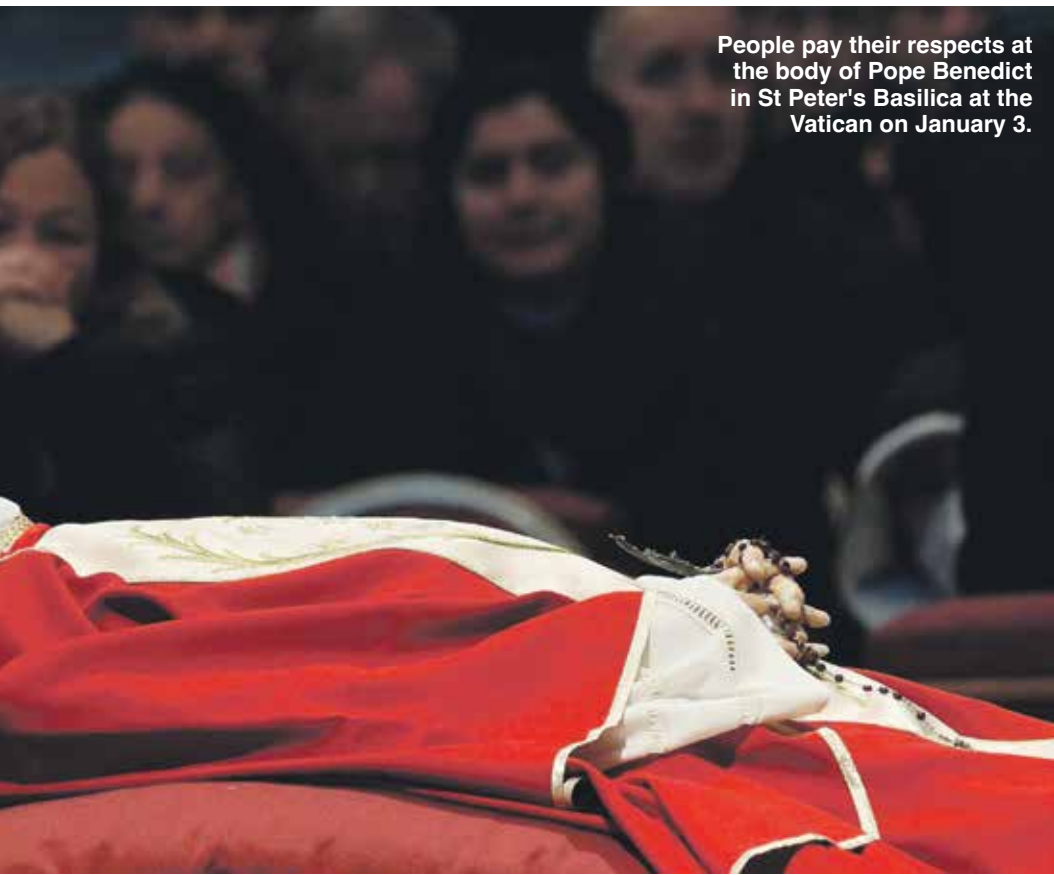
Theologian

The former pope who was one of St John Paul II's closest advisors and a highly regarded theologian – arguably one of the most accomplished in the modern era – wrote extensively in defence of Catholic doctrine. In latter years he sought to counter the growing secularisation of the Western world.

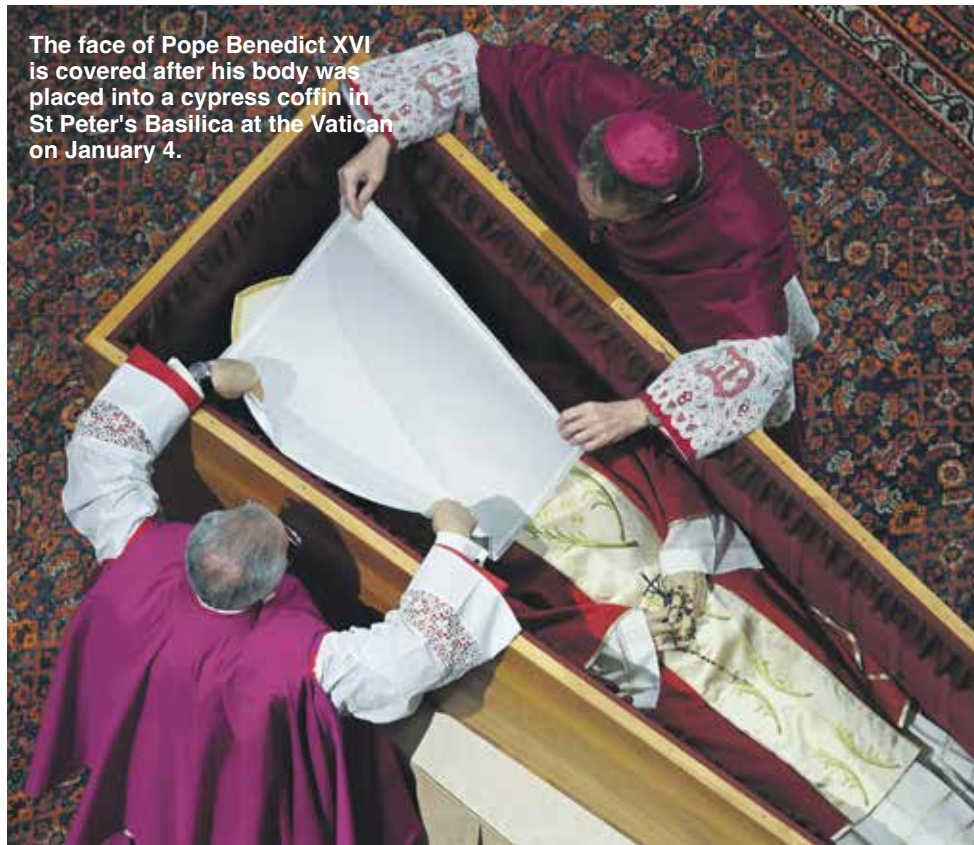
His history and works have been written about extensively in the weeks following his death, and to all that have paid attention, there is no doubt he will leave a lasting legacy.



Fiona-Louise Devlin and John Patrick Mallon, from the Diocese of Motherwell, Scotland, hold banners commemorating Pope Benedict's 2010 visit to the UK, before his funeral.



People pay their respects at the body of Pope Benedict in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on January 3.



The face of Pope Benedict XVI is covered after his body was placed into a cypress coffin in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on January 4.



The tomb of Pope Benedict XVI is pictured in the crypt of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, January 8.

Benedict XVI can help with Ireland's 'hunger for Faith understanding'

Chai Brady in Rome

There is "a great hunger" among Irish people to understand their faith and to "understand the debt of the Faith", the Archbishop of Dublin told *The Irish Catholic* in Rome.

Following his visit to St Peter's Basilica on Wednesday to pay his respects to Pope Benedict XVI who was in repose from January 2-4, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said the late pontiff's teachings have great scope to better inform Irish people of their Faith.

"Because very often we only get a very superficial knowledge of the Faith through school and one of the things that Pope Benedict has done is... articulate the Faith in simple language," Archbishop Farrell said.

Adult faith formation was one of the key things called for in the synthesis document that came out of the Irish synodal process. The extensive consultation included all Ireland's dioceses.

The report, published in August 2022, stated: "Adult faith development, resources for lay ministries and collaborative decision-making

was flagged as poor or non-existent."

One submission highlighted: "Our spiritual growth is stunted. As adult members of the Church, we are not sufficiently grounded in our faith, and do not have the confidence in speaking about our love of God."

Outlined

A second outlined that "there is a crisis in transmission of faith, rather than a crisis of faith and that we are unsure about how to evangelise in the modern world. This problem can only be addressed with the deployment of significant resources into programmes for those who wish to deepen their own faith, spirituality and understanding of Scripture at a personal or academic level".

Archbishop Farrell referred to *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, saying it has a "profundity and a depth but it has a simplicity of language that you could give to children in primary school and they would understand the message that's being conveyed, that's one of the great things that he brought in his teachings".

"I suppose it came from his life as a teacher and a professor... but also out of prayer," he said.

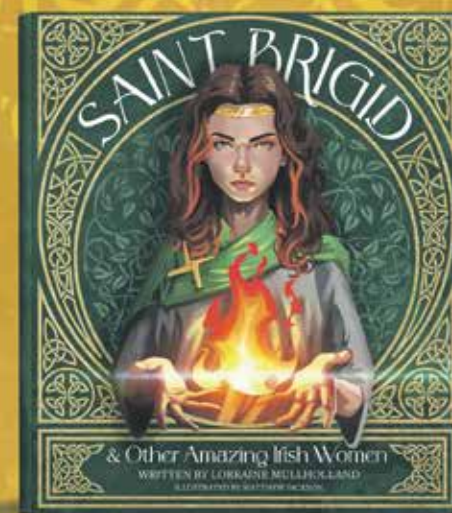
Dr Farrell described the late pontiff as a "very central figure in the Catholic Church for all his life", as a priest, as a theologian, a professor, at the Holy See as the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and then as pontiff for eight years.

"His legacy to the Catholic Church is huge, particularly his theological writing and his theological acumen. The wisdom that he brought over a lifetime, I think that's very hard to estimate that at this stage but only history will judge that he has made an enormous contribution," he said.

"To get that depth and simplicity in one man means that you really have to have a very profound understanding of the Faith to be able to convey it in such simple terms. It can only come out of a life of prayer and a life of really understanding the Faith in all its complexity. That's what he was able to convey and I think that's one of his great legacies that he'll leave to the Catholic Church and that will be shown in time."

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Latin Mass situation is 'tricky' but not an issue in Ireland – archbishop



For Pope Benedict, divine worship must always be ordered to the glory of God, Chai Brady hears in Rome

The Primate of All Ireland and the Archbishop of Armagh has said Pope Benedict XVI did a lot to try and bridge the divide between the liturgy before and after Vatican II.

This led him to reach out to those who attended the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM), known as the 'Extraordinary Form', which is celebrated in Latin, in his *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*.

Archbishop Martin spoke to *The Irish Catholic* in Rome last week while he was visiting for the former pope's funeral on Thursday, January 5. He said that in all the commentary around Pope Benedict following his death, one of his legacies that has not been stressed enough is his love for culture, literature, art, architecture, and music and how they can open people up to the transcendent.

“Specific times and places must be determined for where and when the TLM can be celebrated”

“I know that over the years he gave some very beautiful encouraging messages to musicians for example, people involved in sacred music, to those involved in architecture, and he always said that you touch the transcendent through these amazing ways of bringing out the joys, the beauty, the life of God's creation,” the archbishop said.

Translated

“I think this translated actually into his own sense of what we do when we wor-



Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh.

ship so, for example, he himself wrote very special pieces about the liturgy and how every time we are participating in divine worship, we are touching the transcendent. Pope Benedict had a great sense of the role of silence in the liturgy. That it doesn't have to be noisy.”

Archbishop Martin said Pope Benedict spoke a lot about the noble simplicity of the liturgy and that for him divine worship must always be “ordered to the glory of God and the sanctification of God's people”.

“I think his own writings, for example his seminal work *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, are works that people turn to nowadays, especially those who sometimes see in

the reform of the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council that we have moved away from beauty in worship,” Dr Martin said.

However, he stressed that the late pope spoke about the importance of the Second Vatican Council as “not being a break with Church tradition but being in continuity”.

Restrictions

What has caused controversy since then is the decision by Pope Francis to issue an apostolic letter *Traditionis Custodes* (Guardians of Tradition) *motu proprio* (on his own initiative) in 2021. This tightened permission for celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass. The

pre-Vatican II form of the Mass was liberalised under Benedict in 2007.

The apostolic letter stated that it is up to bishops whether to allow the celebration of the TLM in their dioceses.

Permission

Priests who already obtained permission and are currently celebrating the TLM now must get permission from their bishop to continue doing so, and any priest ordained after Francis's new norms went into effect must submit a formal request to their bishop, who in turn will consult with the Vatican before giving permission.

Specific times and places must be determined for

where and when the TLM can be celebrated, but according to the *motu proprio* they can no longer be allowed to take place in parishes, and no new parishes can be established that exclusively celebrate the Latin Mass.

The new rules also bar any new group wishing to celebrate the Latin Mass from being formed.

In the letter, the Pope said that having heard the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “I now desire, with this apostolic letter, to press on ever more in the constant search for ecclesial communion”.

Regarding Pope Benedict's letter liberalising the TLM, Archbishop Martin said: “He spoke about what was called a hermeneutic of continuity and therefore I think he was the one who tried most to bridge that divide between the liturgy pre- and post-Vatican II. And therefore, he reached out in his *motu proprio* to the Traditional Latin Mass and believed that we could in some way learn from the beauty of that particular way of celebration in today's liturgy.”

“I think, unfortunately, that has not really worked out in the sense that Pope Francis and the congregation at the moment have felt that those who were celebrating the Traditional Latin Mass were in some way in rupture with tradition,” he continued.

“The apostolic letter stated that it is up to bishops whether to allow the celebration of the TLM in their dioceses”

“I think that we could possibly usefully revisit some of Pope Benedict's writing here in order to reach out and to try to reach some kind of accord once more because I think it's not to anyone's benefit for the kind of disruption and discord that is occurring at the moment with regard to the liturgy.”

“I'm hoping for example that the funeral of Pope Benedict which had this noble simplicity to it – it

was a beautiful liturgy, it was in the Ordinary Form, it was not in the Extraordinary Form – can show that nonetheless it is possible to capture beauty, to capture mystery, to capture the transcendent in the liturgy today. We don't necessarily have to have the Traditional Latin Mass in order to do that. I think there's a lot of work that can still be done to bring peace within the liturgy.”

Asked further about his opinion on the reasons for Pope Francis' *motu proprio*, Archbishop Martin said he would not focus on particular countries.

“It's not to anyone's benefit for the kind of disruption and discord that is occurring at the moment with regard to the liturgy”

“I think he was focusing on a particular aberration that has occurred where some people have used the celebration of the Extraordinary Form as a way of saying ‘we are different’ and in some ways Pope Francis is concerned that would begin to eat into and create division within the Church,” he said, “which is something that I don't think anybody wants, those in favour of the Extraordinary Form and those who would feel that we must by way of continuity and consistency try to ensure that the liturgy expresses the unity of the Church.”

“I think that it is a tricky situation but at the moment I feel there is possibly more to be done to bring peace here.”

Speaking in particular about Ireland, the archbishop mentioned there was a consultation regarding the Pope's letter with those concerned all over the country.

“We didn't find that that same amount of division had occurred,” he said.

“There were small groups, stable groups of people, who wished to celebrate the Traditional Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form and it seemed to be going OK. So it wasn't a big issue for us in Ireland I don't think. Perhaps there are places where it had become more of a political – with a small ‘p’ – row between different camps, I didn't experience that in Ireland and nor do I even today in Ireland.”

“I know that over the years he gave some very beautiful encouraging messages to musicians for example”

Out&About

A very merry Christmas



CORK: Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin joined Mangalorean Catholics – an ethno-religious community who are Latin-rite Catholics from the Diocese of Mangalore on the southwestern coast of present-day Karnataka, India – in their celebration of Christmas. Also present were Fr Suresh Babu, a Camilian priest, currently chaplain in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin and Fr Patrick McCarthy, chaplain in MUH, Cork.



LIMERICK: Pupils from Doon CBS Primary School with their teachers, Ms Joanne O’Connell, school principal, and Ms Doherty, pictured at St Anthony’s Nursing Home, Pallasgreen, where they gave a performance of Christmas Carols and music to the residents of the nursing home.



CORK: Members of the Youth 2000 prayer group in Cork are pictured on a retreat they undertook recently. The prayer group meet on Tuesdays in the North Cathedral.

IN SHORT

200 students receive JP II awards in Kildare and Leighlin

More than 200 students received their John Paul II awards in a celebration at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Carlow.

Of the 209 recipients, 46 received papal crosses, 115 gold medals, 34 silver medals and 14 bronze medals.

Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty said it gave him “great pleasure” to present the awards.

He noted that an increasing number of awards were “parish centred”, which the bishop welcomed.

“If we can embed the award into the

fabric of parish life, there is a great chance of the award having literally a longer shelf life,” Bishop Nulty said in his homily.

He added his thanks to secondary schools who facilitate the programme of activities associated with the award.

“There were 15 groups recognised tonight, each of them I’m very proud of,” said Dr Nulty.

