

FRANCIS AT 10: FIRST DECADE OF THE 'POPE OF SURPRISES'

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Thursday, March 16, 2023

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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Survivors of abuse in non-Catholic schools feel marginalised by inquiry

Chai Brady

Abuse survivors in schools that are not run by the Catholic Church feel "marginalised" and "silenced" because they have not been included in a fresh inquiry into abuse, a campaigner has claimed.

It comes after the Government announced that it has appointed a barrister to investigate recent allegations of historic abuse made by former students of schools managed by Catholic religious orders.

Dr Niall Meehan, a lecturer in Griffith College Dublin who has campaigned on behalf of people who allegedly suffered abuse in schools under the patronage of the Church of Ireland, claimed that the Government is refusing to take abuse survivors from non-Catholic schools seriously.

He told *The Irish Catholic*: "They are attempting to sweep it under the carpet. It's embarrassing for them [the Government], so they don't want it published or publicised in any way shape or form," Dr Meehan said regarding the new inquiry into schools run by religious orders – which only includes Catholic schools.

"The scoping inquiry is driven by media interest and public concern, and outrage, so the Government is having the inquiry as a result of pressure, they don't feel the pressure

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Show me the love...



Prachi Agrawal from Dominican College Sion Hill, Blackrock, is congratulated by her parents Deepak Raipuri and Alka Raipuri after becoming the Dublin regional winner of the inaugural Oireachtas essay competition organised by Senator Rónán Mullen, on March 10 in Leinster House. Photo: John McElroy

Cancelling Mary Kenny 'a disaster' says Limerick councillor

Ruadhán Jones

The cancelling of columnist with *The Irish Catholic* Mary Kenny by the University of Limerick (UL) has been dubbed "a disaster" by a local councillor.

UL's move is part of a "very worrying" proliferation of cancelling in universities across the western world, Independent Cllr Emmett O'Brien told *The Irish Catholic*.

The veteran journalist and co-founder of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement was to give a talk on feminism at UL on March 8. However, protests by students over alleged "transphobia" led to the college "disinviting" her. The allegations are without foundation.

Cllr O'Brien insisted that: "If you can't even so much as listen to a person's opinion without forming a preconceived idea, then...society will end up in polarised camps, which for the future is a disaster".

We must listen to people rather than "sticking your head in the sand and saying, no, no, no," he finished.

Ms Kenny said she was "hurt" by the cancelling, calling it "unjust".

"They were judging me before they heard what I said," Ms Kenny told this paper. "That is unfair, to judge people before you've given them a chance to speak."

"I'm game to fight another day," Ms Kenny vowed, saying that people across the political spectrum have been "very good, very supportive" after news of her cancellation broke.

MARY KENNY

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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €165. Airmail €250. Six months €85.
ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277.
Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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Synodality is the big project of this Papacy

Ten years ago, bookmakers Paddy Power asked me to compile their papal election guide ahead of the conclave that would replace Pope Benedict XVI. It was mostly a bit of fun, but punters were in fact betting on who would become the next Bishop of Rome and the bookies naturally wanted some insight.

As I selected the cardinals I though had the best chance of getting elected, I hesitated about Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina. He had, reportedly, been runner-up in the conclave that had elected Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 2005, he was unlikely to get another chance. Or was he?

In the end, I was glad that I added Cardinal Bergoglio to my shortlist and a less-redeemed version of myself enjoyed the bragging rights in those first heady days after the Argentine Pontiff took to the loggia with his trademark *Buona sera*.

A decade later and just months after the death of Benedict XVI, we assess the first ten years of the man the Italians call Papa Bergoglio.

From day one, he has had the wind at his back. Perhaps no Pope in the modern era has enjoyed the positive media coverage that Francis has. Catholics in the pews are, by and large, positively disposed towards him. His characteristic humility and personal touch shines out.

Remarkable

This is all-the-more remarkable given the fact that he came after two polyglot Popes, and yet has travelled the globe and won the hearts of Catholics and non-Catholics alike with his mix of *Rioplatense* and the Italian he learnt from his grandmother. Proof positive that actions and gestures really do speak louder than words.

Francis in the last ten years has called the Church to be authentically the Church: to be a Church that goes out rather than one that is self-referential

"Having regard to this and the importance of meeting the challenging timeframe which the minister has set - and has personally committed to in her discussions with survivors - the scoping inquiry is prioritising schools run by religious orders as its focus.

"Anyone who is a survivor of sexual abuse in these schools can participate in the survivor engagement process which will be an integral element of the scoping inquiry," he said.

On the issue of abuse allegations made by former students

and inward-looking, obsessing about mere ecclesiastical affairs when there is a world in need of mercy.

For Francis, mercy is the great antidote to progressive optimism as well as conservative pessimism, precisely because it grounds its hope in God's forgiveness of our sins, rather than our belief in our own resources.

That is why the poor and marginalised are quicker to grasp Francis than the rich and the powerful - and why the opposition to Francis has come from elite groups invested in particular pre-determined answers to narrow questions.

“You can't please everyone as Pope, St John Paul II didn't and Benedict XVI certainly didn't”

When Church historians come to write the history of the papacy of the first Latin American to sit of the Chair of St Peter, it is perhaps the topic of synodality that will be the most important. Francis has sought to put flesh on the bones of a subject that was at the heart of the Second Vatican Council, namely how the entire People of God - laypeople, religious, priests and bishops - are co-responsible for the Church.

Of course, synodality was not a construct of the 1960s - it has a long tradition in the early Church, but a tradition of great grace as well as great sadness as conflict split the Church apart. The strong and centralised exercise of power we have in the papacy now arose out of a need for authority to trump the will of local ecclesiastics

of non-Catholic schools the spokesman added: "It should also be noted that elements of the scoping inquiry will focus more broadly on the school sector as a whole, including an analysis of current child protection systems and frameworks within the primary and post-primary sector."

The scoping inquiry will be led by Senior Counsel Mary O'Toole. Minister for Education Norma Foley said it was difficult to put a timeframe on the process, but she said it could be in the region of eight months.

Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly



who wanted to do things their own way without the universal Church.

Temptation

That temptation, the temptation to canonise our own thoughts, feelings and opinions, is ever-present. That is why Francis is so keen on asking Catholics to develop the ability to discern spirits, and in so doing discern what God is calling the Church to.

Today synodality, as in the first Christian millennium, is not without bumps in the road. Mercifully, secular powers no longer raise military armies to try to impose doctrine. But the colonisation (as Pope Francis calls it) of the Church is no less ambitious in its desire to mould doctrines and teachings to suit agendas.

The Church in Germany at the weekend presented a huge challenge to the unity and the unity of the universal Church (see page 26). This is something that will cause friction

and tension as bishops from around the world prepare to gather in Rome this October for what has been called the 'Synod on Synodality'.

If we are clear in our belief that the entire People of God are co-responsible for the Church, we owe it to our Gospel commitment to be serious about that and to engage with synodality at every level while remaining faithful to the unchanging truths of the Church.

You can't please everyone as Pope, St John Paul II didn't and Benedict XVI certainly didn't. Francis won't either, but his synodal project has the potential to create a different culture in the Church where all the baptised collaborate together in the work of evangelisation. After all, being Catholic is not a bureaucratic exercise - but a willingness to hand on the precious gift we have been given.

Ad multos annos Franciscus!

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Survivors of abuse in non-Catholic schools feel marginalised by inquiry

» **Continued from Page 1** with regard to non-Roman Catholic institutions so they're not prepared to move on it," he claimed.

Dr Meehan said that due to the parameters of the inquiry "victims of abuse in non-Roman Catholic settings feel that their narrative is not important, they feel marginalised, they feel that they don't have the ability to have their story told, they don't have the confidence that somebody will listen to them, it's not part of the ongoing narrative and therefore it's also not picked up by the media and the media don't pursue it.

"It's assumed all the time that abuse occurs only in a Roman Catholic context," he said.

He insisted: "It definitely

does silence victims in other schools, there's no question about that, because they feel there's nowhere they can go to make their voices heard. It will continue to silence them unless it [the inquiry] comes out into the open."

In response to a query from *The Irish Catholic* about why the scoping inquiry only focused on Catholic schools, the Department of Education said that it was established in response to recent claims of historical sexual abuse in a number of day and boarding schools run by religious orders.

A spokesperson for the department said: "While these revelations initially focused on the Spiritan order, revelations and allegations in respect of schools run by other religious orders have since come to light.

Irishman doctors said would never speak wins Oscar

Jason Osborne

Despite his parents being told at birth that it was likely he would never speak, Belfast-born actor James Martin became the first person with Down syndrome to win an Academy Award at the weekend.

An Irish Goodbye won the Oscar for best live action short film.

The film follows the story of two estranged brothers, played by James Martin and Seamus O'Hara, who come together after their mother's death to fulfil her 'bucket list'.

Speaking on the BBC's *Good Morning Ulster* programme, the actor's father, Ivan Martin, said that it's an "amazing feat".

"It's something that nobody can ever take away from him... When you're the first to do anything, it's there for life and that's how it is with him," Mr Martin said of his son's Down syndrome.

Describing his son as tackling everything with "great gusto," Mr Martin said that when his son was born, they were told that he'd never speak.

"I feel that ultimately the person who said to me, 'Look, Mr Martin, you're going to have to realise that James will probably never speak' – bedside manner of Attila the Hun.



Belfast actor James Martin is pictured with the team behind *An Irish Goodbye* at the Academy Awards on Sunday. Photo: Twitter

"So here we are – James not only speaks, once he started speaking he hasn't shut up since," Mr Martin said.

"He loves the acting, he's loved this ride with the Oscars and the Baftas. He took the Bafta up to

his drama group...it's a hell of an achievement to get it."

Mr Martin said that all he ever wanted for James "was that he'd be happy," adding, "and, I tell you what, he's happy now".

The Academy Award triumph

was roundly welcomed on social media, including by politicians who've supported the introduction of abortion in the North, including for babies diagnosed with Down syndrome.

Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill

who said she was "absolutely over the moon for James Martin and everyone involved in *An Irish Goodbye* for their Oscar win".

"An incredible achievement that will inspire a generation of actors and film makers," she said.





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New primary curriculum affirms importance of religion, says Catholic schools' body

Ruadhán Jones

The new curriculum framework for primary schools announced last week reconfirms the importance of religion and spirituality, a body representing Catholic schools has said.

The curriculum, launched last week by Minister for Education Norma Foley, will come into play in 2026. The Irish bishops' conference and the Catholic Education Partnership have both welcomed the updated curriculum, saying it "meets the

evolving educational needs of pupils".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Hynes of the CEP said they are "happy to see the State reconfirm the importance of religious education as part of a wholistic education".

Mr Hynes said CEP are pleased that the "very relativistic approach" of the previous Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) proposal will not feature in the curriculum.

He added that the recognition of the spiritual dimension in the curriculum is "very important".

"The centrality of religious education within religious ethos schools is acknowl-

edged as an important part of pupil education and development," Mr Hynes said.

Reports prior to the curriculum's release suggested that there would be less emphasis on religious education, as time spent on religious education moved from two and half hours to two hours per week.

However, Mr Hynes explained that the new 'flexible time' option allows up to seven hours a month to be spent on programmes of the patrons choosing, including sacramental preparation, prayer services and school Masses.

Additionally, the Irish bishops' confer-

ence pointed out that the "reorganisation of time for religious education, reflects the movement of some aspects of the current religious education programme into other parts of the curriculum".

Changes to the RE curriculum include moving education on world religions into the subjects of history and geography, whereas it would previously have been taught as part of the 'Grow in Love' programme in Catholic schools.

The bishops added that this is done "in a manner which respects the ethos and curriculum of all primary schools".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Male religious encouraged to fight human trafficking

An Irish network that fights human trafficking has called on male religious to raise awareness about the "evils of human trafficking".

In a letter from four male religious, Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT) said it is important for male religious to "put our weight behind" campaigns that explode myths around trafficking and prostitution.

"Past pupils' networks of male congregations and diocesan schools could be harnessed to raise awareness around the corrupting influence of pornography, and of the fact that it is now a crime for men to purchase sex," APT said.

APT is run by religious congregations and the letter points out that most of its members are women religious, despite that fact that it is largely men who seek the services of trafficked women.

Discernment day 'transformational' for young Catholics

A day-long retreat to help young people discern their vocation was described as "transformational" by some of the young Catholics in attendance.

Organised by a number of youth ministries active in Ireland, Ciara Ferry of NET Ministries Ireland told *The Irish Catholic* that the March 4 discernment day at the Dominican Retreat Centre in Tallaght was provided to "fill a need for young people".

"It's [discernment] at the forefront of young people's minds and so we thought it was a good opportunity to fill that need for them and help them to do it because they're all wondering where is God going to call me for my vocation. Then, even in the meantime, what can I do to serve the Church while I'm waiting and preparing for this?"

Irish prison chaplains report due soon

The delayed 2021 reports of chaplains to the Irish Prison Service are expected soon, having been sent to the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee.

In response to a query from this paper the Irish Prison Service said the chaplaincy service "has a significant contribution to make as part of the multi-disciplinary team in a prison, addressing the physical, social and spiritual needs of prisoners in a holistic way".

The spokesperson said: "Each chaplain is required under Rule 119(1) of the prison rules to submit a report to the director general and to the governor on matters relating to the provision of chaplaincy services in the preceding year.

"The 2021 chaplains reports have now been finalised. The minister is currently in receipt of the 2021 chaplains reports and the Irish Prison Service expects to publish them as a group to the Irish Prison Service website shortly," he added.

'Easy win' for nature as 30% of parish land called to be returned to nature

Chai Brady

There is "delight" following the decision by the Irish bishops to recommend that 30% of parish grounds be returned to nature by 2030.

Jane Mellett, the *Laudato Si'* Officer of Trócaire, said that the announcement by the bishops after their spring meeting directly responds to

the call of Pope Francis.

She said that for parishes it does not mean "abandoning" the land – it still needs to be managed and people should consult those in their locality who are involved in horticulture, landscaping, or gardening.

Ms Mellett said: "I think if you have a group of interested people that can run with

this it's a very easy win for biodiversity. There are many parishes around the country already doing this... so there's plenty of examples out there that we hope to share with people."

She advised reading the Government's booklet *Gardening for Biodiversity*.

Speaking of *Laudato Si'*, the Pope's encyclical on the

environment, the bishops said: "In *Laudato Si'* we read that this diversity of species has an 'intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself'. Humanity is called to care for the Earth and all of its creatures, in other words to 'live out our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork'."

Tánaiste: Ireland addressing Christian persecution worldwide

Jason Osborne

Tánaiste Micheál Martin has said that his department will consider how best to "most effectively" continue Ireland's work on freedom of religion and belief in light of the findings of the Church in Chains Global Guide's contents and findings.

Church in Chains recently launched their 4th Global Guide which lists 60 countries where 200 million Christians face persecution because of their faith, ranging from limited persecution to severe.

"The promotion of freedom of religion or belief is a priority for Ireland and the EU's human rights engagement at both bilateral and multilateral level," Mr Martin said March 8 in response to questions from Fianna Fáil's Brendan Smith TD.

Ireland has "condemned the use of religion or belief to create a hierarchy of humanity from which Christians and other religious communities can be subjected to violence and persecution," Minister Martin said.

Dana lights the fire...



Dr Tim Campbell, director of the Saint Patrick Centre, congratulates Dana Rosemary Scallon on her newly debuted song, *Light the Fire*, about St Patrick bringing the Christian Faith to Ireland. Dana debuted the song at the Saint Patrick Centre on Monday, March 13.

A Spanish court illuminates the 'woman in the home' clause

Ivana Moral, aged 48, is a Spanish housewife who, earlier this month, made history in the Spanish courts.

During the course of her divorce, Judge Laura Ruiz Alamino, awarded Senora Moral the sum of €204,624 in recognition of her having been a dutiful housewife for 25 years, and a mother of two who took care of the home. Ivana Moral's ex-husband, a successful businessman, was directed to pay his former spouse a monthly remittance of €500 as a form of pension.

A sad business

Divorce is a sad business and the splitting of the assets can become depressingly materialistic. But the Moral case was reported



Mary Kenny

globally because it established something significant, especially for women: homemaking is important, and the spouse who keeps the home-base running, and does much of the childcare, has made a real contribution to the family's benefit. She has been a significant part of the 'common good' of a household.

Despite its old-fashioned, even archaic, wording, the famous Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution did try to make that point back in 1937. Eighty-six years before a modern divorce judge's ruling, the Constitution announced that

the State "recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved".

That is the very point the Spanish judge was making – that a homemaker bestowed added value on a 'common good'.

Swept away

Before that clause is swept away – as it very likely will be by Leo Varadkar's plans to remove it from the Constitution in the name of 'gender equality' – let us bear in mind

that it put down a marker of respecting the home; and those who did caring work in the home.

“It overlooks the sometimes invisible context of a home base which is the support structure”

Modern liberal capitalism consistently favours those who are economically active in a paid job: it overlooks the sometimes invisible context of a home base which is the support structure.

It's regrettable that over the 86 years since Article 41.2 has existed we haven't been able to establish with sufficient emphasis that housework is real work, and that childcare is vital work. It's a pity that we didn't underline the value implied in Article 41.2 which has now been flagged up by a Spanish judge.

Talking the talk...

The teaching of modern foreign languages is to be expanded in Irish primary schools from next September, Education Minister Norma Foley has announced. That's great. The earlier a child starts learning a second or third language, the better.

In Britain, Catholics once had the reputation of being especially proficient at foreign languages – and the British Foreign Office deliberately recruited candidates who had attended Catholic schools. It was said, traditionally, that up to a quarter of those working in the FO were Catholics.

The reason was that Catholics used to be familiar with Latin, and Catholic schools were better at teaching Latin. Latin is a helpful basis for learning all European languages

(with the possible exception of Basque and Ungaro-Finnish). Italian, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese are all made more accessible by knowing Latin. German grammar is said to be more open to those who have mastered Latin grammar.

Learning, and maintaining, a foreign language is, I think, a pleasure as well as an accomplishment. Yet probably the greatest obstacle to mastering a foreign tongue now is being a native English-speaker. Because English is so internationally used, the incentive to become fluent in other tongues is diminished. It's discouraging wrestling with a Norwegian phrase when everyone answers in English!



Jane Fonda in North Vietnam in 1972

● My husband Richard West reported from Vietnam from 1968 to 1975. He was working for the left-wing *New Statesman* and he certainly opposed the American conduct of the war in South-East Asia. It was a heart-rending situation.

Yet despite his own anti-war feelings, he never quite forgave the film actress Jane Fonda for going to Hanoi in 1972, speaking on North Vietnamese radio, being photographed with North Vietnamese anti-aircraft guns, and denying the

reported bad conditions of American POWs. She was famously dubbed 'Hanoi Jane' by her critics, some of whom remained bitter about the episode.

Give her the benefit of the doubt? A well-meaning young actress distressed by the American bombing mission, drawing attention to its cruelties? Maybe. But do you speak against your own country from a repressive communist dictatorship? Some call it treason.

Ms Fonda raised eyebrows again last week, when

on an American TV show, *The View*, she suggested that the way to address the abortion debate was to "murder" those who were pro-life. The programme's host, Joy Behar, tried to quickly move away from this contretemps, but Ms Fonda insisted. Some days later, perhaps prevailed upon by lawyers, she said it was a "jest".

Actually, pro-life pregnancy counselling services in the US, are under constant threat of violence and many actual attacks: it's not really something to jest about.

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Europe intervention in 'rejected' NI legacy bill is welcomed

Chai Brady

The decision by the Council of Europe to call for full compliance regarding human rights in proposed legislation to deal with the legacy of the Troubles has been welcomed by a well-known human rights professor in Belfast.

Professor Colin Harvey, Director of the Human Rights Centre at Queen's University Belfast told *The Irish Catholic* that the council's message on the UK's Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill "is further evidence of the profound human rights concerns".

He said: "As is well

known, the plans of the British government have been widely rejected. The decision to proceed with this legislation shows a high level of disrespect for victims and survivors. This is not the way to address the legacy of the conflict."

According to the UK government, the bill aims to promote reconciliation by establishing an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, limiting criminal investigations, legal proceedings, inquests and police complaints, extending the prisoner release scheme in the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998, and providing for experiences to

be recorded and preserved and for events to be studied and memorialised.

Bishop Donal McKeown of the Diocese of Derry told this paper that the bill has been widely rejected by victims in the North who want to keep open the possibility for people to held accountable for crimes, no matter how long ago they occurred.

He said: "Obviously the drafters of the legislation are coming from a particular perspective and are appealing to a particular constituency which would be England and Wales based, so in that sense they will do whatever they want to satisfy their own constituency."

"Dealing with the past

is difficult, we know that from the Troubles... Many people have different priorities when it comes to dealing with the past and sometimes the story told about the past can also be exploited for the purpose of modern agendas," Bishop McKeown said.

"The battle is still going on for the story that will be told about the Troubles, this is all part of that bigger agenda. What the Council of Europe says mightn't be terribly interesting if it doesn't agree with your own particular macro analysis."

He added that the legislation as it suits former combatants.

Charity decry thousands of rental terminations

Staff reporter

A homeless charity has decried the fact 4,741 people were given notices to leave their rented accommodation in the summer of last year, following data provided by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

The charity Depaul believes that while the Government's decision to end the eviction ban should be reversed, now the consequences of the decision must be faced.

David Carroll, Chief Executive of Depaul said: "Of course we want the eviction ban reversed but we now have to proceed under the assumption

that it won't be overturned and look at what action we can take in preparation for the March 31 deadline.

He said there "needs to be a more cogent, planned approach taken to the expansion and the development of a national emergency homeless response".

Mr Carroll added the charity "are aware of the amount of notices to quit on a county by county basis. We urgently need to identify what temporary accommodation may be available in each of the local authority areas. Many are not equipped with the adequate amount of temporary accommodation services at present".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belfast Rally for Life lifts pro-life spirits

Pro-life crowds gathered in Belfast for the 2023 Rally for Life Saturday, March 11.

Taking place in the year of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, organisers Precious Life said the theme for the Rally was "Peace begins in the womb".

The first major pro-life event in the North since the Coronavirus pandemic, Precious Life spokesperson Bernadette Smyth told the crowds, "This is the first major pro-life event here since Westminster forced abortion on Northern Ireland in 2020. We're here today to show that we still demand our unborn babies be protected".

Special guest speakers at the Rally included Dr Dermot Kearney and Fr Sean Gough.

Allianz refuses to comment on rebates

The insurance company that caters for Ireland's 26 dioceses has refused to comment on the awards given due to Covid-19 insurance claims arising out of a loss of weekly donations when parishes were ordered to shut by the Government during the pandemic.

Following a query from *The Irish Catholic* about diocesan claims Allianz said: "As the information you are seeking is related directly to customers, and is private to them, it would be inappropriate of Allianz to disclose the details being sought."

This is despite the company previously giving a full statement about the "unprecedented situation" during the pandemic and saying "Allianz is very proud of its longstanding relationship with the Catholic Church. During this time of difficulty for our nation, we are very happy to support our parish customers and give something back".

INTO to push pride flag campaign in schools

The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) is set to push its pride flag in schools across the country.

In a March 2 email, INTO contacted districts across the country to seek expressions of interest from schools in "flag-raising ceremonies".

The ceremony would be for schools "interested in receiving and displaying an INTO pride flag as a demonstration of the school's commitment to LGBT+ inclusivity", the email reads.

Schools are requested to complete an expression of interest form by Friday March 24.

The pride flag campaign follows on from what the letter describes as "a very successful campaign" in 2022.

Francis' pastoral pontificate lays down challenge for Ireland, says Bishop Demspey

Ruadhán Jones

The pastoral style of Pope Francis' has laid down the challenge for Ireland to go the peripheries, Bishop Paul Demspey has said.

Pope Francis celebrated the tenth anniversary of his election to papacy on Monday, March 13.

The bishop of Achonry told *The Irish Catholic* that

the Pope has "very profoundly reached out to the people who find themselves on the peripheries" of the Church.

Francis is laying down a challenge to the Church in Ireland and to the world to "follow his lead", Bishop Demspey continued.

"That model of compassion, that model of courage and generosity he puts forward - that's something

people have identified with," he said.

The archbishop of Dublin also praised the "striking directness and simplicity" Pope Francis has modelled.

He "continues to challenge us not to be closed in on ourselves", Archbishop Dermot Farrell said in a March 13 statement.

