

# The Irish Catholic

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## ACP's comparison of Church to Taliban 'stomach churning'

Jason Osborne and Chai Brady

Prominent Catholic laywomen have described comments from a priest comparing the Church's treatment of women to the extremists of the Taliban as "very offensive".

Fr Roy Donovan, one of the clerics leading the Association of Catholic Priests, defended his comments this week admitting that it was an "extreme" comparison but he is satisfied it worked to draw attention to his concerns.

"The Church is Taliban-like because women are not involved in leadership or governance or decision-making. To all purposes they are excluded from public forums in the Church," he said on RTÉ Radio One on Monday.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan who has facilitated lay participation across the Church in Ireland, described the comments as "misconceived, misleading and very offensive."

"It is also profoundly damaging and dangerous to women like those in Afghanistan who are living in terror or being hunted down and murdered by the Taliban today," the crossbench member of the House of Lords told *The Irish Catholic*.

Speaking to this newspaper, Fr Donovan admitted "the comparison

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Forming a bright future...



The positivity of education shining through at St Mary's Derry with college pupils, Principal Mr McGinn and careers teacher Mrs Rogan promoting St Mary's University College Belfast's virtual Open Day.

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# Irish Synod can be grace-filled...or a headline-chasing waste of time

I felt blessed to be in Rome at the weekend to be with Pope Francis for the launch of the synodal way which will see a massive programme of consultation in every parish in the Catholic world. The Irish phase of the consultation – known as the synodal way – will begin in dioceses this coming Sunday (October 17).

It's an exciting – if daunting – challenge that the Pope has set before the Church: to have 1.2 billion people from “every nation, race, tribe and language” (cf. Revelations 7:9) discern what God is saying to the Church in the 21st Century. In Rome, the byword from everything the Pope was saying was about ‘encounter’ – to authentically listen to one another and to journey alongside one another patiently listening to the Word of God and authentically interpreting the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

“Maybe a key part of discernment might actually be those who have come to the conclusion that they have the most to offer”

The Pope warned against what he characterised as dangerous polemics designed to divide people rather than bring people together.

It was a beautiful experience of the universal Church

– together with the Successor of St Peter and under his authority: *cum Petro et sub Petro*.

In a word it was an experience of Communion and I left Rome invigorated about what the synodal pathway can offer to the renewal and revitalising of the Church in Ireland.

## Experience

It was a short-lived experience. I had just landed in Dublin when I turned on RTÉ Radio One only to be confronted by two priests who were offering polemics very far from Pope Francis. One, Fr Roy Donovan was comparing the Church to the Taliban.

Yes, let that sink in for a second. Fr Donovan – a member of the leadership of the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) said: “In Afghanistan, the Taliban have pushed women out of the public square back into the home with no part in decision-making in politics.

“The Church is Taliban-like because women are not involved in leadership or governance or decision-making. To all purposes they are excluded from public forums in the Church,” he said.

The murderous Taliban, really? An organisation that terrorises Afghanistan and Pakistan and metes out the most horrible violence to anyone who stands in their way? An organisation who shot a young girl in the face because she wanted to go to school? An organisation that executes people in the street who their crazed foot-soldiers view as having a haircut that is un-Islamic.

“It was a beautiful experience of the universal Church – together with the Successor of St Peter and under his authority”

Even women who feel very strongly that there ought to be female priests in the Church will surely be dismayed at the glib comparison to the horrors going on in Afghanistan.

Speaking to this newspaper after the broadcast, Fr Donovan made it clear that his outing on radio had more to do with grabbing a headline rather than making a worthwhile contribution to

discerning God's will for the Church.

“The comparison is extreme,” he admitted. “But I've been saying this [about the inclusion of women] for the last seven or eight years and nobody in the Church is listening – and now by using the Taliban, if I've got people to listen, to wake up, and to see what's happening and going on with the exclusion of women in all these different areas, then I'm ok with that.”

“A danger, he said, is a synodal process where no one listens and everyone sticks doggedly to their opinions”

But, not to be outdone by this outlandishly over-the-top comparison with the Taliban, another priest was soon on the same programme insisting that he will resign if the Church doesn't shift the position on women within six months.

Media punditry is a cruel master, those in demand one day are soon like eaten bread – forgotten. That means if one longs to “grab a headline” as Baroness Nuala O'Loan put it this week, one soon finds oneself having to up the ante.

The synodal pathway can be a grace-filled moment for the Church, universal as well as in Ireland. But, Pope Francis also warned at the weekend of the risks of a lack of maturity when it comes to discernment and authentically encountering one another.

A danger, he said, is a synodal process where no one listens and everyone sticks doggedly to their opinions.

## Enthusiasm

It's no secret that there are varying degrees of enthusiasm about the idea of a synod for the Church in Ireland amongst the members of the hierarchy. It's illustrative to note that alongside those who speak with optimism about it, there are other bishops who have not uttered a word publicly about the process. What they have said in private is at least sceptical about the level of formation and maturity that may be present in the Church in Ireland for such a creative and bold gesture.

Those involved in organising the synodal process in Ireland will need the wisdom of King Solomon to keep it from being derailed by those who shout the loudest.

Maybe a key part of discernment might actually be those who have come to the conclusion that they have the most to offer, asking themselves honestly whether their shrill voices add anything to a culture of encounter. If the synod is about cheap shots and people trying to outdo one another for easy headlines, it will be an unmitigated disaster and simply contribute even more to the decline of Irish Catholicism.

I hope I am wrong – come Holy Spirit.

❗ To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

## ACP's comparison of Church to Taliban 'stomach churning'

» Continued from Page 1 is extreme, but I've been saying this for the last seven or eight years and nobody in the Church is listening and now by using the Taliban, if I've got people to listen, to wake up, and to see what's happening and going on with the exclusion of women in all these different areas, then I'm ok with that”.

Baroness O'Loan warned: “it's easy to grab a headline by the use of language such as that used by Fr Donovan,” but that it's much harder “to make a thoughtful, constructive and reasoned submission to contribute to the future of the Church we love, with all its faults”.

Adding to the criticism of the comments, Spirit

Radio host and Catholic commentator Wendy Grace said she found the comparison “stomach-turning” and “truly shocking”.

“I find it hard to identify in any way with Fr Roy's comments. My experience as a Catholic woman – a young Catholic woman – is that the Catholic Church is truly the place where I have found respect and empowerment,” Ms Grace said.

She noted that these comparisons are often made by priests “that do not know a lot of young, female Catholics”, and encouraged Fr Donovan to “connect up with the many incredible initiatives run by women, for women, many of which I'm involved in”.

Fr Tim Hazelwood, another one of the ACP lead-

ers defended his colleague saying that Fr Donovan had not made a direct comparison.

“He didn't mean it that way – he meant it in the way that women are excluded. Every time you say something, it can be interpreted in a way, the same as every time *The Irish Catholic* writes something, it can be interpreted in a certain way.

“If we are to be relevant in today's world, the exclusion of women as we exclude them – young women are abandoning the Church because of that – I think we need to really take stock of it and look at it,” Fr Hazelwood said.

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# Push for commemoration of pagan Brigid 'bad history'

**Jason Osborne**

The current trend pushing for a public holiday commemorating St Brigid as a 'celtic goddess' is "dis-ingenuous" and "reflects people's ignorance of history", a prominent Church historian has said.

Recent trends, including a campaign to make St Brigid's day Ireland's new public holiday, have emphasised the Celtic, pre-Christian goddess Bríg, rather than the

"genuine, historical female saint", Professor Alexander O'Hara of Trinity College Dublin's Loyola Institute said.

## Danger

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Prof. O'Hara said that "there's a danger of this kind of false understanding of the past, that pagan/Celtic Ireland was somehow purer," than Christian Ireland, and that this is just "bad history".

Dr O'Hara said it was particularly reflective of ignorance of "the contribution that the Catholic Church played, not only in the development of Irish ethnic identity, but it was absolutely central to the development of the nation of Ireland".

"The thing was that there would be no Irish nation without Christianity. It might have been a different form, but we're talking about different tribal groups

and what brings them together is this universal sense of 'we are all members of Christ's body', and this kind of universal aspect to Christianity is actually what creates it," Dr O'Hara said.

He continued that he understands why there is a push for it, but that the solely Celtic/pagan focus is "not a real engagement with actually our historical heritage and tradition".

Despite this, Dr O'Hara said he

thinks in terms of honouring St Brigid with a public holiday, "it's a fantastic idea, both celebrating her as one of the patron saints of Ireland and also of women's contribution to Ireland and particularly the Church in Ireland".

"This could be a wonderful occasion to actually celebrate the contribution of women in Ireland and their role in the Catholic Church as well," Dr O'Hara said.

## Studying for priesthood helped my acting, says *Matrix* star



**Ruadhán Jones**

Harry Lennix, known for roles in *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Batman v Superman*, said his time studying for the priesthood helped him answer "profound questions" in his acting.

The American actor studied for five years to be a Dominican priest, and was beginning the process of ordination when he turned to acting.

"You have to be able to answer people's questions," *The Matrix Reloaded* star told *Page Six*. "Those questions are sometimes quite profound and require a great deal of thought and preparation to answer."

Mr Lennix continued by comparing mod-

ern superhero movies with passion-plays of the past.

"People used to go and see passion movies, religious kind of movies and I think that these superheroes have kind of taken the place of that. People endowed with super-powers who have a wisdom or ancient kind of tradition that is superhuman," he said.

In a previous interview with *Soul Vision*, Mr Lennix explained that his seminary's motto of *ora et labora* (prayer and work) was the most important lesson of his early life.

"I think hard work is really the biggest lesson that I learned... the diligent application of the lessons I observed was really that you just have to keep at it and it will eventually come to be," he explained.

## TD's question reveals GPs received over €3 million for abortion in 2020 alone

**Staff reporter**

The HSE confirmed that over €3 million was paid out to General Practitioners in 2020 for providing abortion, in response to a question from Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan.

Meanwhile, just over €17,000 was spent on post-abortion care for women.

Commenting on the answer she received from the HSE, Deputy Nolan said the response makes it clear that post-abortion care "is now a necessity for many women in Ireland".

## Debate

"Tragically however, this remains an aspect of the abortion debate that is woefully under-scrutinised

and unacknowledged," Ms Nolan said in a statement.

"Indeed, instead of putting in place life-affirming options it seems that this Government and the HSE is content to continue paying lip-service to the idea of actually reducing the abortion rate and preventing women from going through this horrendous experience in the first place."

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# Renowned theologian welcomes bishop's breakthrough on theological study

**Ruadhán Jones**

A leading moral theologian welcomed an intervention by Bishop Kevin Doran, who stressed the importance of having theological faculties in all Irish universities.

Fr Twomey, author of *The End of Irish Catholicism?* and a retired professor of moral theology, said Bishop Doran's call "struck me as quite a breakthrough and is to be applauded".

He added that theology is needed "for the coherence of universities", pointing out that universities "emerged from the study of theology".

In the past, the Irish bishops took "a pragmatic approach" to theology, seeing it "more or less as something needed for the ministry or teaching", Fr Twomey explained.

"This was a result of the pragmatism of the bishops of the time,

they wanted Catholics to get jobs as lawyers and all the rest of it," he continued.

"But theology as a laboratory for the Faith is needed, so the tools of the Faith can be explored in a way that is demanded by the very nature of the Faith itself.

"Theology is needed for every branch of the university, the humanities, but also the sciences."

Speaking on the feast of St John

Henry Newman, October 9, Bishop Doran bemoaned the lack of "a shared vision" in the development of Irish universities due to the absence of theology faculties.

"In continental Europe, it was common for the best universities to have faculties of theology, alongside all the other academic disciplines," Bishop Doran continued. "In Ireland, by contrast, most of our universities developed without theology.

He added that the decline in the number of Catholic colleges has meant a "resulting decline in the opportunity to study theology as part of a wider third-level education".

"I don't think there is much to be gained by trying to re-write history, but I do believe that, in a modern pluralist society, there is a place for theology in our mainstream universities," the bishop of Elphin said.

## Pro-life billboard campaign highlights 'grim' abortion increase

**Chai Brady**

A nationwide pro-life billboard campaign has been launched by pro-life groups to draw attention to the large increase in terminations since the repeal of the 8th amendment.

**Iona Institute**

The Life Institute and the Iona Institute launched

the campaign last week and are urging that the forthcoming abortion review look into the negative outcomes of the legislation.

"Making abortion legal has certainly made it much more frequent," said Niamh Uí Bhriain of the Life Institute. "Despite the lockdown in 2020, another 6,577 abortions took place, adding up to a grim total of 13,243 in



just two years.

"Yet the government has given no indication that they would like to act to reduce this number or offer better options to women. Instead, we have abortion campaigners demanding changes which would further increase the number of babies aborted, such as scrapping the three-day reflection period."

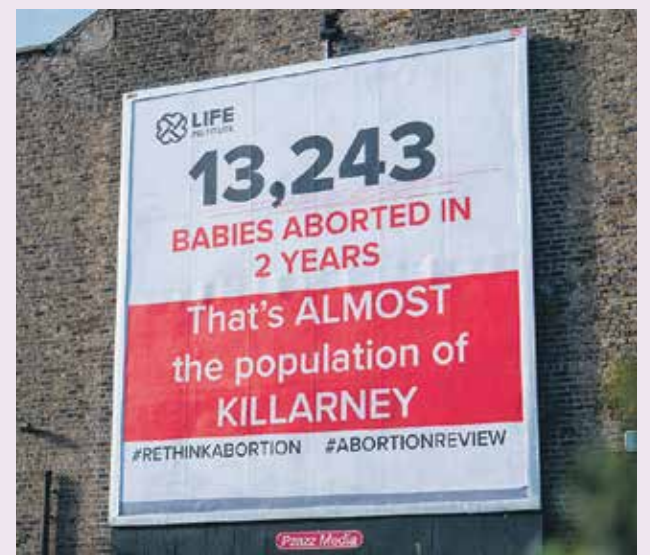
The campaign was launched to coincide with the three-year review of

the passage of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018.

**Review process**

The 36 billboards will appear in Dublin, Cork, Galway and other counties for the first two weeks of October with others planned over the coming months.

Niamh Uí Bhriain added that the review process "should also examine why a study published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics*



and Gynaecology in October 2020 by researchers from UCC said that doctors in Ireland were left 'begging for help' if babies survived late-term abortions".

"The same study confirmed that feticide - admin-

istering a lethal injection to the unborn baby's heart - was being carried out in Ireland, despite assertions in the referendum that late-term abortions would be illegal. That, too, must be investigated," she said.

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## Children's access to porn must be tackled says judge

**Staff reporter**

Access to pornography should be addressed at primary school level according to a High Court judge after sentencing a teenager for the rape of his niece on Monday.

It was discovered he had been acting out pornographic scenes he had been watching since he was nine years old. He was given a five-year suspended

sentence.

There is not much point focusing on tackling sexual consent at university level if pornography is being accessed when children are in primary school, Justice Deirdre Murphy said.

Ms Justice Deirdre Murphy said, "This is a 19-year-old young man charged with serious sexual offences including seven Section 4 rapes and ten sexual assault offences and the send-

ing of lewd texts to his niece over the period."

She said that "this is an alarm call to society in general as to the dangers of a child accessing pornography".

"Sexual education at primary level should deal with pornography. Maybe that might seem to be a shocking thing to say. But this young man and his friends were accessing pornography," the judge said.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Derry church wins major architecture award

St Mary's Parish Church in Lavey, Co. Derry won the 'restoration' accolade at the CEF Construction Excellence Awards 2021.

It beat off competition from Carrickfergus Castle and the Grand Opera House in Belfast.

The judges said those involved in the refurbishment had made "a huge impression due to the attention to detail of

the meticulous refurbishment, extension and artistic enhancement of this historical church".

In a post on the Lavey Parish Facebook page, it said: "Congratulations to Woodvale and everyone in our parish. Our parish church has been named winner in the restoration category this evening during the virtual awards ceremony."

### Triumphant Tyson Fury thanks God for victory

"First of all, I would just like to say thank you to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the mighty name of Jesus, I won this fight tonight again," British heavyweight Tyson Fury said Saturday following his victory over Deontay Wilder in Las Vegas.

"I give him the glory, he gives me the victory," the champion heavyweight

said, as he wore a hat with the Spanish words "*Jesus: El Rey Viene*" ("Jesus: The King is Coming").

Mr Fury is a committed and outspoken Christian, previously telling journalists that if they want to know his opinion, they should ask the Pope, as they share the same opinions.

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# Consultation? 'Include me out!'

Last Sunday, Pope Francis launched a two-year worldwide consultative process that could give a much greater say to lay Catholics and "people on the margins of society" (see pages 8-9). I'm sure this will be rewarding, and yield many valuable responses.

But as the Hollywood wag Sam Goldwyn, famous for his malapropisms, once said: "Include me out!" It's a phrase that I reach for when being asked to get more committed to any organisational arrangements, or even to reply to any lengthy 'market surveys'. I don't really want to be con-



**Mary Kenny**

sulted on how any organisation is managed. I usually vote whenever an election occurs, but after that, I expect those elected to do the job they're required to do.

### Delegators

I'm one of life's delegators. When I go to a hairdresser and she says "how would you like your hair done?" I

reply "you're the *coiffeur* – you decide how you'd like to style my hair!" I expect the accountant to direct me professionally in the matter of my tax liabilities. And when I go to church, I am attending what Christians often call 'a service'. Yes, I expect the professionals – those involved in the church – to serve my spiritual needs.

If clergy are sensitive and intelligent, they'll listen, and learn, anyway from parishioners, and the world beyond the parish.

### Church matters

I once was 'consulted' about Church matters by being invited to sit on a parish council, and although I duly complied, I found the tedium, and the time-wasting, excruciating. Committees love procedure, and the minutiae of "through the chair": I had been accustomed to a newspaper office where the editor considered it his job to make decisions with a swift application of judgement. (Pope Francis gets that point: only pontiffs can make the ultimate decisions on doctrine, he has said.)

Lay involvement in the Church can be terrific – the Legion of Mary is a prime example of first-rate lay participation. But not everyone has the attitude, the aptitude or the time for such involvement.

The synod is a positive initiative, but I think it worth noting too, what Prof. Stephen Bullivant, the writer on religious matters, recorded about procedures after Vatican II.



George III

There's a new biography of George III, written by the Tory historian Andrew Roberts, which seeks to reinstate the 'mad king' who lost America, as a kindly, nuanced, and uxorious man.

Maybe so. But this Hanoverian was so prejudiced against Catholics he couldn't bear to hear the words 'Catholic Emancipation' uttered. So nobody uttered them during his reign (1760-1820).

He found that committees, commissions, justice and peace pow-wows, etc., appealed to middle-class folk who like meetings: responsible citizens, yes, but also the bossy committee types, the retired seniors who enjoy taking over. Ordinary, and especially working-class Catholics weren't that inter-

ested: they were more upset by their traditional saints – Philomena, Christopher – being removed from the canon than by invitations to lay participation.

Maybe I'm a bit like that – just give me peace, quiet and a sense of the sacred, and let the professionals get on with the job!

## Are we on the way to 'Polexit'?

Brexit was, understandably, much disliked in Ireland – it is not in Ireland's interest, and it's created an ongoing Border problem on this island.

It may be more difficult to form an opinion over Poland's current argument with Brussels. Poland is not planning to exit from the European Union, but still, the Polish Supreme Court has ruled that Polish law takes precedence over EU law. The EU Commission is deeply displeased and Ursula von der Leyen has been issuing what's described as "heavy-handed threats", with suggestions of withdrawing funding from Poland.

However, if it did come to a confrontation over the Polish constitution, Brussels would

not necessarily come off best – especially since Hungary supports its Polish ally (they've been allies since 1683, when together they defeated the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna). What with the fuel crisis, economic problems in Italy, a sabre-rattling Russia, and political uncertainty in Germany and France, not to mention the Northern Ireland protocol, the EU has its hands full. Poland is now a very successful economy – the sixth largest in the EU 27 – and has had the grit to stand up to the Soviet Union. This great country deserves respect.

It won't come to a 'Polexit', but on the substantive issue of a patriotic defence of their constitution, I have a feeling that there would be Irish sympathy for Poland.

