

# The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, July 13, 2023 €3.00 (Stg £2.70) The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper @IrishCathNews www.irishcatholic.com

## Call for World Youth Day pilgrims to bring back ‘fire of Faith’ to parishes

Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

Hundreds of young Irish Catholics attending World Youth Day in Portugal have been urged to return home as missionaries and rebuild youth ministry, which was deeply impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Approximately 1,500 young people from Ireland will be involved in official pilgrimages to World Youth Day in Lisbon, August 2-6 while many others are expected to travel independently.

A number of Irish bishops will lead delegations of young people from their dioceses.

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin, who will accompany 40 young people, said he hopes that the pilgrims will “bring back the energy” of the event, and spread it among their peers.

“The best evangelisers of young people are young people. That’s the beauty of WYD, that they have an experience [of Faith],” Bishop Gavin said.

“We’ve been very deliberate about the preparation and tools and supports we’ve given them to unpack the experience. The truth is that the Holy Spirit works through the whole experience in a way we can’t manage. We can just open possibilities and I’ve seen that happen again and again,” he told *The Irish Catholic*.

However, Church leaders are also acutely aware that huge work needs to

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### Born again in Christ!



Dunleer parish, Co. Louth, welcomes baby Cian McKenna, son to Conor McKenna and Miriam Beegan into the Church after he was Baptised in St Brigid’s church on July 10.

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

# Mary Immaculate-UL dialogue 'about us but without us' say staff

**Ruadhán Jones**

Negotiations between Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and University of Limerick (UL) are "about us, but without us" MIC staff have warned, as they urge senior management to consult with them on linkage talks.

Discussions between MIC and UL have been ongoing since last year, but MIC's union representatives said that "discussions have been 'about us, but without us'", correspondence seen by *The Irish Catholic* revealed.

They "urged MIC management to better harness the extensive academic

experience on campus" before deciding on a model of closer structural alignment.

"In the absence of any consultation, IFUT-MIC reserves the right to communicate directly with Prof. Tom Collins, chair of the dialogue process," the correspondence from MIC's Irish Federation of University Teacher's (IFUT) branch shows.

The branch "reiterated its regret that Prof. Eugene Wall had cancelled his annual address, highlighting that this would have been an excellent opportunity to engage with staff on the issue of MIC-UL

linkage".

However, it welcomed President Eugene Wall's email assurance that there would be "no diminishing or reducing of the terms and conditions currently enjoyed by MIC staff".

So far, senior management have refused to release information about the linkage talks to IFUT-MIC.

President Wall told staff in a June 2 email that they won't be consulted until both colleges' governing authorities have determined the model for alignment.

"Viable model(s) for alignment" will be pre-

sented to the governing authorities in September/October this year, Prof. Wall said.

The model chosen will then be presented to staff in November so they can "satisfy themselves" that what senior management have decided on will serve both the strategic interest of the college and the staff.

Negotiations between the two teams representing MIC and UL are ongoing, with the teams meeting roughly every four weeks since March. This is the first phase of the college's linkage talks, with the second phase to begin later this year.

# Irish priests honoured by Chile's ambassador

**Staff reporter**

Three Irish missionaries were recognised for the humanitarian assistance they provided to the people of Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship in the 1970s and '80s.

At the invitation of Ambassador of Chile Ricardo Hernández, President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins attended the ceremony in recognition of Fr Brendan Forde, Fr Desmond McGillicuddy and Fr Liam Hollohan on June 28.

President Higgins said he was delighted to witness the "special occasion", saying:

"The 'diploma of honour' that is being awarded today is a recognition of the humanitarian assistance that these three individuals provided who themselves suffered persecution by the

dictatorship from 1973 to 1989.

"Theirs was extraordinary work carried out during the darkest years of military dictatorship."

He praised the "courageous priests", many of whom spent the years of the military dictatorship coordinating their efforts to offer refuge and support to victims of human rights violations.

## Achny youth climb the Reek...



Young adults from the diocese of Achny join Bishop Paul Dempsey for a 'Reek Challenge' on July 9. The day began with torrential rain, but once the climb began the intrepid pilgrims didn't see another drop.

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## Call for youth day pilgrims to bring back 'fire of Faith' to parishes

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be done in Ireland to help the young pilgrims spread the message of hope upon their return.

Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore, who is bringing a group of 15, said he believes that the growth of personal faith is the greatest fruit of the event, but highlighted the need for parishes to provide the space for young people to spread and live their Faith.

He said: "Please God, they'll bring back some of that [Faith] with them. But what is essential then is that we here on the ground, in the dioceses and in the parishes, we've got to provide places where the Faith can be lived out, where the Faith can be strengthened".

Raphoe has 25 pilgrims set to attend, with Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ saying "there's a real enthusiasm" in the diocese.

"We're hoping very much that when they come back, they'll bring some of the fire of World Youth Day with them," Bishop McGuckian said.

"This is my first time going

myself, but I've run into a lot of people over the years who've been very alive in their Faith and the first big experience of an evangelical renewal...was a World Youth Day.

"There is real hope that there will be a core group who will come back with a renewed enthusiasm to reach out to others," he said.

Bishop Michael Router, who will lead pilgrims from Armagh, said he is hopeful that the event can help rebuild youth work that was badly affected by the pandemic.

"I think a lot of priests would be reporting that they find it difficult to get people involved in parish life. World Youth Day hopefully will energise a number of people to try and get something working at parish level".

However, he warned that "unless it transfers back into the parish these young people come from, unless there is something happening on the ground, then it is not going to be ultimately very successful in

the long run. We need to build the foundations once again from scratch virtually," Bishop Router said.

"Covid accelerated the decline in the practice of the Faith so we really need to start at the beginning again and build the foundations particularly for youth ministry," he added.

Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick said if a large event such as WYD is "animated by faith" it gives young people the opportunity to encounter Christ, which is a "fundamental starting point for anybody's faith journey".

"I think that when they come home they'll want to do something, and that's the trigger point for our youth ministry because, we can do all the ministry in the world but if it doesn't correspond to young people's own desire - for an encounter and spreading that encounter - well then our efforts are in vain. But if they have the fire within them then the fire spreads," Bishop Leahy insisted.

# Irish attendees of Universal Synod announced by Vatican

## Chai Brady

Four Irish people, including two bishops, have been chosen to participate in the first session of the Universal Synod in Rome, which runs from October

4-29.

Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick and Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ of Raphoe were included in the list of participants published by the Holy See on July 7.

In addition, Prof. Eamonn Conway of the

Archdiocese of Tuam was appointed to the role of 'Expert and Facilitator' and Sr Patricia Murray IBVM has been selected from the Union of Superior Generals.

Responding to the announcement, Bishop

Leahy said: "I very much look forward to the gathering in October. I believe the positive engagement and valuable inputs on the part of many in Ireland in the synodal pathway to date have helped to prepare me.

"I am thinking of the special atmosphere and spiritual conversations we experienced, for example, at the Athlone gathering in June 2022. I pray that the October assembly will be a time of going deeper still, in listening together with participants from across the world to what the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time, so often described by Pope Francis as an era of transformation". Bishop McGuckian SJ said he is "excited to be a part of an authentic discernment of the Holy Spirit at work in the people of

God, as we listen together to the scriptures and the Church's tradition".

"We ask for the prayers of all the Faithful for inspiration for all of us who will gather in Rome that this synod will bring us all closer to Christ and his saving love in the world," he added.

There will be 70 non-bishop members in attendance. The presence of lay men, lay women, religious, and priests as voting members makes it the most diverse gathering in the history of the Synod of Bishops.

## Priest alleges angels intervened to stop man receiving Eucharist

## Chai Brady

A Donegal-based priest has claimed to have experienced a Eucharistic miracle during a Mass he was celebrating.

Fr Philip Kemmy PP of Newtowncunningham and Killea in the Diocese of Raphoe said that a host seemed to appear in a ciborium he had just emptied while he was returning hosts to the tabernacle.

"Just as I was reaching

in to place it in the tabernacle I had a sense, in a flash, something fell down in front of my face... it was just so quick. But I was paying attention to the tabernacle," Fr Kemmy told parishioners in a recent homily.

"I went to lift the empty ciborium and I looked and there was a host... and I thought, how did that get there?" he said, adding he was convinced the host had not been there.

He was later called by

one of his parishioners who asked if he had noticed anything strange while he was at the tabernacle. He answered "maybe I'm mad" but that he thought a host dropped out of the sky into the ciborium.

The parishioner told him an unknown person had taken a host but had not consumed it. She said the stranger was walking down the church aisle but the host flew out of his hand and was seen flying into the air,

stopping, and falling back into the ciborium Fr Kemmy just emptied.

Fr Kemmy believes that "for some reason an unseen angel decided that that host was better off back in the tabernacle than in that man's hand, I don't know why. I don't know who the person is even, she didn't know who the person was. But the angels, their eyes were on it and for whatever reason they returned it to the tabernacle".

## Ireland overlooked again as no cardinal appointed

## Staff reporter

Ireland has once again been overlooked by Pope Francis as no Irish prelate was tipped to become a cardinal.

The Pope announced over the weekend that he will hold a consistory for

the creation of 21 new cardinals at the end of September, saying the choices express "the universality of the Church". There are currently 222 cardinals, 121 of whom can be involved in the vote for a new pope – known as cardinal-electors. Currently Ireland's only

cardinal, Seán Brady, is aged 83. After turning 80 cardinals can't be involved in the election of new popes. The last cardinal created in Ireland was Cardinal Desmond Connell, who died in 2017.

The Pope's list includes prelates from Italy, South Africa, Colombia, Malay-

sia, Tanzania, and South Sudan, 18 of whom are cardinal electors.

It is believed the two most likely candidates in Ireland to be appointed a cardinal are Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin.

## Being diplomatic...



The new Papal Nuncio to Ireland Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Dean of the Diplomatic Corp, is pictured with Tánaiste Micheál Martin at the annual gathering of the Diplomatic Corp in Dublin Castle on Monday.

## The Marian Movement of Priests



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# Health minister pushes ahead with 'exclusion zones' despite protest

**Jason Osborne**

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has vowed to implement so-called 'safe access zones' around abortion providers that would see churches limited in their ability to display pro-life messaging on their own grounds.

Addressing the Dáil on July 5, Minister Donnelly said that his Bill would ensure protections for sermons that would be given in

churches within exclusion zones.

However, the same protection would not apply to church grounds within exclusion zones, "to avoid a situation where protestors use the grounds of a church or other similar location to circumvent the prohibited activities".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, well-known Catholic commentator and barrister Maria Steen said that the Bill is a "gross breach" of "religious rights, certainly, and also freedom of expres-

sion and freedom of assembly".

"Taking it to its logical conclusion, particularly this bit about... the curtilage of a church, it means that potentially a crucifix displayed on the outside of a church is a symbol that could fall afoul of the legislation, if somebody were to suggest that it was offensive or was calculated to dissuade them from having an abortion," Mrs Steen said.

"Many churches and parishes might celebrate Corpus Christi

or have a rosary procession or something – if somebody says a prayer for the unborn children, is that then to be taken as offending against this law? For instance, things like the 40 Days for Life, there might be posters up about that on Church railings and so on – does that all fall afoul of the legislation?"

"Well, yes, on the face of it, it does," Mrs Steen said.

Clare Independent TD Michael McNamara said the proposal seems to be "part of a culture

war and a desire to be seen to be addressing a problem without even analysing whether the problem exists".

"It'd be much more in his line to concentrate on delivering the Children's Hospital and the National Maternity Hospital because legislation like this is, at best, an attempt to distract from the Government's manifest failures in regard to much more core elements of their mandate," Deputy McNamara said.

## Minister thanks Ursulines for gifting St Angela's as agreement signed

**Ruadhán Jones**

Minister Simon Harris has thanked the Ursuline sisters for gifting St Angela's College, Sligo, to the State, as he formally signed off on its incorporation with the Atlantic Technological University (ATU).

The Minister for Further and Higher Edu-

cation signed the statutory order to allow St Angela's to become part of the ATU on July 6. The incorporation is effective from November 1 of this year.

In a statement, Minister Harris thanked the Ursuline Order, which "has gifted the St Angela's Lough Gill campus and additional lands to the TU as part of the transfer of assets".

"The order's legacy of over 70 years of dedicated service to higher education in Sligo is being recognised in the incorporation," Mr Harris said.

As part of the incorporation agreement, the chapel and chaplaincy services will continue on the campus, while a research institute – the Merici Institute – for Catholic and religious studies is to be established.

"The Merici institute is a vibrant part of the agreement of St Angela's incorporation," Sr Marieanne O'Connor told *The Irish Catholic*.

"We're living in a pluralist world, but we also need to ensure our own identity while respecting others – this is a way of doing that," said Sr O'Connor, who sits on the board of St Angela's.

## US mega parish named after Irish American priest

**Staff reporter**

Blessed Michael McGivney was honoured in the US after seven parishes in New Haven, Connecticut, were merged July 1 into one parish, which was then named after him.

The founder of the Knights of Columbus was born to Irish immigrant

parents, Patrick and Mary McGivney, who settled in Connecticut in the US.

Fr Ryan Lerner, pastor of St Mary – the oldest Catholic parish in New Haven, and site of Fr McGivney's tomb – will serve as the new parish's moderator.

"I feel profoundly moved and so very excited that our uni-

fied parish will be named for and entrusted to the patronal care of Blessed Michael McGivney," said Fr Lerner.

Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly said the Knights of Columbus were "honoured that the new city-wide parish has adopted Blessed Michael McGivney's name," pointing to the priest's pas-

toral dedication "amid a society that frowned upon Catholic immigrants".

Archbishop of Hartford, Leonard Blair described Bl. McGivney as "an exemplar of charity and steadfast devotion to Christ" who is "still today inspiring millions of people to action for the common good, in the name of God".

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Irish synod plans second national assembly

Plans are underway for a national assembly before the end of the year, as part of Ireland's synodal pathway.

The gathering would be an opportunity to reflect on the learning from both the global and national synodal pathways, said Julieann Moran, the general secretary of the synodal pathway in Ireland.

The plans are not "concrete", Ms Moran told a gathering of the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP).

She also revealed that a survey had been conducted in March of this year, as well as focus groups exploring people's experience with the synodal pathway in Ireland.

Ms Moran said the experience was "overwhelmingly positive", but a lack of understanding of synodality is "hindering development".

### Praying with Santo Nino...



Participants in the first Friday novena to Santo Nino are pictured after celebrations in St Joseph's Church, Berkeley Road, Dublin, which were led by Fr Paul Churchill on July 7.



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# Ukraine and the morality of cluster bombs...

**'S**tand with Ukraine' is a slogan which has elicited much support across the political spectrum in all our European countries. We have nearly all backed Ukraine's case against the Russian invader, admired its people's resistance, and Volodymyr Zelensky's courageous leadership.

But the supply of cluster bombs to the Ukrainian war effort? Here is a dilemma that will test support for the cause.

The pros and the cons have been spelled out coherently in military terms. The Ukrainians say these need these weapons if they are to sustain their resistance against Russian aggression; and US President Joe Biden will allow them the supplies.

But there are huge ethical problems with cluster bombs - particularly horrible canisters which contain multiple explosives that obliterate everything in their path. They are not only vicious in their impact; but they are indiscriminate. They can lie dormant after a conflict is over and be activated at random. A child, any innocent person, could happen upon this



**Mary Kenny**



Pope Francis blesses an ambulance to donate to the Ukrainian city of Lviv. Photo: Vatican Media

weapon months, years, afterwards, and be torn to shreds, or maimed appallingly. This must be wrong.

Catholic moral philosophy on the terms of the 'just war' has made a key contribution to thinking about these issues. Essential to the tradition, deriving originally from St Thomas Aquinas, is the importance of minimising, wherever possible, of conflict (holy days were sometimes introduced to provide a pause in the fighting); and the most strenuous efforts should be made to avoid non-combatants. Aerial bombing

has been considered by many Catholic and Christian thinkers as unethical - because it often carpet-bombs entire populations, rather than targeting a specific armed enemy.

Humanistic condemnation of cluster bombs have their roots in this tradition of Catholic philosophy, and we need to adhere to it.

We want to go on supporting Ukraine. Her cause is certainly a just one - sovereignty over her own country. But the recourse to these particular weapons is, and should be, deeply troubling.

● I had a cataract operation on my right eye last week, and deeply grateful I was for the skill of the surgeon who can implant an artificial lens in a human eye to enable greatly improved sight.

But I was also very grateful for another measure the clinic provided: a warm-hearted young nurse delegated specially to hold the patient's hand during the procedure.

However well-organised a surgical operation may be, having scalpels and needles stuck into your eye causes anxiety

and apprehension. Yet it's amazing how comforting is that human hand holding yours during this medical process.

This, I thought, is one job that will never be performed by a robot. There are situations in which the human touch is irreplaceable.

I also think this principle applies to a good priest. When you observe the way a dedicated priest can bring a sense of solace at a grief-stricken funeral, you understand the worth of that touch of grace.

## Tidying up Britain's speech

**T**he British Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, promises that when he becomes prime minister - probably next year - he will introduce 'oracy' into the school curriculum. This is the ability to speak fluently and grammatically, and it's to be taught from

junior school. Sir Keir says it will help social equality.

Jolly good idea. Back in the 1950s we had something akin to 'oracy' in Irish schools: it was called elocution. Miss Ena Bourke was Dublin's most famous elocution teacher - a formidable lady with a deep contralto voice -

went from school to school tutoring pupils to stand up, speak up, and speak correctly. She taught in inner city rougher schools as well as in more genteel convents. Elocution came to be viewed as something snobby, and fell out of favour. It is returning as oracy!

● Scotland is proposing to decriminalise all recreational drugs (although the UK government is trying to obstruct this move).

Those who favour a more liberal regime treating drug addiction as a health problem rather than a criminal issue point to the success of Portugal in taking this path. Those who are opposed point to the state of Oregon which continues to have one of the highest rates of substance abuse disorder in the US and where a health approach has made little dent in opioid deaths.

So why does the outcome differ between Portugal and Oregon? Prof. Keith Humphreys, an addiction specialist at

Stanford University, California, explains it thus: Portugal, he says, is a Catholic country where family networks tend to be strong. There's a sense of social solidarity and of "people looking out for one another", in consequence. In Oregon, these social, familial and community networks have often broken down, and so the outcomes are much poorer.

Social context surely provides a valuable insight into the debate on drug problems. And interesting to hear an American psychologist praise the benefits of a Catholic country where family networks remain stronger. Does Ireland still enjoy the same matrix?



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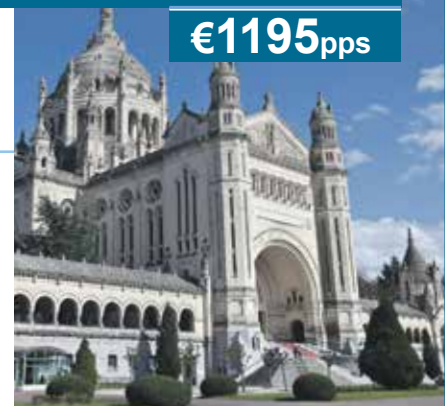
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# Irish missionary tells of tense time in Pakistan after Koran burning

Jason Osborne

Pakistani Christians have called for prayers during a “dangerous” period following the burning of the Islamic holy book, the Koran, in Sweden.

An Iraqi-born refugee burned a Koran outside a mosque in the capital, Stockholm, on the first day of Eid al-Adha, which sparked

protest in many Muslim-majority countries across the world.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Irish priest based in Pakistan Fr Liam O’Callaghan said that the incident “kicked off a whole anger around the Muslim world,” with some extremist Islamic groups threatening Christians and other minorities in Pakistan and around the world.

“It was taken pretty badly. Right across many Muslim countries here in the Middle East and in many parts, there were protests against it. In Pakistan, there was an extremist group....issued a warning that Christians would be in danger and that they would be attacked in retribution for this,” Fr O’Callaghan told this paper.

“That heightened fears because of experiences in the

past where Christians have been attacked.”

Many Church and lay leaders in Pakistan publicly denounced the burning of the Koran in Sweden in an effort to demonstrate their commitment to peaceful coexistence and respect, but continued to be fearful throughout the episode.

“There was an interesting response here, that on social media, all dioceses and all

bishops and other religious and congregation leaders would have issued statements on behalf of the Christian community condemning this terrible abuse of the Koran and saying we’re with our Muslim brothers and sisters, so that was a kind of self-protection measure, but also an effort to say we’re not in agreement with this,” Fr O’Callaghan said.

Prime Minister of Paki-

stan Shehbaz Sharif called for a national day of protest on the Friday following the incident, which is the Muslim holy day.

“Friday, after prayers, is a very dangerous time, so it was potentially quite dangerous. That was held around the country, so that could have been very dangerous,” Fr O’Callaghan said, adding that the turnout was lessened by monsoon rains.

## Newry council ‘not listening’ to parishioners’ protests

Ruadhán Jones

Newry council is “not listening” to parishioners’ worries and concerns over plans to build offices and a theatre behind the town’s cathedral.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s plans to build a multi-million pound office block and “civic hub” would reduce parking at Newry Cathedral “dramatically”, the church’s administrator Canon Francis Brown told *The Irish Catholic*.

“We’re hoping that it won’t happen,” Canon Brown said, but added that it’s at the planning stage “so it can take forever”.

“We just don’t know what will happen, we’re just living in hope.”

All the parishioners are opposed to what’s happening and have made their views known to the council, he said.

Water services and roads services have both objected to the construction, *Newry.ie* has reported, but the council has given no indication that they will

alter their plans.

This is the second time the cathedral has clashed with the local council, as in 2021 plans to build a civic centre on Newry Cathedral’s parking lot caused local backlash. A survey showed that some 72% opposed the move.

When asked if it was frustrating that the council were considering cutting down parking, Canon Brown said it was, adding: “The council are obviously not listening to the people but we just have to live in hope.”

## Historic prayer book goes on display in UK

Staff reporter

A prayer book belonging to the priest who sheltered King Charles II has gone on display in the famous Moseley Old Hall

in Wolverhampton.