Instead, the Pope encourages the Church "to reach out, to welcome the

Lord who comes to us, to welcome our sisters and brothers left behind by the unfairness of life, and to proclaim the Gospel to a world hungry for that which will endure".

"His synodal approach will enable a transformation of the Church into a dynamic community of missionary disciples," Dr Farrell added.

All smiles at the solemn novena...



David, Ova, Richard and Samuel Olasak attend day seven of the 39th Galway solemn novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Galway Cathedral, March 12.

Faith in the future: new miracle innovations could save thousands of lives from climate disaster

As climate change brings the worst drought in 40 years to the Horn of Africa, Concern Worldwide supporters are helping local farmers use new climate-resilient techniques to save their families and communities from starvation.

In some parts of the Horn of Africa, there hasn't been a single drop of rain in three years. Dead cows lie decaying by the road, overcome by dehydration. Across Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, the dust-filled plains are so bare of vegetation that they don't attract any animals. The villages are just as quiet. The hustle and bustle of families cooking or working has fallen silent. Children who haven't eaten for days do nothing but sit still in their huts, too tired and sick to move – they just don't have the energy.

It's the same dire, drought-ravaged situation across all the countries in the Horn of Africa. Right now, 16 million people are acutely food insecure. It's estimated one person dies of hunger every 36 seconds. And as climate change causes more extreme weather patterns, experts predict that droughts like these will become even more frequent, and last even longer, with devastating effects for future generations.

Living in hunger

Ahmed, a farmer in Somalia, and his children, live on the frontline of the climate crisis. He inherited his trade and his land from his father who was a farmer before him. But with each year that has gone by since he was a boy, he has seen less and less rain falling on the family farm. The soil has become so dry that he can no longer grow the nutritious corn and sorghum that once helped him put food on the table for his family.



Somali farmer Ahmed has the tools and training to feed his family, even amid the worst drought in four decades.



Whole communities face the threat of mass starvation as the climate crisis worsens.

Seeing his crops wither before his eyes, Ahmed did everything he could to save them, but without water, it wasn't enough. He had nothing to eat and nothing to sell at the market. The pain of hunger began to take hold of his children. Even if his family were to survive the current crisis, he could only wonder how his children would ever live through the more formidable droughts of the future.

“With the seeds Concern provided, I was able to harvest a lot more and help my family, it changed everything.”

Ahmed, Somalia

Miracle innovation

It was in this desperate situation that Concern Worldwide, Ireland's largest international aid charity, and their generous community of supporters, were able to provide a lifeline for Ahmed. For 55 years, the charity has been helping people from the world's poorest communities to build lives free from hunger.

In Ahmed's case, escaping hunger meant achieving something that seemed impossible to him – finding a way to turn his dusty fields green again despite the onslaught of the current drought. But thanks to supporters who left a gift in their Will to the charity, Concern has the

resources to build climate-smart agricultural programmes that can support Ahmed and families like his. They provide the tools and training that, even in the driest conditions, help farmers grow nourishing food.

Together, Concern and their supporters were able to provide Ahmed with a wide range of drought-resistant seeds, and training on how to grow them. The results have been nothing short of miraculous – today, his once-barren land is sprouting thousands of vibrant, fruit-bearing trees. With the income he's earning from selling the produce, he can afford to feed

Life-saving innovation

For decades, Concern Worldwide has been bringing life-saving solutions to people facing the climate crisis. The miraculous results have been nothing short of life-changing for thousands of families.



CROP VARIETY & DIVERSIFICATION

Drought-resistant seeds increase the chance of a successful crop, even in dry conditions, to protect families from hunger.



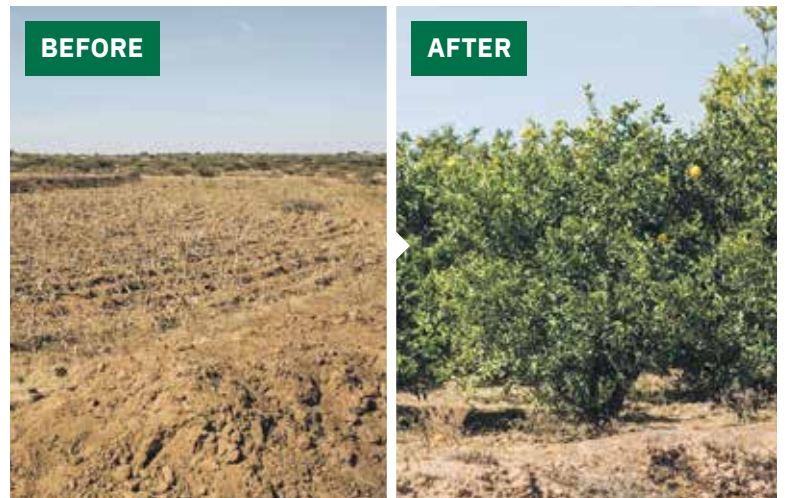
IRRIGATION

When an area receives no rainfall, water pumping systems can bring vital, enriching moisture to barren soil.



POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT

When crops are harvested, more secure storage techniques can protect them from being spoiled by insects and fungi later.



Before Concern supporters stepped in, the drought was killing all of Ahmed's crops. But today, there are fruit trees sprouting on his land, including orange, citrus and guava.

his children again. And when they're old enough, they will learn these life-changing skills from Ahmed, which they, in turn, can pass on to their own children, ensuring future generations live a life free from hunger.

The future threat of climate change

Although the future looks brighter for Ahmed and his children, many families are still not safe from climate change. The World Bank predicts that the coming changes in weather patterns could force more than

Leaving a legacy of hope for future generations

Siobhán O'Connor, from Concern, advises people who want to leave a gift in their Will to the charity. “The gifts that our generous supporters leave in their Wills have the power to change so much,” Siobhán told us. She continued, “that single act of kindness goes far beyond helping one family protect themselves from hunger – it lives on through the years, from generation to generation, helping the families and children of the future survive even the deadliest drought.”

“I am proud to know that, even when I am gone, my support will continue to save lives.”

Colm, who's leaving a gift in his Will to Concern Worldwide, Co. Galway

100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. And by 2050, it may internally displace 143 million people from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin America.

While the threat of mass starvation looms, Concern Worldwide is calling for more people to help them protect vulnerable families like Ahmed's from the hunger caused by drought and climate change. Climate change might be inevitable for future generations, but with your legacy, hunger doesn't have to be.

More and more compassionate people across Ireland are now moving to support Concern's vision to build a hunger-free world. Siobhán explains, “Our community is united by a simple belief that no one should ever have to suffer the pain of hunger. If you share in this belief, I would encourage you to consider joining us today. No gift is too small or big, even the smallest donation will help build a world free from hunger.”

Find out how you can be part of a world without hunger

If you'd like to request your free brochure to find out more about leaving a gift in your Will to Concern, please contact Siobhán O'Connor at Concern Worldwide today.

Phone: 01 417 8020 **E-mail:** siobhan.oconnor@concern.net **Visit:** concern.net/legacy



Nuala O'Loan

The View



Women: be the change you want to see in the Church

Iwonder how women really feel, deep down, about their membership of the Church in Ireland. The synodal pathway process has challenged us all to discern how we live as Church in the future. The Pope was very clear that this was not intended to be a comprehensive review of doctrine, rather it is about how we live as Church in the decades to come.

In that context, having attended a number of meetings and workshops on the role of women in the Church both here in Ireland and in London, I have asked myself what is the experience of women as Church today? To what extent does it lie in their hands and in the hands of the institutional Church to change and improve that experience? I have been told of discontent and feelings of marginalisation, of not being able to contribute fully and of not being equally valued in the Church. That should not happen.

“It is important, I think, to consider the role of women in the Church in this overall context”

I think the starting point for any consideration of this issue must be why do we belong to the Church? So many people in the modern world don't. We are a minority. The reason why we belong to the Church is that we believe in God and we believe that he established his Church to help us on our journey through life home to him. That help comes, in part, through the community of believers to which we belong and in which we live our faith: the parish. We support each other through the darkest days and we rejoice together at moments of happiness, and in the ordinary everyday moments of joy.

We worship together. We believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist, that the other sacraments are sources of grace and help given to us by God. We are each called



to love one another as he has loved us.

The role of the priest is to dedicate his life to helping people on their journey through life, walking with them each day even through moments of the most extreme darkness – serious illness, suffering and death and helping them to have courage, faith, and hope.

It is important, I think, to consider the role of women in the Church in this overall context.

Disempowered

I have heard many stories of women who feel disempowered. The reasons are many and often derive in the first instance from the fact that decision-making and hence power in the Church resides in those who are ordained. This is an indisputable fact. It should change. I think it will change, but that is not going to happen today. We have to live in today.

In most circumstances in the modern Church, parishes develop a harmony in which the parish priest, the parish

pastoral council, the finance committee and the people all work together, subject, of course, to the occasional and inevitable personality conflicts.

Dismiss

I have heard, though, stories of new parish priests dismissing the parish pastoral council and making other (unwelcome) changes, generating resentment, hostility and feelings of rejection among those, men and women, who have served previously. Wiser parish priests – and they are the majority – coming new to a parish take their time to learn about the parish and to come to know their people.

Of course, priests are human beings. Many are very good, holy men who have so much to give, but there are those who are irritable, selfish and who do not live to serve their parishioners.

Priesthood is a great vocation which demands much of those who are called. They do not work 37 hours a week like most

people. They are on call constantly, required to move seamlessly from burying the dead, to baptising a baby, visiting someone in hospital, helping a young couple celebrate their wedding, saying Mass for their congregations, visiting schools, and caring – on occasion – for other congregations whose priest is old, sick or on holiday. They have to nourish not only the faith of others, but also their own faith. They do all this as part of the brotherhood of priests, but without being able to know the love and support of a wife. It is a wonderful calling but it is challenging.

That is part of the context too.

“Priesthood is a great vocation which demands much of those who are called”

So, my question to women who feel they

cannot contribute as they wish to is, what would you like to be able to do within your own parish or diocese which you feel unable to do? Have you tried to do something and felt unsupported? Has your contribution been ignored or unappreciated? What do you want to do now? Is it possible to get together with others to do the good that you want to do within your parish?

Community

People have told me of living in parishes for years yet knowing nobody. Can we really call ourselves a community if we do not welcome newcomers and get to know them and involve them in what is happening? Could you be part of a befriending group? Where groups like the Society of St Vincent de Paul, who provide such help to those in need, are dying for want of new volunteers, could you help? Could you train and become a catechist, teaching others the way

to God? Could you be a Minister of the Eucharist or of the Word? If there is no prayer group, to pray for the needs of fellow parishioners and the world, to praise God for his goodness to each of us, to thank him for all that we have, could you establish such a group? If there is no bereavement group, could you train to offer this help to those who grieve? Could you visit the sick, the lonely, the housebound? Could you become a prison visitor? If the parish buildings are in disrepair, needing redecoration, new furnishings, could you work with others to make your church premises more beautiful places in which to gather as the People of God? There are so many other ways in which we can make a difference. Can you think of how you might do this?

“Can we really call ourselves a community if we do not welcome newcomers and get to know them and involve them in what is happening?”

We all know the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus gave us the Beatitudes: the way of living they describe is our calling. I meet priests who need help and support from those whom they serve, people who need help and people who want to help. Nobody should feel marginalised, unwanted or unappreciated in our Church. We can surely work together, make space for each other, listen to each other, be open to change, and try to ensure that nobody feels excluded or marginalised in this Church of ours.

Pope Francis' pontificate: A timeline

Here is a timeline of some significant events in Pope Francis' pontificate:

- 2013, March 13:** Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, is elected pope on the second day of the conclave becoming the first Pope from the Southern Hemisphere and the first non-European elected in almost 1,300 years. The Jesuit was also the first member of his order to be elected Pope and the first member of any religious order elected in nearly two centuries.
- 2013, July 8:** Pope Francis makes his first trip outside of Rome, choosing to go to the Italian island of Lampedusa to underline the plight of migrants crossing the Mediterranean and the countless lives lost at sea.
- 2014, June 8:** Pope Francis, Israeli President Shimon Peres, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and others come together in the Vatican Gardens for an unprecedented gathering to pray for peace in the Holy Land.
- 2015, September 19-27:** Pope Francis travels to Cuba then to Washington, DC, New York and Philadelphia during his first visit to the United States. He addressed Congress, the United Nations and the World Meeting and Families, canonised St Junipero Serra and visited the 9/11 memorial in New York.
- 2015, December 8:** Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica to inaugurate a Holy

Year of Mercy. He invited churches around the world to designate a holy door as a reminder of his call for reconciliation.

- 2016, February 12-17:** Pope Francis, on his way to Mexico, stops in Cuba to meet Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow at the Havana airport and sign a joint declaration in the presence of Cuban President Raul Castro. In Mexico, he celebrated Mass in Ciudad Juárez, which borders El Paso, Texas. Hundreds of thousands of people attended the Mass, which included faithful on both sides of the border.
- 2017, April 13:** Pope Francis goes to a maximum security prison to celebrate the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper and washes the feet of 12 prisoners, including three women and a Muslim man, who was preparing for Baptism. The celebration continued a practice he began as archbishop of Buenos Aires and performed every Holy Thursday as Pope: including Catholics and non-Catholics, men and women, especially those who are marginalised in the foot-washing rite.
- 2018, April 21:** Pope Francis appoints three women as consultors to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the first time women and laypeople were named as active contributors – not support staff. They joined a growing number of women the Pope has named to top-level positions at the Vatican.
- 2018, August 2:** Pope Francis orders the revision of the

Catechism of the Catholic Church to describe the death penalty as morally inadmissible and to affirm that the Church "works with determination for its abolition worldwide".

- 2019, February 4:** Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university, sign the document on *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* during an interreligious meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- 2019, February 21-24:** Pope Francis convenes a global summit on child protection and abuse, bringing together nearly 200 Church leaders – presidents of bishops' conferences, the heads of the Eastern Catholic Churches, superiors of men's and women's religious orders, survivors and Roman Curia officials. The summit at the Vatican included a penitential liturgy.
- 2020, March 27:** In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis prays and delivers his extraordinary blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) during an evening prayer service from St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. St Peter's Square was empty, and the service was livestreamed.
- 2021, March 5-8:** Pope visits Iraq amidst sporadic violence continuing in the country and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He honoured those who remained faithful and worked to rebuild the country.

- 2021, July 4:** The Pope undergoes a three-hour scheduled surgery at a Rome hospital to remove part of his colon. Officials said it was required to treat diverticulitis, when bulging pouches in the lining of the intestine or colon become inflamed or infected. Throughout his pontificate he has suffered bouts of painful sciatica, and knee problems led him to start using a wheelchair in 2022.
- 2022, July 24-29:** Pope Francis makes "a penitential trip" to Canada to meet with, listen to and apologise to members of Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, especially those who experienced abuse or attempts at forced assimilation at Church-run residential schools.
- 2023, January 5:** Pope Francis presides over the funeral Mass for Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Square. It was the first time in more than 200 years that a pope celebrated the funeral of his predecessor.
- 2023, March 13:** Pope Francis celebrates his 10th anniversary as pope.



Pope Francis gives the homily as he celebrates Mass on the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2013. Photo: CNS/Paul Harin



Pope Francis holds the monstrance as he delivers his extraordinary blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) during a prayer service in the portico of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican March 27, 2020. The service was livestreamed in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

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Pope's Irish arrival and message to young couples

Chai Brady

Almost 40 years since he was a Jesuit priest studying in Ireland, Pope Francis' return visit for the World Meeting of Families on August 25, 2018 was highly anticipated. Being in the small crowd of journalists waiting on the airstrip for the arrival of the Pope's plane – affectionately dubbed by the media 'Shepherd One' – there was an undeniable sense of eagerness as broadcasters looked over scripts and cameramen set up tripods and primed lenses. No one wants to miss an historic event and while it could never be akin to St John Paul II's visit in 1979, it would get a place in history books.

Journalists were tracking the Pope's flightpath on smartphones, trying to predict the exact time he would land. Some were more eager than others to get going as despite being summer, the early morning was cold, and it was particularly windy on the airstrip (the Pope had to take his *zucchetto* off as it was almost blown away when disembarking).

The Pontiff was welcomed by high-ranking State and Church officials but also the Boland family, whose daughter Jane won a competition to design vestments for the Papal Mass in the Phoenix Park.

After the brief greetings he left the airport in the small blue Skoda that was to become a trademark of his trip – it was later announced by the Archdiocese of Dublin that it would be donated to help homeless families.

St Mary's Pro Cathedral

Later that day, Pope Francis spoke to engaged and married couples in St Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin City Centre. From across Ireland's 26 dioceses, 350 couples swarmed to the cathedral for the first pastoral portion of Francis' journey.

The address was described as both humorous and informal, with the Pope telling couples never to go to sleep without resolving conflicts. Met with laughter, he said: "I want to ask you: did you quarrel a lot? But that is part of marriage! A marriage without arguments is pretty boring..."

He added: "Yet there is a secret: plates can even fly, but the secret is to make up before the end of the day. And to make up there is no need to talk; a caress is enough, like that, and peace returns."

This journalist spoke to several young married couples after the event to see how they felt about the Pope's words.

Kelly O'Brien and Donal McCaffrey from Meath diocese, who were due to be married in six weeks, said it was a "privilege". Donal said: "We were hanging on every word – some very practical advice. He was very charismatic, his warmth with the couples who spoke – the couple who were 50 years married – and then the engaged and recently married, he was so warm in his interactions with them afterwards."

For married couple Eoghan and Ruth Ahern from Limerick diocese, who were expecting a baby at the time, what the Pope had to say about children crying in church really struck them.

Ruth said altogether it was an "amazing and emotional experience", and she was surprised at his informal approach. "There were babies crying and he loved the sound of the 'music' that was coming from the babies, he took it in a good way and he was laughing it off instead of giving out," she said.

While the Pope's visit was met with challenges and even scorn by some in Ireland, it was clear to this journalist that when attending the events associated with the Pontiff's visit, there was excitement, and it was a hugely heart-warming and Faith-affirming experience for many.



Pope Francis greets a recently married couple as he visits St Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin, August 25. Photo: CNS

A day to build on a budding faith

Jason Osborne

In my mind, Pope Francis' 2018 visit is inextricably connected to the then-recent referendum defeat. I had only come into active engagement with the Faith as the vote drew near, and while it didn't go our way and ushered in a dark new era, it brought Christians of all stripes together as little has since.

Were it not for the referendum, I wouldn't have met the young, faithful friends I attended the papal Mass with that cloudy, sputtering day, who remain steadfast friends to this day. An enthusiastic group of young men in their 20s accom-

panied by a priest must have been an unusual sight when contrasted against the media reports at the time, which fearmongered about temporary morgues and an Exodus-like trek to the Mass for the elderly.

While we were surely in the minority, the Pope's presence was a reminder that it didn't matter. I already knew it then, but I experienced anew the fact that the Church in Ireland is not alone as it struggles. While the papal trip was a smaller affair than we imagined or hoped it would be, it still brought Catholics to our shores from all over the world, Catholics from countries where the Faith is thriving,

sometimes amid greater difficulties than ours.

As is so often God's way, what looked to the world a fairly dismal last gasp of the Church in Ireland – a far-cry from the jubilation of John Paul II's visit – was surely the planting of seeds for the future. I took a lot from those short few days, as did my friends, and I don't doubt many others did too. The Pope's decision to come to Ireland – a country that had just made a resounding declaration against its Catholic heritage – was a timely reminder that the true state of affairs is best seen through eyes of faith and hope.

The universal Church in Phoenix park

Ruadhán Jones

When Pope Francis came to celebrate Mass in the Phoenix park, myself and my family were among the thousands who braved the elements to see him.

I remember the Pope's visit as being quite contentious. I was in college at the time and some of my classmates were sharing posts on social media threatening to block book tickets to stop people coming. Did it come to anything? I don't know, but it was petty.

For me, however, it was a happy day and a very Irish one. For a start, the weather 'threatened'. In my head it was dull and grey and you

were always wondering if the heavens would open – but they didn't.

Before the Mass, I met up with a Byzantine Catholic priest I knew who was in Ireland to concelebrate the Mass. We walked to the park together, along with his wife, which led to a comical encounter. Street sellers were offering their wares; Pope Francis scarves, hats and headbands, and even, they claimed, holy water straight from St Francis' holy well.

My friend started bartering with them, but they weren't budging. So he gave them his priestly blessing, much to their amusement, while his wife pleaded, "No,

no, they do not want to be blessed!"

I have little memory of getting to the park – despite warnings at the time that it would be like ascending Croagh Patrick. At this remove, the Mass itself blurs into a collection of bodies and screens, with the Pope's image blazoned everywhere.

But I remember joining in the prayers and hymns; I remember wandering through the park and seeing the universal Church at prayer. And I remember Pope Francis, standing not far from Pope John Paul II's cross, once again bringing the global Church to Ireland.

It was, for all the issues surrounding it, a happy day.

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Around the world in 10 years: Pope's 40 trips reflect his priorities



Justin McLellan

Many of the 40 international trips Pope Francis has made over the past 10 years have been to countries where Christians are a minority or where he can draw close to people on the fringes of the world's attention.

The Pope always "chooses the peripheries", said Andrea Torielli, editorial director of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, who has accompanied Pope Francis on nearly all his international trips.

Pope Francis goes "to the most problematic places where he thinks his presence can give way to positive developments, or where he can 'turn on a light' so that the world can see the reality of these places," Mr Torielli told *Catholic News Service*.

Pope Francis has visited some of the poorest countries in the world, such as Mozambique and Madagascar in 2019 and Congo and South Sudan early this year.

In countries experiencing

war, he has pleaded for peace as he did during a visit to the Central African Republic in 2015, and in nations recovering from conflict, he has promoted reconciliation as he did in Iraq in 2021.

He has returned to his native Latin America six times – but has never gone back to his native Argentina – and has travelled to every continent except for Oceania, which he was scheduled to visit in September 2020 prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pope Francis has averaged four international trips each year of his 10-year pontificate even though he was unable to travel in 2020 due to the pandemic. He has visited 60 countries.

Yet just as notable as the countries Pope Francis has visited are those he has not: Spain, Germany and England, all visited by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Even Pope Francis' brief visits to France and Switzerland lasted mere hours so that he could address assemblies of the European Union and the World Council of Churches, respectively.

Smaller countries

In December 2022, he told the Spanish newspaper *ABC* that he had not organised an extended visit to any large European nation because he preferred visiting "smaller countries".

Several of Pope Francis' trips have reflected his commitment

to interreligious dialogue. He became the first pope to visit several Muslim-majority countries: the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Bahrain, to advance dialogue with Muslim communities and condemn all forms of religious extremism with Muslim leaders.

In Abu Dhabi in 2019 he signed the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* with Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university and widely considered to be the leading figure in Sunni Islam thought. And in 2022, the Pope and the sheikh participated in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan alongside 80 other religious leaders and hundreds of delegates.

“Pope Francis goes ‘to the most problematic places where he thinks his presence can give way to positive developments’”

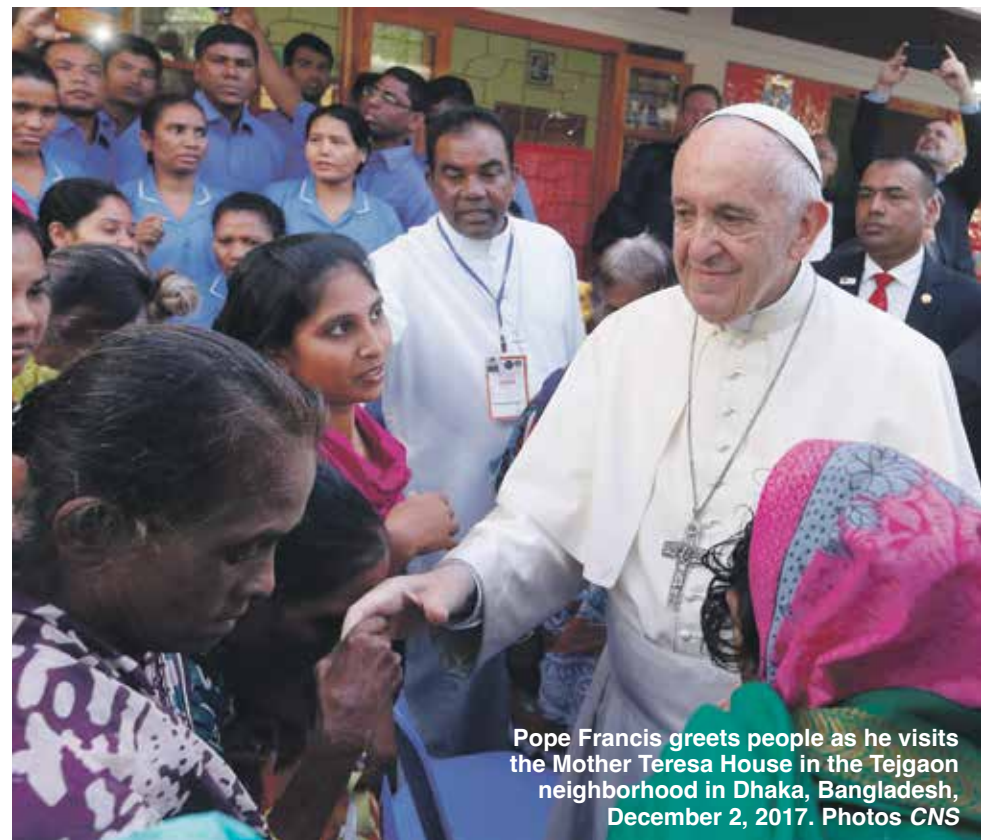
The Pope has also used travel to extend a hand to other Christian communities.