## CAN YOU HELP SPONSOR POWERFUL PRO-LIFE BILLBOARDS?

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# Priest calls for EU investigation into anti-Semitism in Ireland

Chai Brady

Anti-Semitism must be rooted out in Ireland according to a Cork-based priest following the publication of a damning independent report last week.

The report, collated by investigative journalist and activist David Collier over many years, included searches of the social media pages of multiple Irish politicians. It found hundreds of instances of the spread of fake anti-Semitic propaganda, calls for the state of Israel's abolition and the use of common anti-Semitic tropes used for centuries to attack

Jewish people.

Fr Gabriel Burke CC of Blarney parish said the EU should investigate anti-Semitism in Ireland and that there should also "be an open honest debate".

"Why do these people go so quickly into anti-Jewish mode? They will say it's not anti-Jewish it's anti-Israel but I mean the stuff they say, it needs to be brought out into the light and debated publicly, why do people say such things?" said Fr Burke.

"At this stage the EU should set up some sort of envoy to Ireland to look into it and see how deep this goes. There should be an official

investigation.

"It seems only the EU can investigate this because the Irish politicians aren't going to investigate themselves and what will happen is that will filter down. The Irish people themselves are generally not too bad but it will filter into the debates and it will filter into the parties, we need to root this out, it must be nipped in the bud."

Maurice Cohen, Chair of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland welcomed Mr Collier's report and urged that all political parties and both houses of the Oireachtas adopt the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance

Alliance) definition of anti-Semitism. The Government is already a European signatory.

"We further call on the Government to immediately appoint an envoy on anti-Semitism to the European Commission, as requested by the EC several years ago. On Monday 47 countries signed a UNHRC pledge to fight anti-Semitism. So far Ireland has not signed this pledge. The Government should do so without further delay," Mr Cohen said.

"The need for the above measures is urgent. They will not be covered in the proposed new legislation on racism."

## Police and politicians must act over paramilitary style violence

Ruadhán Jones

Catholic activists have called on the PSNI and the North's politicians to act now to eradicate paramilitary-style violence, as gangs continue to exploit disadvantaged communities.

As the PSNI reported 40 paramilitary style assaults so far this year, Fr Martin Magill of the Stop Attacks campaign called on politicians to speak out against a "culture of violence".

"I get frustrated with

some of the politicians, there's 40 of these attacks since the year's start," Fr Magill continued. "Some politicians will regularly call this out, but others for some reason, they see it as maybe just one of those things."

He warned that we "must all be very clear that this is not the way a normal society acts. Politicians must speak out on these issues".

The paramilitary-style attacks correlate with socially disadvantaged areas, Fr Magill added, saying gangs "exploit these com-

munities' difficulties".

Meanwhile, Maria Rosa Logozzo of Focolare Belfast said that the police must improve relations with socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

A lack of trust in the police mean people in these communities turn to paramilitary gangs rather than the police.

"When young people hear the police are coming, they are worried and frightened," Ms Logozzo said. "The PSNI need to reach out and build trust with these people."

## Schools dig deep for Africa



Sean McMahon of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), Meath Footballer Niamh O'Sullivan, Mary Magnier of the INTO, Dublin all-Ireland senior football winner Ciaran Kilkenny, Fr Michael Mullaney President of Maynooth's St Patrick's College, and school children Sophie Scully from Galway and Amber Heneghan, Nicole Connolly and Sienna Heneghan from Maynooth at the launch of Self Help Africa's One Million Trees Schools campaign.

## Anti-poverty Network welcomes welfare increases

Staff reporter

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has called on the Government to commit to benchmarking social welfare rates against the cost of living.

Welcoming this week's budget, the group said that welfare increases still fall further behind the cost of living.

Some of the main points of the budget are:

- A €5 increase to all core weekly payments including pensioners, widow(ers), lone parents, job seekers, carers, people with disabilities and those on employment programmes;

- Increases for children on all weekly payments including €3 for qualified child aged 12 and over, and €2 increase for qualified child dependents up to age 12;

- Increase of €5 per week to fuel allowance, with the weekly means threshold increasing by €20 to €120 and changes to criteria allowing more people to qualify for the allowance;

- Increase of €3 a week to Living Alone Allowance;

- The means-test for carers will be broadened to enable couples with a weekly income of up to €750, and single people with an income of €350, to receive the Carers Allowance; Paul Ginnell Director of

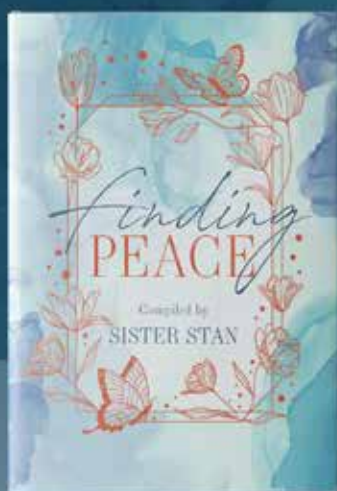
EAPN Ireland said: "Research over the years has helped us to understand the level of income households need to have a decent life, and the current inadequacy experienced by many households. The announcements made as part of today's budget provide the Government with an opportunity to move towards income adequacy for all households including those on social welfare.

"We believe the Government must now develop social welfare policies that will help to lift people above the poverty line and ensure people can achieve a minimum essential standard of living," he said.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 85% fail-rate in prenatal testing for abnormalities in twins

An Irish support group have called for new safeguards after a new study revealed non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) for the screening of chromosomal abnormalities in twin pregnancies is correct just 15.4% of the time.

Vicky Wall of Every Life Counts called the peer-reviewed journal *Molecular Cytogenetics* study's results "shocking", adding that most people who had been led to believe that such tests were almost infallible would find the percentage of false positives "truly alarming".

"This study underlines the need for safeguards and for medical professionals to exercise caution and to avoid advising parents towards a course of action that may have devastating consequences," Ms Wall said.



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# Synod's high ideal is to avoid



Pope Francis is banking on an unprecedented consultation of the Faithful revitalising the Church, but discernment remains hard to pin down, writes **Michael Kelly** from Rome

**P**ope Francis has opened a global consultation process on the future of the Church warning that it is not a parliament or a matter of putting Church dogma up for debate.

Launching the synodal pathway – which is due to culminate in a Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2023 – Pope Francis said the key to understanding the process was to see it as discerning what God is saying to the Church.

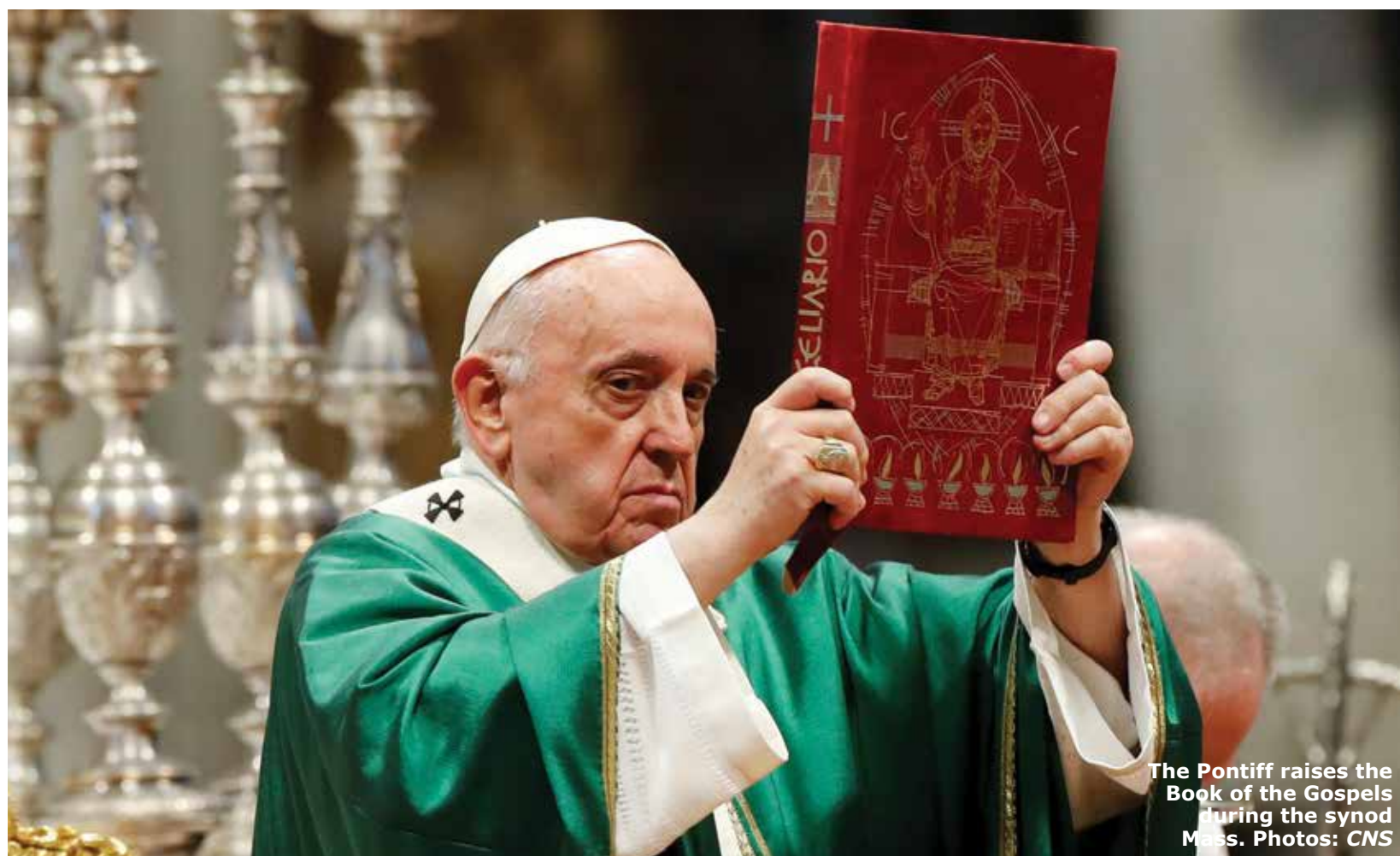
Speaking at Mass in St Peter's Basilica on Sunday, the Pontiff warned that involving as many people as possible in the process and prayerfully listening to all of them is the only way to recognise the call of the Holy Spirit.

"I underline this because sometimes there is an elitism" among priests and bishops "that causes them to separate themselves from the laity," the Pope said leading a day of reflection at the Vatican as part of the official launch of the process.

Widespread involvement "is not a matter of form, but of faith. Participation is a requirement of the faith received in Baptism," Pope Francis insisted during his talk to cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and laypeople meeting in the Vatican Synod Hall.

## Participation

"Without real participation by the people of God, talk about communion risks remaining a devout wish," he said. "In this regard, we have taken some steps forward, but a certain difficulty remains, and we must acknowledge the frustration and impatience felt by many pastoral workers, members of diocesan and parish consultative bodies and women,



The Pontiff raises the Book of the Gospels during the synod Mass. Photos: CNS

who frequently remain on the fringes."

The attempt to create a new synod process, one that involves everyone and attempts to give the entire Church a synodal character of widespread consultation and group discernment, he said, carries "certain risks."

The first, the Pope said, is that of making the whole process a show that is only apparently one of all participants praying and listening for the Holy Spirit's message by listening to each other.

Without attention to the Holy Spirit, he said, the process is simply a formality, it "would be like admiring the magnificent facade of a church without ever actually stepping inside."

Other risks, he said, include turning the synod into an intel-

lectual exercise where no one listens and everyone sticks to their opinions, "ending up along familiar and unfruitful ideological and partisan divides" that do not respond to the Holy Spirit and people's needs and concerns and "paralysis, the attitude that says: 'We have always done it this way' – this is poison in the life of the Church."

**“The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us”**

If done prayerfully, openly and with widespread involve-

ment, Pope Francis said, the process could help build "a synodal Church, an open square where all can feel at home and participate," a Church that listens to the Holy Spirit and one another.

"May this synod be a true season of the Spirit," he prayed. "We need the Spirit, the ever-new breath of God, who sets us free from every form of self-absorption, revives what is moribund, loosens shackles and spreads joy."

"The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us," he said.

## Different Church

Pope Francis quoted the late Dominican theologian, Fr Yves Congar, who said, "There is no need to create another

Church, but to create a different Church."

"For a 'different Church,' a Church open to the newness that God wants to suggest," he said, "let us with greater fervour and frequency invoke the Holy Spirit and humbly listen to him, journeying together as he, the source of communion and mission, desires: with docility and courage."

Welcoming participants, including those following online because of Covid-19 restrictions, Cardinal Mario Grech, synod secretary-general, said his office has seen great enthusiasm for the synod process.

**“Let us with greater fervour and frequency invoke the Holy Spirit and humbly listen to him”**

However, he said, some people are not convinced.

"I sense the difficulty of some brothers and sisters who still feel uncertain and afraid in the face of this path, deliberately left open as to the so-called decisions to be made. I address them fraternally, saying: Do not be afraid to let us know your fears," the cardinal said. "The synod secretariat is also here to listen to your perplexities and fears: They can be beneficial to this synodal process."

Christina Inogés-Sanz, a theologian from Spain, told

the gathering that the entire synod process is meant to be a spiritual exercise, with prayer imbuing every moment from listening sessions on the diocesan level to the gathering of bishops in 2023 and the implementation of decisions they and the Pope make.

"All the people of God are summoned, for the first time, to participate in a Synod of Bishops," Dr Inogés-Sanz said. "All those to whom we did not know how to listen, who left us without us even missing them; they also are invited to make their voices heard, to send us their reflections, their concerns and their pain."

She prayed that God would "teach us to be better Christians. Teach us to recover the essence of Christian community, which is communion, not exclusion."

## Listening

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, named by the Pope to be the relator general of the synod, encouraged his fellow bishops to be open to listening to everyone and to hearing the Holy Spirit speaking through them.

"We are not the masters of the Gospel; we are its servants," he told his fellow bishops. "Our listening must always include our conversion to the Gospel, the Gospel that is, at the same time, both the living word of Christ and the word of the Church. The bishop proclaims the Word of God in his homily only after having listened to Christ and the Church. It is



Pope Francis leads a meeting with representatives of bishops' conferences from around the world at the Vatican on Saturday.



# familiar ideological divide



The Pope greets people during a meeting at the synod launch.

this same attitude of listening that characterizes our role in the synodal journey.”

Cardinal Grech, before sending participants off to share their reflections in small groups, shared an idea he said he had been pondering.

“I wonder, what if, instead of ending the (2023) assembly by delivering the final document to the Holy Father, we were to take another step, that of returning the conclusions of the synodal assembly to the particular churches from which the whole synodal process began?” he said.

**“The Gospel is full of such encounters with Christ, encounters that uplift and bring healing”**

The final document would still be given to the Pope, “who has always and by all is recognised as the one who issues the decrees” resulting from a synod or council, he said. But if it were sent back to Catholics on a local level first, it would “manifest at one and the same time the consent of the people of God and of the College of Bishops.”

The following morning at Mass in St Peter’s, the Pontiff took up the idea of a culture of encounter – one that has been central to his papacy.

A synod calls on everyone to become experts in “the art of encounter” he said.

“Celebrating a synod means walking on the same road, together” just like Jesus did – encountering, listening and discerning with all who one meets, the Pope said.

“Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or

are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: ‘it’s useless’ or ‘we’ve always done it this way?’” he asked.

The overall theme of the synodal journey is to explore the theme, “for a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.” Bishops around the world were to open the process in their dioceses on October 17. The diocesan phase, which runs until April, will focus on listening to and consulting.

In his homily, the Pope said they should begin the synodal process “by asking ourselves – all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this ‘style’ of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity.”

Celebrating a synod, he said, means walking on the same road as others and living out the “three verbs” that charac-

terise a synod: to encounter, listen and discern.

“We too are called to become experts in the art of encounter. Not so much by organising events or theorising about problems as in taking time to encounter the Lord and one another,” to devote time to prayer and adoration, and to listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to say to the church, the Pope said.

### Change

Jesus shows that an encounter has the power to change someone’s life – “the Gospel is full of such encounters with Christ, encounters that uplift and bring healing,” the Pope said. In fact, Jesus was never in a hurry, and he would never have looked at a watch to signal it was time to wrap things up. “He was always at the service of people he met in order to listen to them.”

Each encounter requires “openness, courage and a willingness to let ourselves

be challenged by the presence and the stories of others,” the Pope said. It means not hiding behind a façade or stiff formalities indicative of a spirit of clericalism or of courtiers, but it means being a father.

Sincere listening involves the heart, not just the ears, Pope Francis said. The aim is not to be able to answer people’s questions, especially with pre-packaged or “artificial and shallow responses,” but to provide an opportunity to tell one’s story and speak freely.

**“Celebrating a synod means walking on the same road, together”**

“Whenever we listen with the heart, people feel that they are being heard, not judged; they feel free to recount their own experiences and their spiritual journey,” he said.

Listening to one another “is a slow and perhaps tiring exercise” but it must be done, including listening to “the questions, concerns and hopes of every Church, people and nation,” and to the “challenges and changes” that world presents, he added.

Encountering and listening “are not ends in themselves” where everything stays the same, but must lead to discernment, he said.

“Whenever we enter into dialogue, we allow ourselves to be challenged, to advance on a journey. And in the end, we are no longer the same; we are changed,” he said.

### Journey

The synod is “a journey of spiritual discernment that takes place in adoration, in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God,” the Pope said to the 3,000 people present.

Discernment is what lights the way and guides the synod, “preventing it from becoming a Church convention, a study group or a political congress, but rather a grace-filled event, a process of healing guided by the Holy Spirit,” Pope Francis said.

Jesus is asking everyone “to empty ourselves, to free ourselves from all that is worldly, including our inward-looking and outward pastoral models, and to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time and the direction in which he wants to lead us,” he said.

Pope Francis wished everyone “a good journey together! May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Spirit”.



The Pontiff pauses during Sunday's Mass in St Peter's Basilica.

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*-Pope Francis*

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# Queen's Catholic chaplaincy rings in

Ruadhán Jones

**B**ishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ encouraged students to “get to know God better”, as he celebrated the dedication of studies Mass at Queen's University Belfast (QUB).

A large crowd attended the October 10 Mass online and in person at the Catholic chaplaincy at QUB.

Bishop McGuckian, who had himself begun studies in QUB in 1971, joined QUB chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan and St Brigid's parish priest Fr Eddie O'Donnell to celebrate the Mass.

Speaking during the Mass, the bishop of Raphoe reminded students that “following Jesus will

always make us uncomfortable”.

“But,” he continued, “we must remember that he gazes on us individually with eyes of divine love. During this year you are invited to get to know him better.

“Read the scriptures, study them in a group with other people. God will in time give you the Holy Spirit of wisdom; the kind of wisdom that knows the things of God, that knows in some mysterious way how God acts, that knows when something is of God and when it is not.”

The academic year of 2021/22 is a significant one for the Catholic chaplaincy, Fr McGrattan said, as 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of their moving to the premises on Elmwood Avenue, Belfast.



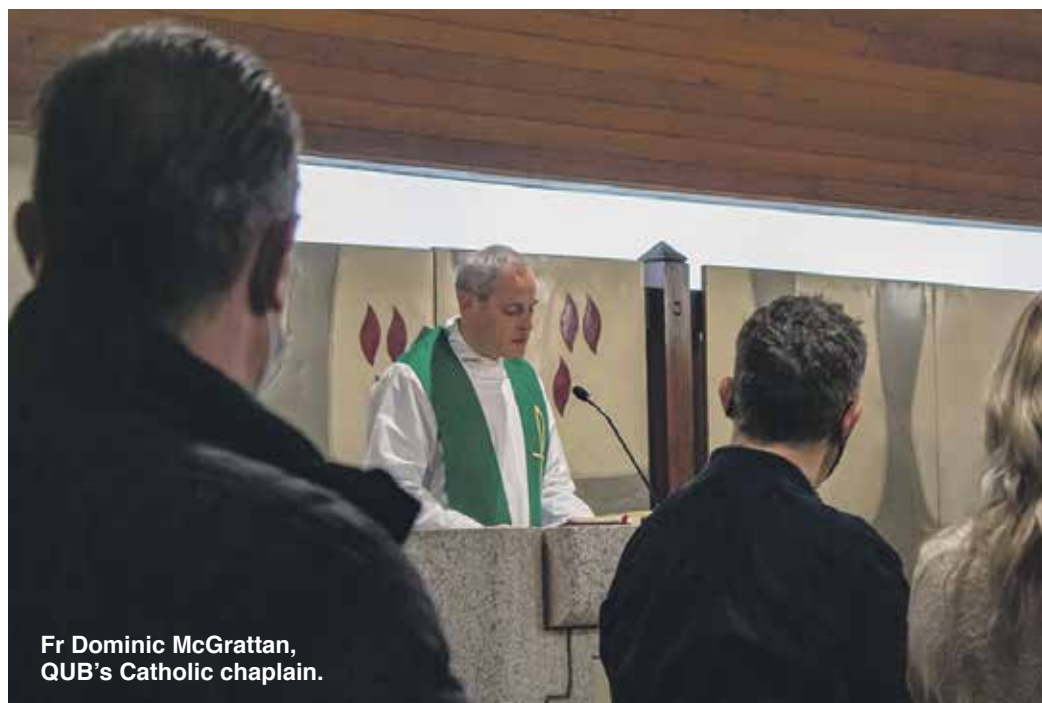
Bishop McGuckian SJ celebrates Mass.