Fr John Huddleston’s personal missal is almost 400 years old, and was purchased by the conservation charity National Trust at auction. It’s believed that the missal,

published in Paris in 1623, might have contributed to the king’s deathbed conversion to Catholicism in 1685.

Following the Battle of Worcester in 1651 in which the Parliamentarians under Oliver

Cromwell defeated the Royalists, King Charles II sought refuge at the home of the Catholic Whitgreave Family, where the Benedictine priest also resided, dressed as a servant.

Fr Huddleston agreed to

hide Charles II in his first floor room, in which there was a trap door beneath the floor of the cupboard where a ‘priest hole’ was accessible. It was here that the monarch hid when soldiers turned up in search of the king.

### Happy holidays with God...



Young members of the Ukrainian Catholic Chaplaincy in Ireland enjoy their children’s camp, ‘Happy Holidays with God’, hosted in the Church of Our Lady of Consolation in Donnycarney on July 10.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Pilgrims called to celebrate in Slane on World Youth Day

Eurovision star Dana will join Archbishop Eamon Martin to celebrate a ‘Light the Flame’ service on World Youth Day, August 6, in Slane, Co. Meath.

The day will comprise of Mass, song, worship, rosary, and healing.

Dana will sing her new song ‘Light the Fire’ in honour of St Patrick who ignited the Easter fire at Slane in 433 A.D. The song has been dubbed by Sr Briege McKenna as “a gift of the Holy Spirit to light the flame of faith in everyone’s hearts”.

Sr McKenna will be conducting the Eucharistic healing service at the event with Fr Pablo Escrivá de Romani, both worldwide ministers for the Intercessions for Priests.

Archbishop Martin said he is hopeful that the day’s celebrations will encourage Ireland’s younger generation to “kindle in their hearts a love for Jesus Christ and become ambassadors for Christ all around the island of Ireland”.

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The Irish Catholic

## Rory Fitzgerald

### The View



# Blind to mounting evidence of UFOs

Imagine if the day came when a highly credentialed US intelligence official publicly announced, “we are not alone”, and said the US government has proof in the form of alien spacecraft and the bodies of dead aliens. Imagine if a US Senator, sitting on the Senate Intelligence Committee, then confirmed that a number of other “serious” individuals who “have held very high clearances and high positions within our government” have come forward with similar claims.

That day did actually come, just last month. In June 2023, US Air Force veteran and former intelligence official David Grusch went public, telling *NewsNation* that a secret US programme has in its possession, “non-human origin technical vehicles, call it spacecraft if you will, non-human exotic origin vehicles that have either landed or crashed”. He went on to say, “Well, naturally, when you recover something that’s either landed or crashed, sometimes you encounter dead pilots and, believe it or not, as fantastical as that sounds, it’s true”.

Mr Grusch went public with this in the wake of informing the US Congress under oath that the US government had been covertly storing extraterrestrial craft for decades. His testimony was part of a whistle-blower programme, created to protect US military and government personnel who forward with information about UFOs.

There have been rumours and reports of flying saucers for decades, of course. The recently implemented US whistle-blower protections appear to have given senior, informed figures confidence to come forward to Congress. Mr Grusch was certainly in a position to know more than most. The US government officially refers to UFOs as unidentified aerial phenomena or UAPs. Mr Grusch was the representative of the US National Reconnaissance Office to the US government’s Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force and later co-lead for UAP analysis at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

As if his claims were not extraordinary enough, Mr

Grusch also claimed that the Vatican was aware of the existence of extra-terrestrials, and that it was aware of the first known incident of a crashed extra-terrestrial craft, which he said occurred in 1933. Speaking to *NewsNation*, he said, “1933 was the first recovery in Europe, in Magenta, Italy. They recovered a partially intact vehicle, and the Italian government moved it to a secure airbase in Italy until around 1944-1945” when the US forces moved it to the US. He also said that, “The Pope back-channelled that, and told the American’s what the Italians had and we [the United States] ended up scooping it”. When asked to if the Catholic Church was aware of “non-human” existence on Earth, Mr Grusch replied, “certainly”.

**“There is a serious possibility that we are being visited – and have been visited for many years – by people from outer space, from other civilisations”**

The Vatican has long been open to the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. In 2009, a conference on the topic was organised by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Vatican Observatory. Fr Jose Funes said “the questions of life’s origins and of whether life exists elsewhere in the universe are very interesting and deserve serious consideration. These questions offer many philosophical and theological implications”.

Fr Funes said there is no conflict between Catholic doctrine and believing in the possibility of alien life. In a 2008 he told *L’Osservatore Romano* that, “just as there is a multiplicity of creatures over the earth, so there could be other beings, even intelligent [beings], created by God. This is not in contradiction with our faith, because we cannot establish limits to God’s



creative freedom.”

Papal astronomer Guy Consolmagno even said he would baptise an alien if the creature met the definition of having a soul, namely having intelligence, free will, freedom to love and freedom to make decisions, saying that “Any entity – no matter how many tentacles it has – has a soul”. Pope Francis echoed this sentiment in 2014. Baptisms could soon become significantly more interesting, if there is any truth to the extraordinary claims being made by US government whistle-blowers!

Once a ridiculed topic, the UFO phenomenon is now being taken seriously by leading media originations such as the *New York Times*, which in 2017 published videos of remarkable objects flying near US Navy ships. Radar systems detected these objects going from 80,000 feet to sea level in less than a second, and back up again.

CBS’s *60 Minutes* aired compelling pilot testimony regarding these same incidents. US Navy Master at Arms Sean Cahill told CNN that the craft he witnessed were technologically “at least one hundred if not a thousand years,” beyond anything US has.

Retired US Navy pilot Cmdr David Fravor told ABC of his 2004 encounter: “I think it was not from this world... I’m not crazy, haven’t been drinking... after 18 years of flying, I’ve seen pretty much about everything that I can see in that realm, and this was nothing close.”

A former US Director of National Intelligence also said that US intelligence

had “high confidence” that Russia and China did not have technology with such capabilities.

The extra-terrestrial hypothesis has often been ridiculed in the English speaking world, but other cultures are more open to it. The 1999 French Cometa report on UFOs involved French scientists and top military figures. The Cometa report concluded that “A single hypothesis sufficiently takes into account the facts and, for the most part, only calls for present-day science. It is the hypothesis of extra-terrestrial visitors. Advanced as of 1947 by certain US military personnel, today it is popular worldwide. It is discredited by a certain elite, but is plausible”. The same report discussed Soviet research into the phenomenon, stating that Soviet studies did “not rule out the extraterrestrial hypotheses, and even favour it”.

A former UK Chief of Defence, Admiral Lord Hill-Norton has said: “There is a serious possibility that we are being visited – and have been visited for many years – by people from outer space, from other civilisations. It behoves us to find out who they are, where they come from, and what they want. This should be the subject of rigorous scientific investigation, and not the subject of rubbishing by tabloid newspapers.”

In 2014, former Canadian Defence Minister Paul Hellyer made the extraordinary claim that at least four species of extraterrestrials have been visiting Earth for thousands of years.

In 2020, former CIA director John Brennan said the

people who’ve undoubtedly had access to classified information. Yet that fact alone does not make their claims true or accurate.

When Australian aborigines first encountered Europeans, they were described as blind to the huge, strange ship just offshore. Joseph Banks, the botanist on Captain Cook’s 1770 voyage, wrote that, “Not one was once observed to stop and look towards the ship” despite how “remarkable an object as a ship must necessarily be to people who have never seen one”. Perhaps we in the 21st Century are similarly blind to the mounting evidence of unexplained craft operating in our atmosphere. Or perhaps we are being told sailors’ tall tales. Either way, a remarkable mystery looks set to unfold as the US government’s investigations continue.

UFO phenomenon “could involve some type of activity that some might say constitutes a different form of life”.

These extraordinary statements are made by credible

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# Irish neutrality: Positive, active and constructive



Tobias Winright

**M**y family and I moved to Maynooth from Saint Louis, Missouri, in the United States nearly a year ago. We had visited Ireland a dozen times during the past two decades, and we were attracted to the beauty of the Emerald Isle and the hospitality of its people. Also, although it had experienced its share of conflict and violence in the past, Ireland's neutrality and its relatively – in comparison especially to the US – small military and unarmed gardaí were appealing to us.

As a former law enforcement officer, I am acquainted with violence. As an ICU nurse, my partner has seen its effects. Our children, too, increasingly heard gunfire in recent years. One is still recovering from the trauma of a shooting at her school last year. Plus, after living in a superpower nation that seems constantly at war, whether cold or hot, we feel more at ease in Ireland.

## Reconsidered

Yet, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the threat posed to undersea cables in Irish territorial waters, and rising menaces to cybersecurity, Ireland's neutrality is being reconsidered at this time, as seen in the recent Consultative Forums on International Security Policy in Cork, Galway, and Dublin. I attended the third meeting on 26 June at Dublin Castle, and it soon became clear to me that not everyone is clear about neutrality and its status today. Still, Irish citizens are clearly concerned about it, and the current debate reflects its momentousness. This is as it should be, for as Jerome Connolly observed in *The Furrow* nearly four decades ago, "An unexamined neutrality is unlikely to command respect abroad or to withstand attacks at home".

The latest *Irish Times/Ipsos* opinion poll found that a majority of voters continue to support neutrality while at the same time they are increasingly open to co-operating with other countries and their militaries to counter threats to Irish security. But from what I have seen during my short time here, many worry that these two commitments to neutrality

and co-operation with others for defence are at odds with each other, with the latter eroding and undermining the former. In what follows, I offer a Catholic moral perspective on neutrality and defence.

Before doing so, a caveat: neutrality is not a univocal concept, which of course complicates matters. Ireland's understanding and practice of neutrality differs in many ways from that of Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, and Finland – and even these have differed due to their respective histories, experiences, and geographic locations. Moreover, Ireland's approach to neutrality has developed and evolved across the decades. As an editorial in *The Irish Times* (June 17) notes, "The truth is that Ireland's neutrality has always been flexible, shifting in response to international events and domestic concerns".

Curiously, neutrality is rarely addressed in Catholic social teaching, even in connection with the ethics of war and peace. During the past year, the Vatican's permanent neutrality has received attention, for instance, in an online panel hosted by Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, but I have found little scholarship, especially by Catholic social ethicists, on the neutrality of nations such as Ireland.

**“These values and principles are consonant with Pope Paul VI's famous line from his World Day of Peace message in 1972: 'If you want peace, work for justice'”**

Sixty years ago, in his encyclical *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII recognised the right, based in the natural law and international law, of nations to be neutral. The Pope appreciated, too, the positive role that neutral nations can play in contributing to the common good of the international community. The encyclical quotes a Christmas address delivered by Pope Pius XII during the Second World War in 1941: "smaller States cannot be denied their right, in keeping with the common good, to political freedom, and to the adoption of a position of neutrality in the conflicts between nations" (§124). Indeed, in June 1945, Pius acknowledged Ireland's altruism in efforts to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the devastation of the war.

According to Mervyn O'Driscoll, Irish neutrality



during that time was a "positive neutrality", which was justified "on moral grounds" and "as a progressive human and political value in many Irish citizens' minds". Similarly, Karen Devine observes that Irish neutrality is a reflection of the Irish people's values and identity. These moral values at the core of Irish identity are reflected in its constitutional commitment to "the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality", to "the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination", and to "the principles of international law as its rule of conduct in its relations to other States" (Article 29). These values and principles are consonant with Pope Paul VI's famous line from his World Day of Peace message in 1972: "If you want peace, work for justice."

I would add that this commitment is an expression of what Pope John Paul II called solidarity, which in his 1987 World Day of Peace message he said is "a key to peace".

## Peace

'Peace', as described by Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, "is not merely the absence of war". I would suggest that for Ireland, neutrality is more than the absence of military alignments. Ireland's is a positive, active, and constructive neutrality, contributing to peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding, conflict resolution, disarmament, and humanitarian aid efforts in

connection with the United Nations. As Neal G. Jesse writes, "Ireland's singular stance contains the core element of nonparticipation in military alliances while also promoting activity in international peacekeeping operations, particularly under the auspices of the United Nations".

**“Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself”**

Many voters worry that Ireland's becoming more integrated in the European community's security and defence efforts compromises its distinctive approach to neutrality. As Connolly once asked, "Finally, would a change in our neutral status involve us in morally questionable defence arrangements?"

Of course, according to *Gaudium et spes*: "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed". But this is not a blank check for defence by all possible means. Rather, as the Catechism teaches, there are "strict conditions for legitimate defence by military

force that require rigorous consideration". Thus, neutrality does not necessarily mean employing exclusively non-violent means. Article 29's reference to the "pacific settlement" of disputes doesn't necessarily entail pacifism.

Still, does co-operation – a word I have often seen in the present debate – with NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) scheme, for example, conflict with Ireland's neutrality? After all, NATO is an alliance possessing a nuclear arsenal. According to *Gaudium et spes*, "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation". More recently, Pope Francis has said about nuclear weapons, "the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned". Ireland does not possess or threaten to use nuclear weapons, but would its co-operation with nations that do be morally problematic?

## Co-operation

I used to wonder about the question of co-operation when the US military was allowed by Ireland to use Shannon airfield during the 'war on terror'. Was Ireland thereby complicit in a war that the Vatican and others doubted was morally justified? In the Catholic moral tradition, not all co-operation is morally wrong. It depends on whether it is formal or material, proximate or remote co-operation. If Ireland's co-operation with NATO or other nations is material and has sufficient reason,

then it may be considered morally permissible. But such analysis of co-operation has traditionally been conducted at the individual level rather than vis-à-vis institutions, such as Catholic and non-Catholic hospitals, as well as nations. Still, while in need of further careful reflection, the question of co-operation with evil may speak to a serious moral concern in the debate about neutrality.

Four decades ago, Connolly emphasised that "a strong case to be made for Ireland, in the context of positive neutrality, to explore systematically the possibilities of alternative non-violent defence, the so-called 'Civilian Defence', as a complement to and eventual replacement for conventional military defence". Similarly, Pope Francis writes: "Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church's continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms; she does so by her participation in the work of international institutions and through the competent contribution made by so many Christians to the drafting of legislation at all levels." It seems to me that the value-added aspect of Ireland's positive, active, constructive neutrality has to do with the word 'complement' that appears in each of the above quotes.

**Tobias Winright** is Professor of Moral Theology at St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth, and he is Associate Member, Las Casas Institute for Social Justice, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University.



# Peace does not 'keep itself' but must be protected



Fr Séamus Murphy SJ

The Government invited submissions to its Public Consultation on International Security Policy. Neutrality is on the menu.

What does Catholic Social Teaching (CST) have to offer Irish Catholics as they reflect?

CST's values of peace, common goods, solidarity, respect for human dignity and rights, and preferential concern for the poor and oppressed are what it offers.

## Building peace through justice and solidarity

As popes have said, peace is more than the absence of war. It does not 'keep itself' but must be protected and built up. Dangers to it should be expected; it would be naïve and unrealistic, a denial of original sin, to think that peace is the 'natural' state of affairs.

Wars often arise from misunderstanding or miscalculation, so negotiation and reasonable compromise should be sought. Some wars arise from aggression by authoritarian states despising democracies as too afraid to fight, so prudence (a favourite theme in Catholic moral thought) requires realism and willingness to arm in order to deter aggressors.

In 1972, standing in a long Judeo-Christian tradition, Pope Paul VI famously remarked: "If you want peace, work for justice."

The Old Testament prophets denounced kings who were corrupt, oppressive, or didn't defend the poor. Psalm 8 prays that God will give his justice to the king so that he will defend the poor and crush the oppressor.

CST (and Thomas Aquinas) holds that while as individuals we should practice non-violence, turning the other cheek, forgiving and not retaliating, the state has, not merely a right but a duty to protect the weak and the vulnerable and to resist oppression by force when necessary.

Ireland has worked for peace by providing peacekeepers at various times. Doing so does not require neutrality, since NATO

members also do it, for instance in Kosovo. It is not clear that our neutrality itself contributes anything to peace-making.

## Solidarity and the common good

In this area, Ireland's current policy of neutrality is morally problematic.

A common good requires the collaboration of all. Peace in Europe is not a good that an individual state can have for itself. If it was, there would be no problem with neutrality. It is a good common to all, since war anywhere in Europe is likely to spread. Thus, all must work together to deter and prevent war. Membership of the EU makes us further committed to that community and collaboration. Neutrality can't be reconciled with CST since it means refusing full commitment to common European defence of democracy and peace.

Our stance on the current war in Ukraine makes that very clear. Our hearts are with them – but we say our neutrality means we can't help to arm them. That we are a small nation is no excuse: smaller countries like Belgium and Denmark are arming Ukraine. Humanitarian aid doesn't count, since we would and should give that to any country in dire need.

To claim that while militarily neutral we are not politically neutral is no help to Ukraine: rhetorical support is mere virtue-signalling. It violates CST's principles. It also draws the harsh words in the Letter of St James about the wealthy verbally urging the poor to feed themselves properly but refusing them any material help to do so.

## Human rights

Are human rights (including Ukrainian rights) worth fighting for? Nobody would give a blanket 'No' to that question. Using military force to defend human rights is risky since it may lead to other rights violations. But for such major attacks on human rights as genocide there would be a moral duty to use force if there were a reasonable chance of success.

Ireland's having no significant military forces and its refusal to be part of a military alliance means we refuse availability for that duty.

## Preferential concern for the oppressed

The Scripture says repeatedly: 'The Lord hears the cry of the poor'. CST endorses

the principle that the view of the oppressed must be given extra weight in political judgements. In the Magnificat, Our Lady praises God for overthrowing the mighty and raising the oppressed. Without NATO's aid, Ukraine would have been crushed a year ago. By contrast, our neutrality obstructs us from living the Gospel and CST: we know they are oppressed but we will not help.

Unlike Ireland, Finland and Sweden have substantial armies, yet they realise that solitary self-defence is not enough to keep the peace in Europe and so are joining NATO.

Between the Ukrainian people, the states near Russia's borders, NATO, Sweden and Finland's example, and CST's principles, there is 'a great cloud of witnesses' against the moral value or practical common sense of Irish neutrality.

## Neutrality is a means, not an end

CST says nothing directly about neutrality or military alliances. Neither has any value in itself. They are only means to the goal of promoting peace and international order. As regards which to choose, it all depends on the context. Sometimes, neutrality is morally sensible; at other times, it is selfish.

It is not wrong for a small nation to keep its head down when war breaks out and hope to get by unscathed. But in today's Europe that is not possible. World War II engulfed numerous small neutral countries from Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark and Norway in the west, to all the countries in central Europe from Finland to Greece.

No wonder that after 1945 those who regained their freedom abandoned neutrality in favour of collective defense, and those who gained it after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 immediately joined NATO. Seventy-five years later, the founders of NATO have good reason to judge that it has served them well.

## Catholic political identity in Europe

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas quoted Lennart Meri, Estonia's first president after the collapse of the



Lt Ross Flanagan and Capt Mike Fitzpatrick and chaplain Fr Michael Hinds with a patrol group on Mount Hermon.

Soviet Union: "Europe is not a geography – it's a set of values and principles." The EU was originally built on the basis of CST values by French Catholic Robert Schuman, German Catholic Konrad Adenauer, and Italian Catholic Alcide de

Gasperi. In the aftermath of the catastrophe of World War II, their vision rejected totalitarian communism, individualist laissez-faire capitalism, and isolationist nationalism. It took European solidarity, subsidiarity, and respect for human

rights and democracy as key values, as CST does.

Neutrality obstructs our living by those values. Time for it to go.

*Fr Séamus Murphy SJ is an Irish Jesuit, currently professor of philosophy at Loyola University Chicago.*

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# ‘It’s always the right time to follow Christ’



One of the country’s newest priests is upbeat as he embarks on his ministry, writes **Sofia Zate**

**A**fter 28 years in media, former Highland Radio host Shaun Doherty has traded the microphone for the pulpit. Fr Doherty was ordained in St Eugene’s Cathedral in Derry earlier this month after six years of formation. Fr Doherty served as the host of the popular *Shaun Doherty Show* on Highland Radio, broadcasting to Derry, Donegal and Tyrone for nearly three decades before making this life change. *The Irish Catholic* asked Fr Doherty if he contemplated joining the priesthood for an extended period before he actually made the leap. He said: “Well it wasn’t an instant thing. It was something I considered as a younger person. In more recent years it became more of a pressing issue to deal with, confront the possibility.” Fr Doherty elaborated by thanking the Columba Community, a Catholic group in Derry, as well as the late Fr Neal Carlin, whom he called a “big inspiration” for providing him with guidance in entering the priesthood.

## Peaceful

He also credits pilgrimages to Medjugorje, which he found to be a peaceful place to collect his thoughts, as helping him finalise his decision to join the priesthood. Often when someone decides to join the ministry later in life it is the result of new-found faith and conversion but that was not the case for Fr Doherty. He insisted that the Church was an important part of his



Fr Shaun with members of the Columba Community.

life “always” and that he “always maintained a connection and never stopped going to Mass ever.” In light of that, I asked him if he could go back in time would he still pursue radio broadcasting or would he have joined the priesthood at a younger age. “It’s impossible to answer that,” Fr Doherty admits, “Obviously that’s something you reflect on.”

Fr Doherty did attend a weekend retreat for young men who were considering joining the priesthood when he was younger, and although he felt welcomed by the other attendees, he was also a little bit overwhelmed by the prospect. But that initial experience stayed with Fr Doherty as he went to work in radio broadcasting. On that subject, some ordination attendees commented that skills Fr Doherty acquired

during his career in broadcasting could translate into the priesthood. “I don’t think it’s exactly the same—obviously. Priests come in different shapes and sizes and ways” he said, “But it will probably help me, I’m sure.” Fr Doherty said: “Certainly having the experience of 30 years in broadcasting and spending a lot of time listening. It [the show] was a three-hour program every day so you are listening a lot. And you’ve heard everything at this stage, after 30 years.”

## Experience

Fr Doherty doesn’t have any regrets about his career choice and maintains that every experience, good and bad, will help him in the future. “The Lord will always use your gifts and experiences for good and for bad and turn them around and I

hope that’s what’s happening with me,” he said.