“I am hearing tonight of the activities undertaken by the participants: ministry in church; sanitising; making St Brigid’s Crosses; being involved with Meitheal, our other diocesan programme, led by Robert Norton and going on pilgrimages.

“Some of you took part in the parish synod group and more are members of parish councils. Some of you are very involved in coaching underage teams, supervising

homework clubs, big brother/big sister volunteering and organising multicultural days in school.”

The awards show the “creativity, the adaptability, the resilience in the face of the pandemic that is in all our young people”, Bishop Nulty continued.

Churches to mark anniversary of ecumenical gathering

An ecumenical joint service of thanksgiving will be held in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, to mark 50 years since the Ballymascanlon talks.

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting at Bal-

lymascanlon, Co. Louth, on September 26, 1973, was the first between leaders of the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

The Irish bishops’ conference said the talks enabled the Churches to develop “strong ecumenical links that have grown over the past 50 years”.

Primate of all-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin and Rev. Harold Good will preach at the gathering on January 22 at 3.30pm.

The Irish Inter-Church Meeting gathers for an annual conference and the Inter-Church Meeting, made up of Church leaders, meets four times a year.

The recent annual conference with participants from various Churches across the island was entitled ‘Creatively reconfiguring our post-pandemic understanding of church’.



USA: Chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan, Marcella Walsh and Shannon Campbell received a warm welcome from their hosts in St Louis.



USA: Students from the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast are pictured in St Louis, Missouri, where they joined 20,000 young people from universities and colleges across the US, Ireland, UK, Germany, Austria, and Mexico for SEEK 23. The annual conference, organised by the Focus missionary organisation, gives students an opportunity to come together and celebrate their Catholic faith.



USA: Marcella Walsh, Aine Lee and Shannon Campbell take advantage of the crisp winter weather.



DUBLIN: President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins is pictured with Oliver, Mark, Eliza and Emily Kane from Tuam, Co. Galway, at Mass for the World Day of Peace in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral.



DUBLIN: Representatives from the Papal and Chivalric Orders were present at the Pro-Cathedral for the celebration of Mass for the World Day of Peace 2023 on January 1.



LAOIS: Fr John Dunphy PP Graiguecullen-Killeslin receives a cheque for €1,000 donated by Slimming World Carlow with Mary to St Clare's Hospitality Food Kitchen.



LIMERICK: Bro. James Dormer, chairperson of the board of management Scoil Iosagain CBS Sexton St, makes a presentation to Doireann Garrard on behalf of the school. Ms Garrard who was deputy principal at Sexton St CBS and has recently been appointed principal of Christ the King Boys Primary School, Caherdavin.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LOUTH: Drogheda Knights of St Columbanus packed some of the 180 goody bags and accompanied the 150 hot dinners which were collected on Christmas morning at the RDS in Dublin. Recipients received meals on Christmas Day in Collon, Clogherhead, Laytown and Drogheda.



CORK: Bishop-emeritus of Cork and Ross John Buckley is pictured launching the annual St Vincent's GAA Poc Fada at Kerry Pike, Cork over the Christmas holiday period. Photo: Mike English.



CARLOW: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty signs a book of condolence opened in Carlow Cathedral following the death of Pope Benedict XVI.



CAVAN: Pictured is Fr Joe White following a celebration of Mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt receiving a presentation from PJ Fleming marking his recent golden jubilee of ordination.

CARLOW

A novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour takes place every Saturday at 10am in Carlow Cathedral, followed by Confession.

CAVAN

Lectio Divina, a prayerful reading of the Sunday Gospel, has resumed each Tuesday after 10am Mass in the Cathedral of St Patrick and St Felim. It takes place in the conference room behind the altar and lasts half an hour.

Legion of Mary meetings take place on Tuesdays at 8pm in St Clare's Chapel.

CLARE

Mass is celebrated on the first Monday of every month at 7:30pm in Ennis Cathedral for those struggling with addiction, their families and all those affected by addiction. The names of those enrolled in the Matt Talbot Prayer Society are placed on the altar.

CORK

A Youth 2000 prayer group for young adults aged 18-35 meets every Tuesday night at 7pm for prayer followed by refreshments in the North Cathedral.

The adoration chapel at St Colman's Cathedral, Cobh, is open for personal prayer on Wednesdays from 11am-9pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays from 11am-6pm.

DERRY

Pure in Heart are hosting a 'pursuit of love' retreat for singles and those ready to pursue a relationship. Takes place January 13-15 in Termonbacca Carmelite retreat centre. Cost is £80 for two nights bed and breakfast. Limited spaces, to book email info@pureinheart.ie Strictly for ages 18-35.

DUBLIN

Taizé in Newman University Church, St Stephen's Green, resumes on January 17 at 6pm and will continue until the beginning of June.

FERMANAGH

Daily devotions via webcam continue to be hosted by St Michael's Parish, Enn-

iskillen. The schedule is: 12pm Angelus (except Sunday); 3pm Divine Mercy (except Sunday); 6pm rosary, Monday to Friday, and 6.45pm on Saturday with Legion of Mary Prayers; 7pm exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Divine Mercy (Sunday only); and 10pm night prayer.

GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (18-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral. An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact youth@galwaycathedral.ie for more information.

KERRY

The diocese of Kerry is hosting an online mission January 22-25. Each day will include: daily prayer in the mission booklet; Mass in your parish; daily reflection online; prayer petition online; family time in the mission booklet; Just a Thought on Radio Kerry; mission talk at 8pm online, which will include a variety of guest speakers.

KILKENNY

Eucharistic adoration takes place every Wednesday morning in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Ferrybank Church from 10.30am to 12 noon and in Slieverue Church from 2.30-3.30pm.

LOUTH

Mass for the African Community takes place in St Nicholas' Church the third Sunday of each month at 2pm.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal novena takes place on Mondays at 10am (except holidays) in Holy Redeemer parish, Dundalk.

MAYO

Adoration takes place in the Knock International Marian Shrine's apparition chapel from 7-9pm daily.

ROSCOMMON

Legion of Mary, Our Lady of Aparecida Praesidium, meet on Saturdays from 4-5pm in St Coman's Club, Roscommon town. For more information contact Celina on 087 6682030.

SLIGO

The next Living Family retreat will take place in the College of the Immaculate Conception, Summerhill, on Sunday, February 5, beginning at 10.30am with registration and closing with a Eucharistic family blessing at 5pm. Booking will open soon.

TIPPERARY

Cherished Catholic women's ministry weekend retreat, led by the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, takes place January 20-22 in Glencomragh House, Kilsheelan. For ages 18 and up. Full board accommodation at €210pp. For more information or to book contact info@holymission.ie.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meet in the pastoral centre on Thursday evenings with rosary at 7.40pm, followed by prayer meeting at 8pm.

WATERFORD

Lectio Divina with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus takes place Tuesdays 2:30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre and Thursdays 7:30-9pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge, Newtown Rd. A time of reading the Sunday Gospel, prayer and sharing, followed by conversation over a cuppa. For more information, contact Sr Kathryn 087 404 2784.

WESTMEATH

An Alpha 'Come and See' event takes place on Tuesday, January 17, on Zoom starting 7.30pm. For more information or to express interest in attending, contact bohermeenparish1@gmail.com.

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

WEXFORD

Divine Mercy devotions take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in Wexford Friary, including Mass and blessing with the relic of St Faustina.

Rosary and devotions at the Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford take place every Tuesday at 2.30pm.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Warning of 'humanitarian catastrophe' in Nagorno-Karabakh

● A leading politician serving the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) has strongly echoed Pope Francis' concerns about the humanitarian situation in the fragile region located within Azerbaijan's borders.

In an interview with CNA, Ruben Vardanyan, State Minister of Artsakh, said that the international community must act in order to prevent a "humanitarian catastrophe" resulting from the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which links the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh with neighboring Armenia.

In an Angelus address before Christmas on December 18, Pope Francis expressed his concern about the situation: "I am concerned about the precarious humanitarian conditions of the people, which are in further danger of deteriorating during the winter season."

In his interview with CNA, Mr Vardanyan accused Azerbaijan of trying to create a humanitarian crisis in the unstable region.

Head of US bishops visits Ukraine, promises solidarity

● Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and head of the Archdiocese for Military Services, USA, visited Ukraine December 27–29 to express the American Catholic Church's continued support.

Meeting with Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and key leaders of the Ukrainian military chaplaincy in the cities of Kyiv and

Lviv, Archbishop Broglio offered messages of encouragement and solidarity.

"You may not see this in Ukraine, but today Ukrainians bring great hope to the world!

"Your nation has united and stood up to this unjust Russian invasion. In your resistance, we see hope for the future," Archbishop Broglio told Ukrainian officials, as reported by Ukrainian Catholic University.

Biden says he 'admired' Pope Benedict

● President Joe Biden on January 4 professed his admiration for the late Pope Benedict XVI, who died on December 31, recalling their meeting in which they discussed Catholic theology.

"What did Pope Benedict mean to you as a Catholic?" EWTN White House correspondent Owen Jensen asked President Biden on January 4.

"I had an opportunity to spend some time with Pope Benedict, a couple of hours and he was a great. ... And reminded me of going back to theology class," the president responded.

"We spoke about Aquinas and about [the] Summa Theologica," he said, referring to the medieval theologian St Thomas Aquinas and his influential capstone work.

"But I admired him, I thought he was a fine man," Mr Biden said.

Vandal destroys statue of the Virgin Mary in Colombia

● A man destroyed a statue of the Virgin Mary that stood in a small brick grotto at the entrance to the town of Sopó in the Cundinamarca district of Colombia.

The Marian image was more than 70 years old. A video circulating on social media shows an individual viewed from the back striking the statue of the Virgin.

In a video posted on the town's Facebook page, the mayor of Sopó, Miguel Alejandro Rico Suárez, said

that the attack was committed by "a young man with psychiatric problems, who was captured at the time".

In the wake of the attack, the mayor called on the people to strengthen their faith "and show all our love for the Virgin".

The mayor invited the Faithful to participate in a Mass, January 8, in the Alpina roundabout to "bless the new image" replacing the damaged one.

Police storm Bolivian church in crackdown on demonstrators

The pastor of Holy Cross parish in the Archdiocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia, Fr Raúl Arrázola, denounced the violent intrusion of a group of policemen into his church on Sunday, January 1.

In a statement to the Bolivian newspaper *El Deber*, Fr Arrázola said that a group of police officers "violated private property" and "the right of asylum that churches have and desecrated it" by forcefully entering the church to arrest people who took refuge inside.

Demonstrations were taking place in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra by citizens protesting the arrest of the governor of the Department of Santa Cruz, Luis Fernando Camacho, who is accused of participating in the massive protests of 2019 that ended with President Evo Morales resigning from office and fleeing to Mexico and then to Argentina, where both countries granted him political asylum.

The ex-president returned to Bolivia a year later on the day after the current president, Luis Arce, was sworn into office. Mr Arce is a member of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party, founded and led by Mr Morales, and considers the 2019 protests to have been a coup d'état.

Fr Arrázola explained that around 2am, young "men and women from all social groups" jumped over the



The governor of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Luis Fernando Camacho is taken by law enforcement to the offices of the city's Special Crime Fighting Force. He is accused of participating in 2019 protests against former president Evo Morales. Photo: Agencia Boliviana de Información.

fence that surrounds Holy Cross church and took refuge inside".

According to *El Deber*, these people "had gathered hours before in the vicinity of El Cristo (the emblematic Christ the Redeemer monument) to hold a peaceful vigil to demand the release of the governor, who since December 30 has been in preventive detention in the maximum security prison of Chonchocoro".

Fr Arrázola told *El Deber* that emotions were running high on both sides between the police and the demon-

strators and that the young people were considerably angered by the police taking over the area around the El Cristo monument, which is symbolic of the city.

"The gathering ended in violent clashes with the police, with a toll of more than 40 arrested, hundreds injured, and burned vehicles," the newspaper reported.

The monument is a few blocks from Holy Cross church, where a number of demonstrators sought refuge.

A group of policemen then stormed the church. The Catholic priest charged that

the officers "did not respect what people look for in a church: asylum, refuge".

In addition, *El Deber* said the police used tear gas and that expended rubber bullet cartridges were found.

In a December 29 statement posted on Twitter, the Bolivian Bishops' Conference said that the "abduction of Camacho is one more attack, among other affronts, directed at the population of Santa Cruz, which has legitimately chosen him to guide the lot of the department in this period."

Catholic bishop, priest released after two months in Eritrea prison

After more than two months in detention in Eritrea, Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalim and Fr Mehereteab Stefanos have been released, several sources have reported.

The 52-year-old bishop heads the Eritrean Catholic Eparchy of Seghe-neity. Fr Stefanos, before his imprisonment, was a parish priest at St Michael's Parish in the same eparchy. It is still unknown whether another priest, Capuchin Friar Abbot Abraham, has been released.

Security agents had arrested Bishop

Tsalim and two priests October 15 at Asmara International Airport upon the bishop's arrival from Europe. The three clergymen were detained at Adi Abeto prison, according to *Agenzia Fides*.

The two released prisoners were welcomed by a group that included Archbishop Mengheteab Tesfamariam of Asmara, head of the Eritrean Catholic Church, *BBC News* reports.

Catholics make up about 4% of Eritrea's six million people. The Eritrean Catholic Church is one of the 23 Eastern Catholic Churches in full communion

with the Holy See. It has an estimated 168,000 members in the northwestern African country and in diaspora communities around the world.

Authorities did not state a reason for the arrests of the three clergymen, *BBC News* reports.

The three detained clergy were accused of criticising human rights violations in their homilies, *ACI Africa* reported in October, citing a source who did not want to be named for security reasons.

US to allow abortion pills to be sold at pharmacies

The United States' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially changed its policy, January 3, to allow pharmacies to sell mifepristone, the drug known commonly as the abortion pill.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Wom-*

en's Health Organisation decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, abortion pills and chemical abortion have become an increasingly debated issue. According to the *New York Times*, abortion pills now account for more than half of abortions in the US.

Until January 3, FDA policy only allowed certified doctors, clinics, and some mail-order pharmacies to dispense mifepristone. Now, FDA policy allows any patient with a prescription to obtain mifepristone from her local retail pharmacy.

The policy change comes

after a December 2021 change that permanently lifted the requirement for patients to obtain mifepristone during in-person appointments with a physician. This change allowed abortion pills to be prescribed via telemedicine and prescriptions to be filled by mail.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie



Bishop to baby



New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan greets 5-month-old Lorelai Scarlett Walsh after celebrating Mass for the repose of the soul of Pope Benedict XVI at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City January 1. Before the liturgy, the bells of the cathedral tolled 95 times to mark each year of the late pontiff's life. Photo: OSV/Gregory Shemitz.

Former archbishop of Paris under investigation for sexual assault

The former archbishop of Paris, Michel Aupetit, is reportedly under preliminary investigation for sexual assault on a vulnerable person, according to a report from the Archdiocese of Paris in late November 2022, French news channel BFMTV reported.

According to the TV channel's report, the allegations date back to 2011 and concern a vulnerable former parishioner, subject to a judicial protection measure. Archbishop-emeritus Aupetit is suspected of having exchanged sexual emails with this parishioner, who

suffers from a "slight mental deficiency".

The investigations opened by the Paris prosecutor's office have been entrusted to the French Brigade of Repression of Delinquency People. For the moment, neither the former archbishop nor the alleged victim – who has not filed any complaint – have been heard from by the police.

In a statement issued on the evening of January 3, the Archdiocese of Paris said it was not "able to verify whether the facts in question were proven, nor if they constituted an offense".

"The report – which did

not involve the classification of sexual assault – has been made" so that "all the necessary verifications can be carried out by the justice," the archdiocese added.

Interviewed by the daily newspaper *Le Monde* following publication of the news, Dr Aupetit's lawyer, Jean Reinhart, stressed that he had learned through the press that a report had been made by the archdiocese. He said that the bishopric had never questioned him on this point.

"[My client] is therefore even more surprised to learn that the Paris public pros-

ecutor's office has opened an investigation of which he knew nothing," he said, adding that he had no idea who this woman could be, "no one having ever complained of the slightest inappropriate gesture on his part."

On the morning of January 4, Mr Reinhart told the public radio station *France Inter* that the 71-year-old former archbishop remained "serene," although "surprised and outraged," and that he would "continue his pastoral mission from which nothing will divert him".