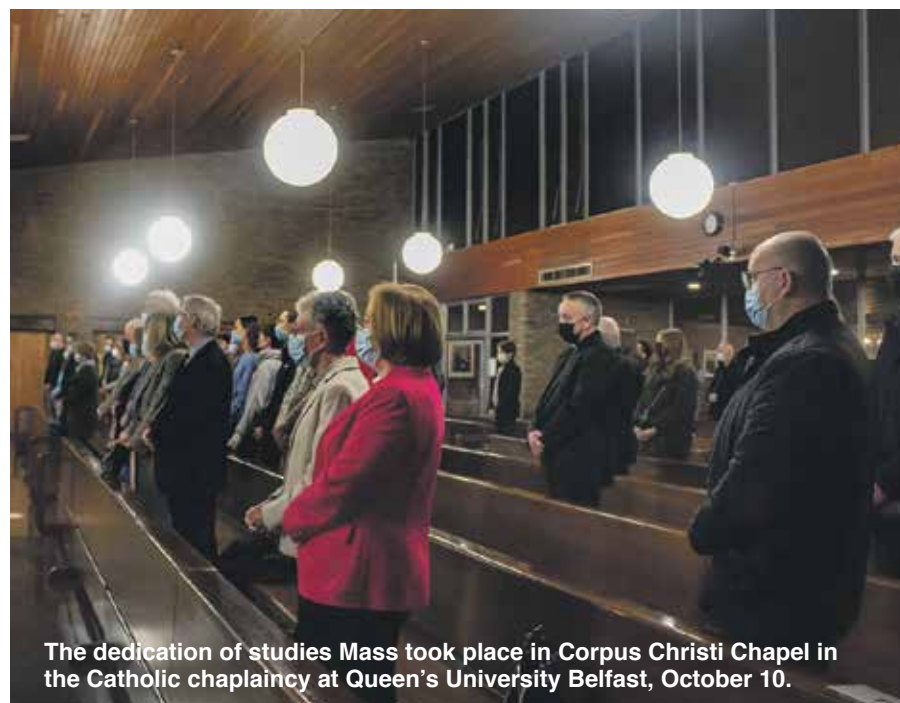
QUB Chaplaincy's newly formed choir provide musical accompaniment, led by Marcella Walsh.



Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ gives the homily during Mass, 50 years on from starting his first year in QUB in 1971.



Fr Dominic McGrattan, QUB's Catholic chaplain.



The dedication of studies Mass took place in Corpus Christi Chapel in the Catholic chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast, October 10.



# the new college year



The QUB choir pictured after the Mass.



Bishop McGuckian SJ is pictured with QUB Catholic chaplaincy's pastoral manager Shannon Campbell and Fr McGrattan.



Ruadhán Jones joins Bishop McGuckian SJ, Fr McGrattan and Ms Campbell.



Students, staff, alumni and guests enjoy some refreshments after Mass in the chaplaincy.

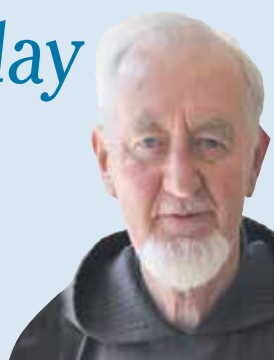




# Christian greatness is shown in helping others rather than dominating them

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



**F**or the past few weeks, the Sunday readings from Mark's Gospel set us on the road, following Jesus on the way towards his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. The Gospel each week is a challenge asking us are we true followers or not. Last week, you might remember, a rich young man was invited to share his wealth with the poor. He turned away with a very sad face.

Today's Gospel (Mark 10:35-45) is about the wrong ambitions still nurtured by the apostles. What Jesus had been saying to them had not sunk in one iota. They seem to remember nothing of the outcome of the earlier argument regarding which of them was the greatest. Jesus set a little helpless child before them. Christian greatness would be shown in helping others rather than dominating them.

**“When Pope Francis chose the name of the poor man of Assisi it was a statement of his understanding of the role of the Church”**

The brothers, James and John, came looking for a favour. They had seen many people come to him for favours and getting what they asked. But, there was something horribly selfish in their request. They often heard Jesus talk about God's kingdom. Thoughts of earthly power and prestige grew in their minds. The favour they wanted was nothing less than the two highest places in this kingdom. Jesus took their request in the most compassionate way possible and gave them the benefit of ignorance. “You do not know what you are asking.”

The ten other apostles were no better. They were not one bit pleased that the

brothers were trying to steal a march on them.

### Jesus came to serve

It was time for Jesus to call them around. He outlined his ideal of leadership and authority. “Among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be the first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### Where do we stand today?

The Word of God in the sacred scripture is a light like an X-ray penetrating the secret thoughts of the mind and emotions of the heart. Like the apostles, do we as individuals need to learn that true followers of Jesus are those who serve? Is it a challenge to the Church as a whole?

### Francis and the Gospel

When Pope Francis chose the name of the poor man of Assisi it was a statement of his understanding of the role of the Church. The first line of every Franciscan rule is about the observance of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. His idea of tradition was not about retaining the centuries when bishops lived in palaces, cardinals were princes and holy mother Church had to answer to nobody when scandals were covered up. His predecessor, Pope Benedict, was asked about power and authority in the Church. He explained that authority is linked to author, and authority in the Church is not about power but it means the responsibility of fidelity to our author, Jesus Christ. To be fully traditional means going back to the life of Jesus and the early Church as revealed in



Siblings in Guatemala are seen with a Box of Joy. US Catholic parishes, schools and groups pack the boxes with small gifts for children in several impoverished nations in an annual programme sponsored by Cross Catholic Outreach in Florida. Photo: CNS

the Acts of the Apostles and letters of Saint Paul.

### Going back to the Gospel

Going back to the Gospel is very comforting but also very challenging. Last Sunday's Gospel was the story of the rich young man who was challenged by Jesus to sell his property and give to the poor. He rejected the Lord's challenge, his face fell and he turned his back. Jesus then said it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God, that is, to take to heart the ideals of true Christianity. It comes as no surprise that many who have stored up great wealth are not too happy with Pope Francis and his idea of a Church of the poor and for the poor. It is very sad that they are pumping obscene amounts of money into television, radio and newspaper media which are openly hostile to Pope Francis. One agency received the equivalent of half a billion Euro for a single year. Serious stuff. That money could have provided food and medical care for millions. How hard it is for

those who have riches to enter the mind of Jesus.

Archaeological excavations near the ancient temple in Jerusalem have revealed that the temple people lived in the lap of luxury. The teaching of Jesus and his symbolic act of clearing the money-changers and tax collectors out of the temple convinced the supposedly religious people that Jesus would put them out of business. It was they who concocted the various schemes which put Jesus on the cross

### How you serve the least of my people

If I may be flippant for a moment, when I read the Gospel, I see that Jesus is getting more like Pope Francis every day! Of course, it is the other way around. Francis is bringing us back to be followers of the One who came, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He simplified the last judgement to one question: what did you do or what did you neglect to do to the least of my beloved people? His mother, Mary, described herself as the handmaid or servant of the Lord.

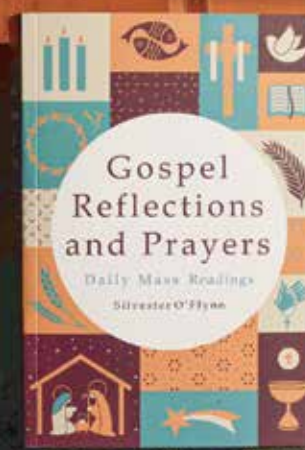
### Prayer

Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, you came to show us how to serve one another. You stripped yourself of divine glory when you came in the poverty of a human body. You

came to serve and to give your life as a ransom for many. You did the slave's job when you washed the feet of the disciples. Open up our minds and hearts to follow in your footsteps. May we live as people here to serve.

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# The Church has underestimated the reality of evil



France report as horrifying as what was uncovered in Ireland, writes David Quinn

**H**as the Church underestimated the reality of evil in the world for the past 50 years? Jean-Marc Sauvé, a retired senior judge in France, believes so. He headed a commission established by the Church to investigate the scale of child abuse within French Catholicism. The report of his commission was released last week what it found is every bit as horrifying as what was uncovered in Ireland and elsewhere.

Using a methodology that some have criticised, the commission estimates that between 1950 and 2020 around 300,000 people were sexually abused as children in Catholic settings. Two-thirds of the abuse was carried out by priests.

The report says that there are about 5.5 million French people alive today who were abused as children by someone, often family members. Going back to 1950, the number would be much higher.

## Report

A report called 'Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland', found an even higher number here, proportionately speaking.

But even if the number abused by priests and lay Catholic workers is half what the Commission estimates, it is still a crime crying out to Heaven for vengeance.

**“Evil often works in a person by convincing them that what they are doing isn't really evil at all”**

Reflecting on the finding Sauvé, a committed Catholic, said: “For the past 50 years, we have tended to hold an ecclesiastical discourse according to which everyone is beautiful and kind... This is false. There is good and evil. And the evil that disguises itself under the garments of salvation is the worst.”

This is one of the best reflections on the nature of the scandals I have come across in years of writing and reading about this terrible phenomenon which has caused so much devastation not alone to the victims, but to the ability of the Church to bear witness to the Gospel.

To blame only the “ecclesiastical discourse” of the last 50 years would be misleading, of course. The scandals have existed much longer



Jean-Marc Sauvé, retired senior judge and president of CIASE, the French Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in Church.

than half a century. The report itself goes back 70 years. Children in institutional settings are especially vulnerable, and institutions date back centuries. There was plenty of abuse in non-Catholic settings also.

But perhaps the “discourse according to which everyone is beautiful and kind” has stopped us being able to analyse properly what we were confronted with and therefore deal with it honestly and forthrightly and take the correct moral actions.

## Therapeutic categories

Evil has often been reduced to therapeutic categories. According to this thinking, if a person does something very wrong, it can't be due to evil, it must be due to a sickness in them, a psychological malady in need of treatment.

Therefore, when a bishop or religious superior was confronted with an allegation that a priest or religious had sexually abused a child, alongside the instinct to cover-up and protect the Church's reputation, was a wish to obtain help for the priest (notably not for the victim).

He was not seen as a sinner, but as someone with an illness, a

compulsion they could not resist and for which they were not really responsible. In fact, this attitude was directly reflected in the commentary on canon law produced by the Canon Law Society of Britain and Ireland in the 1990s.

The priest would be sent away for counselling and then returned to his ministry 'cured', whereupon he would begin abusing children again.

**“The human mind can convince itself of all sorts of things and turn black into white”**

An attitude that prioritised mercy over punishment also took hold. Was it correct to punish someone who was really sick, not evil, senior Church figures asked themselves?

But this kind of thinking obscured the reality that the act of abuse was itself evil. It also obscured the distinct possibility that the person carrying out the abuse was not merely 'sick', but evil in their heart.

As Sauvé says, “the evil that disguises itself under the garments of salvation is the worst”.

Evil often works in a person by convincing them that what they are doing isn't really evil at all. Perhaps the abuser told themselves that the age of consent was too high, and their 13-year-old victim was really consenting, or that the rule of celibacy was too onerous and should be abolished anyway?

The human mind can convince itself of all sorts of things and turn black into white. History is full of examples. Popes launched bloody crusades convinced they were doing God's will. People were burnt at the stake for the same reason.

In more recent times, millions died in the gulag, sent off in the name of creating a more just and equal society.

Hitler thought he was making the world a better place when he ordered the Holocaust.

## Convince

If people can convince themselves that such gigantic crimes aren't really evil, on the contrary, that they are good, then we can talk ourselves into anything. And that is how evil works. Few enough people like to think of themselves as evil, or that they do wicked things. A minority are well aware, and they enjoy it,

but for the most part this isn't how the human mind works. Often, we disguise our evil so well we don't even recognise it.

The Church above all should be able to recognise evil when it sees it. But again and again, evil has managed to disguise itself in the Church as well.

There is also a current, ongoing reaction against preaching about sin too much in the past. Nowadays we hear more about the sins of society, not individuals.

**“As Sauvé says, ‘the evil that disguises itself under the garments of salvation is the worst’”**

But a cursory reading of history should be enough to convince anyone that evil runs like a deep vein through human nature. We are not merely beautiful and kind. There are too many examples of people doing horrifying things to each other on both an individual and collective basis to believe that.

The political philosopher, Edmund Burke, is supposed to have said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

But the problem is even worse when we persuade ourselves that evil is good, or that the seemingly 'evil' person is actually psychologically unwell.

When this happens, evil grows unchecked, as it did deep in the heart of the Church.

**“Even if the number abused by priests and lay Catholic workers is half what the Commission estimates, it is still a crime crying out to Heaven for vengeance”**



# Praying for Swords schoolgirls to be inspired by ‘courage and generosity’

Staff reporter

“Behold, I am doing a new thing—Isaiah 43:19” was the theme chosen for the opening Mass in Loreto College Swords on September 16.

In former years the whole school community walked to the parish church, St Finian’s River Valley, to celebrate the occasion but due to Covid restrictions only sixth and first year students were present and the Mass was celebrated outdoors in the school sports area.

Principal Peter McNamara and Deputy Principal Sharon Gunn were joined by members of the RE Department, Sr Josephine IBVM and Betty Cronin, school chaplain.

Celebrant Fr Anthony Vibin Xavier, commissioned three sixth year students as special eucharistic ministers. They will assist at school liturgies throughout the year and have volunteered to serve in their own parishes in North Dublin. Many students are readers in their parishes while others are members of the Junior Conference of Vincent de Paul or participate in the Loreto Laudato Si’ initiative for justice, peace and care for our common home.

School chaplain Betty Cronin said: “We are a multicultural, multi-faith community who value and celebrate inclusion and so our students of other faith traditions are invited

and welcomed to our liturgical celebrations. This year, together with our sixth year liturgy group one of our Muslim students will lead a lunchtime reflection as part of a mentoring programme offered to incoming first years.”

Loreto College, Swords, transferred from North Great George’s Street in 1988 and has “enjoyed a close relationship with our parish and local community”, Ms Cronin said, adding that the present team, Fr Des Doyle and Fr Xavier always make themselves available to lead liturgical services during the school year including Tuesday morning Mass celebrated before the beginning of the school day in pre-Covid times.

In the coming year Ireland will be celebrating 200 years of Loreto Education, with Ms Cronin saying: “All our schools will be remembering Teresa Ball and her two companions who established the first Loreto schools in Ireland and whose vision and values shapes our approach and thinking here in Swords to this day.

“At opening Mass we prayed in thanksgiving for her contribution to the education of women in Ireland and all over the world. We prayed, too, that our students will be inspired with that same spirit of courage and generosity which will enable them to lead happy fulfilled lives and to be of service to our school and to those they meet wherever their future takes them.”



Newly commissioned ministers receiving commissioning certificates.



Principal Peter McNamara, chaplain Betty Cronin with newly commissioned special eucharistic ministers Orla O'Mara, Emily Ormsby, Isobel McCaffrey and Fr Anthony, St Finian’s River Valley.



Fr Anthony with First Years Miruna Smocot, Gabriela Nistor and Head Girl Diana Sallop representing the ‘Big Sister’ mentoring programme in Loreto.



Prayers of the Faithful with students representing Leaving Cert and First Year students.



Head girls Diana Sallop and Olivia Kelly with Fr Anthony.



# Fundraiser fun for St Mary's Baldoyle



Leinster Rugby CROs – Mark O’ Sullivan, Ariel Robles, Stephen Costelloe, Adam O’ Connor, Andy Carabini and Glenn Predy.



Eva Ward, Stephen Costello, Holly Ward, Maxima Maciala, Marlene Ouattara.

**S**t Mary's Secondary School Baldoyle Dublin held a tag-rugby event to fundraise for improvements to the school's IT facilities.

Leinster rugby community officers Stephen Costello and Mark O'Sullivan set-up the pitches, as the Teachers team won the day,

despite some "controversial" decisions by match officials.

St Mary's principal John Moore thanked everyone involved, saying "it was a fantastic day and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event".

"On the fundraising front, it was a great success and we have

reached 50% of our target," he continued. "Many thanks to everyone who bought a ticket and to those who have made donations.

"Everyone in the school will benefit from the upgrade and we are now working on our next fundraiser and hopefully another sponsor will emerge."



Hannah Kaye Ricablanca and Isabel Farrell.



Jennifer Savage, winner of the jersey signed by the men's Leinster Rugby Team.



Hollie Ford and Lauren Ford.



Teacher Ryan Cleary on his way to a score.



Second Years in action.



The Teachers – Emily Doyle, Joey Ryan, Rocco Mulvey, James Fanning, Robert Fennell, Shane O’Neill, Ryan Cleary, Kim McGettigan, Lauren Hall.



# NI SVP members hit the road

**T**he Society of St Vincent de Paul hosted a series of Member Roadshows, visiting towns and cities across the North, to engage with members in person for the first time since March last year.

Representatives of more than 1,600 members from 167 SVP Conferences heard about SVP's efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as their plans for the future.

Mary Waide, who was elected Regional President for the North Region at the begin-

ning of the pandemic, expressed her gratitude for the "sterling work" of SVP members during the pandemic.

"The dedication of members of SVP has never been more important than it has been in the past 18 months," said Ms Waide, who was meeting many members for the first time.

"I know from experience how daunting it has been trying to help the vulnerable in our community without compromising or risking the health of those who are supporting those in need."



Teresa Daly, Anne Smiley and Willie Fisher.



Betty McGinley, Sean McIlmunn, Siobhan McLaughlin, Dymrna Gallagher and Eileen Kyle.



Betty McGinley, Sean McIlmunn, Siobhan McLaughlin, Dymrna Gallagher and Eileen Kyle.



Attending the SVP Member Roadshow for Co. Antrim in Tullyglass Hotel were Paddy Kerr, Brian Fitzsimons, Michael Matthews, Celine Gillan and Elaine Rogan.



Mary Waide, Regional President of St Vincent de Paul, North Region (second right), is pictured with Pauline Brown, Regional Manager of SVP (front left) and board members Brendan McKernan, Peter McVeigh, Henry O'Loan, Patrick Friel, Anne Irwin and Anne McLarnon at the SVP Member Roadshow for Co. Armagh in Armagh City Hotel.



Bridget Smith, Bernie McNiece, Mary Waide and Betty Devlin.



Eileen McKenna, Mary Waide, Elizabeth Wilson and Eunan McCrees.



Brendan McKernan, Roseann Murphy, Mary Waide and Philip Mone.





Joseph Boyle, Maura McNulty, Mary Waide, Geraldine McGaughey and Jim Conlon.



Peter Cunningham, Nora O'Baoill, Mary Waide and Brendan Downey at the SVP Member Roadshow for Co. Down in Millbrook Lodge Hotel.



Patricia McKeown, Mary Waide and Gerard Mulhern.



PJ McClean, Mary Waide, Jim Morgan and Sean Burns are pictured at the SVP Member Roadshow for Co. Down in Millbrook Lodge Hotel.



