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Government all spin and no strategy on homelessness – Sr Stan

Chai Brady

The Government's strategy to tackle family homelessness is nothing more than an "outdated promise" and a "stack of press statements" according to Sr Stanislaus Kennedy of Focus Ireland.

Describing last year as the worst year of homelessness in the history of the State, the leading campaigner poured ridicule on the Government's response to the crisis, and called for a serious and ambitious plan.

"The Government has no strategy to tackle family homelessness; all it has is an outdated promise in Rebuilding Ireland and a stack of press statements. We urgently need a coherent, joined up and ambitious strategy to tackle this issue," she told *The Irish Catholic*.

"A government strategy would require the Government to take the decisions it has shied away from for

several years," she continued. "This includes actively building social housing, ensuring that bank restructuring does not come at the cost of mass homelessness, taxing those who hoard building land and protecting the rights of tenants facing eviction."

Hubs

Her comments came after heavy snowfall and plummeting temperatures exposed the inadequacy of Government measures to keep homeless people alive and to house families in 'family hubs', temporary emergency accommodation for families which have self-contained bedrooms and bathrooms, she said.

"The Government admits that hubs are only a 'first response' but there is still no sign of them delivering a second, substantive response which is adequate to the crisis we are facing," she said, criticising the Government's

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Ella Taylor (8), 3rd class (left) and Aoife Murphy (7), 2nd class, from Scoil Mhuire na Gael, Dundalk, Co. Louth, pictured at the launch of *Fáilte Pope Francis*, a book of welcome messages and drawings from the children of Ireland which have been gathered together in a beautifully produced book by Columba Press to greet Pope Francis for his expected visit to the World Meeting of Families in August. Photo: Robbie Reynolds

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9.30am–5.30pm

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Managing Director: Garry O'Sullivan

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €125. Airmail €145.
ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.
Printed by The Irish Times

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The Francis revolution at five



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

Sometimes it's hard to believe that it has been five years since the dreary rainswept evening when the little-known Archbishop of Buenos Aires appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica having just been elected as Pope Francis.

Dressed in a simple white cassock and introducing himself to the world with an almost faltering *buona sera*, Francis caught the imagination.

You can't please everyone as Pope. John Paul II didn't, Benedict XVI certainly didn't and Pope Francis doesn't either.

Former president Mary McAleese has described the Francis era as a "journey in disappointment". In this assessment, she finds herself a fellow traveller with many self-styled 'progressives' or 'traditionalists' who either accuse the Pope of not going far enough, or think that Francis has gone too far in his reform agenda for the Church.

Agenda

So, what is the Pope's agenda for reform and where does it stand five years into his papacy? In his landmark apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis sets out a vision of the Church that is more decentralised. A Church where the relationship between the centre (Rome) is balanced with the local Church. This model was the one envisaged by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s that sought to realise the idea of collegiality – that the Pope and bishops govern the Church together.

After the tumult of Vatican II, and misconceptions in the post-conciliar

era Paul VI and to a greater extent John Paul II chose centralisation as a vehicle to ensure that the Church remained united. While probably necessary at the time, that centralisation and over-emphasis on Roman authority stifled some of the creativity that could have come from the local Church. The pastoral needs of Bogotá are not the pastoral needs of Belfast.

“A synodal Church is not about doctrine or changing Church teaching”

After five years, Francis has shown that he believes the Church must be governed in a way that is more synodal – bishops, priests and people coming together to discuss the needs of the Church and discern pastoral strategy to meet those needs.

While there have been two Synods of Bishops in Rome which were widely hailed as successful and collegial, there has been precious little flesh on the bones of co-responsibility in Ireland to elsewhere.

Many Catholic people misunderstand synodality. Some fear that it is akin to turning the Church into a democracy where everything – including core teaching – is up for grabs. But, a synodal Church is not about doctrine or changing Church teaching, it is about finding a different way to be the Church where there

is dialogue and a healthy tension between the People of God and the hierarchical Church. This also necessitates a certain tension between the local Church and the primacy of Rome.

Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium* and elsewhere, has laid out a vision for a more synodal Church that it is up to bishops' conferences to run with and individual bishops to try to implement in their dioceses.

Few have taken up this challenge, so far.

Authentic reform in the Church doesn't come by being imposed from the top down, it comes from the margins – from people discerning together what God is calling forth from the Church in every particular era.

Groundwork

By underlining this fact, Francis has laid the groundwork for a Catholic future that is more collegial and more dialogical. But the Pope is only one man, and it's wrong to be constantly looking upwards as if Francis signing a decree in Rome will reinvigorate a struggling Irish parish.

Each local Christian community has to take responsibility for the transmission of the Gospel in their own milieu – Francis can provide the model, but he can't situate it in every parish. That remains the call – and challenge – of his papal vision five years on.

Real homelessness strategy needed – Sr Stan

» Continued from Page 1

"continued emphasis" on the delivery of hubs rather than permanent homes.

In contrast to the Government's response, the Focus Ireland founder praised Focus staff who braved the elements in some of the counties worst affected by the clash-

ing of Storm Emma and the Beast from the East, providing hundreds of people with hot meals, advice and support while encouraging others to come off the street and avail of emergency services.

"Our staff were amazing during this terrible weather," she said. "Many walked to work or stayed in the city

centres around the country so Focus Ireland could keep our frontline services going. They all went the extra mile to be there to make sure everyone was looked after and safe."

Days before the storm, the Government announced that a record 9,104 men, women and children were homeless across Ireland.

Afterwards, the Department of Housing declared that even though conditions have improved cold weather arrangements will be kept under ongoing review in the main urban areas, with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive keeping contingency beds in the system for the time being.

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May-day alert....



Imelda May [pictured] is to join such acts as Dermot Kennedy and Wyvern Lingo in Dublin's Olympia Theatre this May for a major concert in aid of Focus Ireland.

"The fact that anyone lives, if you can describe it as that, and sleeps on the streets in this day and age is a travesty," she said, continuing, "it's a sign that something major in our society isn't working, whether it be domestic abuse, child abuse, mental health issues, unemployment, an education system that aims for achievement through targets, not well prepared young adults, and fits to only some types of children, or any number of things."

Homelessness, she said, "can happen to any one of us".

Tickets for Rock Against Homelessness cost €35 from Ticketmaster outlets nationwide.

Every Catholic must tackle vocations crisis, says bishop

Colm Fitzpatrick

The new Bishop of Ossory has warned all Catholics that if they fail to develop a "culture of vocations" we will no longer have a Church.

Dr Dermot Farrell, who was ordained as Bishop of Ossory on Sunday, said that although those in ministry have a role in promoting vocations, the laity have a crucial responsibility to build and encourage potential candidates for the priesthood.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the bishop said: "That's a very particular responsibility, not just on the bishop but on every Catholic person to promote vocations to the priesthood. Ultimately, if you don't have priests, you have to say, well what sort of a Church have we? Do we have a Church at all if we have no priests?"

"The Eucharist and the Church are intimately connected but priests and the Eucharist are obviously interconnected as well. You try to envisage a Church in Ireland which has no priests, what have we got then? We don't have a Church," he said.

Dr Farrell, who taught Moral Theology in Maynooth and was President of St Patrick's College from 1996 to 2007 said support for the priesthood has dwindled

largely due to cultural shifts around religion and the role of priests today.

"In those times there was a different cultural matrix in terms of a support for priesthood and support for someone who declared themselves to be a candidate. I do think that's changed now, I don't think there's the same level or universal level of support for candidates when they go for

the priesthood now," he said.

In response to the shortage of priests, the bishop said lay involvement and lay participation is critical, noting that his previous parish in Meath could not have functioned without their work.

Renewal

Although he said August's World Meeting of Families could help create some sort of

renewal, he cautioned that it would be "foolish" to imagine Pope Francis could solve all the Irish Church's problems.

"It has to be done parish by parish, diocese by diocese. Certainly, Pope Francis will give some impetus, but it won't be instant renewal. "It takes time and it takes effort. It takes commitment and it takes programming," he said.

See Pages 22-25.

Boycott Chrism Mass call – Fr Hegarty

The former editor of *Intercom* magazine and priest of the Killala diocese Fr Kevin Hegarty has called for priests to absent themselves from the chrim Masses celebrated in cathedrals during Holy week.

Fr Hegarty called on priests who agree with Mary McAleese's "forensic

dissection of misogyny in the Catholic Church" to join the boycott.

He said "One of the purposes of the chrim Mass is to celebrate the male priesthood. How can we condone inequality while claiming to proclaim the inclusive and liberating message of Jesus Christ."

'Stark choices' for parishes as boundary restructure possible

Chai Brady

The Archbishop of Dublin has hinted that the diocese may change parish boundaries, as they do not always "reflect the current demographic reality of the diocese".

Speaking at the launch of the book *Tomorrow's Parish*, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said that parishes would have to face "stark choices" about their future.

He questioned whether their structure reflected the needs of a society in which there is more "mobility" with many people sending their children to schools outside the parish. Dr Martin said that in some circumstances 80% of children in Catholic schools live outside the parish.

The archbishop also dis-

cussed a theme he calls "working together for mission", which he said has been "badly mistranslated" to the phrase 'clustering', and involves parishes working more closely together.

Recently it has been revealed that St Andrews & Edinburgh Archdiocese could lose as many as 40 parishes following a two-year review, but most Churches will stay open.

Consultation

In a letter sent to all parishes Archbishop Leo Cushley said he was drawing his lengthy consultation to a close by proposing the "merger of an important number of our parishes".

The author of *Tomorrow's Parish*, Donal Harrington,

told *The Irish Catholic* that in some parts of the city the parish boundaries "don't make sense anymore".

"Another thing that strikes me is places where a motorway or dual carriageway has been built and that effectively cuts the parish in two so people will go somewhere else. There are lots of things like that and it certainly merits consideration..."

His book explores the challenges and opportunities faced by modern parishes faced with aging Churchgoers and priests, and a Church that has lost much credibility. This new edition sets out priorities for parishes with emphasis on the role of the family in the World Meeting of Families event this August.

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Be proud of Eighth Amendment: Bruton

Staff reporter

Former Taoiseach John Bruton has said that he won't be voting in favour of repealing the Eighth Amendment and that Ireland should be "proud" of being one of very few countries which have this constitutional provision. Speaking in Kilkenny on Sunday after the episcopal ordination of Dr Dermot Farrell as Bishop of Ossory, the former Finn Gael leader said: "To arbitrarily say that, after whatever number of weeks, it's okay to suppress that life is just not in accordance with the values of charity towards the weak in our communities that have exemplified the Irish over the last many centuries."

Recognition

"It's true that we are probably one of the few countries in the world that has, in our

constitution, an express recognition of the right to life of the unborn child, but that's something we should be proud of," he said.

A referendum will be held in May to replace article 40.3.3 of the Constitution, which places an equal right to life on the unborn child and the mother, thereby prohibiting abortion in almost all cases, with the statement "Provision may be made by law for the regulation of termination of pregnancy".

Speaking on Newstalk's *Breakfast Programme* this Tuesday, Mr Bruton added that the Government or the Oireachtas Committee "didn't seem to examine the situation of an unborn child in any great detail or examine its rights", despite the growing medical knowledge which shows that an unborn baby can feel, react to stimuli, be seen and be recognised.

Archbishop Martin has done 'little or nothing to bring about change' – Fr Flannery

Chai Brady

Founder member of the leadership team of the Association of Catholic Priests Fr Tony Flannery [pictured] has thrown down a gauntlet for action instead of words to Dublin's Archbishop Martin in the wake of Dr Martin's comments on Mary McAleese.



Last week Archbishop Martin said: "Probably the most significant negative factor that influences attitudes to the Church in today's Ireland is the place of women in

the Church. I am not saying that just because of the comments in these days by President McAleese."

Fr Flannery said he was frustrated with the lack of change from the Archbishop in the wake of statements on the need for change.

"I find the Archbishop endlessly frustrating with his ability to come out with statements like this, and at the same time do little or nothing to bring about change."

"It is hard to point to anything he has done in his

time in Dublin to change the Church's attitude to women.

"I urge him now that he has only two years left in his position, to begin to use his considerable influence on church leadership to speed things up."

He called on the Archbishop to use the opportunity of the WMOF18 and the Pope's visit to "make a clear and strong statement" on what needs to be done to break through this "catch-22" situation faced by women in the Church that Mrs McAleese highlighted.

"I have no doubt that he recognises the problems. I

wish he would spell out what he sees are the ways forward for the Church to find solutions."

Meanwhile the ACP in a statement has called on Archbishop Martin to clarify why changes were made to promotional material including a video for WMOF18 which seems at odds with the Archbishop's stance that all are welcome to the event.

Otherwise, they warn, further efforts "to present the WMOF as a welcoming place for everyone will be seen for what it is, empty rhetoric".

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A copy of Fáilte Pope Francis will go to each of the three people who submit the best captions for this picture of 'Pope Francis' peering around a Merrion Square tree while a young reader pores over how Irish children plan to greet the Pope.

Entries should be sent to Caption Competition, *The Irish Catholic*, 23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. Editor's decision is final.

Aoife Murphy (7), 2nd class, from Scoil Mhuire na Gael, Dundalk, Co. Louth, pictured with a life size Pope Francis at the launch of *Fáilte Pope Francis*.

Don't leave Faith out of abortion debate – archbishop

Staff reporter

The Church must speak out in defence of the unborn, Tuam's archbishop has said, maintaining that the taking of innocent human life is the central issue in the abortion debate.

In a pastoral letter to the diocese of Tuam released last weekend, Dr Michael Neary said that every human being has the obligation to respect, protect, love and serve life, and that believers are called to promote a "culture of life" rooted in the Catholic faith.

"In considering something as fundamental as this we ought not to behave as if our Faith could be divorced from our decision and left 'outside the room'," he said.

"Our Faith confirms the fundamental truth upon which every human right and the very future of humanity depends: that every human life is beautiful, every human life is precious and every human life is sacred," he continued, describing the right to life as the most "fundamental" right because it is the foundation of all other rights.

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Female priests are not the silver bullet



Mary Kenny

It seems to me regrettable that the general discussions around the points that Mary McAleese makes in her critique of the Catholic church often seem so insular. Seldom are there any references to other faith traditions – on the question of ordaining women – be it Judaism and Islam, Eastern Orthodox Christianity or Anglicanism and Lutheranism, as well as other forms of Protestant nonconformism such as the Methodists. It is all intensely focused on the Catholic church and the Vatican.

Granted, that's where Mrs McAleese's focus wants to be – she made it clear in her interview with Sean O'Rourke on RTÉ Radio 1 that she would never leave the Catholic Church, and remains embedded in it. Nevertheless, when a policy of change is advocated, it is instructive to research the track record of those who have introduced such a change.

Personally, I am completely open to the question of whether women may be ordained (and

● Saoirse Ronan [pictured] may not have won an Oscar for her role in *Lady Bird*, but she will, surely, have many opportunities in future years to attain that prize.

It's a charming coming-of-age movie, and Saoirse herself is delightful as the eponymous *Lady Bird*. It also provides a surprisingly positive portrait of Catholic education in California – the school has a warm, brainy and encouraging ambience. And the nuns have a sense of humour. *Lady Bird* is a rebellious teenager who doesn't take a reverential view of her school's ethics, but that's all par for the course.

In the current climate, you begin to wonder if Hollywood didn't quite like the movie because the portrayal of Catholic education was so positive.



I have a female friend in the Anglican Church who is going forward for ordination).

I wouldn't argue with Mary McAleese on grounds of theology: she is a canon lawyer and I am not. But I do observe the experience of other faith traditions, and the ordination of women has done little to halt the decline of the Church of England, while poor old Methodism – once such a force from Wesley's great preaching tradition – has more or less collapsed. So sad to see the Methodist chapels in Wales and Yorkshire one by one being

turned into night-clubs, gyms, or second homes for hipsters.

Monarchies

In the Nordic countries Lutheranism has seen a dramatic decline over the past 50 years. Church links with the monarchies of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, which are Lutheran institutions, help to keep the show on the road and maintain a sense of a national tradition, but very few Scandinavians now go to church.

Sweden and the Swedish church does indeed have full equality between men and

women, and in regard to LGBT rights (which Mary McAleese has praised). Currently, the Archbishop of Stockholm, Eva Brune, is the first openly lesbian bishop in the world, and she lives in a registered same-sex partnership. I see from the Continental monarchist magazines that she is conscientious about baptising the newborn sprogs appearing regularly within the Swedish royal family, surrounded by dynastic brilliance and ecclesiastical pomp.

Nobody is saying Archbishop Brune isn't doing a good job. But the churches are often forlorn just the same, and without the Nordic monarchies Scandinavian Lutheranism might have disappeared altogether.

As I have said before, I believe that Mary McAleese should have been permitted to speak at the Vatican. Every aspect of these questions should be discussed. But the discussions should surely also examine the attitudes and values of other churches and faith traditions, and how things have worked out for them. Christianity is all in favour of examining outcomes, as it says in the Gospel: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

An odd interpretation of health care

I mentioned last week that I had written to Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop of the National Women's Council of Ireland suggesting that the NWC might be more inclusive towards women who do not support their stance on abortion rights, and that I had had no reply. Soon after we went to press, I received a response from Ms O'Malley-Dunlop, outlining in some detail their mandate, which she says represents more than 180 member groups. The NWC classifies abortion rights under 'health care'.

You hear women say "I must take care of my health and get a breast check" or "I must look after my health and get a cervical smear". I have never heard anybody say "I must take care of my health and make sure I have an abortion".

If abortion were 'healthcare' Russian and Bulgarian women would be the healthiest in Europe, as they have the most abortions. But they have some of the worst health.

The NWC is entitled to follow its mandate, now explained to me, about supporting abortion rights. But calling it 'health care' is surely misleading, if not mendacious.

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Nuncio visited ex-President to give letter to Francis

Staff reporter

The papal nuncio personally visited Mary McAleese to ensure that a letter to Pope Francis about a decision to bar her from speaking at a Vatican conference was delivered to the Pontiff, the former president has revealed.

Speaking on RTÉ's *Today with Sean O'Rourke*, Mrs McAleese said the visit had been made on Archbishop Jude Okolo's own initiative.

"It went by diplomatic bag, thanks to our excellent new nuncio, Archbishop Okolo," she said. "He in fact came to my home to make sure the letter was collected. His decision, not mine – I didn't ask him to do that, I was perfectly happy to put it in the post, but he made sure that it went by diplomatic bag."

Mrs McAleese has said that she has not been given a specific answer to why Dublin-born Cardinal Kevin Farrell refused her permission to speak within the Vatican at the annual 'Voices of Faith' conference, although Cardinal Farrell had since addressed the issue in general terms.

"I did see Cardinal Farrell at a press conference just over a week ago in Rome (when the question was put to him, and he said he would partially answer it," she said.

"He didn't refer to me at all or why he had barred me, though he went on to say that when people were invited to speak inside the Vatican it is presumed that everything they said was approved by the Pope."

McAleese concerns about Eighth Amendment groundless – PLC

Greg Daly

The Pro Life Campaign (PLC) has rejected suggestions by former president Mary McAleese that the Eighth Amendment may no longer be fit for purpose, saying Ireland remains one of the world's safest places for pregnant women.

Speaking on RTÉ's *Today with Sean O'Rourke*, Mrs McAleese said she had not decided how she would vote in the upcoming referendum, but that she had found "quite compelling" the statements made to the Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment by leading pro-choice obstetricians Peter Boylan and Rhona Mahony.

Mrs McAleese praised how innovative the Eighth Amendment had been in protecting the rights of expectant mothers, describing it as a "very important advance at that time". Her problem now, she said, is that she has questions around whether it continues to do this effectively.

"I would say at the moment

that the information that was given by the obstetricians is really quite compelling as to how effective the Eighth is in what it was designed to do in the first place, that it has raised really profound questions for someone like me who is really strongly pro-life," she said.

Suggestions

She dismissed suggestions that removing the Eighth Amendment would mean that the Government's plan to introduce unrestricted access to abortion during the first 12

weeks of pregnancy would come to pass.

"That's a different matter because those are two different models," she said, adding, "once we go down that road, that'll be left to the legislature, that'll be left to the Oireachtas."

Dr Ruth Cullen of the PLC has, however, rejected the notion that Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn are endangering women.

"A point that cannot be stated often enough is that Ireland is one of the safest

countries in the world in which to be pregnant," she told *The Irish Catholic*. "England, where abortion is widely available, is not as safe as Ireland is for pregnant women. So I feel it's really important people are reassured on this point."