**“And even if you are not in the Church, the human condition is challenging, everybody is challenged”**

Fr Doherty is not oblivious to the challenges facing the Church as Ireland becomes more secular. On becoming a priest at this moment, he said: “I think it’s always the right time.” He elaborated: “Christ has always told us it’s going to be difficult, a challenge.” Throughout the history of the Faith there have been challenges, including in the lives of the Apostles, Fr Doherty pointed out.

“And even if you are not in the Church, the human condition is challenging, everybody is challenged,” he said.

## Unwavering

But Fr Doherty’s devotion to and optimism in the Church is unwavering: “The thing is that the Lord tells us so often ‘do not be afraid’. Fear stops us from doing things. There is a good fear and a bad fear. There is good fear that keeps us from danger and then we can be overwhelmed by fear that it stops us from moving and we have to overcome that.” One of the ways that Fr Doherty confronts and overcomes fear is through taking inspiration from great saints. He said: “There is a saint of the day almost every day. And you can look for their stories and there are always challenges,

there have always been people who are challenged and yet they’ve been given the grace.”

Fr Doherty laughs when asked about his sister’s comments to a *BBC news* reporter, saying she thought, as a child, that he would become a priest. “She was surprised, I think she was sort of stopped in her tracks by the BBC. That must have come out of her quite spontaneously” he says, clearly amused. But, he also believes there is some truth to his sister’s words, explaining: “Probably because I went to Mass a lot as a child and continued through the years. I always kept the Faith, I always went to Mass and I always prayed.”

As he enters a new chapter in his life, Fr Doherty insisted: “I think life is an ongoing conversion, we never stop converting and learning and growing.”

# Decriminalising drugs could easily backfire



The bishops must consider both sides when calling for drug decriminalisation, writes **David Quinn**

**W**hat should we think about so-called 'Citizens' Assemblies'? They seem to be a favourite tool of the Government to nudge public opinion in a desired direction, to expose them to particular expert views and then win the backing of delegates for whatever policy the Government appears to have in mind before these assemblies even begin.

**“For example, at the assembly on climate policy, 80% of members voted in favour of higher carbon taxes”**

Thus, we have had Citizens' Assemblies (or vaingloriously named 'Constitutional Conventions' before that), on topics like abortion, same-sex marriage, climate policy and 'gender equality' among others. We are in the middle of one on drug policy, to which the Irish Bishop's Drugs Initiative made a submission. Somewhat controversially, it recommended in favour of decriminalising drug use.

Citizens' Assemblies consist of 99 randomly selected citizens plus the chairperson. Once selected, these citizens are then subjected to the opinion of experts on whatever is the topic under examination. This is key, because how much can a randomly selected member of the public really know about something as complex as, say, climate policy?

It's why inviting in experts to address the meetings is defensible, but what is a lot less defensible is when almost all the experts seem to sing off the same hymn



Two people sit beside Immaculate Heart Church in Portland, Oregon, which has followed Portugal in decriminalising possession of drugs. The sidewalk has become a marketplace for illegal drugs. Photo: CNS.

sheet and the result is the shepherding of assembly members towards certain policy recommendations and overwhelming majorities vote in favour of whatever the experts have told them is the best course of action.

For example, at the assembly on climate policy, 80% of members voted in favour of higher carbon taxes. But in the real world, does anyone seriously believe that 80% of voters would opt to pay more tax?

Another question it put to members was that "the number of bus lanes, cycling lanes and park and ride facilities should be greatly increased in the next five years". Over 90% of members voted in favour of this.

But when we consider the immense disruption these things cause while they are under construction, and the cost, such a proposal would be lucky to have majority support in the real world, never mind 93% backing.

Multiple examples can be given of totally lop-sided support for whatever the assemblies propose to members.

The lop-sided votes should set off alarm bells. Are delegates really being given a full and rounded view of the complexity of issues, and the trade-offs involved in choosing policy A over policy B? I don't think they are. I believe that the experts tend to over-represent one point of view and that cannot help but skew the votes that come at the end of assembly meetings.

The final meeting of the

Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use is to take place in October, and then votes will be taken. We can probably predict in advance that large majorities of delegates will vote in favour of liberalising drug policies, including opting for decriminalisation of use and more effort being put into 'harm reduction' policies.

It is hard to say in advance when they will think about legalising drugs outright, which would mean drugs such as cocaine or heroin being openly bought and sold. I suspect they won't go this far.

## Decriminalisation

But in sessions to date, members have heard few voices arguing against decriminalisation. Instead, they have been hearing about the supposed success story of Portugal which went down this route more than 20 years ago.

Whether we decriminalise drugs is not a black or white issue. The Church has no firm views on the matter, one way or the other. Instead, different parts of it can arrive at a prudential judgement, based on trade-offs, and in particular consideration of whether decriminalisation would do more good than harm.

On balance, the submission from the Irish Bishop's Drugs Initiative believes decriminalising drug use would do more good, in particular because it gives people with immense problems in their lives that have driven them to drug use in the first place, a criminal record that then blights them

forever.

A better pastoral approach might be to decriminalise drug use, it believes, and then lead users down a path that takes them away from drug use eventually.

But does decriminalisation really do more good than harm? To listen to those who point to Portugal, the answer is a resounding yes.

**“If drug-use is decriminalised, then it is a lot harder to disperse drug-users once they congregate somewhere”**

However, a recent article in the left-leaning *Washington Post* suggests otherwise. It points out: "Portugal became a model for progressive jurisdictions around the world embracing drug decriminalisation, such as the state of Oregon, but now there is talk of fatigue."

The mayor of Porto told the newspaper: "These days in Portugal, it is forbidden to smoke tobacco outside a school or a hospital. It is forbidden to advertise ice cream and sugar candies. And yet, it is allowed for [people] to be there, injecting drugs. We've normalised it."

According to the report, "police are blaming a spike in the number of people who use drugs for a rise in crime."

It says drug encampments are on the rise and neighbourhoods have to be protected from the drug users who

descend on them. If drug use is decriminalised, then it is a lot harder to disperse drug users once they congregate somewhere.

"In one neighbourhood", the newspaper says, "state-issued paraphernalia – powder-blue syringe caps, packets of citric acid for diluting heroin – litters sidewalks outside an elementary [junior] school."

## Nay-sayers

In the early years after decriminalisation, things seemed to improve, and it appeared that the nay-sayers were proven wrong.

But now illicit drug use is increasing rapidly (as it is

elsewhere) and "overdose rates have hit 12-year highs". They "almost doubled in Lisbon from 2019 to 2023".

The US State of Oregon, one of the most 'progressive' in America, went down the decriminalisation route in 2021 and overdoses in Portland, the State's biggest city, have surged by 46%.

**“If this is the case yet again, then we might easily end up decriminalising drugs and then be surprised in the event it backfires”**

Norway was considering decriminalising drug use, but has now backed away.

If the question to be considered is, does criminalisation do more harm than good, then it is absolutely crucial that both sides of the argument be heard.

Have the bishops really considered both sides of the argument? It's hard to say.

But will the Citizens' Assembly properly hear both sides of the argument? Forced to guess, I would say the answer will be no because these assemblies rarely allow both sides of an argument to be properly heard.

If this is the case yet again, then we might easily end up decriminalising drugs and then be surprised in the event it backfires. As usual, we will have only ourselves to blame, or rather our political establishment, which seems to loath anything that questions a policy they have already decided upon in their own minds. It's no way to run a country.

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# From Ballinamuck to Sacramento – the life of an Irish missionary



Entrenched views and a politicised US culture, Fr Michael Kiernan tells Ruadhán Jones about his 50 years of ministry

“In some ways it seems like yesterday,” says Fr Michael Kiernan about his ordination to the priesthood 50 years ago, June 3, 1973. In other ways though, “it seems like 500 years ago”, he adds.

Born and raised in Lettergullion, a townland near Ballinamuck, Co. Longford, Fr Kiernan studied for the priesthood in the former St John’s Seminary in Waterford. At the time, he explains, you could decide where to go after ordination, with many young priests heading to the UK.

Fr Kiernan had some Longford connections, however, based in California and it put him in mind to head there himself. “I knew them a little bit when I came out here, but it really didn’t make much of a difference. I think it was God,

the Holy Spirit pointing me out here,” says the 74-year-old priest.

Going from Ballinamuck to the diocese of Sacramento in California involved a huge culture shock for the young priest, just 24 at the time.

But, he says happily, “I never regretted it, it’s a wonderful place about an hour and half from San Francisco. A great, beautiful city, one of the great cities of America and of the world.”

In the 50 years he has spent in America, he has served in a wide array of settings, from parishes to prisons to his current position as chaplain to Beale air force base.

## Understanding

In addition, he has worked for greater ecumenical and inter-faith understanding, made innovative use modern media to spread the Faith and serves on the boards of a variety of church charities.

“One of the great things about being a priest is that each day is different from the day before... There’s weddings and the couples are all different, people coming in for counselling and help... Then there’s the schools, visiting the different classrooms and the kids,” he says.

“People are great,” Fr Kiernan enthuses. “I’ve never had any trouble. You’ll always get a person in a parish or maybe two or three or five, who are a little difficult and if you said that the sun is shining, they would argue with you. But in general most parishioners are wonderful people.”

In summarising his experience as a priest and pastor, Fr Kiernan adds that “it’s always doing God’s work and that in itself is a joy”.

Though the Lord’s work

is a joy, it can be tough. One area that has challenged Fr Kiernan is prison ministry. Prisons in America have a reputation for being difficult, with high levels of addiction and violence.

“It is a tough area, just from the point of view of getting in because there’s so much security,” he says. “Sometimes when you’re in you can get caught in a lockdown, which means nobody can move for an hour or two or whatever.”

But still, the work is very valuable, with the Irish missionary highlighting the Exodus programme in particular, which helps people coming out of prison.

“If you are in jail and are getting out three months from now, we would get in contact, either myself or somebody else, and try and get a little connection there,” he explains. “When you come out, because you have nothing, you’ve gone through a bad experience and all this, you need help and you’ve no place to turn.”

That’s why the programme is called Exodus, reflecting the Jewish people’s experience when they escaped from Egypt and crossed the Red Sea into a new life.

“The fella got out, reformed his life and was ordained a priest some months ago”

“You’re coming out of this predicament and you’re coming into a new situation and being welcomed by me or somebody else and we try to provide some help for you, maybe a little money,”



A young Fr Michael Kiernan receives the chalice from his mother during his first Mass.

Fr Michael continues. “We see what your talents are, see what the prisons can do and if they’re open to that, then get them a place to stay.”

Without the help of priests like Fr Kiernan, many men and women who leave prison quickly fall into “the same old problem of gangs and within a month they’re back in again”, he laments. But the Exodus programme has been “a great help” and makes a real difference.

## Beautiful

There are some beautiful moments in prison ministry. Fr Kiernan highlights just one, about another Irish missionary Fr Tom Maguire. Fr Maguire passed away last year, but he spent his life working as a chaplain in the prison ministry.

“Amazingly he had a young man who was in the prison ministry and helped him a lot”, having himself been arrested and jailed, Fr Michael begins. “The fella got out, reformed his life and

was ordained a priest some months ago.

“Old Fr Maguire was barely able to make his ordination because of his health, but nothing was going to stop him from doing that in Los Angeles. That’s a great success story. There’s a few that have lots of problems, but occasionally you get success stories of people who reform their lives.”

“People are people and I’m bringing the message of God and Christ and Church, there’ll be people there who will be very interested in that”

One of the things you can’t avoid in conversation with Americans is politics – it is a politicised culture, Fr Kiernan believes, adding “there’s no sign that’s

going to change”. Perhaps, he muses, if Donald Trump goes off the scene things will return to an equilibrium. “But at the moment it’s 50% one way or 50% the other. You’re all wrong and I’m all right.”

For some people, their views get entrenched and “it can be hard to reason with people”, Fr Kiernan reflects.

“The way things are now, if I said today is Sunday, you can bring in calendars and you can bring in 10 people and tell me, no, it’s not Sunday. And I’ll say, well I’m entitled to my opinion! You’re trying to tell me I’m a fool because I say it’s Sunday – well, I am a fool, because it’s not Sunday, but I won’t admit it,” he jokes.

When he first left for the States, a friend asked Fr Kiernan what he would find to talk to people out there – how was he going to relate to them?

## Missionary

“People are people and I’m bringing the message of God and Christ and Church,



Fr Michael Kiernan (middle row, centre) is pictured with classmates at St John’s Seminary.



Fr Kiernan is pictured with his family on his return to Ireland to celebrate his jubilee in June of this year.



Fr Kiernan is pictured with family and friends as he cuts into his jubilee cake during celebrations in Ireland.

there'll be people there who will be very interested in that," was the Irish missionary's answer. "We'll talk about the politics of the day, the weather, the sports, in that sense you become settled in.

"You always bring the faith of the Church, but on the other hand you might present it a little different in Ireland than you would in England or Germany or in the United States.

"And because the US is so vast, the way you do things in Illinois might be different from California. As you get to know your community – you might be in a very conservative community, or very liberal. You work there and try not to bring too much of your Irish ways with you and impose them on others."

**Open**

Society in the States was more "open" than Ireland when he left in the 1970s, says Fr Kiernan. His work on ecumenical and inter-faith relations placed him slap-bang in the middle of the US's wide array of Christian Churches and more.

"I've done a lot of work over the years with Jewish friends, Muslim friends, as well," he explains. "And with many other faiths, Mormons and so on. I've worked with them at the request of the bishop for many years and have gone to various gather-

ings and so on. I was continuing to do that while being the rector of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament."

The Church in America – and the West more broadly – has undergone a sea change in the decades since Fr Kiernan was ordained. For him, however, despite the challenges, it has been a rewarding time.

**“We were just simple country boys, but it’s amazing we’ve gone on to live different lives and different fields”**

"I was ordained at the time Vatican II had just ended," he recalls. "The joy, openness and enthusiasm generated by the council was a blessing and gave excitement to my seminary days. I loved what it presented and its spirit has never waned in me."

The focus placed on collaboration between clergy and laity "made my priesthood exciting, rewarding and challenging. Striving to implement this spirit in the developing Church of the past 50 years has made my priesthood easy and enriched by its fruits", he continues.

Serving with other priests

opened his eyes to "their decency, goodness, generosity and unselfishness", while working with the "wonderful people of our Church has been a blessing".

"Seeing women and men take part in the various ministries and celebrations of the Church is so delightful," Fr Kiernan says. "How beautiful it is to gather with the assembly for the Eucharist, praying as the body of Christ, participating 'fully, consciously, actively', experiencing the power of God's Word proclaimed and receiving the Body of Christ in Communion."

**Pastor**

Fr Kiernan presently serves as pastor of St Mary's Catholic Community at Beale air force base and part time at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. He returned to Ireland in June to celebrate his jubilee, along with friends and classmates from seminary.

"We were just simple country boys, but it's amazing we've gone on to live different lives and different fields," Fr Kiernan reflects as our conversation comes to a close.

"I appreciate all that I learned in the culture in Ireland from wonderful people... who I thank God for all my life and they've been an inspiration all my life to this day," he finishes.

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# ‘Encourage young people so Church can flourish’ – Bishop Fintan Gavin

**Ruadhán Jones**

The Church must encourage young people in the Faith if it is to have a future, Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin said on pastoral visit to Gurrabraher parish.

Bishop Gavin presented two young members of the Cork parish community with their John Paul II awards during his visit. Adam Sorenson and Paul Sunday, as well as James O’Connor from Douglas parish, received their gold medal from the bishop.

In addition, four young people from the parish will travel with Cork diocese to World Youth Day in August of this year, meaning it will be “more strongly represented” than any other parish, the bishop said.

That is a tribute to how Fr Tom Walsh SMA, Fr Aidan Vaughan OFM Cap. and the whole parish has “encouraged and supported young people”, he added.

“These are people we need to continue to encourage and support so that the Church can have a future.”

The recipients of the JP II award, their friends and family are pictured with Bishop Gavin, Fr Walsh and Fr Aidan Vaughan OFM Cap. Photos: Cillian Kelly





Bishop Gavin with Adam Sorenson, who received his John Paul II award from the bishop.



JPII award recipient Paul Sunday pictured with Bishop Gavin.



Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin greets parishioners at Gurrabraher parish, Cork, during his pastoral visit over the weekend of June 24-25.

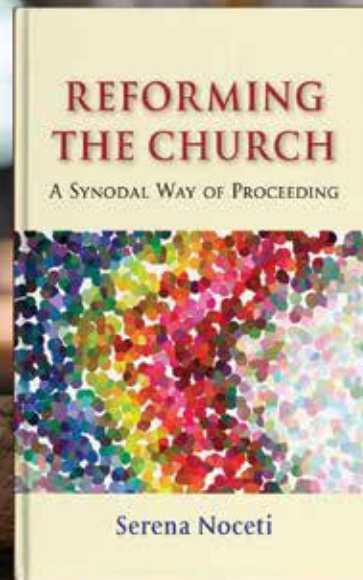


James O'Connor, JPII award recipient, with Bishop Gavin.



Bishop Gavin and Fr Tom Walsh SMA are pictured with Gurrabraher parishioners outside the Church of the Ascension.

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# Holy Family fun in North Belfast

Ruadhán Jones

Holy Family parish in North Belfast hosted their annual community fun day on Sunday, June 25, with a few special guests.



Fr Michael Spence PP Holy Family Parish is pictured on the annual parish community fun day.



Damien Kirkpatrick, a Down and Connor seminarian, at Holy Family's community fun day.



Fr Robert Sloan CC.



# Jesus Revolution: A rollercoaster of tears, laughs and gasps



Audrey Bryce

**T**he movie is better than the book is one sentence that is not generally spoken. How often is a film considered better than the book on which it was entirely based? Well, in 2018 authors Greg Laurie and Ellen Vaughn delineated an inspiring story of mass spiritual revival in their novel *Jesus Revolution* – a name coined by *Time Magazine*. The book indeed caught the attention of Christians and non-Christians alike. Directors Jon Erwin and Brent McCorkle, however, have recently made this very ‘book vs movie’ argument tangible, presenting the same inspiring true story now as a major motion picture in the 2023 American Christian drama film *Jesus Revolution* which was released on

June 23.

The film has stretched to over 150 cinemas across Ireland and the UK, reaching £56,243 (€65,723) during opening weekend, June 23-25, later doubling to €100,000 (€116,845) within the first full week.

## Reconciliation

A tale of extraordinary faith, revelation and reconciliation in the late 1960s, *Jesus Revolution* delineates the story of Southern California pastor Chuck Smith (Kelsey Grammer) as he struggles to understand and connect with the younger generation of hippies. Smith is appalled when he discovers his daughter has brought Christian hippie Lonnie Frisbee (Jonathan Roumie – best known for playing Jesus in streaming hit *The Chosen*) into their home. Despite Smith’s mounting suspicions, he slowly finds his home to be a harbour for Lonnie and his friends who open Smith’s eyes to the true beauty that lies in the junction of music and companionship with the Word of God.

The film so poignantly highlights the glaring lack of civility between the older generations and the hippies during this period. In



Jonathan Roumie in *Jesus Revolution*.

one scene, Smith assures his congregation that his Church is a place of comfort – with a door always open to all. To the aged members of the congregation who are not in favour of the hippies’ infiltration, Smith advises the same: the door is always open – both ways. While some march out, one gentleman shocks the congregation, and instead moves to embrace the strangers – the so-called ‘Jesus-freaks’, before they join in song, as one body before Christ.

Meanwhile, Greg Laurie (Joel Courtney) abandons his military training before running into a girl named Cathe, who acquaints him with the popular ‘live-free’ lifestyle. They encounter Lonnie who introduces him to his and Smith’s ministry where both Greg and Cathe find consolation in times of tremendous tumult and begin journeys of self-discovery.

## Aesthetics

The climactic narrative of the film is certainly strength-

ened by its cinematography and the distinct visual and auditory aesthetics. The camera movement slows in scenes of tremendous emotion such as when Greg attends his first service at Lonnie and Smith’s congregation and is moved to tears, or when he is baptised and the breathtaking instant during which he meets God is captured in its essence, as the sun pours in above him, eyes widening to accept him.

Scenes like this could not be possible however without the film’s outstanding actors who were able

to produce such natural, raw emotion. Witnessing these raw emotions of both Grammer and Courtney specifically, provokes the same, taking viewers on an emotional rollercoaster throughout from tears, to laughs, to gasps.

## Touching

The film wraps up with raw footage of the actual people on whom the film was based, which provided a touching ending for viewers to see the faces of the real people who initiated the revival known as the *Jesus Revolution* that the film is based upon. Whether Christian or not, *Jesus Revolution* provides an opportunity for self-reflection of one’s own faith and the role that it has in our lives.

While some may claim the Church in Ireland and the UK to be in rapid decline, *Jesus Revolution* offers evidence that suggests the contrary. A diverse people have become enthralled with the film’s message of new-fangled faith as the film continues to be inundated with positive feedback from its viewers, religious and non-religious alike.

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# QUB chaplaincy celebrates with its newest graduates

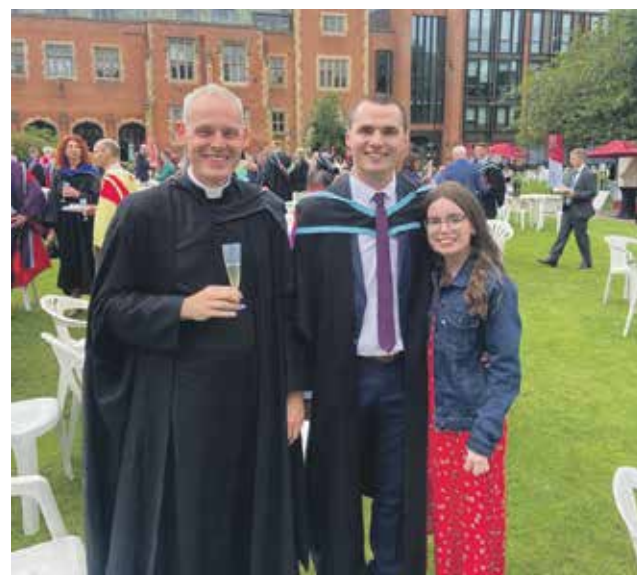
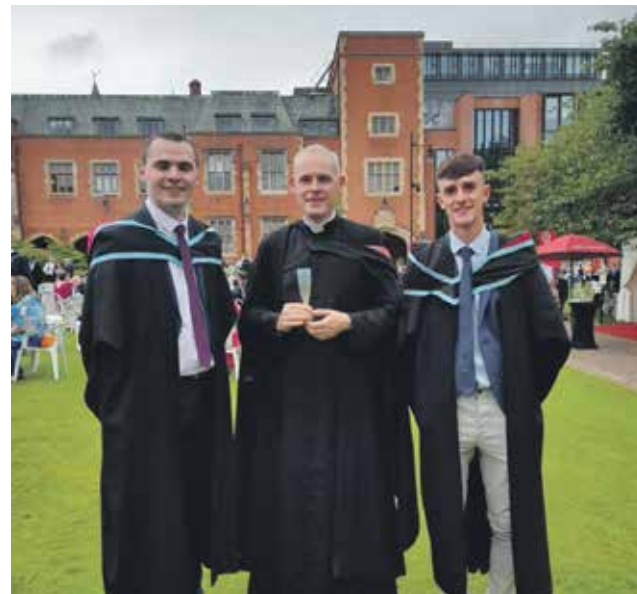
Ruadhán Jones

Members of Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplaincy celebrated in style as they graduated on July 7.

Chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan and Director of Campus Ministry Shannon Campbell joined the students as they marked the completion of their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the Belfast college.

"Your achievements are all the more impressive given the challenges you've faced these past years," the chaplaincy team told the graduates.

"Know that we are very proud of you and look forward to hearing of your continued successes into the future."



# Out&About

## Pilgrims following in Patrick's footsteps



**DONEGAL:** Happy Lough Derg pilgrims from Cork, led by Paddy O'Sullivan, are pictured on June 12 after completing the three-day pilgrimage at St Patrick's Purgatory.



**MAYO:** Members of the Ukrainian Catholic community make a pilgrimage up Croagh Patrick for the second year in a row, lighting candles for their intentions in the Reek's chapel.



**WATERFORD:** Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan and prospective parish faith representatives and members of the Ascend strategic task force meet to undertake the Ardmore cliff walk and for a social gathering afterwards on Sunday, July 2.

### INSHORT

#### Kerry diocese appointments announced

Two priests are to retire from the priesthood in Kerry diocese, as clergy face an "extra workload", the bishop of Kerry has announced. Bishop Ray Browne thanked Fr Denis O'Mahony and Fr Martin Sheehan for their "great service" over many years.

However, the retirements mean two more parishes will be without resident priests, meaning "extra workload on the priests", Bishop Browne added.

He said that "unfortunately, in some situations people will have less choice of Masses".

"It will require extra effort/sacrifice for people to gather with their community for Sunday vigil/morning Mass," said Dr Browne.

The diocese has one ordination coming up this year, with Mark Moriarty to be ordained on August 13.

"We hope to have a further ordination to the priesthood within 18 months, and a person commencing his first year of seminary formation in St Patrick's College, Maynooth in the autumn," Bishop Browne added.

#### Christian charities warn 'safety net' in doubt

The 'safety net' provided by Christian charities in the North is "in doubt" due to severe cuts proposed by Secretary of State Chris Heaton Harris, charities have warned.

The NI Coalition of Christian Voices Against Poverty, which includes Catholic laity and

clergy, challenged the budget cuts to public services in the North.

"As representatives of over 30 Churches and faith organisations (all of whom are charities) we are committed to offering a comprehensive range of holistic services and support in our communities," the coalition said. "However, we must highlight to you that these services are under threat because the demand is overwhelming."

The charities are now shouldering "greater burdens" as they step into the gaps created through "failing statutory provision in terms of both policy and finance".

"Now, with existing budgets stretched and cuts being proposed, even the 'safety net' of faith-based charitable care is in doubt," the charities warn.

#### Latin Mass pilgrimage to take place in September

The annual Latin Mass pilgrimage to Knock International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine has been announced for Saturday, September 2.

The pilgrimage will begin with the Traditional Latin Mass (Missa Cantata) in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at 2pm followed by the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

There will also be an opportunity to explore Knock Shrine, visiting the Apparition Chapel and the apparitions mosaic, while entry to Knock museum is free.

For more information see [www.knockshrine.ie](http://www.knockshrine.ie) or contact 094 9388 100.



**DONEGAL:** Fr La Flynn, prior of Lough Derg, begins his three-day pilgrimage on the island.

**DERRY:** Holy Family PS open their 'Paddy's garden' on June 29 in memory of the school's founding principal, Paddy McLaughlin and parish priest, Fr Paddy O'Kane.

**CAVAN:** Fr Ultan McGoohan PP presents the Benemerenti medal to Mr Seamus Watters in St Patrick's Church Shercock.



**DUBLIN:** Ricardo Hernández, Ambassador of Chile, and President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins are pictured with Fr Brendan Forde OFM, after he was presented with an award honouring his humanitarian work during the Pinochet dictatorship.

**TIPPERARY:** Students from universities around Ireland take some down time in Glencomeragh during a retreat based on the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, organised by the Thomistic Institute. Photo: Lauren Frawley.



**ANTRIM:** Archbishop Eamon Martin is pictured before celebrating Mass at the Cam Mass Rock in Toomebridge on the Lower Bann on Sunday, July 2.

**CAVAN:** Pictured are John Joe Farrell, Ned Carolan and John Joe McHugh from the Knights of St Columbanus and altar servers with the relics of St Oliver Plunkett at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt.

**CORK:** Fr Charlie Kiely PP blessed the Canon Donal Linehan Building at Newbury House, Mayfield, on Friday, June 30, when the building was officially named with members of Canon Linehan's family present. Fr Kiely is pictured with Lord Mayor Cllr Kieran McCarthy, who officially opened the building.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**CAVAN:** On Friday, June 23, Seamus Watters, Shinan, Shercock, received a Benemerenti medal from Fr Ultan McGoohan PP, awarded by Pope Francis, for his outstanding service to his parish. Pictured (from left) are Fr Antony Kidarathil, Fr Thomas Small, Fr Eamonn Lynch, Mr Watters, Fr McGoohan, Fr Charlie O’Gorman and Fr Oliver O’Reilly.



**CARLOW:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty is pictured with some of the 60 young people who attended Carlow Cathedral for the ‘taking my place in the tent’ gathering for those recently confirmed in Kildare and Leighlin diocese.



**NIGERIA:** Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey continues his visitation of Ogoja Diocese, blessing the site of a new school on July 3 as well as celebrating Mass in St Peter’s Parish, Bendi.



**CLARE:** Fr Brendan Quinlivan celebrates the 30th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with Bishop Fintan Monahan after lighting the Killaloe diocese pilgrimage candle.

**ANTRIM**

An evening of adoration, worship, Confession, prayer ministry, testimony and benediction takes place 6-8pm on the third Sunday of every month in St Joseph’s Church.

**ARMAGH**

An outdoor festival for families is to take place in the Shambles Yard on Thursday, August 24, from 5-7pm. It will include music and a wide range of entertainment for families throughout the diocese and beyond. Afterwards, a liturgy/prayer service will take place at 7.30pm in St Patrick’s Cathedral.

**CAVAN**

‘Mother Teresa: Her Love of Ireland and Lessons on Aging Well’ event takes place on Wednesday, July 19, 7-8.30pm at Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre.

**CLARE**

A memorial to deceased residents at St Michael’s Villas Grotto will be unveiled Saturday, July 29, at 4.30pm followed by a 70th anniversary Mass at 5pm and refreshments and music later.

**CORK**

A ‘Finding new life in the Holy Spirit’ gathering takes place Thursdays in the Holy Family Centre, Glenville, at 8pm.

Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions takes place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in ‘Carraig an Aifreann’ Mass rock, Glenville.

**DONEGAL**

Weekly rosary for priests takes place every Thursday evening at the Grotto beside the Pius X Adoration Chapel, Letterkenny, at 7.40pm.

**DERRY**

The Holy Family Padre Pio prayer group meets on the first Tuesday each month at Holy Family Chapel, Ballymagroarty. Begins with the rosary at 6.45pm, followed by Mass at 7.15pm and novena to St Pio directly afterwards. There will be a first class relic available for veneration.

**DUBLIN**

Rathmines parish young adult ice cream and prayer hike

to Bray head takes place Saturday, July 22. For more information contact eoin@rathminesprish.com.

**GALWAY**

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for young adults (18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8.15pm.

**KILDARE**

An 8 km walk on the Curragh Plains led by Bishop Denis Nulty takes place on Saturday, July 29. The walk begins at St Anne’s School, the Curragh at 12noon and concludes with a prayer service in St Brigid’s Church at 4pm. To register contact Aras Bhride on 045-521352 or email kildareparish@gmail.com.

**KILKENNY**

St John’s Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday’s Mass.

**LAOIS**

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Michael’s Church, Portarlinton after the 10 o’clock Mass each Tuesday, with rosary at 7pm followed by prayers to the Holy Face. The rosary is prayed each night at 7pm live on the webcam.

**LEITRIM**

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph’s Church, Leitrim Village.

**LIMERICK**

Adoration is held every Friday during the summer in the Adoration Chapel Abbeyfeale. It starts after the 10am Mass and continues until 7pm.

**LOUTH**

A cancer prayer support group meets in Bethany House of Prayer on Wednesday, July 19, from 11am-12pm. The group is for men and women who have or have had cancer, providing a time of relaxation, meditation and prayer, followed by tea/coffee in ‘Bethany’ House of Prayer, 34 Point Road, Dundalk, A91 W0C 9. Contact 042-9331602 in advance, numbers limited.

**MAYO**

Reek Sunday, the national pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick,

takes place July 30, with Masses every hour from 8am-2pm and Confessions from 7.30am-2pm.

The Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine takes place on Sunday, July 23 from 2-3pm.

**MEATH**

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver’s Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

**MONAGHAN**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Tuesday from 2-4pm in Muckno parish, St Mary’s Church.

**SLIGO**

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place each day 9am-5pm in St Bernadette’s Chapel, Sligo Cathedral.

**TIPPERARY**

Relics of Padre Pio coming to St Mary’s Church, Cahir on Saturday, July 29 at 6pm. Healing Mass followed by blessing with St Padre Pio’s relics.

**TYRONE**

The blessing of the graves will take place in Rouskey on Friday, July 21, at 7.30pm, and in Gortin on Saturday, July 22 at 6pm, with Mass in St Patrick’s, followed by a walk and prayer to the graveyard for the blessing of graves.

**WATERFORD**

On Saturday, July 22, the diocese of Waterford and Lismore will undertake a diocesan camino walk in honour of St Declan whose feast day occurs on July 24. There are three walks to choose from, and the paths are outlined on: <https://sites.google.com/mtmellerray.ie/pilgrimpaths>.

The annual Mass at St Declan’s Holy Well, Toor, Aghlish, takes place on Thursday July 27 at 12 noon. Confessions will be held before Mass.

**WEXFORD**

A men’s prayer group takes place in the adoration chapel, Bride St Church, Wexford town, every Wednesday evening at 8pm. It includes rosary, Lectio Divina and benediction.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Judge dismisses Texas monastery's lawsuit against Fort Worth bishop

● A Texas judge has dismissed a Carmelite monastery's civil lawsuit against Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson.

Without comment, Tarrant County District Court Judge Don Cosby, presiding from Fort Worth, issued a ruling June 30 granting the Fort Worth Diocese's motion to dismiss the monastery's complaint, which accused Bishop Olson of theft, defamation and abuse of power.

In response, Matthew Bobo, attorney for the Carmelite nuns of the Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Arlington, Texas, said his client would appeal the decision.

"We are shocked, extremely disappointed, and respectfully disagree with Judge Crosby's decision," Mr Bobo said in a statement.

### Suspended priest takes charge of Nigeria's Benue State

● His titles are many: priest, faith healer, exorcist, psychotherapist, and, since May 29, governor of Benue State in Nigeria.

Fr Hyacinth Iormen Alia, 57, bucked the guidance of his bishop last year to jump into politics as a candidate from the All Progressive Congress (APC), the party of newly elected Nigerian President Bola Tinubu.

Since his inauguration on May 29, Fr Alia has hit the ground running, determined to "reset," in his words, the course of his strife-torn state in the north-central part of the country.

Fr Alia was just last year

a parish priest never having held elective office and having spent at least eight years as a priest and hospital chaplain in the US. Yet his wealth of education and US experience seems to have helped him gain a landslide electoral victory on March 20.

Before his run for governor, Fr Alia was best known for his healing ministry.

"He healed people who were possessed by evil spirits, and he was very effective at it," Fr Vitalis Torwel, who attended seminary with Fr Alia, told CNA.

### Pope Francis gives first Arabic interview

● Pope Francis has spoken to *Al-Itihad* in his first interview granted to an Arabic news outlet, according to the United Arab Emirates newspaper.

In the July 3 interview, the Pope praised UAE authorities and spoke about interfaith cooperation, peace building, and his 2019 Document on Human Fraternity.

Francis also commented on a protester's burning of a Koran in Sweden on June 28. The Muslim holy book was burned by an Iraqi-born refugee outside a mosque in Stockholm. The incident has sparked outrage among Muslims around the world and led to a raid on the Swedish embassy in Iraq by Shia Muslim protesters.

After other recent permit requests were denied due to plans to burn copies of the Koran, the Swedish courts ruled that the protests should be allowed on the basis of freedom of expression, the BBC reported.

### Abortion restrictions led to 9,799 more births in Texas

● The six-week abortion ban in Texas, which outlaws abortions after the detection of a foetal heartbeat, led to nearly 9,800 more births in the state over a nine-month period than otherwise expected, according to research published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University found that Texas' abortion policies likely led to 9,799 more births between April 2022 and December 2022. The study was the first of its kind to investigate how abortion laws impact birth rates.

"There has been a lot of speculation about how restrictive abortion policies will affect the number of babies being born," Alison Gemmill, one of the lead researchers in the study, said in a news release published by the university.

"This research adds valuable information to that discussion," Ms Gemmill added

## Pope adds 21 cardinals to the Church's ranks

Pope Francis has named 21 new cardinals, announcing the names after his recitation of the Angelus with the Faithful in St Peter's Square July 9. He said he would formally install the cardinals during a special consistory at the Vatican September 30.

The new cardinals represent more than a dozen countries on five continents. Three of the new cardinals are current Vatican officials, three are current or retired apostolic nuncios, 13 are current or retired heads of archdioceses around the world, one is a rector major of the Salesians and one is a 96-year-old confessor in Buenos Aires. Six belong to religious orders; two of them are Jesuits.

Continuing a papal custom, among the new cardinals were three churchmen – two archbishops and a Capuchin Franciscan priest – over the age of 80, whom Pope Francis said he wanted to honour because they were particularly deserving because of "their service to the Church". Being over the age of 80, they are ineligible to vote in a conclave.

Before he read the 21 names, Pope Francis told the estimated 15,000 people in St Peter's Square that the diversity of the new cardinals "expresses the universality of the Church, which continues to proclaim God's merciful love to all people on Earth".

The order in which the cardinals are announced determines their seniority in the College of Cardinals, which has little practical effect except in liturgical processions.

## California church reopened three years after its destruction by arson

Grand re-openings don't always happen all at once. In the case of Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, which was nearly destroyed in a July 2020 arson fire, its reintroduction to the public has happened gradually, carefully, in stages.

First, there was the closing of the mission's 250th anniversary Jubilee Year in September 2022, when the restored adobe church opened its doors for a single Mass celebrated by Archbishop José Gomez – only to close them again so that artisans could complete delicate restora-

tion work on the church's interior.

This past Easter, celebration of Sunday Mass resumed, even while scaffolding covered the church's restored altarpiece, the crown jewel of the historic church.

Finally, on June 27, the scaffolding came down and the renovated church was ready for its first official closeup. More than 100 people – a mix of parishioners, members of the Gabrieliño-Tongva tribe, benefactors, and staff involved in the restoration project – were on hand to witness Archbishop Gomez

bless the church's new interior, as well as a transformed mission museum.

"It's beautiful," said parishioner Mary Acuña García, 71. "It looks like a brand new church." After Archbishop Gomez blessed the altarpiece, the ceremony moved outside, where tribal chief Anthony Morales led members of the Gabrieliño San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in singing traditional welcome songs, while remembering the approximately 6,000 Gabrieliño-Tongva natives buried on mission grounds.

## Church in Colombia to collaborate with govt in search for 'disappeared'

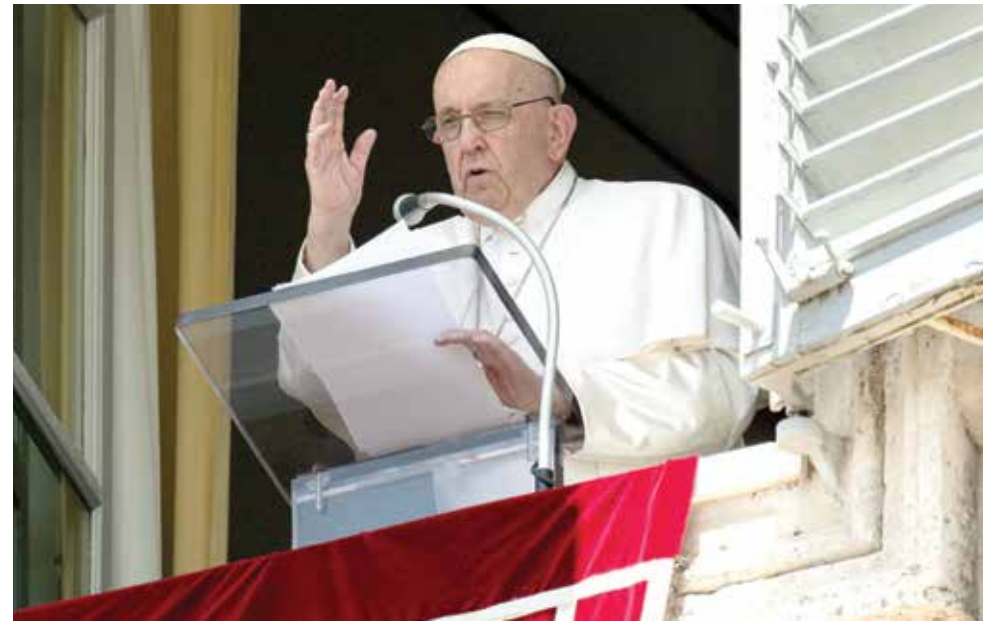
The Colombian Bishops' Conference (CEC) will formally collaborate in the search for disappeared persons as a result of the guerrilla warfare in the country. Their remains could be in common graves or buried in cemeteries but without having been identified.

In Latin America, someone who "was disappeared" means that the person was kidnapped and very likely killed, whether by organised crime or by left-wing or right-wing forces.

According to the Colombian government's National Centre for Historical Mem-

ory, between 1958 and 2012 (the year peace negotiations began), the armed conflict in the nation resulted in the deaths of 218,094 people, of which 177,307, or 81%, were civilians and 40,787, or 19%, were combatants. In addition, 27,023 people were kidnapped.

Msgr Héctor Fabio Henao Gaviria, the CEC delegate for Church-state relations, made the announcement after a meeting held June 27 with the director of the government's Unit for the Search for Disappeared Persons (UBPD), Luz Janeth Forero Martínez.



Pope Francis blesses the Faithful gathered in St Peter's Square at the Vatican after praying the Angelus July 9, 2023. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

Below is the list of the new cardinals:

- US-born Archbishop Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, 67.
- Italian Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches, 67.
- Argentine Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández of La Plata, Argentina, incoming prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. He will turn 61 July 18.
- Swiss Archbishop Emil Paul Tscherrig, the apostolic nuncio to Argentina, 76.
- French Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States, 77.
- Italian Archbishop Pierbatista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, 58.
- South African Archbishop

Stephen Brislin of Cape Town, 66.

- Argentine Archbishop Ángel Sixto Rossi of Córdoba, 64. He is a member of the Society of Jesus.
- Colombian Archbishop Luis José Rueda Aparicio of Bogotá, 61.
- Polish Archbishop Grzegorz Rys of Łódź, 59.
- South Sudanese Archbishop Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla of Juba, 59.
- Spanish Archbishop José Cobo Cano of Madrid, 57.
- Tanzanian Archbishop Pro-tase Rugambwa, coadjutor archbishop of Tabora, 63.
- Malaysian Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang, Malaysia, 71.
- Bishop Stephen Chow Sauyan of Hong Kong, 63. Born in Hong Kong, he is a member of the Society of Jesus.

• Bishop François-Xavier Bustillo of Ajaccio in Corsica, France, 54. Born in Spain, he is a member of the Conventual Franciscans.

- Portuguese Auxiliary Bishop Américo Alves Aguiar of Lisbon, 49.
- Spain-born Salesian Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, rector major of the Salesians, 62.
- Those named cardinal and over the age of 80:
- Italian Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, a retired papal nuncio, a former curial official and a respected historian of the Second Vatican Council, 82.
- Retired Archbishop Diego Rafael Padrón Sánchez of Cumaná, Venezuela, 84.
- Capuchin Fr Luis Pascual Dri, confessor at the Shrine of Our Lady of Pompei, Buenos Aires, 96.



Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## Light of the world



Dominican Fr Patrick Hyde presides over Eucharistic Adoration during a youth and family retreat in the US. Photo: OSV News/Mike Walsh, courtesy *Catholic Star Herald*

# Bishop Álvarez returns to prison after talks with dictatorship break down

Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos has been sent back to prison, July 5 after negotiations between the Nicaraguan bishops and the government of dictator Daniel Ortega broke down, Nicaraguan news sources reported.

According to ACI Prensa, Bishop Álvarez, of the Diocese of Matagalpa, in Managua, was released Monday, July 3 but returned to custody Wednesday, July 5 after he refused to comply with the Ortega regime's demand that he go into exile.

Following reports from Nicaraguan media and human rights activists that he was

released from 'Modelo Prison' on the Monday night, Bishop Álvarez, an outspoken critic of the communist Ortega dictatorship, has been returned to captivity.

Since his July 3 release Álvarez had been sheltered at the headquarters of the Nicaraguan Bishops Conference (Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua, CEN) in the nation's capital city Managua, according to Reuters.