Fr Patrick Devlin, Chaplain to the Deaf in Down and Connor Diocese, Mary Waide, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor and SVP Spiritual Director Fr Perry Gildea are pictured at the Feast Day Mass for St Vincent de Paul celebrated with St Joseph's Centre for the Deaf at SVP Parish Church on Belfast's Ligoniel Road.



Joe Maguire, Kate Beggan and Mary Waide.



Dodie Maguire, Mary Waide and Gerald Gallagher.



Marie Kilpatrick, Mary Waide and Margaret Mary O'Neill.



# Carlow parish rewards young people's



The Heather Cowan award recipients. Photos: John Bradley.

**A** Co. Carlow parish celebrated the “outstanding” work of its young people with a Mass and awards ceremony September 26.

The Heather Cowan Awards was first established in Graiguecullen and Killeshin parish by Fr John Dunphy and the parish team to “acknowledge the outstanding contributions” made by young people to parish life.

The awards are named in honour of Heather Cowan, a young Graiguecullen girl who tragically died of cancer in 2018.

Heather’s father, David, presented the awards, and Fr Dunphy celebrated Mass to mark the occasion.



Fr John Dunphy and the Graiguecullen and Killeshin parish pastoral team at the awards ceremony.

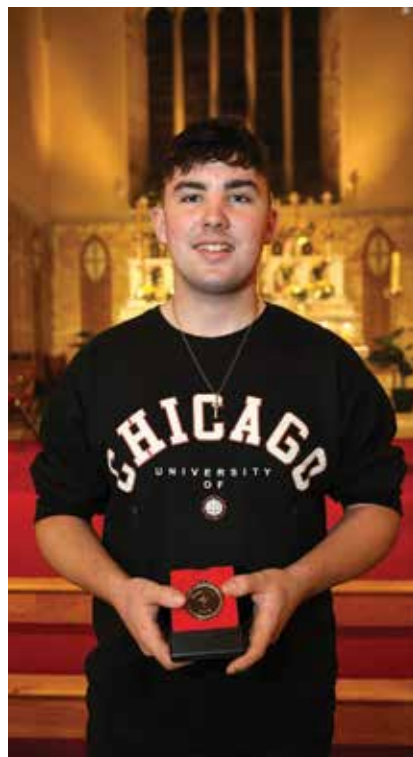


David Cowan handed out the Heather Cowan awards to young people in Graiguecullen and Killeshin parish, September 26.





# 'outstanding' contributions







From Covid to Malaria, authoritarian Venezuela to struggling South Sudan, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart continue to educate and feed the needy, writes **Chai Brady**

**T**he life of a missionary is filled with new experiences and challenges but having a good humour and the ability to laugh at yourself is one of the key aspects to a successful ministry, according to two Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

The presence of God and Church in all places has given Fr Alan Neville MSC a sense of belonging wherever he found himself, whether that be South Africa, Venezuela or South Sudan where he is currently based, even when things get tough.

"No matter where you are, whether you're working with homeless people in South Africa or the parish we had in Venezuela which was a very poor parish in Caracas, there's loads of challenges but you're with the people and God is already there," Fr Neville told *The Irish Catholic*.

"There's none of this thing of you bringing God to anyone. The stuff we consider challenging, that's daily life for them, they are just getting on with it and they're peaceful enough and graceful enough to allow you to journey with them and sometimes things can be a little bit tricky."

Despite the struggle communities face, "there's a real sense of solidarity in the churches and the communities I've been. To be part of that for me is a special grace," he said.

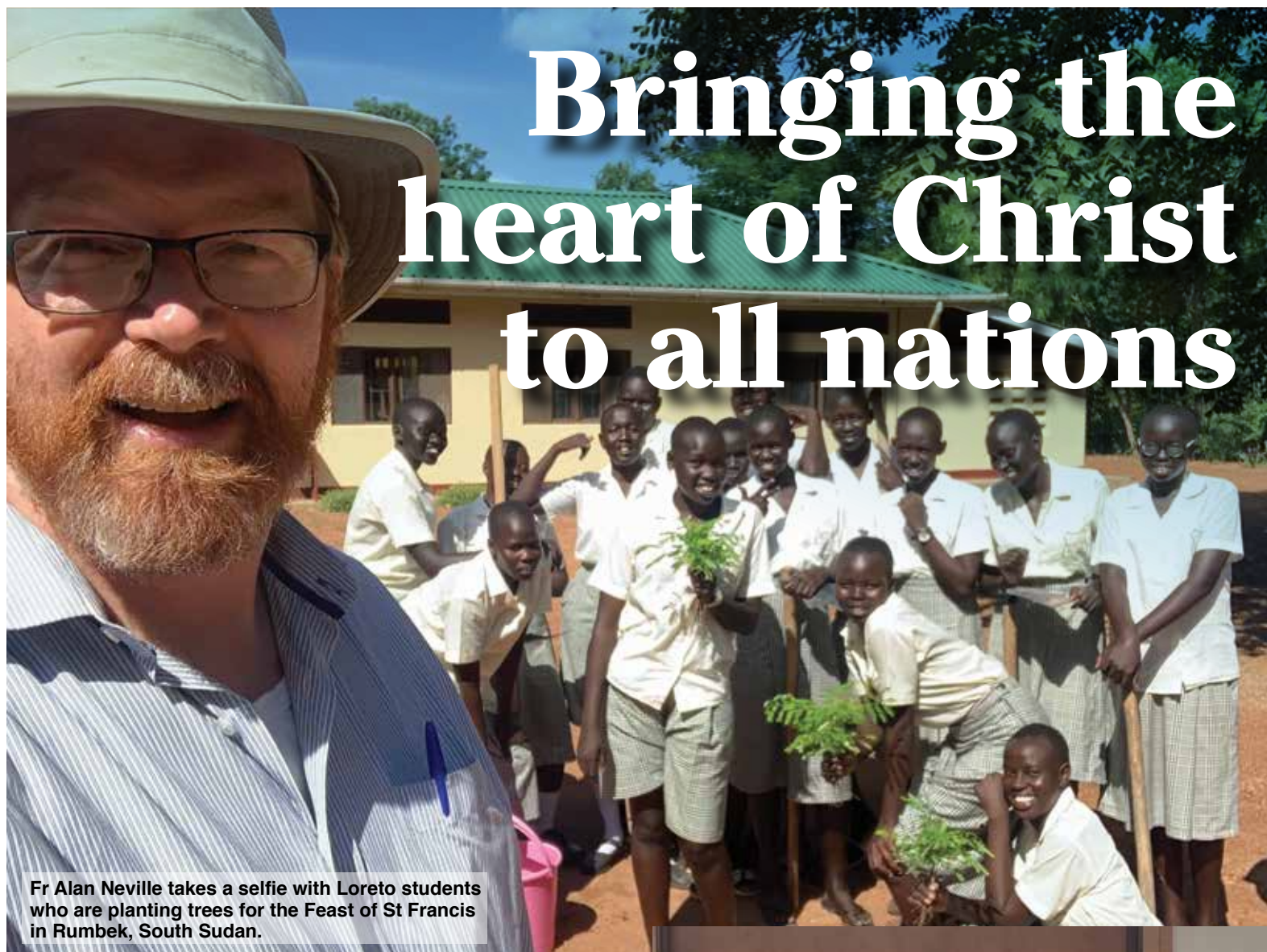
"You know you belong there even though there is a different language, the weather is entirely different, all the culture is very different, it's still the same Church so wherever you go you have that sense you belong."

Currently Fr Neville (46) is a chaplain in Loreto Rumbek which was founded by the Loreto Sisters. He has been there since November 2020.

They are based among the majority ethnic group, the Dinka people, and the region is more stable than many other parts of the country.

### Peace

Despite a new peace agreement and coalition government, South Sudan continues to be racked by insecurity. Armed violence in the country remains persistently high and shows little sign of abating according to the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, an academic institution within the US Depart-



Fr Alan Neville takes a selfie with Loreto students who are planting trees for the Feast of St Francis in Rumbek, South Sudan.

ment of Defence, in a September 2021 report.

Violence is a key driver behind the extraordinary levels of forced displacement. More than a third of the population, an estimated four million, are displaced.

The centre stated that the majority of these are refugees and the displaced typically find refuge within their own country. This has contributed to South Sudan's notorious distinction of having a greater share of its citizens living as refugees than any other country in Africa.

**“We went and got our vaccines with them, so once they saw us getting the vaccines they came as well.”**

For Fr Neville, one of their biggest concerns is not violence, but disease. He says they are still being “hammered” by Malaria, which continues to be a much bigger issue than Covid – although the respiratory virus it is still a concern.

“Our big challenge here now is Malaria but we're beginning to see a couple more cases of Covid whereas before we really didn't see any because every place here is quite isolated. It's very difficult to get around,” Fr Neville said, “If people aren't travelling the chances of transmission of Covid are low whereas now there are more cases of that happening. We're keeping an eye on that and just making sure the girls get through their studies. That's where we are, you focus on what your priority is and for us that's the priority.”

Fr Neville added this is particularly important as the level of secondary school attendance among girls in South Sudan is low.

“Here we're really encouraging it... it [the school] is not unique, but it's one of the few and it does amazing work in supporting young girls to go on with further education and avoid early childhood marriage which is a big thing,” he said.

They have a primary school, secondary school and a clinic in their compound, which has continued to care for the local community, all established by the Loreto Sisters. The head of the Loreto schools in Rumbek is Sr Orla Treacy IBVM, an Irish sister from Bray.

### Vaccination

Fr Neville says their staff were fortunate to be vaccinated quite quickly. “When they brought vaccines here the leadership in the school were saying we really need to get people vaccinated. We encouraged the staff, which includes teachers, people working in our clinic and the people working on our agricultural project,” he explained.

“We went and got our vaccines with them, so once they saw us getting the vaccines they came as well.”

Fr Neville describes vaccination as an “issue of global solidarity”, as there is a need to get as many people vaccinated as possible worldwide.

“We are seeing signs of solidarity and I think that is something to celebrate and encourage but we really need to see more of it because this is a pandemic that knows no borders, it really disregards any sense of citizenship and there is this sense now that as a people we need to stand together. It's happening, very slowly, but at least it's happening.”



Fr Seamus Kelly MSC, who spent 35 years in Venezuela.

Fr Neville grew up in Cork. He was a reader and altar server in church but was not “the most engaged Christian”. Plans for a life in business led him to a commerce degree in University College Cork. He decided against the course after a year and worked with homelessness charity Simon in Dublin before returning to Cork and training to become a social worker.

However, the question of becoming a priest was always there. “At the back of it all I was still considering the possibility of joining the MSCs, they were my local parish, I was an altar server there and a reader,” Fr Neville said.

“They were really good guys, a good sense of humour, it was terrible sense of humour, but a lovely sense of humour too, they used to crack all of these corny jokes. There was a warmth and humour there. All of the time it was at the back of my mind that this was a good idea, it was there constantly.”

### Social worker

After a while, before becoming a social worker, he decided to find out for definite whether the priesthood was for him, “if it works out great, and if it doesn't that's ok, but I didn't want to be 46 years of age staring out of a





Fr Neville MSC teaching in Loreto Rumbek, South Sudan.

window of an office thinking of what might have happened," Fr Neville said. He took the plunge at 25 and has been posted around the world, including, South Africa, England, Venezuela and now South Sudan, he also served as vocations director for the order.

He said: "As far as we know we're the only congregation that has the need for a sense of humour in our constitutions. We have it enshrined in our constitution which for me was a bit of a clincher because I think that's really important. Plenty of dad jokes. It's an approach to life, I really like it."

### Laugh

Another MSC priest, Fr Seamus Kelly, who came back to Ireland several years ago from Venezuela after spending 35 years ministering there, reiterated the importance of a sense of humour in the order despite the many challenges a missionary faces.

"You have to be able to laugh at yourself," Fr Kelly said. "You make mistakes and you get up and you keep going, it's part of our charism, in our constitution that governs our order. We are a family of spirit but we should also have a sense of humour which is very important, to get up and keep going."

It was two years to the day after Fr Kelly was ordained that he was sent to Venezuela, on December 17, 1979.

Before Fr Kelly became a priest, he thought he wanted to be a veterinarian. He attended secondary school at the Sacred Heart College, Carrignavar, Co. Cork. Here, he felt himself drawn towards the priesthood.

Although Fr Kelly returned to Ireland in 2016 and is now based in an MSC parish in Cork, he said he would like to return to Venezuela as the situation for the poor is worsening.

"People are living in dire poverty, their salary doesn't give them

enough to eat – those who have jobs, more than four million have left the country, especially the young people. When they graduate in any sphere of life, there's no jobs for them," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

"A friend of mine who became a doctor recently said there is no work for him in Venezuela, he would get no pay for it. He has gone off to the United States to get a job there. They have to learn the language of course so it's not easy."

**“As far as we know we're the only congregation that has the need for a sense of humour in our constitutions”**

The political situation over the past few decades has not helped the situation, with Fr Kelly saying this is due to the administrations under Hugo Chávez and now Nicolás Maduro.

"Since Maduro has come in, he has reinforced the ideology of communism and land was confiscated, all the rich people and those who were experts in oil companies, they were against them and they have all left. Even though Venezuela is oil rich, it's not being put to use for the good of the poor people, so that's the situation," according to Fr Kelly.

"When I went out there first in 1979 it was one of the richest coun-

tries because of the oil but now it's way down the line. It's a very hard time for all Venezuelans. Family life has been hit strongly, many of them have left. Recently a family of three, they left for Santiago, Chile, leaving everything they had at home in Venezuela. People in other countries now are tired of so many Venezuelans coming in and getting the jobs from them. Even though they leave the country in a migrant situation it is so difficult."

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was founded in 1854 by Fr Jules Chevalier, a French priest. This happened in Issoudun, a town in the middle of France in the Diocese of Bourges. He founded it to help the needy and to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The missionaries in Venezuela have been there for more than 50 years. Fr Kelly said: "They decided to bring that love of Christ to everyone in dire need and today it's more or less via the social aspect, trying to get food for them, giving out food parcels. Anything we get from overseas, money, we use it to buy food for them, medicines, because you can't buy them in Venezuela. The poor people can't get them so it's really handouts we're working with at the moment. We're trying to continue doing the best we can."

### Sacraments

"Those who come to the church, we help them with the sacraments. You also have to talk about evangelisation there, what you're doing really in helping with their needs... I suppose

**“Whether you're working with homeless people in South Africa or the parish we had in Venezuela which was a very poor parish in Caracas, there's loads of challenges but you're with the people and God is already there”**



Fr Neville MSC blesses a new well for the local community in Rumbek, a project funded by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

that is evangelisation too, showing the mercy and love of Christ. We're a congregation of nearly 2,000 missionaries worldwide in the five continents, in Venezuela we're only 12 at the moment and it's a very hard situation for them."

Fr Kelly said it has been saddening to watch the situation get worse and there are very few signs of a political solution. "You just have to pray and hope for a miracle and it's hard to accept it because we were in Venezuela when things were going good and the economy was good and people had enough to eat. At the moment we're in the situation of getting help from overseas," he said.

**“They decided to bring that love of Christ to everyone in dire need and today it's more or less via the social aspect”**

Fr Kelly restarted a radio station that already existed but wasn't operational when he was in Venezuela, it was called Lumen. For more than 15 years, he ran weekly programmes on satellite TV, as well as running a radio station that ran 24 hours a day. It covered the west of the country with a potential listenership of six million people.

"We got funds from overseas and we got the radio moving and it's a great source of outreach," Fr Kelly said. "At the moment now it's very difficult because you haven't the funds to keep it going if anything breaks down. It's still going a small bit but not as much as we would like. Thank God we're able to use it for the good."

"People can do so much good now with the mass media, social media, we have priests and missionaries throughout the world who are involved in that as well."

### Social media

Back in Ireland, Fr Seamus is active on Instagram and is constantly trying to improve his grasp of social media.

"I'm dabbling a small bit on Instagram, sharing and messaging and then helping people. Maybe posting a teaching on some part of the Bible with the help of the people who are involved with me. I'd be able to put it up on Instagram and people will react to it. It's a way of evangelising for me," he explained.

"Social media is a God-given gift and young people are experts on it, the children in primary school, they are born with it now and they're using iPads and they're doing great work and they are using it for good."

Digital evangelisation is a great way to reach young people, according to Fr Kelly, as the Church must go where people are and accompany them.

"Even the secondary schools during the pandemic they were using online resources and studying online for their junior cert and leaving cert and they were able to work from home," he said. "Young people are the experts, they are the hope of tomorrow and we have to work with them and try to be at their level and you can only be at their level if you are with them in all that they are doing. We can do the best we can and they can see that and they will respond. You have to have great faith in the young people today I think they have a desire to do what is right and I think with a bit of encouragement they always respond."

Missionaries like Fr Neville and Fr Kelly continue to reach out to educate and bring the Gospel and Sacred Heart to people across the world, whether that be Venezuela or South Sudan, or even by using social media, and of course, a sense of humour never goes awry.



# Out&About

## A prosperous parish



**KILDARE:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Dr Denis Nulty celebrated Mass in Prosperous parish, which won the Eco-Congregation award for 2021. He is pictured with parishioners, October 3.



**MEDJUGORJE:** Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Dr Alphonsus Cullinan is pictured on Apparition Hill in Medjugorje with fellow pilgrims from the diocese.



**CAVAN:** Mairead Corbally, Principal of Saint Joseph's School, Kingscourt, is pictured on the occasion of her retirement after 31 years of service to the community. With her are her predecessor Ena McGinley and her successor Mary Keneally, October 1.

## IN SHORT

### Society 'wallowing in violence as entertainment'

Bishop of Derry Dr Donal McKeown warned that legislation is not enough to tackle the "tsunami of violence" against women today.

We "need to address the reality of a society that is wallowing in violence as entertainment, and pornography", Bishop McKeown said on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, October 4.

"We know from the news that there is a tsunami of violence against women and children," the bishop of Derry began.

"Many political leaders talk as if the main solution to this is to be found in

more laws and policing. Legislation and law-enforcement are important. But we also need to address the reality of a society that is wallowing in violence as entertainment, and pornography."

He added that more laws are not enough where "there is vast profit to be made in promoting irresponsibility".

We must follow Jesus' call "to build unity through respect", Bishop McKeown urged.

"There is no healing in pitting men against women. Relationships, commitment and love of the other build a healthy society. A society where faithfulness is prioritised will thrive. That is what Jesus underlines," he said.

### Human trafficking legislation urgently needs review – Aontú

Ireland's human trafficking legislation needs to be reviewed urgently, Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said, while welcoming recent convictions.

The Meath-west TD's comments came after two people were convicted of trafficking offences last week.

Mr Tóibín warned that the Government "must not be complacent in fighting this most heinous of crimes".

He called for "zero-tolerance" in this area, saying that "the Government should undertake a review of all legislation relating to human trafficking, and identify any gaps which should

be addressed by amendments or new legislation as quickly as possible".

"The 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report from the US State Department has this year ranked Ireland as a tier two watchlist country when it comes to human trafficking," Mr Tóibín continued.

"I have raised this matter with the Minister for Justice, and she has written to me to say that she found it 'very disappointing that the US State Department did not acknowledge the significant progress made by Ireland over the past 12 months' and that she anticipates that the work Ireland is doing will be reflected in the next report and that Ireland's ranking will be updated.

"While I appreciate the Minister's sentiment, I believe we need action more than talk."



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Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**OFFALY:** Birr Parish recently acknowledged the work of Phyllis Landy, Phyllis Byrne and Mary Kerins for their work with the parish Padre Pio Prayer Group. New officers have taken over their roles in recent times.



**OFFALY:** Birr Parish acknowledged the contribution of Mike Davis who died during the Covid lockdown for his lifetime membership of St Brendan's choir and as organist at daily Mass for nearly 20 years. Brian Kennedy, chairperson of Birr Parish Pastoral Council presented a St Brendan's medal and scroll to his wife Mary and family.



**DUBLIN:** Church of the Holy Spirit Ballyroan celebrated their first Confirmation ceremony October 2. Fr Michael Murtagh is pictured with Oisin Cullen and his family.



**DUBLIN:** Raheny Capuchin Friary recently welcomed two young men, Sean Ronayne and Michal Kulgawczyk, as postulants. They began a nine-month programme of discernment in the community.



