

# The Irish Catholic

## GOING HOME

Pope Francis leads tributes to John Hume Page 10



## NO SOUL SOLUTION

Mark Patrick Hederman on Church vs State in the early 20th Century Page 18



## MARTIN MANSERGH

Governance is a combination of seeking progress and preventing disaster Page 7



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# Irishwoman tells of 'desperation' in wake of Beirut horror blast

### Everyday life is becoming increasingly difficult for Christians in Lebanon

**EXCLUSIVE**  
Chai Brady

An Irishwoman who works in Beirut has warned that the people of Lebanon have lost hope amidst anti-government protests in the wake of a deadly explosion that killed hundreds of people and has been widely blamed on political corruption.

Anna Sophia Gallagher [pictured], originally from Co. Antrim was speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after the entire Lebanese government resigned this week amid a wave of protests. But, she insisted that the issues run much deeper than the death toll from the explosion.

"It's not a new protest – it's just a continuation of anger, flat-out desperation and a loss of hope. "The mood now is basically this regarding the coronavirus: we're well into



our second wave or a continuation of the first wave, and people don't care because they have nothing left so they're just like 'well if we don't die of coronavirus, we'll die of hunger so what does it matter?'" she told *The Irish Catholic* speaking from Beirut this week.

The Church in Lebanon has been stepping up efforts to support the hundreds of thousands of people who have been left homeless after the explosion.

### Challenging

Michel Younes, a Maronite Catholic in Beirut, told this newspaper that living as a Christian in the Middle Eastern country is becoming increasingly challenging. However, he said the Christians draw comfort from their Faith and a strong sense of identity in the community.

"It's the will to fight," he told

» Continued on Page 2

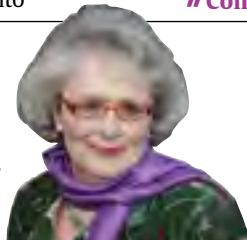
### Flying the flag of hope for a new Lebanon



An anti-government protester waves a Lebanese flag during clashes with security forces in Beirut. Photo: CNS

## MARY KENNY

The reign in Spain may depend on good behaviour PAGE 5



## NO MASKING DOUBT

The importance of a settled routine for children returning to school PAGES 31 & 33



## DAVID QUINN

The challenge of bringing back churchgoers PAGE 8



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## Inside this week

### Personal Profile

**Dave Hunt:**  
planting seeds  
for the future

Page 34



### Maria Byrne

**Saying a name  
many 'dare not  
speak'**

Page 32



### Fr Ron Rolheiser

**Understanding  
suicide and  
melancholy**

Page 30



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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return in the autumn

# 'Make homelessness national emergency' – Fr McVerry

**Jason Osborne**

Outspoken priest and campaigner for the vulnerable Fr Peter McVerry SJ has urged the Government to declare the plight of the homeless as a national emergency insisting that Covid-19 "has aggravated the underlying issues."

This comes after a report revealed that 31 homeless people have died in Dublin this year, in contrast to 35 in the entirety of 2018, and 34 in the entirety of 2019.

The Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) said that the deaths break down as 21 men and 10 women, with three of the women dying in supported and emergency accommoda-

tion facilities.

In 2020, the cause of death for 24 of the individuals was unknown, while four deaths were attributed to suicide and three to a known medical condition.

July 2020 alone has seen ten deaths, with an "unprecedented spike" of seven deaths in the week commencing July 19.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* about Government priorities, Fr McVerry said: "I'd be very critical of their efforts to aid the homeless over the past few years. I don't think they have treated it, ever, as an emergency. I don't think the virus has made any difference."

He said that "given the virus and the funding prob-

lems that are going to be there," he can't see social or affordable housing being built on, "anything like the required scale".

"I think it's an emergency, and I think it's a priority. I think the virus has shown up the problem in a different light because homeless people in hostels tend to be in congregated settings. You can have three or four to a room. There's no social distancing.

"You could be in a room tonight with three people and in a room tomorrow night with three different people, so it has highlighted, similar to the Direct Provision centres, the inadequacy of services for homeless people," the Jesuit priest said.



Bishop Brendan Kelly (left) and the Poor Clares community in Galway celebrate John Gerard Acton's (right) ordination as a deacon for the Galway diocese over the weekend. Usually diaconate ordinations are held in the National Seminary in Maynooth but due to the current pandemic it was held in the Poor Clares Galway chapel. It was the first ordination to take place in the chapel in its history.

## Removing religious oaths 'an attack on pluralism' says TD

**Ruadhán Jones**

Senators and TDs have queried whether the Government plans to replace swearing religious oaths with a 'truth statement', describing such plans as a "false concept of pluralism".

A new bill currently being discussed proposes the use of a 'truth statement' in place of a religious oath or similar secular profession.

Senator Rónán Mullen asked the Minister for Justice whether this was the intention, saying it would facilitate "an attack on genuine pluralism".

"I think that what is proposed here would tend to facilitate an attack on a genuine pluralism," Sen Mullen said in the Seanad.

### Embarrassing

Sen Mullen criticised the Law Society's description of the current system as "embarrassing", saying the comment illustrates an attitude "of official Ireland that anything with even the most cursory or inconsequential reference to religious faith should be abolished".

In the Dáil, TD Peadar Tóibín said the bill threatened to establish a "new uniformity or orthodoxy", saying it attacked "the pluralism we have today".

"It would be a big mistake if the Government rowed back and attacked the pluralism we have today," said Dep Tóibín, "by returning to a situation where...everybody must adhere to that new uniformity."

The bill is still under assessment, having been examined in the Seanad and the Dáil, and has moved on to the committee stage.

## Priests fare better than politicians and journalists in latest trust poll

**Staff reporter**

While commentators are often quick to point to a perceived lack of support for the Church, latest research indicates that priests have outstripped both journalists and politicians in terms of levels of public trust.

The IPSOS MRBI Veracity Index for 2020 has shown that clergy elicited 54% trustworthy responses from those polled, remaining the same as 2018 levels, while journalists and politicians sat at 42% and 32% respectively.

For journalists, this was a fall of 4 points on 2018, while politicians gained 10 points on their 2018 trustworthiness.

Healthcare professionals continued to lead the way, with nurses, pharmacists, and doctors earning responses of 97%, 96%, and 95% respectively.

## 'Desperation' in Beirut

**» Continued from Page 1**

*The Irish Catholic.* "This is how we understand Christianity since I was a little boy. This is my identity: I'm not Lebanese, I'm Christian first – I have a mission to fight, and stay here. It's not comfort I look for," he said.

His comments come as Church leaders in the region are increasingly leading calls for reform. Cardinal Bechara Rai the Maronite Patriarch warned that Lebanon has become "ravaged by corruption, financial mismanagement, soaring poverty and hyperinflation".

He has pleaded with the international community not to turn a blind eye to the systemic issues that have led to the current crisis.

1 See Pages 12 and 13.

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# US sports star says Bible helps us 'get past skin colour'



Jonathan Isaac (also main photo) stands alone amongst some of his team-mates as they 'take the knee' during the US national anthem prior to a National Basketball Association game. The gesture is part of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement's more public demonstrations.

## Chai Brady

An NBA (National Basketball Association) player in the US has said that the Bible "will help bring us close together and get past skin colour". The Orlando Magic forward Jonathan Isaac, who is black, was the first NBA player to stand for the national anthem after the league was postponed for 20 weeks due to the coronavirus.

All other players had chosen to kneel as a sign of support for black lives, with many of them wearing 'Black Lives Matter' t-shirts, a movement which

snowballed after the killing of George Floyd by police in May this year.

Mr Isaac said he didn't feel wearing a Black Lives Matter t-shirt "and kneeling went hand-in-hand with supporting black lives".

He told CNN: "For me black lives are supported through the Gospel. All lives are supported through the Gospel."

"We all have things that we do wrong and sometimes it gets to a place that we're pointing fingers at whose wrong is worst or whose wrong is seen, so I feel like the Bible tells us that we all fall short of God's glory."

"That will help bring us closer together and get past skin colour. And get past anything that's on the surface and doesn't really get into the hearts of men and women."

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# Fear to frustration in parishes over Midlands local lockdowns

Ruadhán Jones, Chai Brady and Jason Osborne

Priests in parishes in Laois, Offaly and Kildare say that the local lockdowns have been met with a mixture of "frustration and disappointment", as most parish activities were shut down overnight.

"The last time the response was fear, this time it's more frustration," says Fr Tom Cox of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly. "On social media, people are quite angry about it."

"We were just getting our confidence and poise back – [then] we had to cancel baptism and confirmations and that made for some awkward conversations at short notice," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Cox's experiences were shared by priests and parishioners across the Midlands, as public Masses were cancelled, and sacraments put on hold once again.

For a number of parishes, it allowed less than 24 hours' notice before cancelling Confirmations, Communion, Baptisms and weddings.

## Disappointment

Fr Peter Burke of Ferbane, Co. Offaly says the cancellation of sacraments was "a shocking disappointment".

"We had confirmation ready for the Saturday," he says. "The lockdown wasn't announced until six on the Friday evening."

Fr Paddy Byrne of Raheen/Ballinakill, Co Laois, says the lockdowns will test the resili-

ence of those already "tested hugely" by the pandemic.

"The immediate disappointment was for families I was to celebrate Confirmation for," Fr Byrne said, "wedding couples who for the third time are being faced with this reality and the big difficulty is the numbers restricted to attending funerals."

The lockdown has also caused confusion as a num-

ber of parishes and dioceses cross county borders, while others queried the relevance of county borders in conducting local lockdowns.

"We're sort of asking, 'why Laois?'," says Fr David Vard of Portlaoise. "When you compare us to Kildare, we're not that bad."

"There doesn't seem to be a real sense of geography in that Dublin is much closer to

the centre of the outbreaks than I am in Shannonbridge, Offaly," says Fr Tom Cox.

## Pressure

While this puts pressure on some priests to continue the sacraments, the priests say that parishioners have accepted the restrictions and are abiding by them.

"Overall, I see people have hope," said Fr Byrne. "It's dif-

ferent than the last lockdown, not as draconian and hopefully it will be temporary."

Similarly, Fr Liam Rigney of Athy, Co. Kildare, said that there is "a huge acceptance" of the lockdown: "Health and safety always has to come first irrespective of anything else, I know the decisions that have been made were not taken lightly."

## The flame burns on



Fr Peter Byrnes CSsR, lights a candle in parlour four of Clonard Monastery in West Belfast, where John Hume and Gerry Adams met for their historic talks, to mark Mr Hume's death.

## Priest highlights Covid-19 Direct Provision failings

Jason Osborne

Laois-based priest Fr Paddy Byrne has highlighted what he has described as the inadequacy of the State's accommodation for asylum seekers, claiming that the coronavirus pandemic has shown the "cracks in society where the vulnerable are".

Referring to the controversial Direct Provision system, Fr Byrne said that: "One thing I've discovered...is that Covid-19 erupts where places are vulnerable, and where else but in Direct Provision centres, and in meat factories where often – as we know –

the workforce are very, very vulnerable and their living and home accommodation inadequate, in terms of social distancing."

## Interests

Underlining the Church's understanding of the innate dignity of all people, Fr Byrne said that there is a need to temper economic interests.

"I think the economy is important – and everybody is paying a cost because of this global pandemic – but people also are important, and I think the dignity of the human person is key to a growing Ireland that's full of goodness."

"For the vast majority of these people they're literally locked into a system that is totally inadequate. Locked into an environment that's tight, where conditions are inhumane, and I hope one of the good things that may come from this is that, while Covid-19 is deadly, it also exhibits itself where the vulnerable are."

"If any good comes from this, it should act as a catalyst for this new Government to be absolutely determined in eliminating Direct Provision from Irish society as we have it now," he said.

## Pub to host Communion livestream after Confirmation success

Chai Brady

A Dublin pub which facilitated parents who weren't allowed to attend their children's Confirmations due to Covid-19 by livestreaming the Mass on their TVs is gearing up to host more family members for Communion next week.

The Kingswood Lodge, which is across the road from the parish church, helped parents mark the occasion as a community last week by opening early and providing tea, coffee and scones, they also asked people to donate to the local community centre and raised €360.

Manager Pius O'Connell said there was a "very good atmosphere".

"There was more of a community spirit. The Communion and the Confirmations, they're short, they're less than an hour, so the whole idea of dropping your child down and having to head home...instead they could come straight in to us and in less than an hour they could head out the door and collect their child, it made things a bit simpler."

There was a mixed response to the initiative according to a social media poll conducted by *The Irish Catholic*, with a third describing it as a 'novel solution' and two thirds saying it was 'disrespectful'.

## Broadcasting authority rejects claim of RTÉ pro-Catholic bias

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has rejected five complaints of pro-Catholic bias against RTÉ during March and April 2020.

The complaints were all made by Mike Garde, a South African-born Mennonite best known for cult watchdog *Dialogue Ireland*.

Mr Garde argued that because RTÉ carries a full daily Mass during Covid-19 restrictions on public worship, the national broadcaster is granting Catholicism an unequal proportion of broadcast time and that other religions are treated as "a side show".

The BAI's complaints forums found "there is no requirement for an equal portion of time to be devoted to each service or to each faith".

The forum also noted that, during the Easter period, RTÉ aired a number of different religious services from various faith traditions.



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# The reign in Spain may depend on good behaviour



**Mary Kenny**

**T**he former king, Juan Carlos of Spain – who has gone into voluntarily exile after a series of scandals – would not be the first Bourbon monarch to be in trouble because of money matters and an unwise extra-marital liaison.

It is understood that Juan Carlos' son, Felipe, insisted his father leave Spain because of 'concerns' about Corinne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, who is under investigation by the Spanish police. The lady is known to have been Juan Carlos's paramour. There is also an accusation that Juan Carlos benefitted from secret offshore funds provided by Saudi Arabia.

## Dynasties

Bourbons might do well to remember that their dynasties often fell because of money and mistresses – evidently Felipe VI knows his history and bears that in mind.

It was Louis XV's profligate life – endless mistresses and lavish spending – that eventually prompted the 1789 French Revolution. His successor, Louis XVI,

was a faithful husband who tried his best – but the damage had been done.

Juan Carlos, now 82, seems to have been a good king until, in latter years, he lost the run of himself with an especially ill-judged elephant-hunting trip to Africa while the Spanish people were facing economic austerity. The Danish-born Countess zu Sayn-Wittgenstein arranged that trip and soon afterwards evidence of their relationship emerged.

**“If a man has been married for many years to a sensible wife, she will usually give him sound, candid advice”**

Clergy and pastors of all denominations have warned against adultery, which is clearly a feature of the Ten Commandments. But there is also a worldly reason for older men to be wary of running off with younger mistresses: it can impair their judgement in other matters.



In this 2019 file photo, Spain's emeritus King Juan Carlos, right, and emeritus Queen Sofia leave the Notre Dame cathedral after attending the funeral of the Grand Duke Jean of Luxembourg.

If a man has been married for many years to a sensible wife, she will usually give him sound, candid advice, such as 'don't be a darn fool' when he is about to do something impulsive, such as elephant-hunting during an economic recession. Experienced wives are seldom in star-struck awe of their spouses.

Younger mistresses, by contrast, often deliver flattery and blarney to these susceptible old chaps – 'oh, darling, everything you do is wonderful!' Sometimes the flattery is the lure in the first place.

Paul Preston, the expert

on Spanish history, says that Juan Carlos had a very penny-pinching (by royal standards) upbringing, and the Spanish royal family, unlike the British, have no great fortune.

This puts them in the way of temptation.

Maybe so, but it's clear

from the polls that every time temptation succeeds – be it either money or mistresses – the Spanish monarchy's popularity declines.

Felipe understands that if the reign in Spain is to survive, the people want good behaviour.

## Eight years on, French facial farce is exposed

How ironic that people in Paris are now required by law to wear face coverings in the street.

Only nine years ago – in April 2011 – France became the first European country to ban Muslim women from wearing a face-covering, the Islamic veil.

Several other European countries followed, saying that it was absolutely necessary to be able to identify a person's full face.

But now the authorities have decided that for the sake of preventing transmission of the coronavirus, hiding half the face is acceptable.

Presumably, the French state will now apologise and withdraw the face-veil ban for Muslim women?

That would certainly be the logic of the situation!

## Can't botox be a gift from God too?

Leon Fleischer [pictured] was an American concert pianist who died recently and what was remarkable about Mr Fleischer is that for most of his career he played the piano with only one hand.

He had embarked on his career playing with both hands, as is normal, and had attained great success, notably under the guidance of the orchestral conductor Pierre Monteux. But then, at the age of 36, he lost the use of his right hand through a condition known as focal dystonia: the fingers curl up and render the hand unable to function. There was no cure available.

Understandably, he grew very depressed for some years. But eventually, he began to research musical compositions suitable for just one hand, and rebuilt his musical career thus, as a one-handed pianist, inspiring composers to produce music for single-handed play.

## Injections

Then, when he was in his 70s, it was discovered that the cosmetic treatment known as botox – usually used for smoothing the wrinkles on the ageing human face – could be applied to Fleischer's neurological condition. And thus it was that his right hand was restored by Botox injections and he was able to perform with both hands once again.

To me, one lesson of this fascinating case is – never give up! Even when you've taken a bad knock, allow yourself some time to



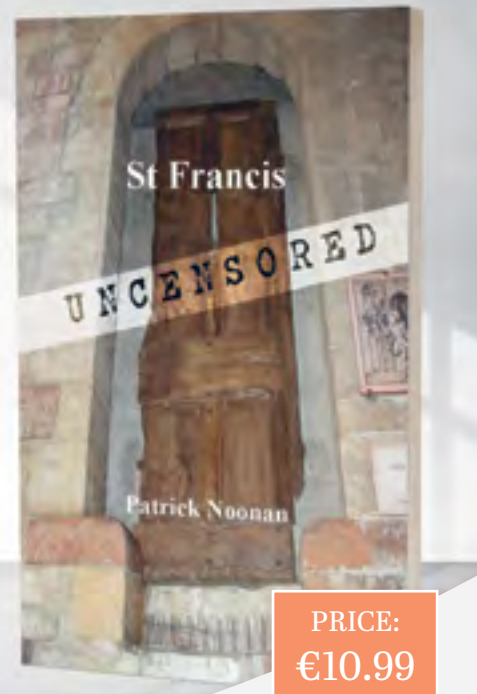
accept it, and then explore an alternative way to achieve what you hope to do.

Secondly, God works in mysterious ways – even perhaps through botox. It may have been regarded as an aid to vanity, but there's another side of the coin, where it's evidently been an aid to healing.

## ST FRANCIS UNPLUGGED, UNLEASHED AND UNCENSORED

In missionary Patrick Noonan's latest book, Francis of Assisi is the figure from the margins, the outsider from nowhere, the misfit who wonders about bishops and inspires Pope Francis. Presenting the 13th century saint with an aversion for clerical scandals he begs the question, "Will the real St Francis please stand up?"

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The Irish Catholic

*His (Noonan's) description of St Francis as a "loose cannon" making peace with the "Osama Bin Laden" of his day in the Middle East is a challenge to all of us as we face an ever-increasing sense of insecurity about Peace in our world*  
Hugh McKenna ofm, Rome

*This is clearly not a romantic St Francis*  
Albert Nolan op, South Africa

## GPs paid nearly €3m fees for abortions

Ruadhán Jones

General Practitioners providing abortion services received €2.9 million in fees in 2019, according to figures released by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The figure was released in response to a query from independent TD Carol Nolan, who described it as “staggering”.

Deputy Nolan said the €2.9 million was taken from the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP), almost the entirety of its €3.1 million funding for 2019.

“It’s going to take away from other aspects of that program, such as post-natal bereavement counselling,” Mrs Nolan told *The Irish Catholic*.

### Increase

The €2.9 million does not represent the true financial cost of providing abortion in Ireland, she added. It only refers to abortions which took place at nine weeks or under in a community setting.

The figure is likely to be the least abortion is ever going to cost in Ireland, according to Mrs Nolan, as abortion figures typically increase year on year.

Mrs Nolan said the Government must seriously consider the shape of its health budget in light of the challenges Covid-19 poses.

“That is something that has to be revised given where we’re heading and what Covid is going to do to the health budget,” she said. “We have a health service that’s going to struggle over the next while and here we are pumping millions into abortion services.”

# HSE’s sexual health advice during pandemic bodes ill

The Health Service Executive (HSE), in partnership with the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), has launched a new sexual health campaign titled ‘Play it Safe’. According to the HSE’s website the aim of the campaign is to provide young adults with access to helpful information to support them in safeguarding their sexual health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic.

The campaign involves making sexual health protection packs available in pharmacies nationwide, which include an information leaflet and a free HSE



### COMMENT Jason Osborne

condom. So, what does this campaign advocate as safe sexual practice during the ongoing pandemic?

According to the campaign website, sexualwellbeing.ie, it is recommended that one only be sexually active with a partner living

in their own household, and that if one decides to engage sexually with someone outside their household, he or she at least limit it to as few partners as possible – preferably one regular partner.

Further to this, it is recommended that one washes their hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sexual activity.

### Practical level

Finally, the HSE recommends masturbation or “remote sexual activity” as alternatives to physical sexual activity with others.

On a purely practical,

amoral level, this advice appears well-placed in that it does advocate measures that, if implemented, would slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The trouble is, and as has been said by those advocating nuance in public discourse throughout the pandemic, we live in a world that operates on multiple levels.

Leaving aside the questions of meaning and value for a moment, the recent phenomenon of ‘revenge porn’ should give those doling out the current advice pause.

Revenge porn is the distribution of sexually explicit images or videos of people without their consent, and has seen a surge in recent years with technology being as pervasive and intrusive as it is today.

**“Pleasure is a good and important aspect of this, but when it is pursued above all else, perspective is lost”**

Some places in the world have seen a 210% increase in image-based abuse during lockdown. With technology enjoying the same ubiquity the majority of the world over, it would be no surprise to see the numbers have jumped similarly in Ireland.

However, we live in a world in which questions of meaning and value cannot be left aside, and as such, the latest HSE advice demonstrates a deep misunderstanding of human sexuality and its real worth.

### Extreme

From a Catholic perspective, the practices advocated are undignified in the extreme. St John Paul II in his monumental work, *Theology of the Body*, taught that our bodies speak a language.

We understand that the human body was made for another, and that our existence as male and female is intended as a call to communion with God and with one another.

Pleasure is a good and important aspect of this, but when it is pursued above all else, perspective is lost and we’re capable of doing each other great harm.

A healthy approach to sexuality during this time would be to ponder the nature of your body and come to see that it’s intended for another, so that you might make a gift of yourself.