On July 5, the Nicaraguan news agency Divergentes reported that CEN and the Vatican were negotiating with the Ortega government on Bishop Álvarez's behalf.

Nicaraguan human rights

activist Bianca Jagger said in a July 4 tweet that she was informed the regime intended to exile Bishop Álvarez to Rome.

Bishop Álvarez refused to be exiled unless ordered to do so by the Pope, according to exiled Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of the Archdiocese of Managua.

In a July 5 statement, Bishop Báez said that Bishop Álvarez had told him "he would not leave Nicaragua for any reason unless the Pope ordered him to do so".

"He added that it was a decision he made in conscience before God. Thus, there is nothing to negotiate,"

Bishop Báez said. "I know Rolando and he would never bargain away a decision of conscience that he made."

After speaking out against Ortega's ever-escalating persecution of the Catholic Church, Bishop Álvarez, 56, was arrested in 2022 and subsequently sentenced on February 10 after refusing to board a plane carrying 222 political dissidents, including four priests, who were flown to the US in an agreement with the State Department.

Bishop Álvarez was sentenced to 26 years and 4 months in prison on treason charges and had his Nicaraguan citizenship revoked.

## Latin patriarch of Jerusalem condemns Israeli military action

The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem condemned the Israeli government and urged peace and dialogue between both sides after the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launched air and ground attacks on the Jenin refugee camp in the Palestinian West Bank.

IDF soldiers conducted a 48 hour military campaign starting on July 3, which was meant to destroy "terrorist infrastructure," according to an IDF statement.

The strikes killed at least 12 people,

including five minors. More than 100 others were hospitalised and at least 20 were in critical condition. The military offensive also destroyed homes, buildings and roads throughout the camp and took out the water supply and the electricity grid in most of the camp. Thousands of Palestinians fled the attack.

Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who has jurisdiction over Roman-rite Catholics in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, condemned the military operation and

bemoaned the damage to the Catholic parish in Jenin.

"In the past two days, the city of Jenin has been subject to unprecedented Israeli aggression, which also caused a lot of damage to our Latin parish in Jenin," the patriarch said in a statement on Twitter. "We condemn this violence, demand a ceasefire, and hope for the pursuit of peace and dialogue to prevent other future unjustified attacks on the population."

# Vatican roundup

## Vatican publishes schedule for papal trip to Mongolia

● Pope Francis' visit to Mongolia August 31-September 4 will make him the first pope to visit this Asian nation, which is home to one cardinal and some 1,300 Catholics.

The focus of the visit will be encounters with leaders of government and civil society and meetings with local Catholics. There will be an ecumenical and interreligious gathering as well as a Mass and the inauguration of a charity centre.

Mongolia is a large country landlocked between Russia and China. Of the country's more than 3.3 million people, about 1,300 are Catholic. About 52% are Buddhist, about 3% are Muslim, 2.5% are Shamanist and 1.3% are Christian.

About 40.6% of the population identifies as "none" when it comes to religious affiliation, according to the CIA Factbook.

The Catholic Faith arrived in the 13th Century during the Mongol empire, but it did not flourish and missionary work came to a halt after a socialist republic was formed in the 1920s. With the introduction of democracy in 1991, Catholic missionaries returned and diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Mongolia were established in 1992

## New doctrinal chief says: 'I will do it my way'

● When asked about the controversy surrounding his recent appointment as the Vatican's doctrinal chief, Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández responded: "I will do it 'my way.'"

In his first interview since being named the new prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop Fernández spoke about handling clerical abuse, the German Synodal Way, same-sex blessings, and how he plans to approach his new role.

The archbishop of La Plata, Argentina, said that he had written a letter to the members of the

Vatican's doctrine dicastery explaining how he admired the current prefect Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, as a theologian and for his style of work, but "added that I will do it 'my way' as the Italian song says."

"Taking into account the Pope's call to synodality, I will first have to listen a bit before making any decisions, but there are certainly considerations from the letter the Pope sent me that we will have to apply in some way," Archbishop Fernández said in the interview with the Spanish Catholic website *InfoVaticana* published July 5.

## Cardinal: Vatican aims to see Russia return Ukrainian children

● The Vatican is developing a plan to return to Ukraine children illegally deported to Russia but is not jockeying to mediate the war, Pope Francis' peace envoy said upon his return from his mission to Moscow.

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, president of the Italian bishops' conference, told the Italian state broadcasters RAI July 3 that "humanitarian aspects," particularly revolving around the children affected by the war, were the focus of his meetings with Russian officials and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow June 28-30.

"There is no peace plan (or) mediation," he said, "there is a great aspiration that the violence ends, that human lives can be saved starting with the defence of the youngest."

At a book presentation in Rome July 4, the cardinal told reporters that he had already spoken to the Pope about his trip to Moscow and that the Vatican is currently working on a "mechanism" to help Ukrainian children that have been taken into Russia, *Vatican News* reported.

"The children should be able to return to Ukraine," he said. "The first step is verifying the children and then seeing how to return them, starting with the most fragile."



# Letter from Rome



Elise Ann Allen

## Clinton and Soros, new martyrs, indulgences and seminaries

Summer is traditionally a time for lazy vacations, yet at the Vatican it's business as usual, with Pope Francis engaging in at least four noteworthy acts all in one day – from decisions on indulgences to seminary formation, to a surprise meeting with Bill Clinton.

Though it was not announced beforehand, Pope Francis met with former United States President Bill Clinton in a private audience on Wednesday, July 5.

Clinton, who served as the 42nd president of the United States from January 1993 to January 2001, was joined by several other prominent American personalities, including Alex Soros of the Open Society Foundations.

Prior to visiting Rome, Clinton, who now dedicates his time to philanthropic activities and various other activities and public affairs, had made a July 3-4 visit to Albania, receiving a medal in gratitude for his support of Albania and NATO's intervention in the Kosovo War from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

Son of billionaire philanthropist and financier George Soros, Alex Soros was also present with Clinton in Albania. He is a chairman of the Open Society Foundations, a grant-making network established by his father that supports civil society groups promoting healthcare, education, and independent media, among other things, around the world.

Pope Francis had a brief conversation with Clinton and his delegation and exchanged gifts. In a brief video compilation published by Vatican News, the Vatican's official state-run media platform, the Pope gave Clinton a statue made at the Vatican representing the work for peace, and Clinton gave the Pope a personalised tray with the presidential seal, as well as a personal note.

Clinton previously visited the Vatican in June 1994, meeting with Pope John Paul II, just before the Vatican and the White House clashed over a UN conference in Beijing and whether abortion rights should be guaranteed under international law.

### Indulgences

In the lead-up to the third edition of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, which was instituted by Pope Francis in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and will be observed on July 23, the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary has announced the granting of plenary indulgences for the occasion.

Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the

Elderly in 2021, decreeing that it be held each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Ss Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Virgin Mary, and thus Jesus' grandparents.

To receive a plenary indulgence, the remission of temporal punishment for one's sins, a person must demonstrate detachment from sin, go to Confession, receive the Eucharist and pray for the intentions of the Pope.

Indulgences were granted for previous editions of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, and the tradition is being carried forward for this year's celebration, which holds the theme, "His mercy from generation to generation".

In the decree, dated June 15 and signed by Italian Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Major Penitentiary of the Apostolic Penitentiary, Piacenza said that for the occasion, a plenary indulgence would be available to all grandparents, elderly, and faithful who participate either in the Mass Pope Francis will preside over at the Vatican for the July 23 event, or who attend various functions for the event throughout the world.

On the same day, a plenary indulgence will also be available to the sick and elderly "and all those who, unable to leave their homes for a serious reason," participate spiritually in the "sacred functions" of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, particularly the broadcast of the Pope's Mass, and who offer their pain and suffering to God.

An indulgence will also be granted to those who follow the prescribed conditions and who "dedicate adequate time" to visiting an elderly person or a grandparent, either in person or virtually, especially those who are sick, abandoned or disabled.

Cardinal Piacenza asked that for the occasion, priests who have the appropriate faculties to do so make themselves available for Confession "with a prompt and generous spirit".

### New martyrs

On July 5, the Vatican also announced the creation of a new "Commission for New Martyrs – Witnesses of Faith" within the Vatican's Dicastery for Saints Causes.

In a letter accompanying the July 5 announcement, Pope Francis said he created the commission in the lead up to the 2025 Jubilee, which holds the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope".

The commission's task, he said, will be to "draw up a catalogue of all those who have shed their blood to confess Christ and to bear witness to his Gospel" and it will continue work begun during the Great Jubilee of 2000 to identify "witnesses of the Faith in this first quarter of a century and then continue into the future."

"Martyrs in the Church are witnesses of the hope that comes from



Former US President Bill Clinton holds a gift from Pope Francis during a private audience July 5, 2023, in the Vatican's Domus Sanctae Marthae where the Pope lives. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

faith in Christ and incites true charity. Hope keeps alive the profound conviction that good is stronger than evil, because God in Christ has conquered sin and death," the Pope said.

Reiterating a point that he has often made in the past, Francis said martyrs "are more numerous in our time than in the first centuries," and include bishops, priests, religious, laypeople and families all over the world who "with the gift of their lives, have offered the supreme test of charity".

Pope Francis referred to a special ecumenical celebration honouring the "new martyrs" held at the Colosseum in May 2000 and attended by the pope and representatives of various Churches and ecclesial communities from around the world to evoke what he has now termed the "ecumenism of blood," referring to

the fact that Christians facing persecution are not distinguished by Church, rite, or tradition.

He said that for the 2025 Jubilee, a similar celebration will be held, but insisted that he does not intend to create "new criteria" for the canonical definition of martyrdom, but rather wishes to continue the search already begun "of those who, to this day, continue to be killed just because they are Christians".

The search for new martyrs, he said, will involve not only the Catholic Church, but also those belonging to other Christian confessions who were killed for their faith.

This decision comes just two months after the Pope made the unusual move of formally inserting 21 Coptic Orthodox martyrs killed by ISIS into the Church's formal martyrology, marking one of the rare occa-

sions in which non-Catholics have been approved for veneration in the Catholic Church.

At the time, a Vatican official familiar with the move said that other cases were being considered in which this incorporation into the Catholic martyrology might apply.

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for Saints Causes, will also serve as prefect of the commission, and the dicastery's secretary, Italian Archbishop Fabio Fabene, will serve as its president.

The commission's vice president will be Italian layman Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio community, and its secretary will be Fr Marco Gnavi, a member of Sant'Egidio and pastor of the Basilica of St Mary in Trastevere, which is associated with Sant'Egidio. Fr Gnavi previously served as secretary to the new martyrs commission for the 2000 Jubilee.

In addition, there will be 10 other members, including Sr Nadia Coppa, head of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), and Jesuit Father General Fr Arturo Sosa.

**“To receive a plenary indulgence, the remission of temporal punishment for one's sins, a person must demonstrate detachment from sin, go to Confession, receive the Eucharist, and pray for the intentions of the Pope”**



# Catholic leaders warn suspension of food aid in Ethiopia is ‘death sentence’



**Ngala Killian Chimtom**

**A**s more people slip into extreme hunger in Ethiopia following a suspension of food aid by international agencies, Catholic leaders are calling for that aid to be resumed, especially in the hard-hit Tigray region of the country.

Bishop Tesfaselassie Medhin of the Ethiopian Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat said any delay in the resumption of food aid would be like issuing “a death sentence” on a people struggling to remain alive.

In a statement July 4, Caritas Internationalis complained that the suspension of food aid to the region has led people to be “starving to death”.

**“Ethiopia and USAID have since committed to a full investigation to uncover the faces behind the scheme”**

“In recent weeks, hunger has killed hundreds of people in Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region as a result of food shortage,” said Caritas Internationalis’ Secretary General, Alistair Dutton. “This is neither humane nor moral.”

Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of over 160 members of Catholic relief, development and social service organisations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide.

Both the US Agency for International Development and the UN’s World Food Program suspended food aid to Ethiopia on March 30 after reports alleging “widespread and systemic” theft of large amounts of food supplies meant for hungry people.

The humanitarian agencies didn’t assign blame for the thefts, but an internal memo from a group of foreign donors suggested that Ethiopian government officials might have been involved.

“Extensive monitoring indicates

**“Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of over 160 members of Catholic relief, development and social service organisations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide”**

A woman collects grain at a camp for internally displaced people in Adadle in Ethiopia’s Somali region. Photo: CNS/Claire Nevill, World Food Program handout via Reuters



this diversion of donor-funded food assistance is a coordinated and criminal scheme, which has prevented life-saving food assistance from reaching the most vulnerable,” the document says.

“The scheme appears to be orchestrated by federal and regional government of Ethiopia entities, with military units across the country benefiting from humanitarian assistance.”

## Investigation

Ethiopia and USAID have since committed to a full investigation to uncover the faces behind the scheme.

“Food diversion is absolutely unacceptable, and we welcome the government of Ethiopia’s commitment to investigate and hold accountable those responsible,” said World Food Program Executive Director Cindy McCain.

But the suspension of food aid is now taking a disturbing toll on

those who need it.

Of Ethiopia’s 120 million inhabitants, about 20 million of them live off the generosity of humanitarian organisations, as drought and years of conflict have left the country with less capacity to produce food on its own. The statistic is even more worrying in the Tigray region, where 5.4 of its six million inhabitants depend on humanitarian assistance.

Many people are now dying as a result of the suspension of food aid, according to Caritas Internationalis.

“For three months, millions of people in need of vital assistance have been deprived of food, drastically reducing the health and security of those already suffering from severe trauma and deprivation following a two-year war and prolonged drought,” Mr Dutton said.

While calling for a “thorough investigation” into the food theft, Caritas Internationalis is also advocating for the putting in place of “robust and transparent accountability mechanisms...to prevent future diversion”.

“But innocent people cannot be the ones who suffer in the meantime,” Mr Dutton adds, arguing that the millions of people who depend on humanitarian assistance must not be made to pay for “the egregious abuses committed by others”.

Caritas’ plea adds to the tide

of appeals coming from various Church denominations and structures.

In a joint letter addressed to the Government of Ethiopia, USAID and the World Food Program on June 16, Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ethiopia, and Rev. Kes Yonas, President of the Mekaneyesus Evangelical Church of Ethiopia, warned that “any further delay in taking the appropriate action to resume the food support will strongly affect the poor and the needy people that may lead to further catastrophe on the children, and vulnerable people like internally displaced persons”.

## Support

The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Abba Mathias, added his voice to the appeals, noting that suspending this vital support is resulting in severe suffering of people due to hunger. He urged the donor agencies to resume “your life-saving aid to our citizens who are in desperate need”.

Madhin insisted that the deaths of hundreds of people due to starvation cannot be the price to pay to fix the system.

While the investigations last, Ms McCain has promised that her organisation will continue to provide assistance to “children,

pregnant and breastfeeding women, school meals programmes, and activities for building the resilience of farmers and pastoralists”.

“Our first concern is the millions of hungry people who depend on our support, and our teams will work tirelessly with all partners to resume our operations as soon as we can ensure that food reaches the people who need it the most,” she said.

**“The government charged humanitarian agencies of trafficking arms to the Tigray rebels”**

Devastating famines and conflicts have afflicted Ethiopia for decades, and very often, food meant for hungry, vulnerable people has ended up in the wrong hands. The UN recently accused the Ethiopian government of using “starvation as a method of warfare” in its war against Tigray. The government charged humanitarian agencies of trafficking arms to the Tigray rebels.

“WFP is working closely with its UN and humanitarian partners and local stakeholders to reform the way assistance is delivered across Ethiopia and in all high-risk operational contexts where we work,” Ms McCain said.

# Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

## Letter of the week

# RTÉ top presenters should reduce salary by 50%

**Dear Editor,** Given the highly selective and well-orchestrated nature of information from our national broadcaster it seems to me that there is a grave danger that the general public are being duped into missing a central point in this whole controversy. The top-up payments to Ryan Tubridy are a minor

issue in comparison with the scandalously outrageous salaries of all RTÉ top presenters.

As an organisation that is funded by ordinary taxpayers one would expect that the views and opinions of fee-paying licence holders would be a consideration at all times. Over the years it has seemed to me that

complaints about various issues including exorbitant salaries were completely ignored but in the past few days an attitude has been displayed that is bordering on contempt.

I refer in particular to the manner in which top presenters were knocking each other over in an attempt to distance themselves

from this controversy. The casual manner in which they paraded in public their annual outrageous salaries was just appalling, given the fact that a mile down the road people are sleeping in doorways, not to mention the thousands of families who are struggling to keep house and home together in these financially difficult

times.

The aim of the exercise would seem to be to show how transparent and upright they all are and thereby hold on to their audiences. Rather than parading their fortunes as they did I would suggest that their approach should be apologetic, and if they are serious about credibil-

ity, with immediate effect they would be considering a reduction of at least 50% in salary which in some way would align them with workers in similar positions in comparable companies and organisations throughout the country.

*Yours etc.,  
Finian Connaughton  
Drumconrath, Co. Meath*

## No apparent end to the war in Ukraine

**Dear Editor,** Pope Francis has called repeatedly for an end to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has destroyed Ukrainian towns, causing the deaths of thousands of people, and displaced millions more from their homes. The papal envoy, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi has concluded three days of talks in Moscow aimed at identifying humanitarian initiatives which could open roads to peace. As of yet there is no apparent end in sight to the war in Ukraine. The Pontiff who told Russia's Orthodox Church Leader Patriarch Kirill not to be 'Putin's altar boy' bears an unfortunate resemblance with the leader of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, now exiled in Belarus.

*Yours etc.,  
Gerry Coughlan  
Dublin 24*



## Church is not subject to the changing tides of societal norms

**Dear Editor,** I write to express my concerns regarding the possibility of ordaining women as deacons and allowing married men to become priests, as highlighted in the recent article about the upcoming Synod of Bishops in Rome [*The Irish Catholic* – June 22]. While the Church should indeed strive to be more synodal and inclusive, I believe that these proposed changes could have significant implications for the integrity and tradition of the Faith.

The Church has a rich history and a well-established tradition, carefully nurtured over centuries. The all-male priesthood and the absence of female deacons are integral components of this tradition, deeply rooted in theological and sacramental principles. Altering these long-standing practices may risk undermining the Church's unique identity and jeopardise the spiritual authority conferred upon its ordained ministers.

Furthermore, the document itself acknowledges that the synodal assembly is not a representative and legislative body. It emphasises the importance of maintaining a spiritual foundation and understanding the synod as a liturgical assembly. This raises questions about the appropriateness of engaging in discussions about matters that may have far-reaching theological consequences without sufficient guidance and authority.

It is crucial to remember that the Church is not merely a social institution subject to the changing tides of societal norms. Rather, it is a divinely guided institution entrusted with safeguarding and transmitting the truths of the Christian faith. While there are certainly legitimate concerns for increasing lay participation and addressing various pastoral challenges, we must be cautious not to compromise the essence of our faith by hastily pursuing changes.

Instead, let us focus our efforts on nurturing a vibrant community that fosters the full participation of all the Faithful, regardless of gender or marital status. This can be achieved through enhanced opportunities for lay involvement in decision-making processes and promoting the dignity and unique contributions of women within the existing structures of the Church.

*Yours etc.,  
Brian O'Dowd  
Sandyford, Dublin 18*

## Standing up to biased reporting and manipulation

**Dear Editor,** Rory Fitzgerald referred to 'Hate speech laws' as being undemocratic and went on to say that "the Irish people are generally tolerant and decent but also long accustomed to the rigors of robust debate" [*The Irish Catholic* – June 15, 2023]. That was probably true at one time but has long since been abandoned. We are constantly subjected to biased reporting, more

like campaigning. When was the last time there was a balanced and robust debate on our airwaves? Newspapers are not better, excluding *The Irish Catholic* and a few others. It is campaigning we are subjected to and this was blatantly obvious during the run-up to the repeal of the Eighth Amendment. In fact, the only debate which took place on RTÉ was the first

one with Dr Peter Boylan, which the 'No' side won, and it was determined that no other would be allowed.

Indeed as Rory Fitzgerald stated "the free and open debate that is fundamental to democracy simply cannot happen if the State puts its citizens in fear of criminal prosecution for saying the wrong thing". That is happening at present and will continue to happen until

people can get it across to our politicians that this will not be tolerated and will result in retribution at the next election. How many will have the sense and courage to demonstrate that they will no longer accept such manipulation?

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Stewart  
Ardeskin, Donegal Town*

## RTÉ and questions of culture

**Dear Editor,** Count me in with Brendan O'Regan about RTÉ and the word trust [*The Irish Catholic* – June 29]. RTÉ used the word all week. I never had any – and refused to own a television set or pay the licence.

I don't think the licence-paying public understood the weapon it had against RTÉ bias, and when the public failed to use it RTÉ became the default moderator of social change over the last dozen years – redefining the family, expanding abortion, same sex marriage and adoption, surrogacy, and so on.

The fatal consequence of paying the licence fee was that we undercut any attempts to create a democratic counter-movement, and that failure only served to boost the existing vehicle of news and commentary, which revelled in the role of 'State broadcaster'.

We heard about culture, defined in terms of salaries and resources. But surely culture can mean fear, censorship, the agreed upon line. Certainly, pro-life people feel the line of questioning never reflected their values and background. I myself complained many times about the

disfranchisement of ordinary Irish opinion, and I know the reply I got: none.

What about the shallow content of the RTÉ schedule? Is that 'culture' (the de-education of our people)? Is that purely explained by the high salaries of a few, and shortage of resources?

Where was the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (Complaints) all last week? The culture is as wrong there as it is in RTÉ, its bar of proof far too high, its impenetrable sections and subsections hardly addressing the question of culture, at least not by my definition.

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

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, July 13, 2023

## The Sunday Gospel

The importance of location in the spiritual life

Page 34



# Seeking truth in the struggle with our sins

**S**incerity is the life blood of a robust spiritual life. It's one of those good habits I call "worldly virtues," meaning virtues essential for living a good life in the middle of the world – in this case, being honest about our weaknesses along with our strengths, our confusions along with our certainties.

### Honesty

But honest with whom? With God, obviously. With other people, no doubt. But first, as the basis and starting point for honesty with God and others, we have to be consistently sincere with ourselves.