**DUBLIN:** Fr Murtagh with Aoise Farrington and family, October 2.

### Events

● In the current Covid-19 crisis, it is clear that most (and perhaps all) Church events, other than some Masses, are suspended. Consequently, we are withholding the popular Events Listing column until normal activities can resume in our parishes. However, please do email us if you know of any parish event planned and we will publish details.





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Cardinal hospitalised with Covid after attending Eucharistic Congress

● Cardinal and President of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe, Angelo Bagnasco, has been hospitalised with Covid after travelling to the International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest.

The cardinal, 78, had been fully vaccinated since May. He tested positive for Covid upon his return to Italy from Hungary and was hospitalised immediately after.

He is one of a number of Catholic cardinals to have contracted Covid since the pandemic began, the most notable being Cardinal Raymond Burke, whose hospitalisation and subsequent recovery from the virus drew attention in light of his previous anti-vaccine sentiments.

### Colombian bishop implores ill woman to not be euthanised

● The head of the Colombian bishops' Commission for the Promotion and Defence of Life on Wednesday addressed a video message to Martha Liria Sepúlveda Campo, a 51-year-old woman who is sick but not terminally so, urging her to renege her decision to be euthanised.

In an October 6 message addressed to Ms

Campo, Bishop Francisco Antonio Ceballos Escobar of Riohacha said that "your affliction can find a transcendent meaning if it becomes a call to love that heals, love that renews, love that forgives."

Ms Campo, 51, has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, which last year made her unable to move her legs.

### 300,000 attend pro-life march in Mexico City

● More than 300,000 people participated in a march in favour of women and life in Mexico City, with more than 1 million people involved associated marches across the country.

The participants of the march listened to testimonies and messages. On stage, a doctor performed an ultrasound on a mother 38 weeks pregnant, allowing the participants in the march to hear

the baby's heartbeat.

The coordinator of the march, Marcial Padilla, shared his testimony with his wife Mayela Sepúlveda and their 9-year-old daughter Ana Paula, who has a "very severe brain injury."

While "some might think that Ana Paula is worthless, or that her life has no meaning, it is exactly the opposite. Her life is wonderful by itself", she said.

### Cuban priest denounces socialism as a 'failure'

● Fr Alberto Reyes Pías, a priest of the Archdiocese of Camagüey, pleaded via Facebook with those possessing left-wing tendencies in the socialist hegemon and asked them to recognise the failure of the socialist model that was imposed on Cuba 62 years ago.

Addressing the country's hierarchy, Fr Alberto stated that, "the Cuban model has been a failure, and I humbly ask the Left to end up accepting that, because while you refuse to accept it and boast of continuing to say to a dead person: 'come on, you can do it,' my people suffer."

"We suffer from the uncertainty of a social model where we have practically no control over our present or our future", the priest submitted.

### A 1,200-year-old Vatican Library manuscript is on display at Dubai Expo

● The Vatican Library has a ninth-century manuscript currently on display at the Dubai Expo.

Three original manuscripts from the Vatican Apostolic Library are part of a Holy See exhibit on display until March 31, 2022, at the world's fair in the United Arab Emirates.

The oldest of the documents is an Arabic translation of the Greek scholar Theon of Alexandria's introduction to Ptolemy's, "Handy Tables" produced between 800 AD and 830 AD by the Bayt al-Hikmah, or House of Wisdom, in Baghdad.

It is the first time that the manuscript has left the Vatican Library.

## Pro-life leaders criticise decision to halt new Texas 'heartbeat law'

Pro-life leaders in Texas responded to a federal judge blocking Texas' pro-life "heartbeat" law, just more than one month after the law went into effect.

In a ruling on Wednesday, October 6, Judge Robert Pitman of the Western District of Texas ceased enforcement of the law by the state.

The Texas Heartbeat Act limits most abortions after detection of a foetal heartbeat, and is enforced through private civil lawsuits against those performing illegal abortions, as well as against those deemed culpable under the law of assisting in illegal abortions. Successful lawsuits can net at least \$10,000 in damages.

The Biden administration had recently lodged a complaint requesting a temporary restraining order on the state or anyone filing a lawsuit under the law.

Although Pitman would not order an injunction on prospective private lawsuits, his order thwarted any private actions under the law "to the extent" that they "would necessitate state action that is now prohibited." The state is prohibited from actions such as awarding damages to successful lawsuits or imposing judgments in such cases. "A person's right under the Constitution to choose to obtain an abortion prior to foetal viability is well established,"



Pro-life advocates and supporters of legal abortion demonstrate in Austin, Texas, October 2. Photo: CNS

Judge Pitman enshrined in his decision.

Responding to Pitman's overruling of the heartbeat law, Chelsey Youman, Texas state director of the group Human Coalition Action, stated that, "Judge Pittman's stonewalling of the Texas Heartbeat Act is a shameful example of unfettered judicial activism at its worst. His historic injunction has no regard for the rule of law, and is more about partisan politics than a fair judgment of the law."

"The people of Texas speaking through their state

legislators acted to protect unborn children with beating hearts, who are as human as you and me," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List.

"The Heartbeat Act is estimated to have saved more than 4,700 babies since it took effect over a month ago. Now an unelected judge has interfered with the clearly expressed will of Texans," she added.

Judge Pitman wrote that Texas "contrived an unprecedented and transparent statutory scheme" that "cir-

cumvented the traditional process" of judicial review by allowing private citizens to enforce the law through lawsuits.

In his opinion and footnotes, Pitman made persistent references to "pregnant persons" and "pregnant people."

"The Court finds that abortion is a safe and common medical procedure, based on the credible declarations of abortion providers founded on their education and experience," he stated.

## Controversial votes force German 'Synodal Way' to extend to 2023

The German Catholic Church's "Synodal Way" will be extended to 2023 after its plenary session ended abruptly following votes in favour of a text approving same-sex blessings and a discussion of whether the priesthood is necessary.

Bishop Georg Bätzing, chairman of the German bishops' conference, and Thomas Sternberg, president of the lay Central Committee of German Catholics, announced the extension on October 2, at the end of the second synodal assembly in Frankfurt.

The synodal assembly is the supreme

decision-making body of the Synodal Way, a multi-year process bringing together bishops and lay people to discuss four main topics: the way power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women.

The Synodal Way, launched on December 1, 2019, was originally expected to end in October 2021, but was extended to February 2022 due to the pandemic. The latest extension means that the controversial process will last more than three years.

The Church in Germany is facing an

exodus of Catholics in the wake of a clerical abuse crisis. More than 220,000 people officially left the Church in 2020. Only 5.9% of Germany's Catholics attended Mass last year, compared to 9.1% in 2019.

The decision to suspend deliberations was reportedly met with dismay among participants in the assembly. Assessing the nature of the votes, more than 168 participants out of a total of 214 voted in favour of blessing same-sex marriages, while the topic of the necessity of priesthood returned a slender majority in favour of priesthood (95 to 94).

## Bishops' leader to discuss confessional seal comments with French minister

The president of the French bishops' conference has accepted a request to discuss his recent comments about the confessional seal with the country's interior minister.

According to an October 7 Bishops' Statement, Archbishop Eric de Moulins-

Beaufort will be meeting with interior minister Gérald Darmanin to discuss the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession for Catholics and the theological, spiritual, and canonical foundations of the seal of Confession.

Rather than a summons arising from the recent rev-

elations of decades-long sexual abuse that took place in the Church in France, the request from Mr Darmanin has been described as an invitation to discuss whether the confessional seal took precedence over French laws.

The statement on the

bishops' conference website said that the meeting with Mr Darmanin "will be an opportunity for [Moulins-Beaufort] to recall that today, the seal of Confession, imposed on priests by canon law, is not contrary to French criminal law."





Edited by Brandon Scott  
news@irishcatholic.ie

## Seeking refuge



A migrant man seeking refuge in the United States walks to Mexico through the Rio Grande near Ciudad Acuna, Mexico, to avoid being deported. Photo: CNS.

## US Congresswoman evacuated from Mass in Rome due to security concerns

Congresswoman and Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, left Mass at a church in Rome Saturday evening. Her sudden departure was spurred by protesters criticising the introduction of a Covid 'green pass' in the city, according to journalist Joan Lewis. The representative of California had travelled to the Vatican with her husband to meet Pope Francis and other prominent Vatican officials.

Speaking in the aftermath of the incident, the church's rector, Fr Steven Petroff Pelosi, confirmed that Ms

Pelosi was unable to remain in the church amid doubts over her safety, "unfortunately there was a security incident and sadly Speaker Pelosi and her husband had to leave". Pelosi, who was due to contribute to the Mass by taking part in the readings, was safely evacuated from the church as the rector believed that her safety "was most important" at the time.

Joan Lewis, a journalist based in Rome, stated that she had spoken to [Fr] Petroff, who told her that the security concerns stemmed from demonstrations going on in

the streets of Rome that were moving into the area where St Patrick's is located around the time of the 6 pm Mass. "What Fr Petroff learned after Mass was that a large number of the anti-Green Card protesters were moving in the direction of Via Veneto and they appeared to be violent".

### Heckling

Although it was reported by certain media outlets that Ms Pelosi was subjected to heckling and jeering, Lewis maintained that Pelosi was not the recipient of such abuse

while a spokesperson for Pelosi disclosed that "it was Italian security officials who made the decision to pull the Speaker out of the church."

Ms Pelosi, a self-professed practicing Catholic, has a long and tempestuous history with the Church, which includes disputing with her local ordinary, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, over her support of abortion and travelled to Rome to give the keynote address at the opening session of the G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit on Friday.

## Polish archbishop calls for migrants in Belarus border crisis to be helped

The president of Poland's Catholic bishops' conference called for humanitarian aid for migrants seeking to enter the country from neighbouring Belarus.

Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki made the appeal on October 4 amid tensions between Poland and Belarus over an inordinate rise in migrants seeking to cross the border.

Influenced by the recently celebrated 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees event on September 26, the archbishop used the philosophy

of the event to help illuminate the current crisis at the Polish border. "In view of the events on the Polish border in past weeks, the recently celebrated 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees gives me an opportune occasion to recall once again the Christians' responsibility for strangers and to seek solutions that serve the common good", he said.

"As Christians, we must be convinced that the right and duty to defend the state borders can be recon-

ciled with bringing help to people who find themselves in dramatic situations of 'no return' as hostages to the geopolitical games of certain politicians."

Speaking on the Church in Poland's position on the issue of the Polish border crisis, Archbishop Gadecki affirmed that the Church "declares its readiness to join in the search for the best solutions, which ... within the framework of the legal order ... will serve the common good widely understood".

## Vatican roundup

### Pope Francis appeals for countries to achieve net zero carbon emissions

● Pope Francis and various religious leaders from across the world appealed last Monday for countries to "achieve net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible".

The plea was made on October 4 in a joint message signed in the Vatican's Hall of Benediction.

The 2,000-word appeal, which was signed by almost 40 faith leaders, called for "wealthy countries" to display greater impetus in the face of rapid climate change. "The world is called to achieve net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, with wealthier countries taking the lead in reducing their own emissions and in financing emission reductions from poorer nations," they outlined in the document, which was presented to both Alok Sharma, president of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, and Italy's foreign minister Luigi Di Maio.

They had gathered at the Vatican for the meeting, "Faith and Science towards COP26", promoted by the British and Italian embassies to the Holy See. The summit brought together religious leaders and scientists ahead of the climate change conference in Glasgow, Scotland, from October 31 to November 12. Pope Francis indicated earlier this month that he hoped to attend the conference in Glasgow, but he will now be represented by the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at the event.

### Three Swiss guards resign over newly-enacted Vatican vaccine mandate

● Three Swiss Guards have quit after refusing to comply with the Vatican's Covid vaccine policy and three other guards have been suspended until they become fully vaccinated.

The Pontifical Swiss Guard, who provide protection to the Pope, has required all 135 guards to get a Covid vaccine.

Lt Urs Breitenmoser, a spokesman for the Swiss Guard, informed sources that three guards left on a "voluntary" basis. "Three members of the Guard have chosen not to adhere to that request, voluntarily leaving the corps," he stated.

The policy comes after Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, incumbent president of Vatican City State, previously intimated that the regulations were being implemented at the request of Pope Francis, who asked the authorities "to take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and combat the ongoing public health emergency in the Vatican City State."

However, the new rules stipulate that Catholics going to Mass or Confession in St Peter's Basilica, or in other churches on Vatican territory, will not need to have the Covid pass.

### Pope Francis encourages all religious traditions to suppress 'temptation to fundamentalism'

● Pope Francis asked leaders of world religions to resist "the temptation to fundamentalism" for the sake of peace at an interreligious gathering Thursday in front of the Colosseum

The event, titled "Peoples as Brothers, Future Earth. Religions and Cultures in Dialogue", was the 35th event promoted by the Sant'Egidio Community.

Speaking on a stage together with Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu representatives, Pope Francis appealed for peace amid the world's current crises and conflicts. "Peace summons us to serve the truth and declare what is evil when it is evil, without fear or pretence, even and especially when it is committed by those who profess to follow the same creed as us," the Pope said.

"For the sake of peace, please, in every religious tradition let us defuse the temptation to fundamentalism and every tendency to view a brother or sister as an enemy."

Advocating for more worldwide equitable practices, the Pope stressed for "Fewer arms and more food, less hypocrisy and more transparency, more vaccines distributed fairly and fewer weapons marketed indiscriminately", to take precedence in the world's nations.



# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

It's probably fair to say that over the centuries, the Pope's criminal justice system hasn't exactly enjoyed a sterling reputation.

Nineteenth century French novelist and journalist Edmond About, whose 1859 book *The Roman Question* remains arguably the single best treatment of the papal court, wrote that in the unlikely event you were ever to see a Church official being prosecuted by a Vatican court, "Rest assured the public interest has no part in the business. The real springs of action are to be sought elsewhere."

Most observers probably would have said something similarly cynical about Vatican justice, albeit less elegantly, as late as last week. On the limited number of occasions when the Vatican tribunal now handles a case of consequence, the working assumption has been that it convicts who it's supposed to convict and acquits who it's supposed to acquit – i.e., that its role is to rubber-stamp decisions made elsewhere, while lending them a veneer of legal respectability.

Yesterday, however, that perceived rubber stamp showed some spine.

**“The first ruling came in the Vatican’s ‘trial of the century,’ a blockbuster case involving ten defendants”**

Under presiding Judge Giuseppe Pignatone, former Chief Magistrate of Rome, the court issued rulings in two separate cases, each of which required some measure of resolve. Both represented an act of defiance against two entities which traditionally have wielded considerable influence over criminal cases here – in the first case, the Vatican's prosecutor's office, and in the second, the more ephemeral court of public opinion.

## Blockbuster

The first ruling came in the Vatican's "trial of the century", a blockbuster case involving ten defendants, including the very first cardinal to face such an indictment, and centring on a \$400 million London property deal gone horribly wrong.

The indictment presented by the Promoter of Justice, in effect the DA of the Vatican system, relies heavily on the testimony of a turncoat witness, Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, the former director of the financial affairs office within the Secretariat of State. Msgr Perlasca

## In money and sex abuse cases, Vatican tribunal shows some spine



The judges of the Vatican City State criminal court – Venerando Marano, Giuseppe Pignatone and Carlo Bonzano – as the trial of 10 defendants in a financial malfeasance case begins. Photo: CNS

**“It’s probably fair to say that over the centuries, the Pope’s criminal justice system hasn’t exactly enjoyed a sterling reputation”**

was arguably the architect of the London deal, heading what his own boss in a written declaration for the court called a "rotten and predatory system" within the Secretariat of State, but he managed to escape indictment himself by turning on his erstwhile colleagues.

## Testimony

Unlike other witnesses, prosecutors videotaped Msgr Perlasca's testimony, but they didn't include those recordings in the materials submitted to the court and defence lawyers. During a hearing in July, the tribunal ordered them to turn over those recordings by August 10, but the prosecutors balked citing the need to protect the privacy of those involved.

On Monday (October 4) those same prosecutors asked the court to allow them to recollect all the evidence in the case, a time-consuming endeavour which presumably would have allowed them to interview Msgr Perlasca again and submit only that material, ensuring the tapes never surfaced.

Yesterday, the tribunal in effect replied, "Not so fast".

While the judges approved the withdrawal and eventual resubmis-

sion of some charges, they allowed others to stand. Most importantly, the court ruled the prosecutors can't have it both ways. They can't rely on the Msgr Perlasca recordings to bring legal charges against someone – which, by definition, is a public act – and then refuse to turn over the recordings on the basis of privacy concerns.

**“The bottom line, however, is that nobody was convicted and nobody’s going to jail”**

Once again, the tribunal ordered the prosecutors to cough up the tapes, this time with a deadline of November 3.

Tuesday's (October 5) second ruling came in the case of a former pre-seminarian named Gabrielle Martinelli, now a priest in the Italian diocese of Como, who'd been charged with sexual abuse of another pre-seminarian in a facility which, at the time, was located on Vatican grounds. The rector at the time, Monsignor Enrico Radice, was also charged with knowing about the abuse but covering it up.

Granted, the legal case was complex from the outset, involving charges that one minor abused another. The accuser also gave shifting, and sometimes conflicting, versions of events. From a PR point of view, however, the narrative was fairly simple: A Vatican court has the chance to show it takes abuse seriously.

## Verdict

Bear in mind, too, that the verdict came less than 24 hours after the release of a massively damning report on clerical sexual abuse in France, creating a swell of negative coverage around the world and stoking new questions about whether claims of reform are for real. In the end, the judges absolved the two defendants. Technically, they were acquitted on some charges, on others they were held to be "not punishable" because they represented exceptions to the crime charged, and in still other instances their alleged crimes were judged to be past the statute of limitations.

The bottom line, however, is that nobody was convicted and nobody's going to jail.

Of course, that decision presumably was reached well before

anyone knew the French report would be coming out at the same time, but it was entirely predictable that there might be some PR blowback anyway. No matter when it happens, if you have a choice between two headlines – "Vatican convicts priests for abuse" and "Vatican acquits priests on sex abuse charges" – it doesn't take a PhD in communications theory to figure out which one is likely to play better.

Naturally, one can argue the merits of either ruling.

**“The tribunal ordered the prosecutors to cough up the tapes, this time with a deadline of November 3”**

Maybe the prosecutors have good reasons for not wanting to turn over the Msgr Perlasca tapes – though if they do, they've been remarkably discrete about telling anyone what those reasons are. Maybe Martinelli and Msgr Radice really did deserve some sort of censure in the sex abuse case, even if it was hard to determine based on the trial record.

What's not disputable, however, is that reaching both decisions required the tribunal to show some gumption. If nothing else, that may suggest that as the London trial continues to play out, we have more surprises in store.



# Scandal-ridden Legionaries of Christ named in Pandora Papers



Pope Francis blesses a group of newly ordained priests of the Legionaries of Christ in this 2017 photo. Photo CNS.



Inés San Martín

Chilean President Sebastián Piñera, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair have all been named in the exposé of the financial secrets and offshore dealings known as the Pandora Papers. However, there's only one Catholic institution named: The Legionaries of Christ religious order.

**“The downfall of the Legionaries of Christ began in 1998, when nine men went to the Vatican to formally accuse Maciel of sexually abusing them”**

The order was founded by Father Marcial Maciel, who was later credibly accused of abusing children and instituting a cult-like atmosphere within the institution.

Just three days before an intervention of the ordered authorised by Pope Benedict XVI began in 2010, they set up a scheme to absorb

money through three trusts in New Zealand. These allowed them to hide millions in assets from the Vatican, and avoid paying taxes on investments in real estate, technology, oil companies, and even the company behind Kentucky Fried Chicken.

The downfall of the Legionaries of Christ began in 1998, when nine men went to the Vatican to formally accuse Fr Maciel of sexually abusing them. In 2006, at the age of 85, he was suspended from ministry and died two years later.

## Apostolic visitation

In late 2009 an apostolic visitation was ordered by the pontiff, and shortly afterwards Cardinal Velasio De Paolis was appointed to impose “structural changes” in the Legion, and the order underwent a five-year process of renewal.

But on the eve of Cardinal De Paolis's public appointment – after it had been revealed to the Legionaries – priests and businessmen close to the order set up an opaque network of trusts and subsidiary companies that have been used over the past decade. These tax haven accounts, according to Spanish newspaper *El País*, have accumulated more than \$295 million in assets in sectors such as real estate, technology, oil, and fast food.