His trip in 2014 to Jordan, Israel and Palestine ended with a meeting with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians.

In 2016, Pope Francis signed a joint declaration with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in Havana, Cuba, marking the first meeting between heads of the Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate.

Later that year, he went to Sweden to participate in a ceremony commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with other Christian leaders.

The Pope even described his most recent trip to South



Pope Francis greets people as he visits the Mother Teresa House in the Tejgaon neighborhood in Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 2, 2017. Photos CNS

Sudan on February 3-5 as an "ecumenical pilgrimage", which he made alongside the leaders of the worldwide Anglican Communion and the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Surprising

Even in countries where it is typical for popes to visit, Pope Francis' choice of activities can be surprising and show his desire to stay close to marginalised people.

During his apostolic visit to the United States in 2015, the Pope received a regal welcome, he met with President Barack Obama at the White House and became the first Pope to address a joint meeting of the US Congress. Yet immediately following the historic moment, he ate lunch with homeless people at a local parish. In Philadelphia, he visited a maximum-security prison before celebrating Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Other trips have seen the Pope visit refugee camps, elderly person homes and hospitals.

"He always tries to visit places where people are suffering," Mr Torielli told CNS, "places where he can feel people's lived experienced".

As for where the Pope will travel next, Pope Francis has indicated a possible trip to Mongolia is on the horizon. Mr Torielli noted that a papal trip to India which was previously in the works could be revived.

He added that it is Pope Francis' dreams to travel to one place where his predecessor, St John Paul II, had also wanted to go but never managed: China.



Dancers perform during the entrance procession as Pope Francis celebrates Mass at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan, February 5, 2023.



Pope Francis listens to traditional musicians as he arrives for a meetings at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, September 15, 2022.

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Pope Francis has ‘jumped Church forward’ in Jewish-Catholic relations, say experts



Rabbi Abraham Skorka of Buenos Aires and Pope Francis embrace after visiting the Western Wall in Jerusalem in 2014. Photo: CNS

Over the past 10 years, Pope Francis has moved Jewish-Catholic relations forward in profound ways, interfaith experts have said - with much of the credit going to the Pope's long-standing friendships with Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Abraham Skorka. "When Pope Francis

reflects on any Jewish matter, along with his knowledge, undoubtedly the affections forged with his Jewish friends appear in his mind and heart," Rabbi Skorka said. Scholars such as Adam Gregerman, co-director of the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations at St Joseph's University in Philadelphia, said the Pope's

apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), which affirmed God's ongoing relationship with the Jewish people, has marked "a genuine advance theologically," and "a change from the beginning of the 20th Century when Popes saw Jews as having no ongoing religious validity".

Pontiff has brought ‘new life, fresh air’ to Muslim-Catholic relations

Over his decade-long papacy, Pope Francis has reinvigorated Catholic-Muslim relations through authentic friendships and a focus on shared concerns such as basic human rights, immigration and environmental care, two interfaith experts have insisted. "I think in many ways he has brought new life and a breath of fresh air to Muslim-Catholic dialogue," said Imam Saffet A. Catovic, programmes manager and head of the Islamic Society of North America's (ISNA) Office for Interfaith, Community Alliances and Government Relations. "We've been engaged with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops since 1996 in a formal way, and the Pope has given a new impetus to the conversations that have been taking place."

Mehnaz M. Afridi, professor of religious studies and director of the Holocaust, Genocide and Interfaith Centre at Manhattan College in New York, said the Pope has shown "a certain humility, grace and acceptance" in approaching the Muslim



Pope Francis is greeted by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of Shiite Islam's most authoritative figures, during a courtesy visit in Najaf, Iraq in 2021. Photo: CNS

community, while inspiring Christians to live out their faith. "He is using Christian teaching to open up Christian minds all over the world

to look at recent immigrants from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan as part of reaching out to the other," she said. "That has been a major push."

"I dream of a Church transformed." – Pope Francis

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The Irish Catholic

Pastoral and practical: Francis seeks healing, hardline against abuse



Carol Glatz

Pope Francis has held up two recurring images the past decade: the good shepherd who looks for the lost sheep, and who lays down his life to defend and save them; and the good Samaritan, who did not ignore, pity or judge the wounded traveller, but helped him without asking for anything in return.

“God thinks like the Samaritan” and “God thinks like the shepherd”, the Pope said in his first general audience talk March 27, 2013, calling on everyone to enter “more deeply into the logic of God” in their daily lives.

It is this same “logic” of God’s love and protection that Pope Francis has used to address the abuse crisis in the Catholic Church.

“The hallmark” of the Pope’s approach is the way he listens to survivors and understands “how deep the wounds go”, said Jesuit Fr Hans Zollner, a leading safeguarding expert and a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors since its establishment in 2014.

“He doesn’t run away, he listens carefully” with great empathy, and he regularly meets with survivors privately, Fr Zollner told *Catholic News Service*. “He’s a model for each (person) within the Church and especially those in authority.”

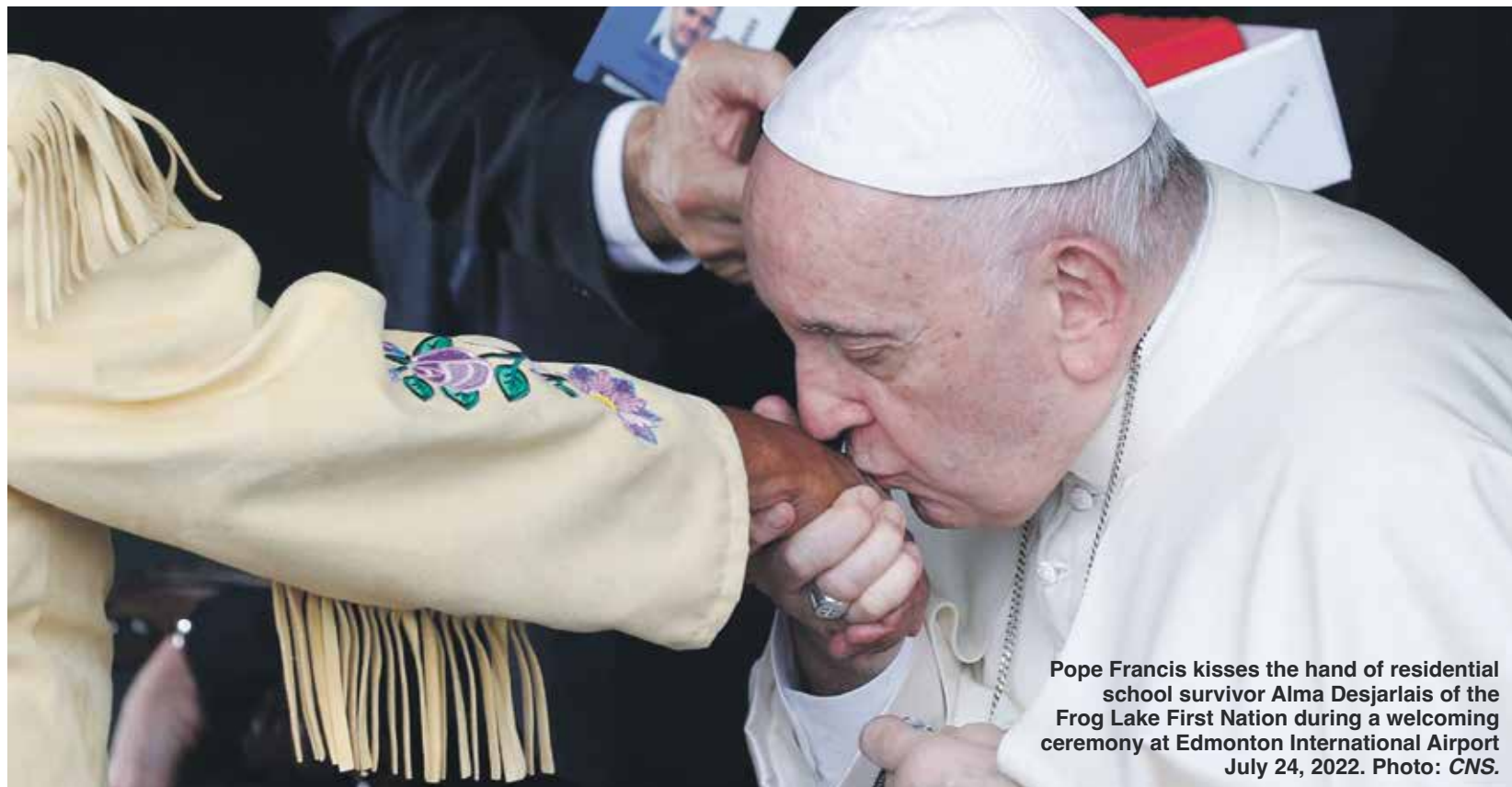
It is indicative of his desire for the Church to be a field hospital, Deacon Bernie Nojadera, executive director of the Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, told *CNS*.

“He modelled humility and was able to say sorry when he was wrong,” Mr Nojadera said. “He has asked for help and has sought advice from our sisters and brothers who have been harmed, molested or abused by the Church and its members.”

The Pope has insisted that by meeting personally with survivors and learning “to weep”, leaders will understand the full gravity of abuse and, therefore, want to help the wounded, eradicate the evil and make amends.

This is the roadmap for action he clearly outlined in his homily at Mass celebrated in his residence with a group of clergy sex abuse victims in 2014.

The Lord tells Peter, “Go



Pope Francis kisses the hand of residential school survivor Alma Desjarlais of the Frog Lake First Nation during a welcoming ceremony at Edmonton International Airport July 24, 2022. Photo: CNS.

back and feed my sheep’ – and I would add – ‘let no wolf enter the sheepfold,’” the Pope said, asking for “the grace to weep, the grace for the Church to weep and make reparation for her sons and daughters who betrayed their mission, who abused innocent persons.”

In that homily, Pope Francis called the sexual abuse of minors not just a grave sin, but a “crime” so “despicable” it is akin to “a sacrilegious cult”. He promised “zero tolerance,” saying “there is no place in the Church’s ministry for those who commit these abuses, and I commit myself not to tolerate harm done to a minor by any individual.”

Bishops must foster the protection of minors “and they will be held accountable,” he warned, delivering on that promise five years later with *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which revised and clarified norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable.

Predecessor

Pope Francis has built on the foundation left by his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, said Fr Zollner, who is director of the Institute of Anthropology: Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University.

Pope Francis put the problem of abuse and the need to protect the most vulnerable “on the agenda of the global Church,” Fr Zollner said. It was a point he drove home when he convened a summit in 2019 for the presidents of bishops’ conferences, representatives

of religious orders and heads of Vatican offices demanding concrete action by everyone.

Mark Joseph Williams, a survivor of clergy sex abuse, who serves as special adviser to Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, told *CNS* that the Pope is “a man of mercy and has shown the global Church why it is so critical to listen to the voices of victims/survivors”.

“Most certainly, the synod on synodality journey has much promise to embrace those so hurt by the Church,” he said, and, at the same time, “realise that this same Church that failed so many, like me, can be the haven for healing, a place for greater prevention, a sanctuary for sustained justice”.

“Pope Francis called the sexual abuse of minors not just a grave sin, but a ‘crime’ so ‘despicable’ it is akin to ‘a sacrilegious cult’”

Fr Zollner said Pope Francis “has changed Church law more than his predecessors have” regarding abuse.

His 2016 *motu proprio*, “As a Loving Mother”, expanded on canon law that allows for the removal of bishops and superiors for serious negligence or “lack of diligence” in the exercise of their office, in particular in regard to the sexual abuse of minors.

The document together with *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* aim to correct what had been a lack of or

unclear procedures for investigating the way a bishop or religious superior complies with norms and clearly expresses the consequences of noncompliance or cover-ups.

The Pope also waived the obligation of secrecy for those who report having been sexually abused by a priest and for those who testify in a Church trial or process having to do with clerical sexual abuse.

Confidentiality

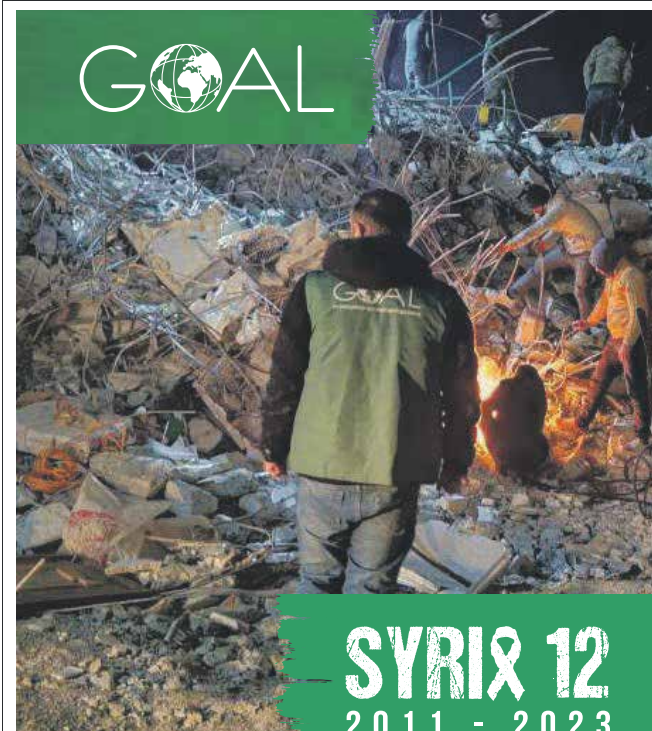
While Vatican officials are still obliged to maintain confidentiality, the change removes potential conflicts with civil laws, including on mandatory reporting, and with following civil court orders, such as turning over documents considered as potential evidence.

Abolishing the pontifical secret in cases of sexual violence and abuse of minors by clergy was a fundamental change, Fr Zollner said, because it reaffirmed “that state law has to be respected and followed independently from what the Church thinks about it and does” regarding its own laws.

“Pope Francis has moved mountains when it comes to the clergy abuse crisis across the entire Church,” Mr Williams said. “I have personally felt his healing balm in word and deed.”

“There is still a lot to do,” Fr Zollner said.

Laws and guidelines alone do not change habits and mentalities, he said. “We need to form a new generation of Church leaders” so that the old “culture of silence” is replaced by a culture of healing and safeguarding.



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Pope from 'ends of the earth' brings new style to Rome



Carol Glatz

Right from the start, upon his election, Pope Francis presented a whole new style of being pontiff.

The way he spoke to the vast crowd after his election March 13, 2013, was familial and down-to-earth, beginning with, "Brothers and sisters, good evening," and ending with "We'll see each other soon!" and "Have a good night and sleep well!"

He repeatedly referred to himself as "bishop of Rome," which eventually ended up being his sole title in the *Annuario Pontificio*, the Vatican yearbook, and would be another sign of his vision for renewal by promoting a more collegial and decentralised Church.

And his invitation to the crowd on the day he was elected – "Let's begin this journey" with "fraternity, love, trust" and prayer, and "may it be fruitful for evangelisation" – was a clear sign of a new style he saw for the entire Church, that of synodality, with all brothers and sisters in the Faith walking, praying and evangelising together.

That first night also gave a glimpse into how Pope Francis would lead the universal Church in the uncharted situation of having a retired pope in the wings. He led everyone in prayer "for our Bishop Emeritus Benedict XVI".

Choices

Many of his most unexpected choices on how he would live as pope were offered as a kind of, "Do as I do, not just as I say," especially to his brother bishops around the world. He chose to live in a Vatican guesthouse instead of the Apostolic Palace, he has used an annual penance

celebration at the Vatican to publicly go to Confession, he responds to many people who write to him with a letter, note or phone call, he meets regularly with victims of abuse, and he has gone in person to pay a bill, to pick up a new pair of glasses and to visit the elderly and the sick.

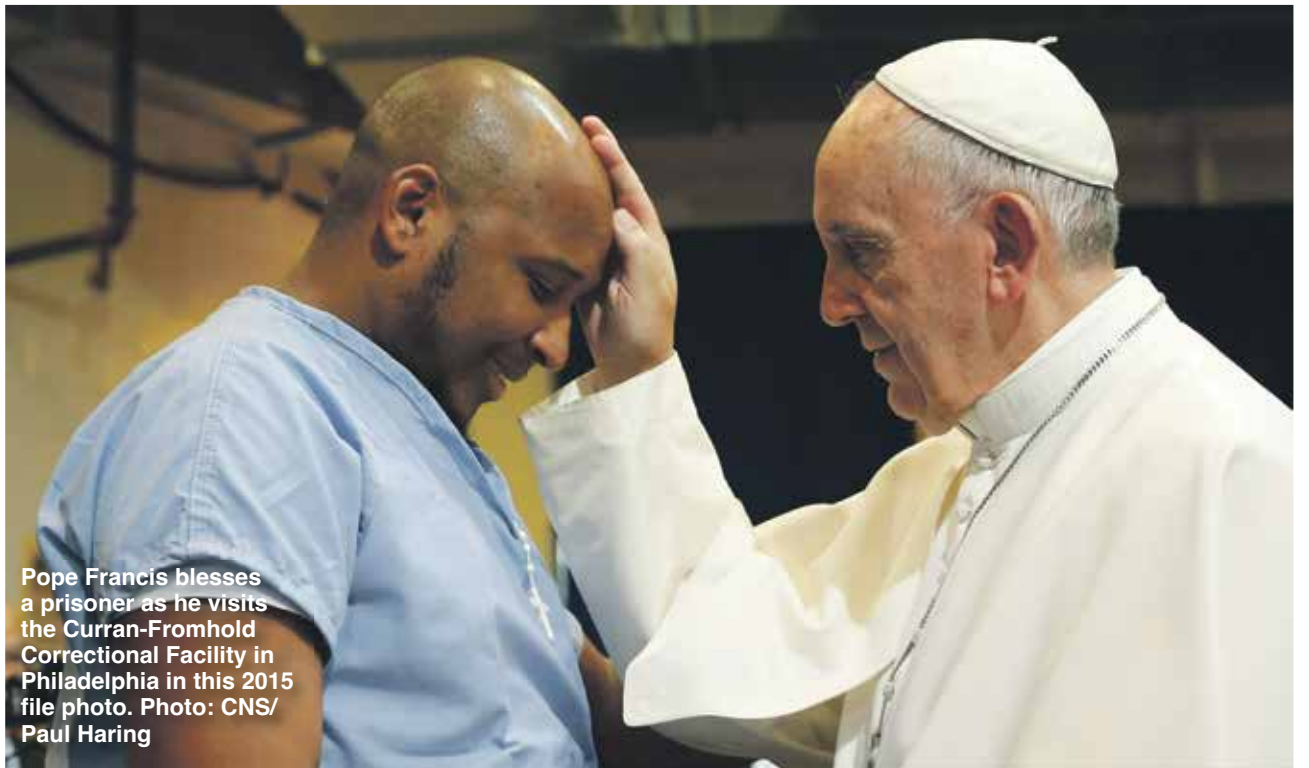
The election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, marked the first time a Jesuit was made pope. He ushered in a number of styles characteristic of his order: the Ignatian practice of discernment for making decisions in the presence of God; seeking God's presence in all things; and a penchant for boiling his talks down to three bullet points.

He was the first pope to come from the Americas, born of immigrant Italian parents; this second-generation experience lent lived authenticity to his insistence migrants be respected, integrated and appreciated for their hard work and the rich diversity they bring to a host nation.

“He repeatedly referred to himself as ‘bishop of Rome,’ which eventually ended up being his sole title in the *Annuario Pontificio*”

Most indicative of his unique style was choosing the name "Francis" to honour St Francis of Assisi, known for his poverty, commitment to peace and love of creation. It was a signal of the style to come: simplicity, humility, working with the poor, desiring a Church that is poor and for the poor, and further deepening his predecessor's love of creation integrated with a respect for all life.

Under his watch, the papal charities office has increased its outreach, particularly to the homeless who live near the Vatican and in other parts of the world, such as



Pope Francis blesses a prisoner as he visits the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia in this 2015 file photo. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

Ukraine, where he has sent his papal almoner to deliver aid directly and convey his prayers.

He also set aside the usual practice of washing the feet of 12 priests during a public celebration of the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper. Instead, he has celebrated smaller Masses – closed to the public – in prisons, refugee centres and rehabilitation centres, washing the feet of Catholics and non-Catholics, men and women, in order to show Christ's love for everyone, especially the most marginalised.

Outreach

His idea of "outreach" has included reaching outside the Vatican bubble. He called in "outsiders" as the majority of the members of his International Council of Cardinals and of the Vatican safeguarding commission. He gets a new personal secretary every few years and gives dozens of interviews to big and small media outlets.

His desire to "speak from the heart" means many off-the-cuff comments, homespun anecdotes, sharp rebukes or critiques and an occasional statement that requires clarification or an apology.

A native-Spanish speaker who grew up with Italian-speaking relatives in Argentina, the Pope merges a number of styles and, as a former high school teacher, often draws on literary themes and rhetorical devices.

Metaphors

His memorable metaphors and allegories have a religious message: priests need to be "shepherds living with the 'smell of sheep'"; Confession is not "sitting down in a torture chamber"; and Catholics must resist "a throwaway culture" that readily disposes of people's lives and dignity.

Pope Francis also has offered a new approach to evangelisation that he had mapped out in his brief address during the pre-conclave meetings of the cardinals. Cardinal Bergoglio's words struck a chord with his listeners and formed the basis of his blueprint as pope.

The outline of his talk said that when the Church is self-referential with a kind of theological narcissism, it gets sick and is unable to carry out its mission to go out and evangelise; in effect, such a Church keeps Jesus within and does not let him out.

Jesus is knocking so that "we will let him come out," the then-Cardinal Bergoglio had said, and the next pope needs to help the Church go out to the "peripheries" and become "the fruitful mother who gains life from the sweet and comforting joy of evangelising".

“His memorable metaphors and allegories have a religious message: priests need to be ‘shepherds living with the ‘smell of sheep’”

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Pope Francis' major documents on reform, evangelisation and caring for creation

In documents issued during his first 10 years in office, Pope Francis covered topics as diverse as strengthening one's Faith, evangelisation, caring for creation, accompanying families and young people, and respecting indigenous peoples.

He wrote a major document on reforming the Roman Curia, three encyclicals and five apostolic exhortations. Here is a list of his major texts:

Apostolic constitution:

Prædicare Evangelium (Preach the Gospel): The Pope's long awaited apostolic constitution on the reform of the Roman Curia was released in 2022. It replaced St John Paul II's 1988 constitution, *Pastor Bonus*, and reorganised the Roman Curia to highlight its role in promoting the Church as a community of missionary disciples, sharing the Gospel and caring for all those in need.

Apostolic letters:

- *Desiderio Desideravi* (I have earnestly desired). In this 2022 letter, the Pope insisted that Catholics need to better understand the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and its goal of promoting the "full, conscious, active and fruitful celebration" of the Mass. He reflected on the power and beauty of the Mass, emphasised the need to limit celebrations of the liturgy according to the rite in use before the Second Vatican Council and called for greater awareness of the sacrifice of Christ and his real presence in the Eucharist.
- *Traditionis Custodes* (Guardians of the Tradition) was published in 2021 and declared the liturgical books promulgated after the Second Vatican Council to be "the unique expression of the 'lex orandi' (law of worship) of the Roman Rite", restoring the obligation of priests to have their



Pope Francis delivers a June 9, 2021, video message to participants of an online forum titled 'Where are we with Amoris Laetitia'.

bishops' permission to celebrate according to the "extraordinary" or pre-Vatican II Mass and ordering bishops not to establish any new groups or parishes in their dioceses devoted to the old liturgy.