Trump criticised for blaming Republican's losses on abortion issue

Former president Donald Trump took to social media to blame Republican losses in the November midterm elections on candidates who opposed abortion for any reason.

His comments drew criticism from many pro-life advocates.

On his social media platform, Truth Social, Trump posted: "It wasn't my fault that the Republicans didn't live up to expectations in the midterms."

"I was 233-201" he added, referencing his win-to-loss ratio on candidates

he endorsed.

"It was the 'abortion issue,' poorly handled by many Republicans, especially those that firmly insisted on no exceptions, even in the case of rape, incest, or life of the mother, that lost large numbers of voters," Trump said.

"Also, the people that pushed so hard, for decades, against abortion, got their wish from the US Supreme Court, and just plain disappeared, not to be seen again," he added.

The pro-life political advocacy organi-

sation Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America responded with a January 2 statement asserting that unambiguously pro-life candidates have an electoral edge.

"The approach to winning on abortion in federal races, proven for a decade, is this: state clearly the ambitious consensus pro-life position and contrast that with the extreme view of Democrat opponents," read the statement titled 'GOP Presidential Nominees Must Put Forth a Strong Pro-Life Agenda'.

Get out of your comfort zone to seek God like the Magi, Pope Francis says

● On the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Pope Francis said that if the Magi had remained comfortable, they never would have encountered the Lord in Bethlehem.

In his homily for the Church's celebration of the Three Kings on January 6, the Pope warned that today's world is full of "tranquillisers of the soul" and "empty promises of pleasure".

Francis said that from endless consumerism to "non-stop media controversies" and the "idolatry of fitness," everything today "seems to tell us: 'Don't overthink things. Let go and enjoy life'".

"Often we try to soothe our hearts with creature comforts. ... If the Magi had done that, they would never have encountered the Lord," he commented.

Pope Francis underlined that God however is found in "restless questioning" and seeking the answers to life's bigger questions like, "Where do I find a love that does not fade away, a love that endures even in the face of frailty, failure, and betrayal? What hidden opportunities are present in the midst of my crises and my sufferings?"

The Pope quoted an Epiphany homily by the late Benedict XVI, whose funeral he presided over yesterday.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the Magi – also known as the Three Wise Men or Three Kings – who came with gifts to worship the Child Jesus shortly after his birth.

"Benedict XVI said of the Magi: 'Their outward pilgrimage was the expression of their inward journey, the inner pilgrimage of their hearts.'" Francis said, quoting his predecessor's 2013 homily for Epiphany.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle served as the main celebrant of the Liturgy of the Eucharist for the Epiphany Mass with Pope Francis offering the homily.

In his homily, Pope Francis said that the Magi's restless questioning and continuous journeying in dialogue with the Lord finds its end in the worship of God.

Pope Francis: Faith journey is walked with others

● Christians should not seek the Lord by themselves without being part of a faith community and without spiritual accompaniment, Pope Francis said.

However, Pope Francis cautioned against forms of accompaniment that "can give rise to unrealistic expectations, misunderstandings, forms of dependence that leave the person in an infantile state".

The person who accompanies others in their spiritual life "does not substitute the Lord, does not do the work in the place of the person accompanied, but walks alongside him or her, encouraging them to interpret what is stirring in their heart," the Pope said January 4 at his weekly general audience.

Speaking with visitors in the Paul VI audience

hall, the Pope concluded his series of talks about the process of spiritual discernment by focusing on the importance of spiritual accompaniment in helping and supporting this process.

Spiritual accompaniment is "important first and foremost for self-knowledge, which as we have seen is an indispensable condition for discernment," Pope Francis said.

"God's grace in us always works on our nature," the Pope said, which is why "it is important to make ourselves known, without fear of sharing the most fragile aspects: where we find ourselves to be more sensitive, weak or afraid of being judged" with a person "who accompanies us on life's journey".



LetterfromUSA



Kate Scanlon

After a report dubbed 2022 “the year of the botched execution,” Catholic activists renewed their calls for an end to capital punishment in the US at both the state and federal levels.

Despite declining public support for the practice, and a campaign promise from President Joe Biden, a Catholic and a Democrat, to repeal the federal death penalty, a bill to do so gained little traction last Congress, when Democrats still controlled both chambers.

“Today we state clearly that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible’ and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide”

In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis cited Pope St John Paul II, whom he said “stated clearly and firmly [in the encyclical *Evangelium vitae*] that the death penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal justice.

“There can be no stepping back from this position,” Pope Francis wrote. “Today we state clearly that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible’ and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.”

Pope Francis also revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, No. 2267) to reflect that position in 2018.

In a December 16 report, the Death Penalty Information Centre, a Washington-based non-profit that studies capital punishment, found that seven out of 20 executions that took place last year, or 35%, were “visibly problematic” due to “executioner incompetence, failures to follow protocol, or defects in the protocols themselves.”

Robert Dunham, DPIC’s executive director, said in a statement accompanying the report that “After 40 years, the states have proven themselves unable to carry out lethal injections without the risk that it will be botched.

“The families of victims and prisoners, other execution witnesses, and corrections personnel should not be subjected to the trauma of an execution gone bad,” Mr Dunham said.

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of the Catholic Mobilising Network, a group that opposes capital punishment, told OSV News “numerous botched and problematic executions” occurred

Catholic activists renew calls to abolish capital punishment after ‘year of the botched execution’

A death penalty protester is seen in this file photo. Photo: CNS/Bryan Woolston, Reuters



“Republicans have historically supported capital punishment, but a growing number of Republican state lawmakers are supporting efforts to repeal the death penalty in their states”

last year.

“In Alabama and elsewhere, these botched executions have led to an evaluation of the ethicality and efficacy of state-sanctioned death. Such reviews are often hidden behind a veil of secrecy,” Ms Vaillancourt Murphy said.

Back-to-back

In November 2022, following the back-to-back failed executions of Alan Miller and Kenneth Smith, Alabama’s Republican Gov. Kay Ivey issued an order putting all executions in the state on hold while the state conducts “a top-to-bottom” review of the state’s lethal injection protocol.

But Ivey’s November 22 statement made clear she has not changed her views on supporting the practice, casting the matter as a way “to ensure those guilty of perpetrating the most heinous crimes in our society receive their just punishment.”

But Ms Vaillancourt Murphy noted that Alabama is a state that moved to restrict abortion after the US Supreme Court issued its decision in *Dobbs v.*

Jackson Women’s Health Organisation in June 2022.

“As a state that sees itself as standing for life, re-evaluating its insistence on the death penalty is an important step toward pro-life consistency,” she said.

Democratic Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Sen. Dick Durbin introduced in Congress a bill in 2021, the Federal Death Penalty Prohibition Act, with a pro-life Republican co-sponsor, Rep. Peter Meijer of Michigan. But the bill was not taken up by either the House or the Senate.

Republicans have historically supported capital punishment, but a growing number of Republican state lawmakers are supporting efforts to repeal the death penalty in their states. According to the group Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty, eight states had Republican-sponsored bills to repeal the death penalty introduced during their legislative sessions last year: Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah and Washington state.

That shift among state Republican

lawmakers coincides with a shift in voters’ perspectives on the practice. A November 14 Gallup survey found support for the death penalty was at 55% last year, a significant decline from 1994, when the survey recorded its all-time high of 80%.

“Lawmakers on both sides find it hard to ignore the moral and practical failings of the death penalty”

Ms Vaillancourt Murphy said that “ending the death penalty is no longer considered one-sided a Democratic or Republican issue.”

“For the past several years, leaders from both parties have been instrumental in advancing abolition efforts,” she said. “Lawmakers on both sides find it hard to ignore the moral and practical failings of the death penalty.”

Citing some of the states where Republican lawmakers have backed repeal efforts, Ms Vaillancourt Murphy said, “Many lawmakers who profess pro-life values are recognising that honouring the dignity of life must extend to those on death row.”

“We are called to uphold the sanctity of life for both the innocent and the guilty,” she said.

She also noted that some Republicans object to the practice as wasteful spending.

“The death penalty is far more expensive compared to alternative sentencing,” she said. “For many conservatives who tout the value of fiscal responsibility, capital punishment is simply irresponsible.”

The Biden administration in 2021 ordered a moratorium on carrying out federal death sentences, a policy that has paused, but not ended, the practice at the federal level.

Vaillancourt Murphy praised that order as “the first time a presidential administration ever declared such a moratorium” – but the pause leaves room for Biden’s eventual successor to potentially reverse the order. She noted that the previous administration restarted federal executions after a 17-year hiatus and proceeded to execute 13 people.

Opportunity

“Looking ahead, President Biden has an opportunity to take stronger, more decisive action against the federal death penalty – specifically by commuting the sentences of those on the federal death row,” Ms Vaillancourt Murphy said.

“Given how swiftly the last administration restarted federal executions, it is critical that these sentences be commuted – otherwise, we recognise that lives remain at risk.”

i Kate Scanlon is national reporter for *Our Sunday Visitor*.

As Benedict XVI was laid to rest, ecumenical tributes flowed in



Elise Ann Allen

As Pope Benedict XVI was laid to rest Thursday in the Vatican, Christian and interfaith leaders across the world conveyed their appreciation of his theological contributions and efforts to build bridges.

In a statement of condolence, the acting Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev. Jerry Pillay, said the former pope's theological, pastoral, and ecumenical legacy "remains forever".

"At the heart of his spiritual leadership was the promotion of a culture of peace and global solidarity," he said, saying Benedict as pope "encouraged deeper understanding and cooperation with different Christian communions that trace their roots back to the Reformation as well as with the Orthodox Church, by stressing the significant elements of shared faith."

“Benedict, he said, was ‘an inspired spiritual leader who committed himself to a common and prophetic voice of Christians in the face of societal challenge’”

Rev. Pillay noted that Benedict XVI was the first pope to ever belong to a WCC committee, the Faith and Order commission, at the time when then-*Msgr* Josef Ratzinger was serving as a professor of theology at the University of Tübingen in the late 1960s.

"He not only brought an important theological contribution, but also showed the irreversible journey of the Catholic Church in the one ecumenical movement, for which we are truly grateful," Pillay said, saying Benedict will remain "one of the finest and renowned theologians of the 21st century."

Benedict, he said, was "an inspired spiritual leader who committed himself to a common and prophetic voice of Christians in the face of societal challenge. He was a man of deep faith, who cultivated humbleness and a servant leadership."

Similarly, the Dalai Lama in his own letter of condolence to the Vatican's embassy in New Delhi voiced sadness at Benedict's passing, saying when he and Benedict met, "I found there was much we agreed about in relation to human values, religious harmony and the environment."



Pallbearers carry the casket of Pope Benedict XVI during his funeral Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican January 5. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

"During his papacy, he worked hard to promote these issues. He lived a meaningful life," the Dalai Lama said, saying he has been engaged with the Catholic Church for decades and has "learnt much about their experience," and that "these exchanges have contributed to a better religious understanding between us."

"At a time when we are seeing tension in several parts of the world, we can take a lesson from the life of Pope Benedict and do what we can to contribute to religious harmony and global peace," he said.

Benedict died December 31 at the age of 95, nearly 10 years after making history for becoming the first pope in 600 years to resign from the papacy.

In the days since his passing, Benedict has been hailed for his intellectual and theological contributions to the global church and is already being called one of the most influential thinkers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

While Pope Francis has become known as the pope of ecumenism for his very intentional efforts to build bridges with other branches of Christianity, ecumenical and interfaith leaders have also praised Pope Benedict as having laid part of the foundation on which Francis is building.

In her own statement of condolence for Benedict's passing, Rev. Anne Burghardt, secretary general

of the World Lutheran Federation (LWF) called the pope emeritus "a sharp-minded theologian whose strong academic background shaped his pontificate."

Encouragement

"We give thanks for his encouragement never to slacken in the ecumenical endeavour," she said, voicing gratitude for the times Benedict voiced appreciation for the 1999 joint Declaration of Doctrine of Justification, which she said, "has enabled many advances in Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations."

Rev. Burghardt pointed to then-Cardinal Ratzinger's involvement with discussions between the LWF while still head of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "working with a group of German theologians to ensure a consensus on the Joint Declaration, following the publication of reservations from the Catholic side."

The joint declaration has since been signed by several other major Christian organisations, including the World Methodist Council and the Anglican Communion, as well as World Communion of Reformed Churches, "making it one of the most significant ecumenical documents for multilateral worship, action and theological engagement," thanks in part to Ratzinger's efforts, she said.

In a statement, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, noted that Benedict in his lengthy life and min-

istry "saw many profound changes in the Church and in the world," having lived through German Nazism, the Second World War, and the Second Vatican Council, as well as the fall of the Berlin Wall.

"Pope Benedict was one of the greatest theologians of his age – committed to the faith of the Church and stalwart in its defence," Archbishop Welby said, saying, "In all things, not least in his writing and his preaching, he looked to Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God."

"It was abundantly clear that Christ was the root of his thought and the basis of his prayer," he said.

Several Orthodox leaders have also voiced their appreciation for Benedict XVI, and sorrow for his passing, including Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, who has come under fire from the global community in recent months for his support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year.

In a statement, Patriarch Kirill voiced sadness at Benedict's passing, saying his many years of life "marked an entire era in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, which he guided in a historically difficult period, associated with many external and internal challenges."

"The indisputable authority of Benedict XVI as an eminent theologian has enabled him to make a significant contribution to the development of inter-Christian coopera-

tion, to the witness of Christ in the face of a secularised world and to the defence of traditional moral values," Kirill said, saying he saw first-hand in his meetings with Benedict "his deep love for eastern Christianity".

“I myself have heard from Benedict that he got to know Orthodoxy better thanks to his Orthodox students”

He also praised Benedict's "sincere respect for the tradition of Russian Orthodoxy," saying that during Benedict XVI's papacy, "relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church developed considerably in the spirit of fraternal collaboration and in the desire of fraternal collaboration."

Similarly, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople during a Divine Liturgy on January 1, recalled the many times he worked with Benedict, including the signing of a joint declaration during Benedict's visit to Turkey in 2006.

"Benedict XVI was a great theologian," he said, noting that Benedict while still a university professor had Orthodox students, including the now-Archbishop Stylianos of Australia and the then-metropolitan of Switzerland, Damascene.

"I myself have heard from Benedict that he got to know Orthodoxy better thanks to his Orthodox students," Patriarch Bartholomew said, asking that the memory of Benedict be "everlasting."

“He not only brought an important theological contribution, but also showed the irreversible journey of the Catholic Church in the one ecumenical movement, for which we are truly grateful”

i Elise Ann Allen is senior correspondent for Crux.

Letters

Letter of the week

How churlish we are on the late Pope

Dear Editor, With the noble exception of yourself, it seems that our media was virtually incapable of finding a single commentator who had anything positive to say about the late Pope Benedict XVI. To call a lot of the coverage petty and churlish would be an understatement.

No one should expect that the passing of a controversial person like Benedict XVI would go without some critical commentary, but a lot of what passed for analysis was in fact mean-spirited and small-minded and often from people who have spent decades trying to dis-

credit and belittle the contribution of Benedict XVI.

To hear journalists with little insight or understanding of theology question whether or not Joseph Ratzinger was a great theological mind was hard to listen to. Agree with him or not, he was one of the most important thinkers of the late-20th and early-21st centuries as evidenced by the warm reception he received when he delivered keynote lectures all over the world.

The people warmly receiving Pope Benedict at these lectures often passionately disagreed with

him, but they recognised in him an honest partner in dialogue and someone who would help them challenge their own thinking.

Unfortunately, the media climate in Ireland is not able for such critical thinking. No, we live in a society where only one view or opinion is tolerated and those who dissent are not only disagreed with but ridiculed and derided as somehow not being up to the task of engaging in intellectual rigour.