This cannot be done through images sent over the internet, or by any means other than good, old-fashioned loving relationships. Until the HSE understands this and incorporates it into its underlying philosophies, its sexual health advice will be lacking.



Redemptoristine nuns Srs Lucy Conway, Maura Walsh and Monica Boggan take a selfie during their walking prayer relay last week. The 12 nuns, based in Drumcondra in Dublin, walked the distance of a marathon praying the Rosary for all who have died or suffered from Covid-19, frontline workers and more.

## In times of darkness, we trust in God’s compassion

In today’s Gospel (Matthew 15:21-28), a troubled mother pleads with Jesus to cure her tormented daughter. We are surprised to read that he answered her not a word. It’s so unlike Jesus. But he knew what he was doing. He was drawing out deeper depths of her Faith.

A passage from the Old Testament explains why God allowed the Israelites to experience such hardships and darkness during their 40 years in the wilderness. It was “to humble you, to test you, to know your inmost heart. God was training you as a parent trains a child” (Deuteronomy 8:15). Jesus was drawing out the inner depths of the woman’s Faith. An immediate answer to her request might not have been fully appreciated. Her persistence developed a deeper Faith. Now he could say to her: “Woman, great is your Faith. Let your wish be granted.”

She is a model of Faith in three qualities: persistence, humility and a sense of humour.

### The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O’Flynn OFM Cap.



She is in desperation for the sake of her daughter but her persistence is remarkable. She will not take ‘no’ for an answer. She is like the woman of the parable who wears down a reluctant judge with the only weapon she had – her persistence. Jesus addresses her as ‘woman’. Is this a womanly strength?

Is it forced on women as the only way to break through the hard-hearted logic of a world organised by men? She, a Canaanite, has to break through the man-made barriers of racial discrimination and cut through the red tape of ecclesiastical rules. Her motherly love will not be diverted. Love is greater than logic.

Although she is persistent yet her Faith is also very humble. She

kneels before Jesus. Her prayer is simplicity itself: “Lord, help me.”

### Playfulness

This humble Faith has room for humour. There is a sense of playfulness when Jesus says: “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the house-dogs.” Jews commonly referred to other nations as dogs. The reader has to hear, not a racial slur, but a tone of humour in his voice. She catches the tone and enters the repartee: “Ah, yes, sir; but even the house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master’s table.”

If you meet somebody who has a great reputation for sanctity but has no sense of humour, then know that you are not dealing with genuine holiness. In time you will spot some ungodly anger or prejudice or contradiction of love.

### When God is silent

The prophet Jeremiah has a beautiful saying about God’s love. “I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant

in my love for you”. But how does one survive when God is silent, just as Jesus initially did not answer a word to the Canaanite woman? She was a woman of great Faith.

Many of the mystical saints, people of great Faith, experienced long periods of darkness and spiritual dryness. St Teresa of Calcutta lived for 40 years without any consolations in prayer. She lived in union with the thirst experienced by Jesus on Calvary.

Nobody, apart from a few people she trusted, suspected that she walked and prayed in darkness all those years.

One brave prisoner in a concentration camp scratched these lines on the wall of his cell: “I believe in the sun even when I do not see it shining. I believe in love even when I feel it not. I believe in God even when he is silent.”

In daylight we can see the objects all around us. But it is only in the darkness of night that our eyes stretch to the distant stars. In

times of darkness God is stretching and deepening our Faith: “Woman, great is your Faith”.

### Prayers

Sometimes the answer of God to our prayer is easily seen, but sometimes it is not. We pray for the grace of perseverance in prayer when it seems that God does not hear us.

The woman who approached Jesus was of a different race and religion. May we learn to respect people of every race and religion.

*May God grant healing and peace to children who are very disturbed.*

*May God help parents to discern when to say ‘yes’ to their children and when to say ‘no’.*

*O God, we trust in your wisdom and compassion as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.*

Extract from Silvester O’Flynn, *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*, Columba Books.

## Martin Mansergh

The View



# Seeking progress and preventing disaster

A book that I treasure for many reasons is a Holy Bible given to me as a Christening present in 1947, and inscribed “to my godson Martin with affectionate greetings”.

It is compact with a leather cover, and, despite being well thumbed, its 1,400 pages of thin but strong paper are very well preserved.

The donor, the husband of a college contemporary of my mother at Oxford, was Canon John Collins of St Paul’s Cathedral, who turned out to be the very opposite of the ‘safe pair of hands’ much prized by establishments (and of course the Church of England is established).

He was a founder figure of two radical movements from around 1960, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Although it took 40 years’ struggle, the first was completely successful, being of material importance in shaking off apartheid, with parallel offshoots in many western countries, including Ireland, where it was led by Dr Kader Asmal, later a minister in early post-apartheid governments.

The first president of the new South Africa, Nelson Mandela, embodied values admired by most Christians, which is not to underestimate the very great challenges that his country still faces. He was warmly received, when he came to Ireland in February 1990 to thank the people here, soon after his release.

### Limitations

CND certainly contributed to limitations on nuclear weapons, but not so far to their elimination. This month, the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, causing a literally incalculable number of mainly civilian deaths, is a reminder that nuclear bombs are a genocidal weapon.

Macho great power leaders regularly warn each other and the world of their willingness to use them. Of course, the arsenals can



only be dismantled with care, to minimise scope for nuclear blackmail. The ideals of both the anti-apartheid movement and CND were close to those of Irish foreign policy, even if campaigning and diplomacy employ different methods.

The bible I was given was the authorised or King James’ version, which contains many purple passages, even from a purely literary point of view. Nowadays, most Anglican churches, with the exception of some cathedrals, such as St Patrick’s in Dublin, use a revised edition, which eliminates archaic language and provides a more accurate or intelligible translation. The soaring language in some places is unfortunately also missing, or much attenuated.

**“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies”**

One of the things I like to do, if I am particularly struck by a passage in a lesson reading, is to compare it with its rendering in my godfather’s bible. Sometimes it is an improvement, sometimes not. I have occasionally been guilty of combining texts from different versions so as to enhance the meaning.

At my mother’s funeral service in Tipperary, I chose and adapted a reading from Proverbs 31, beginning at verse 10: “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” It is an unusual biblical passage that praises women with strong organisational and entrepreneurial

abilities, who are also thoughtful and charitable.

My cousin Philippa was showing me again recently a very different sort of bible, an enormous family bible published in London in 1793, containing many handwritten entries on key family events. It was a present of Richard Martin of Bridgetown in north Cork to his daughter Mary, where she was married in a drawing-room in 1795 to my great-great-great grandfather John by the Rev. William Berkeley, nephew of Bishop Berkeley of Cloyne, the philosopher.

It contained a heart-breaking and poignant message by their eldest surviving son, whose Christian names were also Richard Martin, half a century later, when he lost his second wife in childbirth in 1854.

Apart from intense grief, some husbands may have found it difficult to avoid some feeling of guilt. The entry recorded that “my dear beloved and kind wife” of 11 years and seven months died with her seventh child in Dawson Street, not from confinement, but from heart disease. “I hope through God that my sins and iniquities may be washed away and may our blest Redeemer who died for sinners join me hereafter to those who loved and took care of me. I hope through God to meet my darling there.”

### Strong faith

There is no doubt that the uncertainties of life and of death were often met by a strong faith. That particular time was of course a period of devastating human

tragedy for large numbers of people deprived of all resources necessary to cope with the Famine.

In one of the pew sheets distributed by the Dean Very Rev. Gerald Field to our Cashel group of parishes, during the pandemic when churches were closed for services, a passage relevant to our present situation caught my eye. In this instance, the New Revised Standard Version of I Kings, chapter 3, where Solomon talks and prays to God in a dream, reads better: “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?”

**“Most people have confidence that the government is trying to do all it can, with some success to date”**

We face, here as elsewhere, a situation of great uncertainty, with no guarantees about the future course of the pandemic, or its intensity and duration, or when people will be able to come safely together again in unrestricted numbers and settings. Most people have confidence that the government is trying to do all it can, with some success to date.

While the new coalition has so far got the big decisions right, they have been tripped up on a number of little things. Government supports become ever more elaborate. It is not always clear that better government results.

The restraint surrounding John Hume’s funeral did nothing to detract from the impact. We were reminded how much we owed to him and his colleagues. We had one civil war 100 years ago. John Hume helped prevent the northern conflict from degenerating into a full-blown inter-communal conflict by finding another way. Governance is always a combination of seeking progress and preventing disaster.

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# The challenge of bringing back churchgoers when all this is over



It would seem that only a fraction of those who used to attend Mass have returned, writes **David Quinn**

In America, the Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, Thomas Tobin is worried that when this pandemic finally ends a lot of worshippers will not



A priest wearing a protective face mask greets parishioners attending Mass on the first day of the reopening of the church in Jakarta, Indonesia, after government restrictions were eased during the coronavirus pandemic.

return to Mass because they will have lost the habit.

On Twitter a few days ago, he said: "It's clear that on a practical level, the discipline of attending Sunday Mass is gone. Post-pandemic we'll

have to invite people back to Mass by creative outreach, and by emphasising the importance of Christian community, the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist."

In America, of course,

the virus remains far more widespread than here, notwithstanding the outbreak in certain meat factories recently in the Midlands. Even in the US, mind you, the picture varies greatly, because in a way America can't be viewed as one country, but as 50 separate ones because each state has so much freedom to deal with the virus in its own way. Some have been very strict about lockdown and some have not.

In addition, some have already been hit by the first wave of the virus (New York for instance) and some are still going through it, like Texas and Florida. But the average American would be right to be still worried about the pandemic, given the situation there, and this is especially so if you are in an older, vulnerable group, the same category most likely to go to Mass regularly. If many of this age group are still staying away, then that is understandable.

Some Americans may also have read reports about virus outbreaks in some churches, but this tended to be where the pastors had foolishly abandoned social distancing requirements. Nonetheless, incidents like this will still naturally breed caution in people.

## Risk

So, perhaps Bishop Tobin is a bit premature with his statement. Maybe many are looking forward to coming back to Mass when all this is over, or when we have learnt to live with a certain amount of risk (which would

still be a lot less than our recent ancestors lived with in the days before modern medicine).

What is happening in Ireland? Public worship here has been permitted again since June 29, three weeks sooner than originally planned. But churches are restricted to letting in no more than 50 people at a time, unless they are very big, so if everyone who was coming to Mass every week before the virus arrived, most would have to be turned away.

Purely anecdotally, and to judge from speaking to priests and lay-people, probably around a quarter of people who were coming to Mass each week before this began, have returned. (To emphasise again, this is based on anecdotal evidence only.)

**“One temptation in the face of this will be to think that if they were only coming out of habit, then their Faith can't have been too strong to begin with”**

Where is everyone else and what are their intentions? These are absolutely key questions for the future of the Church in Ireland and elsewhere.

Some will be staying away out of fear, or because they know if too many come, they will not be allowed into church. But unfortunately, and despite my earlier caveats, Bishop Tobin is probably right when he says a certain number won't come back at all. They will simply have fallen out of the habit.

One temptation in the face of this will be to think that if they were only coming out of habit, then their Faith can't have been too strong to begin with. There is a lot of truth to this, but we shouldn't underestimate the importance of habit. It is probably the reason we do a lot of important things.

We all have daily routines. To take a simple example, you might like to take a daily walk. If you got out of the habit of doing this, it would have consequences for your health. It's no good saying you can't have been very committed to exercise in the first place if you dropped the habit so quickly, when the habit was a very good one.

Not going to Mass regularly can easily have consequences for your spiritual health, and even ultimate salvation. (That is not the sort of thing you're supposed to say nowadays, but losing contact with the community of Faith can easily result in something even worse: alienation from God.)

## Conventions

Humans are habitual by nature, and we imitate other people a lot of the time. If the habits are good, and the social conventions are good, don't underestimate them.

Imagine, for example, the retired people who used to come to 10am Mass every day. Not only was this bringing them out of their homes (maybe they live on their own), it was putting them in touch with both the wider Faith community, and the community in general.

The consequences of losing this habit would be grave from both a spiritual and a mental health point of view.

Apart from the Church, other sectors of society are worried about their future because of the pandemic. What other habits will be broken? It might seem like a good thing if people can work from home more, but that is probably only true up to a point. The office is another form of community where people meet one another, make new friends and learn from the experience of older workers, among other things.

**“One way or another, the Church must prepare for the possibility that there will be a lot of 'lost sheep' after this”**

Town centres could easily die and we will no longer meet fellow workers for drinks or a meal at the end of a working day. I'm not sure that is an advance, especially if you are young and in search of the wider world.

One way or another, the Church must prepare for the possibility that there will be a lot of 'lost sheep' after this, and if we mean what we say about being 'pastoral', we will, as Bishop Tobin says, have to be creative and energetic about bringing them back to the flock.

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# Pope leads tributes to John Hume



John Hume's wife Pat (left) and daughter arrive at St Eugene's Cathedral for the funeral Mass. Photos: Stephen Latimer

## Staff reporter

Pope Francis has hailed John Hume's tireless commitment to the peace process. In a message read at Mr Hume's funeral in Derry, the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said that the Pope was saddened to hear that Mr Hume (83) had died on August 3.

"Mindful of the Christian Faith that inspired John Hume's untiring efforts to promote dialogue, reconciliation and peace among the people of Northern Ireland, His Holiness commends his noble soul to the loving mercy of Almighty God," the message said.

At the funeral Mass mourners – who included President Michael D. Higgins as well as the North's First Minister Arlene Foster and deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill – observed physical distancing in line with Covid-19 guidelines.

In his homily, Fr Paul Farren praised Mr Hume's single-mindedness when it came to the pursuit of

justice. "In a time in our world when often small mindedness and self-focus seems to be the driver John never put anybody or any specific group first. He put everybody first."

"He didn't focus on difference and division. He focused on unity and peace and giving that dignity to every person," Fr Farren said.

## Support

He also offered prayers for Mr Hume's wife, Pat. Fr Farren said that Mrs Hume "stood behind John to defend him and support him. She stood beside him to love him and accompany him even in the most difficult times and when his health failed and his mind got weaker she walked in front of him to lead him."

"Pat encircled John with love, compassion and support and it was your presence that made his work possible. When the history of Ireland is written if Pat Hume's name is not beside John's it will be an incomplete history," he told mourners in St Eugene's Cathedral.



Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin pauses as John Hume's remains are taken from St Eugene's Cathedral after the funeral Mass.



Fr Paul Farren during his homily.



John Hume's daughter, Áine, lights a candle at St Eugene's cathedral.



John Hume's remains are taken from St Eugene's Cathedral.

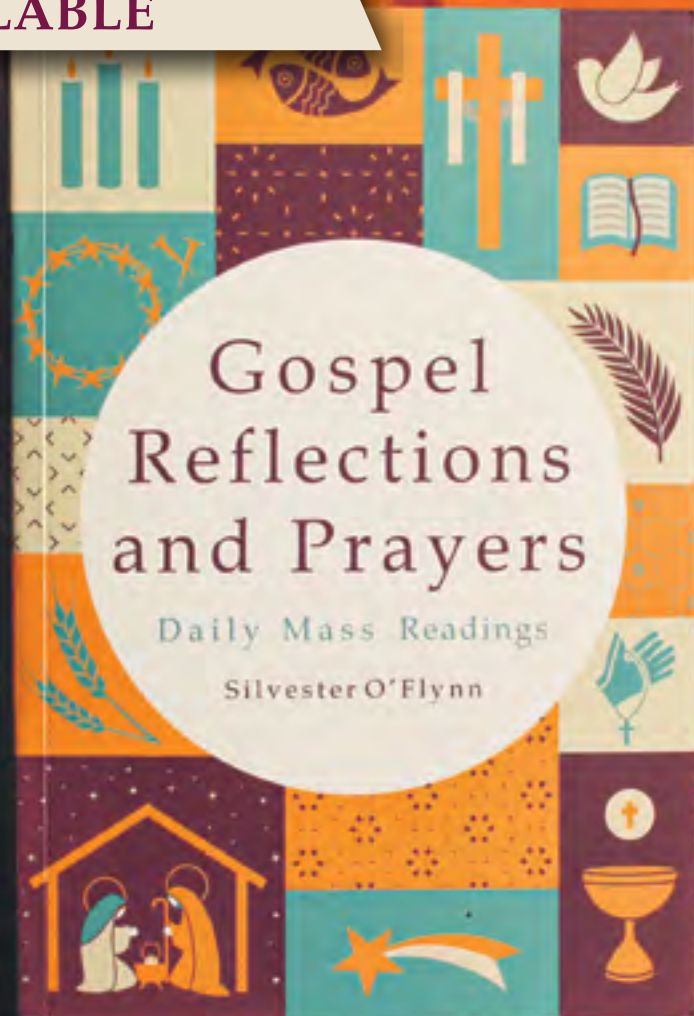


President Michael D. Higgins pays his respects at the funeral of John Hume



Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe Andrew Forster, Fr Paul Farren, St Eugene's Cathedral and the Bishop of Derry, Dr Donal McKeown

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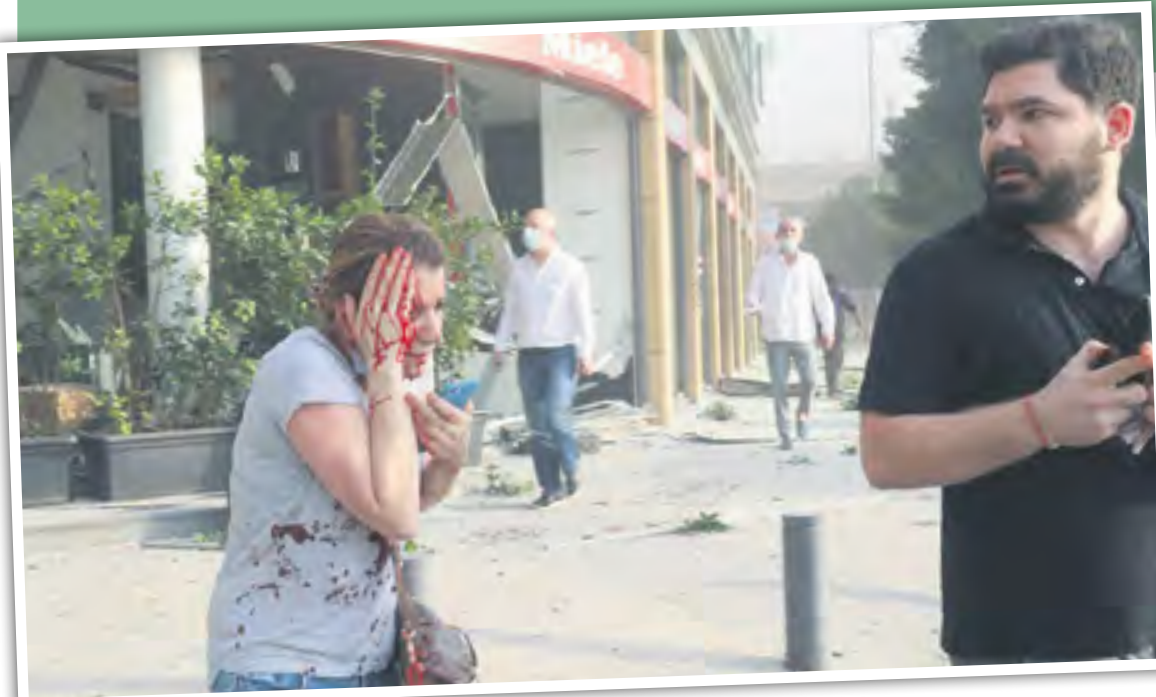
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# Beirut blast highlights a country in turmoil



**L**ebanon continued to lead international headlines this week after an explosion at Beirut's port claimed the lives of hundreds of people in a country wracked by inflation and accusations of a corrupt, now defunct, government that had "utter disregard for the value of Lebanese life".

The explosion was the result of the detonation of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that was unsafely stored at the port for six years.

Anna Sophia Gallagher, originally from Antrim but now living and working in Beirut as a researcher in public sector reform, said the corruption of Lebanon's government, which sparked protests on and off from October, led to the disaster on Tuesday, August 4.

For many it was no wonder that just under a week after the blast, on Monday evening this week, Prime Minister Hassan Diab announced the resignation of Lebanon's government as protests turned violent, leading to clashes with police. It will remain as a caretaker administration until a new cabinet is formed.

The explosion was the straw that broke the camel's back, with Ms Gallagher saying it epitomised the negligence and corruption of the administration. It came to light on Tuesday that security officials warned the president and prime minister of the security risk of the ammonium nitrate as early as last month, saying it had potential to destroy the capital.

## Glass

Only 1.5km away from the explosion, she was sitting outside a restaurant when it happened. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms Gallagher said: "We were sitting beside a concrete wall, thank God it wasn't glass, if we'd been sitting 20 metres away the glass would have exploded onto us."

"I was facing where the blast came from and she was looking at me and she says she saw my face drop and the earth shook a bit and then I watched this blast of hot air come up the street."

"It was almost like the buildings

## Chai Brady hears about the tensions and trauma following Lebanon explosion



on either side of the street inhaled, it's as if a building could take a breath, then the buildings all exhaled and exploded glass on to the street and as all this was happening the cars slammed on their breaks and started honking, people were screaming, there was dust everywhere.

Although she didn't see the blast, Ms Gallagher and her friend "saw the shockwave of hot air come up the street and then we saw the red smoke in the sky immediately afterwards".

"I just went into crisis mode, I was with my friend so I instinctively body tackled her to the ground and jumped on top of her she was very, very shaken so I was just trying to calm her down and get her to breathe."

The blast destroyed huge swathes of the city, reportedly displacing 300,000 people at a time when the country's banking system is in dire straits. Over the past year inflation skyrocketed triggering protests. The World Bank predicted almost half the population of Lebanon would be below the poverty line this year even before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Ms Gallagher, who has been in the Middle East for the last seven years, said: "The reason why this explosion happened is also part of the corruption. The government left ammonium nitrate there, they couldn't be bothered, they knew about it but no one really did anything, no one really cared, all across the Lebanese media there's

different evidence of different members of the government, including the president and the prime minister, who knew this was stored.

"The head of the port authority who is a senior civil servant also knew that the ammonium nitrate was in that hanger and yet he called the firefighters anyway."

"The mood is as you would expect after basically 30 years of total utter disregard for the value of Lebanese life, it's undignified, the ruling elite can literally not care less about if these people live or die, they haven't cared and they still don't care. The government response to the protests is also very violent."

## Complex

The economic situation in Lebanon is set to continue to deteriorate in the wake of this blast, with the bill for the damage caused possibly exceeding €15 billion.