- *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the light of the world). The document, published in 2019, revised and clarified norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable when accused of abuse or of covering up for priests or other churchworkers accused of sexu-

ally abusing minors or vulnerable adults. It requires all priests and religious to report suspected abuse or cover-ups and encourages any layperson to report through a now-mandated reporting "system" or office that must be set up in each diocese.

Encyclicals:

- *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith) was Pope Francis' first encyclical, published in 2013. It was built largely on the work of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, completing a trilogy of encyclicals

on the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The encyclical on faith encouraged Catholics to embrace their faith more fully.

- *Laudato si'*, On Care for Our Common Home, was published in 2015. He said his encyclical on the environment was a means of entering into dialogue with all people about humanity's responsibility toward "the common home that God has entrusted to us".
- *Fratelli Tutti*, on Fraternity and Social Friendship, was published in 2020. It highlighted what the Pope said were urgent social, political and religious issues and the need to address them together based on the truth that all people are brothers and sisters, leading to greater solidarity and concern for the poor and the Earth.

Post-synodal apostolic exhortations:

- *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). The document on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world was published in 2013 with the aim of encouraging the missionary renewal of all members of the Church. Calling for a new chapter in evangelisation, the Pope also provided a clear guide to joy of the beatitudes, the grace of discernment and the signs of holiness that express a person's love for God and neighbour.
- *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). The Pope's 2016 post-synodal exhortation on marriage, love and family life brought together

the results of the two Synods of Bishops on the family, looking at the challenges experienced by families and affirming the importance of accompaniment when providing pastoral care, particularly to people seeking to regularise their marriages.

- *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad). The 2018 apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness challenged Christians to take the dignity of all human life seriously, viewing it in light of Christ's incarnation. The Pope offered a road map for simple ways that everyday people can be holy.
- *Christus Vivit* (Christ is Alive), published in 2019, was the Pope's response to the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, the Faith and vocational discernment. In the text, the Pope told young people they are loved and valued and needed by the Church and he pleaded with older members of the Church not to stifle the enthusiasm of the young, but to offer gentle guidance when needed.
- *Querida Amazonia* (The Beloved Amazon) was a 2020 post-synodal exhortation in response to the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon. It called for an end to exploitation of the indigenous peoples and the natural resources of the Amazon and for greater efforts to organise regular pastoral care of Catholics in the region, including by recognising the role women play in Catholic communities, respecting popular forms of piety and working to inculcate the Faith in Amazonian cultures.



Pope Francis meets with a group of clergy and laypeople advising the French bishops' conference on ecological policies and on promoting the teaching in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home, September 3, 2020.

What St Patrick teaches about resilience



In the face of adversity, our patron saint's deep trust in God grew even stronger, writes Fr Eamonn Conway

St Patrick faced three major challenges in his life. The first was when he was captured as a slave; the other two, when he returned to Ireland as a missionary bishop.

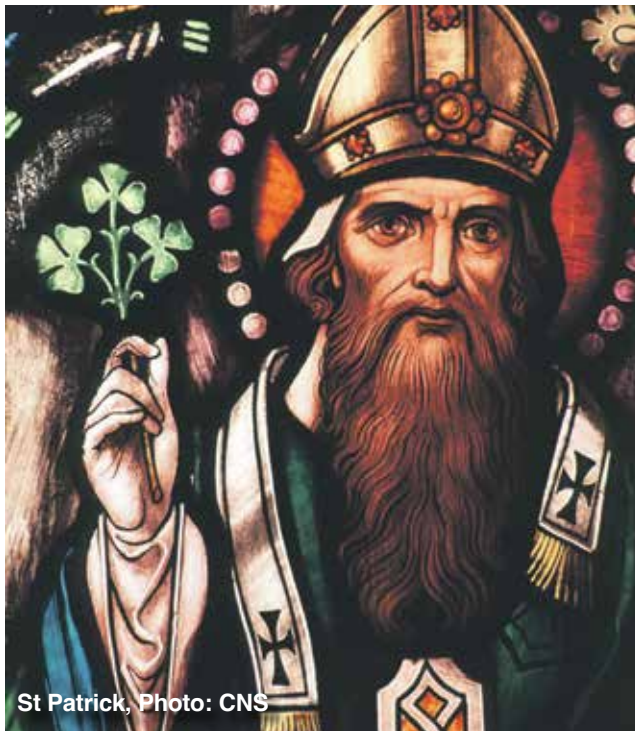
Patrick was 15-years-old when he was kidnapped and enslaved in Ireland for six years. While still a teenager, he found himself, in his own words, "an untaught refugee... who [did] not know how to

provide for the future...like a stone lying in deep mud." Most of the time he was hungry and cold, dwelling in lonely woods and on mountain sides in harsh conditions. Eventually he escaped only to be taken captive once again before escaping for a second time and making his way home.

Resilience

Years later when he returned to Ireland as a bishop, every grain of resilience Patrick had accumulated as a teenager was put to the test. By this time, he had become quite influential as a Church leader, sufficiently so that he had attracted powerful enemies. His writings recall two traumatic events in his ministry.

The first had to do with him being put on trial by senior bishops back in Britain who had oversight of his mission. They accused him of being unfit to serve as a bishop and they used as a pretext to get rid of him knowledge of a sin he had committed some 30 years earlier when he was 14, and which had since come to light. This is what Patrick tells us of the confession he made as a youth that later got him into difficulty: "In the anxiety of my troubled mind I confided to my dearest friend what I had



St Patrick, Photo: CNS

done in my boyhood one day, in one hour indeed, because I had not yet overcome my sinful ways." The one he describes as his "dearest friend", the one to whom, in his own words he had "confided [his] very soul", subsequently became a senior bishop, indeed one of the bishops overseeing his trial. It seems that initially, this "dearest friend" and now fellow bishop promised to speak

up for Patrick. When the time came, however, he publicly let Patrick down.

Betrayal

Patrick's sense of hurt and betrayal is palpable. He says the impulse to give up was overpowering. He doesn't tell us how he prevailed, only to say that "the Lord graciously spared me and helped me greatly when I was trampled

upon in this way...I did not come out of it badly considering the disgrace and blame I felt."

Confessio

This first incident is described in St Patrick's *Confessio*. The second incident, the enslavement and murder of converts he had baptised by the soldiers of a Briton called Coroticus, is detailed in a formal letter of excommunication he wrote. This letter expresses both Patrick's anguish and anger. These murderers, will, he says, "be slaves of hell in everlasting punishment". Yet, he also voices his conviction that God's grace will triumph even in the face of these unspeakable horrors.

God's grace is a match not only for the external evils Patrick encounters. It is also a match for his own deficiencies and shortcomings, about which he is quite open. His Confession, begins with the words "I am Patrick, a sinner, the most rustic and least of all the faithful".

So here we have three events from the life of St Patrick: exile and enslavement, personal betrayal and professional disgrace, and the destruction of the flock that represented his life's work. Any

one of these would be enough to bring down most people. Yet despite the adversities he faced, Patrick's deep personal sense of God's trustworthiness grew stronger the more his life was thrown into crisis. Forged in the crucible of suffering, Patrick learned, in his own words, "to praise and proclaim [God's] name in all places, not only when things go well but also in times of stress".

Pope Francis reminds us that, "The saints are not superman, nor were they born perfect...They spent their lives serving others, they endured suffering and adversity without hatred and responded to evil with good, spreading joy and peace. This is the life of a saint".

Many of us struggle nowadays when we face adversity; resilience education and well-being training have become part of life, but usually without a religious or faith dimension. Yet, we do not have to look beyond our patron saint to see that a lively and trusting relationship with God counts for a lot when our back is to the wall.

1 Fr Eamonn Conway is a priest of the Tuam Archdiocese and Professor of Integral Human Development at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.

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Pope's Curia reform complete, financial reform ongoing



Pope Francis speaks during an audience to exchange Christmas greetings with members of the Roman Curia in Clementine Hall at the Vatican December 22, 2014. Photo: CNS.



Cindy Wooden

From the beginning of his pontificate 10 years ago, Pope Francis set out to reform the structure and attitudes of the Roman Curia and knew he also had to reform the Vatican's financial system and stewardship of resources.

One month after his election, he announced he was forming an international Council of Cardinals to advise him on governance and, in September 2013, the council began studying ways to reorganise the Curia.

Praedicate Evangelium

Nine years passed before Pope Francis promulgated *Praedicate Evangelium* ('Preach the Gospel'), his apostolic constitution finalising the Curia reorganisation and highlighting its role as a body existing to help the Pope and local bishops share the Gospel and care for the poor.

The emphasis on service and evangelisation was a point Pope Francis made repeatedly to

Curia officials, most notably in his annual Christmas greetings, which often were seen as more chastising than cheery.

“Before he has, let's say, a managerial style or business administration model, he's a man of faith and hope and, indeed, of charity”

The most famous of those speeches came in 2014 when he listed the “diseases” to which Curia officials are susceptible, including: thinking they are “downright indispensable”; “the ‘Martha complex’ of excessive busyness”; “mental and spiritual ‘petrification’” or having “a heart of stone”; “spiritual Alzheimer's disease,” which involves forgetting one's own salvation and vocational call; gossiping; and idolising or courting superiors in the hope of promotion.

But nine years is a long time to accomplish what was supposed to be a priority.

Canadian Cardinal Michael

Czerny said that says something about the Pope, which is “that before he has, let's say, a managerial style or business administration model, he's a man of faith and hope and, indeed, of charity”.

“In other words, to have the faith to spend nine years to work out a reform before springing it on everyone, I think is magnificent,” he said. “It's absolutely mind blowing to have that kind of faith, not to be anxious and rush and push and cajole, and all sorts of other things that many of us are very tempted to do and, in fact, do do” only to find out that no one was onboard.

Financial reforms

The economic and financial reforms are going even more slowly, and their urgency is seen in the Vatican's mega-trial of 10 people, including Cardinal Angelo Becciu, on charges of financial malfeasance related to a property deal in which the Vatican lost some \$200 million (€189 million).

Pope Francis has expanded the efforts begun by Pope Benedict XVI to monitor transactions, standardise budgeting procedures and

ensure the Vatican bank and other financial offices are not being used for illegal activity.

“Some hundreds of millions of euros were tucked away in particular sectional accounts and did not appear on the balance sheet”

In 2014 the Pope established the Council for the Economy, a body of eight cardinals and bishops and seven lay experts “to consider policies and practices and to prepare and analyse reports on the economic-administrative activities of the Holy See”.

He also set up the Secretariat for the Economy, which reports to the council, and was to have “authority over all the economic and administrative activities within the Holy See and the Vatican City State”, including budget making, financial planning, hiring, procurement and the preparation of detailed financial statements.

The first head of the secretariat was Cardinal George Pell, who set out to consolidate the use of modern

budgeting practices, beginning with giving the Pope an accurate picture of the assets and expenditures of all Vatican offices, including the Secretariat of State.

Tensions

But that led to some tensions with offices that were used to keeping their own accounts. In December 2014, Cardinal Pell said in an interview that the new budgeting and reporting procedures had meant his office discovered “some hundreds of millions of euros were tucked away in particular sectional accounts and did not appear on the balance sheet”.

The Vatican press office jumped in a day later to clarify that the money did not represent “illegal, illicit or badly managed funds,” just assets being held in numerous administrative offices that were not considered part of the main institutions of the Roman Curia.

In 2020 Pope Francis named Jesuit Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves to lead the secretariat; when he stepped down in November after almost three years in the job, he said progress had been made in improving the transparency and credibility of Vatican financial activities and accounting.

However, he said, the goal of reform continues, particularly in centralising investments rather than having multiple offices handling their own; clarifying and simplifying the rules for purchases and awarding contracts; and completing the setup of the new Directorate for Human Resources.

“To have the faith to spend nine years to work out a reform before springing it on everyone, I think is magnificent”



Justin McLellan

When Pope Francis greeted the thousands of faithful gathered in a rain-soaked St Peter's Square March 13, 2013, he quipped that his brother cardinals looked almost to "the ends of the earth" to find a new bishop of Rome.

The end of the world, in this case, was Buenos Aires, Argentina, where Pope Francis was born to Italian immigrants in 1936 and served as archbishop from 1998 until he became pope in 2013. He is the first pope born outside of Europe since the year 741 and the first from Latin America, where an estimated 40% of the world's Catholic population lives.

That distinction has moulded Pope Francis' approach to governing the Church over the first 10 years of his pontificate, forging pastoral priorities and doctrinal decision-making rooted in his identity as a servant of the people in Buenos Aires' *villas miserias*, or shantytowns, first during a military dictatorship and then during a profound financial crisis.

Theology

"Usually, European popes start thinking about theology from philosophy," Emilce Cuda, secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, told *Catholic News Service*. But in Latin America, she said, looking at humanity's relationship to God begins with common people.

Ms Cuda said that's because Latin America was "the first continent to take seriously the Second Vatican Council" and with it the idea that God's will can be discovered by listening to all baptised members of the Church.

The resulting openness to "com-



Pope Francis prays at a cross on the border between El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, before celebrating Mass February 17, 2016. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

munal discernment," as Ms Cuda described it, characterised the early priestly life of Pope Francis, who was ordained a priest just four years after the council ended, and extended all the way into one of the most recent events of his pontificate: the opening of the current Synod of Bishops.

“Usually, European popes start thinking about theology from philosophy”

The synod seeks to gather input from all baptised members of the

Church to inform discussions among the world's bishops on building a listening Church. The bishops will meet in Rome in two sessions, the first in October and then again one year later.

"It's not a different theology, it's not a different Church, it's not a Latin American Pope now at the top of the Catholic Church; it's the continuation of one tradition that began in the '60s in this council," Ms Cuda told *CNS*. "Pope Francis is going ahead with this challenge that started with the Second Vatican Council."

Mar Muñoz-Visoso, executive director of the US bishops' Secre-

tariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, told *CNS* that Pope Francis' Latin American pastoral style was translated into Church teaching right from the start of his pontificate.

As an example, she cited his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, on proclaiming the Gospel in today's world, and likened it to the final document from the Latin American bishops' council meeting in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007. Pope Francis led the committee that drafted the document, which insisted evangelisation in Latin America must involve close engagement with the Faithful and especially those on the margins of society.

The Aparecida document reflected what Ms Muñoz-Visoso called the Latin American Church's "strong sense of mission," as well as its "communitarian" nature.

"One could say *Evangelii Gaudium* takes the main tenets of Aparecida and re-proposes them for the universal Church," she said, including the "rich tradition of collegiality and common discernment" in the Latin American Church.

Contribution

That contribution to the universal Church from what has historically been considered the margin of the theological world is what Dr Hosffman Ospino, associate professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education at Boston College, identified as the greatest impact of Pope Francis' pontificate.

"We have traditionally looked at Latin America as mission territory, but we haven't looked to it for leadership. Francis changes

all that," he told *CNS*. "He shows that Latin American Catholicism is vibrant with much energy that is both theological and pastoral."

For Latin American immigrants, especially in Europe and the United States, Dr Ospino said, the figure of Pope Francis "reaffirmed" their experience of the Church and put them back in contact with a vocabulary of "mission" and a fondness for popular devotion typical of the churches they grew up in.

“The Aparecida document reflected what Ms Muñoz-Visoso called the Latin American Church's 'strong sense of mission,' as well as its 'communitarian' nature”

Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, told *CNS* that having a pope from Latin America has "opened up to the universal Church the perspective of Latin America". As the leader of a diocese that borders Mexico, Bishop Flores said Pope Francis' pastoral style and care for migrants "very much resonates" with the reality of the Rio Grande Valley.

"Everyone brings their history with them when they serve in the priesthood, and certainly in the papacy," he said, "and his pastoral sense of trying not to forget anybody and trying to always keep in mind who might not be taken care of is something that is very much born out of that Latin American experience".

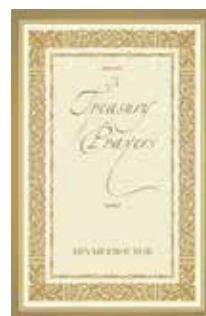


Pope Francis uses incense while celebrating Mass for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Photo: CNS/Paolo Galosi, Press Group

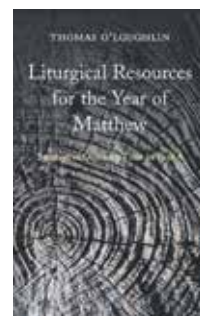
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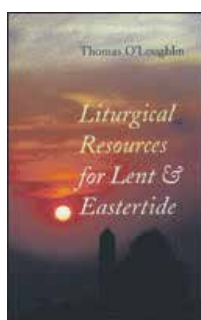
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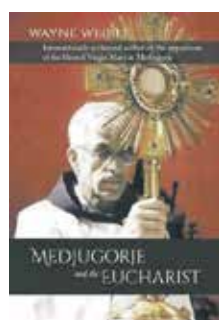
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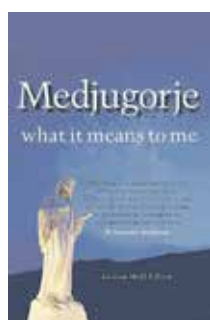
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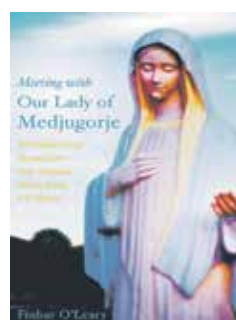
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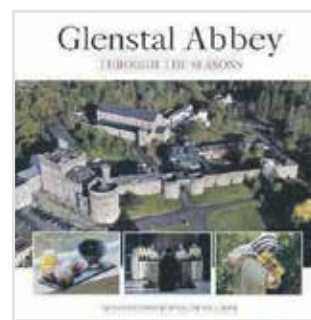
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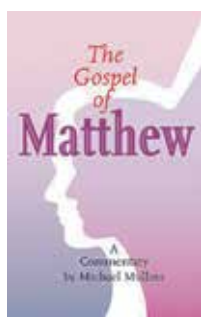
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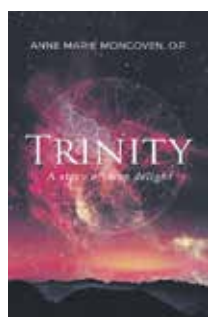
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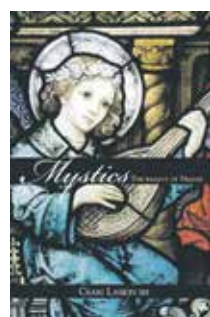
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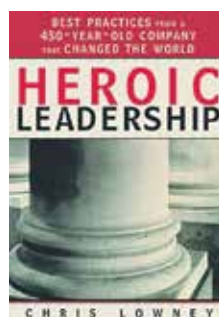
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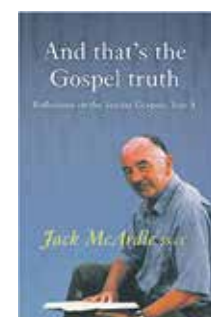
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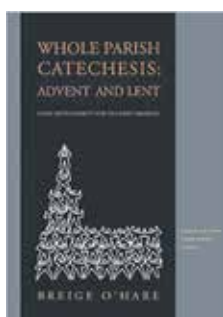
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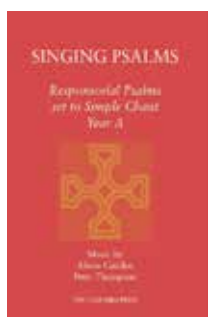
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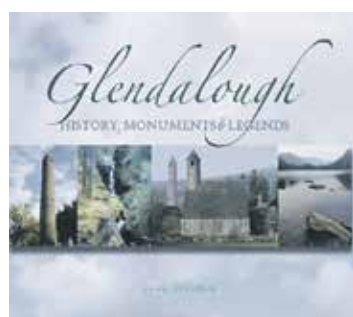
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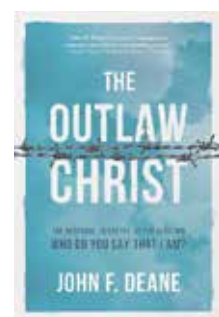
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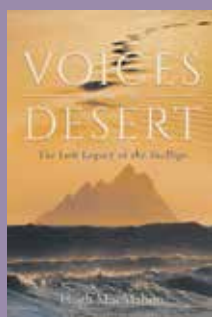


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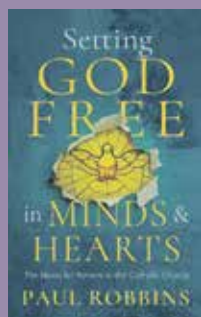


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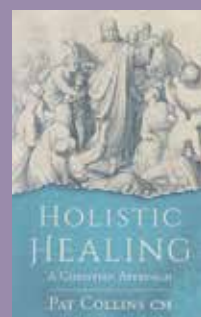
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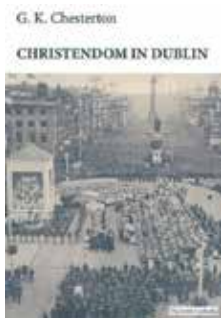
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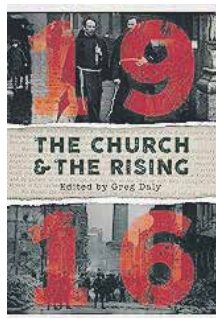
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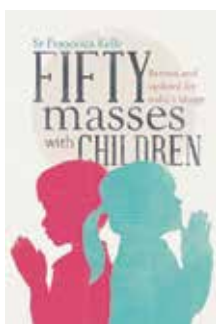
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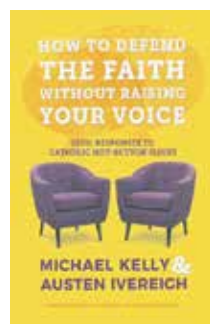
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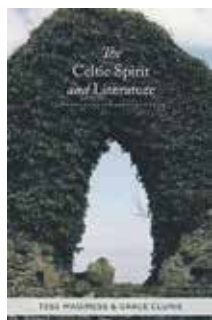
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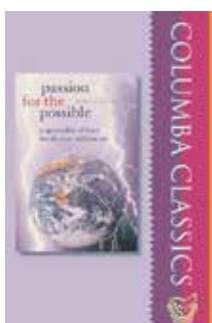
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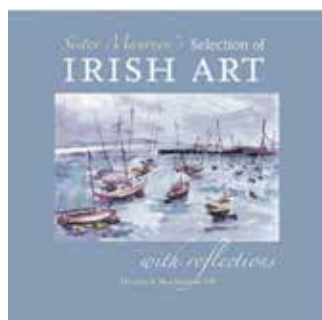
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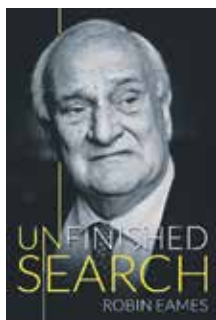
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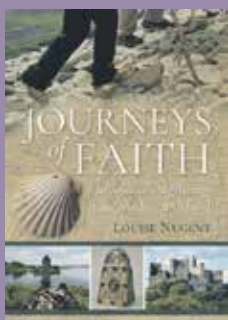
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How I learned Pope Francis was a true ‘Pope of peripheries’



Inés San Martín

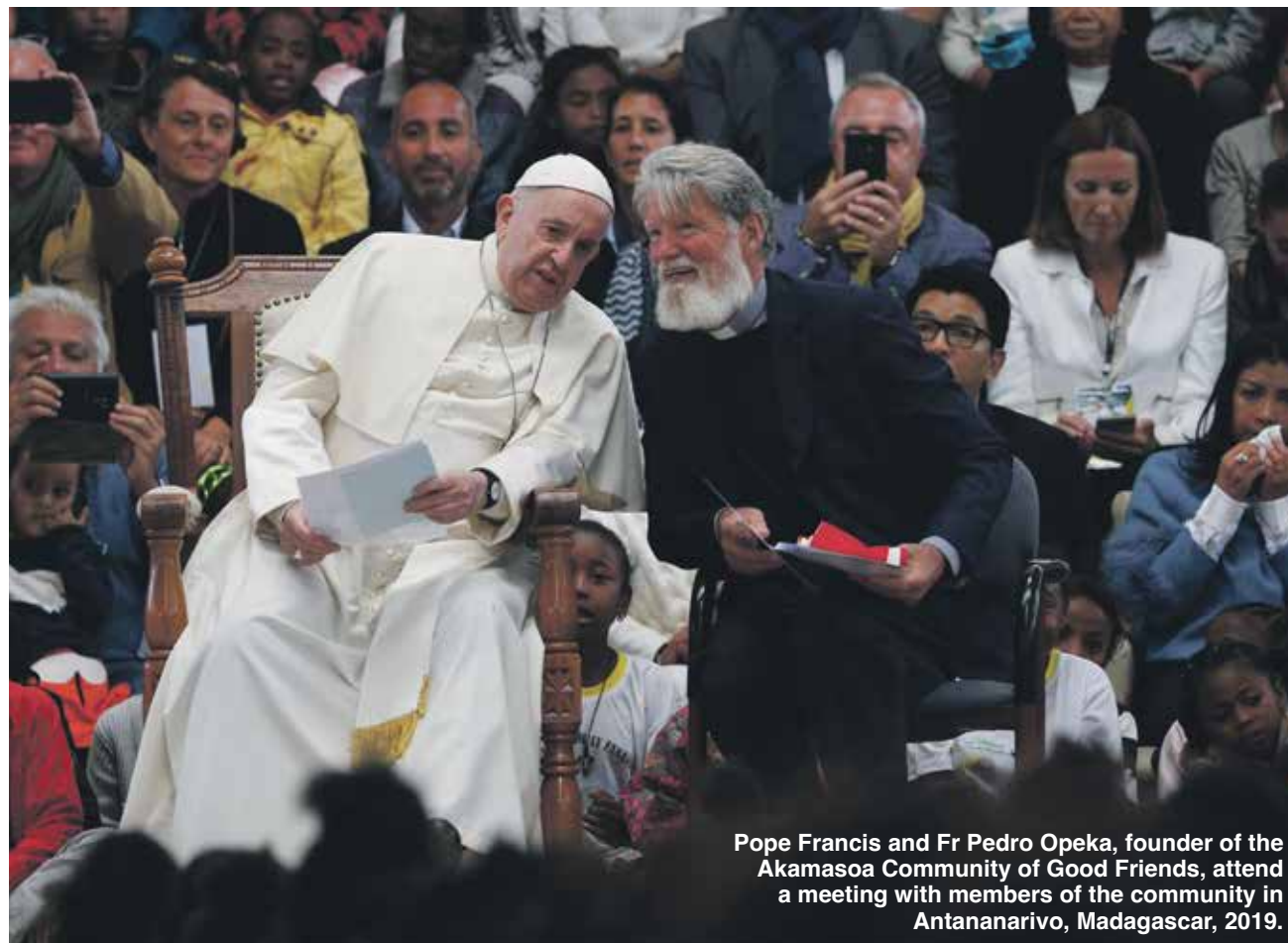
It is often said that we are our truest selves when we are happy, comfortable and surrounded by those we love and trust. During each of the nearly 30 trips I made with Pope Francis, there was always a memorable moment when his true self would come out to play. Early on, we would recognise this moment. The Pontiff would completely disregard his prepared remarks and start speaking in Spanish – with the interpreter often struggling to keep up – particularly when he lapsed into Argentinian patois

These days, more settled into his role of a globe-trotting Pope and less prone to go off-script when speaking to thousands, you can still identify the moment where he forgets that he carries the earthly concerns of the Catholic Church on his shoulders, and he’s back to being that young man who vowed to dedicate his life to Christ. These moments never occur during the mandatory visits with politicians, nor during the necessarily solemn Masses.