*Yours etc.,
John Ahern,
Naas, Co. Kildare*

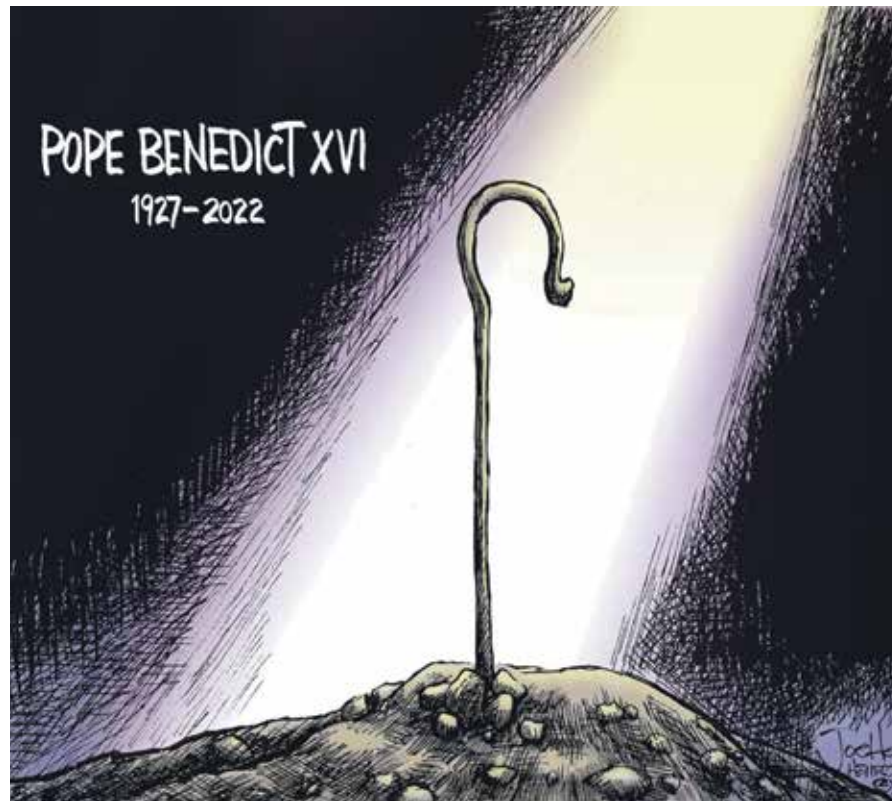
Benedict: the first green Pope?

Dear Editor, One of the neglected aspects of the ministry of Pope Benedict XVI was surely his contribution to helping us understand our shared responsibility as dwellers on planet Earth for the care of our common home.

As far as I can recall, he was the first major theologian – and certainly the first Pope – to speak of our responsibility to ensure that we are good stewards of what we have inherited rather than simply seeing ourselves as masters and mistresses to dominate the world around us.

Pope Francis has thankfully built on that to such an extent that in our parishes homilies about environmental awareness are now part of what we expect in our Sunday liturgies.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Ryan
Sligo Town*



Thanks for emphasising friendship

Dear Editor, Reflecting on your excellent coverage of the legacy of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI (*The Irish Catholic*, January 5, 2023) it got me thinking about how often I have read in his writings – both pre-Pontificate and as Pope – him stressing the importance of seeing faith as a personal relationship with God.

I recall being repeatedly struck by the important

fact that we must never allow Jesus to be reduced to an idea or a concept but keep before our minds that he is an actual living person who wants to be in relationship with us.

I have always been interested in my faith and studies theology some years ago which I hoped would deepen my faith. Overall I found it a depressing experience (I

won't name the institution) as those involved in teaching seemed to relish the fact that they had a little bit more learning from the rest of us and saw it as their job to try and shock us or try to deconstruct the faith we had.

In the writings of Cardinal Ratzinger I discovered a child-like (not childish) appreciation for my faith and the fact that God

wants to be my friend. Many of us have grown up with a sense of God as a harsh judge who is forever grumbling about us or just waiting to consign us to Hell – how liberating it is to know that God loves us unconditionally.

Thanks for emphasising that in your coverage.

*Yours etc.,
Jane Reilly,
Athlone, Co. Westmeath*

Ukraine's never-ending war

Dear Editor, We are all moved by the plight of the poor Ukrainian people suffering under barbaric Russian bombardment. Vladimir Putin is clearly a man who neither fears the international community or God.

But, is it not time to face an unpalatable truth? Unless we can find a truce between Russia and Ukraine and

bring this terrible war to an end, then many more people will lose their lives and the economic and infrastructural destruction visited upon Ukraine will be immense.

I know that Sabina Higgins was vilified when she suggested that there should be ceasefire talks, but we learnt from our own conflict on this island

that the only way forward is dialogue.

Not everyone will get what they want in such a process, but surely peace is much more important than whether Ukraine is a smaller country after the war than when it started?

*Yours etc.,
Lorraine Murray
Newry, Co. Down*

facebook community

Each week we publish a selection of comments from *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

Our Lady Marches through Wexford

Well done to those who organised this and participated in it. It takes courage in this day and age, when all too many people are 'courageous' enough to bash all things religious...when they have the support of the mob and the media at large! – **Sinead Tracey**

It's heartening to see these older traditions restored in an increasingly secular country. - **Mary Fallon**

The Irish Times reportedly refused to cover abuse in Protestant homes

The government are actively engaged in the modern-day child abuse scandal by pushing devastating gender and trans ideology on kids as young as two and sexualising kids from four or five. – **Declan O'Reilly**

What do you think? Join in the conversation on *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

Church isn't being difficult with teaching

Dear Editor, One thing strikes me looking at a lot of the coverage of the death of Pope Benedict XVI. Many of those commenting on the future of the Church seem to think that it is self-evident that the Catholic Church must eventually 'get with the times' as they put it and accept that abortion is just one of these things and that a man can become a woman by getting a form from the Department of Social Protection, and change back to a woman again with another form from the same department the following day.

I heard one commentator confidently proclaim on the radio that the "Catholic Church just doesn't get it" as if the teaching of the Church is decided by focus groups or designed to be popular and that Church leaders just haven't had the money to organise focus groups to see where people 'are at'. Perhaps he thinks that the Church just hasn't noticed that people no longer care for things like the right to life and will wake up one morning, realise the mistake and immediately abandon principles like the fact that abortion is wrong.

The fact is that those insisting that the Church "just doesn't get it" don't understand that the Catholic Church teaches what it does out of conviction, rather than trying to be popular or 'with it'. Some truths are eternal, and as Archbishop Fulton Sheen warned: if the Church marries the spirit of one generation, she will soon find herself a widow in the next generation.

*Yours etc.,
John Scally
Mallow, Co. Cork*

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.

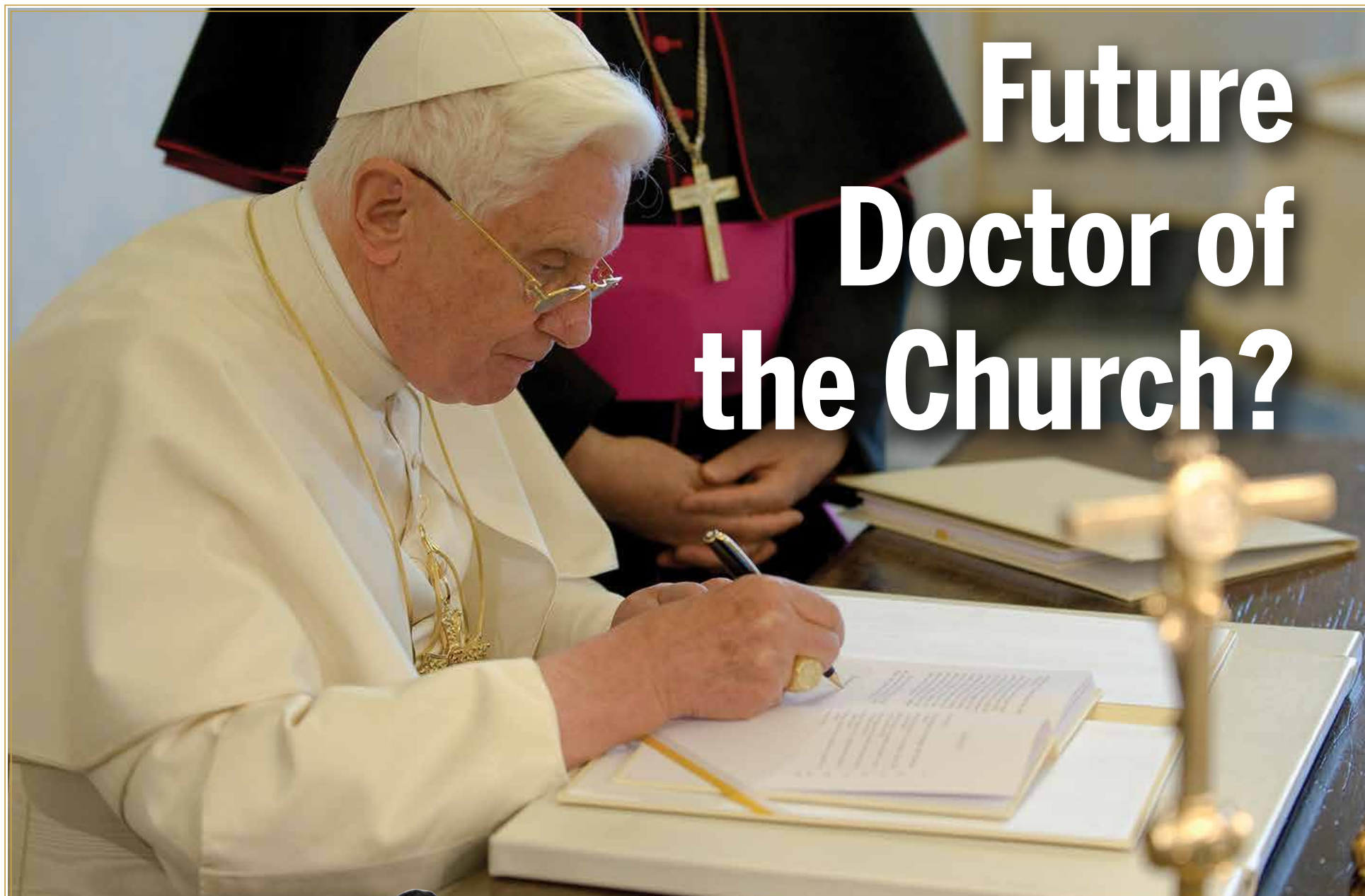
Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, January 12, 2023

Questions of Faith

Are science and religion opposed?

Page 32



Future Doctor of the Church?

Beginning well before he was elected pope in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI made substantial contributions to theology and Catholic thought through his prolific writing, academic lectures and long-form interviews, say scholars who study his work. In the wake of his death, Benedict has been heralded as one of the most important theologians of the 20th Century, one whose scholarship will stand the test of time.

Pope Benedict was “very intellectually gifted,” said Tracey Rowland, a theologian at the University of Notre Dame Australia and author of *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, published in 2008 by Oxford University Press.

“He was a great gift to the



Scholars say German professor-pope stands the test of time writes Maria Wiering

Church, and I think in the future, he will be a doctor of the Church,” she said. “In a hundred years’ time, he will be seen to have laid the foundation for a theological renewal.”

Even before he attended the University of Munich, Joseph Ratzinger was well educated in the classics - the literature of ancient Greece and Rome - and had studied Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

“He comes out of that German

intellectual tradition, and that was the most demanding scholarship in the world,” Dr Rowland said. “What you ended up with was this man who was really atop the whole grip of the Western intellectual tradition.”

Fr Ratzinger wrote his 1953 dissertation on St Augustine of Hippo. And he wrote a second dissertation-level work, qualifying him to teach at a university, on St Bonaventure. Both doctors of

the Church were major influences in his thought, Dr Rowland said: St Augustine shaped his view of ecclesiology and the relationship between love and reason, and St Bonaventure shaped his understanding of revelation.

He then taught dogma and fundamental theology at four German universities: Bonn (1959-1969), Münster (1963-1966), Tübingen (1966-1969) and Regensburg (1969-1977). At Regensburg, he also later served as dean and vice-rector until his 1977 appointment as Archbishop of Munich and Freising.

Fr Emery de Gaál, chairman and professor of dogmatic theology at the University of St Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, described Pope Benedict as a scholar who surrendered his

whole life to academic work. He authored “no less than 1,600 theological titles, books, articles, essays, book reviews,” Fr de Gaál said. Among those works is the 1968 book *Introduction to Christianity*, which has been widely translated and called a “masterpiece.” He also oversaw the compilation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in 1992, under Pope St John Paul II.

“He stands in a singular position as a theologian pope. No pope has written that much and so much in an original and decisive way,” Fr de Gaál said. “To see a pope with comparable theological acumen, we would have to go back to Gregory the Great in the Sixth Century, or Leo the Great (in the Fifth Century). And, of course, they didn’t write that much.”

» Continued from Page 29

During the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the future pope served as a theological adviser and was among the theologians considered to be 'reformers.' He was a contributor to and editorial board member of *Concilium*, a theological journal launched in 1965 by Vatican II standouts, including Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng. However, in 1972, Fr Ratzinger helped to found the competing journal *Communio* with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac.

“At the Second Vatican Council, he was part of the reform group, but he was never...theologically liberal”

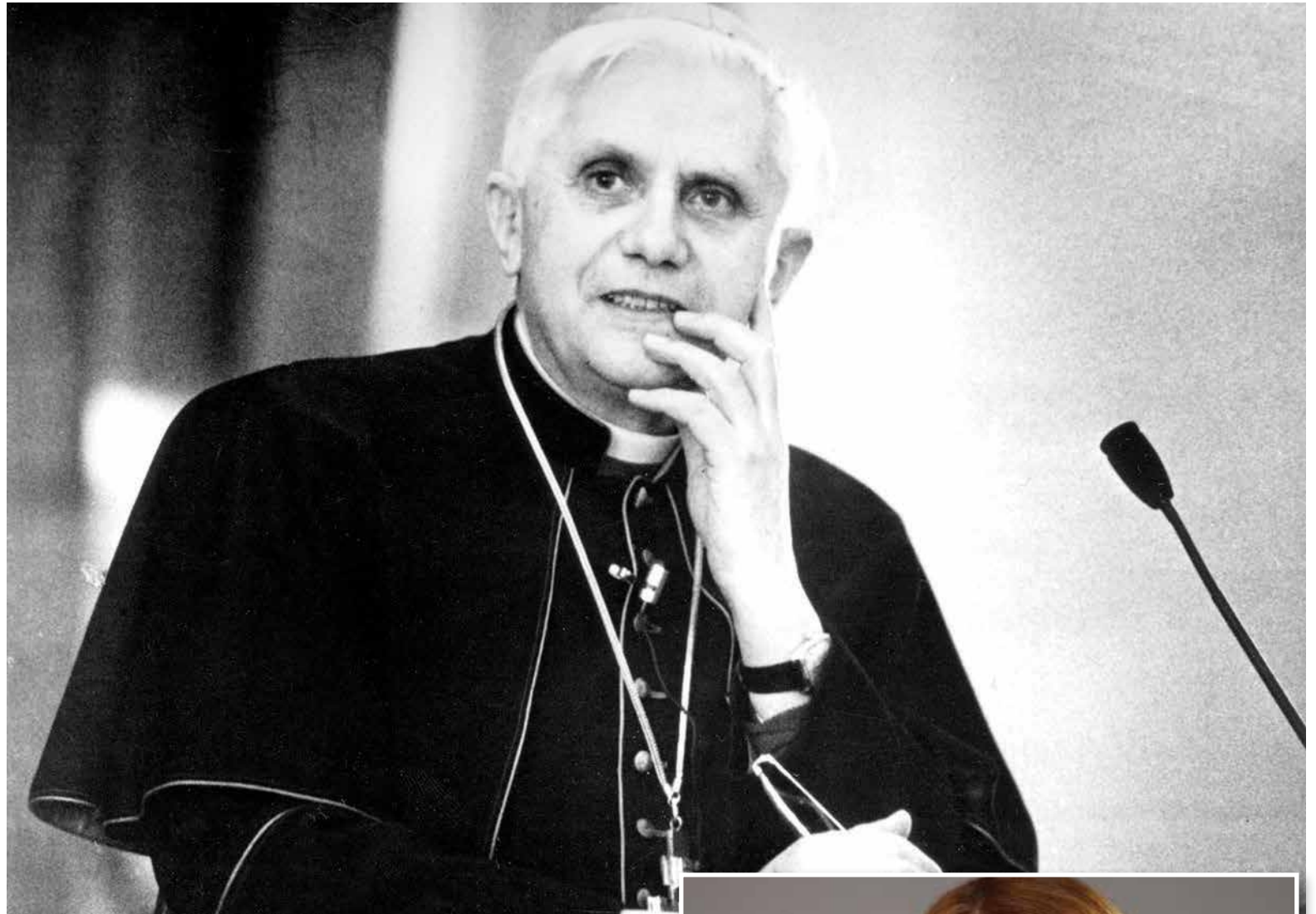
Some observers say his theology pivoted from 'progressive' to 'conservative' around 1968, as cultural upheaval overtook European university campuses due to the Vietnam War, sexual revolution, rise of Marxism and attacks on the Western intellectual tradition.