Noting how Mrs McAleese had said she intends to study the Government's proposals, Dr Cullen pointed out that "if repeal happens, there is really no disputing the fact that all meaningful protection for unborn babies will disappear".

Study begins on Irish brother behind Celtic

A study on the Irish Christian Brother who founded Scottish football club Glasgow Celtic has commenced in Scotland.

The impact of Celtic FC founder Br Walfrid on social, cultural and religious identities in Scotland will form part of a new £25,000 (€28,000) study by the University of Stirling. The research will investigate the life and works of the brother, who founded Celtic in 1887 to alleviate poverty among Irish immigrants in Glasgow.

The work – backed by the Archbishop of Glasgow and Celtic FC – aims to increase knowledge regarding Br Walfrid's significance to the lives of thousands of Irish immigrants in 19th Century Glasgow.



Campaign ambassador Sarah McGovern and Ireland rugby star Rob Kearney called on communities around Ireland to take part in the National Spring Clean campaign which runs throughout the month of April. For more information go to www.nationalspringclean.org. Photo: Leon Farrell/Photocal Ireland

Majority disagree with McAleese 'misogynist' accusation

Chai Brady

The majority of *The Irish Catholic* readers disagree with former Irish president Mary McAleese after almost 500 voiced opposition to statements she made over the weekend.

In a poll conducted by this paper on social media about 70% of over 650 people answered 'no' to the statement: 'In a recent RTÉ article, former president Mary McAleese described the Catholic Church as "an empire of misogyny". Do you think that is a fair assessment on her part?'

Although there was mixed comments, the majority of people felt Mrs McAleese's criticism of the Church was unfair or unfounded.

One person said that the statement "breeds anti-Church/religious sentiment which is a factor for increased persecution upon the religious in Ireland in recent



years".

Another said that because the "strongest and most passionate" feminists they've encountered have been nuns, "there's plenty of room for women in the Catholic Church".

However other commenters agreed with the former president's assertion, saying that Church structures – espe-

cially pertaining to the treatment of women – should be challenged.

One person said: "The Church should do much more to empower women and it would be much the better for it. I believe it is an injustice that women who give their lives to God as sisters are not recognised as clergy."



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Thinking – and voting – with the mind of the Church



A Catholic with a properly formed conscience cannot vote for abortion, writes **David Quinn**

Can a Catholic in good conscience vote in favour of abortion? This was the question put to the new Bishop of Raphoe, Alan McGuckian, on *Morning Ireland* last week. Bishop McGuckian was speaking about the bishops' latest



statement on the abortion issue and set out very ably what that is, putting the undeniable humanity of the unborn child front and centre.

This is not how Bishop McGuckian put it, but if we vote in favour of abortion, we cannot pretend that we are not giving permission to one group of human beings

– women – to kill another group of human beings, namely their unborn babies.

So, can a Catholic in good conscience vote for abortion? A better way to put it might be that no Catholic with a well-informed conscience can vote for it.

When it boils down to it, we can do practically anything in good conscience, but that doesn't make it right. A Catholic could convince themselves that abortion is right in particular circumstances, but that subjective judgement doesn't make it right. A person can easily do something that is objectively bad with a good (but mistaken) conscience.

“No Catholic with a well-informed conscience can vote for it”

That's why it's crucial to speak about a well-informed conscience, or a properly formed conscience. Every Catholic, indeed every person who takes the moral life seriously, has a duty to properly form their conscience.

This is why the advice to simply 'follow your conscience and you'll do the right thing' is so misguided. Your conscience can easily lead you to do the wrong thing. And so your conscience has to be properly formed. For a Catholic that means becoming properly informed about what the Catholic Church teaches.

On the issue of abortion, it couldn't be clearer. As Archbishop Michael Neary

said in his pastoral letter last weekend, "Abortion is the deliberate taking of a human life". How could a Catholic ever vote for that with a clear conscience?

As the bishops collectively said in their statement last week, 'A Common Humanity': "Making abortion freely available desensitises people to the value of every human life. The scientific evidence about the beginning of human life has never been clearer. It is, therefore, a great irony that we in Ireland are for the first time in our history losing our clarity about the right to life of the unborn."

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "Since the 1st Century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law".

Travels

I've travelled the country quite a bit over the last few months giving talks on the coming referendum and have picked up quite a lot of anecdotal evidence of confusion among ordinary Mass-going Catholics on the issue of abortion.

Some Catholics (again, I'm referring to practising Catholics here) appear to believe that abortion is justified in hard cases, such as rape or where the baby has a terminal condition.

This is obviously not what the Church teaches because the right to life of the unborn is as inviolable as your right to life or mine.

But even if these Catholics cannot be persuaded on this point, they need to understand that the Government is asking us to repeal the right to life completely and introduce a law that is more liberal than the British one. The British law means one pregnancy in every five ends in abortion each year in the UK, a horrible total.

Other Catholics I've come across say they personally disagree with abortion but that you can't 'legislate for morality'. But even if this is true, it's beside the point because one of the main purposes of the law is to protect, and the first thing it must protect is your right to life.

I think priests have a

huge role to play between now and the referendum. They don't have a big role to play in the public debate. In fact, that would probably be counter-productive. But they do have a very big role to play when addressing their own congregations, in clearing up any confusion people may have in their minds about the issue.

A lot of priests have suffered a loss of confidence because of the scandals, which is understandable, and they may also feel they have no right, as men, to speak out on the abortion issue. Furthermore, they will be aware of people in their congregations who may have had abortions and will want to be sensitive.

“Pope Francis has spoken out very clearly in favour of the right to life”

However, there are ways and ways of tackling these things. It is possible to speak both sensitively and clearly about abortion. The bishops have managed to do that in their latest pastoral statement. All a priest has to do is read that at Mass.

Or he could quote Pope Francis. Pope Francis has spoken out very clearly in favour of the right to life. That shouldn't come as a surprise, but it will to some people because media reports have given the impression that he has downgraded the importance of the abortion issue. He hasn't. There isn't a bishop in Ireland who speaks more strongly than he does about the matter.

Above all what needs to be cleared up is any confusion on the point of whether a Catholic with a properly informed conscience should favour an abortion. They cannot.

There are still around a million adult Mass-goers each week in Ireland. If they all vote in favour of the Eighth Amendment, we win. If too many of them vote in favour of repeal, we lose. It's as simple as that. Priests can play a bigger part than they think in persuading them to vote to continue protecting the unborn child.

David Quinn's new book is *How we Willed God (and other tales of modern Ireland)*, from Currach Press.

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Martin Mansergh

The View



Holding the nation together

Following the recent acute and unseasonal cold spell, a photograph appeared on the front of the *Tipperary Star* showing a winter scene of the centre of Thurles, taken from the bridge over the River Suir, with the caption (anonymous): "A snowflake is one of God's most fragile creations, but look what they can do when they stick together."

One of the impressive features of Irish society today, taking advantage of the progress in science, technology and communication, is the ability to conduct effective crisis management in extreme weather conditions. All the resources of the State are pulled together nationally and locally by dedicated public and voluntary services, backed by the community and private initiative, especially from those who own large construction or farm vehicles.

Many no doubt wondered whether the warnings might be somewhat exaggerated. They were not, and everything possible was done in good time to make people safe. Each experience, which has tended to become more frequent, contains lessons for future reference. The relative compactness and intimacy of Irish society is a great advantage in these situations.

Justifications

One of the justifications of the nation state is the sense of belonging and solidarity it generates, which are needed on an everyday basis but are particularly vital in working through periodic crises. The office of President is important in that regard, in that it provides a symbol of national unity that transcends political loyalties.

Ireland has been fortunate in having had without exception Presidents of stature and integrity. Since the election of Mary Robinson in 1990, holders of the office have become more high profile, and exercised a certain moral leadership.

The Constitution provides the President with limited



John Redmond.

but important powers, to refer legislation to the Supreme Court for a ruling on its constitutionality before being signed into law, to refuse the dissolution of the Dáil to a Taoiseach who has lost its confidence, and the right to make significant public statements, provided they are free of political partisanship. State visits provide important opportunities to cement relations with other countries.

“The successful candidate should ideally be someone with substantial experience of politics or administration”

The President serves for seven years, a term which can be renewed once. Re-election can of course be contested, but may not be, if there is no perceived public appetite for change. Presidential elections are expensive not just for parties, but for the contestants, and often a bruising experience. The personality of candidates is subjected to close scrutiny, as the scope for policy promises is limited. An incumbent President who is above politics may find it difficult to step down into the electoral arena again.

No one can seriously suggest that President Mary McAleese, when she

greeted Queen Elizabeth II in 2011 towards the end of her second term, lacked a mandate, just because her re-election was not contested. As is the case in most other democracies, the successful candidate should ideally be someone with substantial experience of politics or administration or some other representative role.

Just as President McAleese was the right person for the bridge-building role required by the peace process, President Michael D. Higgins has up till now been the right person to participate actively and creatively in the decade of centenaries and to set the appropriate tone of empathy, critical appreciation and understanding. Inevitably, choices have to be made, and each President has to be allowed a measure of discretion as to how they exercise that role.

The anniversary of the moment is the death of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) leader John Redmond, who died 100 years ago on March 6, 1918, and who still arouses controversy.

It ought to be possible 100 years on to transcend the raw partisan divisions of that time, and to accept that the construction of the Ireland we have today, not all good of course, was contributed to by different hands over generations, even if particular gratitude is owed to those who finally brought independence to fruition.

John Redmond was once practically a taboo subject in Irish history. That has been much repaired in recent times, with a two-volume biography by Dermot Meleady and now the just published volume in the fine Royal Academy series *Judging Redmond & Carson* by Alvin Jackson. The problem is that many of Redmond's eulogists and detractors exaggerate their case.

The positive achievements should not be ignored. Redmond reunited the IPP in 1900 after the disastrous Parnell split, and made it again a force to be reckoned with, leading it for the next 18 years in tandem

with John Dillon.

The period from 1898 to 1911 saw the introduction of lasting and substantial reforms, the introduction of democratic local government, the transfer of land ownership to former tenants following the Wyndham Act and further legislation in 1909, and the establishment of the National University of Ireland, which had the support of the Catholic Church. The curtailment of the House of Lords veto with IPP support opened the way to a realistic possibility of self-government.

There were some negatives, like opposition to women's suffrage or to State inspection of

church-run institutions, and reservations about the old-age pension, not shared by its recipients.

“A minority who always wanted full independence saw a unique opportunity in the war”

Above all, with close attention by Irish MPs to constituency issues, to the frustration of the Imperial Parliament, the IPP helped accustom the people to participation in a parliamentary democracy, so that after the independence struggle it was the norm to be returned to.

There can be little doubt that the *quid pro quo* for putting Home Rule on the statute book in September 1914 even if suspended, in the face of stiff unionist resistance, which at least made it a benchmark, was Redmond's encouragement to young Irishmen to join up following the start of the First World War.

Given the prolonged impasse in implementation, a minority who always wanted full independence saw a unique opportunity in the war to stake that claim, counter the embrace of British imperialism, and go well beyond Home Rule. Yet, when things settled down again, the continuities were as significant as the breaks.



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Constitutional amendment mocks doctors' 'first do no harm' ethos

Proposed change may sideline medical professionals' opinion, writes **Maria Steen**



Last week the *Sunday Times* reported that the Government may change the wording of the proposed abortion legislation. The Citizens' Assembly and the Oireachtas Committee recommended that abortion be allowed where there is a "risk" to the life or health of the mother – including mental health. Now, there are rumours that the Government may upgrade the requirement to a "serious risk" rather than a "risk" when they publish the wording of their proposal in March.

The same newspaper also reported the comments of retired obstetrician Peter Boylan, who said: "I don't really have a problem with them saying 'serious risk' because if the woman regards it as serious then it is. It should be the woman's assessment of the risk that counts."

“Doctors should be very, very worried about what they may be forced to do”

It seems then, that though doctors will be used as the vehicle by which women are to avail of abortion in this country, they will be there as little more than a box-ticking exercise. Whatever medical advice or concerns they may have will be worthless, if "it's the woman's assessment of the risk that counts".

In medicine, the suggestion that it should be the patient's assessment of risk that should alone dictate treatment would seem preposterous. The fact, however, that the Chairman of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists can say this with a straight face in relation to abortion highlights two things.

The first is that providing an abortion is not the practice of medicine, as it has been understood for centuries. It is not healing. It is just killing, and

doctors should not set out deliberately to kill.

Assessment

The second is that Boylan is absolutely right. It is the woman's assessment that will count, and it will not matter one whit whether the risk the legislation requires is described as "serious" or not. It will not matter if the doctor does not agree that there is a risk, serious or otherwise. We know this from the UK experience. The vast majority of abortions there are sought by healthy women who want to abort healthy babies.

Under the 1967 Abortion Act, two doctors are required to be of the opinion that a woman's pregnancy involves risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to her physical or mental health. 98% of abortions in the UK are carried out under this ground, and of those, 99% are under the mental health ground. This is despite the fact that as the Oireachtas Committee acknowledged, "the majority of terminations are for socio-economic reasons that are unrelated to foetal abnormality or to rape".

In short, the requirement to satisfy two doctors that a pregnancy involves 'risk' to a woman's health is no impediment to abortions being performed on women with healthy pregnancies because the babies in question are simply 'unwanted'.

Doctors, it seems, are to be conscripted into Simon Harris' new system. Not only is his plan without a moral compass – allowing terminally ill babies to be involuntarily euthanised and children who are simply not wanted to be killed – it appears to have been made without a thought as to the practical implications for the practice of medicine in Ireland.

As we know, Harris

volunteered the country's GPs to be on the front line in providing this new 'service' of abortion. (Gone are the days when we expected doctors to care for and heal patients, rather than provide services to clients.) Without consulting them, he decided that they should be the ones overseeing the vast majority of abortions, which happen in the first 12 weeks. (In Britain, 92% of abortions are carried out in the first trimester.)

However, despite his claim that abortion is "healthcare", he seems to have given no thought to the potentially dangerous consequences for women of the abortion pill, which he expects GPs to prescribe on demand.

Complications

Many in favour of repeal would say that GPs ought to prescribe the abortion pill, which comes in two doses, and then send the woman home to pass the baby there. However, the complications that can arise from these serious drugs – mifepristone and misoprostol – are not

negligible.

Consider this scenario. The woman returns home, bleeds heavily and assumes she has aborted the baby. Unbeknownst to her, she has an ectopic pregnancy, which in the absence of a scan, has not been detected by the GP. Her life is now at risk. What responsibility will the GP have to shoulder? What will this do to doctors' professional indemnity insurance premiums?

In order to avoid this scenario, will GPs have to have ultrasound machines on their premises and facilities for women to stay and be observed as they are aborting? Who is going to pay for this? The whole thing seems to me to be practically unworkable.

The alternative is that women will have to present at hospitals to be scanned before being administered the drugs, and possibly have to stay for observation.

Last week the *Irish Independent* reported that senior obstetricians and health officials pointed out the obvious fact that liberalising the law on

abortion will lead to a demand for more surgical terminations.

Dr Peter McKenna said that he expected about 40% of abortions to have a surgical input and that this would have resource implications. It was also reported that waiting lists for women in need of surgery for gynaecology procedures are already too long.

The implication being that additional pressure from surgical abortions would only increase this pressure on already stretched obstetrics and gynaecology services.

Cost

And what of the emotional cost to the women of Ireland? For those who wish to abort their children, they will do so in a maternity hospital where they can hear the cries of other women's babies delivered alive.

For those women who give birth, they will do so on operating tables and in delivery suites where other women's babies have been killed earlier that day. Is this what the women of Ireland want?

And what about doctors? Do those who entered the field of medicine to heal and cure really want a part in the deliberate killing of babies before they are born? Will they have a right of conscientious objection? I would hazard a guess that, whatever their views about the law, there is a significant number of doctors in this country that would not wish to be involved in the practice of abortion.

“In my view, doctors should be very, very worried about what they may be forced to do. Remember, the charge is being led by a party that effectively excommunicated its own members for attempting to assert a right of conscientious objection back in 2013”

In my view, doctors should be very, very worried about what they may be forced to do. Remember, the charge is being led by a party that effectively excommunicated its own members for attempting to assert a right of conscientious objection back in 2013.

There has been no formal promise of such a right to conscientious objection. Even if the government offers some form of opt-out, as a sop to get the referendum over the line, without a constitutionally-protected right to conscientious objection there is nothing to stop a future Oireachtas from revoking any such concession.

In effect, repeal of the Eighth Amendment means handing the Oireachtas *carte blanche* to legislate for abortion and it leaves doctors in this country very vulnerable to being forced to take part in a procedure that goes against the first principle of medicine: do no harm.

“The first is that providing an abortion is not the practice of medicine, as it has been understood for centuries. It is not healing. It is just killing, and doctors should not set out deliberately to kill”



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Cut short by Storm Emma, WMOF icon pilgrimage still a success



Sr Karen Kent



Bishop Buckley led the people of Cork & Ross in prayer to welcome the icon when it arrived to our diocese in the Cathedral of Ss Mary and Anne.

For this specially prepared liturgy Cllr John Sheehan, representing the Lord Mayor of Cork, and his wife were present along with the Papal Knights and Dames of the Diocese, religious, parishioners from the many parishes in the city and surrounding area and representatives from the myriad of groups, organisations and charities who support family life in the city.

The theme of the visit of the icon to our Diocese was: all are welcome in God's family. Bishop Buckley was joined in the opening procession by the Hosford family from Faranree parish and the Feeny family from Knocknaheeny parish bringing forward the WMOF candle and the petition box.

Young adults of the diocese introduced the icon and the images portrayed as the bishop opened the doors incensed and venerated the icon.

Texts

Members of pastoral groups from local parishes led the congregation in prayer for families based on the three Gospel texts of the icon.

Bishop Buckley in his homily spoke of the family as the bedrock of society and that every family needs to be a school of prayer, a domestic church. Prayer in the home has been a long held tradition in Irish families and he went on to invite families to reinvigorate this essential element of life in every home.

Celebrating and praying for vocations in families was the theme of the holy hour the

following afternoon, led by Fr Charles Kiely, which drew a large gathering of laity and religious. Taking the theme 'Who will you be Eli for?', it focused on the call of Samuel and the Lord's need of Eli to assist Samuel in responding to his call from God.

In a time when it can appear that no one is interested in religious life or priesthood, Fr Charlie spoke of it being all the more necessary to continue to pray for, celebrate, and promote vocations, and not to be afraid to propose this way of life to young adults today.

He reminded the gathering of the words of Pope Francis: "Behind every vocation is the prayer of a mother, a father, grandparents, and a parish community" and we all need to be part of this work for the Church.

To close the holy hour Bishop Buckley spoke of the constant need for prayer and Eucharistic Adoration in our parishes in this prayer for vocations in our Church.

“All parishes have been participating in a year-long diocesan preparation programme”

The next day, Sunday, drew another gathering of people for an Ecumenical Service led by the Ecumenical Standing committee in Cork – from the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Roman Catholic communities.

On Monday the icon continued its pilgrimage in the diocese when it was moved to St Patrick's Cathedral in Skibbereen.

On this evening Msgr



County Mayor Cllr Declan Hurley stands at the petition box with Msgr Leonard O'Brien and Fr Charlie Kiely pictured behind him.



The Duggan family with the WMOF petition box in Skibbereen.

Leonard O'Brien led the liturgy of welcome and the Bush family from Rath & The Islands parish and the Duggan family from Clonakilty parish brought forward the WMOF candle and petition box.

On this occasion Cllr Declan Hurley, the Mayor of County Cork, joined the celebration and spoke of his own faith and involvement in parish life in Dunmanway along with his hopes for the forthcoming papal visit to Ireland.

Unfortunately Storm Emma brought an abrupt conclusion to the pilgrimage and the icon was not able to complete its onward journey to St Patrick's parish in Bandon where it had been eagerly awaited.

At each venue members of the Diocesan Commission preparing for the World Meeting of Families were present to meet those who gathered and share with them information about the international gathering this August, encouraging people to register to attend and to consider volunteering.

Since May of last year across the diocese people

have been preparing for the pilgrimage of the icon as they participated in a three-session series: encountering family life in the Gospels and the reflections of Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. These sessions are continuing over the coming months as preparations are ongoing for groups in parishes planning to attend the World Meeting of Families.

Alongside this all parishes have been participating in a year-long diocesan preparation programme with one family focused event each month connected to the Sunday liturgy.