This weekend, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists released an exposé of the financial secrets and offshore dealings of dozens of heads of

**“However, the historic architect of Legionary finances, Mexican Father Luis Garza Medina, together with two of his businessmen brothers, opened Salus Trust and AlfaOmega Trust on November 15, 2011”**

state, public officials, politicians, artists and sports stars from 91 countries and territories. Hundreds of journalists spent two years investigating nearly 12 million confidential files that compose the so-called Pandora Papers.

Though many of the accounts aren't illegal, the use of offshore tax havens is often accused of being highly exploitative, contributing to wealth inequality, and frequently going hand in hand with corruption and criminal activity, especially tax evasion.

The allegations against Fr Maciel were not only of sexual nature – he led a double life in which he fathered children, who he is also accused of molesting – but also of financial impropriety.

On July 6, 2010, the Retirement and Medical Charitable Trust (RMCT), was set up in order to “collect donations and make investments” to “financially assist retired members, mentally affected, or injured in an accident”.

However, the historic architect of Legionary finances, Mexican Father Luis Garza Medina, together with two of his businessmen brothers, opened Salus Trust and

AlfaOmega Trust on November 15, 2011. The money for this trust allegedly came from “a family inheritance”.

The profits from this trust go into the RMCT, with the order denying owning or controlling AlfaOmega or Salus Trust, stating that the million-dollar benefits they receive from Fr Garza Medina's structure are a generous contribution.

“It is not uncommon for members and their families to freely decide to give donations to the congregation or to other religious and charitable causes,” they said in a statement.

## Legionaries of Christ

Yet the ongoing existence of RMCT in a tax haven belies the promises made by the Legionaries of Christ in 2017 after the Paradise Papers revealed a similar scheme: The order said that this financial architecture was no longer in use, and that it was something typical of the times of Fr Maciel.

“Today the Legion of Christ does not have offshore companies [in tax havens] nor does it have resources in offshore companies,” global spokesman Aaron Smith said at

the time. “They were created when Fr Marcial Maciel was general administrator, and then they were closed,” he added.

In a statement released Monday, October 4, the Legionaries argued that the two trusts created in New Zealand by the Fr Garza Medinas for their benefit “are independent of our Congregation” and reaffirmed that the institution “does not control the assets of its religious, nor does it administer them, nor does it own them, unless the religious donate their assets”.

Although Fr Garza Medina is no longer in a high-ranking position within the Legion – he was removed during the Vatican's intervention – his sister Roberta told *El País* that he never ceased to be in charge of the accounts, since “most of the assets are not in the name of the Legion, but in the name of my brother's lenders”.

Only after the death of Luis and his sister Paulina, who is a member of the Legion-affiliated group Regnum Christi, will the resources of the trusts be fully turned over to the Legionaries of Christ, according to documents reviewed by the Spanish newspaper.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Recognition of religion needed for Europe's moral change

**Dear Editor,** We are being lectured *ad nauseam* that the truly dark period of our recent history has been superseded by an enlightened and liberal era. However, the hall marks of social behaviourism in this secularised paradise making for daily media reportage presents an unpleasant and disturbing reality. Children, according to a Garda report were suspects in almost one in five sex crimes in 2018. Since then, further such crimes, including killings, were perpetrated by adolescents. Suicides, especially among teenagers, as well as cases of self-harm, range across all age groups, male and female. There are grave concerns at the levels of obesity, alcoholism and drug addiction affecting teenagers and adults. Children are being trau-

matized in alcoholically fuelled fear behind closed doors.

What long-term unreported anguish, some life-long and even inter-generational, is being inflicted on all the families so affected.

The aged, particularly, fear living alone in rural and in many urban areas and even adults are wary of walking alone after dark on many city streets. Now euthanasia is on the existential agenda for the seriously ill elderly and a subtle and unspoken pressure will be exercised on them 'to do the right thing'.

Ireland has signed up for abortion and within a couple of years of this misconceived legislation the lives of 13,243 human entities were terminated at the commencement of their journeys to entitled full life.

In the broader context of its more 'advanced' member states the very future of European civilisation is threatened as aggressive secularism's 'condom culture' has brought 'greying' Europe to its demographic knees as births rates fall below the required levels of 2.1 child per woman to sustain its population growth.

It will be in a radical religiously sourced realisation of the inherent familial relationship enjoyed by all humans as beings of divine stock, as children of our creator all, that the moral transformation required to create a new revelation of the universe will be sourced and sustained.

Your etc.,  
**Colm Ó Tórna**  
Artane, Dublin

## Pray for the conversion of China

**Dear Editor,** Interesting reading Fr Rolheiser last week on the powers of prayer [*The Irish Catholic* – September 23, 2021].

Considering all the traumas and tribulations and lunatics currently in the world, I think the most urgent change we need is the conversion of China. Almost anything we touch today especially technology-wise, is made in China, and what an influence they are having on the world. But their record on human rights, Tibet, etc., is not exemplary. They seem to seek only world domination and over the next couple of generations, they will have huge and growing influence.

As Christians, we must pray vehemently and unceasingly for the conversion of China, and don't expect it to happen overnight.

Your etc.,  
**Sean Creaney**  
Blackrock, Co. Dublin



## Nailing the big lie of the pro-abortion agenda

**Dear Editor,** Thanks to you for publishing Fr Silvester O'Flynn's quote of the year [*The Irish Catholic* – September 30, 2021], which nailed the big lie of the pro-abortion agenda.

As he put it, "the so-called right to choose is a lie because it is a denial of the right to life of another

human being".

How right he is, and how wrong the 'Yes' voters were in the Repeal referendum, when they put their trust in the Prince of Lies, the Devil. Led astray also by their politicians, who promised abortion would be "safe, rare and legal". Strange how their accomplices in the media

are in no hurry to bring them to account for that lie, despite almost 20,000 innocent deaths since. Instead they have focused on the coronavirus where there is a much lower death rate. Explain please.

With the facts about abortion emerging more clearly, perhaps it's time to

start thinking about another referendum – to give the people who got it wrong the last time a chance to atone for their error. And, of course, to put an end to the senseless extermination of innocent life.

Your etc.,  
**Sean Ryan**  
Dundrum, Dublin 16

## Don't believe everything you hear on the internet

**Dear Editor,** Bishop Paul Dempsey is absolutely right when he says Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, would be appalled by the constant criticism of Pope Francis [*The Irish Catholic* – September 30, 2021]. There seems to be a small but significant number of allegedly Catholic media organisations who do not have one good word to say about the Pope and take every opportunity to question his leadership and decision making. However, in the past they

would never have been critical of other popes and would have vehemently defended them. The criticism is unwarranted and frankly un-Christian.

Those behind it should take a long hard look at themselves and ask: "Who am I to question the Holy Father? What makes me see more clearly than him who has been chosen by God to lead his Church?"

The hubris behind the attacks, particularly some supposedly Catholic broadcast-

ers, is absolutely appalling. Some, which I will leave nameless, are large organisations, not some small blog in a dark part of the internet. They can be agenda setting and are forming the minds and hearts of people badly – corrupting them. My advice is to trust our Pope and to trust in God, and not to believe everything you hear on the internet.

Your etc.,  
**David McGuinness**  
North Strand, Dublin 3

## facebook community

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

### German Catholic lay groups voice frustration with slow pace of reforms

They can go start their own church. – **Lynne Flatley**

Ironic they march under the banner of 'we remain loud', loud is far from Christ, loud is what demons are, serene silence is Christ-like. – **Annette Devlin**

Who cares? The ones I feel sorry for in Germany are the faithful Catholics who are watching as their bishops destroy the German Church. Not sure why *The Irish Catholic* bothers reporting on this. – **Adam Conroy**

Who are these German 'Catholics' exactly? Just about no 'Catholics' in Germany even bother to go to Mass. Ever. Yet, we are supposed to believe that these 'Catholics', who never bother to go to Mass, are somehow motivated enough to protest outside a Catholic bishops meeting? Nothing suspicious about that! – **William Broderick**

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

## We clergy should smile a little more

**Dear Editor,** Your edition of [*The Irish Catholic* – September 30, 2021] provided, on pages 2 and 23, reports and photographs of priestly vocations. The former was from the success of the Diocese of Wichita in Kansas in attracting candidates, and the latter of photos of professions from the Irish Dominican Province. Both were edifying. The Irish Dominicans, however, were an illustration of joy. They were smiling and exuded what a vocation should be. The Wichita seminarians, by contrast, looked rigid and fearful, hands glued together. Sadly, I have seen more photographs of the Wichita variety too often in the last few years. Unfortunately, it seems to be de rigueur among clergy and seminarians to affect this pose. As a priest who has now passed his silver jubilee, I have learnt that we clergy should smile a little more, not in a false or forced way, but invitingly and gently. Otherwise, even if candidate numbers can appear high in some parts of the world, it is an impenetrable ceiling. If our hands are rigidly joined and our faces taut with what is supposed to be holiness, we will not convince anyone. Those same hands must get messy on the mission. Those same jaws must relax to recount the Good News. I tried the tight jaw, and glued hands approach myself once upon a time. I can testify they don't work.

Your etc.,  
**Fr Dáithí Ó Murchú**  
Haslemere, England

## 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.



# Around the world



▲ **GHANA:** Catholic Relief Services staff and their families receive the Johnson & Johnson Covid vaccine during a vaccination exercise organised by CRS-Ghana in partnership with the Ghana Health Service in Tamale. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis gives the homily as he celebrates a Mass to open the process that will lead up to the assembly of the world Synod of Bishops in 2023, in St Peter's Basilica on October 10.



**FRANCE:** A cross is pictured in front of power-generating windmill turbines in Mésanger, October 7.



**USA:** Archbishop Allen Vigneron of Detroit prays over Hanan Ismail and Amanda Ross during their consecration as virgins at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit.



**AUSTRALIA:** Plenary Council members from the Diocese of Townsville gather for small-group sessions online.



**SOUTH SUDAN:** Women unload emergency food aid in Akobo, October 6.





# Immigration – then and now

In the summer of 1854, US President Franklin Pierce sent Isaac Stevens to be governor of Washington Territory, a tract of land controlled by the federal government. Governor Stevens called for a meeting of Native chiefs to discuss the tension between the US government and the Natives. One of the tribes, the Yakima, was stubbornly rebelling, led by their chief, Kamiakin. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (the religious order to which I belong) were working with the Yakima nations.

**“Where there are only a few here now, others will come with each year until your country will be overrun with them”**

Their chief, Kamiakin, turned to one of our Oblate priests, Charles Pandosy, for advice, asking him how many Europeans there were and when they would stop coming. Sadly, the advice that Pandosy gave him was of no consolation to the chief. In a letter to our Oblate founder in France, St Eugene de Mazenod, Pandosy summed up his conversation with the Yakima chief. He told Kamiakin: “It is as I feared. The whites will take your country as they have taken other countries from the Indians. I came from the land of the white man far to the east where the people are thicker than the grass on the hills. Where there are only a few here



**Fr Ronheiser**

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

now, others will come with each year until your country will be overrun with them. ...It has been so with other tribes; it will be so with you. You may fight and delay for a time this invasion, but you cannot avert it. I have lived many summers with you and baptised a great number of your people into the faith. I have learned to love you. I cannot advise you or help you. I wish I could.” (Quote from Kay Cronin, *Cross in the Wilderness*, Mission Press, Toronto, c1960, p. 35.)

One hundred and seventy years later the situation is the same, only the players are different. In 1854, Europeans were coming to America for a myriad of reasons. Some were fleeing poverty, others persecution, others saw no future for themselves in their homeland, others were searching for religious freedom, and others were immigrating because they saw

**“Most of them are fleeing persecution or a hopeless future for themselves in their own countries, even as others are seeking a better career and fortune for themselves”**

huge possibilities here in terms of career and fortune. But, this was the problem. There were people already living here and these indigenous peoples resisted and resented the newcomers, perceiving their coming as a threat, an unfairness, and a seizure of their country. Even before they fully realised how many people would land on their shores, the indigenous nations had already intuited what this would mean, the end to their way of life.

## Different colours

Does any of this sound strangely familiar? I recall a comment I read on the sports pages several years ago which spoke volumes. A baseball player in New York City going to play the Yankees shared how, going to the stadium on the subway, he was taken aback by what he saw and heard: “There were people of different colours, speaking different languages, and

I asked myself, who let all these people into our country?” That could have been Chief Kamiakin of the Yakima nation, 170 years ago. Today our borders everywhere are crowded with people trying to enter our Western countries and they are fleeing their homelands for the same reasons as did the original Europeans who came to America. Most of them are fleeing persecution or a hopeless future for themselves in their own countries, even as others are seeking a better career and fortune for themselves. And, like the indigenous peoples, we who now live here have the same concerns that Chief Kamiakin had 170 years ago: When will this stop? How many of those people are there? What will this mean for our way of life, for our ethnicity, our language, our culture, our religion?

Whatever our personal feelings about this, the answer to those questions cannot be much different from the answer Fr Pandosy gave Chief Kamiakin all those years ago. It’s not going to stop - because it can’t. Why not?

Globalisation is inevitable because the earth is round, not endless. Sooner or later, we have no other option but to meet each other, accept each other, and find a way to share space and life with each other. Because the earth is round, its space and resources are

limited, not endless. Moreover, there are millions of people who are unable to live where they are presently living. They will do what they have to for themselves and their families. What’s happening cannot be stopped. In the words of Fr Pandosy, “we may try to fight and delay this invasion for a time, but we cannot avert it”.

**“It’s our turn now to know what it feels like when a country we consider as ours is progressively filling up with people who are different from us in ethnicity, language, culture, religion, and way of life”**

Today, we, former immigrants ourselves, are beginning (at least a little) to understand what the indigenous peoples must have felt when we showed up, uninvited, on their shores. It’s our turn now to know what it feels like when a country we consider as ours is progressively filling up with people who are different from us in ethnicity, language, culture, religion, and way of life.

What goes around comes around.



Chief Kamiakin.



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 14, 2021

## Personal Profile

Helping  
renew the Faith  
in Europe

Page 34



# Longing to learn a language?

**M**ost of us would like to be able to speak at least one other language, and most of us leave school without the ability to do so (unless we attended a Gaelscoil). Or at least that was my experience. If you were good at Spanish, French or German in school, you were likely to retain quite a few words and phrases, and maybe even some of the grammatical rules, upon leaving, but fluency or proficiency remain elusive.

As such, learning to speak another language falls into our own hands. It's not all doom and gloom, though – there's never been a better time for doing so, with the prevalence of helpful apps and the ease with which we can travel now. There's also been much research and study done,



**Picking up a new language is a daunting prospect with a tantalising reward, but it's easier now than ever, writes Jason Osborne**

both professionally and casually, into the language learning process, revealing helpful insights that perhaps went unnoticed for a long time.

I'm grappling with Polish at the moment, an undertaking that often feels far beyond my capacity. However, I've picked up a few tips along the way that have made the process significantly smoother and have given me hope that one day I'll speak the language, at least communicatively if not perfectly fluently. I'm convinced that those

who stick with the often-tricky process will enjoy a reward they'll possess for the rest of their lives.

### Immersion

It goes without saying that immersion is the best way to learn a new language. Our brains may not be as malleable and impressionable as they were when we were children, but they still soak up an awful lot. Moving to the country of your chosen language, if possible, is the best choice you can make. You hear conversations, see signs,

watch TV and movies, talk to people and more in your desired language, which naturally increases your chances of picking it up eventually, if for no other reasons than necessity and exposure.

These days, with the omnipresence of English, it can be tricky even abroad to escape your linguistic circle, the populations of many countries possessing functional English at the least. Despite this, going abroad is your best bet for a full-foreign language experience.

If this is totally off the table for you, as it is for many, there are still ways to increase your exposure, such as putting your language's subtitles on movies and shows you watch, or better still, watching content from that country and getting the full experience. Listen to music in the language, read chil-

dren's books in the language – do whatever it takes to increase its presence in your life. While none of these things alone is enough to get you speaking it, my attitude lately has been that “any Polish is better than none”, or whatever your chosen language may be.

### Do lessons

Good, old-fashioned lessons are being ignored sometimes these days in favour of apps (which have their place), but you can't beat lessons, especially in the early stages of the learning process. Of course, not all teachers are of the same quality, so research and selectivity are essential.

While physical lessons are becoming possible again with the mass-easing of restrictions

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## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### STAR TREK'S SHATNER TO 'BOLDLY GO' WITH BLUE ORIGIN

Blue Origin has confirmed that William Shatner, who starred as Captain James T Kirk in the original Star Trek series, will fly aboard the company's next crewed rocket on 12 October.

The company also announced the identity of the remaining passenger, Audrey Powers, the company's vice president of mission and flight operations.

They will join Chris Boshuizen, a former NASA engineer and co-founder of Planet Labs, and Glen de Vries, a co-founder of clinical research platform Medidata Solutions, on the sub-orbital flight.

#### WORLD TOURISM SURGES IN JULY, BUT FALLS SHORT OF PRE-COVID LEVELS

World tourism surged in July, thanks to vaccination rollouts and fewer travel restrictions, but traveller numbers still fell far short of pre-pandemic levels, the UN's tourism body said today.

About 54 million tourists crossed international borders in July, the highest figure since April 2020, in the early months of the Covid crisis, the World Tourism Organisation said.

That represented an increase of 58% compared with the level recorded in July 2020, but was still a drop of 67% from the 164 million recorded in July 2019.

"This improvement was underpinned by the reopening of many destinations to international travel, mostly in Europe and the Americas, coupled with progress made in the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines" which contributed to "gradually restoring safe mobility in Europe and other parts of the world," it said.

In the first seven months of the year, Asia and the Pacific continued to see the steepest declines, with a drop of 95% in international arrivals.

This was followed by the Middle East where numbers were down 82%, Europe and Africa, which registered a fall of 77%, and the Americas which sustained a drop 68%.

#### WANDERING DOG BRIGHTENS DAILY COMMUTE IN ISTANBUL

Boji, a street dog, has become a regular sight on ferries, buses and metro trains in Istanbul. A devoted commuter, the dog enjoys long journeys on public transport, up to 30km on a regular week day.

Istanbul municipality officials who record the dog's trips with a microchip say he drops by at least 29 metro stations a day and was even tracked at sea, taking a weekend break to the Princes' Islands off the city's coast.

"We noticed a dog using our metros and trains and he knows where to go. He knows where to get out," said Aylin Erol, from Metro Istanbul. "It's like he has a purpose."

Data collected from his tracking device shows historic tramlines are Boji's favourite but he is also a frequent subway commuter. Ms Erol says the dog respects public transport rules and waits for disembarking passengers before hopping on the train.



# Becoming who we already are

**T**hese articles on meditation each month are written to point towards a contemplative way of being in the world and to nourish in readers an awareness of who they are at the deepest level of their being. It is not particularly helpful for anyone to take a single article and to draw inferences that are unwarranted. But neither is it helpful if my message is open to misinterpretation, so let me clarify a few things.

#### Christian churches

It has been a recurring theme in these articles that the Christian churches, or should I say denominations, have placed an inordinate emphasis on doctrine and dogma, on scripture and tradition at the expense of personal experience. They inform one another and together they inform our understanding of our faith and our appreciation of who we truly are. But in the absence of personal experience, dogma and doctrine lose their intrinsic meaning. As the renowned theologian, the late Fr Michael Gallagher SJ wrote "Spirituality comes before theology: If faith is not an experience of encounter, we have little to reflect on except the words of others. And they will ring hollow unless touched by personal fire".

Meditation, as a daily practice, creates an ongoing opportunity for rich personal spiritual experience. Of course, just as dogma and doctrine need to be informed by personal spiritual experience, such experience needs to be considered and interpreted in the light of scripture and tradition.

The contemplative tradition of our Faith, as articulated by saints and mystics down through the centuries, assures us that in the quiet of meditation, as we let go of our thoughts, we begin to encounter that which lies beneath – we begin to apprehend the deep, mysterious silence beneath the noise. I deliberately

## Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



use the word apprehend rather than comprehend because we never fully understand it. And, what is it that we apprehend? We apprehend that we are loved and have always been loved by God – not for our talents or our achievements, not for our ego or our performance – but that we are loved for who we truly are, that we were created as love by Love and remain intimately connected to the ground of all being. We discover, as Thomas Merton described it, that "underlying the subjective experience of the individual self there is an immediate experience of being... [which] is totally different from the experience of self-consciousness". Merton described this discovery, this growing awareness, as the discovery of our true-self, which is love.