"Before this Lebanon was going through an extremely complex compounded set of crises where effectively the country is in hyperinflation and there's arbitrary capital controls on people's bank accounts, everybody's lost all of their savings for their day to day checking accounts, they can't access their money. The price of food has risen, some food by 200%," said Ms Gallagher.

"My friend, she is just one person but as an example, used to have a salary of something like \$2,000-3,000 a month and effectively she earns about \$150 a month now, that was before

**"The economic situation in Lebanon is set to continue to deteriorate in the wake of this blast, with the bill for the damage caused possibly exceeding €15 billion"**

the blast, she's maybe one of the luckier cases.

"If you think about the blast now, she has no home and she's lost all of her belongings. The situation in Lebanon before this horrible explosion was that the middle class had been rendered poor but effectively now the middle class are now destitute, they have nothing."

**"They're still living in housing that was designed to last for five years, so 40 years later they're living in... basically like a shanty town"**

"So the protests had started because of that anyway from October, in various intensities," Ms Gallagher continued: "It's not a new protest, it's just a continuation of anger, flat-out desperation, loss of hope, the mood now is basically this regarding the coronavirus: we're well into our second wave or a continuation of the first wave, and people don't care because they have nothing left so they're just like well if we don't die of corona we'll die of hunger so what does it matter?"

Ms Gallagher is currently trying to raise money for the Palestinian Civil Defence, an NGO that delivers emergency services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon including an ambulance and police service.

She said: "The way the Palestinians live in Lebanon is they're now effectively third or fourth generation refugees, they exist here but they have not been allowed to integrate, so they're basically still living as refugees."

"They're still living in housing that was designed to last for five years, so 40 years later they're living in... basically like a shanty town. There's 12 camps across the country, and the fact that they're still living in things that people call camps after decades is insane, but they live in these very cramped living conditions, everyone on top of each other, in houses that could fall at any minute, and that was before the explosion, and obviously in such cramped living conditions there's also a huge fear of the coronavirus now, or any sickness."

Currently there is a lot of neighbourhood, religious and social communities rallying together to support each other in Beirut, with charities such as the Red Cross receiving emergency aid internationally.



Antrim-born but Beirut-based Anna Sophia Gallagher.

seconds after that, the second explosion, the second wave hit us, it was much more powerful than the first one.

“I thought we were being hit by 155mm shells, because I remember it from when I was a little boy, we had the war here, and I remember the 155mm shells. I’m not a small guy, I’m a big guy, so I lifted my wife and my son and I ran to the deepest corner of my house, like if we’re being shelled that must be the safest point and then I remembered that didn’t work for us during the war.

**“The region that was hit the most is a Christian region but then because it became very costly you have rich Muslims living there as well”**

“It came to my mind that we had an underground floor in our building, so I took them and ran to the underground floor. After that we got in the car and tried to flee towards the mountains, if it was war, I thought I better get them out of here.

“When I took them to the deepest corner of the house, I thought we were about to die.”



Although the patriarch said that churches and parishes would open their doors to help those affected by the blast, Mr Younes said that his experience of Maronites is that they are “bad at begging”.

“We would die in our homes rather than beg, so it’s very hard to know if someone needs help,” he

explained, “for example me and my wife we help families, the families that we help, if we didn’t know about them, nobody would.”

“I think that the number of people that actually went to church or any other institutions that are helping like Caritas, I think the number of Maronites that went there for help I think is very, very minimum.”

Mr Younes said what is needed in Beirut is for the youth in the Maronite community be engaged to go house to house to check in with people and see if they need help.

He gave the scouting organisation connected with the Church, the Maronite Scouts, as an example of a youth component that could be tapped in to.

“We have scouts, they want to help cleaning but cleaning is the easy part. I think the Church could use the scouts to go from house to house to see where people need help. The region that was hit the most is a Christian region but then because it became very costly you have rich Muslims living there as well, the neighbourhood that are not rich are mostly Christian.

“The rich can take care of themselves, even the Christian rich can take of themselves, but they [scouts] have to go house by house but we’re not good at begging, this is the problem, I think it was because of the war.”

Speaking about his own faith, Mr Younes said it is becoming increasingly difficult to be a Christian in Lebanon, but there is a strong sense of identity in the community. Despite the difficulties he has faced through his life, he says, it is not comfort he takes from his faith, “it’s the will to fight”.

“This is how we understand Christianity since I was a little boy. This is my identity, I’m not Lebanese, I’m Christian first, I have a mission to fight, and stay here. It’s not comfort I look for.”

The future of Lebanon seems increasingly perilous, particularly politically and economically as they move into uncharted territory, but there seems to be strong ties within communities and a culture of helping neighbours which will be a key component on their road to recovery.



Remains of the city’s grain silo shadows a shattered Beirut; left, broken glass lies beneath the altar of St Maron Church in the Dora region of Beirut; below, Lebanese Maronite Catholic Michel Younes with his son.

The Maronite Church in Lebanon, an Eastern rite Church in full canonical communion with the Catholic Church, has been vocal in its criticism of the government, with Cardinal Bechara Rai, Maronite patriarch, saying Lebanon has become “ravaged by corruption, financial mismanagement, soaring poverty and hyperinflation” in a homily over the weekend.

Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan in Beirut said all Syriac parishes would use everything at their disposal to help after the explosion.

Michel Younes, a Maronite living in Beirut, told this paper that he lives in Forn el Chebbak, 4-5km away from the explosion and was at home when it happened. After living through a war when he was younger, he said he thought it was a bomb and war had come to the country once again.

“My wife had my son and she was laying on the sofa, I heard the first thud, it was deep, it felt like someone had kicked the floor under me,” Mr Younes said.

“I looked at my wife, I thought it was an earthquake, maybe 4-5



# Jason Donohue: a good friend and noble spirit

This is a homily preached by **Fr John Carroll** at the funeral of Mr Donohue who died from cancer last month.

**I** don't intend to 'talk up' Jason's life, or indeed his many achievements – his is a life that speaks for itself: a gentle life, a noble life, a life marked with gratitude for all he received and who it is he ultimately became.

I've really only five simple things to say:

Admiration - Jason lived by a quote which he shared with his wife Siobhan – it's a simple quote, but it's one that tells us a lot about how he endured his illness, what his philosophy was, what his outlook was, what discipline he pursued throughout recent years and months.

“Do not look back and grieve over the past, for it is gone; and do not be troubled about the future, for it has not yet come.

Live in the present and make it so beautiful that it will be worth remembering.” (Ida Scott Taylor)

**“To me, as Jason read that passage on that day, the Spirit was very obviously on him as he spoke”**

Jason was telling Siobhán why he always lived in the moment. He told her “I have to live in the moment. To think about the future is too upsetting. Every one of us have just the moment we are in and if I stay in the moment I have exactly the same length of time as everyone else”.

## Understanding

In these words, Jason gives us a beautiful understanding of mindfulness; of the gift of this moment, of the beauty of this day. In struggles, he gave us an example to follow.

It was his daily (small) creed.

St. Paul – in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13: 4-8) – left us a beautiful reflection on faith hope and love. It's a



Jason and his family.

wonderful reflection which can become a barometer on where we find ourselves in life with regard to God, ourselves and others. My own name does not fit as well as Jason's does here. Let me read it to you and you will see.

“Jason was always patient and kind; he was never jealous; never boastful or conceited; he was never rude or selfish; he rarely if ever took offence and was never resentful. He was always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever came his way. Jason's love does not come to an end. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love and Jason had that in abundance.”

There is something appropriate in putting Jason's name into this passage – none of it jars – it fits there very easily and very accurately. It's the man we all knew.

Coming to mind - earlier this morning, I sat down to pen these thoughts and I reflected on the life of a good friend – a man with a warm smile. Some of the thoughts that crossed my mind were: His book of reflections, his attachment

to daily Mass, his journaling, his reflective spirit. His hands rubbing together before an open fridge and his delightful capacity to create beauty out of little or nothing at all.

His phrases so often repeated – “Siobhan and the girls... a pint with dad... thanks mam...”

A smile as he'd say “how about a movie? – would you like action or something softer?” – and he liked action, the livelier the better...so different to his quiet nature. A square of chocolate, not the whole bar.

Gratitude in immensity - to his mother and father, gratitude for the gift of Siobhan and the girls, Saibh and Shóna, gratitude for friendship – for the many hands that helped him along the path of life. And his signature phrase – “sounds like a plan...sounds like a plan...”

“Sounds like a plan Jonners!”

## Trip

Last year, Jason, myself and a few of the Ferns priests (Frs Paddy Browne, Jim Fegan and Brian Broaders) made a very memorable trip to Jerusalem and to various parts of the Holy Land.

Jason was in flying form and the trip couldn't have gone better. We didn't discuss Jason's sickness at all, it just didn't figure!

**“Some of the thoughts that crossed my mind were: His book of reflections, his attachment to daily Mass, his journaling, his reflective spirit”**

At the site of the Holy Sepulchre, there was a very large crowd. The queue was immense. After Mass, I said to Jason, that I might approach the rather fierce looking and lively Greek Orthodox monk who was porter at the entrance and see if I could “get him in”. It must have been Jason's charm but the monk was no problem at all. Inexplicably, the monk stopped the queue, let the small shrine empty and then waved Jason straight through to the site of the resurrection.

And as if by providence, he got his minute alone

there (something that is quite difficult to get at any time – almost impossible). When he came out from the empty tomb, we knew we had about two hours before the others on the trip would get through, so I asked him what he'd like to do. “Whatever you think yourself... I don't mind”, was the (characteristic) reply.

I offered him the possibility of coffee and cake - and a trip to the Armenian quarter to visit an artist whose shop I know well. “We might even have ice cream on the way back” I added – “Sounds like a plan Jonners, sounds like a plan.” Off up town Jerusalem, we headed.

(Note - I was christened Jonners many years ago by Jason).

When we got to the shop, we browsed and chatted. Vic was painting ceramics and seeing to us and to others. After a while I asked Jason, “anything catch your eye?” and it did – a ceramic dove in two complimentary pieces – hanging left of the artist on the far wall. The dove is blue edged and mainly white – no olive branch.

We discussed it with the artist – as in the prayer shawl of the rabbi, when the blue

becomes indistinguishable in the darkness of the evening, it's time for night prayers. When the dove becomes white, it's morning, time to arise and give yourself to God for the day! We were on to a winner from the start.

## Painting

We took the painting with us and we chatted about it over ice cream (lemon sorbet) at a shop not far from the Jaffa Gate. For me the painting was special because it symbolised the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Earlier that week, Jason had done exactly as the Master had done himself – in the Church Synagogue in Nazareth – Jason was invited to read the Gospel passage of Jesus reading from the Book of Isaiah, as recounted in chapter Five of St Luke's Gospel.

Jason stepped forward and did as Christ Himself had done 2,000 years earlier: “and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour” (Luke 5:17-19).

**“There is something appropriate in putting Jason's name into this passage – none of it jars – it fits there very easily and very accurately”**



The Armenian art from Jerusalem that meant so much to Jason.



Jason celebrating his 50th birthday with Fr Niall Ahern, his wife Siobhan and Fr Carroll.

### Passage

To me, as Jason read that passage on that day, the Spirit was very obviously on him as he spoke – for Jason was always a man to stretch out his arm and to include, to offer hope and comfort, to ensure nobody gets left out.

**“Jason was always patient and kind; he was never jealous; never boastful or conceited; he was never rude or selfish”**

“Then Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 5: 20-21).

That last phrase is key – for in Jason’s lifetime, such love was fulfilled in our hearing. It was the anthem by which he lived his life.

“And what do you like about the painting Jason?” I asked. “I like that it is two who have become one and that One (God) brings forth two... It’s like myself and Siobhan together, it’s the gift from God to us

of Saibh and Shóna...it’s that our two children would always be told how mammy and daddy love one another dearly and that we love them through and through...I like that about the painting and I’d like that to be told to the children always...

Today, I will give you that painting - and by it - let us remember a warm natured son and brother, a loving husband and father, a good friend and a noble spirit.

Today I say thank you to John and Breidin for the gift of Jason to us... with Jason a word of gratitude for the gift of Siobhan, Saibh and Shóna... and a word of gratitude to you all for the generosity with which you shared him with us his friends.

Let us now do as he did and as he now asks.

I cry and I smile - in conclusion I would like to leave you with a phrase used first by a German poet Ludwig Jacobowski titled *Leuchtende Tage* published in the August 1899 – it’s a simple one – it’s helpful to where we find ourselves today – “I don’t cry because it has come to an end, I smile because it happened.”

It’s not where we are at today for quite truthfully, we need to do both - we cry because it has come to an end, but we do also smile because it happened!

*Fr John Carroll is a priest of the Diocese of Ferns.*

# As our parish celebrates a jubilee, above all we give thanks



Fr Willie Purcell PP and parishioners Margaret Nolan Doheny, Billy Carrigan, Patrick Phelan, Helena Phelan, Caoimhe Carrigan, Mary Twomey, Isabel Brennan, Sinead Twomey, Noreen Brennan and Brigid Nolan at the RTE Television Centre in Dublin 4

## Our churches holds memories, not resting in stone but in prayer writes Fr Willie Purcell

**T**here is so much to thank God for: the ancient paths where our ancestors trod on their way to Mass, the wonder of the seasons that gave them hope often in times of struggle and despair. The companionship of family and neighbours as they made their way to a place of safety wrapped in the wonder of grace and blessing. We are not the people of the next generation, we are the congregation of the now, and we are the ones who carry the story of the men and women of faith who for 150 years trusted completely in God. We are the young and the older ones who realise that who we are today is because of the faith and prayers of the ones who have gone before us, we are the answer to their prayers, we are the

ones to carry on their faith, and we are the ones called to give witness to all they believed.

We like them bless ourselves with the water of new life.

We like them enter the house of God with eyes cast down knowing that we are entering with humility into the presence of the source of all love.

**“We listen with open hearts to hear the Word of life which gives hope even when our lives are hopeless”**

We like them say we are sorry and know that forgiveness is poured into our hearts like healing ointment on an open wound.

Like them we listen with open hearts to hear the Word of life which gives hope even when our lives are hopeless.

We like them offer the bread and wine knowing that we too can be transformed into the likeness of God.

We like them proclaim the great ‘Amen’ yes we believe just like parishioners of the past who

proclaimed their faith in words and heart.

We like them join the great procession towards everlasting life to receive into our very selves the source of all life in union with God and communion with one another.

We sing words that give hope and consolation to help us see that with one voice and heart we are the family of God. We like them bow our heads to be blessed by the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

Our church holds memories, not resting in stone but in prayer, memories that bring joy, memories that celebrate new life, memories that rise like incense into the heart of God, memories of loved ones carried in love to rest at the foot of the altar of love. Memories of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, neighbours, friends, parishioners, memories of those whom we have never known and whose stories are known only to God, but our Church for 150 years has held these memories safe and will continue to hold the memories of who we are when others gather to pray and remember us.

*Fr Willie Purcell is parish priest of Clara parish in the Diocese of Ossory. This was a reflection delivered during a televised Mass on RTE*

**“We are the young and the older ones who realise that who we are today is because of the faith and prayers of the ones who have gone before us, we are the answer to their prayers”**



We may see the possibilities of technologies being realised more and more by faith communities even as things start to get back to normal writes **Dr Brian Conway**

**P**erhaps more than at any other time in recent history, today's pandemic world has led to a rapid reappraisal of how we organise virtually every single aspect of our social lives, from shopping, work and healthcare to banking, dating and religiosity. It has changed our relationships – with our own bodies, with others, and with nature. It has shaken us out of taken-for-granted assumptions about mobility, security and space.

In observations about these changes, some attention has been given to the apparent boom in online religion or what might be called remote religion. Webcams have been brought into use for this like never before, allowing devotees to participate in religious services or engage in more solo-oriented religious behaviours such as prayer. Of course, online religion predates the pandemic but has been given renewed emphasis in recent times. A good example of this is the online religion offerings of the national Marian shrine in Knock, Co. Mayo, where livestreaming of daily Mass and of the Apparition Chapel takes place. YouTube viewership figures for daily Mass in the shrine in the last month show that the number of viewers of services range from about 300 to an impressive 8,000. To put this in context, five months ago viewership figures rarely went above 1,000. This provides evidence of increasing engagement with online religion during the pandemic. Alongside this, religious groups are falling back on 'old' forms of parish communication such as letters, phone calls and newsletters. We may see the possibilities of technologies being realised more and more by religious authorities after the pandemic. Even so, it is important not to exaggerate or overstate this potential. As much as online teaching is not a complete substitute for face-to-face teaching, online religion lacks the co-presence and intensity of more traditional formats.

Recent research shows that the impact of the pandemic on faith and religion has not been simple or straightforward.



# The mixed blessing of the pandemic for faith

Sociologist Gladys Ganiel's survey-based study entitled *People Still Need Us*, focusing on the pandemic's impact on religious groups, found that it led to a significant uptick in online worship provision. Moreover, religious groups are more likely to have dedicated online worship personnel now than before the pandemic. In addition, religious groups have increased their social outreach roles in providing support to the elderly and other needy groups. Of course, the question of how long any uptick in religiosity might last is an important one.

**“Today's difficult context shows that faith and religiosity are as much shaped by critical moments as by social processes like urbanisation”**

Studies not yet published, such as an online survey-based study by Dublin City University's Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education, will help us to drill down even deeper into the impact of the pandemic on religious groups.

**“The State restrictions on gatherings have led to the curtailment of regular religious services as well as the ritual marking of death and other lifecycle events”**

At the same time, we also know that the pandemic has brought out its own challenges for religious leaders. The State restrictions on gatherings have led to the curtailment of regular religious services as well as the ritual marking of death and other lifecycle events such as communions, confirmations and weddings. This is especially challenging in the Catholic case given the centrality of the sacraments in the Church's daily life. This has meant that clergy have had to celebrate some of these rituals in front of empty churches, where it is more difficult to establish a presence among ordinary people. It is also made more difficult by the ageing out of clergy and religious. As many clergy are themselves in a vulnerable category, many have had to step back from face-to-face ministry to protect their own health and wellbeing. Adapting to new forms of religious expression has also led to growing workload burdens for religious leaders who are able to continue in ministry, even if in a curtailed way. The observation by a Church of Ireland respondent in the Ganiel study that, “Although people say, ‘You must be having a quiet time Rector’, life is busy with all its remote communicating. This is

time consuming”, probably finds an echo in many a presbytery and parochial house.

Another downside of the pandemic has been the erosion in religious financial giving. While this has been partially offset by online donations, public health restrictions have dealt a body blow to church collections. This means that there are fewer resources to support the day-to-day living expenses of clergy but also to develop Church responses to needs arising from the pandemic. In the Dublin Archdiocese alone, the salaries of priests have been reduced by as much as 25%, a pattern replicated across many other dioceses as well.

Of course, it's not just that the pandemic has impacted religion ('pandemic to religion') but also that religion has influenced the pandemic ('religion to pandemic'). This is reflected in the prophetic ministry of Pope Francis in drawing attention to the pandemic's prolonging of already existing structural inequalities, showing how moral values can be brought to bear in shaping global responses to it. Addressing charismatic Catholics in a video message in May, Pope Francis spoke of the “pandemic of poverty” requiring our collective attention and

action: “If we do not work to end the pandemic of poverty in the world, the pandemic of poverty in the country of each one of us, in the city where each of us lives, this time will have been in vain.” Perhaps religious leaders will amplify a new prophetic voice in tomorrow's post-pandemic world.

**“Recent research shows that the impact of the pandemic on faith and religion has not been simple or straightforward”**

Today's difficult context shows that faith and religiosity are as much shaped by critical moments as by social processes like urbanisation. Such moments are often fast-moving, sudden and unexpected. Although sometimes seen as suffering from bureaucratic inertia, the pandemic has brought into focus that religious institutions are also quite adaptive and innovative in responding to quickly evolving social contexts. As the uncertainties generated by the pandemic continue to play out in our everyday lives, religion may well provide an underacknowledged comfort blanket in these unsettled times.

*Dr Brian Conway is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Maynooth University.*



# The Irish Spirit

August 13th, 2020  
Issue No. 11

## *The Battle for Ireland's Soul*

Mark Patrick Hederman on Church vs  
State in the early 20th Century

## Benedictine Nuns

*A brief history of their journey from  
Ypres to Kylemore Abbey*

PLUS

*Poetry from Achill Island,  
Fr Ray Kelly on pilgrimage to Rome,  
and more....*

From the book *The Opal and the Pearl*  
by Mark Patrick Hederman

The first half of the twentieth century was a battle for the 'soul' of Ireland. The Roman Catholic Church, as the century progressed, became the highest and the loudest bidder. This battle for the citadel became polarized into two camps: those defending Gaelic nationalism and those promoting cosmopolitan internationalism. Since most of the intelligentsia were protestant, it turned into a war between cultures. Spokespersons from each side, like AE and Shaw, on the one hand, and leading politicians, who publicly vaunted, in contrast, the fact that they were not intellectuals, on the other, presented almost contrary opposite views of the architecture of the new nation-state. Shaw called for the abandonment of nationalism saying that it must be added 'to the refuse pile of superstitions'. Anyone who wanted to divide the race into 'elect Irishmen' and 'reprobate foreign devils (especially Englishmen) had better go and live on the Blaskets where he can admire himself without much disturbance'. The Irish language was going to be a way of cutting off influence from outside, according to AE, who was afraid it was being used as 'a dyke behind which every kind of parochialism could shelter'. He wanted 'world culture, world ideas, world science; otherwise Ireland would not be a nation but a parish'. He used *The Irish Statesman*, founded in 1923, as a vehicle for his ideas. 'The cultural implications of the words Sinn Féin are evil', he wrote in 1925, 'We are not enough for ourselves. No race is. All learn from each other. All give to each other. We must not be afraid of world thought or world science. They will give vitality to our own nationality. If we shut the door against their entrance we shall perish intellectually, just as if we shut the door against the Gaelic we shall perish nationally'.

W.B. Yeats believed that the whole person, in the totality of every constituent part, was needed to discover and embody any worthwhile and reliable truth. He held that there is a religion which reneges on its responsibility to discover such truth and which becomes a search for immunity against the shocks of life. Such an impoverished religion was the one being proposed, in Yeats's view, for the New Ireland of the twentieth century. Such a fearful attempt to hide from the demands of human passion and human life was, for Yeats, a denial of the two essential mysteries of Christianity: Creation and Incarnation. One of the major differences between this earlier Christianity and the later manifestations of it, especially in the version being institutionalized in Ireland after independence, but also in various protestant variations, was its capacity to integrate the sexual as a sacred mystery central to all life of whatever kind. The character of Crazy Jane in Yeats's imagination represents the Old Testament of the Celtic race crying out against the bishop, representing institutionalized religion, especially its contemporary Irish Catholic variety. Sexual prudery and puritanism were major enemies in Yeats's crusade for a more integrated and wholesome Christianity.