All preparations have been led by the Diocesan Pastoral Planning and Development Office and Bishop John Buckley thanked Fr Charles Kiely and Sr Karen Kent for their creative and inspiring liturgies and resources for this year.

! Sr Karen Kent OSU is the Coordinator of Pastoral Development in the Diocese of Cork & Ross.



The Bush family with the WMOF candle.

Please contact World Meeting of Families correspondent **Chai Brady** with photos, news or articles relating to your parish or diocese's WMOF2018 preparations and events for inclusion in the weekly update:

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Nuns 'on the run' from Mother's House

Eucharist is essential food for the daily journeys of a group of sisters, writes **Susan Gately**

The Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother, dressed in white habits, arrived in Roscommon town last May. "People are very open and friendly. They meet us on the streets and beep their horns at us because most of the children know us by now," says Sr Ruth Maria O'Callaghan, leader of the new Irish convent.

Bishop Kevin Doran invited the sisters to the diocese, but their arrival was particularly poignant, as two months after their first meeting with him where they planned the new convent, an Irish member, Sr Clare Crockett (33), was tragically killed in an earthquake in Ecuador. At the time she was teaching guitar to five young postulants who also died. Bishop Doran attended her funeral in Derry.

"For many years I have been praying for a foundation of Servant Sisters here in Ireland," says Sr Ruth, who comes from Finglas in Dublin. "Being a teenager and a young adult I never knew the richness of the Catholic Church, the life of grace and everything that the Lord has to offer us." Now through the Home of the Mother, she has found the 'hidden treasure' "which is the Lord Himself". My greatest joy is being able to transmit this to people and bring them hope, she says.

True love

The Roscommon convent is made up of six young sisters – four from the United States, and two from Ireland. At 40, Sr Ruth is the eldest. She was 20 when priests from the order came to visit her parish.

At the time she was toying with the idea of religious life. "They transmitted a true love for the Church, of being authentic before the Lord without any masks. They had a true joy that came from their intimacy with the Lord."

She joined the order, spending eight years in Ecuador and two in Spain. Ironically it was her friend Sr Clare Crockett who came out to Ecuador to substitute for



Left to right, front: Sr Rachel Newton (Maryland, US), Sr Bernadette Clair (Cork, Ireland), Sr Megan María Conway (Hawaii, US) and Sr Ruth María O'Callaghan (Dublin, Ireland). Left to right front: Sr. Rachel Newton (Maryland, US), Sr. Bernadette Clair (Cork, Ireland), Sr Megan María Conway (Hawaii, US), Sr. Ruth María O'Callaghan (Dublin, Ireland); back, Sr Michelle Klobe (Minnesota, US) and Sr Megan Murry (Illinois, US)

her, allowing Ruth to leave for Spain.

In Roscommon, they are nicknamed 'Nuns on the Run' as they lead such busy lives. "Before we begin our day we always have an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Without this we cannot do anything," says Sr Ruth.

“Ireland needs hope and needs to remember that Our Blessed Mother has won the battle, we just need to unite ourselves to her”

"People are surprised that we have no television, but being with the Lord before

the Blessed Sacrament, this is where the best films go on." They go to Mass in the morning too.

In the town they are involved in lots of different activities, including visiting homes and helping with Confirmation retreats in schools in Roscommon and Castlerea. "We go into one of the hospitals in Roscommon and we have a holy hour on Thursday. We're always very busy, thank God."

The biggest challenge in Ireland is overcoming fear, says the Dublin nun. "Fear of speaking the truth, fear of being rejected and fear of being afraid of what others might think of me because I am a true Catholic with all its consequences." But to follow Jesus means we will be per-

secuted. "We know this," she says.

Disputing the hackneyed phrase 'the Church is dying out', she refers to St Paul who says when you have hope you have joy: "Ireland needs hope and needs to remember that Our Blessed Mother has already won the battle, we just need to unite ourselves to her and offer ourselves to her for whatever she needs."

“For years the sisters ran summer camps and pilgrimages here, and as a result six women have joined the order and two men”

The Home of the Mother, an International Public Association of Faithful of the Catholic Church, was founded by a Spanish priest Fr Rafael Alonso Reymundo, in the 1980s, receiving its 'Definitive Decree of Approval' in 2016.

Fr Reymundo received, in his own words, three missions from God: "The defence of the Eucharist; the defence of the honour of Our Mother, especially in the privilege of Her virginity; and the conquest of young people for the Lord".

As a newly-ordained priest he surrounded himself with young people and tried to "cultivate their spiritual life, so that they might live in the grace of God" encouraging

them to "lead a serious prayer life, to confess frequently, to receive daily Communion if possible, and to pray at least one mystery of the Rosary each day".

In July 1982 before St Peter's tomb in Rome, six of these young women committed themselves to live its spirituality. Three of them went on to co-found the women religious branch – the Servant Sisters.

With a Carmelite spirituality, it now has branches for priests, brothers, sisters, lay people and youth – the Servant Priests born in 1990 and the branch for lay people in 1995. In 2001, in response to St Pope John Paul II's appeal for Christians to enter the media, the Home of the Mother began a television station in Spain.

Today the Servant Sisters

have 19 foundations – 10 in Spain, four in Italy, three in Ecuador, one in the US and their most recent addition in Ireland. The Servant priests have seven foundations in Spain, Italy and Ecuador. The founder, Fr Rafael Alonso Reymundo, is still alive, calling himself "a qualified spectator of what God is doing". He is "absolutely astonished by the growth of the lay members" of the Home of the Mother.

Although the Irish foundation is less than a year old, for years the sisters ran summer camps and pilgrimages here, and as a result six women have joined the order and two men. "We still count Sr Clare Crockett as being one of us, although she has with the mercy of God, founded a new house in Heaven," says Sr Ruth.



● On Monday, April 16 at 6pm the first screening of a feature film on the life of Sr Clare Crockett [pictured] will take place at Derry Cinema, Brunswick Movie Bowl. Admission is free. *All or Nothing: Sr Clare Crockett* runs for 90 minutes and is available to the public on request from <https://www.sisterclare.com/multimedia/film/request?view=form>

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A necessary patron



The St Patrick of popular lore was the creation of the 7th-Century Church, writes **Thomas O'Loughlin**

Memory is our key both to the past and to our identity, and we are usually fairly certain about the overall architecture of the edifice known as 'our story'.

Turning to Patrick – a crucial figure in Irish memory since the 7th Century – memory's headlines run like this: a young British boy from a well-off clerical family was taken into slavery in Ireland, he later escaped, eventually became a bishop returning to Ireland as a missionary. He so effectively preached the Gospel that soon the whole island was Christian and he did the job so well that within a century Ireland was a powerhouse of faith with monasteries, scholars, and missionaries of her own.

And, we know more about Patrick than any other 5th-Century individual from these islands due to his two surviving letters: one now known as his Confession, and the other a letter excommunicating the soldiers of the slaver Coroticus. These writings are seen as rugged witness to his simple holiness. Patrick is, therefore, the father of Irish Christianity, the 'apostle of Ireland', the 'patron of the Irish', and the basis for the annual festival of Irishness on March 17.

Different histories

But memory is always layered, the product of different moments' reflection on the past and the remnants of various periods' attitudes to what they see as 'their past'. Sixty years ago most writers would have been happy to say Patrick came to Ireland in 432, converted Ireland in a great Easter-event on the Hill of Slane near the High King's residence, and founded the See of Armagh: both Anglican and Roman Catholic archbishops claim to be the linear and direct successor of Patrick in that city.

Today, by contrast, such statements are carefully hedged because they are first mentioned in the later 7th Century – at least 200 years after Patrick (and we can only guess at Patrick's dates by saying: 'in all probability sometime in the 5th Century').

On the other extreme, the imagery surrounding St Patrick's Day is such a pastiche that often people in Ireland know the story but conclude "that he probably never existed" and then say that "it's all lies!"

One generation's need for

a meaningful story to explain their present is the next generation's embarrassment, yet bits from every period linger in the storehouse of images. Untangling these layers is a fascinating human task – hence the fascination of Patrick, and hagiography in general, to a long succession of historians.

This historical task is further complicated because of the special place that Christians give to studies of the past within their own apologetic agenda. For many denominations this untangling has a special place not

just as curiosity about the past but also as a theological task by which they establish their relationship to what they see as their 'origins'.

“There was the notion of ‘a Christian nation’ – a gens – derived from the Bible”

Often this religious agenda becomes confused with the task of the historian, or, as has often happened in the case of



Patrick, is thought to be identical with historical research. The French historian Marc Bloch once wrote:

“Christianity is a religion of historians. Other religious systems have been able to found their beliefs and their rites on a mythology nearly outside human time. For sacred books, the Christians have books of history, and their liturgies commemorate, together with episodes from the terrestrial life of a God, the annals of the Church and the lives of the saints.”

Constructing memory

Prior to the mid-7th Century there seems to have been little or no awareness of Patrick in Ireland, but by the end of that century a picture of Patrick had been created that remained almost unchanged and unchallenged until the 1960s.

The pre-Christian religion of Ireland was a distant memory in Ireland by the 7th Century. When Irish writers then tried to picture it, they had so little to go on that they had to borrow from the stock descriptions of Babylonian pagans found in the biblical Book of Daniel.

These 7th-Century clerics had a thriving Church, but by contrast with the Churches in France or Spain they did not have a spectacular and well-defined history and self-identity as a Church within the family of Christians worldwide.

What they needed was a history of themselves-as-a-church. This, an *historia ecclesiastica* (note 'ecclesiastica' is an adjective: it indicates a particular kind of history, and not a 'history of the Church'; it might be translated as a 'churchly history'), was something that people like Eusebius of Caesarea had supplied for the citizens of the Roman Empire, Gregory of Tours had supplied for the Franks, and which Bede, within a generation, would supply for the English.

So, who would supply a story of Christian-origins for the inhabitants of Ireland, and what would elements would it have to contain?

First and foremost, there was the notion of 'a Christian nation' – a gens – derived from the Bible, and a belief that the whole Church was made up of the nations that had been baptised (reading Mt 28:19 literally).

So there was an Irish gens greater than the feuding tribal groupings; and this 'nation', now a baptised nation, had

a place in the history of the Age of Christ. And developing this sense of the Irish as 'a holy nation' (1 Pet 2:9) was the work of a writer called Muirchú, author of the most famous Life of Patrick and one of the more elusive writers of early Christian Ireland.

Apart from what we can learn from the Life, we have only one item of contemporary information about him: he was present at the Synod of Birr in 697 as one of the guarantors to the *Cáin Adomnáin*, a law protecting women and children, indicating that at the end of the 7th Century he was an important Irish churchman.

From the Life we learn that Muirchú considered himself to be following in the footsteps of Cogitosus who earlier in the 7th Century had written a Life for Brigid. Muirchú also tells us that he composed the work at the request of "Aed, Bishop of the city of Sléibte" (Sleaty, just outside Carlow) and he dedicated the work to Aed.

We know little of Aed except that he placed his diocese under the protection of Patrick (i.e. Armagh) during the time that Ségeine was bishop (661-688). We know also that Aed was, along with Muirchú, one of the guarantors at the Synod of Birr, but had already relinquished office by 692 in favour of monastic life.

“The problem was (and is) that the origins of Christianity in Ireland are very obscure”

So the Life was certainly composed prior to 700, and some scholars see its purpose, in part, as fostering the assimilation of Sleaty within the jurisdiction of Armagh and so place it before 688.

Muirchú's concern with what he considers 'his nation' as a baptised gens has all the elements Gregory of Tours' History of the Franks or in Bede's History of the English Nation as a Church, but for Muirchú it took the form of a Life of Patrick: a retelling of the story of Patrick to meet his needs, or in our terms a construction of the myth of Patrick.

The second element in Muirchú's argument was a simple piece of religious logic based on his understanding of Mt 28:19 and of the sacrament of baptism. If there is one gens (i.e. everyone on



Patrick imagined he was living in the last times: the world would soon come to an end and the Christ would return as judge of the dead and the living. Had he a map, it would probably have looked something like this. 'Conf' refers to his Confession; 'Ep' refers to his letter to Coroticus's soldiers. Based on a map in *Celtic Theology* by Thomas O'Loughlin.

the island belongs to a single nation – a concept first found in his Life and which entitles him to be considered the first theorist of Irish nationalism), then there can be but one baptiser, and that baptiser is that nation's apostle, and then that apostle is also its heavenly protector (i.e. its patron saint).

The problem was (and is) that the origins of Christianity in Ireland are very obscure: all he had to go on was (1) a one-line reference to Pope Celestine sending Bishop Palladius from Rome in 431 – and nothing more was recorded of him; and (2) a couple of letters from a British bishop called Patrick who worked in Ireland at a time when there were still many pagans, and whose memory was preserved in some communities for they still celebrated his anniversary on March 17.

But every Church needed a history and so from these two elements, along with a theology of conversion taken from the Easter Vigil liturgy, Muirchú invented Patrick the Apostle. The whole gens was baptised in single great Easter Vigil in 432 by Patrick.

Muirchú opted for Patrick over Palladius because Patrick had left a larger footprint in the store of memory. Poor Palladius was written out of the script – and presented as a failure, and Patrick imagined as his duly authorised successor (by Heaven and by Rome) who successfully turned the Irish into a gens sancta Dei: a holy people of God. So can we get behind Muirchú's theological writing up of his church's memory?

Fragments

Christianity arrived in Ireland, probably in the 4th Century, with slaves taken from Roman Britain: slaving was big business as Patrick's writing and experience show us.

As elsewhere on the empire's edges the pastoral care of Christian slaves was a matter of concern for their home Churches who provided them with ransoms (when they could) and with clergy. By the early 5th Century there were sufficient Christians in Ireland – certainly Romano-British slaves but probably also native converts – that there was deemed to be a need for a bishop and hence

the mission of Palladius.

Palladius is the unsung hero: written off by Muirchú, he probably spent an arduous life ministering in Ireland to slaves, helping them to establish themselves as a church. We know this concern for Christians in Ireland was ongoing as we find reference to it again during the pontificate of Leo the Great (440–461).

So where does Patrick enter the story?

Patrick escaped from Ireland in his early 20s, and back home followed his father and grandfather into the clergy. He gives the impression that much later when already a bishop (probably in his 40s; he could not have become a priest until into his 30s) he was told in a vision to return to Ireland and preach in those areas "at the ends of the earth where no one had preached before".

Patrick made no claim to preach to the whole island or to be its only missionary, but only to have worked where no other missionary had gone already. But here the tale becomes complex: we only know this because other bishops attacked his personal

integrity / conduct / preaching, and his defence of his ministry, the Confession, has survived.

However, if you start, as our common memory has done since Muirchú's time, with the image of Patrick as the sole apostle to Ireland, then these critics must have been in Britain (as there would be not other bishops in Ireland) and their criticisms of the saint could be dismissed as just the earliest example of British people in not understanding what is happening in Ireland, or the clerical jealousy of men lacking Patrick's holy zeal.

Alas, if you remove the 7th-Century lens and concentrate on how Patrick presented his vision of Christianity and the 'coming judgement', the tale is less edifying. Patrick – like others in the 5th Century – had adopted apocalypticism, seeing the world's end and the Second Coming as imminent. So what was holding up the judgement when the sinners would be duly punished?

Basing himself on texts like Mt 10:23, the 'hold up' of the return of Christ as Judge was that there were still places which had not heard the Gospel. Once every place, right

out to the edges, had heard a preacher, then the Second Coming could happen.

Patrick saw himself as this eschatological preacher on the last frontier. He added into his text of the creed that the judgement is "coming soon", and says that he "baptised many, ordained many, and prepared a people" for the end.

Preacher

Patrick – to his fellow bishops, probably in Ireland, who would have seen his activity close up – had gone completely 'off message' with his unique vision of himself as the apocalyptic preacher. Yet by answering these anonymous levelheaded pastors, the real founders of Irish Christianity, Patrick became the only one who left a name and any account of evangelising in Ireland!

Ironically, Patrick became a touchstone of Irish orthodoxy but was himself an extremist who thought he was preparing a special little group who would escape the coming wrath; while those sensible bishops who condemned his misreading of the nature of God's judgement have been dismissed as twisted and

jealous.

Muirchú needed a named apostle, and Patrick was all he had. Muirchú's first task was to edit out the disreputable bits, and then to present Patrick as a model of orthodoxy and practice – as conceived in the late 7th Century – through a series of comparisons and exemplary stories, then link him with the ruling dynasty of the day by making Patrick the founder of their church at Armagh, and lastly show Patrick as the intercessor for the Irish in heaven.

Now the Irish had a single Christian identity in the past, a tale of unity that might be an alternative to feuding families in the present, and a collective destiny in the life to come. Patrick the heretical bishop was buried, Patrick the saint was born!

i Thomas O'Loughlin is Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings* (Continuum, London 2000), and *Patrick: The man and his works* (SPCK, London 2014 [second edition]).

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The time is now for change in the Catholic Church

Text of keynote address by Mary McAleese, President of Ireland 1997-2011, at the Voices of Faith International Women's Day Conference. Theme: Why women matter. March 8, 2018 at the Jesuit Curia, Rome

"Historical oppression of women has deprived the human race of untold resources, true progress for women cannot fail to liberate enormous reserves of intelligence and energy, sorely needed in a world that is groaning for peace and justice" – Extract from presentation by Profe. Maryann Glendon, member of Holy See Delegation to the UN Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

The Israelites under Joshua's command circled Jericho's walls for seven days, blew trumpets and shouted to make the walls fall down. (cf Joshua 6:1-20). We don't have trumpets but we have voices, voices of faith and we are here to shout, to bring down our Church's walls of misogyny. We have been circling these walls for 55 years since John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* first pointed to the advancement of women as one of the most important "signs of the times".

"They are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons" "[...] The longstanding inferiority complex of certain classes because of their economic and social status, sex, or position in the State, and the corresponding superiority complex of other classes, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past".

At the Second Vatican



Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese.

Council Archbishop Paul Hallinan of Atlanta, warned the bishops to stop perpetuating "the secondary place accorded to women in the Church of the 20th Century" and to avoid the Church being a "late-comer in [their] social, political and economic development". The Council's decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* said it was important that women "participate more widely [...] in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate". The Council's *pastoral constitution Gaudium et Spes* said the elimination of discrimination based on gen-

der was a priority⁵. Paul VI even commissioned a study on women in Church and Society⁶.

Surely we thought then, the post-Conciliar Church was on the way to full equality for its 600 million female members. And yes, it is true that since the Council new roles and jobs, have opened up to the laity including women but these have simply marginally increased the visibility of women in subordinate roles, including in the Curia, but they have added nothing to their decision-making power or their voice. Remark-

ably since the Council, roles which were specifically designated as suitable for the laity have been deliberately closed to women. The stable roles of acolyte and lector⁷ and the permanent diaconate⁸ have been opened only to laymen. Why? Both laymen and women can be temporary altar servers but bishops are allowed to ban females and where they permit them in their dioceses individual pastors can ban them in their parishes⁹. Why?

Back in 1976 we were told that the Church does not consider herself authorized

Footnotes

¹ John XXIII encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, n. 41.

² *Ibid.* n. 43

³ Cf. Fr. P. Jordan O.S.B., *NCWC News Rome* correspondent 'Changes proposed in role of women in the Church' posted 12 October 1965. Cf. <https://vaticaniat50.wordpress.com/2015/10/12/changes-proposed-in-role-of-women-in-the-church/>

⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 November 1965, n. 9 in AAS

58 (1966), 846.

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, n. 29 in AAS 58 (1966), 1048-1049.

⁶ It reported in 1976.

⁷ 1983 Code of Canon Law, can. 230 §1. Cf. Paul VI, apostolic letter, *Ministeria Quaedam*, 15 August 1972, n. 2-4; 7, in AAS 64 (1972) 529-534. Formerly called the minor orders of acolyte and lector, they are: henceforth to be called ministries. Ministries may

be assigned to lay Christians; hence they are no longer to be considered as reserved to candidates for the sacrament of orders. [...] In accordance with the ancient tradition of the Church, institution to the ministries of reader and acolyte is reserved to men.

⁸ 1983 Code of Canon Law, can. 1031 §2. In 2016 Pope Francis set up a Commission to look at the question of ordaining women to the Diaconate. The report is believed to have been on his desk

for a year as of March 2018.

⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, letter Concerning the use of female altar servers, 27 July 2001.