However, other scholars disagree, arguing that Pope Benedict's scholarship is theologically consistent. Dr Rowland said the “tsunami in the 1960s” didn't shock the priest-professor, but he rejected the stance some Church leaders took to “adopt the spirit of the times and try to market Christianity” to it. Instead, Ratzinger argued that the Church was not a “haberdashery shop,” where the windows change with the fashion, she said.

“At the Second Vatican Council, he was part of the reform group, but he was never...theologically liberal,” she said. “He was in favour of reform because he wasn't in favour of 16th-Century Baroque scholasticism. He was more patristic, more Augustinian. What happened in the late 1960s and the early 1970s is that there was a split among the reformers. So, the people who had been the reformers at Vatican II break into two camps and one becomes very liberal” on matters such as morality and restructuring Church governance, she said. “Ratzinger never had those ideas.”

Fr de Gaál said the political categories of 'liberal,' 'progressive,' 'conservative' or 'restorative' he has seen applied to Pope Benedict in the wake of his death are inaccurate descriptors. Because of divine revelation, “to speak of 'conservative' or 'liberal' is really a caricature... You really have to go into the nitty gritty of theology, of the Catechism, of Scripture to discover that men and women of all faith, be it simple or sophisticated, rise above such categories.”

As prefect of the Congregation (now Dicastery) of the Doctrine of the Faith from 1981 until his papal election, then-Cardinal Ratzinger had the job of defending Church doctrine, a role that earned him the moniker 'God's rottweiler.' Because of that public perception, Christopher Ruddy, associate professor of systematic theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, said he was pleasantly surprised when he began reading Ratzinger's writings, including his memoirs *Milestones*, in the late 1990s.



Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger during a lecture in New York in 1988. Photo: CNS

“I found that this was the theologian who was speaking to my heart,” he said. “I'm like, ‘This is a very different person than I've been led to believe that he is.’”

Prof. Ruddy, who teaches a course on Pope Benedict, said then-Cardinal Ratzinger's 2000 book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* - a complement to the 1918 same-titled work on liturgical renewal by Romano Guardini, a priest-theologian whom Ratzinger knew and admired - will likely prove to be his most influential.

Liturgy

It presents the liturgy as “not something that we do once a week or once a day or so on, but that our entire lives are meant to be liturgical, and that what we're most ultimately made for is to worship God, to praise him, and in doing that, to become fully human and fully alive,” Prof. Ruddy said.

He also praised Pope Benedict's three-volume *Jesus of Nazareth*, published in 2007. The work conveys that “he's not just believing in some system of thought or practices...but he actually wants to see the face of the Lord,” he said. “These are real works of faith, and I found that very inspiring.”

As pope, Benedict wrote three encyclicals, or letters to the Church: *God is Love* (2005), *Saved in Hope* (2007) and *Charity in Truth* (2009). John Cavadini, a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, said that with the encyclicals, Pope Benedict is “taking up a very basic facet of our faith...and explaining it to people.”

The encyclicals revisited some themes Pope Benedict explored in

earlier works, said Prof. Cavadini, whom Pope Benedict appointed in 2009 to a five-year term on the Holy See's advisory International Theological Commission. For example, *Saved in Hope (Spe salvi)* drew on his 1977 theological treatise *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, which examined, but in a more “theologically detailed and technical” manner, Prof. Cavadini said, the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. The encyclicals are written to be more accessible to Catholics “in the pew” and reflect Pope Benedict's pastoral concern.

“Dr Martens said the lecture was academically unproblematic, but it was criticised because it was delivered by a pope, not simply a scholar”

That's also reflected in Pope Benedict's admonishment of what he termed “the dictatorship of relativism” to describe non-belief in ultimate truth. Pope Benedict argued that “if you don't believe in anything absolute, then you don't believe in love,” Prof. Cavadini said, and for Pope Benedict, “eternal love and eternal truth [Jesus] are the same thing.”

One challenge Pope Benedict faced as Pope was a seeming desire, at times, to separate his own writings from his papal teaching function, said Kurt Martens, a canon law professor at the Catholic University of America. In his introduction to



Theologian Tracey Rowland.

Jesus of Nazareth, Pope Benedict said that the work was not an exercise of his teaching authority but was from his private search for God.

“That begs the question: To what extent, when you hold that office, can you write as a private person?” Dr Martens asked. “I don't know the answer to that.”

Meanwhile, a 2006 lecture Pope Benedict gave at the University of Regensburg incited street protests in some Islamic countries because he quoted a Byzantine scholar critical of spreading the faith through violence in Islam as being incompatible with God's nature. Dr Martens said the lecture was academically unproblematic, but it was criticised because it was delivered by a Pope, not simply a scholar.

Speaking in general of Pope Benedict's papacy, Dr Martens described him as a “bridge” between St John Paul II and Pope Francis, who was

elected in 2013 after Pope Benedict's resignation.

“John Paul II was more of a doer, and Benedict the thinker. Francis comes with a more pastoral approach, that idea of the Church as a ‘field hospital,’” he said. “I think Francis would not have been possible without his two predecessors.”

Fr de Gaál said he expects interest in Pope Benedict's scholarship to grow as more of his works are translated from German into other languages, including English.

“The more distance we gain from the cultural context in which Pope Benedict wrote in the 1950s, 1960s, 70s and onward, the more we see his theology as self-standing, and thereby being classic,” he said. “It speaks to every generation.”

i Maria Wiering is senior writer for OSV News.

Dreaming of a single human family united in peace

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

Released in 1937 and directed by Jean Renoir, the talented son of a great French painter, *La Grande Illusion* set itself deliberately against the trend toward jingoism present in 1930s Europe. Set during WWI, it tells the story of French prisoners of war who continually try to escape from German camps; and about the German officers who fraternise with and guard them.

“The brotherhood of man is a theme dwelt upon by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*”

There's an air of melancholy about the film that is so typically and wonderfully French, and yet it ends, in a way, with hope. It is this hopeful note of man's universal brotherhood shining through war that landed the film on the Vatican's list of 45 important films under the 'values' section.

The brotherhood of man is a theme dwelt upon by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. The Pope has spoken with increasing urgency on the subject as vicious wars continue in Ukraine, Nigeria and around the world.

La Grande Illusion is about WWI, but clearly it was anticipating a WWII. The grand illusion, it is called, hinting at a once-popular book released in 1909 about why a great European war



A still from the 1937 French classic *La Grande Illusion*, which the Vatican selected for its 1995 list of significant films.

wouldn't happen again because it would be futile. We know how that went.

We had WWI and then we had the rise of increasingly jingoistic and racist nationalism, most notably in Germany, but it wasn't alone. At a shallow level, then, Renoir is making a political statement. He is showing German and French soldiers side-by-side, humanising both in the other's eyes. He is not unaware of division, whether it be class, nation or race; but Renoir knew of something deeper, a fraternity.

The film stars Jean Gabin as the lower-class French officer Lieutenant Marechal, Pierre Fresnay as the upper-class Captains de Boldieu and Marcel Dalio as the Jewish middle-class Lieutenant Rosenthal. Then there is the mesmerising Erich von Stroheim as the upper-class German Cap-

taine von Rauffenstein.

The French classic begins with de Boldieu and Marechal being captured by von Rauffenstein, moving from one prison to the next until the two French soldiers find themselves once more under von Rauffenstein's guard.

Friendship

He treats them amicably, and with de Boldieu forms a particular friendship; they are kind of the European elite, aristocratic and, as de Boldieu points out, in decline. He knows this, but von Rauffenstein must come to learn it. It is the end of an era, the era of gallant war perhaps, but certainly of the aristocrat and all he stood for.

But while there is a moving scene where Boldieu, dying in his bed, explains all this to Rauffenstein, this is not the end of the film. The end of the film is given

to the up-and-coming, the lower class Marechal and the middle-class Rosenthal. And their tale ends with hope, of a kind, in the discovery of our universal brotherhood.

It is a qualified hope that things may be different in the future – or they may not. And we know, unfortunately, that they were not. So perhaps I impute more melancholy to the film than is really in it, but as the allusive title suggests, there is an illusion in here somewhere.

In addition to the excellent theme, one of relevance to our time, the film is made with great skill. Renoir was a director of taste and technical excellence; here, he also touches the heart.

The director gave his actors so much room and they responded well. His camera frequently meanders across the screen with

ease. It is so self-controlled, drifting naturally from a wide shot of a full crowd to a delicately lit close-up. And there is little more beautiful that film has to offer than a well-done close-up.

And then, each frame within a shot is so well-crafted. I remember one in particular, of the soldiers grouped in a make-shift theatre, belting out the Marseillaise with all their heart; their faces washed out by the light; one great bulb hanging in the background, illuminating all; tired faces, worn faces, but determination and pride written in everyone. I don't know how Renoir did it.

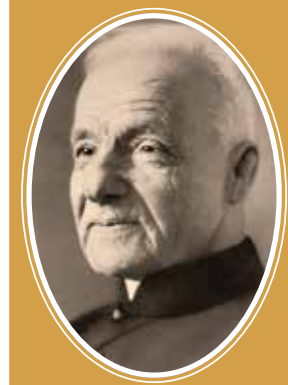
“It is a beautiful film that creates so many varied moods through heartfelt human relations, dwelling on all kinds of love, without ever getting lost”

But then, as the American film critic Roger Ebert put it, Renoir is at his best observing characters with sympathy. He appears to have an abundance of sympathy for his trapped soldiers, even for their enemies. He sees no true enmity, only the false boundaries established between us. One world at one time, that's the possibility he hints at – but is it all a grand illusion?

It is a beautiful film that creates so many varied moods through heartfelt human relations, dwelling on all kinds of love, without ever getting lost. It understands Pope Francis' own wisdom, that “no one can face life in isolation” and that the time has truly come to “dream, then, as a single human family” in which we are “brothers and sisters all”.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St André Bessette
Photo: OSVNews

St André Bessette: The miracle man of Montreal

If ever there was a saint for the poor, humble and marginalised, it must be the Canadian Alfred Bessette, or St André Bessette. Born in Quebec on August 9, 1845, he was orphaned by the time he was 12. He was forced to work to support himself, travelling from place to place and taking up stints in factories in the US. Each posting was only short, however, as Alfred had been born in very poor health and he couldn't offer much as an ordinary worker.

After a few years trying to find work in the United States, he returned to Quebec, where his childhood pastor encouraged him to consider a vocation to religious life. The superior of the order to which he turned, the Holy Cross Brothers in Montreal, could not help but doubt the vocation of the then-25 year-old, who showed up at their door asking to enter religious life.

Forced to work from an early age as he was, Alfred had very little education and was illiterate, which made his desire to join an order of teaching brothers all the more unlikely. The superior was naturally inclined to reject such an applicant, but the note from the young man's pastor that was sent

along gave him pause: “I am sending you a saint...” it read.

The superior first turned Alfred away, but the bishop of Montreal intervened, and the Holy Cross Brothers accepted him. He took on the name “André,” after the childhood pastor who had vouched for him. His community could not think of anything for him to do other than answer the door of their boarding school, where he welcomed and greeted visitors in their hundreds, for years. “At the end of my novitiate,” Brother André joked later, “my superiors showed me the door, and there I stayed for forty years”.

Meeting as many people as he was, word of his close relationship with God began to spread. Being intensely devoted to St Joseph, many began to experience physical healings after praying with Brother André, and his reputation as a miraculous healer took root.

So many people came to see him that the Congregation allowed him to see sick people at a trolley station across the street. Through it all, Brother André remained humble, and often seemed confused that people would offer him such praise. He

continued to insist that it wasn't down to him, but to St Joseph's intercession. Before long, people were coming to the order just to see the doorman, while 80,000 letters a year started streaming in for him.

Desiring to introduce people to St Joseph and increase devotion to him, he saved the money he earned from giving haircuts at five cents apiece, eventually earning the \$200 he needed to construct a simple structure – the origins of the Oratory of St Joseph in Montreal. This shrine opened on October 19, 1904, and in 1909, Brother André was released from his duties as doorkeeper and assigned full-time as its caretaker.

The Oratory began to attract large numbers of pilgrims, and plans were made to construct a large basilica. The rest of Brother André's life and ministry was to receive the long lines of sick visitors who flocked to the Oratory to see him, and as a result, he became known as the “Miracle Man of Montreal”.

Brother André died January 6, 1937 at the age of 91. During the week that his body lay in state outside St Joseph's Oratory, an estimated one million people turned out to pay their respects.

‘Visio divina’: Divine seeing and praying with art and Scripture



Lindsey Weishar

In the past few years, the term *visio divina* has gained traction in the Catholic lexicon. Like *lectio divina*, which is a way to pray with Scripture, *visio divina* translates to “divine seeing” and is a way to pray with art or other visual media alongside Scripture.

“Jesus, however, reaches a hand toward her, perhaps pointing out to those assembled her example of humility”

I first encountered *visio divina* in June 2021 at the GIVEN Forum, a conference dedicated to helping young women activate their gifts for the good of the Church and the world. One of the projects inspired by the 2016 forum was Katie Weiss’ Behold, a ministry that uses *visio divina* to help women to “encounter the beauty of God and themselves, and go forth into the world sharing this beauty”.

During the forum, Katie led the participants through a time of *visio divina*. She showed us an image of James Tissot’s painting, “The Ointment of the Magdalene”. Then she took us through the following steps (which are also found on her

website):

- **Visio:** We were asked to spend time looking at the image and “praying how it speaks to (our) heart”.

- **Meditation:** Katie then read us an accompanying Scripture passage (Jn 12:1-10) and invited us to ponder the painting more deeply with the guidance of reflection questions. As one would experience during *lectio divina*, we were asked: “What strikes you about this image and Scripture?”

- **Prayer:** We were then invited to enter into dialogue with the Lord about what was speaking to us from the Scripture and painting.

- **Contemplation:** Katie describes this step as “simply resting in God” and “a time of divine intimacy”.

- **Action:** The final question of our prayer was, “How can you live out the fruit of this meditation?” The point of this step is that the word we read and the image we gazed upon take root in us and change us, and call us to some kind of response.

Praying with this painting was powerful. I was struck by Mary Magdalene’s utter abandonment before the Lord, as well as the shocked and somewhat disapproving faces of the people around Jesus.

Jesus, however, reaches a hand toward her, perhaps pointing out to those assembled her example of humility. He is not at all embarrassed by the fact that her hair is draped over his feet. In this moment of abandonment, Mary has given all her worldly and spiritual goods to the Lord, and the sweetness of the ointment fills the room.

During the meditation, one of Katie’s questions was: “Does anything hold you back from receiving your gifts?” This led me to ponder areas of fear and lack of trust

in my own life and to bring these to prayer, and to discern the action of finding a spiritual director so I could more freely empty my alabaster jar over Jesus’ feet.

In June 2022, I got a chance to sit down with Katie to discuss more deeply her own experiences of praying with art. Before founding Behold, Katie spent time with a religious order discerning her vocation. Though struggling to pray with Scripture alone, she found prayer came more easily before Fra Angelico’s “Annunciation”.

“It gave me permission to feel what I was feeling,” Katie shared. “I was feeling I wasn’t called to the religious community I was with, but I was afraid to see that.” Praying before this painting gave her permission to acknowledge hard feelings – like fear and suffering and, in this instance, the courage to discern out of the religious community.

“Katie describes these experiences of creating or engaging more of the senses while praying with art as incarnational”

More recently, art has helped Katie process the profound grief of her miscarriage. An artist herself, she felt called to paint in the weeks following this loss: “I painted this image of Mary holding our baby, Lucy. It was really healing to acknowledge a loss and to express what I was feeling inside.”

Art has been a catalyst for helping Katie grow in intimacy with the Lord, and her ministry is guided by the belief that it can do the same for others. Behold has served post-abortive women and has also offered small group opportunities to pray through the mysteries of the rosary with art and to use hand lettering to pray with a Scripture verse.