The first ideology won a major victory in the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929, which also consolidated a connection between Church and State. Representatives of 'the other voice', such as W.B. Yeats and Bernard Shaw protested vehemently at the passing of this act. The new Republic was particularly single-minded in implementing its ideals. The Irish Free State in the twentieth century became an alignment of nationalist politics and the Roman Catholic Church. Two Eucharistic Congresses can act as bookends to the story being outlined: in 1932 the new aristocracy of Ireland were put on display as princes of the Church; the more recent Eucharistic Congress of 2012 as the second bookend could be said to close that chapter.



“**John Jordan sees Kavanagh as one of the few Catholic writers who tries ‘to understand ... and treat with compassion’ the prevailing ‘perversion of the Catholic teaching on sex and marriage’”**

In 1937 the De Valera Constitution of our 'free' state, expressed this derivative philosophy. In a radio broadcast to the United States on 15 June that same year, De Valera called it 'the spiritual and cultural embodiment of the Irish people'. To mark its first anniversary in 1938, he reminded everybody, almost as in a sermon: 'as faith without good works is dead, so must we expect our Constitution to be if we are content to leave it merely as an idle statement of principles in which we profess belief but have not the will to put into practice'.

The message of artists to us, since the beginning of our new history, has been consistent and quite other. Their point of view has been repudiated or ignored by officialdom both in the church and in the state. The message might be summarized as follows: The picture of humanity that you are painting, whether in its ideal form, or in your perception of what it is actually like, is too narrow, too pessimistic, too 'other-worldly', too unobtrusive. You refuse to accept the blood-and-guts reality of what we are, the bodily, sexual, earthy amalgam that makes us who we are. We want to be human, fully human. If God doesn't want

our humanity the way it is, the way he made it, then he doesn't want us at all. He wants something else. The job of the artist is to describe, to express that reality as it actually is. Artists have been doing that from the beginning of our history as an independent state and because they have been doing that, they have been condemned, banned, excommunicated by the official organs of the Church and State.

'Somewhere in the nineteenth century' Patrick Kavanagh wrote in 1951, 'an anti-life heresy entered religion'. Some of Kavanagh's poetry is an attack on the deeply pessimistic view of human nature perpetrated by the Catholic Church in Ireland, which he saw as 'anti-life' and which demanded that all his sexual energy 'be eliminated until expressed within the bonds of marriage'. Catholicism in Ireland was a negation of incarnation and a blasphemy against creation. Church and State were colluding in this necrophiliac distortion of Christianity. 'A wake is what is in progress in this country' and De Valera is the undertaker 'in his long black cloak'. His poem on Lough Derg is also exploring 'the unresolved tension between flesh



Patrick Kavanagh statue along the Grand Canal in Dublin.



The nave of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland. Photo by David Iliff.

and spirit, between life and anti-life, between joyous and sorrowful religion'. John Jordan sees Kavanagh as one of the few Catholic writers who tries 'to understand ... and treat with compassion' the prevailing 'perversion of the Catholic teaching on sex and marriage'.

If the Church can be seen as a defender of religious orthodoxy, art can become a champion of the orthodoxy of humanity. As such it can take on either an individual or a collective voice. It can be a protest against the way in which a whole group, a whole country, a whole culture is leading its people. It can try to show us that as a Western European Culture, as an Irish nation, or even as a particular community, we have been journeying on the Titanic for a whole century, overconfident in the world-view, the infrastructure, the detailed management of daily life, that kept us afloat, and perilously neglectful of all that was going on outside or below an apparently subdued and tranquil surface. We could be heading for collision with a perfectly natural ice-berg which we should have detected, assessed, situated and negotiated, if we had been living in the real world which not only surrounds us but actually is us.

Poetry as a personal and private language can be particularly pioneering and exploratory in this regard. Ottavio Paz, the Mexican writer, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1990, wrote a series of 'Essays on Modern Poetry' called *The Other Voice*:

That voice was not heeded by the revolutionary ideologues of our century, and this explains, in part at least, the cataclysmic failure of their plans. It would be disastrous if the new political philosophy were to ignore those realities that have been hidden and buried by the men and women of the Modern Age. The function of poetry for the last two hundred years has been to remind us of their existence; the poetry of tomorrow cannot do otherwise. Its mission will not be to provide new ideas but to announce what has been obstinately forgotten for centuries. Poetry is memory become image, and image become voice.

Many have taken upon themselves the task of explaining and regulating the mystery of human life, few have had the opportunity of putting their ideas into practice. Situations such as The French Revolution, The American Declaration of Independence and the history of Russia since 1917, have provided scope and opportunity for the implementation of such ideologies. Our own situation in the Irish Republic, whatever one might feel or believe about its justification, its credibility or its ultimate viability, did provide for those responsible for constituting it, a unique and enviable opportunity to establish a cherishing and vitalizing environment for a manageable population on a relatively small-scale model. The question is: to what extent did they allow what we are here referring to as 'the other voice' to influence their architecture? And the answer to that question must be: not enough. In Ireland, art as the 'other voice', has been constant and assiduous in formulating a different, wider, less banal, and more variegated, identity than the one being prescribed for us by either Church or State. Far from the kind of dialogue between society and the arts, which would have been salutary and invigorating, an atmosphere of fear and suspicion developed. Creative interrogation and criticism was silenced or ignored. Many artists protested vigorously, none more eloquently than George Bernard Shaw:

In the nineteenth century all the world was concerned about Ireland. In the twentieth, nobody outside Ireland cares twopence what happens to her ... If, having broken England's

grip of her, she slops back into the Atlantic as a little grass patch in which a few million moral cowards are not allowed to call their souls their own by a handful of morbid Catholics, mad with heresyphobia, unnaturally combining with a handful of Calvinists mad with sexphobia ... then the world will let 'these Irish' go their way into insignificance without the smallest concern.

Throughout our hundred year history we have been told the same thing in different ways by Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, for instance. Neither is saying there is no God, there is no Church, there is no Christianity. On the contrary, they are suggesting that if any of these realities want to have some effective contact with us and operate any kind of comprehensive salvation, they must begin taking seriously the partner with whom they are trying to have such a relationship. If we are to move forward towards a development which respects all the elements in the amalgam which we are, which we have become, which we hope to direct ourselves towards as an optimistic future, we must collaborate. Artists and scientists act as our antennae. They are diviners and creators of our future. They are our eyes, our ears, our imaginations.



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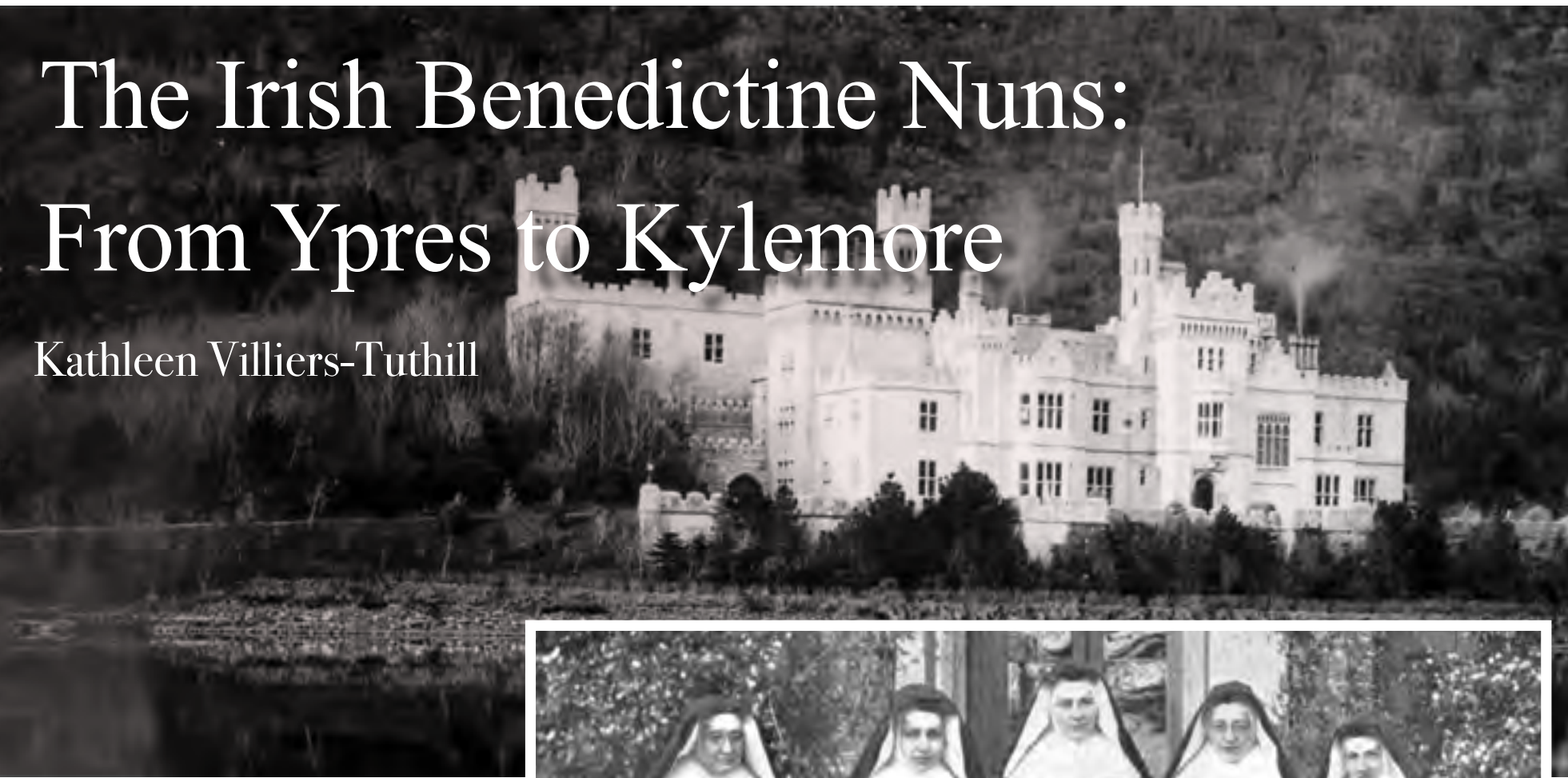
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# The Irish Benedictine Nuns: From Ypres to Kylemore

Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill



From the book *The Irish Benedictines*

Edited by Martin Browne OSB & Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB

The abbey of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin at Kylemore in County Galway is the oldest of the Irish Benedictine monasteries. The community, established in Ypres in 1665 as an English foundation, was formally designated as an Irish house in 1682. This long history, from Ypres to Kylemore, comprises over three hundred years of unbroken Irish Benedictine tradition.

The monastery at Ypres was set up at the request of the Bishop of Ypres, Martin de Praets. The bishop was acquainted with the English Benedictine abbey at Ghent and it was his wish to establish a similar house at Ypres. When making his request to the abbess of Ghent, the bishop asked specifically for Dame Marina Beaumont, and she went on to become the first abbess of Ypres.

Abbess Beaumont had great difficulty in attracting novices to her community. She requested and received nuns from the abbesses of Ghent, Pontoise and Dunkirk, but none of these would stay. Having failed to establish an independent community, Abbess Beaumont again sought assistance from the other English Benedictine houses and eventually received two nuns and several postulants from Paris. The abbess then transferred Ypres Abbey to Paris conditionally, an act which greatly angered the abbess of Ghent (Lady Abbess Knatchbull), who had always intended Ypres for the Irish nation.

On the death of Abbess Beaumont in 1682, the community elected Dame Flavia Carey on 19 November 1682. The house was then formally designated an Irish monastery, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Gratia Dei.

Irish nuns from the other monasteries were sent to increase the numbers at Ypres and from then on the community became known as De Iersche Damen – the Irish Ladies or the Irish Dames of Ypres.

For almost 250 years, this community would remain the only Irish community of the Order of St Benedict. The purpose



of the abbey was to provide an education and religious community for Irish women, although other nationalities were also welcome. The abbey attracted the daughters of the Irish nobility, both as students and postulants, and enjoyed the patronage of many influential Irish families living in exile. In their school, the nuns permitted no more than thirty students at any one time so as to provide individual attention for the girls. Many of the students came direct from Ireland at a very young age, sometimes two and three sisters came together. Several of the students went on to become nuns and abbesses.

Lady Abbess Mary Joseph Butler (1686-1723) was the first Irish born abbess of Ypres. A year after being elected abbess, she received a request from King James II, through the Duke of Tyrconnell, the Lord Lieutenant, to come to Dublin and establish her community there. The king promised her his royal protection and certain privileges as an inducement, and a house was taken for the community at Great Ship Street, close to Dublin Castle.

The abbess arrived in Dublin on 31 October 1688 and entered her enclosure in Great Ship Street. Her school was an immediate success and out of the thirty students attending,

eighteen expressed a desire to enter. The abbess, however, decided not to accept any postulants due to the political climate of the day.

By 1914, the community consisted of Abbess Scholastica Bergé, Prioress Maura Ostyn, eight choir dames, eight lay sisters and a novice. The community moved to Kylemore Castle in December 1920. They now numbered nineteen and their arrival in Connemara was recognised as a great boon to the area and every effort was made, by clergy and people, to help them settle into their new home.

Taking ownership of Kylemore Castle was an onerous task for the nuns. With the castle came thirteen thousand acres of land, over a hundred tenants, a farm with extensive buildings, several other estate houses, a six-acre walled garden, a miniature cathedral in the grounds, along with a mausoleum containing the remains of the original owners of the estate and extensive fishing and shooting rights. It was certainly a big jump from the old monastery garden in Ypres.

On 1 March 1921, the Sacred Congregation for Religious granted permission for the rights and privileges of Ypres Abbey to be transferred to Kylemore, making Kylemore Abbey the

“The community moved to Kylemore Castle in December 1920. They now numbered nineteen and their arrival in Connemara was recognised as a great boon to the area and every effort was made, by clergy and people, to help them settle into their new home”

first Benedictine abbey to be established in Ireland since the Reformation. In thanksgiving for their arrival at Kylemore, Abbess Maura promised to erect a statue of the Sacred Heart as soon as funds became available. This promise was fulfilled in 1932, when a large statue of the Sacred Heart was placed half-way up Duchruach Mountain at the rear of the abbey.

The nuns were anxious to reopen their school, and did so almost immediately, but it was not formally opened until 11 September 1923. There was a junior school and a secondary school, with thirty pupils ranging in age from eight to eighteen. A small number of lay teachers was employed from the start, but the majority of teachers were members of the community, who had themselves been educated at Ypres. From the beginning, Kylemore was recognised as offering education of a high academic standard, with all the advantages of a continental education without the necessity for lengthy travel.

On 20 December 1924, the school hosted its first concert and prize-giving ceremony, with photographs of visiting clerics and of the students published in the local press. The newspapers carried the names of many of the students and the majority appear to have been drawn from the neighbouring counties, though there were some from other parts of the country. However, within a few years, Kylemore was attracting foreign students and winning a reputation as an international school. For the young girls of the district the nuns opened a domestic economy school. This was later replaced by a day school, which, in the 1930s, was amalgamated with the boarding school.

In 1929, the Land Commission purchased that section of the estate leased out by tenants and the nuns continued to farm the remainder. They also retained the fishing rights which proved a tremendous asset when they decided to open a guesthouse at the abbey during the summer months. Utilising the classrooms and the many other houses scattered around the estate, the nuns could accommodate up to sixty guests. The guesthouse was popular with fishermen and clergy, and with honeymooners.

Lady Abbess Agnes (1953-1981) was the last abbess to be elected for life. A native of Westport, Co Mayo, she was a former student of the abbey and the first of the Kylemore nuns to be elected abbess.

It was Abbess Agnes who presided over the changes brought to community life following the Second Vatican Council. This was a testing time for monastic life and the community relied heavily on the abbess for direction. The changes affected many aspects of community life but some were more obvious than others, such as the modifications to the habit and the concession that allowed trips home to visit family and friends. Under the changes, the division of choir dame and lay sister, or converse sister, was dispensed with and from then on the title 'sister' was given to all. The daily prayer was shortened and changed from Latin to the vernacular. However, Latin Vespers continue to be sung each Sunday evening at Kylemore and plainchant remains the dominant music in the nuns' worship. The title 'Lady Abbess' was simplified to 'Mother Abbess'. Elections for the position of abbess were to be held



Lady Abbess Mary Joseph Butler

every six years, and not on the death of the abbess, as was the practice up until then. Although elected for life, Abbess Agnes took advantage of this climate of change and resigned voluntarily in 1981.

Today, the Kylemore community stands at nineteen and is still of mixed nationality. In recent years, the community, in common with other religious orders, is experiencing a serious decline in vocations. However, they are still a vibrant and active community, receiving strong support from a wider community of friends. The abbey school is one of the few remaining girls' boarding schools in the country and continues to provide an education for the young girls of the area. The abbey itself is recognised as one of the country's most beautiful buildings and contributes greatly to tourism in the region. It attracts visitors from all nations and of all religious beliefs. The nuns welcome their visitors in the spirit of St Benedict and invite them to participate in the community liturgy and prayer.



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## Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood

From the book *Knock Prayer Book*  
by Fr Richard Gibbons

Lady of Knock,  
Shepherdess of the Lamb of God,  
from the altar of the cross  
the Saviour entrusted us  
to your motherly care.  
Ask God to send priestly vocations  
to the Diocese/Order (Name)  
Shepherd those whom God  
is calling to the priesthood.  
May they answer God's call  
with courage, generosity and wisdom.  
Saint Joseph,  
Shepherd of the Holy Family.  
Intercede for all families of our Diocese/Order.  
May parents help and encourage  
each child  
to follow the vocation  
to which God is calling them.  
Saint John,  
Bishop and Shepherd.  
You rested close to the heart of the Lord.  
Intercede for the bishop and priests of (Name)  
May strength come to them  
from their closeness  
to the heart of Christ,  
and so may they shepherd  
their people  
in such a loving manner  
as to inspire others  
to answer the priestly calling.  
Jesus,  
Shepherd, Lamb, Sacrifice.  
Give shepherds  
similar to your heart  
to the people of (Name)  
for whom you gave Your Life.  
Grant us priests  
so that we may be fed from  
the table of the Eucharist – the source  
and summit of our lives.  
Amen.

Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill, Kildare & Leighlin



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# Visiting Rome

From the book *Hallelujah*  
by Fr Ray Kelly

I grew up in a typical Irish Catholic family and religion played a big part in our lives. My parents believed very much in passing on the faith to their children. There was the regular Sunday Mass, and confessions once a month on a Saturday. As a family we attended Benediction and the various novenas and sodalities on a regular basis, as well as the Mission every few years. During the month of May, we made a lovely May altar to Our Lady, as well as decorating a May bush outside our front hall door. The bush was often a hawthorn bush set up to celebrate an occasion like the beginning of summer. It also gave some families the feeling of protection by Mary, the Mother of God, against unseen forces. The decorations usually consisted of ribbons, cloth streamers, sometimes even a bit of tinsel and maybe a few painted eggshells. There was the annual Corpus Christi procession through the village. The arrival of Ash Wednesday meant receiving the ashes on our foreheads at Mass and the beginning of the six weeks of Lent. That meant that we gave up sweets, and if we were given any during that period they were saved up to be devoured on Easter Sunday. Sometimes we got a dispensation to eat some on St Patrick's Day. During the season of Lent my father got us all up for eight o'clock mass followed by breakfast and off to school. The recitation of the rosary most evenings before bed was also a common occurrence. Indeed, if any of us, particularly my brother Joseph or me, were "acting the mick" like poking or punching each other, or laughing during the rosary or indeed during Mass in the Church, the punishment was as often as not to kneel down for ten minutes in front of the Sacred Heart Picture as it stared back at us; its eyes seem to follow us if we moved ever so slightly from our positions. I remember very clearly that when the punishment was dished out to me I always took it with a heavy heart like a "put-down".

Starting a new life in Dublin meant that I was able to unconsciously unshackle myself from a lot of my childhood Catholic practices. Nevertheless I still attended Mass on the weekend when at home with my parents. I would also attend Mass on holy days in Dublin, usually an 8am holy day Mass at the pyramid church, also known as Our Lady of Dolours in Glasnevin, just across the road from where I worked.

After Pope John Paul's visit in September of 1979, I decided the following season of Lent, which began on Ash Wednesday 20th February, 1980, to do an extra bit of penance as I was taught when I was a boy. Since there was a regular daily 8am Mass on in the pyramid church, I would arise that little bit earlier and attend before I would cross the road for work. It was a lovely quiet time of prayer and silence which I began to enjoy. I would meet the same people nearly every morning and during the Mass offer them the sign of peace, and usually have a short chat on the way in or out. When the season of Lent was over, I decided to continue attending the 8am Mass at the pyramid church. I just fell in love with the quiet time. However, another thought entered my head during my quiet time in church. The thought was that maybe I could be up there on the altar where



Fr Ray Kelly

**“I felt so honoured and privileged to meet a man who not only served his community with great distinction but also worked hard for a better world for everyone”**

the priest was and celebrate the mass with the people. It was a thought that didn't last very long, and being honest I was glad when the thought had passed.

In the meantime, I picked up a flyer from the notice board of the Church. The flyer was from the Catholic Youth Council; they were organising a week long return visit to Rome of 1,000 young people as a repayment of the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland to thank the Pope for coming to Ireland. I brought the flyer into my work place and showed it around to some of my friends. There was huge interest from my friends, so we made contact with the Catholic Youth Council and attended various meetings in planning for the trip. There was a lot of planning to get 1,000 young Irish people over to Rome. We were going to see the Pope first of all at St Peter's Square. We would meet the Pope then for an 8am morning Mass at his summer residence at Castlegandolfo; the following evening there would be a garden party where we would stage a concert at Castlegandolfo for His Holiness. Auditions were held for those who would like to perform and I remember auditioning. At the audition I sang a version of the song "Danny Boy". About a week later I got word that, time permitting, I would be one of the acts to perform for Pope John Paul II. I couldn't contain myself with excitement. I had about three rehearsals before our departure for Rome. Before we departed, all 1,000 of us young people were put into groups of 50. We would then be picked up by our appropriate bus

at the Leonardo de Vinci airport in Rome. This would be our group for the entire week.

Saturday 23rd August 1980, the day of our departure came, arriving in Rome in the early hours of Sunday morning and straight to our hotel that was our home for the next nine days. The first few days were sightseeing around Rome. Piazza San Giovanni was our first tour visiting the Holy Stairs, Baptistry, Basilica and Cloister. Then we had a beautiful Sunday evening Mass in St John Lateran's.