That isn't as easy as it sounds. Not everything that passes for sincerity is the genuine article. Pope St John Paul II got to



**Sincerity with God, with others and with ourselves is vital in a healthy spiritual life, writes Russell Shaw**

the heart of the problem in its contemporary form in a 1993 encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* (*The Splendour of Truth*). He wrote of "currents of modern thought" that consider a judgment regarding a moral question to be true "merely by the fact that it has its origin in conscience".

Where that kind of thinking prevails, St John Paul said, "sincerity, authenticity and 'being

at peace with oneself" replace fidelity to objective truth.

He says that to have a "good conscience" – to be genuinely sincere – people "must seek the truth and must make judgments in accordance with that same truth" (*Veritatis Splendor*, No. 62).

Today, nevertheless, it's widely supposed that in matters of morality there is no such thing as objective truth. There's

your truth and my truth and everybody else's separate version of truth, and each one is as good as any other.

### Subjectivism

Instead of simplifying the quest for sincerity, this makes it nearly impossible to be sincere, meaning to be honest with God, with other people and with oneself. Seeking the truth and judging and acting in its light are

difficult enough for imperfect people in a fallen world. Today's moral relativism and subjectivism only make it harder.

There's a powerful illustration of self-deception and its cure in a memorable short story called *Revelation* by the Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor.

The central character is Mrs Turpin, a middle-aged farm woman who scorns poor whites, African Americans and anyone else who doesn't meet her personal standards. But one day a series of events shakes her complacency. At day's end, Mrs Turpin has a vision – "a vast horde of souls ... rumbling toward heaven".

Prominent in this multitude are "whole companies of white-trash," crowds of black people,



and “battalions of freaks and lunatics”. Bringing up the rear is a cluster of upstanding personages very much like herself.

“They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behaviour. They alone were on key. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces that even their virtues were being burned away. She lowered her hands and gripped the rail of the hog pen, her eyes small but fixed unblinkingly on what lay ahead.”

**“But it’s different with sins of omission – the failures of love, honesty, compassion and generosity that easily escape our notice”**

Most of us won’t have our eyes opened to the truth about ourselves in a manner as dramatic as that. It will be an arduous, lifelong process. “We often do wrong, and what is worse, we excuse ourselves,” says *The Imitation of Christ*.

Sincerity is crucial to overcoming this tendency to self-deception. People serious about the spiritual life generally do try to be sincere, knowing that a famous passage in the first letter of St John speaks the simple truth when it says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”.

But if we face up to our sinfulness, the passage continues, God “will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:8-9).

God’s forgiveness waits for our acknowledgment of sin. That acknowledgment is a key part of

being sincere.

Usually it isn’t difficult for good people to recognise the specific, concrete evil actions they perform. Sins like anger, stealing and lust are ordinarily hard to overlook.

But it’s different with sins of omission – the failures of love, honesty, compassion and generosity that easily escape our notice. For instance: a husband and father who’s consistently patient and kind with his wife and children but shortchanges them when it comes to giving them his time. He buries himself in unnecessary after-hours work (“That’s how you get ahead,” he rationalises) along with frequent socialising with colleagues (“We need to relax once in a while”). The result is a persistent neglect of home and family obligations that he chooses to ignore.

This man needs to take an honest look at what he’s doing. Or, more precisely, not doing. He needs to be sincere with himself.

And how crucial that is! St John Henry Newman in one of his homilies declares: “Without self-knowledge you have no root ... you may endure for a time, but under affliction or persecution your faith will not last.”

This, he reasons, is why people become “infidels, heretics, schismatics, disloyal despisers of the Church ... They endure not, because they never have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and they never have had experience of his power and love, because they have never known their own weakness and need”.

Examination of conscience and spiritual direction are the two principal means of acquiring sincerity. They are – or ought to be – key parts of the spiritual lives of all who aspire not just to be good enough to scrape by and make it into heaven after a long stay in purgatory, but who aspire to be

true saints, as the Second Vatican Council said they should. Neither is intended only for a small number of elitists. Supposing otherwise is a serious, destructive and all-too-common mistake.

Examination of conscience is ordinarily a daily affair, a few minutes spent in prayerful review of the day’s successes and failures in the ascetical struggle, capped off with a concrete resolution for improvement. Daily examination is remote preparation for sacramental Confession, which also should be part of the schedule – say, every two weeks. (Longer, more in-depth examination is appropriate on special occasions such as retreats and days of recollection.)

**“To get good results, we have to use the means”**

Spiritual direction also should be a regular exercise, perhaps once a month. The sessions needn’t be lengthy, but they should be honest and to the point: serious conversations with a reliable guide (a committed Christian, of course, who shares the same values and beliefs as oneself) that help us achieve a clearer picture of our spiritual selves than we’re likely to get alone. Direction doesn’t replace the Sacrament of Penance, but is complementary to it.

To get good results, we have to use the means.

Examination of conscience and spiritual direction are means to becoming and remaining sincere.

**i** Russell Shaw is the author of more than twenty books. He is a consultant of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and served as communications director for the US Bishops.



# An obsession with the past conceals present truths

## Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

The daily Office of Readings includes an excerpt from a homily by St Augustine, which may be a funny place to begin a film review. Nonetheless, I'm going to take an excerpt from it now:

"What fresh sort of suffering, brothers, does the human race now endure that our fathers did not undergo," the great saint writes. "Or when do we endure the kind of sufferings which we know they endured? Yet you find men complaining about the times they live in, saying that the times of our parents were good.

**“Owen Wilson’s character, called Gil, is afflicted with just the type of nostalgic bent that Augustine criticises”**

"What if they could be taken back to the times of their parents, and should then complain. The past times that you think were good, are good because they are not yours here and now."

Now, what might this have to do with *Midnight in Paris* (2011) directed by self-proclaimed atheist Woody Allen. Well, ultimately this film dramatises Augustine's theme, that our obsession with the past conceals truths about the present.

One of the veteran American director's later films, it stars Owen Wilson as a whimsical



Owen Wilson and Woody Allen are pictured at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011. Photo: Georges Biard.

American writer in Paris, who discovers a café which, if entered at midnight, transports him back 1920s Paris, then a hub of artistic creativity.

### Allen's films

Whimsy is not usually something I like in Allen's films. Too often his output of the last 30 years has

seemed self-indulgent, fantastical and false. Additionally, I don't like Owen Wilson's acting – the film's I've seen him in, usually raunchy boys comedies, were not impressive and he conveyed little character.

Therefore I watched the film with a degree of trepidation. But I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the performances, of the direction and of the story, which funnily enough encourages a rejection of whimsy and fantasy of the type described by St Augustine.

**“The film opens with a delightful love letter to Paris, much as his more famous film *Manhattan* praises the eponymous city”**

Owen Wilson's character, called Gil, is afflicted with just the type of nostalgic bent that Augustine criticises. As a successful but disillusioned Hollywood screenwriter, he pines for an era of great writers, a golden age back in the past when true art was appreciated.

Being able to travel in time to meet literary critic and author Gertrude Stein, musician Cole Porter and poet and filmmaker Jean Cocteau is a dream come true for Gil. He shows Stein a novel he's working on, which begins with the line "Out of the Past" was the name of the store, and its products consisted of memories: what was prosaic and even vulgar to one generation had been transmuted by the mere passing of years to a status at once magical and also camp."

Gil displays a lack of self-awareness in writing this novel, regarding his own fantasies about the past and about his inattention to the present. He is in Paris with his fiancée Inez (Rachel

McAdams) and her family, and it is not long until their wedding.

It's clear to everyone except Gil himself that their relationship isn't working. But his mind is simply too stuck in the past, too fixated on a fantasy, to see the truth before him. But while in 1920s Paris, he discovers that his malaise is a shared one. 1920s Parisians pine for the Belle Epoque of the mid 1800s, the Belle Epoque types wish to be back in the Renaissance.

### Moral lesson

It's a moral lesson, which – spoilers – Gil actually takes on board. It turns the film from whimsy back to life, and I think marks it out as one of the more engaging of Allen's later films as a result.

His quality as a director is never in doubt. The film opens with a delightful love letter to Paris, much as his more famous film *Manhattan* praises the eponymous city. It sets the tone, somewhat wry, genteel, and deliberately beautiful.

While the villains, ie. Inez and her family, are too cardboard cutout – the bourgeois Republican types Allen can't stand – the scenes in 1920s Paris come to life. Allen isn't interested in accuracy per se, but in mood and playfulness. It's a good conceit, I think, and one he works out well, allowing a satisfying resolution and some surprising twists, which I hope I haven't spoiled.

Owen Wilson basically gives his best Woody Allen impression, which while annoying, is better than nothing – it tends to fade away when Gil actually has something to do. And what he has to do is learn as St Augustine warns: "The past times that you think were good, are good because they are not yours here and now."

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



A St Kateri Tekakwitha statue.

## St Kateri Tekakwitha: The first Native American saint

If you're at all like me, the distances the Gospel has reached constantly astounds you. This week's saint, remembered and celebrated by the Church July 14, is a good reminder of that. Born in 1656, St Kateri Tekakwitha was the child of a Christian, Algonquin mother and a Mohawk father, both of whom, along with her brother, died of smallpox when Tekakwitha was just four years old. She would bear the marks of the disease for the rest of her life, as she was scarred by it and suffered impaired vision as a result (her name, Tekakwitha, translates as 'she who bumps into things').

She was adopted by her reportedly anti-Christian, Mohawk uncle after she'd been orphaned by the disease and so was raised as all young women of that time and place were. That is, until visiting Jesuit missionaries impressed her with the lives they lived and the faith they professed. She could only admire in silence as a girl as the priests weren't particularly welcome, but their example clearly stuck

with her as Christianity would shape the rest of her life.

Too young to previously express her Christian desire, Tekakwitha bided her time as she closed out her teenage years and entered her 20s, she requested instruction in religion and Baptism from one of the Jesuit missionaries, Jacques de Lamberville, who ministered to the Iroquois people. She was baptised 'Kateri', which is the Mohawk form of 'Catherine'.

Just as Christ promised, Kateri knew suffering. Her decision to become Christian wasn't welcomed by the people she'd grown up alongside. Her Christian prayer was viewed with contempt and suspicion, her observance of Sunday rest considered laziness. When things looked like they were moving from passive hostility to real potential for violence, however, Kateri was advised by a missionary to leave on a 200-mile journey to a Jesuit mission and Native Christian village south of modern-day Montreal, in Canada.

She did so, and arriving at the Christian

Indian mission of St Francis Xavier at Sault Saint-Louis, where she came to be known as 'Lily of the Mohawks' in acknowledgement of her tenderness, kindness and faith. Here, she lived out a life of prayer, penance and service alongside fellow Native American Christians, embodying a faith that impressed the missionaries deeply.

By 1680, however, Kateri's health was failing, and she died on Holy Wednesday of that year. Her beatification process (which of course led to her canonisation in 2012) was aided by the vast documentation of her life done by Fr de Lamberville and his fellow missionaries. The process began in 1932, and she was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980.

Then, after evaluating the case of a boy who was healed of an infection of flesh-eating bacteria following prayer to St Kateri for her intercession, Pope Benedict XVI recognised her as a saint. Thus, 'Lily of the Mohawks' became the first of the Church's Native American saints.

# The call to encounter

Mike Nelson

**W**e can learn much from Scripture and the teachings of the Church about the value of encountering those different from ourselves.

Certainly, Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (Jn 4:4-42), his dining in the tax collector's home (Mt 9:10-17) and his parable about the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) speak clearly about recognising the God-given dignity and flaws present in each human being.

## Culture

More recently, St John Paul II repeatedly travelled throughout the world to encounter those of different faiths. And in his October 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, on *Fraternity and Social Friendship*, Pope Francis – as he has throughout his pontificate – encouraged “a culture of encounter” in a world suffering from the Coronavirus pandemic and ideological differences.

Such a culture, Pope Francis said, means “a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations”.

All good and necessary. But in this time of polarisation in our various countries and Church, there is also something to be said for personal experience, and how it teaches us – reaches us, really – in a way that simply reading about what others have done and said may not.

I would like to share one such story about “encounter”.

It takes place 60-some years ago, in a San Fernando Valley suburb of Los Angeles. It involves three girls – a Catholic and two Jewish sisters, each from nine to 11 years old, who were playing together in front of the Catholic girl's house after school.

Harmless, right? By today's standards, we would hope so. But in the early 1960s, Catholics had long been instructed, in schools and in Church, that the less associating they did with people from other faiths, the better. The Second Vatican Council and its documents *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Nostra Aetate* on ecumenical and interfaith relations – telling Catholics, in effect, to treat non-Catholics with love and respect – hadn't yet happened.

**“Like me, my wife treasures her public school education experience, which afforded us the opportunity to encounter people of all faiths, races and ethnicities”**

Which meant nothing to the girls playing hopscotch and jump-roped that day – until two other Catholic girls came walking down the street and encountered them. These girls, knowing who all three were, faith-wise, immediately told the Catholic girl, “You shouldn't be playing with these other girls! They're Jewish, and the Jews killed Jesus!”

How did the Catholic girl respond to the other two girls, who were bigger and older than she? Did she recoil in horror at what she was doing and beg of the other two, “Please, don't tell father or sister”?

Not exactly. Without hesitation, she shouted, “These girls didn't kill Jesus! These girls are my friends, and I'm gonna play with them!” Her fellow Catholics, clearly not expecting that reply, said nothing more and continued on their way home.

That's the story the girl's

mother, who saw this from her kitchen window, shared with me years later, after I had married her daughter. Today, six decades after her encounter and nearly 46 years after we married, I am happy to say that this child of God has lost none of her passion for “encountering,” befriending and loving those who are different from her – or for speaking her mind when she finds injustice in her midst.

Like me, my wife treasures her public school education experience, which afforded us the opportunity to encounter people of all faiths, races and ethnicities. And while, like me, she loves her Catholic Faith, she finds her world broadened, her life enriched and her faith in Jesus strengthened when she encounters people of different faiths who share her love of all humanity, who treat everyone with kindness and who respect the God-given dignity present in all creation.

## Faith experiences

A few years ago, we took a two-week group tour of Italy, among two dozen folks of different backgrounds and, clearly, different faith experiences. Significantly, we realised, it was the first time after close to 35 years of almost day-to-day involvement in Church life and ministry that we had spent this much time with mainly non-Catholic people.

It was one of the most rewarding experiences of our lives. And not because of the amazing sites and the wonderful food – amazing and wonderful though they were – but because of the people. Kind, friendly, generous, loving people with whom, I told them at our final group dinner, we would happily travel with again in a heartbeat.

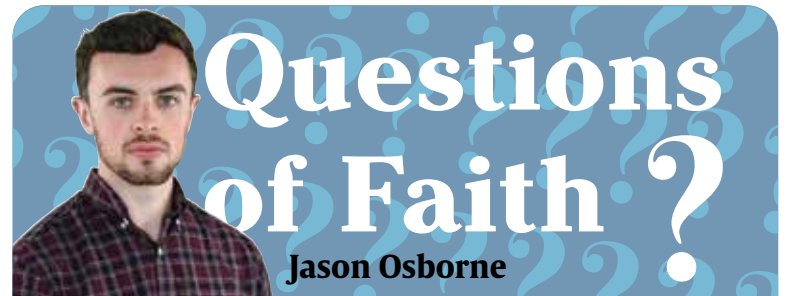
We had, you might say, come outside of our “Catholic cocoon” to rediscover the beauty and dignity with which God imbues all creation.

At the risk of sounding impertinent and even heretical, I would humbly point out that Jesus, as far as we know, never said, “become Catholic”.

He did say, “Follow me,” as in, “Do as I do. Walk where I walk. Do not be afraid to encounter those outside your neighbourhood, your faith community, your sphere of influence. Look beyond the externals and discover my presence within them – and allow them to discover my presence within you.

“And honour these ‘others’ by treating them as I would – with kindness, love and respect. For they, like you, are the creations of my Father.”

**i** Catholic journalist Mike Nelson writes from Oxnard, California.



## Questions of Faith?

Jason Osborne



## Do Catholics treat Mary as an idol?

**S**pend any time around Protestant denominations as a Catholic and you're likely to be asked: “What's the deal with Mary?” Or depending on who you're chatting with, you might be more aggressively accused of “worshipping” Mary. Our initial reaction might be something along the lines of laughing it off, insisting that of course we don't worship Mary. But then they start asking about whether or not we pray to her, and whether or not this or that Marian prayer sounds like it's not veering into dangerously adoring territory.

I've seen, both on and off-line, Catholics lose their certainty ‘under fire’ that we don't worship Mary. We previously discussed whether or not Catholics worship saints in this column, but it's worth discussing the Mother of God alone as she belongs to a different category of saint and as such, she has inspired more devotion, art, music and prayer than any other.

Think of the words of the Salve Regina, for example: “Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope...” Our life? Our hope? When cited these words (and many, many others) by Marian-sceptics, it's easy to lose your cool and start casting suspicious glances at the statues of Our Lady adorning our churches. You need not worry, though, because to reiterate – Catholics do not worship Mary, and the Church has never instructed anyone to.

The origin of the Church's understanding of Mary lies in its understanding of her – frankly – unique relationship with Jesus. In giving God her ‘Yes’ when it came to bearing his Son, she freely responded to an unrepeatably gift: the opportunity to become the Mother of God, made flesh. Any woman who has carried a child and given birth, or any husband who has lovingly watched over the pregnancy and

childbirth process, knows that the relationship is as deep as can exist between two people.

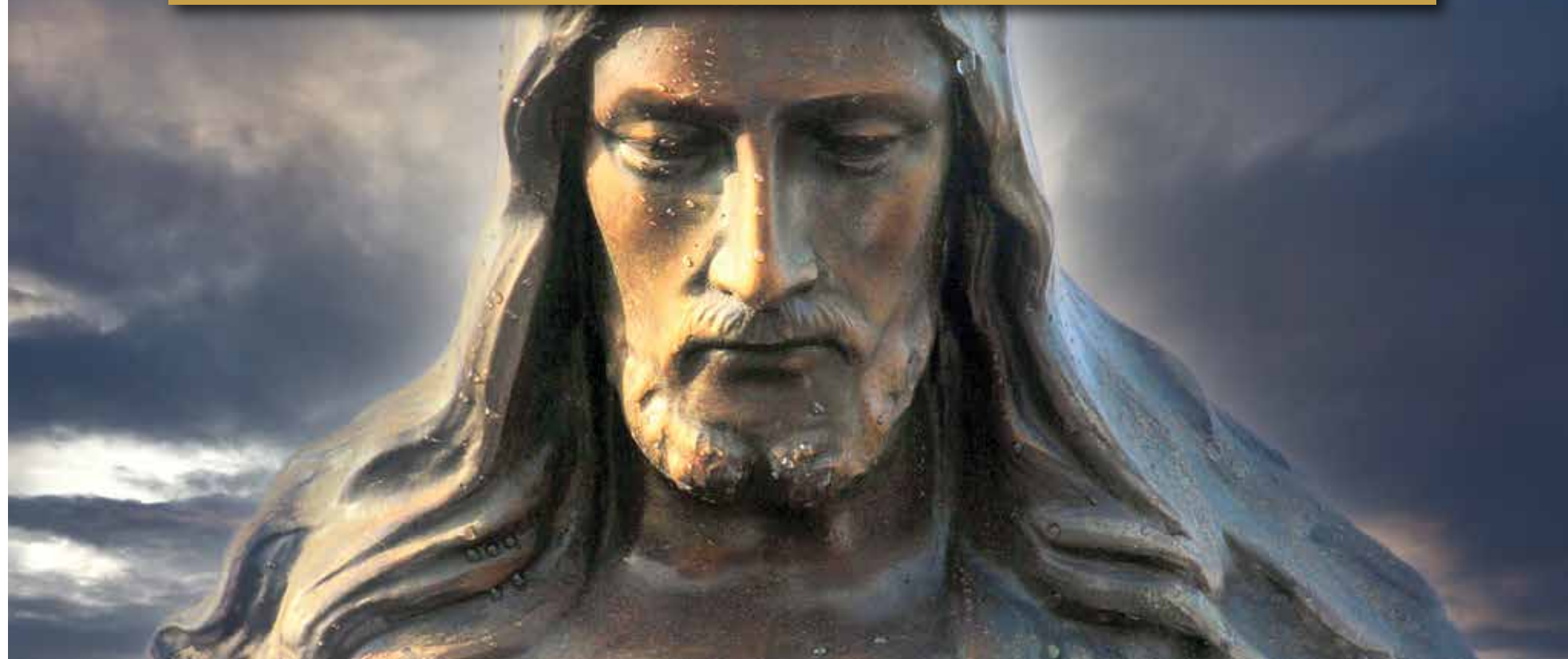
The difference between each of us, though, and Jesus and Mary, is that their unique relationship is a source of devotion and, indeed, hope for us. The Church proclaiming the ‘Communion of Saints’ as it does, which is the community of the Faithful, both living and dead, united in the body of Christ – his Church, understands that Mary is as available spiritually to you or me as anyone else. Because we encounter her here on earth through prayer, icon, statue, song or painting we might be unconsciously inclined to think of her as just another influential, but dead and gone, historical figure.

That is not the Church's Faith, however. The Church understands she is more alive than we are now, and as such, it makes as much sense to ask her for prayers as it does to ask any of the people in your prayer group or parish. In fact, it makes even more sense, as she is currently enjoying the fullness of life God intends for all of us. As Jesus mother, it doesn't take much imagination to understand that just as he listened to her intercession here on Earth (as he did at the wedding feast at Cana), so too, does he listen to her intercession in heaven.

To sum up, Catholics treat Mary with an extremely heightened form of the veneration that we afford to saints, by virtue of her unique and unrepeatably relationship with Christ. Our ‘adoration’, though, we reserve for God alone. All of the devotion and prayer lavished upon Mary by the Church and Christians throughout the ages do nothing to detract from Christ's role as saviour and redeemer, and in fact does an awful lot to recognise the sanctifying effect he had on everything – and everyone – he touched.