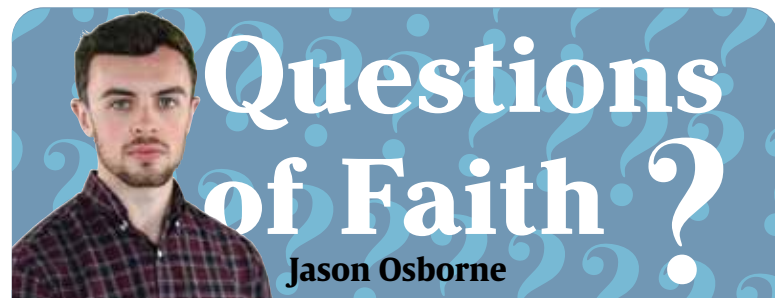
Katie describes these experiences of creating or engaging more of the senses while praying with art as incarnational. It is also very much a part of the Catholic tradition – while researching for Behold, Katie found a book on Eastern Catholicism that mentioned the practice of praying with icons and Scripture.

Even stained glass, Katie says, is a visual way to engage with Scripture, and in the early days of its use, would have helped a largely illiterate population engage more deeply with faith.

Since Behold’s launch in 2016, Katie has seen the term *visio divina* explode. She believes that the Holy Spirit is using this way of praying to touch souls.

The beautiful thing about our Church is that it holds a rich treasury of ways in which we can draw close to Our Lord. *Visio divina*, I’ve found, vibrantly brings Scripture to life and invites the viewer to rest in the visual poetry of an artist’s inspiration.

Visit www.beholdvisiodivina.com to learn more.



Are science and religion opposed?



It’s commonly argued in today’s world that science and faith are in conflict. Some ardently go so far as to suggest that science and the discoveries about the natural world that it’s made possible to invalidate faith, making religion a superstitious thing of the past.

The idea at the core of this argument is that it only makes sense to believe in that which you can see, measure, analyse and, ultimately, physically prove. To take anything on faith – such as Divine Revelation, miracles or otherwise – is to suspend your reason, and so we shouldn’t do it.

If you’ve heard arguments along these lines, you’re not alone. It’s a very popular idea in the current age of philosophical materialism (which believes that matter is all that exists). Those who make this claim run into a couple of pretty substantial problems, though. Foremost among them is that the argument, “only science can establish whether something is true or false, and so it’s the only tool we should rely on,” can’t be proven or disproven by the scientific method, and so it’s immediately self-contradictory.

The idea that only science can teach us reliably about the external world is known as “positivism” and while it was popular in the mid-20th Century, it isn’t anymore, with many philosophers – and scientists – rejecting it for the reason mentioned above.

With this argument discarded, it leaves open the possibility that there are things science can’t be relied upon to discover or reveal to us – such as the existence of God or the nature of moral values. As ever, the Catechism states the Church’s position on the interplay between science and faith well:

“Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.

“Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowl-

edge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the Faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God.

“The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are,” it reads.

Science and faith go hand-in-hand; indeed, science can only be properly carried out if we trust in reason, and reason can best be trusted in if the nature of reality is reasonable – as the Church claims that God is.

Another angle that’s sometimes taken is that historically, the Church has been hostile to scientific investigation, out of fear of the possibility that the Christian worldview will be undermined. While surely there have been, and are, minds in the Church that fear such things, that couldn’t be further from the Church’s stance or attitude towards scientific discovery.

Indeed, it was Catholic scientists – priests – who discovered hereditary patterns of traits and first posited the Big Bang theory. The most famous of modern scientists, Albert Einstein, was reportedly abhorred when he first encountered Fr George Lemaitre’s theory of the moment of creation, but is said to have later declared “Lemaitre’s theory was ‘the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened’”, once it was confirmed by observation.

Director of the Vatican Observatory and President of the Vatican Observatory Foundation, Bro. Guy Consolmagno told this paper previously that for him, “my religion tells me that God made the universe, my science tells me how he did it. That’s the first summary of why they complement each other beautifully”.



The one and the many – ecumenical and interfaith relations



Pope Francis visits with Israel's two chief rabbis, Ashkenazi Rabbi David Lau, left, and Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef, in at the Heichal Shlomo centre in Jerusalem on May 26, 2014. Photo: CNS

One of the most ancient problems in philosophy is the question of 'the one and the many', whether reality is ultimately a unity or a plurality and how these interrelate. We might ask the same question regarding the plurality of religious faiths, Churches, and forms of worship in our world. Is there some inherent oneness there or is it all plurality without anything binding us together in some kind of community that transcends our differences?

At the risk of being misunderstood, here's my perspective. All of us in the world who have a sincere belief share a common faith because ultimately we share a common God. Moreover, since we share a common God, we also share a common problem; namely, we struggle equally in trying to conceptualise this non-conceptualisable God.

The first dogma about God in all valid religions is that God is holy and ineffable, meaning that God cannot ever be circumscribed and grasped in a concept. By definition, it is impossible to capture infinity in a concept (like trying to have a concept of the highest number it is possible to count to.) Since God is infinite, all attempts to conceptualise God fall short.

All legitimate faiths have this problem in common, and this should keep us humble in our religious language. Further still, beyond our common struggle to have a concept of God, we also all struggle to



Fr Rolheiser

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understand God as actually loving universally and unconditionally.

All religions and all denominations struggle not to make God tribal, biased, and lacking in full love and understanding. In Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for example, where we all believe in the same God, we also all tend to conceptualise that God as male, celibate, and frowning most of the time. Not exactly the ineffable, unconditionally loving God of revelation.

Task

So what's our task? Our task as believers is to move towards an ever-deepening empathy with each other, across all denominational and religious lines. That is the real route for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

At the risk of sounding heretical or disloyal to my own faith tradition, I say this. Our task is not to set out to make converts, to try to persuade others to join our own Church. Our task is to enter ever more deeply, faithfully, and lovingly into our own Church and denomination, even as we strive to be in deeper empathy with all others who worship God in ways different than we do.

The renowned ecclesiologist Avery Dulles taught that the way forward for Christian ecumenism and interreligious dialogue is not the way of conversion, of trying to get others to convert to our particular Church. The way forward (in his words) is the way of "progressive gradualism", namely, of each of us being ever more faithful to God within our

tradition so that as each of us grows closer to God (and, for Christians, to Christ) we will grow closer to each other and to all people of sincere faith.

The unity we seek lies not in one Church or faith community eventually converting all others to join it, but in everyone of sincere faith becoming progressively more faithful to God so that the unity we desire can take place sometime in the future, contingent on our own deeper fidelity inside our own faith tradition.

Join

Our task then is not that of trying to convert others to join our own Church, but of moving more deeply into our own Church, even as we strive to be in an ever-deeper empathy with other Churches and other faiths. We need to be brothers and sisters to each other, recognising that we already have a shared God, a shared humanity, and shared heartaches.

I work in a doctoral program in spirituality that draws students from many different Christian denomina-

tions. During the five years of their programme, these students study together, socialise together, commiserate together, and pray together (though only occasionally in a formal Church service).

Interestingly, during the ten years, we have not had a single conversion of one person to another denomination. Rather, every one of our graduates has left the programme with a deeper love and understanding of his or her own tradition – and a deeper love and understanding of other faith traditions.

This does not imply that all religions are equal, but rather that none of us is living out the full truth and that the path forward lies in a deeper personal conversion within our own faith and a more empathic relationship to other faiths.

I leave you with a poem, my own – *The One and the Many*:

Different peoples, one earth
Different beliefs, one God
Different languages, one heart
Different ways of falling, one law

of gravity
Different energies, one Spirit
Different scriptures, one Word
Different forms of worship, one desire

Different histories, one destiny
Different strengths, one fragility
Different disciplines, one aim
Different approaches, one road
Different faiths – one Father, one Mother, one earth, one sky, one beginning, one end.

“All of us in the world who have a sincere belief share a common faith because ultimately we share a common God”

This Sunday's Gospel (John 1:29-34) begins with John the Baptist pointing towards Jesus and saying, "Look, there is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world". His words are repeated at Mass in order to alert us to the awesome privilege of welcoming the Lord in the Eucharist.

"Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb." Words that become too familiar tend to lose their impact, so today's Gospel offers an opportunity to reflect and savour their richness as if this were our first time to hear these words.

Passover lamb

The application of the image of the lamb to Jesus grew out of a rich vein of Jewish thought. When Moses prepared the Hebrew people to escape from slavery in Egypt, the angel sent to kill every firstborn male passed over their houses which were marked with the blood of a lamb. Then they passed safely over the Red Sea.

“Animals were sacrificed for many important occasions. Atonement for sin required the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb”

After settling in the Promised Land, an annual remembrance of that liberation became the Passover feast, the highlight of the Jewish year. When family groups gathered for the sacred meal, the principal item on the table was a lamb that had been sacrificed. In many places they ate it standing, dressed for a journey.

In the chronology of John's Gospel, the death of Jesus took place at the very time when the Passover lambs were sacrificed. And the ritual instruction regarding the sacrificial lambs also applied to Jesus: "Not a bone of his shall be broken" (John 19:36).

From the earliest days of the Christian communities, the symbol of the lamb was retained, recognising that the death of Jesus replaced the sacrifice of animals. Little more than 20 years after the death of Jesus, a passing reference in a letter of Paul suggests that his readers were already familiar with the idea that Jesus Christ had replaced the multiple sacrificial lambs: "Christ, our

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Passover, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

Sacrifices of atonement

Animals were sacrificed for many important occasions. Atonement for sin required the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb, and this too took on a new meaning for Christians. "Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you... was not paid in anything corruptible, but in the precious blood of a lamb, without spot or stain, namely Christ" (1 Pet 1:18-19).

What we call redemption is the third of three acts in the great drama of the world. The first act is about God, one and true, good and full of love. The second act is the story of sin, which is the antithesis of God with deceptions and divisions, bad will, hatred and murder.

The third act is the connection between the God of goodness and the world of sin. "For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

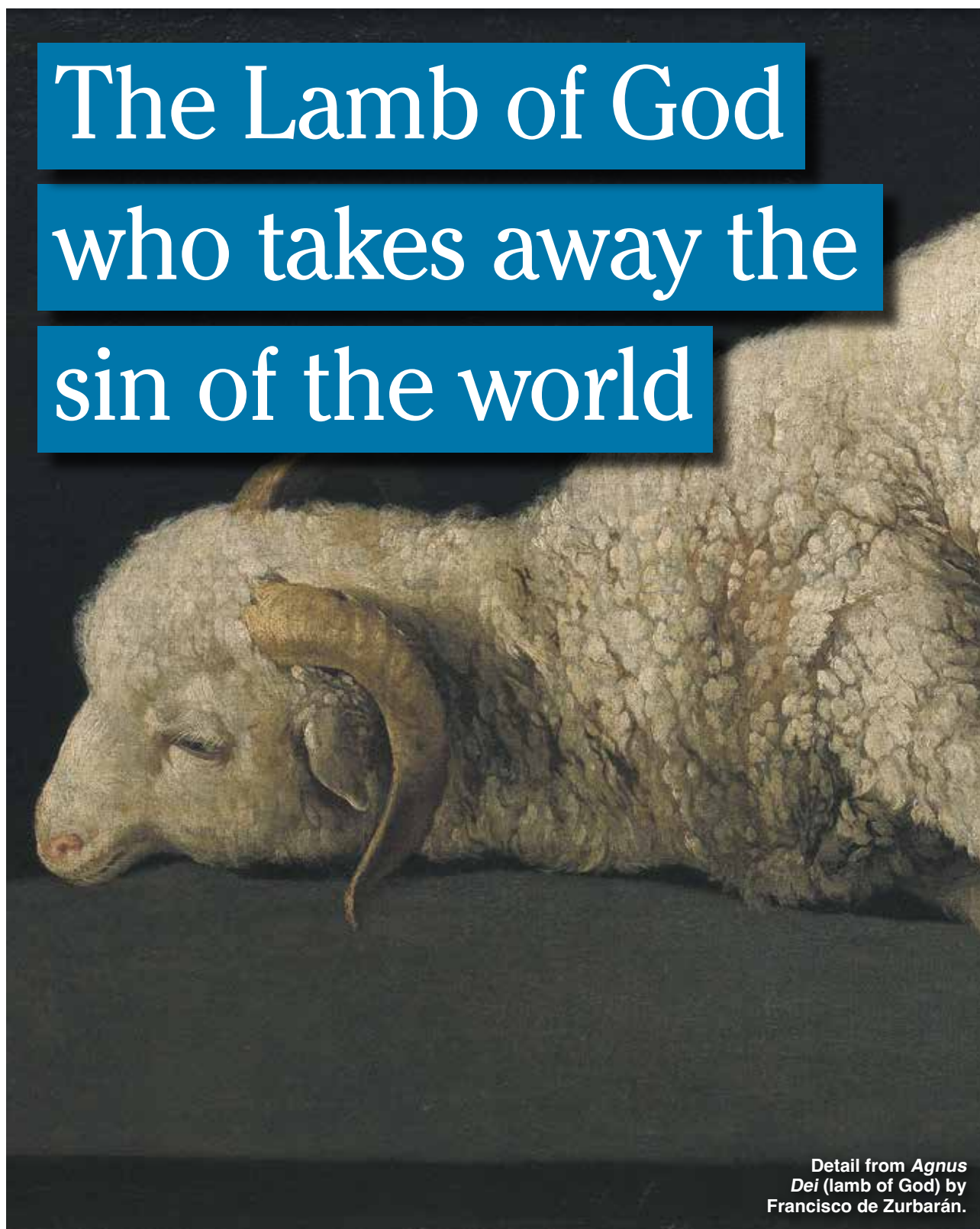
God's mercy

John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Critics of Catholicism speak of Catholic guilt. But when somebody does some wrong, guilt is the proper response. In humble confession a penitent comes to admit this guilt.

But for many people the sense of guilt stays in the mind. They find it very hard to accept divine forgiveness. Many people who come to Confession regularly continue to recall sins of the past instead of rejoicing in the mercy of God.

It is only in recent times that we have become aware of the harm done by sexual abuse. A great many victims, although totally faultless, continue to blame themselves and cannot shake off feeling dirty.

A psychiatrist can help one to sift through the rubble of memories for the root cause of sin. A counsellor can help one to come to terms with the situation. But the only power that can take away sin is God's loving mercy, which is greater than sin. In the 12 steps of rehabilitation from an addiction, an essential step is handing over one's powerlessness to the higher power. St Paul affirmed how God's grace is



The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

Detail from *Agnus Dei (lamb of God)* by Francisco de Zurbarán.

greater than sin: "However much sin increased, grace was always greater" (Rom 5:20).

Supper of the Lamb

Let us return now to the celebration of the Eucharist. As the sacred host is raised before our eyes, the words of the Baptist are

heard again to express our faith. "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb."

We then express our unworthiness but also our trust in God's word. "Only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sinfulness of the world.

Help us to recognise how your mercy is so much greater than our sins.

We pray especially for those who cannot shake off feeling dirty because others abused them. You take away the sin of the world.

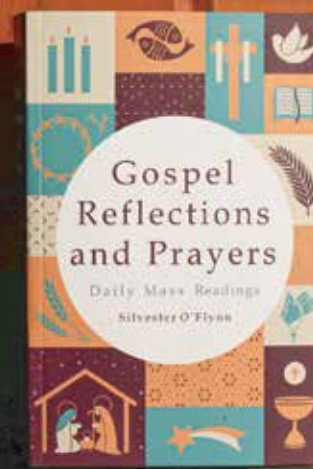
May your divine mercy touch their hearts and minds as they experience the deep cleansing of your compassion.

Although we will never be worthy to receive Holy Communion, we trust that you will say the word inviting us to the supper of the Lamb.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Memories of Benedict to the fore of the media's mind

The word 'unprecedented' has had many outings in the last three years, and media commentators reached for it again in relation to the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict was already a master of the unprecedented thanks to his surprise resignation in 2013. Some early coverage of his death was inclined to be lazy, clichéd and ill-informed, but improved around the funeral time.

The **Funeral of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI** (RTE One) was solemn, moving and inspiring. Among those providing the music was the Sistine Chapel Choir which dates back to the 15th Century. The commentary, by Fiona Mitchell and Fr Thomas McCarthy, was excellent as always, subtle and informative. When it came to the beautiful Offertory Chant Fr McCarthy delayed the translation so that we could listen to the music without interruption – nice touch! It was also good to see Donegal woman Mary Maguire delivering the second reading. The **News at One** (RTE Radio 1) reported her as being honoured and having "so much joy" in her heart. At one stage the camera operator focused on a picture of Benedict waving – as if he was waving goodbye to us. At times as well the camera lingered on the crib in St Peter's Square, reminding us we were still in the



Fog obscures the dome of St Peter's Basilica in the early morning before the funeral Mass of Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Square at the Vatican January 5, 2023. Photo: CNS/ Cindy Wooden

season and how death has an extra poignancy at this time of year.