On our way back to the hotel we stopped off for dinner at the Ristorante Scoglio di Frisio. A group of 12 of us sat down and studied the menu. As we did not understand a lot of the food listed in Italian, we decided to play it safe and order spaghetti bolognese all around. The waiter got his count wrong and brought out 11 plates of spaghetti bolognese. When I pointed this out to him, he produced an empty plate and decided to take a little off everyone's plate to make up the shortfall. All we could do was laugh our heads off.

The following day was a lot of sightseeing again at Castel Sant'Angelo, Piazza del Popolo, Borghese Gardens, Spanish Steps, St Mary Major, the Irish College, the Colosseum and Circus Maximus, followed by an afternoon on the beach and a few hours at the Luna Park Carnival Centre. On Tuesday we celebrated Mass at Monte Cassino followed by an afternoon on the beach again. On Wednesday, the excitement was building. We began our day with Mass in the underground Church of the Catacombs of S.



August 1980. Visit to Castel Gandolfo with Pope John-Paul II. Ray standing second from right

Domitilla; in the afternoon we departed for St Peter's Square with a sightseeing tour first and then assembled in St Peter's Square for the general open-air audience with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul welcomed all the people naming their country, and when he said Irlanda, he specifically welcomed the 1,000 strong young people from Ireland. Well the cheers could be heard certainly all over Italy and Ireland, if not the world. My heart lifted.

On Thursday morning we set off at 6.30am for our Mass with Pope John Paul at Castelgandolfo. It was the most beautiful experience of my life as the Holy Father prayed with us - it was unforgettable. The enthusiasm of 1,000 young people and many adults was electric as we sang out many of the hymns that were heard in Galway almost a year before "Freely, freely, you have received", "He's got the whole world in his hands", "Totus Tuus" and many more; the Pope was enjoying every moment of it. We then had a group photograph taken with the Holy Father: I was profoundly moved by his vigorous presence and his deep and obvious spirituality. He had a charisma that animated everyone. His faith in God, his devotion to Mary and his love of people especially the youth, never ceased to impress me. After that experience, I am not sure if there would be anything to top it, but there would be. Before that, however, we had a beautiful tour of the city of Rome by night stopping at the Trevi Fountain, Piazza Colonna, Via Veneto and the Pantheon.

On Friday morning we had a special guided tour of the Vatican Gardens followed by a visit to the Sistine Chapel. At half four in the afternoon we departed for Castelgandolfo for our garden party and concert. This was the evening of evenings as 1,000 emotional Irish youngsters assembled onto the grounds of this splendid hilltop summer residence over-looking Rome. I was in awe as I sat starry-eyed at this highly moving and awesome occasion in the Mediterranean pine-lined gardens of the world's most powerful religious leader. The excitement built up as I waited patiently in the garden, which was dotted with young pilgrims waving white and yellow papal flags as well as the Archbishop of Dublin Most Rev. Dermot Ryan, Bishop Forrester and the Catholic Youth Council director Fr John Fitzpatrick, Fr John Magee (later Bishop of Cloyne), as well as the Lord Mayor of Dublin Fergal O'Brien and his wife and many more. The garden, which was cut off from the remainder of the 20 acre castle grounds and palace by a high laurel hedge, was ringed by the Pope's security men and armed police. Soon I joined in the shouts of joy which rang out for the Pontiff as he quietly emerged from the graceful splendour of his castle to the grounds where we were gathered for the

party. He slowly walked down the floodlit pathway surrounded by cheering Irish guests. He sat down with Archbishop Ryan and Bishop Forrester on either side, and was introduced to the various dignitaries and organisers of this Youth pilgrimage from the Catholic Youth Council.

When the formalities ended the papal gardens rang out with "In Dublin's Fair City" and "The Wild Rover". Pope John Paul smiled broadly and quietly joined in on the occasion by reading the words of the songs from a book he had been presented with earlier. That was followed by a group of young Irish Dancers dressed in a multitude of colours that danced to a group of traditional musicians playing the harp, the violin, the tin whistle and the bodhran. At this stage my heart was pumping as I knew I would be performing after two sisters from Navan. Then I walked forward, bowed in reverence before the Pope and stepped up to the microphone as the introduction music of the song "Danny Boy" began. Strangely, once I started singing I felt a calmness come over me as I sang out the words "Oh Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling...". As I reached the high notes I noticed the Holy Father saying the words in a gentle silence and I smiled. My three minutes of song ended to a rapturous applause. Then as the other performers did, I approached Pope John Paul and knelt before him as he took my hand and presented me with rosary beads. I stood up and bowed in reverence. My moment with the Holy Father had ended, but it would stay etched in my memory forever. I returned back to the area where the other performers were located, and the tears just flowed as I realized the enormity of what had happened.

When the concert was over, Pope John Paul spoke to us in good but faltering English. There was a huge roar from the crowd when he recalled his visit to Ireland almost a year before and described it as being a wonderful experience. He said a special part of it was the Holy Mass in Galway which was attended by mainly young people. Referring to the fact that many of the Catholic Youth Council group had to save hard for their trip to Rome he said, "What you had to sacrifice to come here was much greater than what I had to sacrifice going to Ireland... I thank you for your singing and dancing. It was a special privilege to be part of it. To you I am embracing all people of Ireland, especially young people." Apologising for not giving a long speech and pointing out that even Popes need sleep, he blessed the pilgrims saying, "God bless Ireland".

We returned to our hotel and reached there before 1am. But I couldn't sleep, neither could the other pilgrims staying at the hotel. We sat up until about 4am as gradually we filtered off

to bed. I was wrecked, I was emotionally drained, but I was on cloud nine. The next day we began winding down after such a highly emotionally charged few days. We had Mass in St Mary Major Basilica and then shopping in the afternoon. Then on Sunday we had a tour of the Colosseum and Mass at St John Lateran Cathedral.

I felt so honoured and privileged to meet a man who not only served his community with great distinction but also worked hard for a better world for everyone. John Paul was a man of peace and a great bridge-builder. He brought the Catholic community closer to the world and the world closer to his own community. He was a man who did his best to promote understanding and respect between all world religions and faiths. I have always been inspired and touched by his strength and ability to stay strong to Church teaching and his ability to forgive. Especially around the time of the attempted assassination on his life. During the years of his leadership so much good has occurred for a deeper understanding between Catholics and all other religions and faiths. I think he will be especially remembered for his commitment to the dignity of every human person and respect for all human life from conception to natural death. In his book, *Go In Peace: A Gift of Enduring Love*, John Paul wrote, "Christ's passion is orientated towards Resurrection. Human beings are thus associated with the mystery of the Cross in order to share joyfully in the mystery of the resurrection". So he is telling us that suffering has a value, and that we are created for eternal life. Certainly, meeting John Paul touched my heart, and little did I know at the time that my visit to Rome and meeting His Holiness Pope John Paul would change my life forever.

My 89 year old grandmother was a very special lady in my life. As a child I spent a lot of my youth and years after with her. She was always number one on my visiting list when I would arrive home from Dublin on weekends. Every Halloween was always the time for me to help Granny, and climb up the apple trees for her and pick all the apples off the trees. This Halloween after my visit to Rome would be no different. Granny always wanted the apples picked off the tree that way she could store them up in a tea chest with straw; they would be preserved that way in order to be distributed to all her daughters throughout the year. If they had fallen from the tree to the ground the chances are that the skin might be broken, so preserving these would result in them rotting very quickly. On the bank holiday Monday after our apple picking Granny had a stroke. The family gathered around and I did not return to work. I wanted to be by her side. All her family called, including most of her 25 grandchildren too. Everyone wanted to know what she might have been up to that might have brought on the stroke. In fact, sharing the apple picking story almost made me feel guilty as if I shouldn't have allowed her to be out helping me.. Aside from that her age was against her too. She let go of her 89 years of life on Saturday 1st November 1980.



### Hallelujah

by Fr Ray Kelly

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# Treasures from *Achill Island*

## THE VIEW FROM HERE

On these soft days you may discern whisperings from the bogland cuttings, unfelt breezes gossiping over the wide spread of the heathers; inevitably the skylark will be a speck of dust above you, a non-stop lyrical gabbling to the light of day. This, still, in the twentyfirst century, may open the soul to the earth's being, soul like a featherweight of trembling bog-cotton held written in the soil. On Dookinella beach Atlantic breaks in olde-gentleman-like delicacy, the kittiwakes chatter on their high-cliff terraces; today you might fancy you can see, out past Clare and the further islands, all the way to the Boston North Shore, to Ogunquit, Maine and the solemn flight of pelicans close to that rocky coast; these soft days you can relish, with renewed pure wonder, the joy and grief and the see-saw sing-song harmonies, the hoarse cacophonies of this, your root creation.



## THE MONASTERY

I was sent down for milk. Evenings. Knocked, scared, on the scullery door. A yellow light from the chapel windows; figures within unshaped and cowed, in some intimate dance with their dark Christ. A sour silence smelling of man, of curds, and of wet stone floors. I turned, and the yellow light sent shadows shifting through the orchard trees, their bitter, arthritic limbs, boned fingers, armpits, the writhing creatures of the drowned ark. Up on the road moonlight sometimes, the thump of my own feet on tarmac, all the irrational rational dread thudding in my soul till the distant house beckoned to me, home, and the music that light makes tuned its strings for me so I could run, certain again of familial warmth, of the oil lamp softening the eyes of Jesus on the kitchen wall.



Read more in *Achill: The Island*, poems by John F. Deane and paintings by John Behan

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# Letter from Rome

## Unpacking the ‘Italy good, America bad’ meme on the coronavirus pandemic



John L. Allen Jr

I never thought I'd live to see it, but there it was in *The New York Times* on July 23, big as life, in the headline over a column by Paul Krugman: ‘Why can't America be like Italy?’ Since then, unflattering comparisons of the US to Italy in terms of handling the coronavirus have become a media meme, popping up all over the place.

For me, it's enough to induce intellectual whiplash. For most of my adult life, Italy has been a global exemplar of how *not* to run a country, with a legendarily opaque bureaucracy, notoriously corrupt, and struggling to provide even basic public services such as garbage collection or fixing potholes.

Now all of a sudden, Italy has become a case study in efficiency and leadership.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte celebrated his 56th birthday yesterday, and even he has to be a bit dazed. Not only is he being feted around the world for his management of the pandemic, but Italy's most recent polls show he enjoys a 65% approval rating.

Like most media *memes*, the ‘Italy success story’ is a bit exaggerated. Nonetheless, there's enough truth to it that it's worth unpacking. Let's start with the exaggerations.

### Infections

To begin with, whether Italy is truly a success story remains to be seen. The most recent monitoring data has shown an uptick in infections over the past week, with 552 new cases reported on Friday, and the average age of those contracting the virus is going down. Gianni Rezza, director of prevention for Italy's Ministry of Health, warned that the country has to “pay attention,” and the government extended precautionary measures until September 7.

Still, Italy reported just three coronavirus fatalities on Friday, as opposed to 1,287 in the US, and Italy's infection rate remains among the lowest in the European Union at a time when other EU states are struggling with new outbreaks.

For another thing, Italy probably lucked out at the beginning of its crisis because it was largely concentrated in the wealthy north, as opposed to the chronically underdeveloped and dysfunctional south.

Had Mr Conte been in the



Pope Francis meets with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at the Vatican.

position of asking Italians to accept a national lockdown over a problem localised in the south, many northerners might have written it off as yet another example of the south being a mess that had nothing to do with them. On the other hand, in their heart of hearts, many southerners likely thought that if this disease can cripple even Milan, then God knows what it could do to us, and were more inclined to accept drastic measures.

Further, Italy also benefitted from the quirky nature of its parliamentary system, where heads of state can take power as a result of backroom deals without a single

person ever having voted for them.

Mr Conte initially was the product of a Faustian pact between the right-wing Lega party of anti-immigrant hawk Matteo Salvini and the left-wing populist Five Star Movement.

“Let's note that much of the ‘Italy good, America bad’ drumbeat in the US media has a clear anti-Trump edge”

He was a nobody before being thrust into the prime minister's

role, and to this day he has no clear party affiliation or allegiance.

As a result, nobody suspects Mr Conte of pursuing a partisan agenda, and, for the most part, public health precautions such as face masks have not been politicised in Italy as they have elsewhere, most notably the US.

Had Italy been under the stewardship of a different kind of PM, one with a stronger partisan edge – say, had these still been the Silvio Berlusconi years – the story might have been very different.

Finally, let's also note that much of the ‘Italy good, America bad’ drumbeat in the US media right now has a clear anti-Donald Trump edge. (In fact, I wasn't completely honest above – the headline of Mr Krugman's July 23 op/ed actually was, ‘Why can't Trump's America be like Italy?’ In one fell swoop it managed to be both critical of Mr Trump and snide to Italy, with the suggestion being, “If even Italy can figure this out, what the hell?”)

All that said, there's still a case for celebrating Italy's accomplishment, and perhaps a lesson in it too.

First, from the beginning Italians used the language of *salvare la Patria*, ‘saving the country’, to describe their anti-Covid efforts, even when they were joking about it (“You can save the country in your pyjamas!” was one popular trope during the stay-at-home quarantine.) The campaign

awakened dormant national memories of the World War II-era *partigiani* and their sacrifices to help liberate Italy from Nazi occupation.

In the States, such rhetoric has been in short supply. Instead, sounding alarms from the beginning has been cast as a political manoeuvre designed to bring down Mr Trump. It was cast that way by the president, and, frankly, it's been exploited that way by many of his critics.

Second, Italians bought into the mobilisation in a way a broad swath of Americans never have. Honest to God, I actually witnessed ordinary Italians self-policing orderly lines in front of grocery stores...something that if you've ever been to Italy, you know is nothing short of an utter cultural revolution.

### Influence

Third, there's the eternal ‘X’ factor in Italian life, which is the role of the Pope.

Yes, there's a strong anti-clerical streak in Italian life, most Italians don't go to church anymore for anything beyond weddings, baptisms and funerals, the Italian bishops wield declining influence in national affairs, and on and on.

Still, in moments of national crisis, Italians instinctively turn to the Pope, like kids in a family that fight all the time still look to dad when the chips are down.

From the beginning, Pope Francis urged the Church to share in the sacrifices being made by other Italians, even indirectly rebuking the Italian bishops when they appeared poised to defy government restrictions on public celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments. At key moments, Francis also articulated the national mood, most poignantly in his March 27 *Urbi et Orbi* blessing from a deserted and rainy St Peter's Square. He helped hold the country together and keep it on course.

As both a Catholic and an adopted Italian, all that can't help but make me feel a swell of pride.

Now, let's see if Mr Conte can move from the implausible, in flattening the curve of the virus, to the seemingly impossible, and actually get the garbage off the streets. If Francis can give him an assist on that too, I'll personally prepare the *positio* for his eventual beatification.

John L. Allen is Editor of Crux.com



Brides wearing wedding dresses hold a flash mob near Rome's Trevi Fountain to protest at the postponement of their weddings due to the coronavirus pandemic.

# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### ACN sending €250,000 in food aid to Lebanon

● International Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has announced an emergency €250,000 food aid package for victims of the massive August 4 explosion in Beirut.

The ACN grant will focus on poor families most affected by the explosion, which devastated the port area of the Lebanese capital and adjacent areas, including the mostly Christian neighbourhoods of Mar Maroun and Achrafieh.

Fr Samer Nassif, a Lebanese priest, told Aid to the Church in Need that the Christian area of Beirut is “completely devastated”, with at least 10 churches destroyed.

ACN estimates some 300,000 people have been left homeless. Additionally, many offices, schools, hospitals and shops were completely destroyed in the explosion.

### Nicaraguan cardinal says Mass at firebombed cathedral

● Cardinal Leopoldo José Brenes Solorzano of Managua said Mass at the entrance of the Blood of Christ chapel in his cathedral, which was firebombed on July 31.

“The Church has always suffered and will continue to suffer, but our assurance is that the Lord is with us,” Cardinal Brenes said during the Mass.

He called the July 31 firebombing “an act of terrorism”.

The Archbishop of Managua said there is “an atmosphere of sadness and pain...because what we feel from this nightmare is: when are we going to wake up?” He urged clinging to “the cross, because if we are clinging to his cross, who can separate us from the love of God?”

Cardinal Brenes said that looking at the image of Christ crucified, “we see our Blood of Christ charred, but still standing”.



### Pandemic has not stopped migration

● From January 1 to August 5, the Italian internal affairs ministry reported that 14,838 migrants and asylum seekers had arrived in Italy. During the same period in 2019, when Matteo Salvini, then-minister of internal affairs, closed ports to rescue vessels and enacted strong policies to keep migrants away, only 4,021 migrants had arrived.

At the height of Italy's strict COVID-19 lockdown in spring, migrants continued to arrive.

The government said 241 migrants came in March and 671 arrived in April.

The numbers went up in May and June, but jumped to 7,068 arrivals in July, indicating that many had been waiting in North Africa for a chance to migrate.

### Pakistan's minorities denied housing in Muslim areas

● Hard-liners in Pakistan are forcing Christians out of Muslim neighbourhoods and refusing to give them lodgings, according to a high-profile minority groups' politician championing human rights.

Speaking following the death of Christian man Nadeem Joseph – who was repeatedly shot by a neighbour for refusing to leave his house in a Muslim neighbourhood – Pakistani politician Joel Amir Sahotra told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that there is a worrying trend of non-Muslims facing fierce opposition if they try to move to Muslim areas:

“Discrimination against religious minorities, unfortunately, is very common in Pakistan – there is no respect or acceptance for them.”

He added: “People are not even willing to rent their properties to non-Muslims. They even advertise it openly that non-Muslims are not allowed to enter the properties – it's like the Stone Age.”

## Beirut's huge explosion adds to Lebanon's dire situation

Hospitals in the Lebanese capital are overwhelmed with those suffering injuries from a massive explosion in Beirut's port, causing widespread damage to the city and rocking the tiny Mediterranean nation already devastated by the coronavirus and its worst financial crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

“People won't be able to rebuild their homes, businesses, livelihoods. There are reports of hospitals turning away patients because they don't have the capacity,” said Aya Majzoub, Lebanon researcher with Human Rights Watch.

“Even before this blast, there have been shortages of medical equipment, protective gear. The health care capacity was already overstretched. I don't know how hospitals are going to be able to handle these additional injuries,” she added. Initial reports say the explosion was caused by highly explosive materials seized from a ship stored at the port.

Lebanon's dire economic crisis, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, is pushing people into a struggle for survival, Catholic and other humanitarian agencies warn, as growing numbers of families can no longer afford the basic food, electricity,



Residents of a street near the port in Beirut return to their demolished homes after the blast.

hygiene, water and cooking fuel needed to live. On top of that, power cuts last up to 20 hours a day.

### Inflation

With Lebanon's currency collapsing by 80% of its value since last October, spiralling inflation and unemployment running about 55%, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association/Pontifical Mission's Michel Constantin explained

that Lebanon does not have a social safety net, but the Catholic Church is reaching out to help the destitute.

An agency of the Holy See, CNEWA/Pontifical Mission works for, through and with the Eastern Catholic churches to address pastoral needs and deliver humanitarian aid.

“People have lost their jobs, are stuck at home with no employment and are getting hungry. We are distrib-

uting food, life-saving items such as medicines, food and milk for children for families who have lost jobs. Not to fight poverty, but to save lives,” Constantin told *Catholic News Service* by phone from Beirut.

“This crisis hits everybody – Lebanese families, Palestinian and Syrian refugees alike. We will start seeing children dying from hunger before the end of the year,” warned Jad Sakr, acting country director of Save the Children in Lebanon.

A recent report by the U.N. World Food Program said 50% of Lebanese citizens, along with 63% of Palestinians and 75% of Syrians in the country, had expressed doubts they would find enough food over the previous month.

“If we offer a choice between hygiene or food boxes, the families will all choose food...every time,” explained American Emily Redfern volunteering with Fratelli Project, supported by CNEWA/Pontifical Mission and a partner reaching those in need.

Speaking of the head of a household in one family she said: “He's too proud to accept help – it's a good thing his wife is not, otherwise I don't know how they would be eating.”

## Pope extends Catholic patriarchs' jurisdiction over Arabian Peninsula

Pope Francis has extended the authority of the Eastern Catholic patriarchs to their Faithful living in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Pope's decision sets aside instructions issued by St John Paul II in 2003 and Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 entrusting the pastoral care of all Catholics of any rite to the Latin-rite apostolic vicars.

Given “the historic prerogative of the jurisdiction of the Eastern Catholic patriarchs over the Arabian Peninsula” and in response to their request “in view of the greater spiritual good

of their Faithful”, the Vatican said, Pope Francis set aside the previous restrictions, although the patriarchs are asked to coordinate with the apostolic vicars and can establish new territorial jurisdictions only with the prior approval of the Vatican.

According to *Vatican News*, the change involves six Eastern Catholic patriarchal churches: the Coptic, Maronite, Syriac, Melkite, Chaldean and Armenian Catholic churches.

Catholics belonging to Eastern Churches without a patriarch continue to be under the jurisdiction of the

Latin-rite apostolic vicars.

Until the change, all Catholics in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia were under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, and those in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen were under the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia.

Because the vicars are resident on the peninsula and the patriarchs are not, the apostolic vicars will continue to represent the Catholic community with government authorities, the statement said.

## Churches flooded in Karachi after heavy rainfall

Masses have been suspended in two Catholic churches in Pakistan's Karachi Archdiocese after torrential monsoon rain.

Thick black sludge covered the compound of St Francis Xavier Catholic church in the Shahjahanabad area follow-

ing flooding after three days of heavy downpours in the port city. Five feet of water stood in Shahjahanabad, home to 45 Catholic families.

The church was also swamped last month due to flash flooding.

The wall of a church in

the Sadiq Nagar slum collapsed due to heavy rain. Both churches belong to St Philip's parish of the southern archdiocese.

According to the latest report by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), 58 people have died

while 128 houses have been damaged around Pakistan since the beginning of the monsoon last month.

A Caritas emergency response team visited the flood-affected parish at the weekend.



Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## Be willing to ask for God's help...



The crowd in St Peter's Square watches as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking the square at the Vatican on Sunday. The Pope said calling out to God for help is key during periods of doubt and fear. Photo: CNS

## Priest's 100-mile bike ride raises aid – and hope – for parish

Fr Christopher Heanue started his morning on July 27 by celebrating Mass at 5am...and then took off on a 100-mile bike ride.

It wasn't just any ride. Fr Heanue called his journey '100 Miles of Hope', which was a fundraiser to help support his parish, Holy Child Jesus, in Richmond Hill, New York, in the Brooklyn diocese. He is the administrator and a parochial vicar of the parish in the New York borough of Queens.