# Relating to both Jesus and Christ



**F**or too many years, for me, Christ was simply Jesus' last name: Jack Smith, Susan Parker, Jesus Christ. Intellectually, I knew better; but practically, both in my private faith and as a theologian, I functioned as if Christ were simply Jesus' surname. Whether in prayer, writing or preaching, I almost always used the two names together, Jesus Christ, as if there were a perfect identity between the two.

There's not. Jesus is a divine person inside the Trinity, someone who once walked this earth as a flesh and blood individual and who now is with the Father as part of the Godhead. And although he is also the key component inside the reality of Christ, Christ is more than Jesus.

Christ is a mystery which also includes us, Jesus' followers on earth, the sacraments, the Word (Scripture) and the Church. Scripture is clear: We are the Body of Christ on earth. We don't represent Christ, replace Christ, or are some vague mystical presence of Christ. We are the Body of Christ, as too are the Eucharist and the Word (the Christian scriptures).

## Distinction

That distinction has huge implications both for our private faith and for how we live out our faith in the Church. To simply identify Jesus and Christ impoverishes our discipleship, irrespective of which name (Jesus or Christ) we most relate to.

Let me begin with a *mea culpa*: In living out my faith, I more easily and existentially relate to Christ



Fr Rolheiser

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than to Jesus. What that means is that I have a belief in and a lifelong commitment to the reality of the resurrection, to Jesus' teaching, to the Church, to the sacraments and to the Christian scriptures. I believe that participation in the Eucharist is the single most important thing I do in life, that the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest moral code ever written, and that the Church, despite all its faults, is the Body of Christ on earth.

## Struggle

But, unlike many of the faith-filled mystics and saints that I read, and unlike many of my Evangelical

friends and colleagues, I struggle to have a real sense that Jesus is an intimate friend and lover. I struggle to be the beloved disciple in John's Gospel who has his head reclining on the breast of Jesus and for whom one-to-one intimacy with Jesus relativises everything else. I know that Jesus is real and wants a deep one-to-one intimacy with each of us; but, truth be told, I struggle to actually feel that most days and to make it the central part of my discipleship. Commitment to the Eucharist, Jesus' teaching, and the Church are, save for graced affective moments in prayer, the heart of my faith and lived discipleship. Habitually I relate

more to Christ than to Jesus.

And, let me risk adding this: I believe that is also true for various Christian Churches. We have Churches that relate more to Christ and Churches that relate more to Jesus (not that either excludes the other). For example, my own Church, Roman Catholic, is a very Christ-centred Church. Ecclesial community, Eucharist, the sacraments, and Jesus' teachings are key. No true Roman Catholic can ever say that all I need is a private relationship to Jesus. That is also true of most Anglicans, Episcopalians, and mainline Protestants. It is less true for Churches within the Evangelical family, where the salient mandate in the Gospel of John to have an intimate relationship to Jesus more easily becomes the central tenet within Christian discipleship.

It is not that the different Churches exclude the other dimension.

## Private prayer

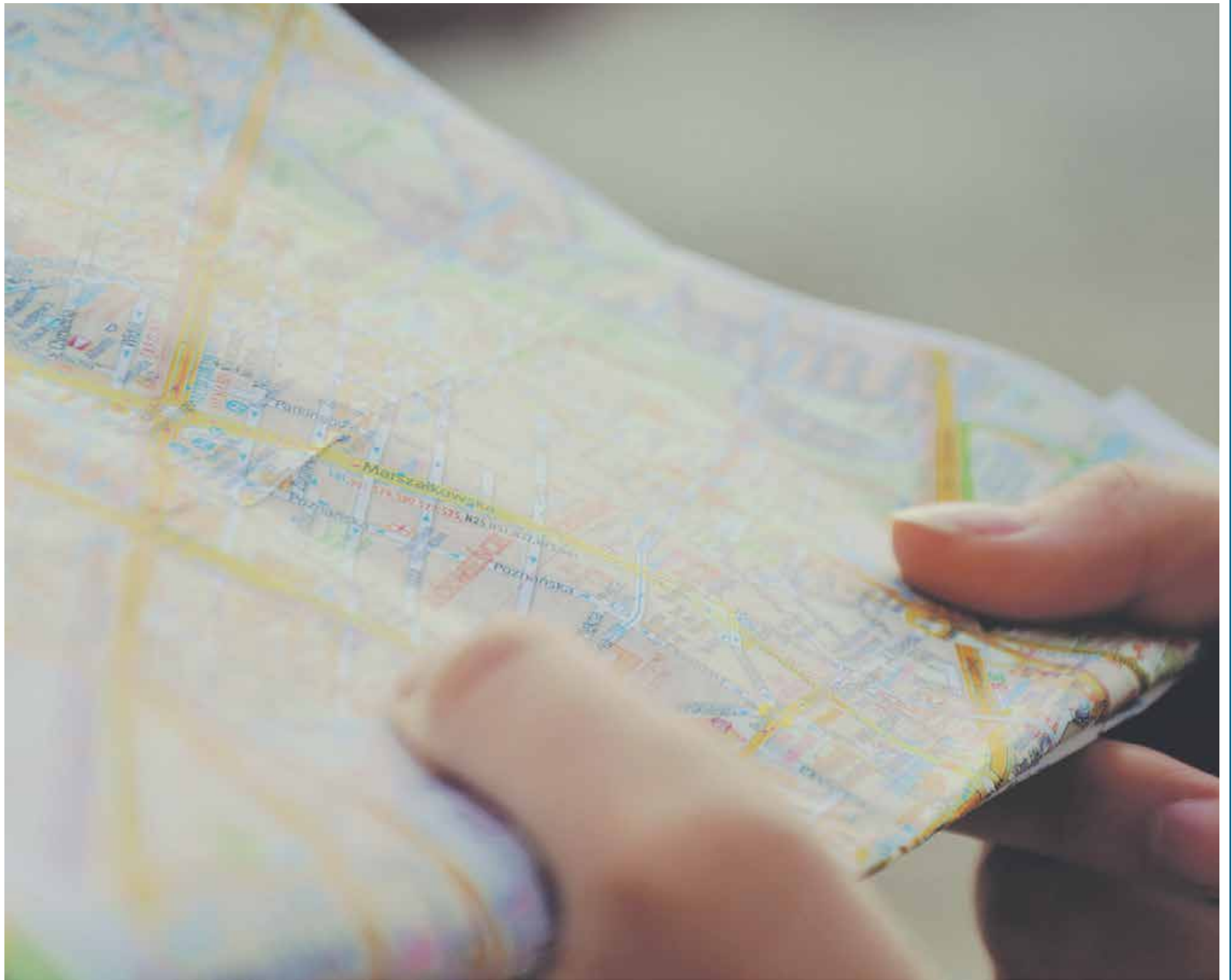
For example, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and mainline Protestantism emphasise private prayer as a means to relate to the person of Jesus as an intimate friend and lover. To this, Roman Catholicism brings its rich (sometimes over-rich) tradition of devotional prayer. Conversely, Evangelicals, with their strong focus on Jesus, use communal services of the word and preaching as their major way to relate to the wider mystery of Christ.

We have something to learn from each other. Churches, just as individuals, must be about both, Jesus and Christ, that is, focused on a personal relationship with Jesus and participation in the historical incarnational mystery of Christ, of which each of us is part. We must be focused on Jesus, but also on the Eucharist, the Word, and the community of believers – each of which is the Body of Christ. Our faith and discipleship must be both deeply private and visibly communal. No Christian can legitimately say, my discipleship consists wholly in a private relationship to Jesus, just as no Christian can legitimately say, I don't need Jesus, I only need Church and the sacraments.

We are disciples of Jesus Christ, both the person and the mystery. We are committed to a set of teachings, a set of scriptures, the Eucharist, and to a visible community we call the Church – as well as to a person named Jesus who is the heart of this great mystery and who wants to be our friend and lover.

**“I believe that participation in the Eucharist is the single most important thing I do in life, that the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest moral code ever written, and that the Church, despite all its faults, is the Body of Christ on earth”**

# The importance of location in the spiritual life



July 16, 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
 Is 55:10-11  
 Ps 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14  
 Rom 8:18-23  
 Mt 13:1-23

## The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



A real estate agent friend often reminds customers that location is the most important element in buying or selling land. The location of a home or business makes a difference as it determines the value of real estate in both the short and long term. When it comes to buying or selling property, it's "location, location, location!"

This Sunday's readings draw our attention to a different kind of location – the spiritual location of the

heart, mind and will, and the eternal value and significance of what is taking place there. Everything in our spiritual life depends on our spiritual location on where we are in relationship to God. On whether we are close to or far from God's word and love.

### Flourishing

God's word is a living source of divine grace that prepares us to be rich soil, flourishing in a good spiritual location. The prophet Isaiah focuses on the priority of God's saving work in

our lives when he says, "...so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."

### “The parables engage reflection on discipleship as a call to conversion amid life's joys and challenges”

When we are in the right spiritual place, God's word can and does wonders in our lives!

The psalmist offers the same spiritual advice in his hymn of praise to God as he says, "the seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest".

In the Gospel reading, Jesus is followed by a crowd so large that he gets into a boat and begins to teach in parables as the crowd stands along the shore. And like any good teacher, Jesus uses vivid imagery that echoes in the daily life of his listeners. Jesus' parables are images, painted with words, that invite his audience to understand how the kingdom of God relates to their daily lives.

### Reflection

The parables engage reflection on discipleship as a call to conversion amid life's joys and challenges. Through the parables Jesus offers his disciples, and us, his loving invitation to conversion of those interior locations of the

mind and heart. When the disciples question Jesus on why he speaks in parables, he directs their minds to the attitude of openness to God's words and deeds as a necessary condition of discipleship.

We may have heard the parable of the sower and the seed so many times that we overlook its powerful lesson for daily Christian discipleship. The seed falls in various locations – on a path, rocky ground, among thorns, and rich soil.

Each location in which the seed falls results in a different outcome.

Jesus' lesson highlights the generosity of God, the sower of the seed, who seeds lavishly, in the hope that it will reach good soil – the best locations.

God's word is a transform-

ative presence in our daily life, just like a seed that is planted, it takes root, grows strong, and bears good fruit. By remaining close to the spiritual location of God's word we encounter the grace of God that gradually transforms the soil of our hearts and minds. We discover our true dignity and our life's meaning and purpose in God, as we pray with joyful hope, "speak to me, Lord".

Question: How will Jesus' words take root in the soil of your mind and heart today?

**i** Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Searching for the ethical dimension to reporting the Ukraine war

One of the many concerning news items last week was the decision of the US government to supply cluster bombs to Ukraine. And this was after they had previously condemned Russia's use of these weapons, banned in 123 countries (not including the USA or Russia), because of their indiscriminate nature and the dangers they pose to civilians.

**Reya El-Salahi** (Times Radio, Saturday) was the only programme I heard that dealt in depth with the ethical issues involved, and it was a worthwhile and enlightening exercise. Vittorio Bufacchi from the philosophy department in University College Cork teased out the complex issues involved, and he based his analysis on what we commonly know as 'just war theory'. There were two issues, he said – whether a war is justified in the first place, and subsequently the conduct of the war. On the first matter, he reckoned the Ukrainians were justified as they were acting in self-defence. The use of cluster bombs was more complex. Of relevance were the non-explosion rates – how many of these bombs were likely to fail and therefore be a danger to civilians for a long time. He pointed out that the Ukrainians weren't likely to use them in Russian territory, but in areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian forces – any civilians in danger would be their own, and so they were likely



A US Navy F/A-18C Hornet launches from USS Nimitz carrying CBU-100 cluster bombs.

to take great care in their use. We shall see. I just dread the thought of child victims.

Turning to a different kind of war RTÉ finally got around to looking at the hate crime bill in detail on **Prime Time** (RTÉ One, Thursday), a bill which, it was announced during the week, would be paused until autumn – a good idea as it gives thinking time. All credit goes to people like Senator Michael McDowell and Sen. Rónán Mullen who gave it much more scrutiny in the Seanad than it got in the Dáil. Senator McDowell was one of those contributing – he thought the legislation as drafted was in danger of

extending criminality to areas now considered free speech, or "argumentative free speech". He spoke of the constitution and a right to be offensive, which sounded strange – would it not more accurately be a *freedom* to be offensive? Liam Herrick of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties thought the bill was "poorly drafted" and might criminalise private activity in the privacy of the home, in relation to having certain materials, even if you hadn't disseminated them. Dr Seamus Taylor of Maynooth University trusted the organs of the law to be sensible, and in relation to a majority being opposed in the open consulta-

tion phase spoke of 'far right' groups and "orchestrated responses". Hmm...this was all in the filmed report that preceded an interview with Minister for Justice Helen McEntee who is promoting the bill. I wasn't convinced by her reassurances – these would have no force in law, and are just subjective interpretations, albeit the intentions behind the bill. But what if there are unforeseen consequences... there are already *foreseen* consequences and the filmed report told us that critics are saying that the Government seems to be increasingly closed to the idea of amending it to address the concerns.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND

Channel 4, Saturday July 15, 6.20am

The whole family meet the school counsellor and a local clergyman, Fr Hubley, to uncover what – and who – is to blame for the constant bickering between them and Michael's parents.

#### SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

BBC One Sunday July 16, 10.30am

Sean Fletcher and Holly Hamilton host the show that puts the heart and soul into Sundays, bringing faith and ethics to the topics of the day.

#### I FORGIVE

EWTN Tuesday July 18, 7pm

This series on to the power of forgiveness begins with host Immaculée Ilibagiza sharing her own journey to forgive those who terrorised her family and her country during the Rwandan genocide that occurred in 1994.

At one stage she said "I think it's very clear". It wasn't.

What was clear was the commitment of newly-ordained Fr Shaun Doherty who was interviewed on **Sunday with Miriam** (RTÉ Radio One). I had actually stumbled on his similar interview with Andrea Gilligan on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk, Friday) but didn't realise who it was. Fr Doherty had been a DJ for nearly 30 years with Donegal's Highland Radio – a texter said his good listening skills as a broadcaster will stand to him in the priesthood. He came across as modest and unassuming, but a clear thinker. He had considered priesthood when a youngster, and had been profoundly influenced

by Fr Neal Carlin who had worked with people during the Troubles and people with addiction issues.

Finally, on the **Nine News** (RTÉ One, Saturday) the trans and intersex pride march, with 'hundreds' got one minute and 29 seconds of coverage, with four interviews and one platform speaker. Last week the Rally for Life, with 'thousands', got 15 seconds, no interviews and no platform speakers. (On Twitter, RTÉ gave this a full video, but the pro-life rally just got a still image).

RTE has more problems that you would think from the current controversy.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## Mr Charles, the Hungarian

Described as an eccentric opportunist, 'Mr Charles, the Hungarian' came to Dublin in March 1742 when he tried to steal a march on George Frideric Handel who had arrived in the city some months earlier. Taking up residence in Abbey Street, Handel remained in Dublin until the following August.

During this time he finished his oratorio *Messiah* that had its first performance in the Fishamble Street Musick Hall on April 13, 1742. A resounding success, the work remains a staunch choral favourite across the globe.

Handel's visit created a lasting impression but that



George Frideric Handel

of 'Mr Charles, the Hungarian' has virtually sunk into oblivion even if, in his day, he was a master of the French horn, chalumeau, a precursor of the clarinet, and the clarinet itself.

But why am I mention-

ing 'Mr Charles, the Hungarian' who flourished between 1734 and 1756? Well, a snatch of his music forms part of the opening concert of the compact Dublin HandelFest 2023 in St Patrick's Hall of Dublin Castle on tomorrow – Friday July 14. Involving the Irish Baroque Orchestra, conducted by the redoubtable Peter Whelan, the Fest also celebrates the rich cultural heritage left by Handel's stay in the city in 1741/42.

The event in St Patrick's Hall presents a reconstruction of a dazzling virtuosic concert that Mr Charles directed at the Smock Alley Theatre in May 1742, just a few weeks

after the première of Handel's *Messiah*.

The programme on July 14 follows that Smock Alley occasion with the overture to Handel's *Il pastor fido*, the third of his *Concerto Grossi* Op 3 and a selection of his Water Music in an early edition by the English printer/publisher, possibly of Irish descent, John Walsh.

Dating from 1717, the Water Music had its first performance on a royal barge taking King Charles I on an evening cruise up the Thames from Whitehall to Chelsea. Delighted with the music the monarch requested that it be repeated several times

en route and be played again during his return.

As well as Handel at St Patrick's Hall, there will be music by some of his continental European contemporaries – Johann Adolf Hasse, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Lorenzo Bocchi and the rediscovered 'Mr Charles, the Hungarian'.

The Italian cellist and composer Bocchi made his way to Dublin from Edinburgh. While here he played an important role in the early history of music publication including the first collection of Irish tunes printed by William Neale, who had a music shop in Christ Church Yard and was partly responsible for

the Musick Hall in Fishamble Street.

The short Fest's closing recital in the Chapel Royal on Sunday evening July 16th brings Claire Duff and Malcolm Proud with three Handel violin sonatas and his harpsichord Suite No 4. There are further novelties through pieces by the Italian composer Nicola Mattheis who was active in London in the latter part of the 17th century.

Making a name for himself with his imaginative and brilliant performances, Mattheis was responsible for changing English preference in violin playing from a French to an Italian style.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## A poet's search for true faith through an Achill Island childhood

**Song of the Goldfinch,**  
by John F. Deane  
(Veritas, €19.99 pb/  
£17.50pb)

Thomas McCarthy

**H**ave we forgotten how universal our secure and graceful Irish Catholic life once was? Well, that is, as the song goes, if your Dad was rich and your Mom was beautiful – true wealth, of course, was then to have a ‘respectable’ father and a devout mother.

In this sense, John F. Deane, future poet and onetime candidate for the priesthood, had struck gold as a boy. His father ran the social welfare office and his mother was a teacher in one of the most beautiful places on God's earth, Achill Island.

### Dreamtime

This was the late 1940s, an Irish dreamtime of comely maidens and frugal missionary priests. Socially, his childhood was an idyllic beginning; such origins in a secure Catholic homestead would produce children who were mentally prepared to inherit and command Ireland.

And exceptional children such as poet John F. Deane would go on to proclaim Ireland to literary Europe: “And so, baptised. ... I was a Christian, a couple of days into my being, a Catholic, a Roman Catholic. I inhaled all time and cosmos at that moment. ... I grew, as it used to be said, and waxed strong in that air and with each breath, in the faith that was handed to me, with gentleness, but with



A vision of Achill Island in the springtime of childhood, a window on the cosmos.

emphasis.”

That word ‘emphasis’ is brilliantly chosen. *Song of the Goldfinch* is the story of emphatic faith, of life lived in the boundless certainties of Christian teaching. “The Christian faith is a wonderful offering,” he goes on, “oceans-wide and deep, sky-pure and rich with the fragrances of earth.”

Here in these pages he has written the story of that spiritual unfolding, the journey from instinctive and inherited faith into seminary and adulthood. As a child in Achill he had served at Mass, and was even then profoundly sensitive to Catholic atmospheres: “when the incense was smoking perfectly and when the

gilded monstrosity was hoisted into the light and the priest intoned his goldfinch song, then the world was gilded too, and eyes and ears and something deep inside the heart were fully satisfied.”

### Sensitivity

The clairvoyant sensitivity that he brings to these atmospheres is one of the joys of his book. This Achill faith led him to poetry as surely as childhood formation had propelled him into the seminary. Faith and poetry were inextricably linked.

He spent five years boarding at Mungret College, a place described with pity and lively good

humour. Then, blindly following the example of his brother Declan, who was two years into a novitiate with the Jesuits at Emo Court, the young poet found himself with the Holy Ghost Fathers in Co. Tipperary: “And we were 48 young men, innocent and wide-eyed, perhaps amongst the very last large group in this country to have entered a novitiate of missionary fathers.”

The five years of this novitiate, moving from Tipperary to Kimmage to study English and French at UCD, are wonderfully described. They were the years when he formed a differentiated faith and lost his vocation – or, rather,

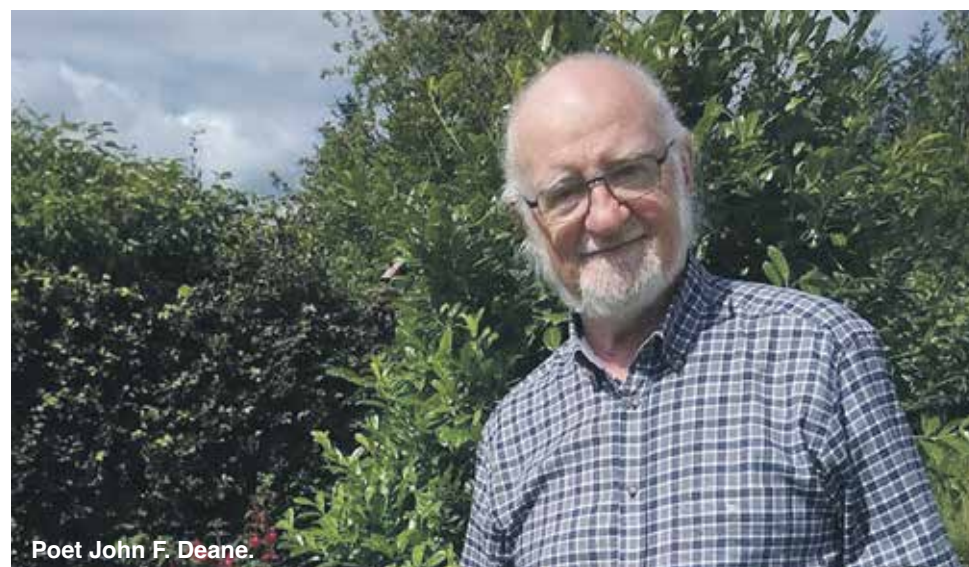
admitted that he didn't have one.

Hugely influenced by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Hymn of the Universe*, he developed a more complex, personal Catholic faith, and this faith was deepened by his writing a Master's thesis on the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.

*Song of the Goldfinch*, then, is the lyrical memoir of a rare being in our humanist world, a Catholic poet.

### Quest

His is a searching quest, from the severities of St Augustine to all that is simply “done by mankind with a good heart”. The life he describes is best expressed in this wonderful insight: “the poem is an epiphany, a little eucharist of the Word”. The epiphanies and songs of faith in this book have brought John F. Deane to Francis, both the saint of Assisi and the present Holy Father. In writing it all down the poet has created a wonder.