Master

Pope Francis described Benedict as "the great master of religious teaching". His homily wasn't really a eulogy but, as I presume homilies are supposed to be, an exploration or elucidation of the Gospel. From the quote 'Into your hands I commend my

spirit' he moved to commending our brother Benedict "into the hands of the Father". I was moved by what Fr McCarthy called the "reverential silence" straight after the homily – the thousands in St Peter's Square were hushed. Another touching moment towards the end was when Pope Francis greeted the simple coffin after the Mass – he bowed his head and touched

the coffin, and in the process probably touched us all.

RTE's coverage was bookended by a studio discussion to set the context. *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly was the professional journalist as usual, but I thought theologian Gina Menzies (of We Are Church) was overly negative towards Pope Benedict. Of course critical analysis is required and no pope is perfect, but I'm not sure the funeral was the appropriate context.

On **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) Michael Kelly was back in action for a very comprehensive conversation with theologian Tina Beattie and Catherine Peppinster, former editor of *The Tablet*. They broadened the discussion from being just about Benedict to a comparison of the legacies of the three recent popes. I liked the depth and breadth of the discussion, with a variety of views expressed. For example Prof. Beattie was not enamoured of the reining in of liberal Catholic theologians, Michael Kelly thought some of them pushed the envelope too far.

Inspiring

That same morning on **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) we heard the inspiring story of Fr Paschal Uche of Brentwood Diocese in the UK. His vocation was inspired when he was part of a youth delegation that welcomed Pope Benedict to Westminster Cathe-

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIMPSONS: HOMER THE HERETIC

Channel 4 Saturday, January 14, 8.25am

Homer has a vision from God and decides to start his own religion, which doesn't go down well with the neighbours. (S4 Ep3/22)

SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

BBC One Sunday, January 15, 10.30am

Sean Fletcher and Holly Hamilton host the show that gets to the heart and soul of the issues of the day.

WAYFARING STRANGER WITH PHIL CUNNINGHAM

BBC Four Friday, January 20, 9pm

Music and history combine as Scottish performer Phil Cunningham explores musical connections between Scotland, Ulster and America. Featuring a wealth of music, sacred and secular.

dral on his UK visit in 2010. Fr Paschal got to meet, speak to and hug the then-pope, and became very conscious of a worldwide nature of the Church.

Sunday Morning Live

(BBC One), back for a new series, featured a gently

nuanced interview about Benedict with Christopher Lamb, Rome correspondent of *The Tablet*. He said the late pope emeritus left "a complex and mixed legacy". He was a "kind, gentle figure" despite his reputation for theological "crackdown".

Heart and Soul

(BBC World Service, Friday) featured a thorough review of Benedict's papacy, strengths

and weaknesses. Irish journalist Colm Flynn presented the programme and had contributions from the likes of Cardinal Arinze and John

Allen – the latter described Benedict as incredibly kind and gentle, while the cardinal gave insight into the shock caused by Benedict when he announced his resignation. The programme was particular good at filling in the background from Benedict's younger days as a theology professor.

Earlier in the week there was a timely repeat of a *Would You Believe* special **A Farewell to Pope Benedict** (RTE One, Wednesday), with contributions from a veritable who's who of religious journalism. It was ten years old but still fresh and still hugely relevant.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Film

Aubrey Malone



Centenary of the Screen's Moses

As the new year begins I'm reminded that Charlton Heston was born 100 years ago. One of his first major roles was as Moses in Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*. Parting the Red Sea could be said to be starting at the top.

He decided to play him as "a man much scarred by the stress of being the instrument of God's will and lacking Christ's serene certainty about the divinity of his mission".

Heston went on to appear in George Stevens' *The Greatest Story Ever Told* some years later. He played John the Baptist. "Of all my Biblical parts," he said, "Jesus aside – and Jesus is really unplayable – the Baptist was the best."

By now his CV was beginning to haunt him. The critic Glenn Hopp observed: "When one sees Heston, one might wonder if he's going to baptise people in the Jordan River or part it and lead them across." He came to many roles with that kind of baggage.

The hatchet-faced Heston wasn't noted for his humour but when Stevens asked him how he felt as he stood knee-deep in the water, he joked, "I'm okay, George, but I'll tell you this. If the Jordan was as cold as the Colorado, Christianity would never have gotten off the ground!"

I interviewed Heston when he was in Dublin to



Charlton Heston appears in a scene from the 1956 classic movie *The Ten Commandments*. Photo: CNS

promote his autobiography some years ago. Pointing out a typo in the book drew a stern look from him. One didn't 'correct' Moses.

I asked him how he felt about being cast so often as biblical characters. "In a word, grateful," he said, "They made my career".

He was glad to hook up with De Mille as a young man but in some ways he 'handcuffed' him by making him feel typecast. When I asked him what he thought about De Mille personally he said, "What can you say about that man that hasn't been said before? He was a dynamo. It's fashionable to debunk him as a sensationalist in our age of psychological realism but nobody loved movies like he did. He got a heart attack on *The Ten Commandments* but he still wouldn't stop filming. He was 74 – and a workaholic. You can't not respect that."

I asked him if he thought he was genuinely religious or

a 'dollars' man. He replied "I don't like to make those kinds of distinctions. None of us is simple. He went in the devil's door and came out God's side. He was the most fulfilled man I ever met but his talent made him arrogant. He acted like God on the set. I saw him as reverential."

Did working in biblical films deepen Heston's faith? "How could being in *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur* not do that? It was all around me."

In the latter film he had a scene where he gives Jesus a drink of water on the hill of Calvary. Such moments defined the monolithic star.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



A many-faceted Catholic of his time

The Most Estimable of Men: Judge John O'Hagan, Patriot, Poet, Scholar, Lawyer

by Thomas J. Morrissey SJ
(Messenger Publications, €19.95/£18.95)

Peter Costello

Having heard so much recently about patriots of later generations, it is very welcome to have a biography of a man of the Young Ireland movement - a book which will remind some and inform many that what we think of as patriotism, mere love of country, once had many dimensions. Dimensions which we could well do with these days.

Over the years Fr Morrissey has written many substantial and important books, mainly on social and trade union topics. In this much smaller book, however, he takes a new and significant direction, which other historians might follow.

In Ireland we are rather over-obsessed with important figures, leaving secondary and tertiary figures, as some see them, in the shade. But such people have made in the past important contributors to the development of Ireland's life and culture.

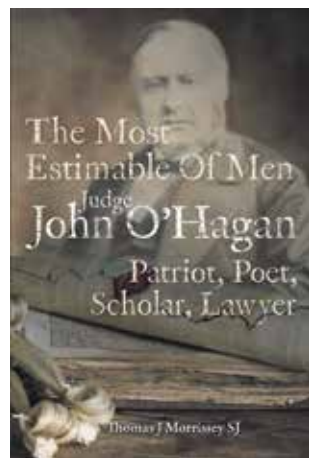
“O'Hagan's connection with the Young Ireland movement shaped his views”

His subject in this book is Judge John O'Hagan, born in 1822, of whom I suspect few will have heard. There is no large hoard of papers available. So, Fr Morrissey has had to research his life largely through his activities and his friendships. Overall it makes for a very interesting, at times very moving and human book.

The major influences on O'Hagan's life were the loss of his father as a boy, and the love of his wife, who survived him but by whom he had no children.

The book is built up from fragmentary passages culled from other people's books and papers. But these people and their connection with O'Hagan make for a fascinating jigsaw.

From his father he received a love of the classics and of literature which was of value to him all his life. For instance, in his later



years he made a very well-received translation of *Le Chanson de Roland* - at a time when a new interest in medieval French literature was developing in France. This was posthumously published to great praise in the literary journals.

Vignettes

The book provides interesting vignettes of his friends. Prominent among these was Fr Mathew Russell, the energetic and dynamic editor who cultivated many of the rising writers of the Irish Revival.

But there were also more intimate encounters, with, for instance, Gerard Manley Hopkins. The passage about the poet reveals however not the man so often thought of as a depressive, but rather 'the happy Hopkins' that Desmond Egan has laid such emphasis on in recent years. The conjunction of Hopkins, Bridges and O'Hagan is most interesting.

Though brief, this book is full of interest. Would that more historians, both national and local, would devote more time themselves to exploring, albeit in a brief form, the lives of those who in the 19th Century were seen as a generation of 'nation builders'. O'Hagan's work as Chief Land Commissioner transformed the country, as Gladstone admitted. In his hands local problems were turned into national achievements.

O'Hagan's connection with the Young Ireland movement shaped his views. Later he refused to see Thomas Davis as a revolutionary. Indeed he had hard words for such people as the Fenians whom he saw quite simply as "anarchists".

Fr Russell after O'Hagan's death rightly noted that for many of his friends O'Hagan was quite simply "the best man they had ever known".

Pope Benedict's legacy to the Church: saving its past, and shaping its future

The younger Ratzinger, dedicated to study and writing.

Books Editor

The passing of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI marks an important milestone in the history of the Catholic Church, in large part because of his role as a writer and scholar.

All his life Joseph Ratzinger was an intellectual figure, a continuing student of theology and philosophy. He once said that "his only real friends were his books".

One can understand that feeling: they might have seemed to be unchanging voices, but with constant re-reading books express different things on different occasions.

Progressive

When the professed theologian first emerged he was seen as a friend of Hans Küng at one time and to be a part of a progressive edge of the Church. What altered this perception for many was his reaction to the events of the spring of 1968, when the student revolt in Europe and North America quite dismayed him, indeed terrified him: it seemed to threaten the very foundations

of his mental world.

It seemed - as it was in some ways - a betrayal of the claims of intellectual discourse and debate that should be involved in the intellectual life, different views feeding on each other's ideas, in which doubt rather than certainty should also be allowed for.

But the emphasis on 'tradition' especially in such matters at the Latin Mass with which he was associated, was to overlook the very important first passages of the Acts of the Apostle (2:5-12), which emphasised the use of the vernacular from the start in that upper room.

Changing

The changing Ratzinger became more certain, and less welcoming of other points of view, it seemed to some. But that raucous manner of interaction that dismayed the Tübingen philosopher decades ago is still with us, and still as harrying and hateful. He was right about its effects, but his solution of more rigid certainty seemed to some to strike out the sense of compassion that pervades the Gospel, the inter-

cultural interaction symbolised by the Three Wise Men.

As a child of central Europe Ratzinger the student and teacher seemed to have little real sense of the other cultures of the world in any humane way.

“As an intellectual document it expressed a fear of other cultures, but not the strength of Christian belief”

When for instance he was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the agency published a condemnation of the writings of Fr Anthony de Mello SJ, which revealed not only a lack of a sense of humour faced with the fables of the Indian Jesuit, but also perhaps a failure to fully apprehend the English in which it was written.

As an intellectual document it expressed a fear of other cultures, but not

the strength of Christian belief. But his work from 1968 *An Introduction to Christianity*, serves to give an account of the Christian faith as encountered through the Apostles' Creed, and will perhaps last beyond many other more of his topical books.

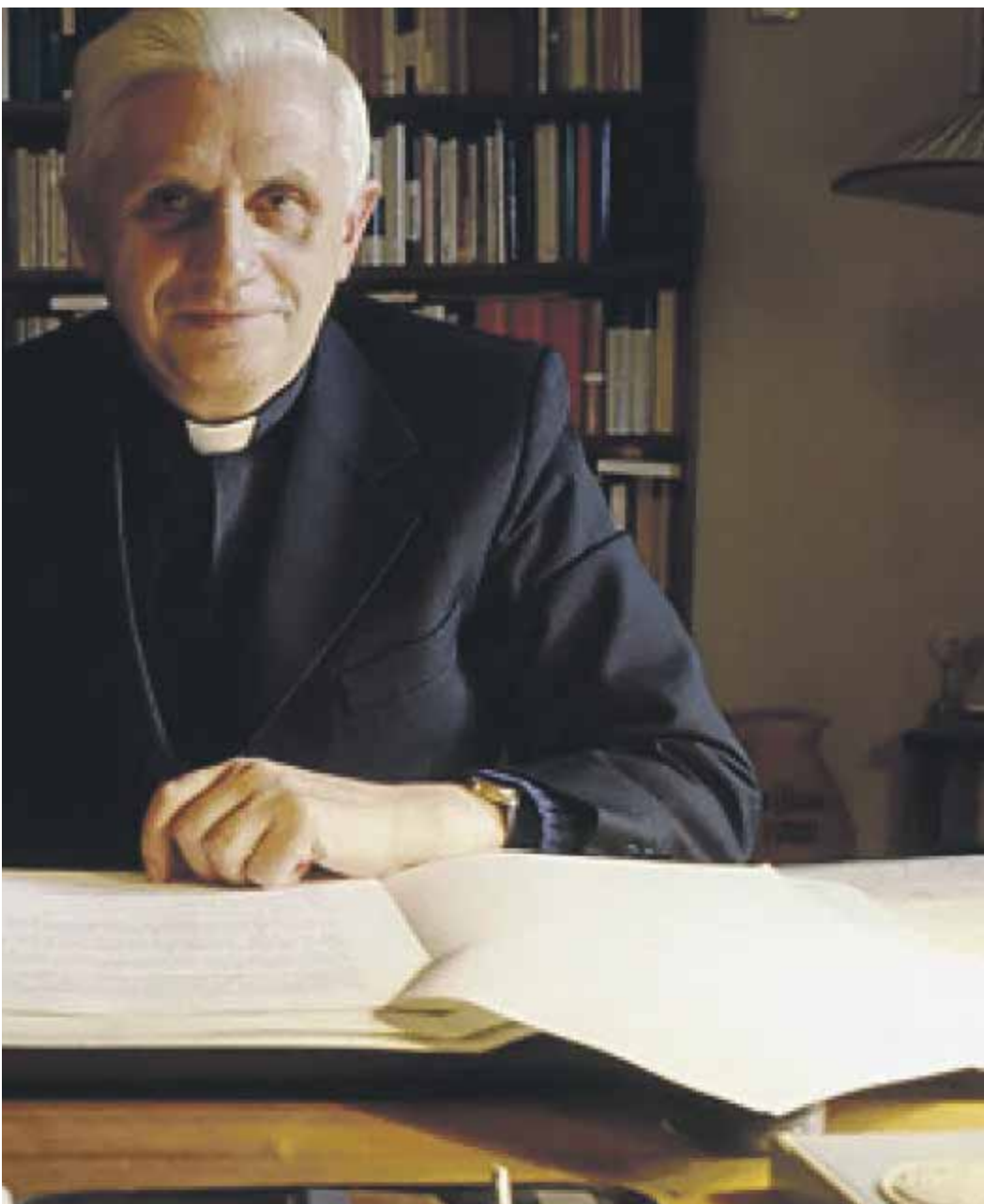
But all his life Benedict, whether as schoolboy, student, priest, bishop, cardinal or Pope, was always a writer. His output was huge.

But not all of these were actually written by him in the common understanding of the term. They were as often as not the outcome of meetings with journalists who recorded his answers to their questions, thus providing a running commentary on the common concerns of the day. It was a very different approach to teaching through encyclical letters, documents whose language is often found difficult by ordinary readers.

Approach

Benedict's approach was direct and forceful and more adapted to the modern manner than many of those

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.



Vatican spokesmen whose grasp of English, surely the universal language of our day, seemed unsteady. What he expressed was certainty, rather than the anxious doubt that so many Catholics seem to feel these days.

On New Year's Day, a pilgrim in St Peter's Square - who had changed his holiday plans so he could pay his respects to the remains of the late pontiff - told a Canadian journalist, that though he had drifted away from the Church he returned to it under the influence of Pope Benedict. The Church is nothing if it is not tradition, said another: "Its teachings do not change."

Traditionalist

But the man they acclaimed as a traditionalist had broken

with tradition to resign the office of pope. This decision, as pope, to resign his office marked the Papacy as perhaps only another major executive role and not a divine office to be closed only by death.

He showed by this one act just how personal judgement of a pope changes tradition and alters the Church's self-understanding.

“The man they acclaimed as a traditionalist had broken with tradition to resign the office of pope”

He had, of course, witnessed the white martyrdom of Pope St John Paul II, dur-

ing which a pope's mind and body crumbled away before the eyes of a distressed world.