Peripheries

The Pope of the peripheries comes truly alive in the soccer stadiums surrounded by thousands of youth in South Korea, in a high-security prison in Mexico, or in a municipal dump-turned-city within a city in Antananarivo, capital of Madagascar. The joy Pope Francis felt when visiting fellow Argentine, Fr Pedro Opeka, missionary and founder of Akamasoa, the humanitarian association that serves the people living in the garbage dump, is ingrained in the hearts and minds of many of the often-jaded reporters who get to travel aboard the papal plane.

Fr Opeka turned a place where children would fight with dogs over discarded food into a city of friendship, with its own schools, universities, sports centres and a Church that welcomes friends and foes of the Faith



Pope Francis and Fr Pedro Opeka, founder of the Akamasoa Community of Good Friends, attend a meeting with members of the community in Antananarivo, Madagascar, 2019.

every weekend. Sunday Mass in Akamasoa has become a must to anyone visiting.

“Pope Francis called on the world to see not only their plights, sufferings and marginality, but also the many gifts and resources both nations have”

From the start of his pontificate, the first Pope from the global South has been denouncing the piecemeal consumption and exploitation of the third world by the West. Coming from the southern hemisphere, the Pope is particularly aware of this reality and has used his papal platform to give voice to the voiceless who are oppressed by poverty, exploitation, corrupt leadership and war.

We saw it earlier this year, when he fulfilled what he called a “dream” visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, two countries in Africa affected by war, external exploitation and hunger.

From the smallness of these countries – small in the international scene, that is – Pope Francis called on the world to see not only their plights, sufferings and

marginality, but also the many gifts and resources both nations have. As he said of Congo, it is a “land rich in resources and bloodied by a war that never ends”.

When he is on the road, Pope Francis chooses to speak to the world from places that truly need a papal spotlight – not only to highlight the suffering experienced there, but also to highlight the many gifts they could share with the rest of humanity, but with justice. From the Central African Republic to Bangladesh, from Thailand to Paraguay, from Iraq to Kazakhstan, Pope Francis models what he preaches – he is a true Pope of the peripheries.

Marginalised

Even when visiting the world’s superpowers, Pope Francis brought the marginalised to the fore. The historic visit to Cuba on his way to the United States in 2015 wasn’t a pat on the back to the Communist regime. He made a trek, seemingly impossible at the time, to insist on the need to maintain open spaces for diplomatic actions. With reflection and dialogue he wanted to prevent – and in this case try to resolve – problems.

When he went to France in 2014, Pope Francis delivered a sombre diagnosis in

the European parliament in Strasbourg: Europe, he declared, had lost its way, its energies sapped by economic crisis and a remote, technocratic bureaucracy. The continent was only a bystander in a world that had become less Eurocentric. He said the rest of the world often looks at the continent as an old, barren lady: “In many quarters we encounter a general impression of weariness and aging, of a Europe which is now a ‘grandmother’, no longer fertile and vibrant,” the Pontiff stressed.

“People who know the Pope best understand that the idea of a ‘poor Church for the poor’ is a literal one, not a metaphor”

The humbler the people he encountered, it seems, the more prone Francis is to praise and champion them. This is not, of course, a Pope who promotes poverty, but a man who has encountered in the humble ones of this earth, the clear representation of what he means when he calls for a “poor Church for the poor”, one that gets out of the sacristy to find

people where they are – an “*Iglesia en salida*” (or a “Church that goes out”).

A challenge

For many, understanding what he means by this has been a challenge. There are those who think he wants a Marxist, populist or Peronist Church, in reference to Argentina’s Justicialista party, founded by General Juan Domingo Peron and immortalised in an artistic, if historically inaccurate, way by Andrew Lloyd Webber’s ‘*Evita*’. Others believe he wants to reform the Church so it focuses solely on the excluded because they live in situations the Church teaches are irregular – the divorced and civilly remarried couples; those cohabitating; the LGBT community, and so on. But at the end of the day, people who know the Pope best – those who knew him when he was just Fr Jorge Mario Bergoglio – understand that the idea of a “poor Church for the poor” is a literal one, not a metaphor.

Argentine theologian Juan Carlos Scannone says a key part of what shapes Francis’s thought is a strongly Argentinian stream of Catholic thinking called “theology of the people”.

It holds, Scannone told me years ago, that reflection on virtually any topic shouldn’t start with ideological categories, but with the concrete experiences of

ordinary people.

Friends say Fr Bergoglio’s identity was forged by Buenos Aires’ popular religiosity, some of which goes back to the colonial era that brought devotions such as Our Lady of Luján, patroness of Argentina. A second influence is that of immigrants who would wait in line for hours to venerate the image of St Cajetan, patron of bread and work.

“It stems not only from the Gospel but from his first-hand experience of the incredible generosity often displayed by those who have less”

These expressions of popular piety have kept millions flocking to shrines as an expression of the people’s faith. Francis learned to value such expressions of devotion early on, seeing them not merely as quaint or kitschy, but rather as a touchstone for both theology and pastoral activity.

Theological treatises have been written about Pope Francis and this popular religiosity. Another element ingrained in this theology of the people, often ignored, can help us understand his constant reaching out to the humble ones of this earth: it stems not only from the Gospel but from his first-hand experience of the incredible generosity often displayed by those who have less. Mistake me not: I am not romanticising poverty when I say that in those slums of Buenos Aires neighbours know one another by name, help one another when there is nothing to eat, support one another and defend one another from the constant looming threat of substance abuse. In other words, those who have nothing are willing to give everything.

Francis saw this first-hand when walking these slums, and he projects this as the reality on the ground in the peripheries he visits when traveling abroad – most of them lands of mission forsaken by everyone but God.

The Pope of the peripheries shines a light on those who have less not only because he thinks the world can help, but because he knows that the comfortable-but-spiritually impoverished have much to learn from them, including the role of generosity, if we are to build a lasting peace.

Praise, protest for Pope Francis' outreach to LGBTQ persons



Gina Christian

Pope Francis has evoked both praise and protest for his outreach to LGBTQ persons during his decade-long papacy, as he has offered warmth and welcome while upholding the Catholic Church's teaching on human sexuality.

"My experience of Pope Francis has been hope-filled and also frustrating," Dr Ish Ruiz, a gay theologian and post-doctoral fellow in Catholic studies at Emory University, told *OSV News*.

Dr Ruiz praised Pope Francis' "breakthrough papacy", which he said has helped remove barriers between the Catholic Church and LGBTQ persons.

At the same time, Dr Ruiz told *OSV News* he "wishes the Pope would go a little bit further with what he's done" and "allow Church doctrine to be transformed by the grace-filled witness" of LGBTQ persons.

Grace Doerfler, a graduate student in journalism at Stanford University, told *OSV News* that "as a lesbian Catholic, I think (Pope Francis is) really a pastor. ... He has such an attitude of welcome, kindness and love, and I think his papacy has made a real difference in how I and other LGBTQ Catholics feel about the Church, and about staying (in it)."

Yet Ms Doerfler also said she "would love to see a Church where I could have a Church wedding someday, and where Catholic school teachers and other people in ministry could be openly gay and not lose jobs over it".

Early days

Since the early days of his papacy, Pope Francis has offered an open hand to persons experiencing same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria, and recently condemned the criminalisation of homosexuality in several parts of the world.

Asked by a reporter in 2013 about homosexual individuals among the clergy, the Pope famously responded, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

For Matthew – now a married father of two in the St Louis area



Pope Francis greets Jesuit Fr James Martin, author and editor at large of *America* magazine, during a private meeting at the Vatican in this October 1, 2019, file photo. Photo: CNS.

who asked his last name be withheld for privacy – that reply coincided with a growing awareness that he was sensing homosexual inclinations, which along with homosexual acts are regarded as "disordered," according to Church teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

“Struggles to accurately understand Pope Francis on the topic of homosexuality often result from a failure to appreciate the fullness of his pastoral outreach to LGBTQ”

"The 10-year anniversary of Pope Francis really resonates with me, because I was a freshman in college exactly when I started to realise my experience," he told *OSV News*. "This 10-year journey is very much my timeline of my first (recognition) and then realising the beautiful grace (of) the Lord in my life."

While stressing he remains "respectful" of the Pope, Mat-

thew told *OSV News* he wanted to "be real" about how Pope Francis' approach to the topic of homosexuality "has hindered me".

Specifically, Matthew pointed to "ambiguity and lack of clarity" in reports of the Pope's occasional statements to media on the subject, which he told *OSV News* could be misconstrued as support for same-sex unions.

Francesco

Evgeny Afineevsky's 2020 documentary *Francesco* created an uproar when spliced clips from a 2019 interview with Mexican broadcaster *Televisa* appeared to show Pope Francis broadly endorsing legal protections for such civil unions, while defending Church doctrine that made it "a contradiction to speak of homosexual marriage", said the Pope.

Subsequent media coverage showed the film had not included key contextual information and caveats made by the Pope in addressing the topic with journalist Valentina Alazraki.

Struggles to accurately understand Pope Francis on the topic of homosexuality often result from a failure to appreciate the fullness of his pastoral outreach to LGBTQ persons, said Fr Philip Bochanski, a priest of the Philadelphia Archdiocese and executive director of Courage International, a Catholic apostolate that supports same-sex attracted men and women in living chastely according to church teaching.

Pope Francis' approach seeks "to

receive the person and accompany them mercifully, and having heard and received their story, to orient them in the teaching of the Church," Fr Bochanski told *OSV News*.

"It would be too simplistic to say that this Pope says, 'homosexual acts are sinful' or 'who am I to judge?' That's overlooking much of what Pope Francis has said on this topic. He always refers people back to the catechism."

“Fr Martin pointed out Pope Francis has even appointed Juan Carlos Cruz, an openly gay man who advocates for fellow survivors of clergy sex abuse, to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors”

In his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"), Pope Francis summed up that perspective in two back-to-back passages, acknowledging the challenges same-sex attraction presents to both parents and children, and calling for "respectful pastoral guidance" while upholding Church teaching that views same-sex unions as not "even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family".

Above all, "Pope Francis has, through words and gestures, helped to open up the conversation around the Catholic Church and LGBTQ peo-

ple," said Jesuit Father James Martin, a consultor to the Vatican Dicastery for Communication who ministers extensively to LGBTQ persons.

Admitting that "many LGBTQ people in the West tell me that they wish (Pope Francis) would 'go further,'" Fr Martin told *OSV News* the Pope's outreach has "marked a sea change in the Church's approach to this community".

Fr Martin pointed out Pope Francis has even appointed Juan Carlos Cruz, an openly gay man who advocates for fellow survivors of clergy sex abuse, to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

"I don't think we can underestimate how much more welcome LGBTQ people – and their families – feel in their own Church, thanks to Francis," said Fr Martin.

Individual people

The Pope sees not ideologies but "individual people, and he wants to make some kind of path for them to come closer to God", Eve Tushnet, author of *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith*, told *OSV News*.

In so doing, she added, Pope Francis provides a "desperately needed vision for some kind of good future" for LGBTQ persons in the Church.

"The Church has wisdom here," said Ms Tushnet. "The Church gives guidance to shepherd these longings and desires, and a path by which they are made more chaste, and even more loving and giving, than your own desires."

“The Pope sees not ideologies but ‘individual people, and he wants to make some kind of path for them to come closer to God’”



Out&About

Setting down roots



MAYO: On Saturday, February 25, 500 trees – one for each member of the Ukrainian community in the Ballina area – were planted in the grounds of Killala Bishop's House. Bishop John Fleming is pictured with members of the community.



USA: Bagpipers march past St Mary's Church during the annual St Patrick's Day parade in East Islip, New York, on March 5. Photo: OSV News.



KILDARE: Fr Michael Mullaney, Dr Ethna Regan, Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra and Bishop William Crean are pictured following the Annual Lent Lecture delivered by Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ on March 6.

INSHORT

Bishop Fleming welcomes Ukrainians to plant 500 trees

Bishop of Killala John Fleming welcomed members of the Ukrainian community for the planting of 500 trees to mark the anniversary of Russia's invasion.

Bishop Fleming said he was delighted to welcome them, adding that "their lives have been uprooted and they have put down roots in our community".

Planting the trees – one for every Ukrainian in the area of Ballina – is "a sign of our welcome to them and our concern for them", Bishop Fleming continued.

"With God's help, when peace, stability and prosperity return to Ukraine, these trees will be a reminder to future generations of our concern for our sisters and brothers from the East."

The trees will also help to reduce the harmful effects of climate change, by improving the quality of environmental life in North Mayo, the bishop of Killala said.

"I congratulate and thank the members of Ballina Community Clean-up for taking this initiative as well as for their weekly Saturday morning work which helps keep Ballina litter free and so deepen our pride of place."

Co. Down school to bid for integrated status

A Co. Down school where fewer than 50 children are Catholic is to bid for integrated status.

Bangor Academy, the largest school in Northern Ireland, said it will ballot parents and guardians of its pupils on the proposal.

In a letter, school principal Matthew Pitts said becoming integrated would be "an affirmation of our current ethos and values", *The Irish News* reports.

The aim for new integrated schools, and those schools wishing to transform to integrated status, has been to attract at least 30% of pupils from the minority tradition within the

school's enrolment.

According to the Department of Education, figures reveal that Catholic pupils make up slightly more than 2% of the total enrolment at Bangor Academy.

In 2020/21, of the 1,803 pupils enrolled at the school, there were 1,110 listed as Protestant, 48 Catholic and 645 'other'.

50 people attend catechetics course in Limerick

More than 50 people from across Ireland attended a training course for catechists held in the diocese of Limerick in February.

Sr Hyacinthe Defos de Rau OP led the initial training in the Limerick Diocesan Centre, assisted by Sr Cooney Fowler OP, which focused on the Catechetical programme "Come, Follow Me".

The programme is used for the catechesis of children, aged 7-11, in parishes and schools.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



BELFAST: Catholic ice hockey star David Goodwin celebrates the Belfast Giants' victory in the Challenge Cup with Queen's University Belfast Catholic chaplain Shannon Campbell, March 2.



CARLOW: Fr Conor McDonough OP and Patrick Grant filming in Rathglass for the 'Treasure Ireland' series on the Irish Dominican YouTube channel. Photo: Christopher McQuinn.



CORK: Bishop of Cloyne William Crean makes a presentation to Fr Dermot Lane and Maura Hyland for their significant contribution to catechetics in Ireland on behalf of the Council for Catechetics of the Irish bishops' conference.



AUSTRALIA: Fr Eamonn Conway joins Ryan of the chaplaincy team on Notre Dame Australia's Sydney campus as each university community member is invited to place a glass tile to complete a mosaic, on March 7. The mosaic contains the university crest and motto in Greek and Latin, "In the beginning was the Word".



BELFAST: Blessed Trinity College Belfast gets its 'Faith Friends Programme' underway at St Therese of Lisieux PS. Year 13 students will lead the P7 children through a number of workshops over the coming weeks to further explore their relationship with God.



ANTRIM

Lectio Divina takes place each Friday in St Joseph's church after 7pm Mass and on Monday in St Comgall's church after 10am Mass in Antrim parish.

CARLOW

Holy hour takes each Monday in Lent at 7pm in St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen, while Stations of the Cross take place at 10am on Mondays followed by Mass.

CLARE

A series of Lenten talks on the theme 'Lord teach me to pray' continues on Monday, March 20 from 8-9.15pm in Maria Assumpta Hall, Ennis parish.

CORK

Way of the Cross takes place on Fridays during Lent at 7pm in St Peter and Paul's Church in Cork City.

A catechesis for adult faith formation is being held each Sunday and Wednesday at 8pm until March 22, in the Sacred Heart church hall, Western Rd.

DONEGAL

Lenten 'Sycamore' programme, an informal course about the Faith and its relevance, takes place in Stranolar Parish centre from 8-9pm each Thursday in March.

DUBLIN

The Feast of the Divine Mercy will be celebrated on Sunday, April 16, in Corpus Christi Church, Drumcondra, with Holy Hour at 3pm followed by Mass at 4pm.

GALWAY

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

KILDARE

The Legion of Mary will lead the Stations of the Cross on Friday's during Lent at 3pm in the Church of Our Lady and St David, Naas.

KERRY

Youth 2000 Munster Retreat

takes place March 24-26 in St Brendan's College, Killarney, for ages 16-35. More info on www.youth2000.ie

LAOIS

The rosary will be prayed for Lent Monday to Saturday at 6.30pm and at 3pm on Sunday in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish.

LIMERICK

Adoration will be held every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during Lent in the Adoration Chapel, Abbeyfeale from 10am-8pm.

MEATH

The Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal to host a 'Light the Fire!' event for St Patrick's Day, March 17, in Slane. Begins 5pm with Vespers on the Hill of Slane followed by a rosary procession to St Patrick's church. Mass at 6pm with main celebrant Bishop Denis Nulty followed by Eucharistic Adoration.

TIPPERARY

Three-part series of talks on the mystery of the Eucharist continues Tuesday March 21, 7.30-8.30pm in St Oliver's Parish Church, Clonmel, E91N578. On the theme 'The Mystery of the Eucharist'.

Morning prayer takes place after 10am Mass in St Mary's church, Clonmel parish. For the duration of Lent, an evening Mass is on at 7pm, Monday-Friday, excluding Tuesday when a Station of the Cross takes place at 7pm.

TYRONE

The Seven Joys of Our Lady fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order meets each second Tuesday of the month in St Brigid's chapel, Brocagh, Clonoe Parish, at 7pm followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8-9pm.

WESTMEATH

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

WEXFORD

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Notre Dame cathedral to open in December 2024

● Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, whose spire and roof were destroyed by an April 15, 2019 fire is expected to be rebuilt within the five-year deadline set by the French government.

As confirmed by the head of the construction site, French Army Gen. Jean-Louis Georgelin, in an interview with the *Associated Press*, the faithful and tourists should have access to the site again by the end of 2024.

Reconstruction work only began some 24 months after the tragic incident occurred, with the first phase consisting of cleaning and securing the site, involving more than 200 different companies.

Letters from Pope entered into evidence at Vatican trial

● Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who is on trial at the Vatican for financial malfeasance, tried to get Pope Francis to sign statements saying the cardinal acted with the Pope's approval when he used Vatican money to invest in a property in London and when he paid a woman who claimed she could help secure the release of a kidnapped nun. "I regret to inform you

that I cannot comply with your request," Pope Francis wrote in a letter to the cardinal dated July 26, 2021.

Alessandro Diddi, the Vatican prosecutor, entered correspondence between the Pope and Cardinal Becciu into evidence March 9 during the 50th session of the trial, which began one day after the Pope declined to sign the statements that could have absolved the cardinal.

Caritas Georgia workers wary after 'foreign agent' legislation withdrawn

● Staff at Caritas Georgia remain wary after a controversial proposed law in the nation of Georgia was withdrawn March 9, following two nights of violent protests in the capital of Tbilisi that saw dozens injured and detained by police.

The legislation, backed by that country's ruling Georgian Dream party, would have required non-commercial legal entities (including news outlets) receiving more than 20% of their income from abroad to register as foreign agents.

As such, the organisations would be subject to extra scrutiny and hefty fines for noncompliance.

"People are suspicious that there is an agenda behind it, because it is not that easy to call back the law after the first reading," Anahit Mkhoyan, executive director of Caritas Georgia, told *OSV News*.

Study: Vocations key is trusted relationship with priests

● A new study by the Houston-based Vocations Ministry has found that trusted relationships with parish priests are a deciding factor in cultivating vocations.

The organisation's 2023 "State of Priestly Vocations in the United States" report concluded that "the overall role of priests in fostering vocations is significant," with "around 70% of those ordained" reporting that they were invited by a priest to consider the calling.

With many parishes merging or closing, reducing the priest-to-parishioner ratio is essential for making such encounters possible, study author and Vocation Ministry founder Rhonda Gruenewald told *OSV News*.

Dioceses with the lowest priest-to-parishioner ratios have been shown to ordain six times as many priests as those in which priests were responsible for more parishioners.

German synod approves controversial issues

The German Synodal Way has voted to adopt "implementation texts" related to same-sex blessings, lay preaching during Mass, and a request for Pope Francis to re-examine the discipline of priestly celibacy in the Latin-rite Catholic Church.

The votes took place during the first two days of the fifth synodal assembly in Frankfurt, Germany. The assembly concluded a three-year process March 11 that many observers have said is advancing heterodox ideas and may prompt a schism between most German dioceses and the universal Church.

Delegates to the Synodal Way also voted Friday evening to delay addressing perhaps the most controversial topic: establishing synodal councils at the parish and diocesan level. Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, a supporter of the Synodal Way, introduced the motion to delay.

Condemned

While the Vatican has not explicitly condemned the Synodal Way's promotion of heterodox proposals related to same-sex blessings and women's ordination, the Holy See has been increasingly clear about its rejection of this form of ecclesial governance, which involves bishops and laity "sharing responsibility". In the German proposal, laity could even overrule a bishop (or bishops at the national level) with a two-thirds majority.