¹⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declaration *Inter Insigniores*, on the question of the ordination of women to the ministerial priesthood, 15 October 1976.

¹¹ Written with the help among others of two Irish

laywomen, Cathy Molloy and Edel O'Kennedy. For the background to the Decree cf. M.J. Heydt, 'Solving the Mystery of Decree 14: Jesuits and the situation of women in Church and civil society' <http://www.conversationsmagazine.org/web-features/2015/12/27/solving-the-mystery-of-decree-14-jesuits-and-the-situation-of-women-in-church-and-civil-society>

¹² Per UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in his opening introduction at the UNGA

Seventieth Session, 25 September 2015, UN Doc A/70/PV.3, 1.

¹³ Francis, *apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, n. 103 in AAS 105 (2013) 1019-1137. Cf. Francis interview with Fr. A. Spadaro SJ for *America* magazine in which he repeated these words, 30 September 2013 (as amended online).

¹⁴ P. Zagano, 'What the Pope really said', NCRonline 25 September 2013 [https:// www.](https://www.)

to admit women to priestly ordination¹⁰.

This has locked women out of any significant role in the Church's leadership, doctrinal development and authority structure since these have historically been reserved to or filtered through ordained men.

“How long can the hierarchy sustain the credibility of a God who wants things this way”

Yet in divine justice the very fact of the permanent exclusion of women from priesthood and all its consequential exclusions, should have provoked the Church hierarchy to find innovative and transparent ways of including women's voices as of right and not in trickles of tokenism by tapping, in the divinely instituted College of Bishops and in the man made entities such as the College of Cardinals, the Synod of Bishops and episcopal conferences, in all the places where the faith is shaped by decision and dogma and doctrine. Just imagine this normative scenario – Pope Francis calls a Synod on the role of Women in the Church and 350 male celibates advise the Pope on what women really want!

That is how ludicrous our Church has become. How long can the hierarchy sustain the credibility of a God who wants things this way, who wants a Church where women are invisible and voiceless in Church leadership, legal and doctrinal discernment and decision-making?

It was here in this very hall in 1995 that Irish Jesuit theologian, Fr. Gerry O'Hanlon put his finger on the underpinning systemic problem when he steered Decree 14¹¹ through the Jesuits 34th General Congregation. It is a forgotten document but today we will dust it down and use it to challenge a Jesuit Pope, a reforming Pope, to real,

practical action on behalf of women in the Catholic Church.

Decree 14 says:

We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And, like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often contributed to a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation.

“The regrettable situation” arises because the Catholic Church has long since been a primary global carrier of the virus of misogyny. It has never sought a cure though a cure is freely available. Its name is “equality”

Down the 2000 year highway of Christian history came the ethereal divine beauty of the Nativity, the cruel sacrifice of the Crucifixion, the Hallelujah of the Resurrection and the rallying cry of the great commandment to love one another. But down that same highway came man-made toxins such as misogyny and homophobia to say nothing of anti-semitism with their legacy of damaged and wasted lives and deeply embedded institutional dysfunction.

“It has left the Church flapping about awkwardly on one wing when God gave it two”

The laws and cultures of many nations and faith systems were also historically deeply patriarchal and excluding of women; some still are, but today the Catholic Church lags noticeably behind the world's advanced nations in the elimination of discrimination against women. Worse still, because it is the “pulpit of the world” to quote Ban

Ki Moon¹² its overt clerical patriarchalism acts as a powerful brake on dismantling the architecture of misogyny wherever it is found.

There is an irony here, for education has been crucial to the advancement of women and for many of us, the education which liberated us was provided by the Church's frontline workers clerical and lay, who have done so much to lift men and women out of poverty and powerlessness and give them access to opportunity.

Yet paradoxically it is the questioning voices of educated Catholic women and the courageous men who support them, which the Church hierarchy simply cannot cope with and scorns rather than engaging in dialogue.

The Church which regularly criticizes the secular world for its failure to deliver on human rights has almost no culture of critiquing itself. It has a hostility to internal criticism which fosters blinkered servility and which borders on institutional idolatry.

Today we challenge Pope Francis to develop a credible strategy for the inclusion of women as equals throughout the Church's root and branch infrastructure, including its decision-making.

A strategy with targets, pathways and outcomes regularly and independently audited Failure to include women as equals has deprived the Church of fresh and innovative discernment; it has consigned it to recycled thinking among a hermetically sealed cosy male clerical elite flattered and rarely challenged by those tapped for jobs in secret and closed processes.

It has kept Christ out and bigotry in. It has left the Church flapping about awkwardly on one wing when God gave it two.

We are entitled to hold our Church leaders to account for this and other egregious abuses of institutional power and we will insist on our right to do so no matter how many official doors are closed to us.

At the start of his papacy Pope Francis said “We need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church”¹³ words a Church

scholar described as evidence of Francis' “magnanimity”¹⁴. Let us be clear, women's right to equality in the Church arises organically from divine justice. It should not depend on *ad hoc* papal benevolence.

Pope Francis described female theologians as the “strawberries on the cake”¹⁵. He was wrong. Women are the leaven in the cake. They are the primary handers on of the faith to their children. In the Western world the Church's cake is not rising, the baton of faith is dropping. Women are walking away from the Catholic Church in droves, for those who are expected to be key influencers in their children's faith formation have no opportunity to be key influencers in the formation of the Catholic faith.

That is no longer acceptable.

Just four months ago the Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin felt compelled to remark that “the low standing of women in the Catholic Church is the most significant reason for the feeling of alienation towards it in Ireland today”¹⁶.

Yet Pope Francis has said that “women are more important than men because the Church is a woman”¹⁷. Holy Father, why not ask women if they feel more important than men? I suspect many will answer that they experience the Church as a male bastion of patronizing platitudes to which Pope Francis has added his quota.

John Paul II has written of the ‘mystery of women’¹⁸. Talk to us as equals and we will not be a mystery! Francis has said a “deeper theology of women”¹⁹ is needed. God knows it would be hard to find a more shallow theology of women than the misogyny dressed up as theology²⁰ which the magisterium currently hides behind.

And all the time a deeper theology is staring us in the face. It does not require much digging to find it. Just look to Christ. John Paul II pointed out that:

“we are heirs to a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. [...] Transcending the established

norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness...as we look to Christ...it is natural to ask ourselves: how much of his message has been heard and acted upon?”

Women are best qualified to answer that question but we are left to talk among ourselves. No Church leader bothers to turn up not just because we do not matter to them but because their priestly formation prepares them to resist treating us as true equals.

Back in this hall in 1995 the Jesuit Congregation asked God for the grace of conversion from a patriarchal Church to a Church of equals; a Church where women truly matter not on terms designed by men for a patriarchal Church but on terms which make Christ matter. Only such a Church of equals is worthy of Christ. Only such a Church can credibly make Christ matter.

The time for that Church is now, Pope Francis. The time for change is now.

“Back in this hall in 1995 the Jesuit Congregation asked God for the grace of conversion from a patriarchal Church to a Church of equals”

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The Irish Catholic

ncronline.org/blogs/just-catholic/what-pope-really-said.

15 Francis, Address to the International Theological Commission, 5 December 2014. Cf. H. Roberts ‘Women theologians are ‘the strawberry on the cake, says Pope’, The Tablet 11 December 2014.

16 From a talk entitled “The church in Dublin: where will it be in 10 years’ time?” at St Mary's Church, Haddington Road, as reported in the *Irish Times*,

November 16 2017.

17 Response of Pope Francis to a question from a journalist: “Will we one day see women priests in the Catholic Church?” on papal plane returning to Rome from the United States, Sept. 29, 2015. Cf. <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/popotes-quotes-theology-women>

18 John Paul II, apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 15 August 1988 in AAS 80 (1988) 1653-1729.

19 Interview with journalists on board plane on way to Rio de Janeiro 22 July 2013 cf. John Allen ‘The Pope on Homosexuals. Who am I to judge?’, NCRonline <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-homosexuals-who-am-i-judge>

20 Cf. Manfred Hauke, Women in the priesthood. *A Systematic Analysis in the Light of the Order of Creation and Redemption*, Ignatius Press, 1988.

Rally for Life: tens of thousands answer the call



Photos: Chai Brady, Sean Feeney and Save the 8th

Huge crowds attend pro-life rally as referendum approaches

Chai Brady

In one of the biggest pro-life demonstrations ever in Ireland, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of the capital to call for a 'No' vote in the upcoming abortion referendum.

Demonstrators of all ages, from across Ireland, marched from Parnell Square to Merrion Square to advocate for the retention of the Eighth Amendment last Saturday.

A medical practitioner, several campaigners and politicians took to a stage set up beside Merrion Square Park to talk about the referendum, set for May, when voters will be asked whether they want to retain Article 40.3.3 which gives constitutional protection to the unborn.

At the rally Dr Judy Ceannt, a GP and relative of 1916 leader Eamonn Ceannt, said that "they have not even consulted us doctors. The basic law that governs our actions as doctors is first do no harm. We are not meant to intentionally kill or harm any patient, least of all the most helpless: the unborn baby. The Government has no right to impose this on us."

"The 1916 Proclamation promises to 'cherish all the children of the nation equally', surely that includes our youngest and most vulnerable citizens, the helpless baby in the womb."

The Oireachtas Committee that was set up to advise on the issue has recommended unrestricted access to abortion for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and at any point if there is a risk to the life or health – physical or mental – of a woman.



Rally for Life: tens of thousands answer the call





A pro-life youth group from Austria and Germany, pictured with a few extra pro-life advocates, travelled to Ireland specifically for the march. "We're a group of nine young people. We're part of Youth for Life Austria and Germany. We're here to support the Irish people. It has been awesome, lots of music, lots of joy: celebrating life. There's a large number that we're seeing here today, it's very impressive," said Natalie Ehrenberger (20). Photos on this page: Chai Brady



Sorcha Ni Dhomhnaill (19) from Sallins, Co. Kildare, and Robert Byrne (20) from Dundrum in Dublin. "It's a very important thing to support unborn life and everyone here is very positive and happy," Mr Byrne said.



Emily Fitzpatrick (16) from Dublin and Charlotte Murphy (23) from Aghrim say the Eighth Amendment exists to protect women and babies, with Charlotte saying: "Babies are made in the image of God and he commands us to protect even the weakest of us, so we're here to support women and babies and to love them."



Aoife Declár from pro-life group Meath for Life in Navan and Ciara Leahy from Raheny. "I'd like to thank the gardaí because I felt very unsafe last year and the gardaí followed us and made us feel safe. I felt there was a bigger Garda presence. I think there's a fabulous atmosphere and we're thrilled to be here," said Ciara.

Shane and Louis (who spoke at the march) Dunleavy from Navan, Co. Meath with their children Tadhg and Ciaran. Shane said: "There's a brilliant turn out this year. My wife had a case of sepsis a couple of years ago and she nearly died but she didn't because she had a correct diagnosis and she survived, so she came here to talk about that."



Fr Gavan Jennings, a chaplain from Ely University Centre, with Colette Haynes from Dublin.

Fr Gavan told *The Irish Catholic*: "It is worth it to get out on the streets if it's going to do anything to defend the life of the unborn child. I would encourage people that the referendum is not lost, I think we're going to win. I think the Irish people can see through this, they know what's happening. I think if people work, if people pray, it will be won in May."



Bishop Dermot Farrell taking a seat in the chair in the Cathedral Sanctuary on Sunday. Photos: John McElroy

Creating faith from the ground up



We are all called to give ‘credible witness to the Gospel’, Bishop Dermot Farrell tells **Colm Fitzpatrick**

Contemporary topics about the Irish Church now revolve around questions about our declining priesthood, the efficacy of clergy formation, and the integral role of the laity. Although these discussions often begin and end at the armchair, the newly-appointed Bishop of Ossory is hoping to put his words into real action.

Dr Dermot Farrell, who was ordained as bishop on Sunday, is excited about the challenges his new position entails, and is encouraged by the “wealth of support” that he has received from his new parishioners after being told that Pope Francis asked him to become bishop.

“I suppose I felt it would be a challenge. I was a bit shocked. Initially, when you get that question put to you, the first thing is shock. I suppose also, one realises the enormity of the challenge that faces you in saying yes to that,” Bishop Farrell told *The Irish Catholic*, adding that the shock later subsides and the reality of the situation kicks in.

“After the initial shock you become more relaxed and you also realise the wealth of support that is out there.



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (Principal Consecrator) presenting the new Bishop with the symbols of the Episcopal office.

I have received nothing but support from both the people and priests of Ossory and that’s an enormous source of strength and encouragement when you’re facing up to those responsibilities and challenges that lie ahead,” he explained.

In spite of these challenges, he said that he’s not apprehensive at all about his new role, but actually has feelings of “mixed emotions” after having to leave his home diocese of Meath which he has been actively part of for almost five decades.

Relationships

“You know, when you’re leaving a diocese that you’ve been involved with as a priest for 38 years and if you add in the years from when I was a seminarian, and I was associated with the diocese, that’s 46 years. That’s a long time and that’s a lot of relationships. When you’re leaving that’s certainly a sad time.

“You build up a network of relationships and people that you meet along the journey of life, and you won’t necessarily lose all of those but there is a certain fracture that takes place when you’re moving to a different part of the country.”

Bishop Farrell studied in Maynooth from 1972-1981, and was ordained a priest on June 7, 1980. He later taught Moral Theology in Maynooth and was President of St Pat-

rick’s College from 1996-2007. Becoming a priest was something that he thought about “occasionally”, he said, and this became more focused towards the end of secondary school.

“Like most students in secondary school one has to make a decision about where life is going to take you. So, it came towards the end of my secondary school days, that decision became as I said more focused. And I went with that decision. And went to study for the priesthood.

“Obviously, one has to keep re-evaluating that decision. There are points along the journey where you accept various ministries – those are always kind of milestones where one has to reflect on the decision,” Dr Farrell said.

“There are spiritual directors and others who help you along the way.”

His family played a formative role in developing his faith as did the culture of the time which extolled the role of priests as an integral part of society.

“They were a family who prayed. So, that obviously had a dimension because vocations don’t come out of a vacuum. They come out of a prayer life, a faith life and that was certainly part of my own family,” he said. Bishop Farrell added that he was “inspired” by some priests, and would have “looked up to and admired” them because



Some dignitaries and clergy attending the consecration.



of their pastoral work in the parish.

He pointed out, however, that support for the priesthood has now dwindled in our modern times largely due to shifts in the culture about religion and the role of priests today.

"In those times there was a different cultural matrix in terms of a support for priesthood and support for someone who declared themselves to be a candidate. I do think that's changed now, I don't think there's the same level or universal level of support for candidates when they go for the priesthood now," he explained.

He was particularly excited about his own priestly ordination in 1980, whereby he could finally put into practice all that he had learned as a seminarian.

“He is enthusiastic about now coming to Ossory to meet the parishioners and getting to know the diocesan priests”

"I looked forward to getting involved in parish ministry because I had been eight years in formation. Suddenly the day arises when you're out of formation and you're at the coal face. The training up to that is to a certain amount theoretical but then you actually have to go out and do it," he said.

"It's like if you're training to be an engineer in university and then suddenly you find yourself out standing on the side of a road. You have to put in what you have learned over a period of time into actual practice.

"That takes time, you grow into it. It takes a bit of time to go out, even the idea of getting used to or celebrating mass, dealing with sick people, visiting the hospitals that doesn't all just come, one has to develop a style. That takes time."

With his ongoing vocational journey, he is enthusiastic about now coming to Ossory to meet the parishioners and getting to know the diocesan priests on a more personal level. Dr Farrell said that he has received "nothing but support" from the people who work for the diocese and those he has already met.

He is, however, aware of the new challenges that he will be facing as he now has responsibility for the 42 parishes in Ossory as opposed to only his Dunboyne parish in Meath.



Cardinal Sean Brady, Bishop Michael Smith (co-consecrator) Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (Principal Consecrator) and Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo (co-consecrator) processing into St Mary's Cathedral for the beginning of the ceremony.

"You are, I suppose, launching out into the deep to use that Gospel phrase", he explained.

He added that on top of his administrative and governance roles, that he also has a pastoral responsibility in caring for the priests as they are "a big asset" of any diocese.

His first port of call as the newly appointed bishop will be to visit the various parishes and the priests and the many children in the parish who will be making their Confirmation soon.

Visits

"That will involve visits to these parishes to meet the parents of the children being confirmed. I've met all the priests already, well most of them, but I will be meeting them individually," he said, adding that as bishop he will have further opportunities to engage with the parish and people during events such as the anniversaries of churches and other pastoral functions.

He believes that one of the main challenges that he will have to encounter and address is trying to proclaim the message of the Gospels in a culture that is apathetic or even hostile towards it. Although in previous decades people in Ireland were more welcoming of what the Church taught, he believes society's interests have shifted.

"The challenges facing Ossory aren't very different from the ones facing Meath or any other diocese as well. The first challenge is that the whole landscape has changed over the years since I was ordained. Culturally, there are great challenges in trying

to preach the Gospel in the world and give credible witness to the Gospel," Bishop Farrell explained.

"You have to develop the prayer life of priests, people and parishes in the years ahead. That's a challenge."

He noted that the challenges that he faces in Ossory are no different from those faced on a national level. As the primary purpose of the priest and bishop is the proclamation of the Gospel or "evangelising the people", the challenge doesn't change.

With his background in Maynooth, another central issue which he hopes to tackle is the promotion of religious vocations. Although the bishop has some responsibility for this role, he said that all of the faithful have a collective duty to build and encourage potential candidates for the priesthood. This input is necessary because the Church cannot survive without priests who will administer the Eucharist.

“You have to develop the prayer life of priests, people and parishes in the years ahead. That's a challenge”

"That's a very particular responsibility, not just on the bishop but on every Catholic person to promote vocations to the priesthood. Ultimately, if you don't have priests, you have to say, well what sort of a Church have we? Do we have a Church at all if we have no priests?" he said.

"The Eucharist and the Church are intimately connected but priests and the Eucharist are obviously interconnected as well. You try to envisage a Church in Ireland which has no priests, what have we got then? We don't have a Church."

He mentioned that the reason why the priesthood has declined in numbers is complex, and that there's "probably a multiplicity of reasons". He outlined some examples such as the lack of people practicing their faith, diminishing family sizes, as well as the historic sexual abuse scandals.

"You could probably list 10-12 factors if you went into what's actually affecting vocations. I don't think it's any one factor," he continued. In order to fix this problem, we need to create a "culture of vocation", he said, and that this is a priority for every person.

"You can't shovel the responsibility of the vocations onto one person, be that a vocations director or one priest or one bishop. It's a challenge to the whole Church."

In light of the popular criticism today that the ongoing formation of priests is not paid enough attention in the Church in Ireland, Bishop Farrell hopes to implement structures that will help priests to continue and strengthen their vocational and pastoral development. Without this intervention, the vocational life can become static and fail to keep up to date with new research and teaching.

"If you look at any profession, there's always ongoing formation, ongoing training for people whether they're accountants, or solicitors or whether they're judges or nurses, and priests shouldn't be any different", he explained, adding that you receive your initial formation in the seminary but that there needs to be ongoing formation.

“These things are often short-lived. You have to build on them and that renewal has to be built from the ground up”

"You wouldn't particularly want to go to a doctor that hadn't studied since medical school in the 1950's - I'd be very sceptical. There has to be ongoing formation, things are changing all the time."

He knows this from personal experience as a young seminarian, when he had questions about his vocation, but through pastoral guidance, came to trust and be comfortable with his decision. "I largely thought that it was the way forward but there were times when you did reflect on it. Not that there were major doubts that arose. You always have questions. You try to answer those questions in the discernment process. The discernment process brings better clarity to yourself.

He hopes to speak with priests and try to decide what

the best way is of implementing ongoing formation such as study days. There are a number of ways to do it, he said, and so "there's no size that fits all. We would need to look at different ways for that to be achieved".

Alongside promoting the priesthood, Bishop Farrell also said that he wants the laity to have a more integral role in the parish as they provide wisdom and support. When asked whether lay leadership is going to increase, he responded:

"We should have lay leadership anyways, maybe the shortage of priests has forced us to take that more seriously. Lay involvement and lay participation is critical in terms of parishes," he said, noting that his previous parish Meath would not have been able to function without them.

"People are willing to step forward if they are asked. I've never had any difficulty in getting people to assist in financial administration in the parish or the pastoral dimensions of it. You have to ask them and if you ask from them people are always willing to give their time and their expertise."