Poet John F. Deane.

**“I inhaled all time and cosmos at that moment. ... I grew, as it used to be said, and waxed strong in that air and with each breath, in the faith that was handed to me, with gentleness, but with emphasis”**

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 search of ‘Ulysses’: a tale of two cities



Relic of an imperial past – Miramare Castle, built by Archduke Maximilian

Trieste Joyce School 2023

Felix M. Larkin

James Joyce lived in Trieste from 1905 to 1915, albeit with one interval of nine months spent in Rome in 1906-7. He moved to neutral Switzerland because of the First World War in 1915, but returned briefly to Trieste in 1919 before going to Paris where he would remain for almost the rest of his life.

He began writing *Ulysses* in Trieste in 1914, and it is generally acknowledged that that great novel was inspired as much by Trieste as it was by Dublin. It is truly a tale of two cities.

### Joyce School

It is appropriate, therefore, that for the past 25 years Trieste has hosted a week-long Joyce School – attracting scholars, students and general readers of Joyce’s work. It was founded by John McCourt, a UCD graduate who has published widely on Joyce, particularly on Joyce’s period in Trieste.

He taught at the University of Trieste and at the University of Macerata, and is currently rector of the latter institution. He is still one of three organisers of the school, the others being Laura Pelaschiar (University of Trieste) and Richard Barlow (Nanyang Technological University).

This year the school ran from June 25-30 inclusive, with an opening ceremony on the evening of June 25 and three lectures on each of the following five mornings and seminars in the afternoons on *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. I was honoured to give one of the lectures.

I spoke about the *Freeman’s Journal* newspaper, in whose offices the Aeolus episode of *Ulysses* occurs. My purpose was to explain how much of that chapter is based on fact,

though Joyce’s experience of the *Freeman’s* office relates not to 1904 – the year in which *Ulysses* is set – but rather to 1909 when, on a visit to Ireland from Trieste, he had occasion to call into the office and see at first hand “how a great daily organ is turned out” (to quote from *Ulysses*).

John McCourt, in his contribution to the School this year, spoke about another Triestine author, Italo Svevo, and his friendship with Joyce. It seems that Svevo, the son of a Jewish German father, was partly the model for Leopold Bloom.

Other lectures included one by Nicholas Allen, a native of Belfast now teaching in the University of Georgia (USA), on the importance of water and the sea in Joyce’s writings. He argued that the fact of Dublin and Trieste being port cities helped shape Joyce’s work.

Richard Barlow, Sam Slote (TCD) and Ronan Crowley (Aarhus University) considered aspects of *Finnegans Wake*. Barlow sought to locate the *Wake* in the context of the Irish Revival, concluding that it should be regarded as a post-Revival text. This chimed well with Crowley’s argument that the sources of data that Joyce used in composing the *Wake* were more cosmopolitan – than for his earlier writings.

A highlight of this year’s School was a presentation by five MA students at the University of Trieste on the subject of trees, plants and flora in *Ulysses*. They have been exploring this eco-theme – one that resonates strongly with our concerns about climate change – in a study group under the guidance of Laura Pelaschiar.

My visit to Trieste was not, of course, all work. I had ample time to explore that extraordinary city, part of the old Austro-Hungarian empire

when Joyce first went to live there – as indeed it had been for the previous 500 years. Trieste was then one of the world’s great ports, the main gateway to the sea of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

### Snatched

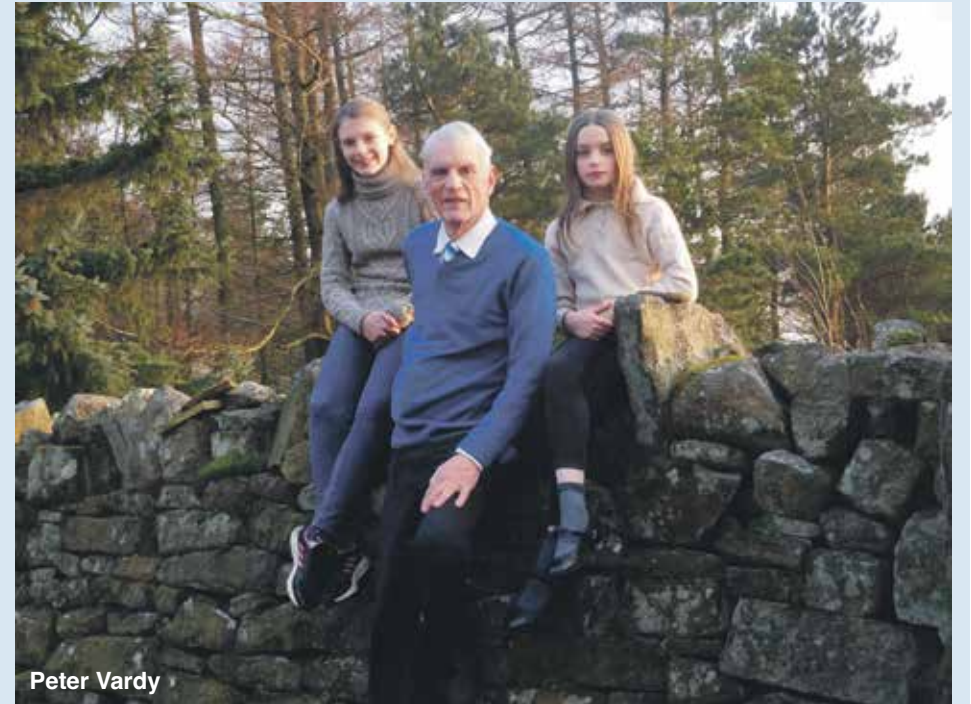
When that empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, the city was “snatched from its geography” (in the words of Jan Morris, author of *Trieste and the Meaning of Nothingness*) and ceded to Italy. Thereafter the port went into decline, having no obvious purpose within Italy. The character of the city today, and especially its architecture, retains much of its Habsburg heritage.

The scion of the Habsburg dynasty most associated with Trieste was Archduke Maximilian, younger brother of Emperor Franz Joseph I. He built the romantic castle of Miramar – in Italian, *Miramare* – on a promontory outside Trieste.

Sadly, he did not live to enjoy it. During the American Civil War, the French invaded Mexico with a view to re-establishing a European presence on the American continent. They installed Maximilian as the new Emperor of Mexico, but the venture failed miserably and Maximilian was executed by firing squad by the Mexicans – the subject of a famous painting by Édouard Manet.

There is an impressive statue of Maximilian in the Piazza Venezia in Trieste, near the Museo Revoltella where the Trieste Joyce School was held. Curiously, when Maximilian departed for Mexico in 1864, the Irish novelist Charles Lever was the British Consul in Trieste – and he died there in 1872. He is another link, in addition to Joyce, between Ireland and Trieste.

## The natural wisdom of children



Peter Vardy

**The Philosophers’ Daughters**, edited by Peter Vardy (Darton, Longman and Todd, £12.99/ €15.50)

Peter Costello

Peter Vardy was vice-principal of Heythrop College, University of London, and now runs the largest conferences for students of Philosophy and Religious Studies in Britain.

In this thought-provoking book he has gathered a number of questions posed by his two young daughters, Petra and Thora, on life and belief and attempted to answer them himself, and also gathered additional answers from 54 leading figures in a variety of fields. The result is a fascinating book that makes one reflect on one’s own views and beliefs.

The children ask many questions about different subjects, ie., the Big Bang Theory and what could have caused it, the suffering in the world, what is the point and meaning of life, does the idea of seeking truth make sense any longer since everyone seems to have their own truth? There are many questions, some more profound than others.

I often find myself asking questions about God and an afterlife. Some days my questions lead to darkness and doubt and I feel depressed and utterly bewildered. I find myself desperately seeking reassurance and serenity. I cry out to God to help my unbelief.

### Atheism

Of course, there are no satisfactory answers to be found in atheism. Atheism simply can’t be lived by. It can’t be put into practice. The well-known atheist writer, Albert Camus, believed that life had no meaning and that morality was purely relative and subjective. Sartre held similar views.

In spite of their views, both were passionately against racism and colonialism. So they believed that something was evil. Many atheists necessarily believe that there are no spiritual or immaterial aspects to human life and therefore the concept of freewill and objective morality makes no sense.

It’s a delusion. Quite simply this belief of atheism can’t be lived by. Civilisation would collapse if this atheistic philosophy were implemented. Good and evil would become totally meaningless and there would be no objective difference morally between Hitler

“Relativism and Post-modernism now hold such sway that the idea of absolute Truth is derided and mocked in many quarters. Truth matters – indeed, perhaps, it matters more than anything else”

and Francis of Assisi.

The whole notion of crime and courts of law would be rendered meaningless if we have no freedom and are merely conditioned robots. As I say, such a philosophy is totally absurd and impossible to live by.

I have often thought about the anthropic principle and the theological fine-tuning argument and I find them convincing. William Paley, the English clergyman and Christian apologist, used the analogy of the watch and the watchmaker to point to God the Creator. If you found a complicated watch lying on the ground you’d immediately assume that it had a watchmaker. It didn’t create itself.

In reply to a question about truth and whether it matters any longer Peter Vardy says: “Relativism claims that the days of absolute Truth (notice the capital ‘T’) are over and everything is relative to culture. Postmodernism claims that there is no longer any meaning of a painting, a novel, a piece of journalism – everything depends on culture, sexuality, gender, race and similar factors.

“Relativism and Postmodernism now hold such sway that the idea of absolute Truth is derided and mocked in many quarters. Truth matters – indeed, perhaps, it matters more than anything else. It may be difficult to arrive at truth and there are different perspectives on many issues all of which need to be recognised and all of which may contain an element of truth but this does not undermine the claim that absolute Truth exists”.

Petra and Thora are obviously intelligent children, and are very well presented to ask the question we would all like to have answers to, and so they ask very important questions. Their questions certainly made me think, as they will every reader of this book.



# Leisure time

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

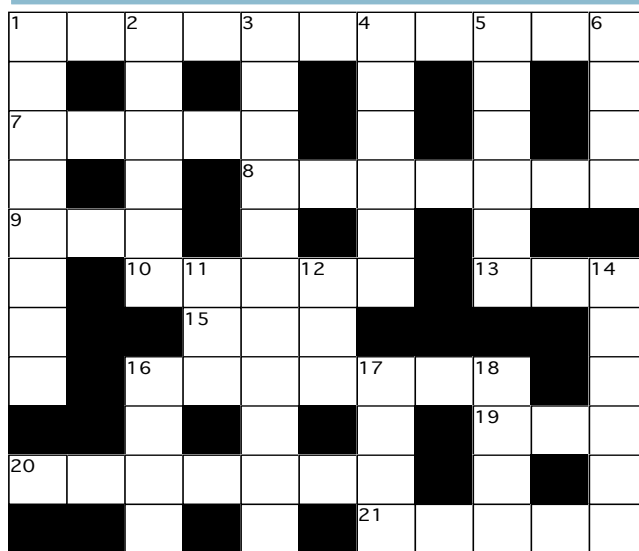
Trócaire

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](mailto: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

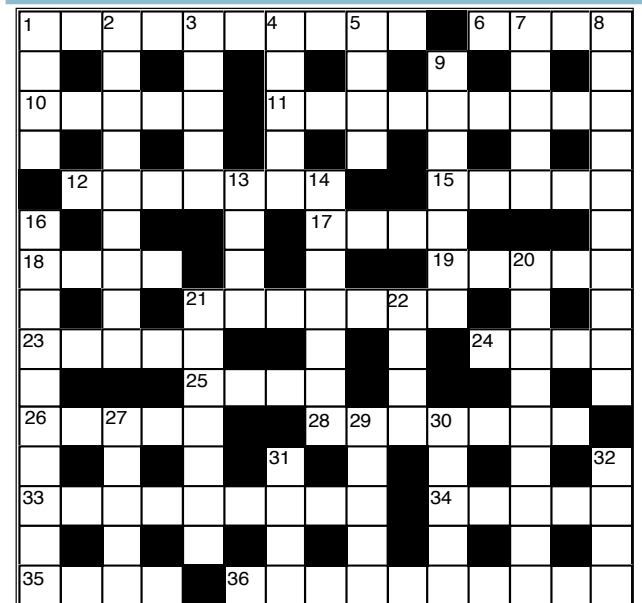
Gordius 491



- Across**
- 1 You might put bright colours on these parts of your hands (11)
  - 7 Once more (5)
  - 8 Island country in the North Atlantic (7)
  - 9 Sick (3)
  - 10 Sail this for pleasure (5)
  - 13 Turn it on to get water (3)
  - 15 Sound a dove makes (3)
  - 16 Snake (7)
  - 19 Ancient (3)
  - 20 Goes red with embarrassment (7)
  - 21 Piece of furniture (5)
- Down**
- 1 Tall, pink bird which often stands on just one foot (8)
  - 2 In a tidy way (6)
  - 3 The second-largest town in Wexford (11)
  - 4 Most recent (6)
  - 5 Baby (6)
  - 6 You can build a castle with it on the beach (4)
  - 11 It's usually the best card (3)
  - 12 Jump on one foot (3)
  - 14 Small pool of rainwater (6)
  - 16 Broth (4)
  - 17 Direction opposite to West (4)
  - 18 Place where someone is buried (4)

### Crossword

Gordius 619



- Across**
- 1 Significance - of being Earnest? (10)
  - 6 Mr Redding sang 'Try a Little Tenderness' (4)
  - 10 Colourful part of a flower (5)
  - 11 Essential skydiving equipment! (9)
  - 12 Imitator (7)
  - 15 Ancient Roman marketplace, or a place where matters may be discussed (5)
  - 17 Natural coral formation (4)
  - 18 Style of hairdo (4)
  - 19 Inclined (5)
  - 21, 35a & 36a You do this as part of your preparation for Penance (7,4,10)
  - 23 Looking at (5)
  - 24 See 3 down
  - 25 Donated (4)
  - 26 Durable, rugged (5)
  - 28 Dense area of bushes (7)
  - 33 Great praise for having a unit load redistributed (9)
  - 34 Manmade waterway (5)
  - 35 See 21 across
  - 36 See 21 across
- Down**
- 1 Game involving observation and an initial letter (1,3)
  - 2 Fragrant mixture of many a 10 across (9)
  - 3 & 24a Team speed competition (5,4)
  - 4 The first letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
  - 5 Wagon, dray (4)
  - 7 More loyal and faithful (5)
  - 8 Your father's new wife is this to you (10)
  - 9 Brief fracas (7)
  - 13 Cajole (4)
  - 14 Brass instrument (7)
  - 16 Relax, proceed at your own pace (4,2,4)
  - 20 Leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War (9)
  - 21 Brainy type (7)
  - 22 Member of Hitler's party (4)
  - 27 Monolith also known as Ayer's Rock (5)
  - 29 Measure horses in them, but don't use them in soccer! (5)
  - 30 Desert plants (5)
  - 31 For many years, he was dictator of Yugoslavia (4)
  - 32 Adhesive (4)

### SOLUTIONS, JULY 06

GORDIUS NO. 618

**Across** - 1 Archbishop 6 Good 10 Death knell 11 Venezuela 12 Pennant 17 Asti 18 Aces 19 Earns 21 Mongrel 23 Tango 24 Spin 25 Nice 26 Meant 28 Dominic Behan 33 Momentous 34 Agile 35 Sett 36 Challenger

**Down** - 1 Adds 2 Chameleon 4 Seven Deadly Sins 5 Owns 7 Oxeye 9 Ezekiel 13 Alto 14 Tangled 16 Pantomimes 20 Repairing 21 Montana 22 Exam 27 Admit 29 Ousel 30 Inane 31 Loch 32 Fear

CHILDREN'S No. 490

**Across** - 1. High jump 6. Ask 7. Ice-skates 8. Sip 9. Spear 11. Missed 13. Opera 14. Learn 15. Errors 18. Little 19. Sentry

**Down** - 1. Hailstone 2. Geese 3. Joker 4. Material 5. Skip 6. Assistant 10. Airport 12. Danced 16. Ree 17. Sly

### Sudoku Corner

491

Easy

1	9						2	7
6	7	8						
				1	9			5
	4			6		2	1	9
				3				
9	5	6		4				7
3			1	2				
						1	9	6
7	8						4	2

Hard

		8	3			9		7
			6	9			4	
						8		3
		3		4	6	7		
		5		2			1	
		6	1	3		2		
7		2						
	8			6	7			
5		1			2	6		

Last week's Easy 490

5	7	2	9	3	4	6	1	8
4	9	8	5	1	6	7	2	3
1	6	3	8	2	7	5	9	4
8	3	1	6	7	2	4	5	9
7	5	6	4	8	9	2	3	1
9	2	4	3	5	1	8	6	7
3	1	5	7	6	8	9	4	2
6	8	9	2	4	3	1	7	5
2	4	7	1	9	5	3	8	6

Last week's Hard 490

5	7	4	6	8	3	1	9	2
1	2	6	4	5	9	8	7	3
8	9	3	2	7	1	5	6	4
6	4	7	9	3	8	2	1	5
3	1	2	5	4	6	7	8	9
9	5	8	7	1	2	4	3	6
4	3	9	1	2	7	6	5	8
2	8	1	3	6	5	9	4	7
7	6	5	8	9	4	3	2	1



Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney

# Destined to meet: Daniel O'Donnell and Fionn Marum

**Recently**, a new community garden was opened in the centre of Rathdowney, Co. Laois. The garden is on the site of the old parish church and we hope it will be a place of gathering and celebration but also a space for contemplation and prayer.

Among the entertainers who performed at the opening ceremony were two who had never met each other before, one a household name, the other setting out at the beginning of his musical career. However, their lives are linked in a most extraordinary and unique way.

**Health**

Fionn Marum is 23. He was born in Romania in 1999 and for various reasons, including some serious health issues, he ended up in an orphanage. He was later fostered to a Romanian family. Around that time Irish country star, Daniel O'Donnell had begun his Romanian charity appeal raising funds to provide new homes for the hundreds of abandoned children living in terrible conditions at a number of Romanian orphanages that he had visited. A newly married couple in Portlaoise, Noel and Nicola Marum were sitting at home one night when a report of Daniel's work in Romania came up on TV. The couple was inspired to go to Romania to adopt a child.



Daniel and Majella O'Donnell with Fionn Marum.

They specifically wanted to adopt a child that others might choose to leave behind because of health issues or other challenges. When they went to Romania, they chose a young boy not yet two years old, and they named him Fionn. The young couple were advised by doctors that because of his medical difficulties Fionn would probably never be able to walk properly. With the persistence, dedication and love of his parents together with wonderful physical therapy Fionn not only learned to walk but in 2015 he took

up athletics. He has subsequently won county and regional medals for long distance running. He had also been told he would never be able to play a musical instrument but now he has taught himself, guitar, brass, electric guitar and harmonica. Fionn has also turned out to be quite a talented singer in the American country music tradition. Last September he was accepted for further study at a music college. This young man is adamant that he owes everything to his parents, but he was also conscious over the years

that there was one other person he needed to acknowledge.

**Saving**

Some months ago, Fionn wrote to Daniel O'Donnell to thank him for the part he had played in "saving" his life. This was the first Daniel knew of the story and even though Fionn was asking for nothing, not even a reply to his letter, Daniel decided to contact him and suggested they meet sometime. To cut a long story short, with Daniel's agreement, we invited Fionn to come to Rathdowney for the opening of the community garden. He performed a few songs including one of his own. I asked him to share his story if he was comfortable doing so and he did. It was a very moving part of an afternoon of celebration already filled with joy and community spirit at its best. Later in the evening Daniel and Fionn took to the stage together in what was probably the highlight moment of the day.

As I watched the two of them singing in perfect harmony, I thought of that beautiful line from the American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson when he said: "People destined to meet...will do so, apparently by chance, at precisely the right moment."

**The seventh child**

A woman is sitting at the bedside of her dying husband. The man leans forward and says softly to his wife: "Dear, it has always bothered me that our seventh child never quite looked like the rest of our children. Now I want to assure you that our 65 years of marriage have been wonderful and your answer cannot take all that away. But, I must know, did he have a different father?"

The wife drops her head, unable to look her husband in the eye, and then confessed. "Yes, he did."

The old man is very shaken. With a tear in his eye he asks; Who was he? His wife visibly embarrassed struggles to answer but then finally says: "You."

**“People destined to meet...will do so, apparently by chance, at precisely the right moment”**



## Impoverished Catholic community in D.R. Congo badly needs our help to build a solid and dignified chapel

Fr Cesar Balayulu, a Consolata priest working on the outskirts of Kinshasa, has told us about his Catholic faithful at serie Dix, about ten miles from his parish church. "The people live in small houses often made from metal sheets or straw. Because of their poverty our people cannot help us financially with the cost of building the chapel dedicated to Our Lady Consolata which we wish to construct. At present Mass is offered under a large metal sheet on poles, this becoming impossible in bad weather. "The new chapel, when completed, will help our Christians to participate with dignity in the Holy Eucharist, no longer having to carry chairs from their homes every Sunday. It will enable them to focus more on prayer and not to be distracted by noise from outside. It will promote the social life of the Christian community. We turn to you, Little Way, with great confidence that you will support us with your aid."

**Will you please help these Christian brothers and sisters of ours to turn their dream of a chapel into reality?**

*(If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).*

**Every euro you send will be sent direct to help build a mission chapel.**



**PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN**

Fr Eamonn Gowing is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

**Can you spare a donation, large or small, to feed a hungry child?**

Every euro you send to our fund for Needy Children will be used, without deduction, to provide food, health-supplies and basic necessities for deprived children.

**MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS**

In these difficult times missionary priests overseas rely more than ever on Mass stipends for their daily subsistence and in order that they may continue to minister to their poor communities.

**We like to send a minimum stipend of €6.50 or more for each Mass.**

**WALSINGHAM THERESIAN CENTRE**

Praying for the Missions and offering accommodation to pilgrims. For reservations please contact Maggie on 0044 1328 820 222.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **MISSION CHAPELS**
- €..... **HUNGRY NEEDY CHILDREN**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**