Irme Stetter-Karp, president of the Central Committee of German Catholics and co-chair of the Synodal Path, and Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops' conference, attend the fifth synodal assembly in Frankfurt March 9, 2023. Photo: OSV News/ Heiko Becker, Reuters

"Neither the Synodal Path nor any body appointed by it nor a bishops' conference have the authority to set up the 'synodal council' at the national, diocesan, or parish level," three cardinals with significant leadership roles in the Roman Curia wrote to the German bishops in a January 16 letter, with explicit papal approval. In an address to the German bishops at their February 27 meeting, papal nuncio Archbishop Nikola Eterovic affirmed that this prohibition also applied to diocesan bishops.

Warning

The decision to pass on voting is likely an indication that the Vatican's warning

has had some effect. Now the matter will be taken up by the synodal committee.

Church blessings

The resolution to provide Church blessings to same-sex sexual unions passed on Friday afternoon. Titled "Blessing ceremonies for couples who love each other," the measure was opposed by only nine of 58 bishops, while 11 bishops abstained. If the 11 abstaining bishops had joined in opposing the measure, it would have failed to reach the required two-thirds support of the bishops.

The measure also calls for blessing the relations of the

divorced-but-civilly-remarried and couples that aren't married.

During floor debate preceding the vote, the measure was vocally opposed by Bishop Stefan Oster of Passau, Bishop Gregor Maria Hanke of Eichstätt, and Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer of Regensburg.

"It is foreseeable that after the blessing has been approved, the question will very quickly arise as to whether the blessing is not also discriminatory if the marriage is then refused," Bishop Voderholzer said.

Priests and lay faithful describe attacks in Nigeria

"Oh, what sorrow to have watched three of my parishioners shot dead in cold blood, right before my eyes — and I couldn't do anything," Nigerian parish priest Fr Bako Francis Awesuh, 37, shared in a new *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN) report published Friday.

"I couldn't pray because of the shock I was in. Whenever I opened my mouth to pray, words failed me. All I could say was 'Lord, have mercy.'"

ACN's report, titled *'Nigeria: A Bleeding Wound'*, shares some of the firsthand testimonies of Catholic Faithful who have

survived torture, kidnappings, and massacres at the hands of Nigerian terrorists.

In May 2021, Fr Awesuh and 10 of his parishioners were kidnapped from St John Paul II Parish in Nigeria's Kaduna state by radical Islamic Fulani attackers.

Fr Awesuh was alone in his room at 11 pm when he heard gunshots. Terrified, he turned out the lights and waited.

"I stood there confused, not knowing what to do, as I felt completely lost. There was a knock on the door. My legs went cold and my body stiff. I was sweating profusely," Fr Awesuh said. "They broke

down the door and forced themselves inside. One of the men pushed me to the floor, tied me up, and flogged me mercilessly."

Fr Awesuh and his parishioners were marched barefoot through the wilderness for three days. They were then held captive in harsh conditions for more than a month until a large ransom could be paid.

Eventually, Fr Awesuh and his parishioners were ransomed, but not before three parishioners were shot dead during a rescue attempt.

Syrian Catholic monk once kidnapped by ISIS made archbishop

Fr Jacques Mourad, a Syrian Catholic monk who was kidnapped in Syria by Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists in 2015 and managed to escape after five months in captivity, was consecrated as the new archbishop of Homs, Syria.

At the March 3 Mass for the episcopal consecration,

Bishop Flavien Rami Al-Kabalan, procurator of the Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch to the Holy See, noted that the new archbishop "has placed his life in the hands of the Lord," according to the Vatican agency *Fides*.

Bishop Al-Kabalan stressed

that God chose the new archbishop "to be the spiritual father who sanctifies souls with the sacraments of salvation and guides everyone in prayer and fasting, the patient and loving brother, the wise and understanding teacher".

Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignace Youssif III Younan

celebrated the Mass. Also in attendance were Cardinal Mario Zenari, the apostolic nuncio in Syria; Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Yoseph Absi; Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatios Aphrem II, and dozens of bishops.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Smoke and strife in Georgia



Law enforcement officers take cover during a protest in Tbilisi, Georgia, March 9, against a draft law on “foreign agents”, which critics say represents an authoritarian shift and could hurt Georgia’s bid to join the European Union. Photo: OSV News/Irakli Gedenidze, Reuters

New Chinese app requires faithful to register to attend services

A human rights group active in China is reporting that religious believers in a populous Chinese province are now required to register on a government app in order to attend worship services.

ChinaAid, a US-based Christian charity, reported March 6 that the religious department of the provincial government of Henan is rolling out a system whereby all believers must make online reservations before they can attend services in churches, mosques, or Buddhist temples.

The reservations are to be made through an app

called ‘Smart Religion’ developed by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Henan Province. According to ChinaAid, applicants must fill in personal information, including their name, phone number, government ID number, permanent residence, occupation, and date of birth before they can make a reservation. Those who are allowed into a place of worship must also have their temperature taken – suggesting the app may be related in some way to Covid-19 restrictions – and show a reservation code.

Henan, located in

the east-central part of the country, has one of the largest Christian populations in China – as much as 6% – according to a 2012 government survey. The communist government of China is officially secular, and the same survey suggested that just 13% of the 98 million population of Henan belongs to an organised religion.

The Chinese government technically recognises Catholicism as one of five religions in the country, but there exists an underground Catholic Church, which is persecuted and loyal to Rome. Government-approved Catholic churches,

on the other hand, have comparatively more freedom of worship but face other challenges, including pressure from the government to censor parts of Catholic teaching, while including Chinese nationalism and love for the party in preaching. Religious believers of all stripes are surveilled in China.

ChinaAid reported that there are concerns that less tech-savvy elderly people might be isolated from signing up for religious services, but officials said staff would assist them in doing so.

Pope: Imprisonment of Nicaraguan bishop reminiscent of Hitler’s dictatorship

Pope Francis called Nicaragua’s Daniel Ortega “unstable” and likened Nicaragua’s Sandinista government to Nazi Germany in an interview published on Friday.

Speaking about Nicaragua’s Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who was sentenced to 26 years in prison by Ortega’s dictatorship last month, Pope Francis said: “It is something out of line with reality; it is as if we were bringing back the communist dictatorship of 1917 or the Hitler dictatorship of 1935.”

“They are a type of vulgar dictatorships,” he added, also using the Argentine word “guarangas”, meaning “rude”.

Pope Francis said: “With much respect, I have no choice but to think that the person who leads [Daniel Ortega] is unstable,” according to a transcript published on March 10 by the Spanish-language news outlet Infobae.

“Here we have a bishop in prison, a very serious man, very capable. He

wanted to give witness and did not accept exile,” he said, speaking of Bishop Álvarez, whose imprisonment deeply grieved the Pope.

The Pope’s comment echoes those made recently by the chair of the UN’s Human Rights Group on Nicaragua, Jan Michael Simon.

“The use of the justice system against political opponents, as in Nicaragua, is exactly what the Nazi regime did,” Mr Simon said.

Vatican roundup

Rupnik concelebrated Mass despite restrictions

● Fr Marko Rupnik concelebrated Mass at a basilica in Rome on Sunday despite restrictions prohibiting “any public ministerial and sacramental activity”.

The Jesuit priest and artist who has been accused of sexually and psychologically abusing consecrated women stood at the altar of the Basilica of Santa Prassede, a historic church popular with pilgrims located near the Basilica of St Mary Major, at the 9am Sunday Mass on March 5, according to the Italian newspaper Domani.

When asked about the Mass, Fr Rupnik’s superior, Jesuit Fr Johan Verscheuren, said that Fr Rupnik is only allowed “to concelebrate Masses in the context of the Aletti Center, which is his inner circle, his community”.

In comments to ACI Prensa, Fr Verscheuren said that he had not been able to confirm the Italian media reports and preferred “not to make judgments about things that I am not absolutely sure about”.

Fr Rupnik founded the Aletti Center, a school dedicated to the promotion of religious art in Rome, after his years in the Loyola Community of Slovenia, where he has been accused of abusing consecrated women.

Pope Francis adds cardinals to his council of advisers

● Pope Francis appointed five new members to his council of cardinals advisers, including Synod organiser Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich and Canadian Cardinal Gérald Lacroix. The Vatican announced on March 7 the nine members of Pope Francis’ Council of Cardinals tasked with assisting the Pope “in the governance of the universal Church”.

The Pope has nominated Brazilian Cardinal Sérgio da Rocha, Spanish Cardinal Juan José Omella Omella, and Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, the president of the Governorate of Vatican City State, to be new members of the council, along with Cardinals Hollerich and Lacroix.

With the new appointments, Honduran Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, 80, and Germany’s Cardinal Reinhard Marx, 69, are no longer members of the Council of Cardinals. Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, the 80-year-old retired president of the Governorate of Vatican City State, has been replaced by his successor.

The group of cardinal advisers, also referred to as the C9 for its nine members, was established by Pope Francis one month after his election in 2013 to advise the Pope on the reform of the Roman Curia, particularly the new apostolic constitution, *Praedicate evangelium*, published last year.

Vatican takes activists to trial for damage to Vatican statues

● The Vatican held a hearing to try three climate activists for criminal damage to a famous statue in the Vatican Museums. Guido Viero, 61, and Ester Goffi, 26, were ordered to appear before the Vatican City State’s tribunal on March 9.

Mr Viero and Ms Goffi superglued their hands to the marble base holding Laocoön and His Sons, an ancient marble sculpture on display in the Vatican Museums, on the morning of August 18, 2022.

They are accused of damaging the base of the statue through the use of “particularly tough and corrosive synthetic adhesive”.

Laura, who video-recorded the demonstration in the Vatican Museums and whose last name is not public, has also been charged by the Vatican.

The three are part of *Ultima Generazione* (‘Last Generation’), an Italian group that encourages nonviolent civil disobedience to “raise the alarm on the climate emergency”. Charges of resisting a public official were dropped. According to *Ultima Generazione*, Mr Viero and Ms Goffi face up to three years in prison and fines of up to 3,099 euros.



Letters

Letter of the week

Pray for Christians silenced in Nicaragua

Dear Editor, Thank you for continuing to highlight the plight of Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos of Matagalpa diocese in Nicaragua [*The Irish Catholic* – March 2, 2023], particularly after he was sentenced to 26 years in jail. His conviction of treason, spreading false news and “undermining national integrity” was an appalling miscarriage of justice. It is welcome that the Irish Government called for his immediate release, although it would be more effective

coming from the European Union as a whole.

Bishop Álvarez continuously spoke up for the poor of Nicaragua, and for those silenced by dictator and authoritarian President Manuel Ortega.

It is not only the prelate who is suffering for speaking out, but the Church as a whole in Nicaragua is constantly being maligned by Ortega, who is trying to seize any influence the Church has in the country. Ever since protests in 2018,

and the subsequent brutal crackdowns, fear of losing power has driven Ortega to use the full force of the police to silence protests and individuals, which has led to deaths.

We must pray for our Christian brothers and sisters whose rights are being stripped and mouths shut for fear of reprisal.

*Yours etc.,
Jack Walsh
Stepaside, Dublin 18*

A confusing article on Biden and Meloni

Dear Editor, What a confused and confusing article from John L. Allen Jr [*The Irish Catholic* – March 2, 2023].

To call President Biden “an old-school American Catholic liberal” and “working class” is to insult many ordinary Americans who never lived easily under the abortion Regime so aggressively promoted by Biden, not to mention his other policies for the overthrow of a society based on marriage and the family.

Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni is, meanwhile, judged and executed by Mr Allen for having conceived a child outside wedlock, and he makes no mention of her defence of a society based on the protection of innocent life in the womb. He tells us that she is more a ‘secular conservative’ than the Christian she claims to be, and that her roots “aren’t in Catholic social activism”. Really? Nearer fascism, he thinks.

We are not to like the Polish President either, being a product of the country’s Law and Justice Party, whose support is in

traditional areas. What’s wrong with that? That wouldn’t be the party that resisted the EU when it tried to impose abortion on Poland?

I see a pattern, Mr Allen Jr.

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



Being grateful for God’s gifts this Lent

Dear Editor, After Mass last week I got to thinking about what produces gratitude and its different levels that we feel and experience.

The more casual occasions are frequent and easy to identify, like when you are in traffic and someone lets you in when you want to change lane or make a turn; or where someone providing a service goes beyond what is expected. We can feel a momentary

appreciation and typically respond with thanksgiving, grateful for the courtesy shown.

Where a situation is more critical, we tend to have a deeper gratitude, when someone saves your life with timely CPR during a heart attack or more so, when the assistance is sacrificial as when a relative donates a kidney to extend his loved one’s life.

And yet, in the most crucial

drama imaginable we tend to be quite aloof and unappreciative. When God created us and breathed life into our immortal souls, inviting us into fellowship with the Trinity and the offer of eternal bliss should we choose it you would think that would elicit gratitude.

Maybe we are myopic and insensitive to these incredible gifts or undervalue what is holy and eternal in favour

of the material in the present moment.

Perhaps for Lent we could begin to be grateful for what has been given by God, to thank him daily, to appreciate what we cannot see or is yet to be realised, as well as the many tangible gifts and blessings we have already received.

*Yours etc.,
Stephen Clark
Malate, Manila, Philippines*

More pressing issues in Ireland than Latin Mass

Dear Editor, I refer to your Editor’s Comment [*The Irish Catholic* – February 23, 2023] and I am happy that you raised the question of why Pope Francis is spending so much time on the elimination of the Latin Mass when there are more pressing issues facing the Church today.

Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin has started a programme of clustering parishes in the diocese as a result of a lack of vocations to the priesthood and the low attendance of parishioners attending Mass each Sunday, and this is understandable. But this programme will not bring back the people who have abandoned the Sunday Mass and something different should be attempted.

Before his retirement, Desmond Cardinal Connell indicated in 2001 that he would call a synod of the Archdiocese of Dublin and a conference was arranged to discuss the issue which was held in the Grand Hotel in Malahide. Delegates from all the parishes in the archdiocese attended.

Unfortunately, the cardinal retired in 2003 and the idea of a synod was abandoned by his successor, Dr Diarmuid Martin. I would suggest that the idea of a synod should be re-visited when the synod on synodality is completed in 2024. On this occasion, perhaps those faithful Catholics who attend the Traditional Latin Mass can be invited. As there was no open discussion at the parish meetings

for the synod on synodality because of Traditionist custodes, it would be helpful if open discussion would be allowed on this occasion.

In Dublin City there is only one church where the Latin Mass is celebrated, St Kevin’s on Harrington Street, on the south side of the city, which is full every Sunday. It would be helpful if a northside inner city parish was assigned for the celebration of the Latin Mass and these Masses could be celebrated by priests of the Ecclesia Dei Institutes resident in Ireland.

*Yours etc.,
Herbert F. Eyre
North Strand, Dublin 3*

Scandalised by Church’s ‘lack of charity’

Dear Editor, The recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria was one of the greatest natural disasters of modern times. Over 50,000 killed and millions displaced, hungry and homeless.

I assumed that this disaster would immediately result in a church collection at all Masses throughout the country.

I know that Trócaire do great humanitarian work. However I know that there are many people who think, “I must make a donation to that”, but never get around to it. A collection at Mass would give them an opportunity to do so.

When there was no notice of a collection, I wrote to our bishop. He advised that this was usually organised nationally and that if this was done we would join in. I also spoke to the parish priest who undertook to “Look into it”.

I feel that as the news of the disaster has receded in the media, the opportunity to raise millions for the relief has been lost. I am amazed and scandalised at the Church’s lack of charity. Not very Christian?

*Yours etc.,
Don Harte Barry
Model Farm Road, Co. Cork*

Parishes regard each other as ‘deadly rivals’

Dear Editor, In nearly every diocese in the country, parishes are being amalgamated as a response to the decreasing number of priests. In my opinion, it is the clergy who should adapt to the changes that are taking place instead of involving a weakening of parish identity.

Parishes are communities that have a very definite character. In fact, they are often quite close physically, while regarding each other as deadly rivals. Anyone who has seen two such parishes meet as contestants in their county final will understand how difficult it would be to form a single community that would involve shared projects, combined meetings and

common liturgies at Easter or Christmas. In other countries where there are few priests, it is the parish community who are in charge of the liturgy and the physical structures. They meet for prayers on a Sunday and have Mass every three or four weeks if the priest is available. It is they who prepare the young people for the Sacraments of Initiation, and paint the church when necessary. The very fact of the challenges involved helps unite and strengthen their sense of ownership of the parish and of their identity as God’s people there. So, why can’t we do the same?

*Yours etc.,
Pat Seaver
Farranshone, Co. Limerick*

Time of six-figure salary charity leaders is over

Dear Editor, The age when the leaders of ‘Christian’ charities receive a six-figure salary is over. The evidence for this is the growing number of parishes in Ireland who have sister parishes in low-income countries. Some of the parishes are Westport, Rathgar, Castleknock and Termonfechin.

In 20 years time, every parish in Ireland will have a sister parish in the developing world.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Andrew Kieron OSF
Merchant’s Quay, Dublin 8*

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

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Your Faith

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Local and universal: the two sides of St Patrick

St Patrick and Ireland are deeply connected. You can't think of one without being reminded of the other. Although he wasn't Irish, after he came to Ireland, the country would never be the same. Patrick, an arrogant young man who didn't believe in God and wouldn't care about others, became a man with a deep experience of God's love and a great compassion towards everyone. Ireland, an illiterate country living in spiritual darkness, would become the 'Land of Saints and Scholars' with a key role in the preservation of faith and culture during the Dark Ages.

That's the kind of thing that love does! Any kind of true love (husband and wife, father



The Apostle to the Irish has influence far beyond these shores, writes Fr Emílio Bortolini Neto

and son, friends) brings forth the best in us and gives us something we would never get otherwise. Although Patrick's first time in Ireland was awfully unpleasant, wasting his youth (from 15 to 21) as a slave, the experience of God's love made him deal with that in such a wonderful way. Instead of gathering an army to take his revenge with violence, he came in peace, loving his enemies,

bringing the light to those who had thrown him in the darkness, healing the hearts of those who had caused him harm, setting free those who had enslaved him.

Overcome

How did he manage to do that? How did he overcome the instinct of revenge we all have? We all hold hard feelings against people who caused us so much less

trouble than the Irish had caused to the young Patrick. Surely, human nature puts us on the path of hate and revenge, but the Grace of God is stronger, and if we let him do his work, we will be deeply transformed. The secret of Patrick was quite simple: his role model was God, not his enemies. Therefore, he wouldn't treat them the way they treated him, but the way God had treated him, forgiving his unbelief, healing his heart and giving him the chance of a new life. Maybe we don't realise it, but when we want to pay back what someone has done to us, we are putting this person as our role model, for we are reproducing their behaviour. Therefore, at the heart of Patrick's feelings, thoughts, words and attitudes was the experience of being loved

by God. And not as a reward he would have deserved, but as an experience of gratuity, of being loved without merit, out of pure unconditional love, like parents love their children before they have done anything to deserve it. Once he received this love from God, Patrick passed it on to the Irish, who had the same experience of being loved by someone whose love they had done nothing to earn. And what the Irish learned from St Patrick, they passed on, sending missionaries all over the world. It's a pattern reproduced, in such a unique and beautiful way.

But, although Patrick has this deep connection with Ireland, he is not stranded here. His feastday is celebrated all over the world, not just in places like the USA,



A young man dressed as St Patrick poses for pictures as Sydney Opera House is lit with green lights during St Patrick's Day celebrations in central Sydney, Australia. Photo: CNS/ Daniel Munoz, Reuters

Canada and Australia, who received many Irish immigrants, but even in countries where you don't find Irish people, like Brazil. And this interest is not just in his feastday and green beer. One of the most important Patriciologists ever is an Austrian scholar, named Ludwig Bieler (1906-1981) and, although I am not worthy to be placed beside him, I humbly put myself as another example of the universal appeal of St Patrick.

“Patrick’s life, although deeply connected to Ireland, also has a universal appeal, for, somehow, we are familiar with the situations he went through”

I am a Brazilian priest, with Italian and Portuguese ancestors, and no connection to Ireland (at least in the last 40 generations). When I was a seminarian, studying theology, back in 1994, I was asked to do an essay about any Missionary saint, and I chose St Patrick just because he was the patron saint of the land of some of my favorite musicians: Van Morrison, Hothouse Flowers, The Pogues, Rory Gallagher and, of course, U2. It was no big deal, a small work, but it ignited a spark that would become an

eternal flame. I was totally amazed by his story! No wonder the great French historian Daniel-Rops calls St Patrick's work of evangelisation, “the Irish miracle” saying it is “one of the most glorious chapters in Church history”. My Masters in Spirituality in Rome (2009-2011), gave me the opportunity to get a closer look to his writings, and, with the great help of Fr Billy Swan (who I first met at the airport, while we were waiting for our baggage), who was writing his Doctoral thesis on the same subject, I wrote my thesis on St Patrick's spirituality. After I went back to Brazil, I turned my thesis into songs. I don't know why, but, although I love storytelling, that was not the approach I took. I wrote 32 songs (one for each county in Ireland), and most of them are in the first person, as if they were being sung by Patrick himself, expressing the feelings he had in the different situations he went through.

Universal appeal

These songs show how Patrick's life, although deeply connected to Ireland, also has a universal appeal, for, somehow, we are familiar with the situations he went through. We were never kidnapped and enslaved or dreamed of foreign people asking us to go to their country but, yet, somehow, as Susanna Hoffs sings in the beautiful song *Now and then*: “looking in your eyes was like a mirror”. The young

Patrick, left alone in the Irish green fields, embodies the feeling of loneliness we all know, even if we may be surrounded by many people. His hope of fleeing from slavery and going back home is an image of the bad situations we refuse to accept and try to change. His indecision about coming back or not to the land of his captivity reflects our doubts, when we don't know what to do, which route to take. His suffering with the betrayal of a friend and the kidnapping of the people he had recently baptised mirrors the situations in which we feel the sharp knife of evil slicing through our heart. His gratitude towards God and the Irish people who accepted his message, expresses the feeling we have when we treasure the good things we received and recognise where they come from. So, if we look into the eyes of St Patrick we will see our own reflection, if we dive into his life we'll get a better and deeper understanding of ours, for our life is a puzzle we are still working on, but his is finished, like the cover of the puzzle, where the figure is complete, and helps us to find the right place for each one of our pieces.

Love

I wrote comments on these songs and published a book called *Apple of my eye*. The title is an indication of the interpretive key not just to the life of this great saint, but to the whole human life:

Love. Take love out, and nothing makes sense, put love in and all the parts of the puzzle start to fit. As the great Irish rock band Horslips sings: “the sun will shiver, the moon will crumble and vanish from the sky, but the rocks remain, and love is the same, love will never die”. (Thanks, Barry!) That's Patrick's secret: Love! May his feast day makes us feel loved by God and share it with the whole mankind, far and near.

“If we look into the eyes of Saint Patrick we will see our own reflection, if we dive into his life we'll get a better and deeper understanding of ours”

You can listen to the songs in my YouTube channel, “Padre Emílio Bortolini Neto”, and the printed book is available in the Parishes of St Paul, Ayrfield and the Holy Trinity, Donaghmede (Dublin 13).

Erin Go Bragh.

i Fr Emílio Bortolini Neto is a priest of the Diocese of União da Vitória – Paraná – Brazil



St Patrick, patron of Ireland, is depicted in a stained-glass window. Photo: CNS/ Gregory Shemitz

Testifying to the brotherhood of man during war

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

Rome, *Open City* (1945) is a film famous for a variety of reasons. It is credited with starting a whole new film movement called Italian Neo-realism; filmed in the streets of Rome at the end of WWII, it is also a rare historical document.

What will likely cement its exalted position in film history long-term, however, is the pathos of the drama at its centre. Directed by Roberto Rossellini, it tells the story of a diverse group of characters coping under the Nazi occupation, and centres on a Resistance fighter trying to escape the city with the help of a Catholic priest.

Italian Society

You get the full gamut of Italian society, from children to parents to grandparents. They are all involved in different ways in the struggle against the Nazis. An old lady helps the hero, leader of the Resistance Giorgio Manfredi, to escape the clutches of the Germans; young boys plant small bombs to cause what minor disturbances they can; a priest, Don Pietro, assists the underground by relaying messages.

Don Pietro becomes an increasingly significant figure over the course of the film, which is broken into two parts. He was based on a real priest Giuseppe Morosini, who worked against the Nazis during the war. For his troubles, he was captured, imprisoned, tortured and executed, despite Vatican efforts to free him.

Rossellini initially intended to shoot a documentary about



Aldo Fabrizi stars as Don Pietro in *Rome, Open City*

Fr Morosini. Instead he brought together a team of young writers – including future director Federico Fellini – to script what would become *Rome, Open City*.