Renewal

With the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) taking place in Ireland this August, Bishop Dermot Farrell is hopeful that Pope Francis will visit. Although this may create some sort of difference, he firmly holds that renewal does not happen overnight. What is really needed is an active community of believers who can bring forth their gifts in their own dioceses so that effective change can occur.

"One visit will certainly help a little bit, but these things are often short-lived. You have to build on them and that renewal has to be built from the ground up", he said, noting that it would be "foolish" to think that Pope Francis will solve all of the problems in the Irish Church.

"It has to be done parish by parish, diocese by diocese. Certainly, Pope Francis will give some impetus, but it won't be instant renewal. It takes time and it takes effort. It takes commitment and it takes programming," he said.

Dr Dermot Farrell summed up his hopes about being Bishop of Ossory by saying that he looks forward to meeting the challenges living down there and being part of the diocese. By building and creating renewal he wants to, "strengthen the parishes to be great centres of faith where people will want to come and worship and pray together as a faith community."

rl

A day of celebration in Ossory...



The Bishop-Elect standing and, below, prostrate before Archbishop Martin



The new bishop greeting parishioners after the ceremony.



Bishop Dermot Farrell greeting David O'Keeffe from Thomastown after the ceremony.





Bishop Dermot Farrell greeting a local representative.

Lt Cdr Patricia Butler, Aide De Camp to President Michael D. Higgins, greeting Bishop Dermot Farrell.



Archbishop John Neill, former Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin.



Bishops at the ceremony.



Out&About

Students' family week

KERRY: Students Erica Pilch, Fiona Vodopi, Niamh Ferris, Shauna Rusk, Claire Crowley, Lauren O'Grady, Darragh Clarke and Emma Nolan from Mercy Mounthawk in Tralee prepare for family week in school. They are creating awareness of how technology, use of phones and screens can negatively impact family life.



MAYO: The Knock Family Mass takes place on the first Sunday of each month at 12pm, in preparation for the WMOF. Pictured are Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector of Knock Shrine with some of the participating families.



DUBLIN: Fr Bryan Shorthall and Bishop Fintan Monahan attend the Novena of Grace to St Francis Xavier held in St Michan's Church, Halston Street.



WEXFORD: Sheamie Ryan and Paschal Carley chipped in to help Fr John Carroll clear snow from around St Alphonsus Church in the Barntown (Glynn) parish. Fr Carroll said their activity "heartens us all" adding that it was a time of "acute hardship" in the area.



CARLOW: Attending Plough Sunday Fr Eugen, Rhonda Shirley, Lorna Sixsmith, Ger James and Rev. David White celebrate the contribution of women to Irish farming at the start of the growing season in Staplestown Church, Carlow Union of Parishes (Col) with the community of Tinryland Church.

Edited by Chai Brady
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DUBLIN: Parishioners of the parish grouping of Ballyroan, Churchtown and Rathfarnham attend the first meeting beginning their Amoris talks which will continue until March 28 – in preparation for the World Meeting of Families.



LIMERICK: Volunteer William Priestley helps Tony Geary, who lost his sight when he was 60, get to grips with technology in one of National Council for the Blind of Ireland's offices.



GALWAY: Sr Catherine of the Poor Clares Galway stands beside her bird-feeder which she kept well-stocked for the birds braving Ireland's snowstorm.

IN SHORT

Snow much fun for Galway Poor Clares

With heaps of snow showering Ireland recently an enclosed community of nuns couldn't help but make the most of the weather phenomenon.

The Abbess, Sr Colette said: "The fun we had over the few days just seemed natural. St Francis was known for his love of nature and there are stories told of how he rolled in the snow. We so seldom have snow in Galway, it was energising to reel in it and we were happy to share the fun with our Facebook friends."

Acknowledging that Galway city wasn't hit as hard as other parts of Ireland, the Abbess said the nuns watched the situation as it was unfolding and prayed for those living alone, the elderly and the people helping them.

She said: "Weather events like this are really hard on people but they can bring out the best in people too. It's lovely to see how people club together to help each other. So many people got

in touch with us to make sure that we had everything we needed."

Speaking of another nun in the community, Sr Colette said: "Sr Catherine is particularly caring of the small birds in our garden and was out shovelling around the trees to make sure there was snow-free space for the ground feeding birds to forage and she kept the bird-feeders filled as well. There's definitely a few blackbirds and finches flying around out there today who owe their lives to her!"

Limerick volunteer renews blind man's 'faith in humanity'

A close relationship developed after a Limerick-based volunteer, who had a personal interest in sight loss, helped a blind man learn how to use technology.

William Priestly (38) runs the West End Youth Centre in Limerick, and asked the National Council for the Blind of Ireland if he could volunteer in the field of technology, he was paired with Tony Geary – who lost his sight in his

early 60s.

"Tony was trying to get to grips with technology so for the first few months it was a question of trial and error as we worked it out. We'd meet regularly in the NCBI offices in Limerick city and spend an hour going through the essentials that Tony needed. We got on well and so the whole experience of learning was easy then for Tony," said Mr Priestly.

Seven years on William still meets Tony, he said: "Technology is evolving so rapidly, there is always something to update Tony on."

He added that there is also a natural friendship that has developed between teacher and student.

Tony, a former chef who lives in Doon described William as a "marvellous and constant support for me" and that he has taken away his fear of technology.

"William is a young guy, in his 30s, and he would really renew your faith in humanity. He is giving up his time and his knowledge for free and it is priceless to me," he added.

CLARE

Divine Mercy Chaplet prayer group meets every Tuesday in the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Ennis at 8pm in the chapter room. There will also be a short *Lectio Divina* after the chaplet.

CORK

Life in the Spirit Seminar in Knockavilla Community Centre (Innishannon/Knockavilla parish), with seven weeks of Life in Spirit talks, every Friday until March 23 at 7.30pm. Contact: 087 4589133.

A pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

DONEGAL

The annual Divine Mercy Novena commences on Good Friday, March 30, and concludes on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 8 at 2pm in St Mary's Church Fana-volty, Fanad, with the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Confessions, and Mass. The first-class relic of St Faustina will also be on display.

DUBLIN

The feast of Divine Mercy will be celebrated on Sunday 8 April in Corpus Christi Church on Home Farm Road in Drumcondra. The celebrant will be Msgr Alex Stenson. During a holy hour from 3-4pm confessions will be available. Mass celebrated at 4pm.

Talk on De Montfort's True Devotion to Mary in preparation for Marian Consecration will take place in Marian College, Landsdowne Road, D4, on Friday, March 16 at 7 pm. Speaker: Deacon Cody Miller, Sp.Dir Legion of Mary, Louisiana.

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, from 8-9pm.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. All welcome. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KERRY

Dr Patricia Kieran will discuss 'Exploring Family Life' at the Ballylongford Community Centre on Tuesday March 20 at 7.30pm – hosted by North Kerry Pastoral Area.

Leixlip Parish is hosting 'Amoris', a six-session programme to reflect on our experience of family based on 'The Joy of Love'. It will continue in Our Lady's Parish Centre, Leixlip, on March 14 and 21, April 11 and 18 at 8pm.

GALWAY

Prayer Vigil for Ireland at Emmanuel House of Providence,

Clonfert, on Sunday March 18 from 1.45-7pm in honour of the holy family.

LAOIS

'Parish mission for healing' led by Sr Brieghe McKenna takes place in Ss Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise, during all Masses from Sunday March 18-22. Mass times on Sunday: 8.30am, 10am, 11.15am and 12.30pm. Monday to Thursday: 7.30am, 10am and 7.30pm.

LOUTH

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from NI or 086 3623361 from RoI.

The Rosary will be prayed for the protection of life every Saturday at 3pm at The Square, Dundalk.

OFFALY

Clonmacnois Prayer Vigil in Cluain Chiarain Prayer Centre on March Friday 16 and every third Friday. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and Prayers follow until 2.10am. Enquiries Dave: 085 7746763.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday 10-11am and Thursday 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm.

SLIGO

Latin Mass in Carraroe church on the last Sunday of each month, 3pm.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday 10-11am and Thursday 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm.

WATERFORD

Monthly intercession for marriages and families on Friday March 9 from 6-7pm in the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre.

WEXFORD

Deepen your experience of Lent with Taizé Prayer, a meditative, candle-lit service that centres around prayer music and silence, from 8-9pm every Friday, concluding with 'Prayers Around The Cross' on Good Friday, March 30 at Good Counsel College Chapel, New Ross.

WICKLOW

The Glenree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glenree on the First Saturday of every month.

Taizé Prayer in the Carmelite Monastery in Delgany every Thursday evening during Lent from 8-8.45pm.

World Report



Edited by Chai Brady
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IN BRIEF

Respected German cardinal dies

● Cardinal Karl Lehmann, long time president of the German bishops' conference and a respected theologian who participated in the Second Vatican Council, has died.

The 81-year-old cardinal died at his home in Mainz after declining health and a stroke in September.

In a telegram to Bishop Peter Kohlgraf of Mainz, Pope Francis expressed his condolences and recognised how the late cardinal's service "shaped the life of the Church and society."

"He always cared about being open to the questions and challenges of the day and about offering responses and guidance based on Christ's message in order to accompany people along their journey..." the Pope said in the telegram.

Bishops mark 100th anniversary of WWI end

The Austrian bishops' conference held its general assembly in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I.

World War I ended in 1918, and the meeting was part of the bishops' decision to designate 2018 as a 'Year of Remembrance'. During the meeting, they met with Bosnian bishops. "One hundred years ago, the First World War came to an end. Millions of people had lost their lives. The remembrance of this catastrophe and the massive suffering should strengthen the goodwill of Christians and all people to strive for a peaceful coexistence," the Austrian bishops said.



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Retired Pope dubs Francis criticism as 'foolish prejudice'

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' election, retired Pope Benedict XVI has defended the continuity of the Church's teaching under his successor and dismissed those who criticise the Pope's theological foundations.

In a letter sent to Msgr Dario Vigano, prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for Communication, Pope Benedict applauded the publication of a new book series titled, 'The Theology of Pope Francis'.

"It contradicts the foolish prejudice of those who see Pope Francis as someone who lacks a particular theological and philosophical formation, while I would have been considered solely a theorist of theology with little understanding of the concrete lives of today's Christian," the retired Pontiff wrote.

Msgr Vigano read the letter during a presentation of the 11-volume series.

Before reading the letter, Msgr Vigano said he sent a message to Pope Francis and Pope Benedict regarding the



Pope Francis (right) embraces Pope Benedict XVI.

publication of the book series.

He also asked if Pope Benedict would be "willing to write a page or a page and a half of dense theology in his clear and punctual style..."

Personal letter

Instead, the retired Pontiff "wrote a beautiful, personal letter that I will read to you", Msgr Vigano said.

Pope Benedict thanked Msgr Vigano for having given him a copy of 'The Theology of Pope Francis' book series,

which was authored by several notable theologians.

"These small volumes reasonably demonstrate that Pope Francis is a man with profound philosophical and theological formation and are helpful to see the interior continuity between the two pontificates, even with all the differences in style and temperament," he wrote.

Pope Benedict has made no secret of his affection for and admiration of Pope Francis.

During a Vatican celebration for the 65th anniversary of Pope Benedict's priestly ordination on June 28, 2016, the retired Pope expressed his sincere gratefulness to Pope Francis, saying that his goodness "from the first moment of your election, in every moment of my life here, touches me deeply".

"More than the beauty found in the Vatican Gardens, your goodness is the place where I live; I feel protected," Pope Benedict said.

India Supreme Court sparks religious debate after euthanasia ruling

India's top court has ignited a new religious debate after permitting passive euthanasia, allowing patients to prescribe in their "living will" the withdrawal of medical support if they slip into an irreversible coma.

Leaders of India's Catholics, Muslims and Hindus have opposed the Supreme Court verdict, which says the right to life also includes the right to die with dignity.

Permission is solely for a terminally ill person to choose death over life support but does not allow doctors or families to take that decision on behalf of the patient, the court said.

"The Church rejects any proposal

concerning active euthanasia as well as passive euthanasia," said Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, secretary-general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

India's Muslim Personal Law Board, which deals with the application of Islamic law in personal affairs, also objected to the Supreme Court judgment.

Kamal Faruqui, a senior board member, said that euthanasia in all its forms goes entirely against Islam.

"Human life is Allah's gift and we have no right to meddle with it, however bad the condition of the body," he said.

A better way to help the terminally ill die with dignity would be to offer high-quality palliative care and greater support for caregivers, said Fr Stephen Fernandes, secretary of the Indian bishops' Office for Justice, Peace and Development.

"The mark of a good society is its ability and willingness to care for those who are most vulnerable, not allowing them to die without food and medicine," he said.

Bishop Mascarenhas said the right to life enshrined in the Indian constitution does not include the right to die.

Overturing *Humanae Vitae* is 'crime against Church'



Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Mueller.

Speaking at a presentation of a book on *Humanae Vitae*, Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Mueller, prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stressed that attempts to change the Church's teaching are "a crime against the Church".

"The current attempt," he said, "to put in contrast the last three pontificates, with the pretext of imposing

a heterodox teaching to the faithful is a crime against the Church and a betrayal of her mission and mandate, whose final task is that of preserving the faith authentically inherited by the apostles."

Cardinal Mueller spoke at the Lateran University, presenting the new book *Karol Wojtyla and Humanae Vitae*, by Pawel Galuska. The book traces Cardinal

Wojtyla's contribution to the drafting of *Humanae Vitae*.

Cardinal Mueller's remarks referred in particular to the article 'Re-read *Humanae Vitae* in light of *Amoris Laetitia*' by the Italian theologian Maurizio Chiodi, who was recently appointed a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Letter from Rome

Padre Pio's allure strong as ever as Pope prepares visit

One of Catholicism's most beguiling features is its endless capacity for complexity, and that certainly extends to its understanding of suffering.

On the one hand, few institutions on earth invest more in the effort to alleviate suffering. Yet Christianity also was born in a monumental act of suffering, meaning Christ on the Cross, and the Church teaches that accepting one's own suffering can have redemptive value.

That duality will be on full display next week when Pope Francis travels to Pietrelcina, the birthplace of Padre Pio, and San Giovanni Rotondo, the site of the hospital and sanctuary founded by the famous stigmatic saint.

In one sense, Francis is going to honour a decades-long effort to curb suffering by bringing quality health care to the poor, especially the poor of the chronically undeveloped Italian south. Yet in another, he's also going to "pay homage", in the words of Italian Capuchin Father Antonio Belpiede, to the "lone crucified priest in the history of the Church".

Stigmata

While there are a handful of other saints in whose lives the Church has authenticated the stigmata, meaning the five wounds of Christ on the Cross, none was a priest – St Francis of Assisi for instance was a deacon. Francis' visit is designed to mark the 100th anniversary of the definitive appearance of the stigmata in Padre Pio, as well as the 50th anniversary of his death in 1968.

Although Belpiede said some details of the Pope's movements next Saturday are still being worked out because the Vatican's advance team was only able to do an overview last Thursday due to heavy rains in Italy, he bluntly warned that it's shaping up to be a



John L. Allen Jr

"hellish" day, both for the Pontiff and those organising the outing.

Francis is scheduled to leave from the Vatican next Saturday at 7am, arriving in the small community of Pietrelcina at 8am.

He'll briefly visit a chapel that contains an elm tree under which Padre Pio used to sit in the shade.

He'll then greet local faithful in the town's main square, and also greet the local Capuchin community.

At 9am, Francis will board the helicopter again to travel to San Giovanni Rotondo. He'll land on an athletic field, the only space large enough to accommodate a helicopter, and take a car to the 'House of Relief of Suffering', the massive hospital launched under Padre Pio in 1956 and built up under his patronage. It's considered one of the most efficient healthcare facilities in Italy and Europe.

“This is a penitential path of the Holy Father. It seems to be the will of the Pope to pay tribute to the man of the stigmata”

All in, the hospital counts some 900 beds, divided into 30 medical and surgical wards, 50 clinical specialties, and a 'catalog' of roughly 4,300 diagnostic and therapeutic services. Every year there are 57,000 hospitalisations and over 1.3 million outpatient services.

While there, Francis will visit the paediatric oncology

ward, greeting children suffering from various forms of cancer.

The Pontiff will then move to the sanctuary of 'St Mary of the Graces', where he'll greet the Capuchin community of San Giovanni Rotondo and then pray before the remains of Padre Pio. Then he'll head for the church of St Pius of Pietrelcina where he'll say Mass and greet local dignitaries. He'll get back in the helicopter around 1pm and is scheduled to be back in the Vatican by 2pm.

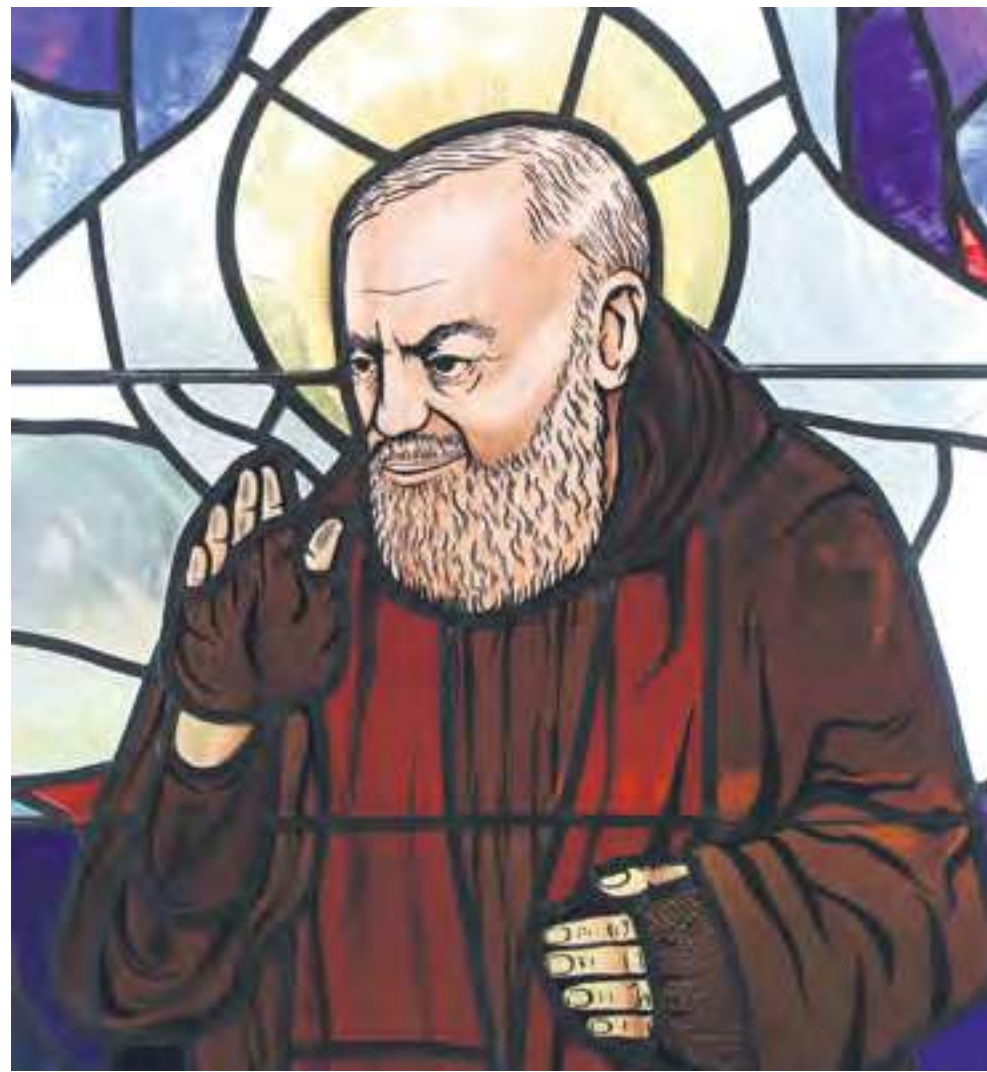
Decision

This will mark the third Papal outing to San Giovanni Rotondo, after visits by John Paul II in 1987 and Benedict XVI in 2009, though it's the first time a Pope has also opted to stop in Pietrelcina. That decision to add a significant logistical complication and to extend the day, according to Belpiede, gives Francis' trip a particularly 'penitential' aspect.

"There's not going to be any lunch with the friars, like Benedict XVI did," Belpiede said. "This is a penitential path of the Holy Father. It seems to be the will of the Pope to pay tribute to the man of the stigmata."