This kind of knowing is experiential knowing, it is trans-rational spiritual knowing that arises from personal spiritual experience. And, because the Church doesn't often talk about personal spiritual experience, we may not have the capacity to recognise it when it happens. So it is important that we create opportunities for contemplative practices and also occasions for exploring them in light of contemplative writings, scripture and tradition. Christian Meditation Ireland does this on a regular basis.

For centuries, the word sin has been associated with personal wrongdoing, with individual moral unworthiness – in other

words, in terms of personal transgression. But, from a contemplative perspective, sin is grounded in the illusion that we are separate, not that we need to be saved because of what has been conceived as 'original sin'. We do need to be saved, but what we need to be saved from is that foundational illusion of separateness because when that fundamental untruth guides us, our actions become grounded in the egoic desire for power, prestige and possessions.

What most people understand by sin is, of course, a consequence of that illusion. From a contemplative perspective, the essence of the Good News of the Gospels is this revelation of who we already are. The Gospel message then, is not about atonement for sin, but about 'at-one-ment', about shattering the illusion of separation and living life from that new perspective. This may be a reframing of the concept of sin from the traditional approach but it does not ignore, downplay or deny sin.

#### Perspective

Nor is there anything in this perspective that reduces Jesus to a Buddha-like figure or sees him merely as a teacher of spiritual enlightenment. As Christians we



believe in a Trinitarian God. John Main taught that when we come into the silence of meditation we enter the flow of love between the Father and Son and he described that flow as the Spirit. Christian meditation is grounded in this understanding and our intention in meditation is to leave ourselves open to such a graced encounter so that it transforms

us; so that we might see and help others to realise that, as Thomas Merton described it: "We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and God is shining through it all the time."

Meditation is not a practice for personal salvation, but for awakening fully to the God-filled present moment. As we come to appreciate the truth that the Spirit dwells within us, we find we are no longer motivated by any outside reward or punishment but our motivation and compassion come from the knowledge that we are participating in the mystery itself. Hopefully, we find we no longer engage in mere rule-following behaviour; instead, it is our awareness of our actual identity in God that drives our actions so that we become truly responsive. As meditation transforms our relationship with the divine, we find ourselves naturally drawn to live our lives out of that understanding, informed by the spirit within us growing ever more in harmony with the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of meditation is contemplative, compassionate action in the world. As John Main wrote: "The all-important aim in Christian meditation is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality in our lives; to let it become that reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are."

**i** After 40 years in the education sector Noel Keating was awarded a PhD for his research into the child's experience of meditation and its spiritual fruits. Noel now leads, in a voluntary capacity, a project which offers free in-service to primary schools who may wish to consider introducing meditation as a whole-school practice. Noel is author of Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents.



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in recent months, the internet has expanded our horizons beyond all recognition. I do one-to-one Polish lessons online twice a week of the exact same quality as physical lessons, if not better, because I'm receiving far more attention than I would if I were in a classroom full of students. Lessons for every language you can think of can be found online, along with thousands of hours of recorded lessons on YouTube.

### “Toucan works by automatically translating certain words and phrases on the page into your target language”

While I mentioned that immersion is the best strategy for learning a language (and it is), the process will be much easier if you understand the basic rules and underlying principles of the language beforehand. This is where lessons come in. They won't equip you to speak the target language by themselves, but they provide a useful framework or understanding of the language which enable you to pick it up faster and faster.

### Apps and online resources

Unlike lessons, the world of apps and online resources doesn't see you getting face time with a teacher. However, many of them are developed by language experts and linguists, so their quality is assured. Apps like Duolingo and LingoDeer are very user-friendly, while browser extensions like Toucan are equally useful in helping you pick up bits and pieces of the language during your daily browse of the internet.

Toucan works by automatically translating certain words and phrases on the page into your target language. As such, it's not an overwhelming experience while helping you to learn new words you wouldn't otherwise

have picked up.

Flashcard websites such as Quizlet are also a handy tool in the aspiring multilingualist's arsenal, offering a very simple system for keeping track of your vocabulary and phrases, and helping you to remember to practice them in a timely manner.

### Patience and humility

A 'softer' tip, if it could be phrased that way, is to develop the virtues of patience and humility. Why patience? Because there is no way to learn a language quickly. There are ways to learn it quicker, but not quickly. It really is more like running a marathon than a sprint. There will be days that you feel far more motivated than others to learn the language – some days feel like victories and some like defeats. This is when patience is key. It will happen, if only you stick with it long enough.

As for humility, one of the biggest barriers to language acquisition, in practice, is self-consciousness. The less you know of the language, the less you're able to say, write and understand – which sometimes makes you feel a bit of a fool. Giving in to the feelings of self-conscious-



ness, timidity and embarrassment only make the process harder.

The best way to approach the process is to accept and become comfortable with the fact that you're going to make lots and lots of mistakes, and that's ok. In fact, those mistakes are what the road to speaking another language looks like. No one has ever seamlessly and perfectly started speaking another language, and you won't either. At least this way, we get to work on some spiritual virtues while picking up a practical new skill.

### Find a friend

A final useful piece of advice is to find someone to tackle the mammoth task with. Whether they're a friend from the country of your target language, or whether it's a local friend who's decided to strive with you, it's easier taking on the challenge with company.

### “An intimidating prospect, sure to take a sustained and often uncomfortable effort, but the end result makes it all worthwhile”

If your friend is abroad, it may be time to evoke Leaving Certificate memories by writing letters as pen pals – a good, controlled environment for a beginner to attempt expressing themselves in. Alternatively, if your friend is also picking up the language, hold each other accountable and synchronise your studying. You'll be thankful for it on the days you don't feel like practicing.

All in all, learning a language is just like climbing a mountain. An intimidating prospect, sure to take a sustained and often uncomfortable effort, but the end result makes it all worthwhile.

## Faith — IN THE — family



### Gerard Gallagher

**B**y the time we get to October many of our conversations cite how tired we are of the routines of life. Some people look forward to mid-term. Others just want to survive till the Bank Holiday. As we all begin to reconnect with the new normal in a life with less restrictions, it is a good time to pause. It is a suitable time to take stock of what we might have learned about ourselves and our families during the Covid-19 restrictions. Many families are tired too with the seemingly endless groundhog days of routine.

A recent news report suggested that our collective carbon foot print has increased now that we are back running around. Many people back to their workplace and routines as before. Traffic has increased. Everything we do we are told impacts on our personal carbon footprint. Does it have to be this way?

Recently Archbishop Farrell in Dublin published a pastoral letter to coincide with Season of Creation, 'The Cry of the Earth – The Cry of the Poor'. Whilst not many know about it, he does make the point that we all need to "look at the crisis" in our world from the perspective of faith and God. He connects two crises of our time, the pandemic, and the crisis of ecology. He challenges all believers to become part of what he calls, "the call to action". He notes that we live our faith today in our time. So, it is today that we need to act. Not tomorrow.

Following on from the events that marked our recent 'Season of Creation' in our families and friendship circles we can look at what we can do better or differently now we are all reconnecting.

Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti, his encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, points out that we cannot change our lives or live lives in isolation. He challenges us to reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan and notice the person who saw something wrong and acted. We are all called to act. He asks us to work together in our actions. That is where you and I come in. Our families can decide to be effective in our world. As Pope Francis says,

'Let us dream, then, as a single family.'

I mentioned in an earlier piece about praying together at the kitchen table, even by a simple prayer of grace. Conversation takes place at the table.

Imagine if our families started a conversation about choices and actions to improve the world that we live in. This can make a difference. This is a first step. This is the action part. Children are very much aware of the climate change.

Teenagers have acted by taking part in protests on Friday to raise awareness on the environment. Imagine if families tried to act like the Samaritan and not only see the problem, but also act.

We all know we need to change our behaviours. At this stage we know that we should switch off unnecessary lights and recycle more efficiently. But let us look at that word dream. In October could we dream about how we can be more environmentally friendly as we celebrate Halloween? Do we really need all those bonfires? Will our parties and our games of trick or treat be the same as before, or can we imagine how we might celebrate these festivities with less of a carbon footprint.

These traditions and rituals can be reviewed as a family at the kitchen table. Can you or your family look at the 'ecological crisis' and see what your family can do differently? You can still have fun and memories, but do they really have to have it the way it was. You see, if we do not modify small actions at home, how can we as a Christian family make a difference if we don't change.

Rather than wait for our government to impose change, why not begin this week, and start a conversation about priorities that make a difference and start at the kitchen table. If each of did this, we can be like the Samaritan who saw and acted. We know we need to save the planet and our common home. Let us now act and create a new normal where our families, parishes and communities of faith witness to this for the common good of all.

Gerard Gallagher is a Pastoral Coordinator in the Archdiocese of Dublin.



# Helping renew the Faith in Europe

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

**B**ro. Antony Kurian OFM Cap. was the first Capuchin to make his solemn profession in Ireland for seven years. The Indian-born brother first encountered the Capuchin's in India, but he joined the order here hoping to join in a renewal of the Faith in Europe.

**“Only when I had this job and I felt I needed something more than this, I thought at least I had to try it, to have peace”**

Bro. Antony's initial contact with the order came when he was in his teens, living in India. Although he was attracted to their way of life, it wasn't until he moved to Ireland that he seriously began to consider his vocation.

“I kept studying, I did engineering in India, then I came to Ireland to do a masters, then I worked for some time here as an engineer,” Bro. Antony explains. “All that time, I never felt really fulfilled with my life, even though I had a good job and everything. I had this good experience with the Capuchins in India, so I always felt attracted to that vocation. I was always thinking about being a Capuchin, but I hadn't made a decision to join.

“Only when I had this job and I felt I needed something more than this, I thought at least I had to try it, to have peace. Either way, I have to try it, then only I will



Bro. Antony.

know. That's why I made this step to contact the Capuchins and visited them. I finished my job, then I went to India for year; I came back and then I joined the postulancy programme.”

Before he considered his vocation, Bro. Antony had a foundation in the Faith. His community in India “was like Ireland maybe 50 years ago” he says, with the majority of people attending Mass regularly.

“I grew up where the Faith is really practised,” Bro. Antony continues. “It was like Ireland maybe 50 years ago, I'm not sure exactly. Every Sunday, there's very few people who don't go to the Church. Most people would go to the church, when I grew up.

“We would have catechism every Sunday. The Faith was really nourished when I was a young age. Even though it was not – it

was simply what you do. It wasn't something special. All the Catholic students would go to catechism class, also there would be retreats in our school. A few times it was given by the Capuchins, so I had contact like that with them also.”

### Faith

“There was a friary close to my house, so I would go to their house sometimes. So my faith was maybe not very personal at that time. It was like, everybody does it so I do it too. Only when I started thinking about it. Even still, it took a long time to draw and even talk about faith. It took a long time to come to that stage.”

Having had those experiences with the Capuchins, Bro. Antony decided to join them. In particular, he says, the simplicity of their life attracted him: “Mainly it was the simplicity... Also the life of St

Francis, when I heard about this. They were also very helpful to the people. Their retreats were very helpful. They had one of the first retreat centres in my area. That all attracted me to them.

“Then I had one priest who I know. The retreat he gave, that really touched me, in India, his message. You could experience God's spirit working through him. That one priest helped, he attracted me to the Capuchins.”

Having joined the postulancy, Bro. Antony says there were many challenging times, but he never doubted his vocation: “It was challenging, because it's a different world – because it's changing the rhythm of the day that you would ordinarily have. That was difficult in the beginning. But even though it was difficult, in a way I was fulfilled, even when I joined – that doesn't mean I had doubts. Overall

I had a sense of peace in me, when I joined.

“There are challenges also because in our days, most religious communities are thinking about the future. There is also change happening. It is something that I like to take positively, that it is change for a better future.

“Sometimes there were lots of uncertainties, whether I will be able to continue here. You know there were issues over the immigration status, those kind of things, there were lots of uncertainties like that. But overall I was at peace once I joined the order.”

**“This is not a specific mission or ministry, but this overall motivation to be part of the renewal and re-evangelisation of faith in Europe”**

Many people asked Bro. Antony why he decided to join the Capuchin's in Ireland, he says, and it was something that he spent a good deal of time considering.

“I was thinking for a long time. Over the years I regularly thought, the journals in India and some of the magazines – they talk about the crisis of faith in Europe and how Europe was key in spreading the Faith to our lands.

“How people need to pray for Europe and help us begin to regain the Faith and even to bring back the Faith to Europe. That was my motivation, but I wasn't sure what to do, what I was able to do. In a way that gave me a purpose to join. This is not a specific mission or ministry, but this overall motivation to be part of the renewal and re-evangelisation of faith in Europe. That was the motivation, it really influenced my decision to join, because I was already here.”

## Sweet Treats

Kiley Britten



## Juicy poached pears with brandy snaps

**T**his is a dessert that provides a lot of warmth through autumn spices, with additional warmth from red wine and brandy. Making the snaps is tricky, but they don't have to be perfect since they will taste delicious no matter what!

### Poached Pears Ingredients

6 large pears  
120g sugar  
150ml water  
150ml red wine  
2.5cm piece of cinnamon stick/1tsp cinnamon powder  
2 tsp cornstarch

### Brandy snaps Ingredients

25g butter, room temperature  
70g sugar  
2 tsp golden syrup  
20g flour ½ tsp ground ginger  
125ml cream  
1-2 tbsp brandy

### Instructions

1. Poach the pears by combining the sugar, water, wine, and cinnamon in a pot. Heat gently until the

sugar is dissolved, then bring to the boil and boil for 5 minutes.

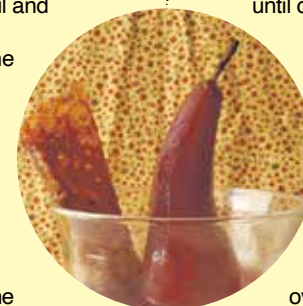
2. While the sauce is boiling, peel the pears but leave on the stalks. Place pears in the pot, reduce the sauce to simmering, cover and leave pears to poach for 20-30 minutes. The pears should be soft before removing from the pot.

3. Allow to cool for a bit then transfer pears to the fridge. Mix the cornstarch with a tiny bit of water, then whisk into the sauce in the pot. Simmer for another minute then remove from heat.

4. Once sauce is cool, pour over pears in the fridge so everything can cool for a couple hours.

5. For brandy snaps, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, then beat in golden syrup. Sift in flour and ginger and mix together.

6. Transfer mixture to a smooth surface and knead until smooth. You may need to add more flour depending on how sticky the dough is, but it should be a little sticky regardless. Cover and place in the fridge



until cool, about 30 minutes.

7. Preheat your oven to 190°C/Gas 5 and grease a baking sheet. Working in batches of 4, roll the cooled dough into balls roughly the size of a hazelnut, place far apart on the sheet, flatten, and bake for 10 minutes.

8. Remove the sheet from the oven and allow to cool for a few moments. Working quickly, slide a metal spatula under each one, turn over, and drape over a wooden spoon. Gently wrap around the spoon—carefully because they will be quite

warm—place on a cooling rack, and slide off the spoon once they have hardened. If the snaps start to harden before this, place in the oven to warm up again.

9. Repeat with the rest of the dough, and once the snaps are cool whip the cream, mixing in the brandy before the cream is at soft peaks. Pipe the cream into the centre of the snaps.

10. Serve the pears by placing them in a small bowl and pouring some syrup over them and placing a snap next to it.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Questions cropping up about the seal of Confession

What I like about TG4 is that it's low key, not polluted by minor celebs and pointless controversies. There are some great re-runs of old TV shows (not sure how this fits in the mission), some high class Irish language programmes (the mission) with some excellent traditional music shows.

**Comhrá** (TG4, Thursday) is a chat show with a simple format, presented by Máirtín Tom Sheáinín, whose guest was Fr Stiopháin Ó Fearchair PP of Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. His vocation story had familiar features – he was influenced by an uncle who was a priest ('an absolutely lovely man'), by the priests who taught him in St Jarlath's College and by chaplain in college. With role models being so crucial in so many vocation stories there's a big problem when today such role models are thin on the ground. After a vocations weekend, an invitation and some so prayer he had no clear answer he decided to give it a go. He found he had more freedom when he went to Maynooth compared to his time in the junior seminary – this was mid-sixties and Maynooth was becoming more open. He came from the parish of Neale and said his first Mass where he was baptised and confirmed. He told how the term 'boycott' was coined in this area (the story of Captain Boycott during Land League times), his time as a Dean of boarders in St Jarlath's, and



Fr Stiopháin Ó Fearchair PP of Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo appears on chat show Comhrá on TG4.

his ministry in Knock, where a great uncle of his had received a miraculous cure – the family was convinced but it wasn't one of the 'official' miracles. He was happy now in Ballyhaunis where the arrival of the Halal meat factory had changed the place – now when he visits the local primary school he meets children of all religions from all corners of the world.

### Questions

I thought the questions could have been more reflective and searching (there was a lot of narrative and factual information) but there was a curious banter about Confession. The interviewer said "you don't sin do you?" Fr Ó Fearchair

responded with a twinkle in his eye – "I'm not telling you my sins... I'm not in the Confession box now". The interviewer responded "So you can't grant forgiveness to yourself then?" Despite the drop in vocations he was optimistic about the future of the Church, though that future was unclear. While the show was enjoyable I'd have liked more depth, and that 'sitting room' looked like a fake studio setting – coldly tiled and way too bright. The dodgy electric fire didn't help.

The question of Confession also featured in a discussion on **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) about the awful Church-commissioned report

on clerical child abuse by clergy in France over the last seven decades. Though there had been reported cases in France previously journalist Lara Marlowe said it was the scale of the abuse that caused so much shock. She said the current Church authorities had expressed shame and horror and that President Macron had saluted the "spirit of responsibility" of the Church (presumably in relation to the current approach). There was still controversy over reparations and what she called "the idea" that the seal of the confessional was sacred.

*The Irish Catholic* Editor Michael Kelly made a distinction between that seal and

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**MY COUNTRY, MY FAITH: IRELAND – FRANK DUFF**  
EWTN Sunday, October 17, 10.30am

Fr Owen Gorman talks with Fr Bede McGregor about serv-ant of God, Frank Duff's intense love of the Eucharist.

**SCOTLAND'S SACRED ISLANDS**

BBC One Sunday October 17, 11.30am

Ben Fogle explores Catholic island life and whether the physical aspect of the landscape makes it easier to make spiritual connections.

**A SERVICE OF REFLECTION AND HOPE**

BBC One NI Thursday, October 21, 10.30am

That controversial service, live from St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Armagh, Church leaders are joined by invited guests for a service marking the centenaries of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland.

the different situation where a priest would admit to his own religious superior that he was guilty of abuse. Further, there was the possibility that a confessor could get the abusing priest to give himself up to the civil authorities – otherwise he'd question how sincere the repentance was.

### Injustice

A lesser-known instance of injustice being inflicted on the vulnerable was the subject of **Unreported World** (Channel 4, Friday). Reporter Ayshah Tull explored the story of missing Native American women in the USA. It was a story of another 'institutional blind spot', of poverty and homelessness, alcoholism and domestic violence and grim human trafficking stories. Added to the difficulties of investigation were juris-

dictional problems, clashes or gaps between federal law, state law and the tribal law of the reservations.

To illustrate the situation the focus was mainly on the search for one missing woman – Susan Lacey Fast Eagle-Chief Eagle, conducted by a private investigator Lisa Willowbird-Chase. Unfortunately there was no closure, no neat solving of the case.

Nevertheless there were people who cared – the investigators, family members and those who ran the secret sanctuary for trafficked women – a place of refuge with a beautiful mural of Psalm 121 on the wall.

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# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## The curtain rises again for Wexford's opera festival

Ireland's October music calendar is usually dominated by events in Wexford and, happy to relate, following last year's Covid restrictions, the curtain will rise again on the town's international opera festival next week.

### Reinstate

Running from Tuesday October 19 to Sunday October 31, festival director Rosetta Cucchi has managed to salvage her 2020 plans and reinstate Alfredo Catalani's *Edmea*, first seen in Milan in 1886; Ambroise Thomas' *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'Été*, premièred at the Paris Opéra-Comique in 1850 and Vincenzo Bellini's *I Capuletti e I Montecchi*, dating from 1830 Venice.