“The film explores this sentiment, which inspired one of Pope Francis’ encyclicals *Fratelli Tutti*, and some of its implications are hard for the local people to accept”

But Fr Morosini’s life clearly left its mark on the filmmakers. His onscreen counterpart, Don Pietro, is present at the key moments of the film. He gives his blessing on the actions of those resisting the invaders, marries them, gives them last rites.

However, in addition to, as it were sanctifying their actions, Don Pietro witnesses to the brotherhood of man at a time of division

and war. The film explores this sentiment, which inspired one of Pope Francis’ encyclicals *Fratelli Tutti*, and some of its implications are hard for the local people to accept. For instance, when one woman worries that Christ doesn’t see the suffering of his people, Don Pietro responds kindly but firmly.

Doesn’t Christ see us?

He says: “So many people ask me that: ‘Doesn’t Christ see us?’ But are we sure we haven’t deserved this scourge? Are we sure we’ve always lived according to the Lord’s laws? People never think of changing their ways, but when the piper must be paid, they despair and ask, ‘Doesn’t the Lord see us? Doesn’t he take pity on us?’ Yes, he does, but we have so much to be forgiven for, and for that we must pray and forgive many things.”

These may seem curious words with which to console a distressed

woman during war. Why should she be concerned with her own sins while all around her people are being violently crushed? Because even those who perpetrate violence are brothers and sisters. It is a hard message to preach to those suffering terribly at the hands of others, but how else do you avoid the hardening of heart Christ warns against?

Even a German soldier may have a moral awakening of a kind, as we see in the case of a Nazi officer overseeing a firing squad who becomes disillusioned at the claims of a master race.

Momentum

As well as having a strong moral chore, *Rome, Open City* builds momentum quickly and there’s a natural dynamism to the plot which carries you along. Of course, it’s a set-up with great dramatic potential – resistance fighters during WWII, goodies versus the ulti-

mate baddies.

The pathos of what you see on screen is only increased when you know a little background of *Rome, Open City*’s production because that in itself is a story worth telling. Filming began mere months after Rome was abandoned by the Germans. You might think that is where the title comes from. But no, Rome became an ‘open city’ when the Italian government abandoned all defensive efforts in 1943. It was open, then, but not free.

“Besides Fabrizi, who plays Don Pietro and Anna Magnani, all the actors are non-professionals. Locals to the city or, as is claimed, German POWs, are used to convey an extra layer of realism”

Much of the style, acting and *mise en scene* are a direct result of the limitations placed on the production by the war. Rossellini couldn’t source enough film and so had to use different stock and inadequate processing. This adds a documentary, or ‘found-footage’, feel to it, much in the way an old and decrepit piece of parchment turns up to testify to an event’s reality or history.

Then, of course, the film received minimal funding and couldn’t employ actors. So, besides Fabrizi, who plays Don Pietro and Anna Magnani, all the actors are non-professionals. Locals to the city or, as is claimed, German POWs, are used to convey an extra layer of realism.

Although it has significance as a historical document, the film doesn’t deserve to be left to history; it is still to this day a powerful thing and a film which I’d encourage you to go and watch.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Patrick is depicted in a stained-glass window. Photo: CNS/Gregory Shemitz

St Patrick: The world-famous Apostle of Ireland

Who else could feature as the saint of the week but our very own patron saint, St Patrick? Fortunately, we know a good deal about this archetypal holy man as he wrote two accounts that we have access to today – quite unique for that region at that time, as texts are scarcer than historians would like! They are his famous *Confessio* and his *Letter to Coroticus*.

Born in then-Roman Britain towards the end of the 4th Century to what is believed to have been a fairly wealthy, Christian family, at about the age of 15 or 16 he was kidnapped by pirates who, as would say in our modern language, trafficked him to Ireland and sold him into slavery.

In Ireland he seems to have encountered God in a powerful way – a meeting that would alter the course of his life and what he would be remembered for.

Confessio

As he writes in his *Confessio*, “After I arrived in Ireland, I tended sheep every day, and I prayed frequently during the day. More and more the love of God increased, and my sense of awe

before God. Faith grew, and my spirit was moved, so that in one day I would pray up to one hundred times, and at night perhaps the same.

“I even remained in the woods and on the mountain, and I would rise to pray before dawn in snow and ice and rain. I never felt the worse for it, and I never felt lazy – as I realise now, the spirit was burning in me at that time.”

A vision

After years of slavery and service, Patrick had a vision which prompted him to up and leave, fleeing across Ireland to the east coast where he convinced the crew of a ship to carry him back to Britain, to his family. He wasn’t long for this old, familiar world, though, as he once again had another vision which compelled him to return across the Irish sea.

“It was while I was there [Britain] that I saw, in a vision in the night, a man whose name was Victoricus coming as it were from Ireland with so many letters they could not be counted. He gave me one of these, and I read the beginning of the letter, the voice of the Irish people. While I was reading out the beginning of the letter, I thought

I heard at that moment the voice of those who were beside the wood of Voclut, near the western sea. They called out as it were with one voice: ‘We beg you, holy boy, to come and walk again among us.’”

Studies

He is believed to have travelled to Europe to deepen his studies and receive priestly training. Historians disagree on whether he was – or if it was someone else who has been mixed up with Patrick – ordained a bishop, but regardless, the Patrick of concern returned to Ireland to do the many things for which he has become known as the ‘Apostle of Ireland’, such as baptising thousands and ordaining new clerics who went on to establish and lead their own Christian communities.

Buried in Downpatrick, Co. Down, St Patrick remains to this day one of the pillars by which the Church in Ireland is identifiable. We celebrate him March 17.

Walking with faith and doubt



Mary DeTurris Poust

Back when my husband and I taught a two-year confirmation prep program at our parish, many of the students in our class were attending because they had to be there. They did the work, asked good questions, trudging through the weekly evening sessions, but faith formation was just one more requirement on their very long to-do lists. One student, however, was unhappy to the point of being outwardly angry and belligerent.

Although this student had attended almost all of our classes over that two-year period, as confirmation weekend approached, we received an email stating that she had decided she did not want to be confirmed. I imagined how challenging that decision was for her parents, and I emailed a hopeful reply.

I assured them that their student's decision not to be confirmed proved to me that she was taking this Sacrament more seriously than many of her classmates. Most were going through the motions to please their parents, but this student was thinking deeply.

True seeker

She would not agree to something in which she did not fully believe. I saw her doubt as the mark of a true seeker, someone who wants more than simply checking off a box on the faith journey. I was not surprised to learn that a year or two later she was confirmed on her own terms.

Doubt is part of any faith life, or

at least it should be. A faith life with no questions at all feels rather small, as though we're too afraid to look in the dark corners for fear of what we might find. But it's precisely in the difficult questions and nagging doubts that we often discover an unexpected opening to even deeper faith.

"We do not need to be afraid of questions and doubts because they are the beginning of a path of knowledge and going deeper; one who does not ask questions cannot progress either in knowledge or in faith," Pope Francis said at a general audience in 2016.

“Our challenge is to remain present, non-judgmental and open in the face of hard questions – our own and those of others. And to continue to do so even in the face of doubt or outright disbelief”

A few years prior, in a 2013 interview published in *America* magazine, Pope Francis had said something even more dramatic on this topic:

"In this quest to seek and find God in all things there is still an area of uncertainty. There must be. If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good. For me, this is an important key. If one has the answers to all the questions – that is the proof that God is not with him."

What does that mean for those of us who are walking the path of faith and trying to lead others to do the same? Should we throw our hands in the air and give up?

No, just the opposite. Our challenge is to remain present, non-judgmental and open in the face of hard questions – our own and those of others. And to continue to do so even in the face of doubt or outright disbelief.

It's not likely that anything we

say – especially if it's tinged with anger, fear or self-righteousness – is going to turn someone from doubt to certainty. The key is compassion, understanding and simply listening without trying to tie everything up with a nice, neat spiritual bow.

Faith struggles

Yes, we can share what helps us through our own faith struggles and carries us forward, but trying to turn someone from doubt to certainty isn't the goal. The goal is helping someone find abiding trust in God's mercy, tenderness and unconditional love.

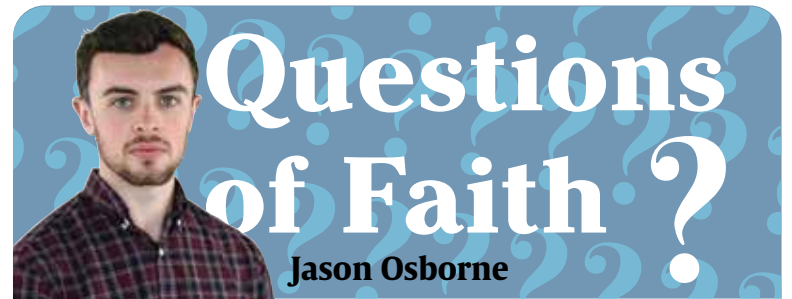
Mother Teresa, the beloved saint whose life work served as a model of faith, suffered deep darkness and doubt throughout her life. Does that mean she loved God less than we imagined? No, it means she suffered more. But she remained steadfast, trusting that all would be well in the end.

As far back as 1957, she confided to her spiritual director:

"Where I try to raise my thoughts to heaven, there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul. Love – the word – it brings nothing. I am told God lives in me – and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul."

We may read those words and wonder what hope there is for us if someone as holy and devoted as Mother Teresa could feel so lost and alone. But there is always hope; there was for Mother Teresa, for the student in my faith formation class and for every one of us. Doubt can be sustained in a life of faith; it is only when we lose hope that things become more troubling.

So, what do we do? We go to God with our doubts. Talk to God. Yell at God, if that's what it takes. Tell God exactly what we're feeling and thinking. Rather than shy away from doubts, we can dive in headfirst and let God open our heart and eyes to the answers we seek, which are often right in front of us.



Questions of Faith?

Jason Osborne



One of the things that most hinders the Church in its mission and makes people reluctant to interact with it is the real presence of sin in those who profess to be Catholic. Every person walking the earth is a sinner, but those who claim to be adhering to the heights of goodness, truth and beauty – Catholics – have often been found to have been engaging in the worst evils and dragging others down with them as well.

The ongoing revelations of abuse emerging from the Churches around the world are the primary example of this, but certainly not the only one. I personally don't buy the defensive stance that many Catholics adopt when arguing with those who bring up the abuse crisis. These affronted Catholics argue that the Church's "enemies" bring up the Church's failings constantly, while ignoring abuses carried out in different sectors and institutions.

A higher standard

Even if that was the case, why does it matter? The Church makes the claim to be God's home in the world, and its members followers of God himself – not a claim businesses or public schooling systems make. Quite rightly, the Church is recognised as being called to a higher standard, and it's fair to hold the failures of members of the Faithful against that.

“Our unfaithfulness does nothing to deter God from his aim. He is faithful, even when we are not”

St Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, "for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). It's not unreasonable, then, to expect better behaviour from those who claim to hold Jesus near and dear. How is one to face up to the fact, then, that we're so often apologising for our sins and their ill effects? Is God truly present

amid such people?

He is, and the symbol of our religion is the timeless proof of that fact: an innocent man tortured to death on a cross before a baying mob. Those who Christ came to lead out of the darkness of sin into the light of new life rejected and killed him, just as every one of us does by our many, many infidelities. However, our unfaithfulness does nothing to deter God from his aim. He is faithful, even when we are not.

The darkness

Even in the midst of the darkness, the evil, both casual and profound, that many members of the Church grapple with and succumb to every day, Christ continues to work his healing hands upon the world through those who choose to cast their eyes to him instead. While evil is loud and obnoxious, love is often silent and unobtrusive, with many of the Faithful's good works going unreported day in, day out.

Famous author George Eliot, writes in *Middlemarch*, "for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs".

This is to make no excuse for the horrendous evils carried out by some who've claimed to follow Christ, but it is to say that that isn't the full picture. The sacraments and fellowship that the Church offers continue to work their "magic" upon many in the world, and this often doesn't generate the headlines that the failures do.

Doctors, nurses, missionaries, charity workers, teachers, writers and more from every walk of life have followed Christ in their humble, unrecognised ways, and while those lives are unlikely to be without stains of their own, the beauty of a relationship with Christ is that those blemishes can be overcome by repentance and steadfast love.

In the end, that steadfast love will overcome the Church, and the world.



Losing a loved one to suicide



New York Times columnist David Brooks recently wrote an article about a lifelong friend who died by suicide. In describing his friend and his descent into a suicidal illness, Brooks sheds some needed light on how we still have a long ways to go in our understanding of suicide. (*New York Times*, February 9, 2023)

His friend, Peter, seemed a most unlikely candidate to die by suicide. He had a wonderful marriage, two loving sons, a warm circle of friends, and a fulfilling career as a doctor within which he took a lot of satisfaction in helping others. He was also physically healthy, active and athletic. Yet, at some point, he began to sink into a crushing depression before which all the love in the world stood helpless. Eventually, he took his own life.

What Brooks highlights in documenting his friend's journey should be required reading for everyone. What does he highlight?

Required reading

First, that in most cases, suicide is an illness. People don't choose to sink into this kind of depression any more than people choose to have cancer, diabetes or a heart condition. They are hit with an illness, and they cannot will themselves out of it any more than someone with a major physical illness can cure himself or herself through simple willpower and attitude. You don't just will your



Fr Rolheiser

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way out of a suicidal depression. Moreover, suicidal depression is not something that any of us, as outsiders, really understand.

Second, the depression is horrible, the ultimate nightmare. Note how William Styron describes his own depression in his memoir, *Darkness Visible*, "I experienced a curious inner convulsion that I can only describe as despair beyond despair. It came out of the cold night; I did not think such anguish possible". Then, the suffering is compounded by the fact that part of the anatomy of the disease (most times) is that the person undergoing it finds it impossible to articulate what the pain exactly consists of. Hence, they are alone inside it, unanimity-minus-one, and with that aloneness comes the overpowering feeling that one is doing a favour to family and friends by removing oneself

through suicide.

Moreover, in the face of suicidal depression, medicine and psychiatry can be helpful but they are limited in effectively treating this kind of depression.

What should we do when we are dealing with someone who is undergoing this kind of paralysing depression? In trying to answer that, it can be helpful to start with the *via negativa* - what shouldn't we do?

Misguided

Brooks shares some of his sincere, but ultimately misguided, efforts to reach his friend. For example, he reminded Peter of all the wonderful blessings he enjoyed and how blessed his life was. Later he realised that "this might make sufferers feel even worse about themselves for not being able to enjoy all the things that are palpably enjoyable".

As well, we should not ask the person if he is thinking of hurting himself. The person is already hurting so badly that everything inside of him wants only to stop the pain, and suicide is perceived as the only means of doing that.

Experts

What should we do? Brooks is clear: "The experts say if you know someone who is depressed, it's OK to ask explicitly about suicide. The experts emphasise that you're not going to be putting the thought into the person's head. Very often, it's already on her or his mind. And if it is, the person should be getting professional help". Experts also agree that we should take the risk and ask the person openly if he or she is thinking of suicide. If the person isn't thinking about suicide, he or she will forgive you for asking; but if he or she is thinking of suicide and you are too timid to ask, your timidity might stand in the way of saving that person's life.

Brooks points out that despite all the work that has been done in medicine and psychology in recent years, suicide rates today

are 30% higher than they were even 20 years ago and one in five American adults experiences mental illness.

“Each of these deaths also left behind a tragic sadness that was massively compounded by our lack of understanding of what really caused this person's death”

My own life has been much affected by suicide, the suicide of relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues, classmates, former students, and trusted mentors. In my experience, in every one of these deaths, the person who died was a good, honest, gentle, sensitive, and over-sensitive soul who, at a point in his or her life, was too bruised, too full of pain, and too overpowered by illness to continue to live. Each of these deaths also left behind a tragic sadness that was massively compounded by our lack of understanding of what really caused this person's death.

In his assessment of his friend's suicide, Brooks says that in the end "the beast was bigger than Pete; it was bigger than us". It still is. Simply put, we are still a long way from understanding mental health and its fragility.

“Suicide rates today are 30% higher than they were even 20 years ago and one in five American adults experiences mental illness”

Children of the light

Last Sunday we had the story of Jesus sitting with the woman at the well, offering her the living water of friendship and mercy. It is a story about the grace of Baptism. Today we have a second baptismal story from John's Gospel, the miracle of sight for the blind. In the early centuries of the Church a favourite name for Baptism was Illumination or Enlightenment. Lent is a preparation for Easter when we renew our baptismal promises, renouncing the ways of darkness while holding a candle lit from the Paschal Candle representing the risen Lord.

The lark ascending

In Christian art the evangelist John is usually shown as an eagle, regarded as the only creature that can look directly into the light of the sun without damaging its eyes. More than the other evangelists, John gazes into the blinding light of the beatific vision, now filtered through the humanity of Jesus, Son of God. "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18).

“The surest way of knowing what God is like is constant study of the human life of Jesus, the Word made flesh. God has spoken to us in a human life, a language we can understand”

I like to think of John as a skylark. This bird is a mimic who picks up a sound and composes a song with it, not flying from place to place, but ascending skywards. Ralph Vaughan Williams left a fascinating musical composition called *The Lark Ascending*. John is the writer who starts with something ordinary like bread or water and ascends gradually to divine bread come down from heaven (John 6: 58), or "the spring of water within, welling up for eternal life" (John 4: 14).

Pondering on today's

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Gospel, reflect on the ascending titles given to Jesus ... man, prophet and Lord. First, he is referred to as "the man called Jesus". The surest way of knowing what God is like is constant study of the human life of Jesus, the Word made flesh. God has spoken to us in a human life, a language we can understand. What did he say, how did he feel, what were his ideals, how did he respond to situations?

The lark ascends as Jesus is recognised as a prophet, one who reveals the presence of God.

The song goes higher again when the man who was blind from birth says to Jesus, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped him.

The Church is the light of Christ

Jesus is the light of the world and his Church is called to be *Lumen Christi*, the Light of Christ. In today's Second Reading, St Paul tells the Ephesians, "You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness, and right living and truth" (Eph 5:8).

Complete goodness

Jesus had an extraordinary ability to see goodness and beauty in the most unlikely people ... in a hot-tempered fisherman, a compromised tax-collector, James and John known as the Sons of Thunder, Simon a zealous nationalist, and some notorious sinners. One of his eight beatitudes reads, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". True followers of the light of Christ can see other people as God's creation, recipients of God's mercy. By contrast, those who are spiritually sick view other people with the jaundiced eye. And everything looks yellow to the jaundiced eye. When our prejudices are strong, we use our eyes more as a murky inlet than as windows of goodness. The famous lines of Frederick Langbridge express the contrast between light and dark-



Christ healing the blind man, Carl Bloch, via Wikimedia Commons

ness: "Two men look out through the same bars: One sees mud, the other the stars."

Right Living

The unenlightened mind operates in a very selfish way. Self-interest is the primary motivating source. But the mind enlightened by faith operates with Christ's vision. It is motivated by charity and strives for justice.

Truth

Pilate, in a tone of sarcasm, asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Truth is unknown to the powers of darkness. Nowadays many elections are won by concealing lies under cloaks of attractive slogans. Killing a child in the womb is camouflaged as compassion. Paul continues his advice to the Ephesians: "Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast. The things that are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by light will be

illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light. That is why it is said: Wake up from your sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

“At Easter we publicly state that we renounce the works of darkness and commit ourselves to the light of Christ”

Lent is a preparation for Easter. It is a season to challenge our mediocrity, to wake us up from our slumber so that we will rise with Christ. At Easter we publicly state that we renounce the works of darkness and commit ourselves to the light of Christ.

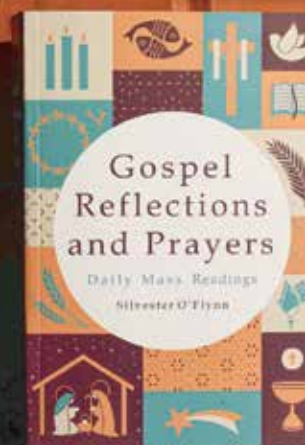
"I am the light of the world, says the Lord, Anyone who follows me will have the light of life".

Let us pray with catechumens preparing for Baptism

Father of mercy, you led the man born blind to the kingdom of light through the gift of faith in your Son. Free us from the false values that might surround and blind us. Set us firmly in your truth, children of the light forever. Stir up our desire for what is good. Let us rejoice in your light, that we may see, and like the man born blind whose sight was restored, let us be fearless witnesses to the Faith, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Mixed reaction to when people are 'cancelled'

What's that I was hearing about Macho of the Day? Oh wait, it was about **Match of the Day** on BBC One, and the odd controversy (provisionally resolved by Monday) about who should present it.

On **Times Radio Breakfast** last Saturday morning Hugo Rifkind, on board to plug his own show for later that morning, called it the "stupidest story in the world". Tongue-in-cheek hyperbole no doubt, but I thought it didn't deserve the relative prominence the **Nine News** (RTÉ One, Friday) gave it – leading off the second half of the programme. The controversy swirled around Gary Lineker, presenter of that soccer show, and his tweets on British government policy on immigration, tweets that somewhat likened that policy, or at least the language used around it, to Nazi Germany – always a dangerous analogy.

Double standards

On that Times Radio show presenter Calum Macdonald gave a thorough questioning to Labour Party MP, Stephen Morgan trying to tease out whether double standards were at play – for example, would he have been as supportive of Mr Lineker if he had expressed support for government policy?

On **The Anton Savage Show** (Newstalk, Saturday) the pre-



Mary Kenny pictured at the launch of her book *The Way We Were* on Catholic Ireland in Dublin.

senter wasn't sympathetic to the BBC bosses, quoting BBC guidelines on impartiality that, interpreted in a certain way, could be taken to suggest that Mr Lineker was quite free to say what he did.

Trivial as it might seem, it did raise interesting issues in relation to media neutrality. He was suspended from his show due to alleged contravening of BBC impartiality policies. I could understand it better if he had been on a news and current affairs show, or had expressed

his political opinions on air. Now he has become a martyr for free speech and a slew of broadcasters refused to take part in the show, and in other sports shows last weekend. Funny enough, it seems to me that those expressing outrage on behalf of free speech in this case, remain remarkably silent when free speech is denied, for example, to those questioning trans ideology and activism. When my fellow columnist with *The Irish Catholic* Mary Kenny was recently disinvited

from an event in the University of Limerick because of some moderate and nuanced tweets on that thorny issue, the supportive responses were thin on the ground. I hope she wears her 'cancellation' as a badge of honour.

Immigration

The Lineker controversy was referenced on **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One) but, wisely, it was only as a starting point to a discussion on the more important and substantive issue of immigration, in particular the problem of what to do about immigrants arriving by small boats across the English Channel. So many such discussions proceed on the assumption by contributors that 'the other side' is not acting in good faith. The discussion did get a bit fractious this time, though one could detect a common set of values, though with different practical strategies. The debates on this show usually take the format of two v. two, a kind of built-in polarisation, but for the most part I welcome it as all sides of current controversies tend to get a look in – an example of the BBC's efforts at impartiality.

On **Sophie Ridge on Sunday** (Sky News) the host interviewed former footballer John Barnes who supported Mr Lineker. He

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC ONE SUNDAY MARCH 19, 1.15PM

To celebrate Mother's Day, Claire McCollum is in Derry to meet remarkable women, including the family of Sr Clare Crockett, inspiring the next generation through their faith and devotion.

IN THE NAME OF THE SON

RTÉ ONE THURSDAY MARCH 23, 10.15PM

The powerful story of Mags Riordan, a Dingle woman who, having lost three children in separate tragic circumstances, was inspired to set up a clinic in Malawi, saving thousands of lives.

LOCKED AWAY: OUR AUTISM SCANDAL – DISPATCHES

CHANNEL 4 FRIDAY MARCH 24, 7.30PM
In this personal and revealing film by award-winning autistic filmmaker Richard Butchins, for the first time autistic patients trapped within mental health units tell their stories in their own words.

saw an inconsistency in the BBC's approach – allowing sports presenters to criticise other countries, for example, Qatar during the World Cup, but not allowing criticism of government policies at home.

Iraq wars

In other controversies, on **Hugo Rifkind** (Times Radio, Saturday) the presenter had a fascinating interview with Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, author of *A Stranger in Your Own City: Travels in the Middle East's Long War*. He was an Iraqi journalist and had a distinctive perspective on the various Iraq wars. He thought the allies that invaded, especially the Americans, brought a simplistic and sectarian narrative to bear – basically seeing the country divided into Sunni

and Shia Muslims – the former being the 'bad guys', because Saddam Hussein was Sunni. It was more complex than that, he said. In fact, growing up, he didn't know which religion his friends and acquaintances were. When asked by people if he preferred the rule of Saddam to the present government, he said for Iraqis it wasn't just a choice between dictatorship and a corrupt regime, which is how he characterised the current government.