In Italy, Padre Pio is perhaps the most famous saint of the 20th century and one of the best-known and best-loved of all time, seen as an icon of compassion for ordinary people. Indeed, a large part of the reason that Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston topped an online poll in a major Italian newspaper in 2013 in terms of who readers wanted to see as the next Pope was because, in his brown Capuchin habit and sporting a beard, he reminds many Italians of Padre Pio.

On the other hand, cultured Italians often look askance at the devotion surrounding Padre Pio, seeing it as folkloristic, low-brow, and just, well, a bit



embarrassing.

The thaumaturgical dimension is often an especially hard-sell, reports that Padre Pio could levitate or read minds, for instance, and that he could bilocate. For most of his life he never left his friary, but he was reported in far-away places such as Genoa, Uruguay and Milwaukee, healing and comforting. Then there was the strange scent of roses said to emanate from his body, the so-called 'odour of sanctity'.

Belpiede said that his experience is that while attachment to Padre Pio in Italy may be associated primarily with the elderly, the poor and unsophisticated believers, that's not true in other parts of the world. In

Africa, he said, devotion is "growing rapidly", and it's coming primarily from the young.

“Capuchins do good in the world... we're simple people, and we're happy for this visit”

"Sure, the humble have a need for simplicity, and there's nothing wrong with that," he said. "But Padre Pio also had a strong appeal for a man such as Giovanni Battista Montini," he said, using the given name of Pope Paul VI, who was known as an extremely refined figure.

"If such people were close to him, it's not because

they were uncultivated but because they had a different vision of his life," Belpiede said.

One final point in the run-up to the Pope's visit next Saturday.

Belpiede said it's also an important moment for the Capuchins, who represent the Church's fourth-largest men's order with about 10,500 friars worldwide.

"Generally, Capuchins do good in the world," Belpiede said. "We're simple people, and we're happy for this visit, truly joyous."

On a personal note, I'll just say this: I was educated and formed in the Faith by Capuchins out on the high plains of western Kansas in the 1970s and '80s. If you want to talk about compassion, their ability to put up with a precocious, often nasty, and usually full-of-himself kid and help turn him into something resembling a functioning adult, at least on my better days, deserves to go down as one of the great acts of mercy of all time.

I, therefore, will be praying that the Capuchins in Pietrelcina and San Giovanni Rotondo have a great day next Saturday. From where I stand, they've more than earned it.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of CruxNow.com



Cardinal Sean O'Malley.

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Celebration of accused's Mass was correct

Dear Editor, I am commenting on the recent resignation of Bishop McAreevey because of his having been criticised for offering the funeral Mass for a priest who, according to the secular media, was "a known paedophile".

Paedophilia is an abomination before God. The trauma caused to victims – physical, psychological, spiritual and social – is incalculable, often resulting in suicide.

The perpetrators are sinners who in every respect are no different to all other sinners amongst whom are those who commit murder, steal, cheat, exploit the poor, abort babies,

prosecute wars and despoil the earth, causing famine and disease.

Jesus Christ told us he came to save sinners and that it was not the healthy but the sick who need the doctor. He also said that prostitutes and sinners would make their way into the Kingdom of God before Pharisees.

God's mercy is his greatest attribute and is open to all no matter how heinous the sin. Therefore, Bishop McAreevey was right to offer the funeral Mass for his priest. Not to have done so would have been an admission that forgiveness is available only to some sinners and

he would have set himself up as judge in contravention of Jesus' admonition "judge not and you shall not be judged". Judgement belongs to God alone.

The Pharisees in the secular media would do well to remember that when it comes to eternity they might appreciate the gift of a funeral Mass, the supreme example of God's mercy, which is open to all and is not merely confined to a select few.

*Yours, etc.,
Loretto Browne,
Ashbourne,
Co. Meath.*

Moral limits to the use of medical intervention

Dear Editor, As if the referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment isn't a big enough threat to the rights of the unborn, we now learn that a law to regulate the practice of Assisted Human Reproduction is currently before the Oireachtas.

God created man and woman, in equal dignity, in "his own image" to be companions for each other. He blessed their union and told them "to be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Jesus brought to full awareness God's divine plan for

marriage and raised it to a sacrament. The crowning glory of matrimony is procreation, a participation in God's work of creation. Human life is given as a gift; it is the fruit of marriage and conjugal love. A child is a gift from God, not a right; it shouldn't be treated as a commodity to be obtained by any means available.

Infertility can be very distressing for couples unable to conceive, but the Church recognizes that there are moral limits to the use of medical intervention such

as IVF and embryo transfer (ET). These are morally objectionable procedures, undermining human life and human dignity, as well as having a high failure rate.

Human embryos, are from the first moment of their existence, human beings possessing an inherent dignity and an inviolable right to life. IVF and ET usually involves the freezing and thawing of embryos which puts them in grave danger of survival. It is an elective procedure; some are chosen, the remainder

destroyed or experimented on. Surrogacy also goes against the teaching of the Church by failing to meet conjugal fidelity; meeting to meet the obligations of responsible motherhood; and offending the dignity of the child. It carries the same risks to the embryo as IVF and ET. Human life is a gift from God not something to be created in a laboratory.

*Yours etc.,
Christina Coakley,
Ballyhaunis,
Co. Mayo.*

We must pray for unity

Dear Editor, I am inspired by the fact that Pope Francis prays for those who call him a heretic, rather than showing contempt towards them (IC 22/02/18). This response is a message to all Catholics that we need to have unity in the Church, and that hateful comments about our Pope causes more damage than good. There are so many factions in the Church now which is disheartening considering historically the Church has always been identified as unitive. Instead of spouting hateful comments, we should all be praying, like Pope Francis, for unity.

*Yours etc.,
James Dudley,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24.*



We should organise a day of fasting in support of life

Dear Editor, The lives of the unborn must always be protected and the mothers must be cared for as well. I urge all our bishops to declare a day of prayer and fasting so that the Eighth Amendment may be saved. I pay great tribute to the many pro-life organisations who do their very best in the preservation of the lives of the

unborn. These people need our constant support and prayers as abortion is a very serious sin. All people are made in the likeness and image of God and have a right to live. There should be no such thing as disposable people, as all people are special.

*Yours etc.,
James A. Corcoran,
Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.*

Johnson's faux pas are revealing

Dear Editor, Thank God for Boris Johnson. His latest *faux pas* reveals with a typical flourish of cheerful arrogance the mind of the present British government. Causing serious harm to the European Union, placing the Good Friday Agreement in jeopardy and facing an uncertain economic future are small prices to pay for the exhilaration of "going it alone" and reviving memories of the empire.

*Yours etc.,
Fr. J. Anthony Gaughan,
Blackrock,
Co. Dublin.*

Lack of knowledge? Vatican Council II is partly to blame

Dear Editor, In response to a letter by Anne Brady entitled 'Oh for the Penny Catechism' (IC 22/02/18), a lot of questions have been asked as to why there is a decline in Church practice. In this short letter she hit the nail firmly on the head in relation to serious decline in Catholic practice and belief in Ireland today. The young people are leaving school with hardly any knowledge of their Faith, and who's to blame?

The turning point came in all of this following the second Vatican Council when everything was turned on its head. It left bishops, priests and the laity in a complete state of confusion and was all downhill after that.

New secular programmes were introduced in the national schools by left-wing politicians accepted by the bishops. Ignorance of the faith and paganism followed and nobody seems to care.

Did students studying for the priesthood in Maynooth and other places set the proper formation for the priesthood either, following the council? My answer is no. So, decline came all the way down the line. There are three sources from which young people should get religious instruction: the home, the school, and the Church. Many young parents did not set proper instruction themselves so they have nothing to offer or pass on. The teachers do a good job but the curriculum is secular and unsuitable.

Many children and their parents do not attend Mass so no hope there either. In the old days we heard a lot about meeting our God when we die and being held accountable for what we fail to do. Who will be held accountable for the failure to pass on the faith in Ireland for the past 50 years?

There is certainly a link between the Council changes and this terrible loss of Faith.

*Yours etc.,
Michael Walsh,
Woodford, Co. Galway.*

Story of abuse remains to be told

Dear Editor, Your article 'Clerical abuse small proportion of national rate – Garda' (IC 8/3/2018) will have given some small relief to those who imagine Irish child sexual abuse to be a largely clerical phenomenon.

At the same time, however, the Garda figure tells us very little that people who've been paying attention didn't already know. The 2002 Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) report, for instance, found that only 1.7% of Irish adults who had been sexually abused had been victims of religious ministers, with a further 1.7% being victims of religious teachers. In other words, for every survivor of abuse from religious ministers or teachers in Ireland, there are 29 other survivors.

This silent majority of abuse survivors make up over 26% of our population, with a surprisingly high number of these being victims of abuse from teenage boys. That story remains to be told.

*Yours etc.,
Gabriel Kelly,
Drogheda, Co. Louth.*

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



EL SALVADOR: Catholic school students wait to visit a museum about Blessed Oscar Romero in San Salvador. Pope Francis has cleared the way for the canonisation of Blessed Romero, who was shot and killed March 24, 1980, as he celebrated Mass. Photos: CNS



KENYA: Sr Redempta Kabahweza, a Missionary Sister of Our Lady of Africa, plays with two of the youngest sexual abuse survivors during a counselling session at Pope Francis Rescue Center in Malindi.



VATICAN: Pope Francis shakes hands with Bernice King, the daughter of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr, during a private audience.



SYRIA: Residents flee after Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army fighters captured the village of Khaldieh in Afrin. Christian activists warn that one million Syrian civilians will face certain slaughter in north western Afrin, where they allege Turkey and its militant allies have already carried out “war crimes” and “ethnic cleansing”.



NEPAL: Rescue workers look for survivors after a passenger plane from Bangladesh slammed into an empty field and erupted in flames just beyond the runway Kathmandu. Officials said at least 49 of the 71 people on board were killed.



UKRAINE: Ukrainian worshippers carry a large wooden cross during a Way of the Cross procession in Lviv.

Love Notes

WENDY GRACE



Put yourself out to the world

I am a single woman in my late 30s and I thought I would be married with a family by now. I had one serious relationship in my early 20s but it ended when he cheated on me. Since then I have been dating but it has never lasted more than a few weeks. I have been on blind dates, I've tried internet dating and I've tried joining clubs and classes that have male members. Am I doomed to be alone?

Have you prayed about what your vocation is meant to be? Marriage is just one vocation, are you sure this is the plan God has for you in your life? If you feel it is, bring God into it, pray for your future spouse, pray before a date, pray for patience and guidance.

I wonder whether your past experience is stopping you from letting a new person in. Is there a possibility that the hurt you experienced in the past is preventing you from moving on with your future? Have you full closure on that experience – if not, it will be hard to open your heart up to a new person. Remember your past is your past, yes it is part of you, but you need to focus on where you are going next. You might think that if you don't let your guard down, you won't get hurt. But the reality is if you don't ever let your guard down, you won't meet the right person.

Could there be other reasons dating is only lasting a few weeks? Are you putting too much pressure on yourself too soon, wanting things to move too fast? Give someone a chance, enjoy the first few dates, it's nerve wracking and can take a little while to truly relax.

It is difficult when you are really trying, but it's important not to become too bitter. If you think, as you say, you're "doomed to be alone" you will be stuck in that negative mindset. You need to stay positive. If you keep thinking it's never going to happen then it won't.

Have you thought about what you actually want in a husband? Are you a really social person that loves to be out and about? Are you an anxious person that needs someone who can help to calm you down? What are the practical aspects you should be looking for? This does not mean the superficial things – it means the true qualities that you need in a partner. If you're not sure, then all the efforts you are taking are like trying to find your way in a strange place without a map. And this doesn't mean settling, because the relationship won't last in that scenario, however you shouldn't be waiting around for prince charming either. I hate to break it to you, but you are not perfect, so make sure you're not seeking out the perfect spouse, but someone you can build a life with.

Positives

Look at the positives, now you know what you want. You still have to continue to put yourself out there, not with the sole purpose of finding a match, ditch the desperation and just enjoy yourself. Participate in hobbies that you actually like, join groups or clubs that you are interested in, not because there might be men there! Remember that there are men ... everywhere!

Spot someone you might like in a coffee shop...talk to them! This is daunting, but if they're a nice person they will chat back, if they are rude, well then you wouldn't want to date them anyway! Friends of mine who recently got married met at a bus stop. So if you deal with the past, open your heart and focus on what matters.

Maintaining a Gospel of hope in family life



In his letter on the joy of love, *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis calls on Catholic families to live their Easter faith and to recognise that at its centre one finds authentic Christian hope. In fact, he emphasises that "in our own day dominated by stress and rapid technological advances, one of the most important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope" (AL 275).

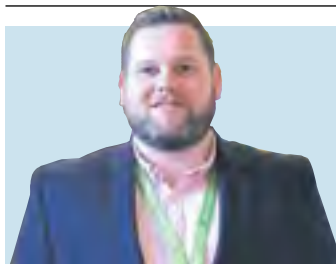
Families living the Catholic faith today can find joy in the words of Friedrich Schiller, German poet and dramatist, when he says that "anyone who has heard the Easter proclamation can no longer go around with a tragic expression on [their] face and lead the humourless existence of a [person] who has no hope".

Or, as a priest said to me recently during an anecdote about one of his old university lecturers: "If you have read the Gospel, inform your face".

But, in a practical sense, what does this mean for families? Does it entail a radical alteration of the devotional or spiritual reality of family life? No, on the contrary, to paraphrase St Francis de Sales when speaking on matters of devotion, "people in family situations do not need to lead lives akin to monks or nuns".

Devotion

True devotion "does not destroy anything at all". Rather, "it perfects and fulfils all things". When families truly live those three important words 'please', 'thank you' and 'sorry' they become spaces utterly devoted to God. This is not always easy. Rather, similar to the Gospel, these words at times present themselves as being profoundly challenging. Yet families can



David Kennedy

garner strength from the fact that the risen Christ is present not only during the good times, but also during the most difficult times.



When my cousin Sarah tragically lost her life at the age of 19 in a car crash on her way to work as a student nurse, it was difficult for me to see any hope or meaning in life. Yet, as traumatic as this loss and experience has been for our family, my Easter faith helped me to find hope, and to recognise that in passing from this earthly existence to the next, Sarah and all those family members who have passed away in the hope of the resurrection, have not stopped being part of our family.

In fact, every day as we remember and talk about them it becomes a form of prayer.

I find hope and strength in the fact that now they are there looking out for us in Heaven,

and in this way, they are still very much part of our family life. As a young person who is preparing for marriage, this point is particularly significant for both my fiancée Fiona and I as we prepare to start our married life together.

We find hope in the fact that those closest to us who have passed away are looking out for us and guarding us through this joyful and hope-filled time in our lives.

As I look towards starting my own family, there are aspects of my family of origin that I hope to carry forward. My grandparents showed me that it is possible to nurture the natural ebbs and flows between faith and daily life. Growing up on a farm, I find that it is the simple things that I remember. Every day the Angelus would be said in the kitchen at teatime and anytime I would spend the night your prayers would be said before you went to sleep.

Some rituals were more notably distinctive such as the blessing of the cattle with holy water before the mart or in the spring when we would almost leap for joy at the sight of the fields again after the harsh winter months.

“Growing up on a farm, I find that it is the simple things that I remember”

This experience of the extraordinary in the ordinary has left a lasting impression on me. In his prayer for grandparents, Pope Benedict XVI speaks of grandparents as "pillars" of the family and the Church. I was lucky enough to receive the most wonderful gift of all – to grow up feeling the

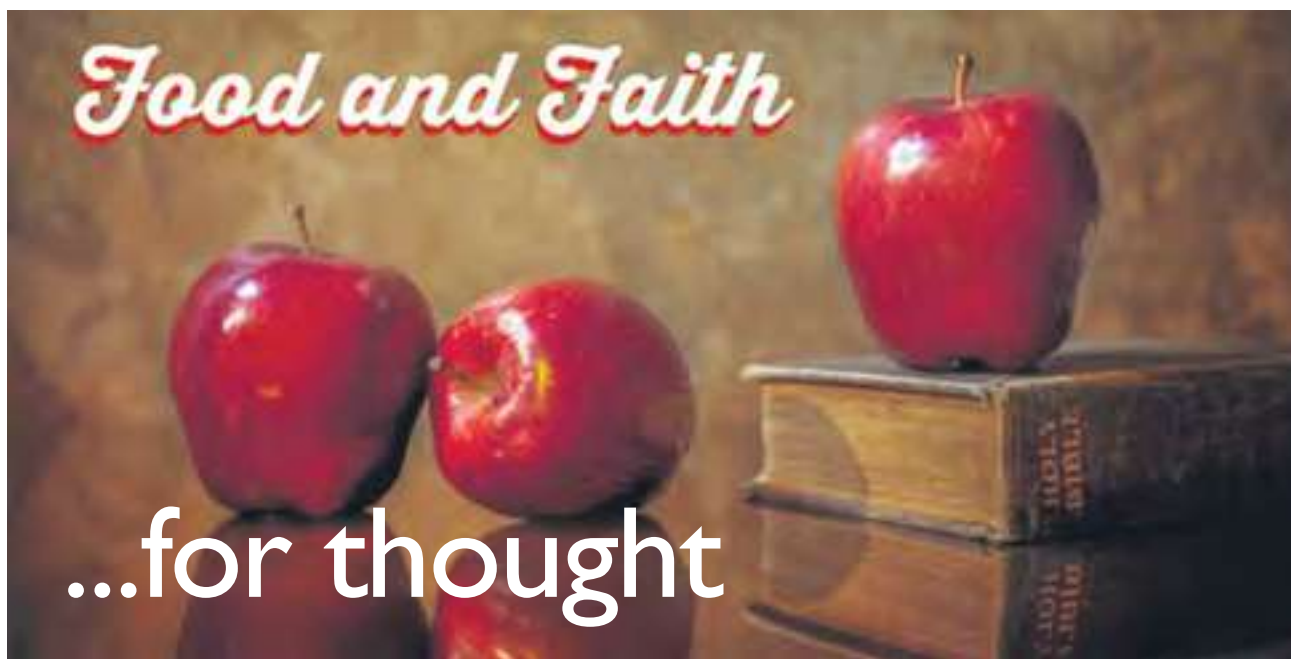
support of these pillars and to have parents who always did their best to give us a caring and loving home that was full of hope.

“We are all only keepers, we keep the place as best we can for the next generation”

Yet, the love that we experience in family life must extend beyond the family towards the care and protection of creation. We must not forget that there will be no family for the earth if we do not take it upon ourselves to look after the gift given to us by God. Here, the wise words that my dad said to me as we walked through the fields at home come to mind, "we are all only keepers [Davie], we keep the place as best we can for the next generation". In this statement the words of Pope Francis at the World Meeting of Families 2015 are reaffirmed – "in families there is always light".

During these months of preparation for the World Meeting of Families 2018, parishes around the country are encouraging families to reflect on and discuss authentic Christian hope within the context of family life. It's a call we shouldn't be afraid to answer.

David Kennedy is a researcher with the Catholic Schools Partnership and the Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools. David is also working with the World Meeting of Families 2018 as part of their outreach to Catholic schools. For more see www.amoris.ie



Creating a context for Christian conversations is vital, writes Colm Fitzpatrick

Tackling the new surge of apathy towards the Christian faith in our modern world, a dynamic evangelical programme is hoping to put the message of the Gospels back on the radar.

The Alpha course, originally developed by the Anglican Church in the late 1970's, was a course which taught the basic tenets of the Christian faith for church members, but has now evolved into a missionary outreach model introducing the faith for those interested in it.

Dominic Perrem [pictured], Faith Alive Coordinator of Alpha in Ireland, has been involved in the organisation for over 10 years, and even used it as a tool to reach out to and introduce students to Christianity during his time in university.

"I was raised in a strong Catholic family. My family were living out their Faith in quite a dynamic way as they were members of a charismatic group, The Community of Nazareth, a lay community that make a commitment to one another", Dominic says, adding that they prayed together.

During his studies in university, he struggled at times to maintain his Christian faith, which was challenging to sustain given the secular setting he was exposed to.

"It was difficult to hold onto my Faith, the environment is very counter the Faith. It's tempting to

lead a materialistic and hedonistic life," he explains.

Despite these enticements, his faith grew stronger and he began sharing it with others, eventually being offered a position in Alpha.

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith, with each talk focusing on a different question about Faith that is designed to create conversation. The unique aspect of the course is that there is no specific or formal setting where it takes place, as the location of the sessions can range from cafés and churches to universities and homes.