Holy Child Jesus has faced some challenging months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the food pantry and parish outreach programs particularly affected.

Joined by parishioners Paul Cerni

and Tom Chiafalo, Fr Heanue, 32, did the ride to provide hope and optimism in addition to raising money.

"I was very, very nervous entering into the ride. The week before, I read some articles about how to prepare for a century ride," as a 100-miler is called by cyclists, Fr Heanue told *Catholic News Service*. "One of the main components that the writers kept saying was that you need to have a whole week of good rest.

"I'll tell you, all of the fears and all the nervousness and anxiety that I had entering into the ride seemed to dissipate once we began," said the priest, who was ordained in 2015 for the Brooklyn diocese.

One Bible verse accompanied Father

Heanue along the way – Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Fr Heanue said he had never been on such a long bike ride, but he took up the challenge to not only ask for support and prayer but also to ask for donations for the parish and its outreach programs.

"We set up a GoFundMe page and I started with a goal of \$1,000. That quickly was raised. I increased it and tried for \$5,000, and in three days we hit \$5,000. I tried for \$10,000 and today we're at about \$9,400," he said when he spoke to *CNS* on July 28.

As of August 6, he had raised over \$20,000 with his GoFundMe page and through Facebook and GiveCentral.

## 'These were innocent children' archbishop says of murders

The Catholic archbishop of Juba, South Sudan, condemned "in the strongest terms possible" the murder of three young girls, killed while watching television in their Juba home.

The girls, ages 9, 7 and 4, were the children of Edward Jami Andrea, a lecturer at the Upper Nile University in the

capital. The children were alone in the house on August 1 while their mother was at the market.

"I don't know whether it was revenge or ritual killings, but these were innocent children who someone just decided to take their lives," Archbishop Stephen Ameyu Mulla told *Catholic News Ser-*

vice from Torit, where he is on a pastoral visit. "I am very shocked and saddened by the deaths."

In a statement, Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala of Tombura-Yambio called the murders "really heart-breaking".

"What kind of monstrous cowards can sneak

up on defenceless children and slaughter them in their home?" he asked, saying he joined all of South Sudan in condemning the murders.

"We, the peace-loving people of South Sudan, must stand united...in the face of those who would use violence and intimidation," said Bishop Kussala.



## Vatican roundup

### Pope names six women to previously all-male Council for Economy

● Renewing the membership of the Vatican Council for the Economy, Pope Francis named six women to the previously all-male board that oversees the financial operations of all Vatican offices and entities.

The original seven lay members were all men with experience in business, finance or government.

The six are: Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof, a German professor of law; Marija Kolak, president of Germany's national association of cooperative banks; Maria Concepcion Osacar Garaicoechea, a Spaniard and founding partner of the Azora Group and president of the Board of Azora Capital and Azora Gestion; Eva Castillo Sanz, former president of Merrill Lynch Spain and Portugal; Ruth Maria Kelly, a former banking executive, former member of Parliament and former secretary of education in Britain; and Leslie Jane Ferrar, former treasurer to Prince Charles.

### Weapons must be set aside for peace to flourish – Pope

● For peace to flourish, weapons of war must be set aside, especially nuclear weapons that can obliterate entire cities and countries, Pope Francis said on the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima.

"May the prophetic voices" of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "continue to serve as a warning to us and for coming generations," he said in a written message sent to Hidehiko Yuzaki, governor of the Hiroshima prefecture, who led a peace memorial ceremony.

"I was privileged to be able to come in person to the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during my

apostolic visit in November last year, which allowed me to reflect at the peace memorial in Hiroshima and at Hypocenter Park in Nagasaki on the destruction of human life and property wrought in these two cities during those terrible days of war three-quarters of a century ago," the Pope wrote.

"It has never been clearer that, for peace to flourish, all people need to lay down the weapons of war, and especially the most powerful and destructive of weapons: nuclear arms that can cripple and destroy whole cities, whole countries," the Pope said.

### Vatican says Baptisms that use a modified formula are not valid

● Changing the words of the formula for Baptism render the Sacrament invalid, said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Specifically, a Baptism administered with the formula "we Baptise you..." instead of "I Baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is not valid because it is the person of Christ through the minister who is acting, not the assembly, the congregation said.

The doctrinal congregation's ruling was published as a brief response to questions regarding the validity of Baptisms using that modified formula.

The congregation was asked whether a Baptism was valid if it had been performed with a formula that seeks to express the "communitarian significance" and participation of the family and those present during the celebration.

A Baptism administered with this kind of modified formula is not valid, the congregation said, and the Baptisms would have to be redone for those individuals who had been Baptised with the improvised wording.

"When the minister says, 'I Baptise you...' he does not speak as a functionary who carries out a role entrusted to him, but he enacts ministerially the sign-presence of Christ," it said.

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Hume's Faith integral to his work towards peace

**Dear Editor,** Your coverage of the sad passing of the legendary John Hume [IC 06/08/2020] was impressive and unlike many other publications you highlighted how his Catholic Faith was instrumental in making him the man he was, which is something that should not be overlooked.

The Irish people have much to be proud of in this peacemaker and it definitely showed in the reaction of the Irish public after his death. The response was extraordinary, there was no doubt that his work towards reconciliation and the Good Friday

Agreement changed the face of Ireland and led us on a path of peace rather than violence. For that reason, we should not forget how his Christian upbringing and the values instilled in him helped him accomplish so much. He rejected violence because it was morally wrong, just as you say in your editorial, not for political gain.

Anyone who believes religion has no place in the modern world should look at the work of this behemoth of peace, this prophet, and remember that although he did not scream his religiosity to all who he came across,

he lived and acted as a Christian and followed the path of Christ in all that he did. His actions spoke louder than words ever could.

There are still many steps to take on the path towards a 'normal' society, which has moved past the violence and vitriol. The ghosts of the past have not left us just yet but John Hume has helped us get to a stage in which we can, and are, moving faster than we ever thought possible.

*Yours etc.,  
Daniel O'Neil,  
Bangor, Co. Down.*

## facebook community

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

### A great man has fallen [John Hume]

Ireland has lost one of its greatest ever sons. An absolute giant of a man with courage, vision and impeccable morality. – **Brendan Baker**

Truly a man of God and a man of peace. A wonderful giant of a statesman among the pygmies who regard themselves as statesmen and stateswomen. – **Peter Killeen**

As Fr Paul Farren said at the funeral, Catholic social teaching both drove and guided his actions. – **Charles Glenn**

### Anger over archbishop's attendance at Muslim ceremony 'misplaced'

Thank you, archbishop, for being a great Christian. Only through dialogue and visible interest can we promote peace and goodwill, in my very humble opinion. – **Deirdre Quinn**

Well done archbishop. It does not betray persecuted Christians. As for Muslims denying divinity of Jesus, same goes for Jews and Hindus. Three popes have visited mosques. – **Declan McSweeney**

We have a core of individuals who will protest always on any issue. Very shallow. I support the archbishop's attendance. It's about acceptance and relationships with other genuine beliefs. – **Tim O'Leary**

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

## A more positive view of transgenderism

**Dear Editor,** I feel that the trans phenomena gets a very bad press sometimes, particularly in Catholic newspapers. I would like to try to correct that by saying that being trans is not necessarily a bad thing, and in fact in my opinion may even be a good thing. I am trans myself and have had a very strong feminine feeling since the age of 15. I am now 62. I am very religious: I go to Mass every day, practice charity, pray a lot and I love my family.

I think my femininity could be a gift from God since it keeps me happy and keeps me away from dark dangers and sins like: fornication, adultery, pornography, homosexual acts and prostitution. I have no interest in these dark dangers and sins whatsoever and everybody has a right to be happy, because the opposite of happiness is depression and suicide.

I would encourage other trans people not to despair about their Faith, but to go to Mass, pray and believe in the love of an inclusive all-loving God. Lest I be a hypocrite like a Pharisee, however, I beat my breast and say: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

To prove Jesus' love is all inclusive, he forgave the woman caught in adultery, he forgave the woman at the well who had six husbands and he forgives publicans and tax collectors. He sets us free from the slavery to sin.

*Yours etc.,  
Dave 'Marisa' Fitzgerald,  
Bray, Co. Wicklow.*

## 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".

*Yours etc.,  
Andy Breen,  
Thurles, Co. Tipperary.*

## Watching Confirmation from pub 'concerning'

**Dear Editor,** I was concerned about an article in your paper which reported that a pub in Kingswood, Dublin, was allowing parents to stay in the pub across the road from the church and watch their children's Confirmation via livestream on their TVs.

At first glance, I initially thought it was a lovely expression of solidarity in a community that is struggling to cope with the strict guidelines during this pandemic. However, we are already having difficulty expressing the importance of Confirmation to parents, many of which only see it as part of a tradition and this, in my eyes, sets a

worrying precedent.

It could be argued that this is just a once off that has taken place due to Covid-19 as the parents weren't allowed in the church to accompany their children but I wouldn't be surprised if more parents decided to watch the livestream from a pub rather than be in there in person in future.

Although perhaps this could be seen as over the top, there is a growing apathy to the Sacraments as many Catholics know. Is this just another nail in the coffin?

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Ryan,  
Drogheda,  
Co. Louth.*



## 'Disappointed' at treatment of archbishop

**Dear Editor,** It was very disappointing to read about Archbishop Diarmuid Martin being so disrespected at Croke Park after attending the Muslim celebration of Eid.

The video of the incident, written about in your newspaper [IC 06/08/2020], details the actions of what I would deem hooligans rather than followers of Christ. Many of them were shouting the Rosary through megaphones. What a time we're living in.

These actions would have been totally unheard of in my generation; when we respected our clergy. Regardless whether you agree or disagree with the archbishop, he still deserves to be treated with dignity and if people want to protest against something he is doing or has done there are peaceful ways of going about it rather than all out thuggery.

Furthermore I believe the archbishop did nothing wrong in his attendance

of the Muslim celebration and as Fr Michael O'Sullivan clearly points out in the article in your paper it is not something that is completely unprecedented and is actually part of a wider Church move towards ecumenism and peace between religions, which is sorely needed. Unfortunately, there will always be those who are xenophobic and so uncomfortable with their own religion that they feel threatened by a small Muslim community praying

in a public space.

Even worse, and perhaps more likely, they are using religion to hide behind as a means to spew their thinly veiled racist ideologies. Either way, it seems to be a worrying trend in Ireland that must be continuously addressed, we must use dialogue to change hearts and minds.

The reality is their anger stems from fear.

*Yours etc.,  
Patrick Byrne,  
Knocklyon, Co. Dublin.*

## Dragnet Parable interpretation was 'evasive'

**Dear Editor,** I esteem Fr Sylvester O'Flynn as a scripture teacher and look forward to the insights in his weekly article 'The Sunday Gospel'. I was however disappointed with his evasive interpretation of the Dragnet Parable [IC 23/7/2020].

The plain-sense meaning of the parable (Matt 13:47-50) is clear. The hauling ashore of the dragnet refers to the historical Church membership – or perhaps even historical humanity itself – at the end times. The contents of the dragnet are divided/judged into

two categories. The 'good ones' are collected and saved; those that are 'no use' are thrown away and reference is made to a 'blazing furnace'. This points unmistakably to the Final Judgement and how the angels will separate the 'wicked' from the 'just'.

Fr O'Flynn takes an evasive view of this parable. He ignores the whole theme of judgement and its eternal consequences. Instead he sees the variety within the dragnet simply in terms of the 'variety of gifts and interests' found within the Church.

In the present-day Church, there is a widespread presumption on a salvation that is practically universal. This presumption does not reckon with Jesus' solemn teaching that the way to salvation is via a hard road and narrow gate (Matt 7:14). Furthermore, this risky presumption transforms the traditional four last things – death, judgement, Heaven and Hell – into the modern two last things, death and Heaven.

*Yours etc.,  
Andy Breen,  
Thurles, Co. Tipperary.*

# 📷 Around the world



▲ **USA:** Felician Sister Mary Serra Szalaszewicz poses for a photo in the order's convent in Livonia, Michigan, complete with a mask  
 ◀ **VATICAN:** A woman holds Lebanon's flag and others a banner wishing Pope Francis well as the Pope leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St Peter's Square. Photos: CNS



**ITALY:** Gisella Cardia kneels and looks skyward in the moment devotees claim Mary appeared to her and revealed a message. The alleged apparitions take place in Trevignano Romano.



**GHANA:** Workers of an Accra factory begin the production of personal protective gear for local frontline health workers. A Caritas Ghana official says the government in Ghana has a good policy response to the coronavirus pandemic but weak implementation.



**FRANCE:** Tourists take a selfie with Mont Blanc in the background in the resort area of Chamonix. The country tries to offer itself as a tourist destination balanced with its programme to control Covid-19.



**LEBANON:** Anti-government protesters break the glass of a building in Beirut as opposition to the country's establishment grows following the port blast on Tuesday of last week.

'Melancholy' by Edvard Munch (National Gallery, Oslo).



# Understanding suicide and melancholy

**W**e no longer understand melancholy. Today we lump all forms of melancholy together into one indiscriminate bundle and call it 'depression'. While a lot of good is being done by psychiatrists, psychologists and the medical profession in terms of treating depression, something important is being lost at the same time.

Melancholy is much more than what we call 'depression'. For better and for worse, the ancients saw melancholy as a gift from God.

Prior to modern psychology and psychiatry, melancholy was seen precisely as a gift from the divine. In Greek mythology it even had its own god, Saturn, and it was seen as a rich but mixed gift. On the one hand, it could bring soul-crushing emotions such as unbearable loneliness, paralysing obsessions, inconsolable grief, cosmic sadness and suicidal despair; on the other hand, it could also bring depth, genius, creativity, poetic inspiration, compassion, mystical insight and wisdom.

## Human finitude

No more. Today melancholy has even lost its name and has become, in the words of Lyn Cowan a Jungian analyst, "clinicalised, pathologised, and medicalised" so that what poets, philosophers, blues-singers, artists and mystics have forever drawn on for depth is now seen as a 'treatable illness' rather



## Fr Rolheiser

than as a painful part of the soul that doesn't want treatment but wants instead to be listened to because it intuits the unbearable heaviness of things, namely, the torment of human finitude, inadequacy and mortality.

For Cowan, modern psychology's preoccupation with symptoms of depression and its reliance on drugs in treating depression show an "appalling superficiality in the face of real human suffering".

For her, apart from whatever else this might mean, refusing to recognise the depth and meaning of melancholy is demeaning to the sufferer and perpetrates a violence against a soul that is already in torment.

And that is the issue when dealing with suicide. Suicide is normally the result of a soul in torment and in most cases that torment is not the result of a

moral failure but of a melancholy which overwhelms a person at a time when he or she is too tender, too weak, too wounded, too stressed or too biochemically-impaired to withstand its pressure.

Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, who eventually did die by suicide, had written earlier about the melancholic forces that sometimes threatened to overwhelm him. Here's one of his diary entries: "The force which drew me away from life was fuller, more powerful and more general than any mere desire. It was a force like my old aspiration to live, only it impelled me in the opposite direction. It was an aspiration of my whole being to get out of life."

There's still a lot we don't understand about suicide and that misunderstanding isn't just psychological, it's also moral. In

**“For Lyn Cowan, apart from whatever else this might mean, refusing to recognise the depth and meaning of melancholy is demeaning to the sufferer and perpetrates a violence against a soul that is already in torment”**

short, we generally blame the victim: if your soul is sick, it's your fault. For the most part that is how people who die by suicide are judged.

Even though publicly we have come a long ways in recent times in understanding suicide and now claim to be more open and less-judgmental morally, the stigma remains. We still have not made the same peace with breakdowns in mental health as we have made with breakdowns in physical health.

**“The person suffering from leprosy still had the consolation of not being judged psychologically or morally. They were not judged to be ‘unclean’ in those areas. They were pitied”**

We don't have the same psychological and moral anxieties when someone dies of cancer, stroke or heart attack as we do when someone dies by suicide. Those who die by suicide are, in effect, our new 'lepers'.

In former times when there was no solution for leprosy other than isolating the person from everyone else, the victim suffered doubly, once from the disease and then (perhaps even more painfully) from the social isolation and debilitating stigma.

He or she was declared

'unclean' and had to own that stigma. But the person suffering from leprosy still had the consolation of not being judged psychologically or morally. They were not judged to be 'unclean' in those areas. They were pitied.

However, we only feel pity for those whom we haven't ostracised, psychologically and morally. That's why we judge rather than pity someone who dies by suicide. For us, death by suicide still renders persons 'unclean' in that it puts them outside of what we deem as morally and psychologically acceptable.

Their deaths are not spoken of in the same way as other deaths. They are doubly judged, psychologically ('if your soul is sick, it's your own fault') and morally ('your death is a betrayal'). To die by suicide is worse than dying of leprosy.

I'm not sure how we can move past this. As Pascal says, the heart has its reasons. So too does the powerful taboo inside us that militates against suicide.

There are good reasons why we spontaneously feel the way we do about suicide. But, perhaps a deeper understanding of the complexity of forces that lie inside of what we naively label 'depression' might help us understand that, in most cases, suicide may not be judged as a moral or psychological failure, but as a melancholy that has overpowered a suffering soul.

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, August 13, 2020

## Personal Profile

Dave Hunt,  
“planting seeds  
for the future”

Page 34



# Back to school with a difference



**T**he balancing act of home-schooling and working will finally come to an end for many as children are set to return to school in September. Unsurprisingly, parents are very keen for their kids to get back to a semblance of normality – even if it is the ‘new normal’.

Barnardo’s ‘Back to School Survey’ found that over 90% of parents believe it is important for their children to return to school for their emotional and social development, and mental health wellbeing. A significant number said balancing work and home-schooling was difficult.



**A sense of normality is important to settle children into the school routine writes Ruadhán Jones**

Similarly, primary and secondary level students said they missed their friends and many missed their teachers too. But while some were excited about the return to school, “others worried whether they would be safe, would they pass the virus on to loved ones, or how would social distancing

work,” the report says. “Some also worried about the impact on their learning and exams.”

There is that lingering sense of worry, in parents and in children, as to how all this will pan out. Two out of five children said they feel positively about returning to school; but one in five feel negatively. Of parents, 16% don’t

want their children to return to school due to fears over the coronavirus.

For parents and teachers, how they can help children overcome and manage their concerns will be an important part of the back-to-school experience. It can be a hard transition at the best of times, so here a few ways you can help make the experience as smooth as possible.

### Getting in the rhythm

While we have heard much about the new normal over lockdown, it’s almost a relief to have such old-normal concerns to deal with. It’s been a long summer, longer than usual, and children

have become accustomed to days spent on their own terms – up to a point.

Extra screen time, some late nights and long sleeps and no homework are only a couple of the summer routines children may have established. Once it gets on two weeks to go, it’s time to set up the school routine.

Start slowly, picking out one or two habits and easing them out. It could be setting up a regular breakfast time to get them used to the school pattern in advance. Reducing screen time will be a step on the road as well to make room in the week for homework and extracurricular activities.

» Continued on Page 33

## Family News



## AND EVENTS

## HOP ON YOUR BIKE FOR A FAMILY ADVENTURE

For cycling lovers and adventurous families who want to get out and about and be active together, hop on your bike and get down to 8th Lock, Grand Canal in Dublin.

This socially distanced cycle from Park West along the Grand Canal to Griffeen Park is said to be suitable for all ages and takes place on Sunday, August 23 from 10.45am to 1.30pm. The event is free.

Organisers, the Dublin Cycling Campaign, say: "This is a fun cycle for all the family. We will meet at Grand Canal opposite Park West Business Campus at 10.45am. There is plenty of parking if you are driving to the start point. We will depart along the canal at 11am. At the Red Bridge we will head along Hayden's Lane to Griffeen Park. Bring a picnic! We will leave the park at approximately 1pm and return to Park West." Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Every family member must register and adhere to social distancing. Registration can be made at: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/south-dublin-family-fun-cycle-tickets-115177932296?aff=ebdssbddestsearch>

## CONCUSSION COULD INCREASE PARKINSON'S RISK

Those who've had a concussion are more likely to be diagnosed with Parkinson's disease later in life compared to people haven't according to a new study.

'Associations between concussion and risk of diagnosis of psychological and neurological disorders: a retrospective population-based cohort study', was published in Family Medicine and Community Health.

While many people recover from a concussion, which is generally caused by a head injury, there can be more long term affects.

Researchers analysed insurance data from the Manitoba Population Research Data Repository, which contains information on nearly every resident of the Canadian province Manitoba.

Concussion was associated with a significantly increased risk of Parkinson's (57%), dementia (72%) ADHD (39%) and by 72% for MADs (Musculoskeletal Ambulation Disability Symptom Complex).

There was a higher risk of ADHD among females, a risk increase of 28% and MADs by 7% than males after a concussion. There was no large difference of risk between males and females regarding Parkinson's or dementia after a concussion.

## OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN INFLUENCED MORE BY MOTHER THAN FATHER

Children who have an overweight mother are more likely to be overweight than when they have an overweight father according to a study from City, University of London.

The data, which was collected for almost 20 years, also found that male children are more likely to be overweight if both their parents are compared to female children.

Other environmental influences are also considered including: parents' age, their mental health, smoking or alcohol consumption, socio-economic status, employment status and ethnicity.

"The transmission of obesity by both parents, the individual father or the individual mother, depend crucially upon the gender of the child," said Professor Jofre-Bonet, "The transmission seems to be stronger for maternal than paternal overweight."

The results are consistent with the view that if parents are overweight or obese, there is a higher chance that their children will be overweight too.

# Saying a name many 'dare not speak'

Reading about the death of John Hume, Nobel Peace Prize winner and prominent Northern Irish politician, what stood out was his persistence and unshakable commitment. Many commentators have mentioned his courage, charisma and kindness and how he spoke out for what he knew to be right. He was a firm believer in justice and truth and knew that, in the face of injustice and repression, silence just wasn't an option. Darran Anderson, who wrote *Inventory: A River, A City, A Family*, wrote of the personal cost to John Hume and wondered at the resolve and stoicism it took to hold the line for 30 or 40 years. He spoke about "the weight of being right when the world seems upside down and hostility is coming from all sides".

**“There's a lot of room for hope as there are so many who've yet to hear the message and many more who need to find out why we believe what we believe”**

For Catholics in Ireland, the world may often seem upside down. Like John Hume we too have felt the pressure of vitriolic attacks or the weight of the tough task that faces us. The same sense of injustice that drove those who longed for peace in Northern Ireland should be an encouragement to us who fight tirelessly to uphold the Christian values of love, service and belief in a God who loves us. We can take courage in the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI when he reminded us that "being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction". He explained how a



## A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

true adult faith is "deeply rooted in friendship with Christ". In a Catechesis on St Bernard of Clairvaux on October 22, 2009, he reiterated that Christianity is not an intellectual system, a collection of dogmas or a moralism but "Christianity is an encounter, a love story; it is an event".