When his time came, exhausted by internal betrayal in the Vatican, and his own feeling of incapacity to cope with the crimes of which individual priests were being not only accused, but also convicted of, forced Benedict to make an historic change.

Journalists and commentators speak of him leaving the Church a divided legacy. The legacy is surely quite clear: when a decision is clear it should not be avoided, it should be made, and that often enough the Church, like a great living tree, must change with the seasons if it is to grow. For this one act the future Church will find much to thank Benedict for.

“They might have seemed to be unchanging voices, but with constant re-reading books express different things on different occasions”

The changing nature of the Coptic Christmas



Christian Christmas ceremonies.

Peter Costello

This year the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity, according to the ancient Julian Calendar by the Egyptian Copts, took place last week with great ceremony. It brought into focus the cultural changes moving over contemporary Egypt where the Copts - who are miaphysites of ancient standing - now in accord with most other Christians, fear for the future of their form of the Faith not only from Islamic factions, but from secular 'modernisers'.

Here in Ireland we hear complaints every Christmas-time about the 'commercialisation' of the mid-winter holiday. There are times and places when one would think that the holy day was invented, not for a religious purpose, but to promote jobs in manufacturing and services industries.

There is justice in these complaints made about Christmas, and about Easter too (I read that the first Easter Eggs are already appearing in some shops) but we should think ourselves lucky com-

pared with what is happening in Egypt.

There, the traditions of the Copts - who still embrace the date of 'Old Christmas' with the difference of 11 days between the Julian Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar introduced by the pope into the Catholic Church 1582 - have defined the cultural differences between Eastern and Orthodox cultures and Western and Catholic cultures.

Problem

There is another more serious problem. Back in the mid 1890s when modern tourism was only beginning, the population of Cairo as a whole was given in Cook's Guide to the Nile at about half a million. Now it is about 27 million.

Most of these are Muslims, as the numbers of Christians of all kinds are falling. Egypt's problems arise almost entirely from this population explosion concentrated in the capital rather than spread across the country. In 1895, the Copts numbered only 350,000 - so they too have increased, but as a marginal culture alas.

I suspect most Catholics

find the Copts today very curious, but accept them as fellow Christians. But the community is currently presented with an unusual challenge in Egypt which is leading to cultural developments which may have serious consequences. The celebration of the birthday of the Prince of Peace may yet lead to renewed conflict.

This year it has become increasingly the fashion for middle class Egyptians who have wide connections with western commerce, to send cards and greetings for December 25, or in the American manner, 'holiday greetings'.

The traditional date celebrated by the Copts is less fashionable, which may in time make the community feel isolated - as well it might. They feel not only the pressure of Islam, but also the currents of secularisation.

One senses that perhaps this movement will add further tension to the country's social troubles. The next decade may see many modern startling changes in one of the world's oldest continuing countries, the second oldest Christian culture of all.

Thinking ahead to Eastertide

The Falling Dusk: The 2023 Lent Book, by Paul Dominiak (Bloomsbury, £12.99/€14.50)

Peter Costello

With Easter eggs, as noted above, already appearing in some shops (or so it is reported), it is certainly a good idea to give some prior thought to the season of Lent and the celebration of Easter. This book is not one of those mindful books so popular these days, but it is in fact a consideration of the seven last words of Jesus on the Cross, which have long held an important place in the approach to Easter.

Whereas those meditative books are aimed at

believers, Paul Dominiak who teaches in Cambridge University, writes he says for "those who embrace, reject, or are uncertain about faith".

Taking those last words gathered from the Gospel texts, he asked his readers to reflect "in unconventional ways on our assumptions, anxieties, suspicions and beliefs through a conventional Lenten form of meditation".

One reason for giving some attention to this book now in January, is that it allows readers time to absorb those unconventional aspects. And after the heady days of Christmas, to redirect their minds towards serious thoughts and ideas.

His aim is to interest and



arouse all kinds of readers in the story and claims of Christianity. For many Mr Dominiak will make more than illuminating reading for the Lenten season.

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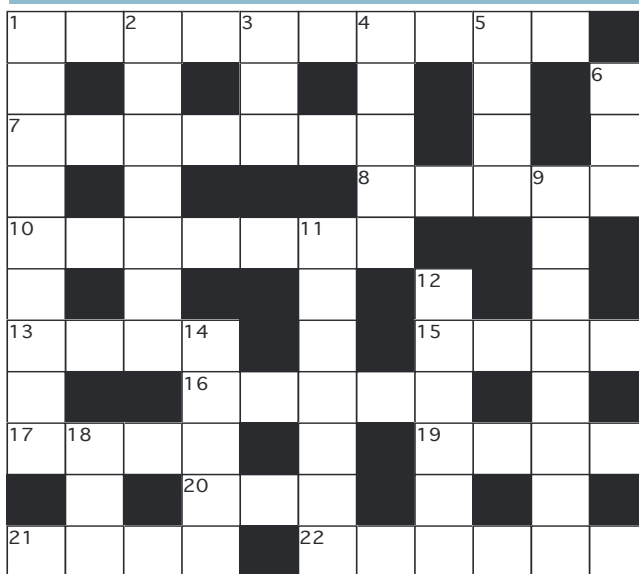
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 465



Across

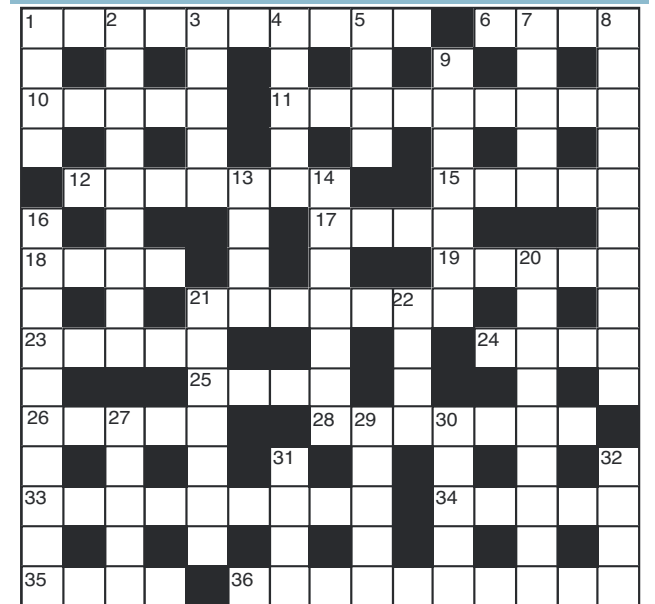
- 1 The All-Ireland Senior Football trophy is named after him (3,7)
- 7 You shoot them from a gun (7)
- 8 Keen (5)
- 10 Fruit with a fuzzy skin, a bit like a small peach (7)
- 13 This country is near Iraq (4)
- 15 ___ and every one (4)
- 16 Over, higher than (5)
- 17 Finishes (4)
- 19 Produced an egg (4)
- 20 You wear it round your neck (3)
- 21 Not at home (4)
- 22 Going on horseback (6)

Down

- 1 Ship that can travel underwater (9)
- 2 You can get this disease from a mosquito bite (7)
- 3 Had some food (3)
- 4 Make someone feel bad (5)
- 5 A step on a ladder (4)
- 6 An animal's hairy coat (3)
- 9 When people have a chance to vote for a new government (8)
- 11 The tenth month of the year (7)
- 12 Removed the skin from a fruit or vegetable (6)
- 14 Definitely not nice (5)
- 18 At this very moment (3)

Crossword

Gordius 593



Across

- 1 Go eat venom (cooked) - and be quick about it! (3,1,4,2)
- 6 Set of cards, as dealt (4)
- 10 Blood-vessels (5)
- 11 Ecstatic at the way the auto purrs (9)
- 12 Bed-covering (7)
- 15 Informal word for language (5)
- 17 The capital city of Latvia (4)
- 18 One side of the leaf of a book (4)
- 19 The holy book of Christians (5)
- 21 & 30d Musical genre performed by such artists as Dolly Parton and Garth Brooks (7,5)
- 23 Go into (5)
- 24 Part in a play or movie (4)
- 25 Dye made from a broken nail? (4)
- 26 Muggy, sticky weather description (5)
- 28 Those on the opposing side in war (7)
- 33 Movement or ethos seeking Christian unity (9)
- 34 See 27 down
- 35 Fill to satisfaction (4)
- 36 Where very young children learn and are supervised (10)

Down

- 1 Donate (4)
- 2 Rear illumination on a car or bike (4,5)
- 3 Craftsman in stone (5)
- 4 Vivacity, enthusiasm (5)
- 5 Exclamation following a minor mistake (4)
- 7 Embellish a form of radon (5)
- 8 Found, unearthed (10)
- 9 Sleep-inducing song (7)
- 13 Metric weight, in short (4)
- 14 Roll on castors (7)
- 16 Lost for words (10)
- 20 Illegally entered a property (5,4)
- 21 Held protectively in one's arms (7)
- 22 Gathering implement or disreputable character (4)
- 27 & 34a Moan in suit about where Moses got the Ten Commandments (5,5)
- 29 Person who is opposed to certain developments in the vicinity where he or she lives (5)
- 30 See 21 across
- 31 Small glass container (4)
- 32 Top up (4)

SOLUTIONS, JANUARY 5

GORDIUS NO. 592

Across - 1 Ball and chain 7 Orb 9 Item 10 Sombre 11 Shed 14 Mount Fuji 15 Erupt 18 Ravel 21 Cairo 22 Eying 23 Lehar 24 Sore 25 Skull 26 Twine 29 Info 33 Adages 34 List 36 Nut 37 Eye witnesses

Down - 1 Bet 2 Lime 3 Apse 4 Dumbo 5 Huron 6 Noah 8 Bedding plant 9 Intercession 12 Junior 13 Stool 14 March 17 Unique 19 Verse 20 Leash 27 Widow 28 Night 30 Fate 31 Isle 32 Alms 35 SOS

CHILDREN'S No. 464

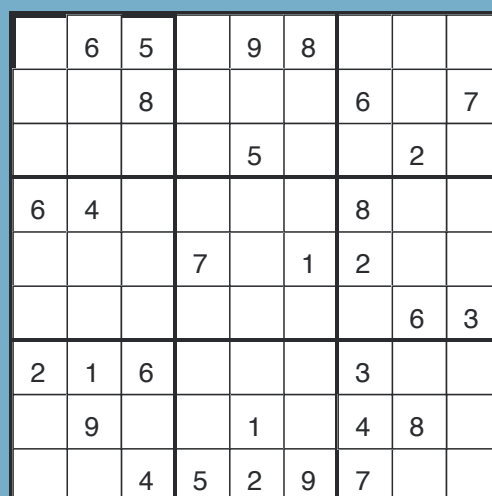
Across - 1 Antiques 6 Acid 7 Raisin 8 Admit 9 Baked 10 Invites 12 Toast 14 Cushion 17 Beach 18 Sahara 19 Yield

Down - 1 Acrobat 2 Think 3 Quidditch 4 Sandwich 5 Divide 11 Sunday 13 Awake 15 Soap 16 Iraq 17 Boy

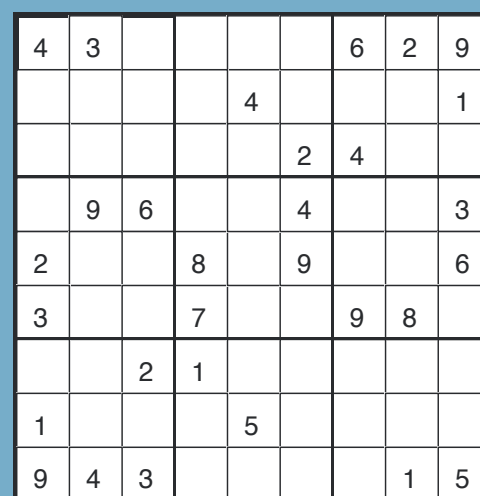
Sudoku Corner

465

Easy



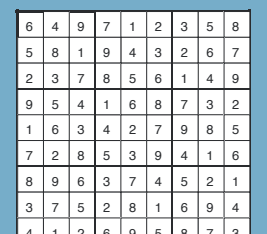
Hard



Last week's Easy 464



Last week's Hard 464



Notebook

Fr John Harris OP



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: 'Lord I love you'

DURING THE LAST WEEK I have been remembering the times I met with Cardinal Ratzinger when I was studying in Rome. I never met him after his election as pope. Back in November 1993 I wrote a letter to an Irish national newspaper, when an article in that paper had described the then cardinal as “uncompromising, traditionalist and utterly authoritarian” simply saying that anyone who had direct dealings with Ratzinger would fail to recognise him in that description. I always found him to be a most generous and understanding man who was the very essence of graciousness and gentleness and dare I say, holiness.



The face of Pope Benedict XVI is covered after his body was placed into a cypress coffin in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, January 4. Photo: CNS

Final words

This week I have been thinking on his final words, “Lord, I love you”. I think in many ways these words encapsulate his life both as pope and theologian. In chapter 21 of St John's Gospel, we are presented with St John's theological teaching on the Petrine ministry. Three times Our Blessed Lord asks Peter “Do you love me more than these others” and three times Peter replies, “Lord I love you”. He may not have died as pope but Benedict's final words are those of St Peter.

For a Christian to say “Lord I love you” is always a response to being first loved. We do not begin the dialogue of love with God, rather God in Christ Jesus invites us into his love and we respond. As Pope Benedict XVI said in his encyclical on love, “Since God has first loved us, love is now no longer a mere command; it is the response to the gift with which God draws near to us”. Being drawn into God's dynamic of love I believe is the central theme in the writings of Pope Benedict and therefore his last words sum up his theological outlook and invitation to be a

Christian. As he also said in that first encyclical “Christians are those who have been conquered by love”.

Contrast

I often contrast this approach with the opening words of St Patrick

in his confessions: “My name is Patrick. I am a sinner”. When I read this opening line, I find myself getting annoyed, these cannot be the words on which to build your faith. As a Christian Patrick should have begun his *confessio* with the words; “I am Patrick and I am loved”. The Good News of the Gospel is that we are loved, not that we are sinners. We all know we are sinners, we are wounded, what we need to hear and accept is that we are loved. The true response to believing that we are loved and thus healed is to be able to say to the Lord, “Lord, I love you”.

Because these were his last words I have no doubt Pope Benedict died a Christian. As Pope Francis said of him in his homily “Benedict, faithful friend of the bridegroom, may your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever!” Amen.

Christmas is over

The days after St Stephen's Day (December 27) I wished a lady “a happy Christmas” as she left Mass. She stopped and stared at me with a puzzled look and then said “Don't you know Christmas is over”. I felt like singing Bing Crosby's song, “What a blessed place the world would be if it had that Christmas feeling all year”. But of course, I didn't. But surely the Christmas feeling is more than just a feeling; it is the Christian truth that God is with us always. No matter what the new year throws at us we have one great strength knowing that in all circumstances “Emmanuel, God-is-with-us”. So, no! Christmas isn't over.

Love is possible

A few years ago, when I was in charge of the academic studies of our Dominican students, I had occasion to call one of the students into my office after the first semester exams. He hadn't done as well as was expected. I should say that I had just written an article on Pope Benedict's teaching that for us Christians the challenge of the Gospel is to be believe that love is always possible. I finished my talk to the student by asking him had he anything to say. He simply said; “Father, where's the love”? He is now a priest.



YOUR GIFT COULD SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE

Millions of children throughout the world are suffering from hunger and malnutrition due to conflict, disease, displacement, and other factors. And the situation in Africa is only getting worse. Millions of women and children are struggling with inadequate diets which can lead to stunting and other health problems. Countless children are dying of malnutrition each day.

The Little Way Association is receiving requests from missionary priests and Sisters who urgently need funds to purchase sacks of wheat flour, sorghum, maize and beans for their people and for medical needs of their clinics such as intravenous feeding of children and babies. For a helpless child, prolonged hunger is a devastating, bewildering, intensely painful experience.

Your gift will assuredly help a missionary to relieve a child's suffering. It could save a life. Whatever you can spare will be sent WITHOUT DEDUCTION and will be gratefully received.



“Insofar as you did this to one of the least of My brethren, you did it to Me”.



“It is love alone that matters.”
- St Therese

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass

Our benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions.

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean 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?

Please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.

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

- I enclose €..... to be allocated to:
- €..... **FOOD FOR A HUNGRY CHILD**
- €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no.)
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to tinyurl.com/lwadonations

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.