Most sessions begin with a meal because it is an effective and interpersonal way to share and engage with others. The talks which follow the food are delivered over about 11 weeks and unpack the basics of Christianity, with questions asked such as, 'Who is Jesus?' or 'How does God guide us'.

“The pillars of a normative family life have been taken away from youth”

"It's about having a long term vision, building up a sense of community, a shared life together," Dominic says.

"You're not just worshipping on a Sunday. You actually get to know these people, and share time and maybe meals with them. You share your life with them."

The informal and interactive structure of Alpha is one of the primary reasons why it's so effective, says Dominic, as it allows those interested in the faith to relax and feel more comfortable in asking questions.

"The reason why Alpha functions well is that you are inviting people into a situation where they're being hosted.

It's very hard to not let natural boundaries break down during a meal. This means you're ready to talk and be open.

"It's about getting someone to realise that they're safe in a place where they can ask 'stupid' questions. The meal is crucial. It opens up the whole area of hospitality," Dominic explains.

The course provides a context for conversations to happen, and carries out, according to Dominic, the

message of the Great Commission where the apostles are told to go out and make "disciples of all nations". This is particularly important as "secularism is a huge challenge", which creates a barrier between how the faith is perceived and how "wonderful" it can be.

Although there are many positive aspects to Dominic's job, his favourite part is experiencing the impact and change that the course has on others.

"We have Alpha in different forms. The Alpha Youth version is in a lot of schools. There's so much stress among the youth now. The pillars of a normative family life have been taken away from them. They are stressed and confused.

Relief

"There is an absolute relief and joy which can enter their lives through the work of God," Dominic says, adding that he loves hearing stories of conversions from teachers and students.

Alongside these moments of enrichment, there are also various challenges in his type of ministry. Very often however, these difficulties don't arise from non-believers, but from other Christians who are sceptical of Alpha's work.

"The most challenging part is where you're trying to appeal to someone who doesn't want to trust you. I work as a presenter on Spirit Radio and the only complaints you'll ever see is from Christians."

In Dominic's experience, at times Christian's "don't want to listen to someone's idea of evangelisation", despite the fact that it's a central value in biblical and Church teaching.

The course is a tool that can be used for everyone and teaches them the core principles of Christianity. Once these fundamental tenets have been taught, those intrigued and inspired by the Faith can be directed to more specific Catholic resources.

Dominic's parting message for all Catholics is to start giving new things a go. We are "expected to be a perennial presence in the country and culture", but this is not the case obviously, he says.

"All of us in our parishes have a responsibility to make a way forward."

For more information about Alpha and how to get involved, see: <https://alpha.org/>

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Toddlers are criminals. At least they would be if they were not below the age of criminal responsibility. If they were held to the same standards as the rest of us, the police would be overwhelmed with reports of toddler-related public disorder, affray, criminal damage, riot and assault. If charged with such crimes, most toddlers could credibly enter a plea of 'guilty but insane', which they would do before firing their water bottle at the judge and demanding crisps.

Luckily for toddlers, they are also as cute as buttons. Yet they have a remarkable ability to switch between the state of adorable cherub and miniature malefactor in a matter of seconds. One moment a toddler in the playground is smiling sweetly and giggling with their little friend, the next they whack them on the head and push them off the slide, just to see what happens.

Toddlerhood is undoubtedly the most violent stage of human life: biting, kicking and scratching – known to the criminal justice system as assault occasioning actual bodily harm – are daily occurrences in preschools.

Toddlers are cunning, too. They operate a kind of protection racket to get what they want. When a tired toddler sweetly asks a parent for a treat in a busy supermarket, the subtext is clear: give me the lollipop or in five seconds I'm going to be lying on the floor screaming at 100 decibels, and you're going to have to drag me kicking and screaming out of this place with five bags of shopping in the other hand, with all the other adults tutting and saying "bad parent". Is that how you want this situation to play out?

“Toddlers can't cope, their circuits short out”

Parenting toddlers is a tricky business, and each one is different. As much as we know that staying calm, and positively reinforcing good behaviour is best, they can frazzle the most zen-like

parent. I remember having just painted a wall in our house. A few days later, I looked up to see our then two-year-old with a marker drawing a massive squiggle on the wall. I approached her crossly, when her eyes went big and tearful, "I was just writing my name," she said, "look". I looked again at the three-foot squiggle. It was a giant 'E', the first letter of her name.

She had been practicing writing her name in preschool and was so proud, she wanted to show me, and to record her brilliant writing in a prominent place, just as her older brother and sister have their art on the wall.

Angry

It was hard to stay too angry for long. Many toddler misdemeanours come from their lust for life, from being so enthused in what they're doing, that the rules are forgotten.

At the early stages of toddlerhood, their thinking outpaces their ability to speak, which causes frustration. They don't understand the rules of their society and must experiment to learn where those boundaries are. Their rapidly developing minds and increasingly complex social interactions run ahead of their emotional maturity. They can't cope, their circuits short out, the world seems impossible for a moment, and so the bowl of cereal is smashed on the floor. When you have biscuits in the cupboard, but won't give them one, it seems an impossible unkindness and injustice to them. Long term considerations such as the effect on their teeth or health don't figure for them, naturally.

They are making their own way in a complex world for the first time, at developing at a pace that is frightening for them. They deserve our sympathy more than anything, especially when they are tantruming, as that's when they are most distressed. Even if they are mini-criminals some of the time, they also have a sure-fire way to get a full pardon for all past crimes: they just look up at you with those big eyes and say, "I love you, dad", and all is forgotten.



The ups and downs of

FAITH

The poet, Rumi, suggests that we live with a deep secret that sometimes we know, then not, and then know again. That's a good description of faith. Faith isn't something you nail down and possess once and for all. It goes this way: sometimes you walk on water and sometimes you sink like a stone.

The Gospels testify to this, most graphically, in the story of Peter walking on the water: Jesus asks Peter to step out of a boat and walk across the water to him. At first it works, Peter, unthinking, walks on the water, then becoming more conscious of what he is doing he sinks like a stone.

We see this too in the massive fluctuations in belief that Jesus' disciples experience during the "40 days" after the resurrection. Jesus would appear to them, they would trust he was alive, then he would disappear again and they would lose their trust and go back to the lives they'd led before they met him, fishing and the sea.

Narratives

The post-resurrection narratives illustrate the dynamics of faith pretty clearly: you believe it. Then you distrust. Then you believe it again. At least, so it seems on the surface.

We see another example of this in the story of Peter betraying Jesus. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells us that there is a secret which separates those who have faith from those who



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

don't: to you is given the secret of the kingdom, but to those outside everything exists in parables. That sounds like Gnosticism, that is, the idea that there's a secret code somewhere (e.g. *The Di Vinci Code*) that some know and some don't and you are in or out depending upon whether you know it or not.

“Faith and eternal life are not something you possess so that they can be stored and guarded like grain in a barn”

But that's not what Jesus is saying here. His secret is an open one, accessible to all: the meaning of the cross. Anyone who understands this will understand the rest of what Jesus means, and vice versa.

We are in or out, depending upon whether or not we can grasp and accept the meaning of Jesus' death.

But, being in or out isn't a once and for all thing. Rather, we move in and out! After Peter denied Jesus, we're told, "he went outside". This is intended both literally and metaphorically. After his denial, Peter stepped

outside a gate into the night to be away from the crowd, but he also stepped outside the meaning of his faith.

Our faith also bounces up and down for another reason, we misunderstand how it works. Take for example the rich young man who approaches Jesus with this question: "Good master, what must I do to possess eternal life?"

That's an interesting choice of a verb: to possess. Eternal life as a possession? Jesus' gentle correction of the young man's verb

teaches us something vital about faith. Jesus says to him: "Now if you wish to receive eternal life", meaning that faith and eternal life are not something you possess so that they can be stored and guarded like grain in a barn, money in a bank, or jewelry in a box.

They can only be received, like the air we breathe.

Air is free, is everywhere, and our health doesn't depend upon its presence, for it's always there, but rather upon the state of our lungs (and mood) at any given moment. Sometimes we breathe deeply and appreciatively; but, sometimes, for various reasons, we breathe badly, gasp for breath, are out of breath, or are choking for air. Like breathing, faith too has its modalities.

And so we need to understand our faith not as a possession or as something we achieve

once and for all, which can be lost only by some huge, dramatic, life-changing shift inside of us, where we move from belief to atheism. "Faith isn't some constant state of belief,"

suggests Abraham Heschel, "but rather a sort of faithfulness, a loyalty to the moments when we've had faith."

And that teases out something else: to be real, faith need not be explicitly religious, but can express itself simply in faithfulness, loyalty, and trust.

“For me, Faith involves staring into the abyss, seeing that it is dark and full of the unknown – and being okay with that”

Fox example, in a powerful memoir written as she as dying of cancer, *The Bright Hour*, Annie [Nina] Riggs shares her strong, but implicit, faith as she calmly faces her death. Not given to explicit religious faith, she is challenged at one point by a nurse who says to her: "Faith, you gotta have it, and you're gonna need it!"

The comment triggers a reflection on her part about what she does or doesn't believe in. She comes to peace with the question and her own stake in it with these words: "For me, Faith involves staring into the abyss, seeing that it is dark and full of the unknown – and being okay with that."

We need to trust the unknown, knowing that we will be okay, no matter that on a given day we might feel like we are walking on water or sinking like a stone.

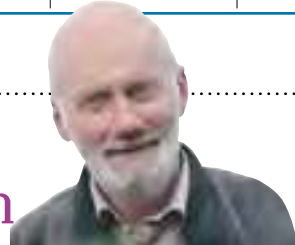
Faith is deeper than our feelings.



Nina Riggs.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Court decision is a bonanza for chat shows

On Tuesday night of last week the Catholic Bishops made a significant intervention in the Eighth Amendment debate, issuing a humane and measured statement. On the **Nine News** (RTE 1) that night, Archbishop Eamon Martin expressed dismay that the right to life of unborn children could be "obliterated" from the Constitution.

On Wednesday's **Morning Ireland** Bishop Alan McGuckian stressed that the unborn were "one with us" in common humanity and that we were in danger of losing our "clarity" on the matter.

On Wednesday night, following the depressing Supreme Court judgement, the **Tonight** programme (TV 3) featured Maria Steen (Iona Institute) and Peadar Tóibín (Sinn Féin) who ably presented the pro-life position. Donal Lynch (*Sunday Independent*), arguing for repeal, said it was a "fate worse than death to be born to someone who doesn't want you". Worse than death? He accepted that in abortion "yes, a life does end... a nascent life does end". There was some unhelpful interrupting going on between Noone and Steen and presenter Matt Cooper upbraided Steen for this, though Noone had made the first interruption.

Dr Peter Boylan seems to be guest of choice (or pro-



Matt Cooper co-hosts *Tonight* on TV3.

choice) for the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk) on this issue. On the Thursday morning's show Kenny asked Boylan about that day's poll showing 70% of GPs unwilling to apply abortion pills, and both Kenny and Boylan were quick to question how representative the poll was.

It was largely a soft interview (shock!) but when Boylan suggested that 'surgical abortions as described by the anti-repealers will not be considered in this jurisdiction' Kenny asked if he wouldn't therefore support these being prohibited. No, said Boylan, it might very occasionally be necessary. Hmm...

On **Today with Seán O'Rourke** (RTE Radio 1) on Friday, obstetrician Dr John Monahan said it wasn't practicing medicine or healthcare to abort the healthy unborn baby of a healthy pregnant mother. He outlined the huge resource implications for this proposed 'GP-led service'. Despite the doctors' poll, Dr Mark Murphy of Doctors for Choice said there was a huge number of doctors willing to do the abortions and spoke of the need for abortion in cases of failed contraception.

Former President Mary McAleese upset a few apple carts last week with her attack on the Catholic Church's atti-

tude to women. In a sense she's the gift that keeps on giving to anti-Catholic elements in the media.

On various shows, many commentators (including several liberal Catholic priests) agreed with her but weren't happy about the tone.

Her challenge to the Church to state what it was going to do to be more inclusive of women if it wasn't going to entertain their ordination merited serious discussion but her "empire of misogyny" and "codology" remarks came across as ill-considered and dismissive of dialogue. It came across as if she'd said "I don't understand this theology so it must be codology". In one clip she added "I'm not even going to be bothered arguing it".

Fr Brian McKeivitt went to bat for orthodoxy on Thursday night's **Prime Time** (a brave move on International Women's Day), while, shortly



Pat Kenny.

PICK OF THE WEEK

GIVE UP YER AUL' SINS

RTÉ 1, St Patrick's Day, 11.55am

Charming animated version of the Story Of St Patrick.

SAINTS OF EUROPE

EWTN, St Patrick's Day, 5.30pm

Fr Bernard McGuckian, SJ, travels to the Hill of Tara in Ireland to explore the life of St. Patrick and his impact on the world.

EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND

Channel 4, Sunday, March 18, 6.30am

The family meets the school counsellor and Fr Hubley to uncover what is to blame for the constant bickering between them.

afterwards, Jackie Ascough of Catholic Comment played that role on **Tonight** (TV3). Ivan Yates suggested to author Martina Devlin that McAleese's remarks had been "deliberately offensive" while Matt Cooper let Devlin interrupt Ascough on several occasions – the opposite of his attitude to Maria Steen the night before.

Accuracy

Ms McAleese was interviewed last Monday by a well-informed and incisive host on his **Today With Seán O'Rourke** show. As regards the "strength" of her language she said she was just trying to be "factually accurate", but inflammatory metaphor is hardly the path to factual accuracy! On Church teaching on women's ordination she said "I have to accept that" and later "I absolutely

accept the authority of the Pope". She told the heart-breaking story of the abuse of a brother of hers – emotional and unexpected. In relation to the Eighth Amendment she was still thinking and reading, with no decision as to how she would vote. She said she was "strongly pro-life", but also strongly influenced by Dr Peter Boylan and Dr Rhona Mahony (not by pro-life obstetricians?).

She felt the Eighth, which she had supported, might not be doing effectively what it was intended to do, and seemed inclined to distinguish between the repeal vote and the legislation that would follow. Oh dear.

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Aubrey Malone

Film

Enigmatic homelessness on the streets of Toronto

Unless (15A)

What would make a normal young girl from a privileged home in Toronto drop out of college to live on the streets without telling anyone why? That's the central conundrum surrounding this captivating moodpiece from Alan Giltsenan which begins – appropriately – with a song from Canada's prime avatar of angst and alienation, Leonard Cohen.

For the next 80 minutes Giltsenan pans his camera around the neon-lit streets of Toronto where Norah (Hanah Gross) sits astride a cardboard sign with the word 'goodness' written on it in freezing temperatures.



Very good
★★★★★

Hanah Gross stars in *Unless*.

She inhabits the pavement outside a department store, gazing blankly ahead of her as she resists all of her family's attempts to persuade her to come home or even engage her in conversation. All they get from her is the merest flicker of a smile – if they're lucky.

What trauma has caused

this rejection of everything she's known up to now? When it's finally revealed in the penultimate scene, all the pieces of the jigsaw coalesce. Until that moment this is an enigmatic foray into a world torn asunder by Nora's uncharacteristic – some would say self-indulgent – transmogrification.

That great character actress Catherine Keener plays her mother Reta. Reta is a writer who documents her pain in a poignant voiceover as she searches for that 'moment of grace' that will explain her daughter's inscrutable behaviour.

Significance

This is a must-see film. The storyline is thin – and the significance of the 'goodness' sign is never explained – but under Giltsenan's dreamy direction it morphs into a kind of symphonic minuet, a tender exposition of the manner in which, in 'a world of maybes', a freakish transposition of events can change a life irrevocably.

Nobody puts a foot wrong in the cast. Great care is taken with every expression, every gesture, every line of dialogue. Ordinary life goes on around her as Norah lives her extraordinary. Meanwhile we await some kind of epiphany or catharsis.

When it comes, Giltsenan underplays it which I felt was a mistake. Joan now speaks for the first time in the film. I thought she should have done so emotionally, even hysterically, to give her performance the traction it needed to avoid it becoming too linear.

I also felt the film could have used a scene where all the family sat around a table discussing what should be done about her instead of

their separate excursions into her life, documented piecemeal by Giltsenan.

But these are small caveats. *Unless* draws you hypnotically into its minimalistic web before the shocking finale. This may prove disturbing for younger viewers, which accounts for the 15A certificate. There's also a sexual scene which draws a tear from Norah – ironically, one should mention, for it's one of the few times she shows any emotion before her 'recovery', if such it can be called.

This is a classy undertaking from a country renowned for such unconventional odysseys into the convoluted map of the human heart.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The many ways of Faith in modern times

What We Talk About When We Talk About Faith

by Peter Stanford
(Hodder & Stoughton, £14.99)

Emily Keyes

Though religion implies community, it is easy to forget that religion is also an individual pursuit, with each practitioner possessing their own understanding of faith.

This is what Peter Stanford, a long-time journalist for the *Catholic Herald* with a love of interviewing, highlights in his new book, which is a collection of interviews with subjects of differing religious viewpoints. He includes interviews from both the pious and agnostic, Christian and Jewish – all in a successful attempt to remind readers that faith, both the word and the concept, means something different to everyone.

Perhaps my favourite of these interviews is with Sr Wendy Beckett, the Carmelite nun best known for her TV art programmes, which saw her explaining the central messages in classical art and what they could tell viewers about human nature.

“He reminds us that Faith does not have one single definition; it is specific to every person, and he encourages us to find our own Faith”



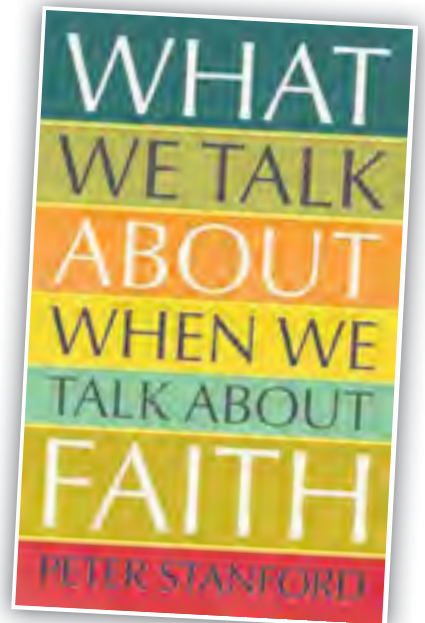
Sr Wendy notes that while these series were popular with non-religious viewers, for her, they were always acutely religious. She says: “I was talking about God for those who didn't know him. In talking about beauty and truth, you are always talking about him.”

Stanford also includes an interview with Delia Smith, arguably England's most beloved chef. While

famous for her cookery books and courses, the Delia we meet among the pages of this book is a spiritual, meditative person, showing us a different, but just as relatable side of her. Delia is beloved because she makes cooking fast, easy and low-stress, and she applies this easy, low-key attitude to her own practice of faith, too.

A churchgoer, she also incor-

porates an hour of silence into her busy days where she can continue to develop and depend her relationship with God, something that even the busiest of us could fit into our schedules. Reading about the religious practice of this paragon of popular culture reminds us that even when we define our lives by our profession, we can still leave room for religion.



With this book, Stanford inspires us to explore our own individual faith, finding the ways to practice our beliefs that work best for our lives and our needs.

Definition

He reminds us that Faith does not have one single definition; it is specific to every person, and he encourages us to find our own Faith using the inspiration and stories from his many interviewees, who are themselves on their own, life-long spiritual journeys.

There is no perfect way to piety; we each can only do our best to remain faithful, and Stanford encourages us to find out what our “best” looks like.

John Redmond: New light on a great Irish leader

John Redmond. Selected letters and memoranda, 1880-1918

edited by Dermot Meleady (Merrion Press, €29.99/£26.99)

Ian d'Alton

On March 6, 1918, John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, died – “a broken-hearted man”, in his own words – at the relatively young age of 61 years.

History was in the process of overtaking him, and what he stood for, as Sinn Fein powered up the outside lane.

It was perhaps wholly appropriate that his last major political engagement was with the Irish Convention – that sepia-tinted gathering of Irishmen in 1917-18 with its bishops and archbishops, every gradation of the peerage, sullen northern unionists and a gaggle of county council chairmen politically out of step with the country's mood.

Less than a year after his death, Redmond's party was no more and the first Dáil was a radically different assembly to that which had met inconclusively in Trinity College.