How can we get that message across to our children and teach them to have the courage and strength not to hide that friendship with God from their friends and work colleagues? Imagine having a dear friend whose name you dare not speak? This is the situation for many young Catholics. They subscribe to the Catholic religion, attend Mass on Sunday, go to Confession and may be involved in multiple Catholic initiatives but, in certain settings, be it work, college or with certain friends or family, they feel unable or unwilling to speak of the love of God that is their whole strength and their *raison d'être*. We need to encourage a new spirit of fortitude and a passion for evangelisation.

In an online video Why Youth Leave the Church, Catholic commentator, Brian Holdsworth maintained that when we're children, we're taught a version of Christianity that's only suitable for bedtime stories. The image of God and Jesus that is sometimes presented, he said, as "more in common with the Tooth Fairy or Santa Claus than it does with the incarnation of truth, goodness and beauty".

Many young adults were baptised into the Catholic Church and celebrated their first Holy

Communion and Confirmation but often this is the end of any engagement with the faith. They're not rejecting the truths of faith and a relationship with Jesus; they just never moved beyond a childish faith or welcomed Jesus into their lives in any concrete way.

There's a lot of room for hope as there are so many who've yet to hear the message and many more who need to find out why we believe what we believe. Good catechesis is vital: you can't develop a relationship with a God you know nothing about. During the Covid-19 lockdown and continuing to the present time, I've been listening with great interest to



Pope Benedict XVI

some fantastic and informative Zoom presentations organised by the UCD Newman Catholic Society in collaboration with young people from several other universities and from Ignite Ireland.

These talks were started to help students cope with the isolation of the lockdown

and served a dual purpose of teaching young people about their faith and creating some sense of Christian community. This is a model that needs to be emulated as the courage to speak out without fear can only be achieved through ongoing education in the faith and encouragement and support from like-minded peers. In times of doubt and challenge, our youth need the steadying hand of good friends to help them through the inevitable storms and periods of self-doubt. The most recent talk presented by Fr Donncha Ó hAodha was an introduction to the catechism. He suggested that the section on prayer might be a good place to start as it's through prayer and the sacraments that young people develop that friendship with Christ which Pope Benedict described as "opening wide the doors to Christ". Pope John Paul II described Jesus as "the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle".

**“Like John Hume we too have felt the pressure of vitriolic attacks or the weight of the tough task that faces us”**

A personal relationship with Jesus will inspire our young people to have the vision of those great men and women who stuck to their ideals, resolute in refusing to allow themselves to accept mediocrity. It is this sort of relationship that will embolden our youth to set the world on fire.



» Continued from Page 31



It takes four to six weeks on average for children to make the adjustment, so don't be concerned if the first week is still a struggle. On the other hand, given that children have been away from friends and social outlets for so long, it might be that they're only too happy to be back!

### Hopes and concerns

That leads on to the second point, which is communicating hopes and concerns. As the Barnardo's survey highlights, both parents and children are likely to have mixed feelings about returning. That's perfectly understandable and will take on different forms for different people.

Communicating with our kids will be important, then, to check how they are feeling about being back to school. Be careful how you do this – the aim is to find out if they are worried, not to plant new ones. Take a bite-size approach, making time for little conversations to listen to them and provide reassurance if necessary.

### “Primary and secondary level students said they missed their friends and many missed their teachers too”

Where possible, take into account their fears and explain what they can do to combat them. For example, it's normal to feel worried about the virus, but here's what you can do... If that is not possible, try to turn a negative into a positive – I know you don't know many people there, but you will have loads of time to make new friends.

Be prepared for young kids in particular to ask the same question repeatedly. They will often need extra reassurance, in such volatile circumstances, that nothing has changed.

### Honesty is key

Be honest and upfront with your children about the ways in which going back to school will be different. It's better that they know beforehand and most likely they will have some idea already.

Be prepared to clear up misunderstandings and explain how the restrictions or alterations are there to help. If you know the

teacher or the classroom they will be in, make your responses specific – Mr So-and-so will help you get used to it. If not, then keep your directions short and simple.

Not everything will have changed, however, and so appealing to these instances of normality can help reassure children. This could be the same teacher from the previous year, the same class or friends, the same subjects and so on.

### Know the facts

In order to be best prepared for these conversations, you will need to keep up to date with the Government's requirements. Schools will also have their own specific regulations, so get in contact with them or check the school website for any necessary information.

The basics are that neither children nor teachers will wear masks in a primary school setting and that the younger classes will not be required to social distance. In secondary schools, children will have the option to wear masks if they need to, but it is not required. A one metre distance will be maintained between students from 3rd class up.

You can also normalise actions such as proper hand washing or covering sneezes by making them part of your daily routines at home. The most important word is normality – try to make the school year as close to normal as possible so that children can focus on learning and socialising.

### Supporting wellbeing

In her Back to School publication, Minister for Education Norma Foley identified five key principles which



she is asking schools to bear in mind when reopening. It's worth bearing these in mind when you are talking to your children, keeping you and the school on the same page.

### “Communicating with our kids will be important, then, to check how they are feeling about being back to school”

The five key principles are:

- Promoting a sense of safety – so that people feel that they are safe, and that those around them are safe.
- Promoting a sense of calm – so that people feel relaxed, composed and grounded (regulated).
- Promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness – so that people experience having meaningful relationships with others who understand and support them.
- Promoting a sense of self-efficacy and community-efficacy – so that people believe that they can manage and do what is needed, and so can their school community.
- Promoting a sense of hope – so that people believe that things will work out well.

### A sense of calm

It's natural for parents to feel some level of anxiety about their children returning to school. It's a good idea, however, to maintain a level of surface calm when conveying details regarding social distancing and the risks of covid.

Kids respond intuitively the behaviour of their parents and this makes our own actions a vital means of helping them adjust. Try to modulate your voice and use body language to convey a sense of care and calm. Be patient with them if they do respond with anxiety and give them a chance to get it out.

In order to be at your most calm and reassuring, a high degree of self-care will be important. So take care of yourself, allowing time for activities which relieve stress, for exercise and so on. In the end, you and your child have the same aim and that is to keep them calm and happy in difficult circumstances.

# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



There's something wonderfully retro about the summer holidays of 2020. Irish people are holidaying in Ireland again – just like they did in the old days, before foreign holidays became de rigueur. The byways of West Cork and Kerry are again filled with Irish registration plates. Some come all the way from places as exotic as Cavan and Sligo.

One great thing about Irish people is the ease with which conversation flows. We can speak to people we've just met as though we've known them for years. Our gigantic Irish wolfhound puppy was the starting point for many such amiable conversations during our fortnight's holiday, which was spent drifting slowly along the west Cork and Kerry coast. The coronavirus pandemic had accelerated my plans to buy an old boat – at least with that we'd have somewhere to holiday, given all the uncertainty about whether hotels or holiday homes would be open. Early summer saw me stumble into the possession of a charming and characterful old ketch. Long gone were the racing days of my youth. I was now embracing the slow and steady, seeking a safe and comfortable platform to bring my four kids to sea, down canals and into lakes.

### “The coronavirus pandemic had accelerated my plans to buy an old boat – at least with that we'd have somewhere to holiday”

The older kids were incredibly excited to find our family suddenly having a little floating homestead. They enthusiastically set about learning their knots and how the sails can harness the wind to move us along. In my younger days, I worked as a skipper, sailing tourists along the Irish coast. Now I'd be revisiting some old haunts, but seeing them from a new perspective as a father, with my own kids as crew. Now there would be no deadlines to meet and we could travel at our own pace. Instead of rushing from one harbour to the next, we could

stop in each one for days or even a week or two, to absorb each place.

For the first week that I had the boat, it was tied up to a pontoon in a harbour near our home as I provisioned her and went through every crevice, getting to know her



innards and checking every system. I spent nights aboard with the kids, to settle in and to find out that we had everything we'd need.

The day came when it was time to take her west. For the sailors of Cork, west is where we go, into one of the finest cruising grounds in the world which begins in earnest at Glandore from where the coastline breaks into hundreds of sublime islands, inlets, bays and beaches. Roaringwater Bay alone could keep a sailor happy for months. I let go of the ropes one fine morning with three children aboard, aged between 5 and 10, and my 71 year old father as crew. The boat came alive under our feet as we slowly navigated the harbour to sea. I hauled up the sails in the gentle breeze and we were powered by nature.

I had one guiding principle in returning to the sea: I would not scare the kids, nor put anyone off by making them seasick, fearful or cold. With this in mind we pulled into a sandy bay as soon as the swell made itself known, and anchored for the night. We swam off the back and my wife and our toddler came aboard for dinner. The older kids stayed on deck deep into the warm dusk, until the stars appeared above the lighthouse. We slept, alone in the bay, cosy in our little home, dreaming of the adventures ahead of us.

# Dave Hunt, “planting seeds for the future”

## Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

“**S**ic parvis magna” is a Latin phrase attributed to Sir Francis Drake, the English sea captain of the 16th century. It’s often translated as, “from humble origins to great challenges”. This quote applies neatly to those pursuits and endeavours which seek to further the message of the gospel in today’s world. No one is more familiar with the seed-planting nature of this work than Dave Hunt. Having worked as General Manager for Pure in Heart, and now working for the Pro Life Campaign, he is intimately familiar with the often invisible yield those who undertake work in these fields find. I asked him where his passion for working in this area came from: “I think my family were always very strong in their faith, my mam especially. Growing up my brother was very ill, he died when I was a child, and he had very strong faith. Basically, I think his example, he was only 12, and the example of my mam and how he had his illness, because it was a life-long illness, and how he carried that and how he lived, provided an example of faith that showed me that Jesus was a real person. He was a friend. He was close to them.”

### Brother

This relationship with his brother shaped his views on fundamental issues: “I suppose my first encounter with the pro-life movement came when I was about 12 and the ‘X case’ came out,” he says. “As well, yeah, I think it was very strong in our family. I have another brother who died before



I was born, he was three. Both Martin and Paul, they both had CF (Cystic Fibrosis), that’s what killed them. Back then it was a death sentence for children, but now people can live into their 40’s and 50’s.”

### Hope

“Back then there was no real hope for you. It was a miracle if you grew to adulthood, really. Pauly, my brother, he lived a full life. He was very much a distinct person.

He had his own personality, his own mannerisms, and he was a person to us. My mother would always talk about him in that way, and so would my eldest sister... And I think, when you hear about what we hear in the news now about children who have life-limiting conditions, they dehumanise them. I say “no”, because I can point to people personally, in my family, who have had life-limiting conditions and indeed died as children.”

### Convictions

Deep relationships and experiences often lay at the root of these convictions, and Dave is no different. First studying, then working in engineering, he knew this wasn’t what he was looking for: “Yeah, it was just very unsatisfying. It was never what I thought it was going to be, the engineering career.” He continues: “I remember I was at a Youth 2000 retreat years ago and a man gave a talk, and it turned out he had been a chemical engineer in the same company as me. He had the same reservations as I had about it all, and he ended up leaving and working for the Presentation Brothers, and he works in catholic communications circles and media and things like that.”

“**I also take satisfaction from people who’ve come to their faith, the people who’ve come to the prayer meeting and are a part of the community now”**

“The idea got into my mind then and it took a long time but when the chance came with Pure in Heart, I was out of work and it all came together very, very quickly. It seemed the right fit for everybody,” Dave reflects. Pure in Heart is a charity that seeks to spread the catholic perspective on relationships and sexuality, and he felt this was in line with the convictions he held. However, as with all mission, it is rarely as simple as getting out there and speaking to thousands in one go. Asked about his experiences there, Dave replied: “I think I was there for the transition. I went through all sorts of plans, what I wanted to do, but as many people have said to me, that time of

work, missionary work, is very chaotic and you’re never really in control.”

“**He is intimately familiar with the often invisible yield those who undertake work in these fields find”**

“I always felt that I wouldn’t be there to see the fruits of my work,” Dave says, “So I always knew that I was there for transition and I was really just to pass it on, so I kind of look back now and like to see where it’s flowing to. They have the podcasts, which grew to the show with Radio Maria, and the blogs.” His experience was in keeping with the spiritual director, Fr. Alan’s, exhortations regarding mission: “That’s mission: the car breaking down, trouble with the laptop before a talk.”

However, this chaotic nature of mission work is not without its rewards: “I also take satisfaction from people who’ve come to their faith, the people who’ve come to the prayer meeting and are a part of the community now. It’s great to watch them flourish.”

Leaving Pure in Heart at the end of 2019, Dave now works for the Pro Life Campaign, which goes hand in hand with both his previous work and his beliefs. Asked about the most rewarding aspects of this new assignment, he responded: “It’s very encouraging because you meet a lot of good people. We’re even meeting people now who had voted yes in the 2018 referendum and had campaigned to repeal, and they’re now turning around and supporting us, and actively volunteering with us. They’re generally young as well, so it’s great to see that.” Slowly but surely, the fruits of his, and many others, labour are showing themselves.



## Children’s Corner

Chai Brady

## Make your own sparkling lemonade!

**A**lthough the summer months are coming to an end and school is on the horizon, it’s still not too late to make your own summery and refreshing sparkling lemonade.

There’s a lot that can be learned in the process of making this beverage, understanding the scientific process behind it is another added bonus while also quenching your thirst.

The ingredients are easy to come by and cheap and quick to source if you’re missing something. A bit of lemon here and a bit of baking soda there and before you know it you’ll be an expert at making your own fizzy drinks.

### Apparatus:

- Lemon
- Glass cup
- Water
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- Some sugar to make it sweet

### Method:

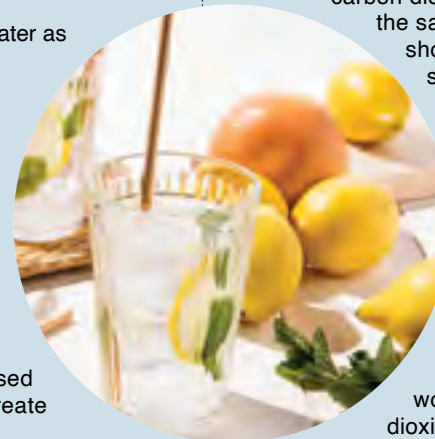
- Squeeze as much of the juice from the lemon as you can into the glass.
- Pour in an equal amount of water as lemon juice.
- Stir in the teaspoon of baking soda.
- Give the mixture a taste and add in some sugar if you think it needs to be sweeter, but try not to overdo it – many fizzy drinks are loaded with sugar thus giving them their bad name.

So, what actually happening? Why don’t we need a compressed canister of carbon dioxide to create the bubble affect?

The mixture you created become bubble and taste like fizzy lemonade, if some sugar is added it might even taste like a lemon flavoured fizzy drink easily found in most

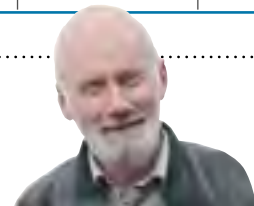
shops. The bubbles that form when you add the baking soda to the lemon mixture are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), these are the same bubbles you’ll find in shop-bought fizzy drinks and sparkling water.

Of course, they add a several other flavoured sweeteners and preservatives but it’s not much different to what you made. In fact, your creation is by far superior in terms of its simple ingredients and lack of unhealthy additives. If you are wondering how the carbon dioxide bubbles formed, it was because you created a chemical reaction when you added the lemon (an acid) to the baking soda (a base). Now all that’s left is to sample your creation!



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Unbridled sadness and horror in a week-that-was

The news cycle last week was dominated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Beirut bombing and the death of John Hume, and in a way they were all connected.

As if the people of Lebanon hadn't enough to put up with, what with political turmoil and the pandemic, that massive explosion earlier in the week was devastating.

On Wednesday night's **Sky News** we saw a couple with a four-week old baby who had been showered with glass from the explosion; the child was receiving intensive care in hospital as the masked, injured and anxious young parents waited – emotional and articulate.

There was a man in the street so fed up of his country, wanting to take the next boat out, while another man showed his wrecked house with blood stains where his father had been injured.

One of the most striking images of the event was the video footage of the bride caught up in the explosion on her wedding day – we saw her revisiting the same location the next day, reflecting on what had happened and glad to be alive.

### Incompetence

Many were getting involved with the rescue and clean-up efforts, while at the same time a frustration with the Lebanese government began



Seconds from disaster: Dr Israa Seblani poses for a photograph on her wedding day in Beirut as the city's latest tragedy was just about to unfold.

to gather force, with accusations of incompetence or corruption or both.

On **Today With Sarah McInerney** (RTÉ Radio One) last Friday we heard from Beirut based freelance journalist Abbie Cheeseman – she was curious about the first small explosion and was on the phone to her mother when the shards of glass from her apartment window started flying. She gave a graphic description of the “complete chaos” as she wondered if there had been an air strike.

She had good news stories about a child rescued in the rubble and a man found alive at sea after the force of the explosion blew him there. She pointed out that the port

was ruined, which will make it difficult to get aid supplies in, while repair and reconstruction will be hampered by the fact that Lebanon doesn't produce any glass.

On **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) Seán Farrell of Trócaire told Audrey Carville about the people driving loved ones to hospital only to find the hospital wrecked and the “serious spike” in Covid-19 that was already making life difficult for the Lebanese. To make matters even worse, the city's grain storage plant had been destroyed and now there were at least 300,000 homeless.

At home the tributes for John Hume have been extensive – the Beatitudes have

been invoked widely and indeed I had great admiration for him as a peacemaker, a politician and leader in the parliamentary democracy tradition.

His passing was also under the cloud of the pandemic as attendance at his funeral was restricted. His family's concern for the health of the community was touching, and their candle-in-the-window suggestion seems to have caught the imagination.

On the **Sunday** programme (BBC Radio 4), Bishop Donal McKeown spoke of Hume being “pickled in Catholic social teaching” from his early days, of his attachment to his local community in Derry. He told of Hume's attendance at daily Mass when he was fit for it, and how he'd come back in the evenings for private prayer.

Also worth listening back



Tamsin Greig.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### CATHOLIC ENLIGHTENMENT: GIFTS OF CATHOLICISM TO CIVILISATION

EWTN, Sunday, August 16, 11.30am; also Tuesday, August 18, 9.30pm

Frs Marcus Holden and Andrew Pinsent demonstrate how Catholic teachings fostered creativity in the arts, architecture and the foundation of hospitals.

#### THE GREAT BOOK OF IRELAND

RTÉ One, Thursday, August 20, 10.10pm

A new documentary on *The Great Book of Ireland*, which has been termed as Ireland's modern-day Book of Kells.

#### NEW! HOPE – OUR LADY OF KNOCK

EWTN, Friday, August 21, 8.30am and 9.30pm

A historical docudrama that covers the events leading up to and following the 1897 apparition of the Blessed Mother in Knock.

to on that show is presenter Edward Stourton's interview with former UK Labour minister Ruth Kelly, one of six women appointed to high position in the Vatican's Council for the Economy. She regards it as “an honour to serve church in this way” which should provide a “fascinating insight”.

She said she'd leave the issue of “ordained ministry” to the theologians, but thought that women should be involved in so many other important aspects of Church life, including selection of candidates for priesthood and the formation of priests.

### Expectations

Finally, in the current series, **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One) I feel the religious content is becoming a tad diluted,

and contrary to my expectations I'm not convinced about actress Sally Phillips joining the show as presenter. She contributes wit and intelligence, but also more frivolity and suggestiveness.

Last Sunday she interviewed fellow-actress Tamsin Greig (*Black Books*, *Friday Night Dinner*, *Belgravia*) about her work with Tear Fund in developing countries. Asked what people could do to help if they couldn't afford to donate she said Tear Fund was a faith-based organisation that believed that prayer could be life changing, and that prayer was “an invisible act of generosity”. I like it.

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# Film

Aubrey Malone



## New movie about Fatima has universal appeal

You may have been reading about *Fatima*, a film that deals with the Fatima apparitions, in recent months. Its release was delayed due to the coronavirus, but this wasn't seen as a problem by its producer, Natasha Howes.

“People have more time to listen to the story now,” she says. Its release in 2020 is timely for another reason: it's the centenary of the death of St Jacinta, one of the visionaries.

Howes came to it with an impressive pedigree, having researched a Fatima documentary made in 2009, *The 13th Day*. That film, she feels, was for a “devotee audience”. This one is more universal. It's targeted towards “people of all faiths and none, towards

rationalist and scientists”. Heaven, she asserts, “didn't just proclaim itself to Catholics on that October day”.

Directed by Marco Pontecorvo, *Fatima* stars Alba Baptista, Stephanie Gill, Lucia Moniz, Joaquin de Almeida, Harvey Keitel and Goran Visnic. Joana Ribeiro plays Our Lady.

The film recounts how a 10-year-old shepherd girl and her two cousins in the Portuguese village of Fatima report having seen multiple visions of a woman who's “brighter than the sun”. They say she advised them to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity. If they say the Rosary daily it will help end World War I.

Their revelations meet with scepticism by both



The three young visionaries as depicted in *Fatima*.

clerical and secular forces. (“It could be the devil. He often disguises himself.”) They're asked to renege on their story but they refuse. As word of it spreads, thousands of pilgrims flock to the loca-

tion to in hope of witnessing a miracle.

The film doesn't stint on budget. It has epic proportions. Using a biography of Sr Lucia as its source, it was produced in conjunction with

an organisation called The Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, which advised on its content.

One of its ambitions was to correct the misrepresentation of Sr Lucia's mother. This was a problem in previous films about the apparitions. She had trouble believing her daughter – “why would she choose you?” she says disparagingly. But there's more to her than this, she was a devout woman, a catechist.

### Depiction

The depiction of Mary is more flesh and blood than ethereal. Her maternal nature makes it easier to understand how the children bonded emotionally with her.

The film will be welcomed by those who've waited

patiently for it to get here. It's a visual extravaganza. Andrea Bocelli also performs a song in it, *Gratia Plena* (Full of Grace).

Other films about Fatima that you may wish to see (or re-see) on this theme are, *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima* (1952) and *Apparitions of Fatima* (1992). The latter is regarded as the most historically accurate film on the Fatima theme. It's screened daily for pilgrims to the village in over a dozen languages.

*The 13th Day* is narrated in flashback form. Most of it is shot in black and white but as the Blessed Virgin appears it bleeds effectively into colour.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## A novel notion worth pursuing: what if Hillary hadn't married Bill?