The National Opera House in Wexford.

In addition there will be two concert performances of Karl Goldmark's *Ein Wintermärchen* while Andrew Synnott's chamber piece, *The 47th Saturday*, salutes the contemporary world. Based

on a short story by William Trevor, its world première takes place at Green Acres Restaurant on Monday afternoon October 25 with a repeat on Thursday October 28.

Dublin-based Synnott has recently been appointed festival chorus master and is its first artist-in-residence. No stranger to Wexford, his operas *The Dubliners* (2017) and *La Cucina* (2019) have been produced there and his *What happened to Lucrece* was streamed in collaboration with the festival's young singers' Opera Factory project last year.

The idea of a festival in Wexford stemmed from a November 1950 meeting between English-born Scottish writer Compton Macken-

zie (1883-1972), possibly best known for his novel *Whisky Galore*, and one of Wexford's respected general practitioners, Dr Tom Walsh (1911-1988). Besides his medical expertise, Tom Walsh was a remarkably knowledgeable opera enthusiast who studied singing under Adelio Viani at the RIAM.

### Reviving

With the idea of reviving neglected and forgotten works, Dr Tom formed an organising committee with a group of friends and the first Wexford festival brought Michael Balfe's *The Rose of Castile* to the bijou Theatre Royal on October 21, 1951. From humble beginnings, the festival's prestige now enjoys worldwide recognition.

Dr Walsh held the artistic director's reins until his retirement in 1967 but not before a significant production of Massenet's *Don Quichotte* brought the Irish debut of Vienna-born conductor Albert Rosen. He would later conduct a further seventeen operas in Wexford and become principle conductor of the RTÉSO.

Then working with Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Brian Dickie replaced Dr Tom and would remain until 1974 when Scottish Opera's Thomson Smillie took charge. Following his move to Kentucky Opera in 1978, Wexford's artistic directors have included producer Adrian Slack; Elaine Padmore, who worked for BBC Radio 3 and would leave Wexford after thirteen years for Copenhagen

and Covent Garden; director of Pesaro's Rossini Festival, Luigi Ferrari, who enjoyed a nine-year tenure, and David Agler who guided the festival between 2005 and 2019.

Agler's term included the building of Wexford's new Theatre Royal on the site of the old one on High Street. Now called the Irish National Opera House, the acoustically clear auditorium opened in time for the 2008 festival with Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snegurochka* (The Snow Maiden) under the baton of Dmitri Jurowski.

The current artistic director – Italian Rosetta Cucchi – has had an involvement with the festival since 1995 when she was appointed a répétiteur. I wish her every success.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Historic Irish scenes and people in their 'true colours'



Image 1 – The 1932 Eucharistic Congress attracted cardinals from across the globe to Ireland.

By Peter Costello

This is the second book by NUI academics Prof. Breslin and Dr Buckley in which they use advanced computer technology to “restore”, or rather add natural colour tones to photographs enlivening the original monochrome.

I have my doubts about this technique, as have many historians and photographers. But looking through these pages I found images of religion in Ireland which seemed well worth bringing to the attention of readers of *The Irish Catholic*.

To see Cardinal Cullen (image 2) in his true colours is a striking thing. Here are the features of the man who is generally credited with

breaking with Ireland's pre-famine traditional habits of piety, and with forming and shaping the Catholic experiences of Ireland in a 'Roman style' that lasted down to Vatican II.

To save the country he thought he would have to completely change it. This he did with a disciplined clergy. He represented in his own person the power and dignity of the universal Church as he saw it. He rejected the revolutionary aspirations of many in favour of a more authoritarian society.

### Moral authority

Yet despite the alleged supreme moral authority wielded by the Church during the following decades the hierarchy was unable to

suppress the rising surge of violent nationalism. Perhaps that dominance was more nuanced than many now believe today. That even back in the 1890s there were those who went their own way despite the Church.

In rural Ireland much traditional piety and custom had been built about such things as ancient shrines and holy wells and customary pardon days. From the 1820s onwards these gatherings, as much a social gathering as a religious one (as was the one at Glendalough) were suppressed because of the drunkenness and their use in arranging marriages (or even trial marriages). The Church refocused the attention of the Faithful not on their own ancient practises but on Eucharistic

themes and Marian devotions more suited to Church celebration (images 4 and 5).

But a love of “signs and wonders” lingers on even down to this day. Among the religious images in the book is a startling one of the bleeding statues of Templemore in 1920, by photographer WD Hogan, who was on good terms with both Sinn Féin and then with the National Army.

The caption to this suggests that this was detected as a fraud by no less a person than Michael Collins himself, who was anxious that sensation would not be laid at the door of the IRA.

**“In rural Ireland much traditional piety and custom had been built about such things as ancient shrines and holy wells and customary pardon days”**

Yet this seems to contradict local legend (as passed on to me by my father who lived in nearby Cloughjordan) that it was got up to cover a shipment of arms by crowding the roads with people and cars around the town, disrupting police security activities. As his elder brother was an officer in the Free State Army under Collins, I have always

thought there was some substance in this.

But the subject of bleeding holy statues and is a complex one. According to that *locus classicus* of Catholic scepticism by Fr Herbert Thurston SJ, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (1952) are often very strange.

Aside from those surrounding the Curé d'Ars, we might recall that at this period Yeats and Maud Gonne investigated a bleeding image of the Sacred Heart, also in France. Some students of the occult see such thing not as fraudulent but as displays that are not miraculous but merely beyond the normal.

(The reference to Michael Collins in the captions to this book is unsupported by an exact reference – another instance of books for a popular readership are all too often unsourced these days, which is a very great pity.)

The Eucharistic Congress (image 1) held in Dublin was a great event in both the history of the Catholic Church and in the fledgling state which the ancient nation had become. It was embraced with enthusiasm by all classes at the time and enjoyed the full panoply of state support. Families in the then very ugly slums of Dublin (image 5) were particularly enthusiastic in their decorations and their participation. The city was filled with important Church dignitaries (image 1), as here in a service at the Pro-



Image 2 – Irish Cardinal Paul Cullen.

Cathedral in Marlborough Street Dublin. And yet it was a high point from which the influence of the church saw a steady decline down to today. When another Eucharistic Congress was held again more it was a colourless shadow of the one in 1932.

**“Urbanisation was underway around Dublin with the emergence of a different kind of life style”**

Since the post-famine decades, the role of the religious, such as the Christian Brothers (image 3), ensured a sound basic education for millions of children. They not only ensured the continuation of Catholics in Ireland, but they also grounded their boys (as here in a Waterford school) and girls with the essentials



Image 3 – Young boys at a Christians Brothers' school in Waterford.



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.



Image 4 – Young children pray before statues which were reputed to have bled.



Image 5 – A house decorated for the 1932 congress.

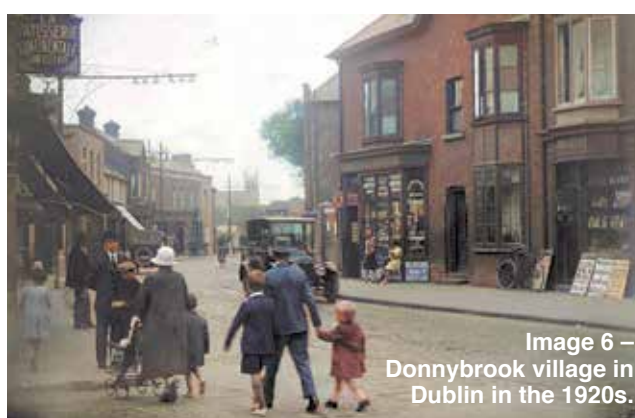


Image 6 – Donnybrook village in Dublin in the 1920s.



Image 7 – Newgrange.

for them to have a working career or to pass examinations for the civil service both under the old dispensation and in the new Irish State. The labours of “the Brothers” to raise the aspirations of the nation should not be forgotten.

Ireland back in 1922 was a largely rural country. But urbanisation was underway around Dublin with the emergence of a different kind of life style. Here (image 6) we see Donnybrook – where those arbiters of culture UCD and RTE are now situated – which is part of the rapidly developing future encompassed now in large scale post-Covid planning schemes for autobahns and skyscrapers.

### Literary future

Finally, two images evoke both our growth of knowledge and Ireland’s past and its literary future. The first is a charming photograph of the ancient entrance to Newgrange (image

7) as I saw it back in the 1950s on a visit with my father. This was before it was turned into a tourist asset through the cooperation of Bord Failte and UCD, and into something very strange and perhaps inappropriate.

**“It was a high point from which the influence of the Church saw a steady decline down to today”**

But it was also revealed to have a philosophical and scientific basis that speaks highly for the originally non-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland (from which according to modern geneticist some 80% of the present inhabitant are descended). That religion and philosophy in the most ancient reaches of Irish history may have relevance to the

abiding religious nature of the Irish nation down to this day.

The other picture (image 8) is that of poets Patrick Kavanagh (left) and Anthony Cronin, along with novelist Brian O’Nolan (totally obscured except for the crown of his hat and the hem of his trouser), outside Goggins pub in Monks-town on the “first Bloomsday”, that ineffectual jaunt on 16 June 1954. They are boarding a Dublin cab against a background of fading religion, in this case the parish church of the Church of Ireland that is such a landmark in the village.

This image can be seen as a token gesture to Ireland’s

emerging future of which James Joyce and his novel *Ulysses*, published in 1922, the first year of the new state, were portents heralding the cultural change that has transformed Ireland since these pictures of national life were created.

**i** The images in this picture essay are taken from *Old Ireland in Colour 2*, created by John Breslin & Sarah-Anne Buckley (Merrion Press, €24.95 / £21.99), where complete credits to the collections, particularly in the National Library, drawn on by the authors will be found.



Image 8 – Poets Patrick Kavanagh (left) and Anthony Cronin on a spree.



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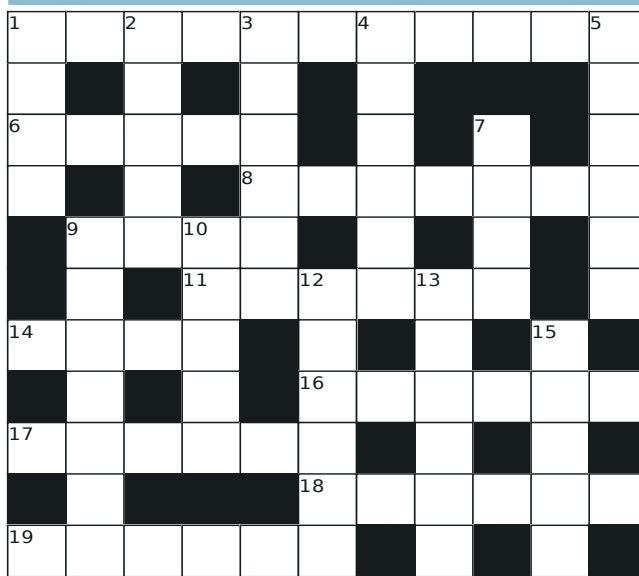


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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 404



### Across

- 1 These creatures in nature are not tame (4,7)
- 6 The usual shape of a ball (5)
- 8 Put up your umbrella when it's doing this (7)
- 9 You wear it on your foot (4)
- 11 Two tens make this number (6)
- 14 The opposite of hard (4)
- 16 Word describing the cold parts of the world near the North Pole (6)
- 17 Games like hurling and rugby (6)
- 18 You move one when you wink (6)
- 19 Grown-ups (6)

### Down

- 1 Pleasantly hot (4)
- 2 Drogheda and Dundalk are in this county (5)
- 3 Boy's name - the patron saint of Scotland (6)
- 4 Person from Chennai or Mumbai perhaps (6)
- 5 Not married (6)
- 7 Very small (4)
- 9 Came to a halt (7)
- 10 This animal lives in and near a river (5)
- 12 Rubs something out (6)
- 13 You get this to show you have paid in (6)
- 15 Come to call (5)

## SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 7

GORDIUS NO. 528

**Across** - 1 Sag 3 Frustration 9 Informed 10 Incur 11 Altar 13 Talks 15 Suburbs 16 Climbed 20 Empty 21 Paris 23 Ringo Starr 24 Pinnacle 25 Bounce 26 Progressive 27 War

**Down** - 1 Sailing ship 2 Golf club 3 Finer 4 Sainly 5 Avoca 6 Inmate 7 Ned 12 Ready to wear 13 Table 14 Silly 17 Brand-new 18 Spiders 19 Franco 23 Rhode Island 24 Pip

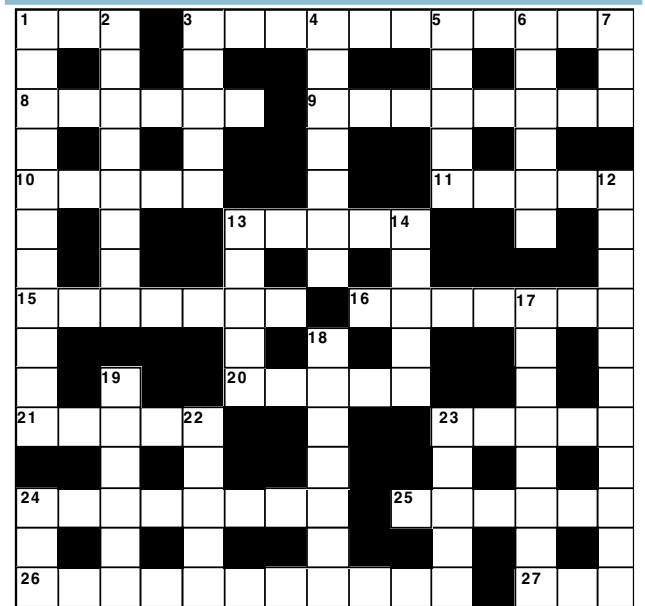
CHILDREN'S No. 403

**Across** - 1 Handcuffs 7 Hop 8 Morning 9 Woods 10 Title 12 Raspberry 17 Earn 19 Spain 20 Spud 21 Wash 22 Listen

**Down** - 1 Homework 2 Nervous 3 Cries 4 Fight 5 Short 6 Apple 11 Kennel 13 Peach 14 Rests 15 Yap 16 And 18 Rude 19 Sea

## Crossword

Gordius 529



### Across

- 1 Being hot, I am that guy! (3)
- 3 Prolonged period of artillery attack (11)
- 8 Police identity parade (4-2)
- 9 Ice ridge movement causes the murder of a monarch (8)
- 10 From the Netherlands (5)
- 11 Belonging to them (5)
- 13 Animal (5)
- 15 Cut short (7)
- 16 Put a letter in where the car might be? Rubbish! (7)
- 20 Distress signal (5)
- 21 Rump I cooked for a Jewish festival (5)
- 23 & 19d Middle-eastern country, capital Riyadh (5,6)
- 24 Marvellous; relating to legends (8)
- 25 Blush or suffer sunburn (6)
- 26 Normal attritional damage (4,3,4)
- 27 I will shortly become sick (3)

### Down

- 1 Ah! Diplomacy was literally needed when Billy Butlin pioneered this (7,4)
- 2 Mythical Cretan monster, half man, half bull (8)
- 3 Fox's tail (5)
- 4 Thief (5)
- 5 Move aimlessly with the current (5)
- 6 Made one's departure (6)
- 7 Definite article in grammar (3)
- 12 It's sung as one leaves the church - in casserole mix! (11)
- 13 Concise (5)
- 14 Taunt, make fun of (5)
- 17 'Lamb of God' in Latin (5,3)
- 18 Minded a child for another (7)
- 19 See 23 across
- 22 Mediterranean island country, capital Valletta (5)
- 23 Affirm under oath (5)
- 24 Not many (3)

## Sudoku Corner

404

### Easy

	8	5					2	
3			8			5		7
	6	2			7	8		4
		1		7			5	
			3		8			
	2			4		7		
8		7	1			6	4	
4		6			9			2
	9					1	7	

### Hard

9	8			3		6	2	
		6		4				
			8	6		1		
		5					7	3
		7				8		
6	2					5		
	1		5		4			
				7		2		
8	4		6			9		7

### Last week's Easy 403

9	3	2	6	4	7	8	5	1
1	7	8	2	5	3	9	6	4
6	5	4	9	1	8	3	7	2
5	8	1	4	7	2	6	3	9
3	6	7	1	8	9	2	4	5
4	2	9	5	3	6	7	1	8
8	9	5	3	6	4	1	2	7
7	4	6	8	2	1	5	9	3
2	1	3	7	9	5	4	8	6

### Last week's Hard 403

8	9	6	4	3	1	2	7	5
5	4	3	9	7	2	6	1	8
2	7	1	8	6	5	4	9	3
3	6	4	7	9	8	1	5	2
1	5	9	3	2	4	7	8	6
7	2	8	1	5	6	3	4	9
9	1	5	2	4	3	8	6	7
6	8	2	5	1	7	9	3	4
4	3	7	6	8	9	5	2	1





Fr Bernard Cotter

Notebook

# Quite an experience searching for Mass in France

**I WAS FORTUNATE** to spend a few days in France in September, thanks be to God. My nerves were fairly frazzled by then, after nearly 18 months of semi- or perma-lockdown. Last year saw me take a staycation in the eastern counties of Ulster, but this year something else was needed – so France it was, with the car. And like many Irish people of my age, weekends abroad are spent trying to find a church hosting Mass that Sunday. It proved a difficult search.



A street in Bourbon-Lancy, France.

**Simple**

You might think that Sunday Mass for a priest on holidays might be a simple matter. For me, it's the one time of the year that I sit in a pew and observe what Sunday Mass looks and feels like from there. It usually educates me for the rest of the year.

I spent two weekends in France. On the first Saturday night there, I found myself staying in a hostelry straight across from the church in the tiny village of les Riceys, in the Champagne region. Getting to that place had taken a very long trip up a narrow and winding road. Imagine my surprise when I found that Sunday Mass would mean driving

all the way back down that winding road, and adding another 10 miles onto the trip, for a 9am Mass. A bracing thought.

The following weekend I had better fortune, and I learned more about the church in France too. I was staying in the town of Bourbon-Lancy (which looks like it takes its name from a type of whiskey, but of course the name was pronounced in a completely different way!).

Arriving to that town early, I made my way to the church and found that Mass was celebrated there every Sunday. In addition, there were 10 'out-churches' in which the Vigil Mass was celebrated at 6.30pm in each place in their turn, every 10th week.

I made my way to the venue for Mass that Saturday night (with the help of Google Maps): the little church was seven kilometres out from the town. I found that this church at Maldat had once been a parish church for Maldat parish, as I presume all the other nine churches had been. In effect, a new parish had

been created from 10 previous parishes – a little glimpse of our future Church in Ireland too perhaps.

**Liturgy**

And yet: the liturgy in that church that Saturday night was full of life. Everyone was masked but everyone sang, at the invitation of the animator, a lady in the sanctuary who led the singing, without instrumental back-up. Sometimes they all went a bit flat, but no one seemed to mind. The Mass was attended by many older people, but a couple of younger families with children too, with many people ministering during the Mass. Among the announcements was the meeting of the Liturgy Group at the central presbytery, to prepare the following Saturday night's liturgy, in another of the ten satellite churches. Quite an experience.

**Questions about France's weekend Masses**

I have questions about weekend Masses in France: perhaps a reader may have the answer? One parish where I attended Mass in France replaced at least 10 previous parishes, with vigil Mass celebrated in the outside churches every 10th week. My question: do people go from church to church for the vigil Mass every Saturday, or do they only go to Mass when it is in their local church? Is any other Sunday celebration held locally when there is no Mass? Could faith be sustained by a gathering of the community to pray together only once in every 10 weeks?

**From an abbey to a jail**

As one named Bernard, I have always been fascinated by Clairvaux, St Bernard's suffix. I visited his place this year, discovering that St Bernard christened the place (meaning 'clear valley'), and that the abbey once held over 800 monks. Before the French Revolution, this had gone right down to 20, and those 20 set about improving living conditions there for a more comfortable life. With the Revolution, these were turfed out, and the abbey proved a perfect locale for a maximum security jail, which it has been for 200 years, to this day. Quite an interesting place to visit.



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- St Therese

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