The Convention, Redmond's last



hurrah, summed up what he was about – conciliation, attempts to square circles, the desire to keep Ireland united and self-governing, but also to remain part of the important economic and political nexus of Empire, and to construct a conservative, Victorian Ireland. And perhaps the best tribute to Redmond – although it is now not often admitted or acknowledged – is that is what Ireland (north and

south) broadly got after 1923. Redmond had had the potential to deliver without the violence of the 1916-21 period, though it is moot whether even if Home Rule had been put in place, he might have still have ended up as the Kerensky of Irish politics.

The ‘considerations of honour’, as he put it in relation to his initial support for the Great War, cut little ice with the revolutionaries of the ‘vivid faces’ generation.

“This is a well-put-together, coherent view of Redmond the man and the politician. It repays dipping into”

Dermot Meleady is Redmond's foremost modern biographer, and the author of *Redmond: the Parnellite* (2007), and *John Redmond: The National Leader* (2013, 2018). The author's deep and special knowledge of his subject is evident in the judicious and illuminating selection of correspondence (to, from and about Redmond) and memoranda, covering the nearly 40 years of

his political career. The personal, however, is not ignored.

The first document from Redmond is a telegram to his mother in November 1880 – “Father is in Heaven died in my arms yesterday” – and the last is about making “slender provision” for his family when he died. In between is a cornucopia that gives us an insight to Redmond's character, politics and personal relationships.

Insightful

Meleady writes an insightful short introduction in which, through Redmond's papers, he refers to Redmond's courteousness, businesslike style and self-discipline.

His relationship with the Catholic Church, especially after the Parnell split, is laid out here; his second marriage to a Protestant does not seem to have affected what Meleady calls his “personal Catholicism infused with a positively Spartan sense of religious duty...”

Meleady takes on those who criticize Redmond for not holding to what Ronan Fanning characterized as “the nationalist delusion that the partition of

Ireland was avoidable”.

He points out that O'Connell, Gladstone and Parnell never had to face up to the issue properly, since none had carried the Home Rule project as far as had Redmond. In that success lay the seeds of failure, as he came up against an intransigent Ulster, notably in the Convention.

This is a well-put-together, coherent view of Redmond the man and the politician. It repays dipping into. Many significant and not so significant characters grace its pages, from Alice Stopford Green to Asquith, Parnell to William O'Brien, Carson to Churchill. Meleady keeps the whole rattling along, with short but judicious explanatory inserts which ensure that the reader is not perplexed.

Two of Redmond's closest colleagues were John Dillon and T.P. O'Connor – not always on his side. They feature heavily in these pages. On April 6, 1918, Dillon wrote to O'Connor about Redmond's death, in a phrase that still resonates today – “...his fate is a terrible warning to all Irish leaders who have to deal with British statesmen...”

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.

An Irish childhood half a century ago

A Time of Our Lives: How We Grew Up From the 1940s to the 1960s

by Gerald Rice
(Order from A Time of Our Lives Ltd., 11 Mornington Green, Trim, Co. Meath; €10 + €2.95 p&p; e-mail: atimeofourlives@gmail.com)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is an unusual autobiography which will resonate with Gerald Rice's contemporaries both in Ireland and the UK.

He describes in extraordinary detail the milieu in which he spent his childhood and early manhood. He was born in a farm worker's cottage near Drumaness in Co. Down on July 7, 1943. The family transferred to Birmingham city three years later. They resided in a house next to a garage, where Gerald's father worked as a foreman.

Following primary school Gerald attended St Philip's Grammar School, which had been founded by John Henry Newman. Priests from the Birmingham Oratory served on the Board of Governors and taught in the school. He pens a glowing tribute to their benign influence on the school and the surrounding areas.

Gerald served as an altar server in the local parish and recalls escapades in which he and the other altar servers were involved and their intense rivalry with other boys in the church choir.

Trainee teacher

On leaving St Philip's he spent a year as a trainee teacher in a local school. Then he attended and graduated from St Mary's Teacher Training College, Strawberry Hill, London. Thereafter he spent most of his life teaching, including a stint in Saudi Arabia before taking up a career in business.

Gerald provides an interesting survey of his reading during his formative years. There were the comics – the *Rover*, the *Hotspur* – but his favourite read was the *Eagle*.

“Gerald provides an interesting survey of his reading during his formative years”

Edited by a Church of England minister, it promoted values. He enjoyed *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Just William* books about a ten-year-old always getting into scrapes. He read stories about British icons such as Nelson and Churchill and even about the exploits of Field Marshall Rommel.

The *Daily Mirror* was the newspaper in the Rice house. Unlike its



competitors it was not attached to a political party. Then, unlike today's tabloids, it was not driven by stories and gossip about celebrities and provided real news. Moreover, it campaigned for justice and proper treatment for all, especially the working class.



Newspapers and magazines in the 1950s vied with each other in making predictions. They predicted driverless cars, trains travelling at 200 mph and rocket planes flying from London to Australia in five hours! They also had a lot to say about the future exploration of the moon and the planets.

Gerald reminisces also about events. On the home front there was the austerity and rationing after World War II which was more severe than that experienced on the continent. And there was the smog, a feature of every winter. The Cold War ensured the continuation of National Service and almost a million Britons remained in the various services. Britain's aspirations to be a leader in

aviation crashed with the ill-fated De Havilland Comet [pictured].

Gerald recalls the impact on him and his contemporaries of the Korean war, the war in Vietnam particularly the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the *debâcle* on the Suez Canal which put an end to Britain's imperial dreams and fantasies.

“He fondly remembers the Festival of Britain and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II which promised to usher in a glorious future”

All of Gerald's memories do not concern wars and their tragic consequences. He fondly remembers the Festival of Britain and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II which promised to usher in a glorious future.

Then there were hikes in Ireland and Germany and an unsuccessful attempt to 'go around the world' which ended in the Sahara with some fascinating exchanges with members of the French Foreign Legion.

Gerald says he was "dumped" by no fewer than two blondes. However, it seems he did have some success in his romantic life, as is attested to by the fact that his book is dedicated to "a girl with nut-brown hair"...

The World of Books

By the books editor

Britain's Irish question continues to confound

There is a striking phrase quoted in Dr Ian d'Alton's review across the page. The author of the book in question takes on those who criticize Redmond for not holding to what Ronan Fanning characterized as 'the nationalist delusion that the partition of Ireland was avoidable'.

Meleady considers the situation of O'Connell, Gladstone and Parnell, the great leaders of the 19th Century. O'Connell had to face a Protestant establishment, but at the date of his active life Belfast had not emerged as a great industrial city to rival Manchester or Glasgow.

It was this industrial power, supposedly derived from the "protestant work ethic", that led to the emergence of a new kind of Protestant Ulster leader from the 1870s onward as Belfast grew in influence through its ship building and other industries, unrivalled in the South.

Fuelled by wealth and inspired by imperial ambition, Ulster said "No". And in 1922 that was enough. The Irish question passed for a time out of English politics, or rather out of Conservative politics. All the problems of the past seemed to be assuaged by the Good Friday Agreement.

But the Brexit revolution has brought them back again. The "Irish question" has returned with a vengeance.

Ignorant

What has been surprising is that the British Conservative and Unionist Parity which Mrs May leads seems so appallingly ignorant of history to which it looks for justification

Take Jacob Rees-Mogg [pictured], who is what the British press call a "Roman Catholic". Of course his religious persuasion has led many here to admire him, as they seem to admire any right wing Catholic who has a chance of power anywhere.

But his comments over the last months that Mr Rees-Mogg is totally ignorant of Ireland, or (which may really be the case) intentionally misleading to his even more ill-informed English audience. But how could he be otherwise he was only born in 1969, the year the recent Troubles began?

"The nationalist delusion" over the Border is not now an Irish delusion, but an English one. The campaigners for Brexit have had decades to work on the ways and means by which they repute the plan could be carried out.

It is astonishing to see how what is very clearly a menacing furor is being manipulated not in the best interest of anyone or anything, except personal advancement. This is true of Rees-Mogg. But even truer of Boris Johnson. Irish people may see him as sort of clown; a Tory of Turkish descent who has managed with an Eton education to advance himself into the heart of British politics opposing migration.

But long term readers of the press with good memories will recall that having been fired from *The Times* (where he got a job through the influence of his father, a former editor) for the serious journalistic sin of inventing a quotation, which he attributed to his own god-father.

Brussels

He was sent to Brussels by the *Daily Telegraph*. There he is said to have invented another great lie, the ever useful myth that the bureaucrats there were going to impose on Europe "straight cucumbers", making illegal the twisted ones enjoyed by the English. This was an example of bureaucratic Europe. But it was still a lie, but a lasting one, for which he did not get fired.

He has seen in the Brexit adventure his means of getting into Downing Street. He too is happy to misrepresent the Border situation, indeed the long established facts of Irish history, for his own end.

But these men are all Oxford graduates, men who are proud of being able not merely to read a book (which as Dr Leavis taught us is not an easy thing). They are men who appeal to history, but only when it can be manipulated. For them all the eminent and energetic historians who have re-explored Irish/British history have laboured in vain.

I mentioned Dr Leavis above. But I suspect that a book closer to the heart of Rees-Mogg, Johnson and other Brexiters, might be a classic book which we may yet see adopted as a new "statesman's manual", William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

Leisure time



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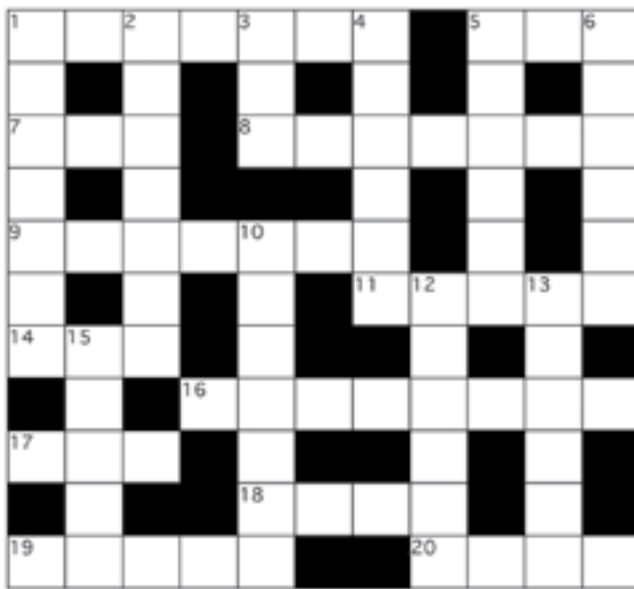
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 223



ACROSS

- 1 This American city is sometimes called 'The Big Apple' (3,4)
- 5 Take a seat (3)
- 7 You might use this word when speaking to your father (3)
- 8 You may use its leaves in a salad (7)
- 9 Against the law (7)
- 11 With time to spare (5)
- 14 The Creator, Who lives in Heaven (3)
- 16 Ice is like this; so is a banana skin (7)
- 17 Gobbled (3)
- 18 Popular flower (4)
- 19 Cross, very annoyed (5)

20 Certain (4)

DOWN

- 1 Signalling 'yes' with your head (7)
- 2 Moved like a duck (7)
- 3 Harry Potter's pet, Hedwig, is this kind of bird (3)
- 4 You boil water in it (6)
- 5 Put it under a cup (6)
- 6 Two tens make this number (6)
- 10 Where you can look at paintings and other works of art (7)
- 12 You might pick them in an orchard (6)
- 13 Bigger (6)
- 15 Many times (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.341

Across – 1 Congregate 6 Farm 10 Mason 11 Apple tart 12 Saunter 15 Litre 17 Etna 18 Cage 19 Cadet 21 Chemise 23 Nacho 24 Stab 25 Rhea 26 Miser 28 Tartare sauce 33 Stud poker 34 Kenya 35 Deed 36 Fallen idol

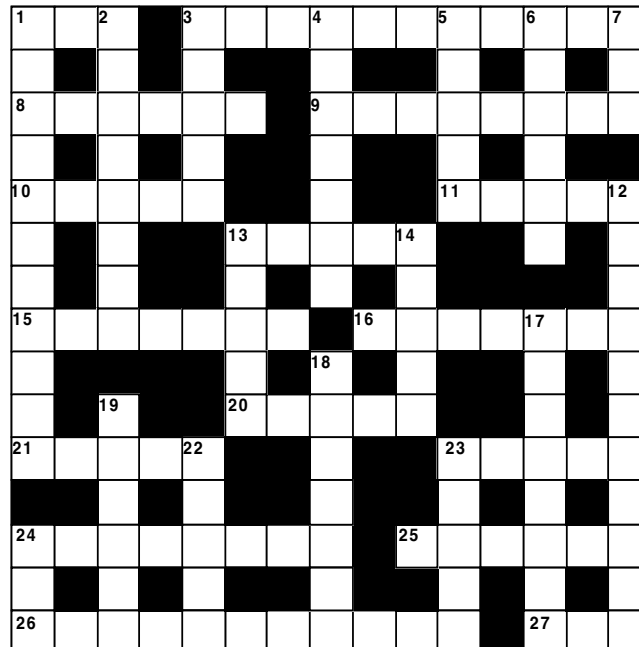
Down – 1 Camp 2 Nostalgic 3 Run-in 4 Glare 5 Taps 7 Apart 8 Mother-to-be 9 Replace 13 Tosh 14 Red meat 16 Economised 20 Dethroned 21 Corrupt 22 Soar 29 April 30 Token 31 Okra 32 Wail

CHILDREN'S No.222

Across – 1 Fairy tales 6 Rooms 8 Sped 11 Mailbox 12 Pray 13 Night 17 Alice 19 Handbag 20 Eagle 20 Cygnet
Down – 1 Fireman 2 Ironing 3 Yes 4 Lips 5 Save 7 Toy 9 Porridge 10 Day 14 Italy 15 Table 16 Cage 18 Even

Crossword

Gordius 342



ACROSS

- 1 Rudimentary shoot (3)
- 3 Wary, discreet (11)
- 8 Jewish set of laws responsible in part for a monumental muddle (6)
- 9 & 10 Push north on soil to find a terrestrial paradise (6,2,5)
- 11 It's not nice to point with a pen (5)
- 13 Aches (5)
- 15 Injuries caused by a novice, accompanied by strange noises (7)
- 16 & 13d Breed of horse favoured by a boxer from East Anglia? (7,5)
- 20 Drags out part of a cha-cha-cha (Ulster style) (5)
- 21 Did he write about the care of children on the USS Enterprise? (5)
- 23 The organ of intelligence (5)
- 24 Fee paid in advance to a lawyer, etc (8)
- 25 Portray just ninety-nine in the department (6)
- 26 Enjoy greyhound racing, but lose one's sensibility? (2,2,3,4)
- 27 Many independent researchers initially identify an old Russian space station

(3)

DOWN

- 1 Insects defining the aerodynamic properties of dairy produce? (11)
- 2 Belt of calms near the equator (8)
- 3 Symptom of a cold (5)
- 4 Be firm with religious clothing when you share accommodation (7)
- 5 & 18d Dud hens never can amount to this many! (5,7)
- 6 How one enters a chap's name (6)
- 7 Stannic metal (3)
- 12 With ire, monks try to rebuild a British cathedral (4,7)
- 13 See 16 across
- 14 Rejects with contempt (5)
- 17 Being a living thing, the instrument is grand (8)
- 18 See 5 down
- 19 Catbird? (6)
- 22 Artist Gustav has spilt milk at the junction (5)
- 23 Lagers, perhaps (5)
- 24 It may get under your feet in the heart of Bruges (3)

Sudoku Corner

223

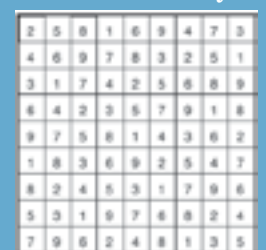
Easy



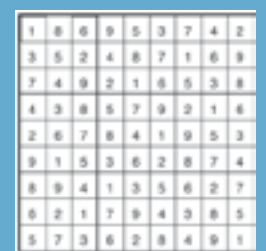
Hard



Last week's Easy 222



Last week's Hard 222





Fr Bernard Healy

Notebook

A bit of planning can help deliver a worthy homily

POPE FRANCIS has me worried! At a recent Public Audience he reminded preachers to prepare homilies well and told us that they “should not last more than 10 minutes, please”. Whatever conclusions my congregation might reach about how well-prepared my homilies are (I try, honestly!), long-windedness on a Sunday morning gives parishioners the chance of denouncing me to Rome on the evidence of their stopwatches!

I also wonder about priests from different parts of Africa who told me that their people would feel “undernourished” if they didn’t get at least 30 minutes of preaching every Sunday. Were they actually hearing this from their congregations or was it wishful thinking on their behalf?

Under-prepared

The Pope’s point about preparation is on point. When I am under-prepared, I preach for too long. Benjamin Franklin once wrote: “I have already made this paper too long, for which I must crave pardon, not having now time to make it shorter.”

To cut away all distractions from the main point, and to steer



away from cliché and favourite hobbyhorses takes work. Reaching clarity about the meaning of the liturgy and the Sunday readings demands an amount of prayer and study too. Pope Francis has put some effort into encouraging preachers to do their job well – his 2013 exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) covers the topic extensively.

However, the Sunday

homily doesn’t just concern preachers. Pope Francis’s time limit for homilists made for an easy headline, but it is subtle clericalism to think that this is the full story. He also pointed out that the attitude of the listeners can help or hinder the preacher’s work. Those listening are told to help themselves “by paying proper attention, that is, assuming the right interior disposition, without

subjective pretexts, knowing that every preacher has merits and limitations”.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever got was to approach every Mass with the certainty that God had something especially for me in the scriptures, in the homily and in the reception of the Eucharist. Listening with the hope that the Holy Spirit will have something for me is a lot better than fearing, or even expecting, that I will be bored. A homily should, Pope Francis says (*Evangelii Gaudium* 142), be “quasi-sacramental”; we should expect the power of Holy Spirit to be present almost as much as we expect Christ to be present in the Eucharist. If I expect the Holy Spirit to be in the words of the preacher and if I pray to find the Spirit there, then I stand a far better chance of coming away from Mass nourished.

captivated by.

As one Fr Joseph Ratzinger wrote in 1961, “such preaching means that a bit of Pentecost comes to pass, in that people understand one another, find they are being addressed in the word of another, and, indeed, hear God’s Word in the word of a man”. If preachers and people aim for that, then maybe we might get a lot more out of our ten minutes.

Bishop Kevin McNamara of Kerry (1976-84) insisted that priests should preach every Sunday. It is said of one popular priest that having read the Gospel of the Beatitudes he turned to his congregation in perplexity. “The Bishop has written a letter telling me to give a sermon every week, but you’ve just heard the best sermon ever given, so I don’t know what I’m supposed to add!” He then blessed himself and sat down.

Congregation

Both preacher and congregation should dare to have high ambitions for the homily. The preacher should know he is not trying to speak for himself or to entertain, but has the task of helping the people to an understanding of the Good News which he himself is

CERTAINLY THE WORST homily I’ve ever heard was one I overheard in a Roman city-centre church. The Gospel contained that line when Christ declares John the Baptist the greatest born of woman, so the homilist spent 10 minutes at this noontime weekday Mass (a congregation mostly of Italian grandmothers) that this meant that we should have more respect for St John the Baptist than for Our Lady! As an example of a message that respects neither the biblical texts, the teaching of the Church and the faith of the People of God, it would be hard to top that! I hope that the congregation forcefully manifested the ‘*sensus fidelium*’ to him after Mass in the form of a good dressing-down.



Please give Lenten alms for poor children

Countless missionaries throughout the world ask The Little Way Association for help to feed, clothe and house deprived children. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. Many of these children’s future depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

Shocking as the facts of child poverty are, things would be even worse were it not for the generosity of people like yourself. Could you save the life of one child by giving alms this Lent? Simple measures such as providing a proper diet could avoid many tragic deaths.

Your Lenten gift will be gratefully received and sent WITHOUT DEDUCTION to the missions, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

EVERY EURO YOU SEND WILL BE VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND FORWARDED WITHOUT DEDUCTION.



In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine: “Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself, as it were, at our mercy. He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart. The very least trifle is precious in His sight.”

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: “Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.”

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.

The Little Way Association uses the world’s network of missionaries to help those in the direst need. Priests, Sisters and Brothers work in some of the world’s poorest areas and in political trouble-spots. Our policy is never to deduct anything from donations earmarked for the relief of poverty or for missionary work.

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