**Rodham: a novel** by Curtis Sittenfeld (Doubleday, £16.99)

**Felix M. Larkin**

Towards the end of this novel (which will make an ideal summer 'beach read', if only on Playa de Backgarden), one of the characters speaks about "the sense most of us have that there are other lives out there we could have led". This novel suggests another life for Hillary Clinton, one in which she doesn't marry Bill.

They meet and fall in love in the novel exactly as happened in fact in the early 1970s. He is the love of her life, but his compulsive womanising causes her to walk out on him. She becomes, in this parallel universe, a law professor in her home town of Chicago – and in 1992 is elected to the US Senate for the state of Illinois. She remains single.

### Affair

Bill, meanwhile, does marry – twice. He becomes governor of Arkansas and runs for the US presidency in 1992. His campaign, however, implodes when it is revealed

that he has had a 12-year affair with a cabaret singer while still married to his first wife. The first President Bush is, accordingly, re-elected in 1992.

Hillary – now Senator Rodham – seeks the Democratic Party's nomination for president in 2004, in 2008 and again in 2016. Her main opponent for the nomination in 2016 is Bill Clinton, who has managed to resurrect his political career after 24 successful years in the tech business in California. Which of them wins, and does the winner then become president? Well, you'll have to read the book to find out.

**“History could have gone off in any number of different directions in any number of different ways at almost any point”**

This is an accomplished novel, a convincing counterfactual narrative – albeit with some silly

twists in the plot. Historians are always wary of the counterfactual, the 'what if?' questions. Nevertheless, we need to be reminded of the contingencies that have shaped the past.

As the American historian, David McCullough, the biographer of John Adams and Harry Truman, has stated: "Nothing ever had to happen the way it happened. History could have gone off in any number of different directions in any number of different ways at almost any point, just as your own life can."

We thus misunderstand history if we assume that what actually happened was inevitable or pre-ordained. When the fictional Hillary Rodham recalls her election to the Senate in 1992, she says that "my decision to run for Senate took on a retroactive sheen of inevitability...the fulfilment of a destiny", but she acknowledges that things could have turned out differently – and, of course, they did in the real world.

The counterfactual narrative in this novel is clearly premised on the proposition that Hillary would, in the real world, have had a much more successful political career if she had not married Bill.

This is, in my opinion, improbable. She owed her actual election to the Senate in 2000 and her subsequent appointment as Secretary of State largely to the fact of having been Bill Clinton's wife. It was the payback for – famously – 'standing by her man' despite his transgressions.

### Entitlement

Her lack of empathy made her an unlikely politician, and her air of entitlement to high political office served to alienate her from an electorate that had been charmed by her husband.

Would another Democrat – say, Joe Biden – have defeated Donald Trump in 2016? I think so, but this is just further counterfactual speculation. By the end of the year we will know how such notions work out in the 'real world'.

## Exploring Iona

Summer outings (No.4 of six)

Peter Costello

My first visit to Iona was a memorable event in my life. After a long dreary drive across the central valley of Mull, we came down to the little port from where visitors took the ferry to the island. It was now a sunny afternoon. The sea bed of the channel was of gleaming white sand, which caught and reflected the brilliant light.

The boat crossed over as if it were actually floating in air the water was so clear. It was like moving from the realm of the mundane to a mystical plane, from the secular to the spiritual. All quite unforgettable, and an ideal entry to a place of ancient renown.

We were following that summer in a leisurely way the route of James Boswell and Dr Johnson in 1774. Since about the age of 12, James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel John, LL.D.*, first published in 1785 has been one of my favourite books.

It is the sort of book you can pick up and find passages to both amuse and inform one. Both men on this trip were sympathetic to the cause of the exiled Stuarts, but in a way, of course, that did not imperil their liberty, but which was strongly anti-Whig. Both were Anglicans, Johnson of a fairly high kind, and Boswell of a wonderfully wandering manner, well aware of his all too human weaknesses..

The book was, for me as a writer and literary historian, an introduction to the rich literature of the 18th Century. It still is, but now I can enjoy the two men in something like a true perspective.

Their visit to Iona, then called Icolmkill, for a time brought both men into some kind of contact, albeit briefly, with the deepest roots of Christianity in Britain. For the modern reader it can work the same effect...

### From Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (1785)

When we had landed upon the sacred place, which, as long as I can remember, I had thought on with veneration, Dr Johnson and I cordially embraced.

We had long talked of visiting Icolmkill; and, from the lateness of the season, were at times very doubtful whether we should be able to effect our purpose.

To have seen it, even alone, would have given me great satisfaction; but the venerable scene was rendered much more pleasing by the company of my great and pious friend, who was no less affected by it than I was; and who has described the impressions it should make on the mind, with such strength of thought, and energy of language, that I shall quote his words, as conveying my own sensations much more forcibly than I am capable of doing:

"We are now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the bless-

ings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible.

"Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery or virtue.

"That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!"

\* \* \* \* \*

We were accommodated this night in a large barn, the island affording no lodging that we should have liked so well. Some good hay was strewed at one end of it, to form a bed for us, upon which we lay with our clothes on; and we were furnished with blankets from the village.

Each of us had a port-



manteau for a pillow. When I awaked in the morning, and looked round me, I could not help smiling at the idea of the Chief of the M'Leans, the great English moralist, and myself, lying thus extended in such a situation.

Wednesday, October 20

...Early in the morning we surveyed the remains of antiquity at this place...as I knew that many persons had already examined them, and as I saw Dr Johnson inspecting and measuring several of the ruins of which he has since given so full an account, my mind was quiescent; and I resolved; to stroll among them at my ease, to take no trouble to investigate minutely, and only receive the general impression of solemn antiquity, and the particular ideas of such objects as should of themselves strike my attention.

We walked from the monastery of nuns to the great



Hillary Rodham in the 60s.

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.

# in the footsteps of giants

Iona, a photochrome from the 1890s. Photo: Library of Congress



church or cathedral, as they call it, along an old broken causeway the convent of monks, the great church, Oran's chapel, and four other chapels, are still to be discerned. But I must own that Icolmkill did not answer my expectations; for they were high, from what I had read of it, and still more from what I had heard and thought of it, from my earliest years.

Dr Johnson said it came up to his expectations because he had taken his impression from an account of it subjoined to Saverel's *History of the Isle of Man*, where it is said, there is not much to be seen here.

We were both disappointed, when we were shewn what are called the monuments of the kings of Scotland, Ireland, and Denmark, and of a king of France.

\* \* \* \* \*

I left him and Sir Allan to breakfast in our barn, and

stole back again to the cathedral, to indulge in solitude and devout meditation.

**“They are industrious, and make their own woollen and linen cloth; and they brew a good deal of beer”**

While contemplating the venerable ruins, I reflected with much satisfaction, that the solemn scenes of piety never lose their sanctity and influence, though the cares and follies of life may prevent us from visiting them, or may even make us fancy that their effects are only ‘as yesterday, when it is past’, and never again to be perceived. I hoped, that, ever after having been in this holy place, I should maintain an exemplary conduct.

One has a strange propensity to fix upon some point of

time from whence a better course of life may begin.

Icolmkill is a fertile island. The inhabitants export some cattle and grain; and I was told, they import nothing but iron and salt. They are industrious, and make their own woollen and linen cloth; and they brew a good deal of beer, which we did not find in any of the other islands.

**From Dr Johnson's narrative *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775)**

In the morning we rose and surveyed the place. The churches of the two convents are both standing, though unroofed.

They were built of unhewn stone, but solid, and not inelegant. I brought away rude measures of the buildings, such as I cannot much trust myself, inaccurately taken, and obscurely noted.

Mr. Pennant's delineations, which are doubtless exact, have made my unskil-

ful description less necessary.

The episcopal church consists of two parts, separated by the belfry, and built at different times. The original church had, like others, the altar at one end, and tower at the other; but as it grew too small, another building of equal dimension was added, and the tower then was necessarily in the middle.

That these edifices are of different ages seems evident. The arch of the first church is Roman, being part of a circle; that of the additional building is pointed, and therefore Gothick or Saracenic; the tower is firm, and wants only to be floored and covered.

Of the chambers or cells belonging to the monks, there are some walls remaining, but nothing approaching to a complete apartment.

The bottom of the church is so incumbered with mud and rubbish, that we could make no discoveries of curious inscriptions, and what

there are have been already published...

The chapel of the nunnery is now used by the inhabitants as a kind of general cow-house, and the bottom is consequently too miry for examination. Some of the stones which covered the later abbesses have inscriptions, which might yet be read, if the chapel were cleansed.

## Roof

The roof of this, as of all the other buildings, is totally destroyed, not only because timber quickly decays when it is neglected, but because in an island utterly destitute of wood, it was wanted for use, and was consequently the first plunder of needy rapacity.

The chancel of the nuns' chapel is covered with an arch of stone, to which time has done no injury; and a small apartment communicating with the choir, on the north

side, like the chapter-house in cathedrals, roofed with stone in the same manner, is likewise entire.

In one of the churches was a marble altar, which the superstition of the inhabitants has destroyed. Their opinion was, that a fragment of this stone was a defence against shipwrecks, fire and miscarriages. In one corner of the church the basin for holy water is yet unbroken.

The cemetery of the nunnery was, till very lately, regarded with such reverence, that only women were buried in it. These reliques of veneration always produce some mournful pleasure. I could have forgiven a great injury more easily than the violation of this imaginary sanctity...

**“The village near the churches is said to contain 70 families, which, at five in a family, is more than 100 inhabitants to a mile”**

It is observed, that ecclesiastical colleges are always in the most pleasant and fruitful places. While the world allowed the monks their choice, it is surely no dishonour that they chose well.

This island is remarkably fruitful. The village near the churches is said to contain 70 families, which, at five in a family, is more than 100 inhabitants to a mile. There are perhaps other villages; yet both corn and cattle are annually exported.

But the fruitfulness of Iona is now its whole prosperity... the island, which was once the metropolis of learning and piety, has now no school for education, nor temple for worship, only two inhabitants that can speak English, and not one that can write or read...

We now left those illustrious ruins, by which Mr Boswell was much affected, nor would I willingly be thought to have looked upon them without some emotion. Perhaps, in the revolutions of the world, Iona may be sometime again the instructress of the Western Regions.

**Next time:** *Richard Hayward explores St Brendan's Kerry in 1945.*

# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)



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**The Irish Catholic**

# Leisure time

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– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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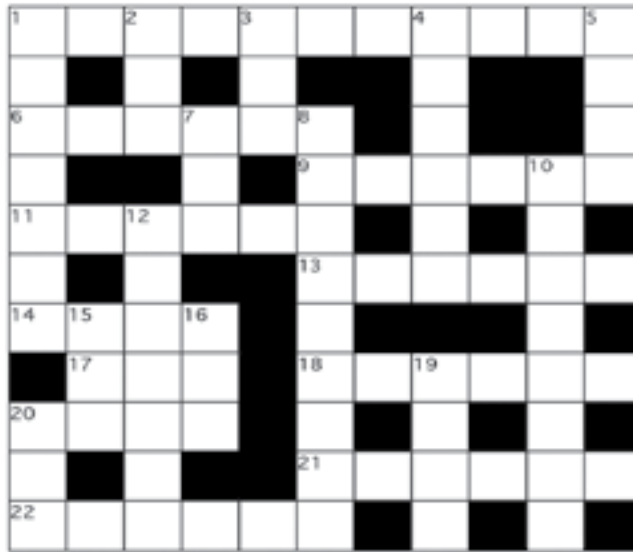
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

### Crossword Junior

Gordius 345



#### Across

- 1 Sweets that look like little people (5,6)
- 6 Most recent (6)
- 9 What you get when you add forty and forty (6)
- 11 Creature (6)
- 13 A message you might go on (6)
- 14 Twelve months (4)
- 17 Beer (3)
- 18 A tent is made of this; an artist may paint on it (6)
- 20 You fill this in when you do a crossword (4)
- 21 Move them with your feet to make your bicycle go (6)
- 22 There are sixty seconds in one (6)

#### Down

- 1 The first month of the year (7)
- 2 "That's a crime - it's against the \_\_\_" (3)
- 3 Say this when you agree (3)
- 4 Firework (6)
- 5 Don't go (4)
- 7 Large type of tree (3)
- 8 Use it to see things that are far away (9)
- 10 The 'arm' of an octopus or squid (8)
- 12 Coming from Rome or Milan, perhaps (7)
- 15 You listen with this (3)
- 16 This traffic light tells us to stop (3)
- 19 Signals 'yes' with the head (4)
- 20 Unwrap this to chew it (3)

### SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 6

GORDIUS No. 467

Across – 1 Pug 3 Shuttlecock 8 Random 9 Returned 10 Nippy  
11 Trent 13 Bonus 15 Saltire 16 Crofter 20 Spare parts 23 Piste  
24 Dreadful 25 Mohair 26 Pie in the sky 27 Fee

Down – 1 Partnership 2 Gene pool 3 Snowy 4 Tyre and Sidon  
5 Erupt 6 Ounces 7 Kid 12 Third degree burns 14 Surge 17 The Sea of Galilee 19 Breeze 23 Peony 24 Dip

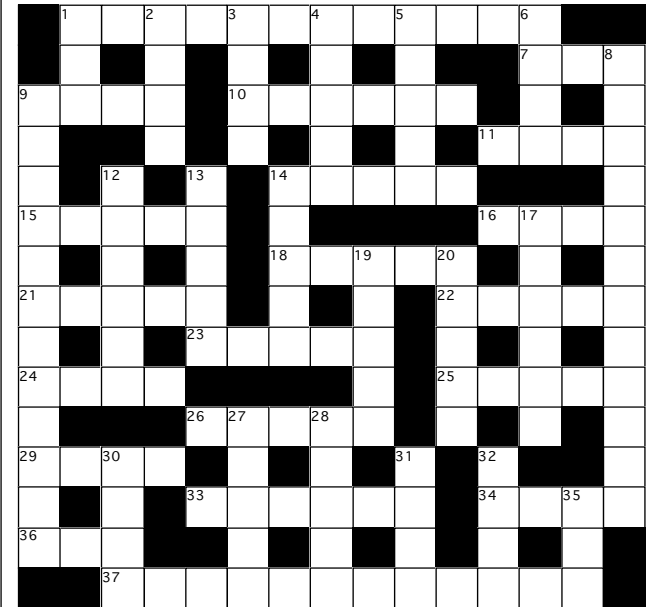
CHILDREN'S No. 344

Across – 1 Birmingham 6 Glider 7 Twenty 8 Perhaps 11 Opened  
14 Spindle 16 Eleven 17 Blush 18 Serve

Down – 1 Bagpipes 2 Raider 3 North Pole 4 Honey 5 Mistake  
9 Honest 10 – Spells 12 Never 13 Dance 15 Pill

### Crossword

Gordius 468



#### Across

- 1 The elite find a fissure near the emergency room - it may be covered by cheese (5,7)
- 7 Choose to stir the pot (3)
- 9 Exaggerated publicity (4)
- 10 & 29a Some tidy excuse needed when revenue wishes you to pay this! (6,4)
- 11 Remove the outer skin of a fruit or vegetable (4)
- 14 Sound a frog makes (5)
- 15 It's a spacious part of the kangaroo, Myrtle (5)
- 16 It takes many to craft such a wagon (4)
- 18 With which to tie up your shoes (5)
- 21 It surrounds a painting of sheep in iron (5)
- 22 Would such money irritate one's ulcer? (5)
- 23 Shell out and make the cardinal wait (5)
- 24 Part of the body mentioned in a male commercial (4)
- 25 Lid (5)
- 26 Frighten (5)
- 29 See 10 across
- 33 Load, onus (6)
- 34 Money for 'Man in Black' Johnny (4)
- 36 Hair-care product (3)
- 37 Why, wrapping a millimetre two times gives twice the effect! (6,6)

#### Down

- 1 Shout or weep (3)
- 2 As always, Vere is confused (4)
- 3 Encounter (4)
- 4 Competitor in a test of speed (5)
- 5 & 12d 'Sad Taco' Road is relocated to Spain's Gold Coast (5,6)
- 6 Cord placed quietly inside fish eggs (4)
- 8 Be honest - is this what you'd do to shame the devil? (4,3,5)
- 9 Canine follicle with analgesic properties? (4,2,3,3)
- 12 See 5 down
- 13 Cowsheds (5)
- 14 She is found in the stormy loch to the east (5)
- 17 Niche, recess (6)
- 19 Borrow (5)
- 20 Piece of bread a golfer tries to avoid (5)
- 27 A scrap can rough up my boxers, initially (5)
- 28 High ground in central Bridgend (5)
- 30 Related or narrated (4)
- 31 Hank might make one cross in Egypt (4)
- 32 Turn up some raincoats as a swindle (4)
- 35 Bashful served Happy yoghurt starters (3)

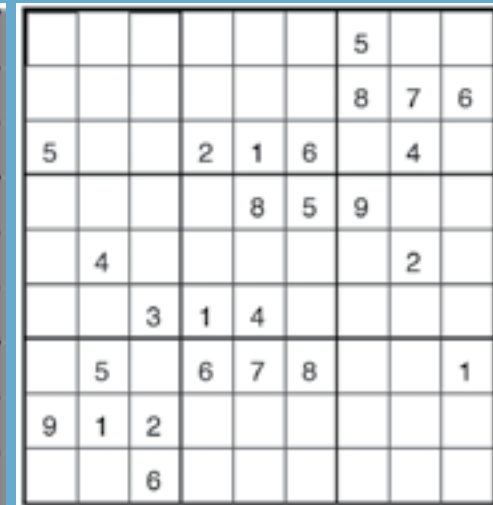
## Sudoku Corner

345

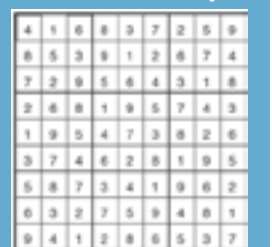
### Easy



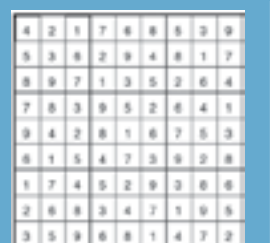
### Hard



### Last week's Easy 344



### Last week's Hard 344



Notebook

Fr Martin Dempsey



# Let's reach out to the vulnerable left in 'leaky boats'

**LAST WEEKEND** I found myself celebrating Mass in an almost empty church again. Our parish is part of the Kildare/Laois/Offaly two-week lockdown so we had no choice but to close our church doors for public worship. The Gospel passage of the frightened disciples in the little boat battered by the unexpected storm seemed very appropriate. I was conscious that Pope Francis had chosen a similar passage back in March when he reflected on the impact of Covid-19 across the world.

In the early weeks of the pandemic, many were consoled by the sense that 'we were all in this together' and some even used the image of us 'being in the same boat'. I think it was Bono who challenged that latter image by stating accurately that while we may all be facing the same storm, we are not all in the same boat.

Some people are better placed to deal with storms than others and some find themselves in stronger and bigger boats. Many are in shaky or leaking boats and the storm has taken, and will continue to take a bigger toll on their lives.

Now in our neighbourhood this week as we find ourselves



caught in a storm within a storm, the range of boats is still vastly different.

**Vulnerable group**

One of the boats I'm particularly concerned about is the very shaky one occupied by migrant workers in many of our meat processing plants throughout the country. Almost 60% of all meatplant workers in Ireland are from outside the country.

Long before coronavirus hit our shores, migrant workers in

our meat factories were a very vulnerable group. They are generally on very low wages and are forced to live in shared rented accommodation where overcrowding is the norm.

They are also vulnerable because of poor English language skills and perhaps more significantly are not entitled to any sick pay if they become ill. All of this is disturbing at any time but pandemic has exposed and magnified the fault-lines in our treatment of migrant workers.

Over the last few months, through organisations like Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, concerns have been raised consistently about how 'worried, frightened and angry' migrant workers have been forced to operate in unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

After the residents of our care homes, the workers in our meat plants and food production companies are easily the most vulnerable to the effects of the

virus. The combination of high moisture, cold temperature, inevitable close proximity of workers, physical exertion and noisy workplaces which force people to shout at each other creates a unique set of vulnerable circumstances for meat plant and food production workers.

**Anger**

These working conditions, combined with less than ideal living accommodation, produces very vulnerable and frightened migrant workers. They may now face the added problem of becoming a target of people's anger as we in the wider community have to live with local lockdowns. This would be extremely unfair and unwarranted.

The frightened disciples cried out in fear from their shaky boat in last Sunday's gospel. Jesus responded to their fear by saying: "Courage, it is I, do not be afraid." Then he reached out his hand to save a sinking Peter.

Today we have to be the reassuring voice and saving hand for all those who are sinking in fear. Let's do what we can to bring all the boats to shore during the coronavirus storm.

**Sláinte John**

Among the many people saddened by the death of John Hume was my sister-in-law. Noeleen worked for many years looking after the famous Members Tea Rooms at the House of Commons in Westminster. When John Hume realised she was from Donegal they became great friends and of course she looked after all his dietary needs, particularly his love of chocolate!

When John won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 he was given a crate of very rare Irish whiskey specially commissioned to mark the historic event. Mr Hume gave away two bottles, one to President Bill Clinton, the other to Noeleen. It will remain one of her most precious possessions. Sláinte John and may you rest in Peace



● **MAN'S BEST FRIEND!** A priest delivered a sermon in 10 minutes one Sunday which was about half the usual length of his sermons. He explained: "I regret to inform you that my dog, who is very fond of eating paper, ate that portion of my sermon which I was unable to deliver today." After the Mass, a visitor from another parish shook hands with the priest and said: "Father, if that dog of yours has any pups, I want to get one to give to my parish priest."



Sr Mary Clare Busingye with some of the victims of flooding in eastern Uganda, where homeless families struggle to live by fishing.



## PLEASE HELP DISPLACED FAMILIES HIT BY UGANDA FLOODS

Amidst the worldwide covid crisis, other human disasters persist. Sr Mary Clare Busingye of the Little Sisters of St Francis of Assisi, Tororo, Uganda, writes to The Little Way Association: "We had very heavy rains that caused flood and displaced people in Fungwe village. Most houses fell and gardens for growing food were submerged in water. Almost all that families owned was lost. About 250 families are now living in classrooms in our primary school where women, children and men are all mixed up. For bedding they sleep on mats. Each family prepares their meal under trees. They have not been given the help required. The main activity at the moment is fishing. The major challenge are the vulnerable women and children. We have tried to help but we cannot continue because of our own financial challenges. I am earnestly requesting for your financial help."

Your kind donation will help the villagers of Fungwe and others who are presently suffering. The current epidemic means that many countries' infrastructure is compromised.

**Every penny or cent of your gift goes to missionaries without deduction.**



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**We like to send a missionary a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.**

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