Mr Rifkind described his book, with these fresh insights, as a "sad" account of the wars, rather than one that concentrated on the destruction. Sounds like a good read.



Pat O'Kelly

Music

A Bach revival on Holy Week

The approach of Holy Week turns our attention to music appropriate to the season and especially to Johann Sebastian Bach and his Passions.

While it may be thought Bach had only composed two settings of the sacred texts – those from the gospels of Sts John and Matthew – it is most likely that he wrote a total of five Passions between 1722, when he was still in Cöthen, and 1731 when he was well established in Leipzig as music director of the city's two main churches of Sts Thomas and Nicholas, the smaller St Peter's and the Neukirche or new church.

Besides the Sts John and Matthew Passions, it is



Statue of Johann Sebastian Bach in the courtyard of St Thomas Church in Leipzig, Germany.

almost certain Bach composed another, according to St Mark, in 1731. While the score has been lost its libretto by poet and postal official Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764), written under

the pseudonym of Picander, remains intact. Picander also supplied most of the interspersed non-biblical sections of the Sts John and Matthew Passions as well as texts for several of Bach's cantatas.

Bach Passion

Another, but possibly spurious, Bach Passion – that of St Luke – has not survived and there was an earlier St Matthew version which the composer expanded for his more elaborate setting completed in 1727 and first performed in St Thomas' Church in Leipzig on Good Friday, April 11 that year.

Taking place during Vespers, the performance was preceded by a hymn, had a

sermon in the middle and was followed by a motet, a collection, benediction and a final hymn. As Bach's music alone takes about three hours this was obviously not an occasion for the faint-hearted.

Following his death in 1750 Bach's St Matthew Passion was more or less forgotten and not heard again until the 1820s when Berlin-born Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), composer and director of the Singakademie in the city, unearthed it and then rehearsing and performing it in private.

Felix Mendelssohn and his sister Fanny were among Zelter's choristers and this led to Felix directing a public performance in Berlin

on March 11, 1829 with the actor/playwright/baritone Eduard Devrient (1801-1877) taking the part of Jesus. Mendelssohn is reported to have said afterwards: "Well, it takes a clown (Devrient) and a Jew (himself) to reintroduce the greatest Christian music to the people."

Bach revival

The Bach revival had begun in earnest.

Thanks to conductor Peter Whelan, the Irish Baroque Orchestra and choral group Sestina, the St Matthew Passion will be performed in St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny on Thursday March 24, Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on Friday March 25

and Galway Cathedral on Saturday March 26. The all-important role of the Evangelist is being taken by English tenor James Way with the other soloists coming forward from among Sestina's ranks.

Bach's St John Passion is scheduled for the National Concert Hall on Good Friday afternoon April 7 with the National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus directed by David Hill. David Gilchrist is the Evangelist with Bernhard Sansky as Christ and also undertaking the bass arias. Soprano Aoife Miskelly, countertenor James Hall, tenor Dean Power and bass baritone Rory Dunne are also involved.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Guiding lights to the path of faith and fortitude

Lights for the Path

by John Sullivan
(Veritas, €24.99/£22.20)
John Sullivan was formerly Professor of Christian Education at Liverpool Hope University, of which he is now an emeritus professor. Hope University is a unique institution, formed out of three Victorian teachers' training colleges in an ecumenical union which now prospers as a developing third level institution.

This book, a product of his teaching in that special environment, is an assembly of short biographies of a distinctive group of people, who have given others a guiding light by the nature of their own lives and thoughts. St Patrick, too, has often been seen as a guiding light, but in a way we know too little about him for him to be truly effective. These individuals are different.

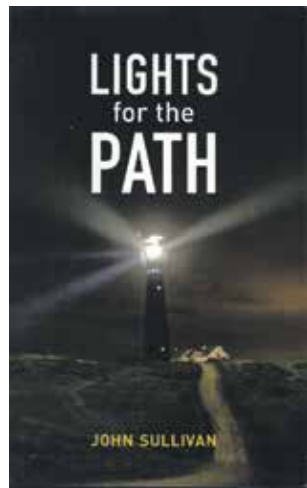
These personalities are all so well known that every detail of their lives can be found inspiring. The author says he intends *Lights for the Path*, to introduce "a range of hidden treasures from the Catholic tradition of men and women who, across the centuries and in diverse contexts, have illuminated how Christians can read and respond to the world".

I was struck at once just looking at the contents list by the very striking arrangement. The book is in two parts. The first, "Christ and Creation", deals with three philosophers: Maximus the Confessor, Hildegard of Bingen and Bonaventure.

Dealing

This selection alone reveals we are dealing with a very different approach from usual. The second part of *Lights for the Path* deals with "Interiority and Engagement". Here there stands out at once the essays on Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong treated together, and a chapter on the English poet Elizabeth Jennings, who has been seen as the most distinguished Catholic poet of the late 20th Century.

I have been thinking of McLuhan over recent years,



but as yet had not found a way to approach him in context, for he seems now despite his extraordinary global influence back in the 1960s to be a neglected figure. He is linked by Sullivan with the even more interesting person of Walter Ong.

Insights

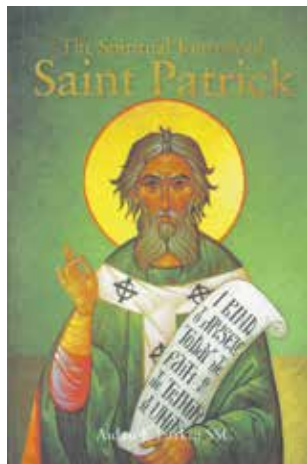
These essays open up ideas and insights that are truly renewing. The others in this part are Edith Stein, Paulo Freire and Etienne Gilson. Sullivan intends his book to be not only for individual reading, but also for collective group use and classroom discussion.

"I was struck at once just looking at the contents list by the very striking arrangement"

Their approaches certainly provide a fully founded experience of Christian thought in a way one sees hardly ever done. Even the recitation of the names demonstrates the unusual nature of *Lights for the Path*, which can be warmly recommended.

The author gives a dimension to the notion of faith and belief which one rarely sees in such books. Readers will never regret buying a copy for an understanding of what Christianity is all about. For Irish readers it may give new deeper meaning to the mission of St Patrick, which we celebrate tomorrow.

St Patrick, the 'Apostle of Ireland' in his own days



The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick

by Aidan J. Larkin SSC, with a foreword by Archbishop Eamon Martin (Messenger Publication, €14.95/£12.95)

Peter Costello

Tomorrow all the world that is Irish will mark St Patrick's Day, mostly in ebullient hoolies it has to be said, rather than calm and settled consideration. Well, that is the way of the world, and if the actual man himself is concealed behind all the faux episcopal fancy dress and a vanguard of leprechauns with red beards and green hats, such we have to admit is the nature of modern Irish culture.

Some of the recent books about Patrick have been very strange too; one of the strangest of all to my mind being the biography by Dr Roy Flechner of UCD, *St Patrick Retold* (Princeton University Press, £20.00), which suggests that the saint was a sort of financial

fugitive in Ireland, who was avoiding his taxes back in Roman Britain while indulging in a little slave trading, importing slaves for Irish chieftains from the same territory into Ireland.

Speculative

These notions seem a step too speculative to many, so it is a relief to turn to this latest book about Patrick to find a very different treatment of the saint, his life and the two documents from his own hand that have survived the confusions of history. That we have such records, *The Confession* and the *Letter to Coroticus* is nearly unique; their voice is so very different to what we find in later Irish manuscripts of a religious nature.

"In the documents he lays a great emphasis on his status as a bishop, with the implication that his status, indeed his whole standing in Ireland, had been challenged"

For a long time, however, they were used by scholars only for biographical and historical purposes. But in this book they are closely examined by the late Fr Aidan J. Larkin, a Columban father, of very varied experience (including election as an SDLP member of the Northern Ireland Assembly).

In what he writes he was inspired by another Columban at Dalgan Park, Fr Daniel Conneely, and by the edition of Conneely's essays on Patrick edited after his death by Fr Paddy Bastable (a man and scholar still recalled with fondness by his lay friends). Fr Larkin completed this new treatment of the material before his death in 2019.

Documents

He has translated the documents anew providing them with introductory chapters and notes. The central part of what is said is to demonstrate, in following Fr Conneely, that these writings show what has not been widely noticed enough that Patrick's memory and mind was suffused with a knowledge of a select number of Latin Fathers – he lived in fact at the end of the history period of the Latin Fathers.

Taking up again Fr Conneely's original discovery or insights rather, Larkin mentions Athanasius, Augustine, Cyprian, Hilary, Ignatius, Jerome and Justin. But also it is to be noted that in the documents he lays a great emphasis on his status as a bishop, with the implication that his status, indeed his whole standing in Ireland, had been challenged. These matters are still difficult to unravel. But Patrick's depth of acquaintance with the Latin Fathers, though, doubtless a product of the time he is thought to have spent at St Lerin's Monastery off the south coast of Gaul, suggests a thorough training.

But early Irish Christianity quickly began to take on



characteristics of the native society, in the creation of abbot-led monasteries on a tribal basis, which soon established themselves as the central feature of Christianity in Ireland, displacing the position of bishop.

The leading role of the families of local rulers is a prominent feature too. So in a sense the Church Patrick brought into the country was quickly nationalised, and seemed open to the influence of Greek culture as well as Latin.

The role of Patrick in history is not a trivial matter, even if the man himself now seems to me on his way to becoming for all too many people a figure of fun. Fr Larkin's book may play a small role in putting that to right.

"These notions seem a step too speculative to many, so it is a relief to turn to this latest book about Patrick to find a very different treatment of the saint"

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.



St Patrick is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Mary's Basilica in Phoenix. Photo: CNS

Ireland's pre-Patrician Christians – who were they?

The reference to Palladius by papal records of a mission in 431 of Palladius to “those Irish believing in Christ” has always presented a puzzle and still does. These Christians may not have been Irish in fact, but traders with bases ashore, rather like the people who shipped Patrick out of Ireland (though they were pagans). The parallel is with those trading posts along the coasts and rivers of 19th Century West Africa, or out in the Malaya's or the islands of Indonesia.

They exported animals alive, as there was no way of keeping slaughtered beasts fresh, or Irish wolf hounds, which were much in demand

in Europe. The posts would not have been on the dangerous west coast of Ireland, but along the south coast from Dingle (an important port in the Middle Ages), through Waterford to Wexford, a run of coast line focused on Ardmore in Waterford.

The boats would have run to the south of England, perhaps to Glastonbury, and to Brittany where Patrick said he had kinsfolk. Those trade items being carried out of the country would have left little trace ashore, except perhaps a misty recollection of a religious heritage, which St Patrick's greater fame extinguished or absorbed.

The significance of Mount Slemish – Ireland and slavery



A sheep herd on Slemish in winter weather, where St Patrick was kept as a slave.

When people think of Patrician sites and shrines they are likely to think of his grave at Downpatrick in Co. Antrim, or Croagh Patrick, or indeed St Patrick's Purgatory.

Rarely is anything said or thought about Slieve Mish, or as it is today Mount Slemish, in Co. Antrim to the north, where he passed it is said some six years as a slave herding sheep on the hillsides or in the nearby woods, in all weathers.

The mountain rises with startling abruptness from the plain, thrusting about 1,500 feet into an often grey sky, dominating the landscape, though not as much as the more widely favoured Croagh Patrick far to the west in Mayo. Slemish is certainly a striking place, but a neglected one as I say.

Yet when we consider St Patrick in the course of history, and in the light of modern attitudes, we realise what an ideal place it is to contemplate the life of that young man ravaged

by Irish pirates and set to work on those all too often bleak Ulster slopes.

When we consider Patrick as a victim of slave runners and of human traffickers, his life stands out in renewed significance. When we consider Patrick as a victim of enslavement and trafficking we can see that Northern mountain as a place of significance.

Slave entrepôt

These days whenever Viking Dublin is mentioned its role as a slave entrepôt is mentioned, and slave chains are rattled. But Patrick's experience reveals that slavery was

commonplace in Gaelic Ireland, it was simply taken for granted.

Rectitude

Perhaps the thought of Gaelic speaking slavers might convince some that the morals and rectitude of the ancient Irish was not always what our pious school teachers once suggested it was.

And indeed the Catholic Church sanctioned slavery and bondage until a recent date. Those who might doubt this might care to read the resumé of the topic in the article in the original edition of *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* of over a century ago.

And I can recall handling on the shelves of the Central Catholic Library in Dublin volumes of moral theology in German by Teutonic moralists on “slavery and bondage”, expressly saying that owning people was not immoral (though of course many other things were). It was merely a matter of property law.

Slemish does not need any actual memorial; the lasting nature of the hill itself is enough of a permanent memorial. But those visiting it should be aware of its past and reflect on its role in Irish history, ancient and modern.

“The mountain rises with startling abruptness from the plain, thrusting about 1,500 feet into an often grey sky, dominating the landscape”

Leisure time

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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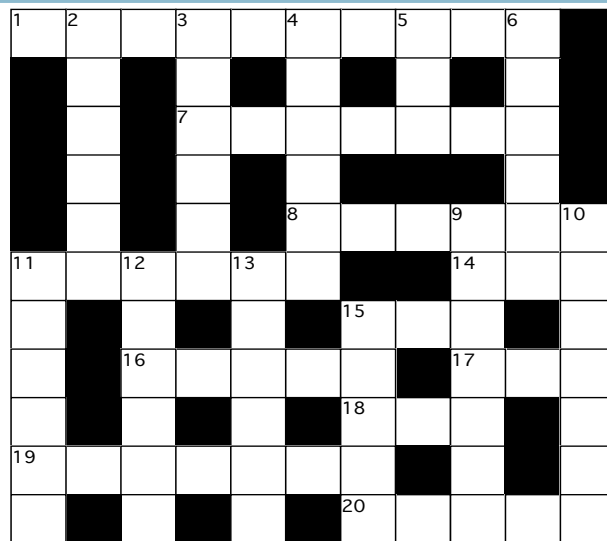
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 474



Across

- 1 Put the ingredients together in this when you are baking a cake (6,4)
- 7 Pieces of pasta you might find in a certain kind of chicken soup (7)
- 8 Closer (6)
- 11 You might _____ butter or marmalade on your toast (6)
- 14 Number that means a single thing (3)
- 15 Vegetable which grows in a pod (3)
- 16 Bit, section (5)
- 17 Speak, use words (3)
- 18 Paintings and other creative works (3)
- 19 Stretchable material (7)
- 20 You might see it growing at the

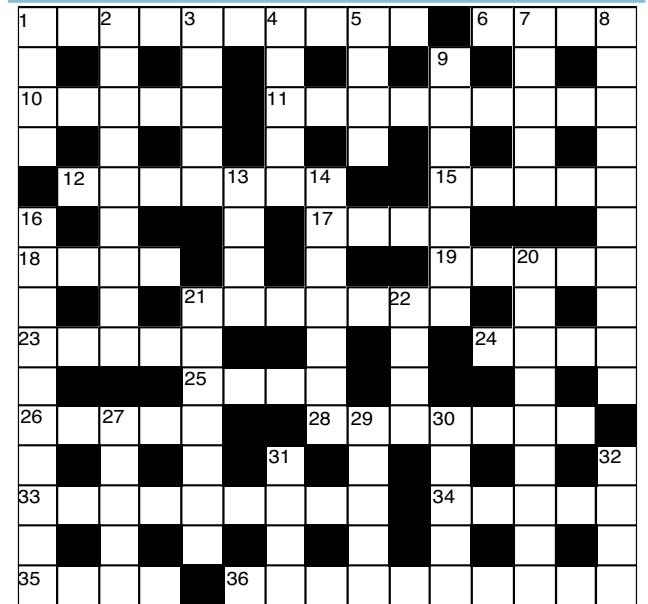
edge of a field or garden (5)

Down

- 2 Cold treat on a stick (3,3)
- 3 Pay no attention to something (6)
- 4 The earth beneath your feet (6)
- 5 Harry Potter's pet, Hedwig, is this kind of bird (3)
- 6 Pay attention to what someone is saying (6)
- 9 Cooked meat in an oven (7)
- 10 Use the bottle bank, perhaps (7)
- 11 You may get this medal for finishing second (6)
- 12 Match played after a draw (6)
- 13 Spies are sometimes called secret _____ (6)
- 15 Fruit with a fuzzy skin (5)

Crossword

Gordius 602



Across

- 1 Wavering; delay (10)
- 6 Mimicked (4)
- 10 Imprecise (5)
- 11 Name often applied to the robin (9)
- 12 Bumped against others in a crowd (7)
- 15 Glue with which to fix broken tapes? (5)
- 17 Novel by Jane Austen (4)
- 18 Make an assessment (4)
- 19 Kingly (5)
- 21 Ghost, or the 24th James Bond movie (7)
- 23 Slumbered (5)
- 24 & 36a Characteristic Christian prayerful remembrance of the crucifixion (4,2,3,5)
- 25 Idi, twentieth century Ugandan dictator (4)
- 26 Alongside a vessel at sea (5)
- 28 Type of shark or swimming canine? (7)
- 33 Magnificence (9)
- 34 Building added to a complex (5)

35 Decomposes (4)

36 See 24 across

Down

- 1 Possess (4)
- 2 & 8d Formally append one's 'John Hancock' (4,2,3,6,4)
- 3 Nice surprise (5)
- 4 Curt (5)
- 5 What a bookie will quote you (4)
- 7 Strategies (5)
- 8 See 2 down
- 9 Get ready (7)
- 13 Walk lamely (4)
- 14 Go down (7)
- 16 Intruder (who might be prosecuted) (10)
- 20 Do islands go around with this musical instruction? (9)
- 21 One's ability to keep going (7)
- 22 Part of a ladder (4)
- 27 Gallic brilliance (5)
- 29 The silent Marx Brother turns up for Ms Winfrey (5)
- 30 Unit of Swiss currency (5)
- 31 The foot of a horse (4)
- 32 Mathematical line (4)

SOLUTIONS, MARCH 9

GORDIUS NO. 601

Across – 1 Joint account 7 Out 9 Brag 10 Arable 11 Flea 14 Study 15 Toner 16 Peck 18 Lopes 21 Enemy 22 Wrong 23 Samoa 24 Ions 25 Negev 26 Stick 29 Lost 33 Ablaze 34 Plug 36 Wee 37 Metropolitan

Down – 1 Jar 2 Iago 3 Tuam 4 Chart 5 Ogled 6 Toil 8 Thanksgiving 9 Brother-in-law 12 Intern 13 Trays 14 Salem 17 Enough 19 Plank 20 Swine 27 Tuber 28 Cramp 30 Shem 31 Bell 32 Spit 35 Urn

CHILDREN'S No. 473

Across – Fortunate 6 Growl 7 Ostrich 10 Toy 12 Skeleton 13 Dive 14 Cus-tard 15 Birr 17 Evil 18 Knit 19 Enter

Down – Fight 2 Roomy 3 Unlock 4 Tear 5 Pushing 8 Telltale 9 Internet 11 Opinion 12 Secret 16 Bar

Sudoku Corner

474

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 473

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

Last week's Hard 473

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock

A future that will call out for the priest

RECENTLY OUR BISHOP, Paul Dempsey, wrote a pastoral letter for Lent. He was encouraging the work of parish pastoral councils throughout the diocese. Some weeks earlier, he celebrated Mass in the cathedral in Ballaghaderreen, where parish pastoral councils from around the diocese were commissioned. It was a wonderful occasion with more than 300 people in attendance and there was a sense of hope in that gathering.

That theme of hope, centred on a committed and Faith-filled people, continues in the pastoral letter though the bishop goes on to point out the rather bleak future predicted for the diocesan priesthood. It is estimated that in 10 years "there will be 12 priests serving in the 23 parishes of our diocese" and in this context it becomes ever clearer that the diocese's future is firmly in the hands and souls of its people. Even as I write these lines, speculation exists around the re-ordering of dioceses, not to mention parishes.

Ordained

I was ordained for Achonry diocese in June 1987. In 1988, a few months after ordination, I purchased my first copy of the Irish Catholic Directory. I suppose



I did this to see my name there and to know that I had "arrived" in the diocese. I had other copies through the years, they have come and gone but I held on to that one. Just now, I took the 1988 copy from the bookshelf. It confirms what I had expected to find. Statistics for priests of the diocese were: 54 priests working in the diocese, with another three in ministries in Ireland but outside of the diocese, two working abroad and eight retired. There were 66 priests attached to the diocese of Achonry in 1988 and today there are 35, with 23 in parish ministry – the remainder in

other ministries or retired.

As a 24-year-old with much to learn, I looked to people I admired among the working and retired and was fortunate to know them through the years. Some of those, still active in the diocese, had been ordained just a year or two before me. Others during my time in Maynooth and still more that I had known through the years. The 24-year-old in me, looked at men in their 60s and thought how old some of them looked, not to mention the retired men but there was still something reassuring around having these priests who had travelled the road, still in view, still making a difference and still happy in their lives. I was glad of my contemporaries too – those who had been with me during seminary years, ahead, with and behind.

Recent days

In recent days, I became the 60-year-old and the one thing that has not changed is that I still have much to learn. The rest or most of it has changed beyond recognition. I looked through those names from 1988 and so many of them have died, others are now numbered among the retired,

my companions from Maynooth have reached, passed or are fast approaching the 60-year mark and our last ordination of a priest of Achonry diocese was 10 years ago. I sometimes feel concern for that man. What must he see ahead of him? And yet, he offers lasting hope because he is so happy and dedicated in his work. Amongst his many roles, he is our vocations director, and he is truly committed to seeking a future for our diocesan priesthood.

I said most of the rest had changed – not all of it! I think that is where Bishop Paul's letter is directed. In 1988, there were wonderful parishioners throughout the 23 parishes of our diocese. Good natured men, women and children who had a sense of place and belonging. They welcomed the priest but knew that though he might come and go the parish was constant. The faces have changed, perhaps the numbers grown fewer, but great people are still there and, in ones and twos, threes and fours, they can and will ensure a future – a future that hopefully will call out for the priest, find the priest, and produce the priest from their number. We are in this together!

When priests were plentiful!

A story of a priest who was confident about himself! He announced at a Sunday Mass that Jesus was his friend and that his friend had asked him to become a priest and that over the years he had given tirelessly of himself in a variety of listed appointments. He shone in them all and went wherever Jesus, his friend, asked him to go. "Now, dear friends", he continued: "My friend Jesus has asked me to move to a new parish to continue my wonderful work there and this is my final Sunday in your midst". The choir sang: "What a friend we have in Jesus"!



A PLEA FROM HONDURAS:

PLEASE HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR FAMILIES AND THE ABANDONED LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

The Missionary Sisters of Christ the Master in Comayagua, Honduras are counting on our help to bring vital food, medicine and other assistance to more than 800 people. Sister Alba Moreles Galvez has written to THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION: "We have been working in this extremely impoverished area for ten years, where families live in wooden shacks in very basic conditions. I hope that the Little Way will assist us with five programs. These are: 1) Comprehensive Nutrition. We need to provide food to three groups, as well as training in gospel values and the development of agricultural projects. 2) A group of girls live and are educated at a Home run by our Sisters. They have nowhere else to go. 3) We wish to provide food and medical aid to older adults, who are often abandoned. 4) Provisions are needed by extremely poor families, as well as training in literacy, to give the young especially a better chance in life. 5) At San Isidro Farm we hope to expand self-sustaining agricultural projects, such as egg production."

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez recommends that we help the Sisters, whom he knows well. He asks for as much as we can send these communities living in extreme poverty.

This Lent, we urge you to give alms to our fund for the hungry, sick and deprived. Without any kind of deduction for administration, this fund is used to support missionaries providing life-sustaining assistance to destitute families and individuals.



Sr. Alba writes: "We provide education, complete formation, to children and young people in situations of extreme poverty, we take care of the abandoned sick and we go where no one wants to go to evangelize."



"We can never have too much confidence in our God Who is so mighty and so merciful."
- St Therese

LENT WITH ST THERESE

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 to Him from our heart, and 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."

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries repeatedly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean, safe water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction.

Little Way benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions in the Missions.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**
- €..... **TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no.)
We ask for a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to tinyurl.com/lwadonations

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address