

# The Irish Catholic

**MARY KENNY**  
 Mary McAleese and infant baptism  
 Page 5



**MOTHER AND BABY HOMES**  
 Calls to dismiss report one-eyed  
 Page 8



**MARTIN MANSERGH**  
 Boris' wedding and the need to ensure consistency  
 Page 7



Thursday, June 17, 2021 €2.50 (Stg £2.20) The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper @IrishCathNews www.irishcatholic.com

## 'Betrayed and abandoned' Priests speak out for fishing communities

Ruadhán Jones

A number of rural priests have described a sense of betrayal in fishing communities, as well as increasing frustration with the apparent indifference shown by Government to their plight.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Fr John Joe Duffy of Dunfanaghy / Creeslough parish Co. Donegal said the communities feel "betrayed and abandoned" over the inaction of the Department of Agriculture and Marine and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), which he called "not fit for purpose".

"The fishing communities feel betrayed by their own Government, by the Department of Marine and again the SFPA," Fr Duffy said. "They have issued the most draconian measures against Irish fishermen that do not exist for other fishermen."

He compared recently announced regulations, which no longer allow weighing to be conducted in factories or processing plants, to "trying to weigh everyone who comes into Dublin on the same scale at once – it would cause chaos... What they're effectively doing is bringing the entire industry to halt," he added.

» Continued on Page 2

### The boys Doon good



Ryan Stapleton, Padog O'Brien and Paddy O'Brien with their table centre pieces made in school with local florist, Siobhan Somers, as part of Creative Schools Week at Doon CBS Primary School, Co. Limerick.

### NI TWO-CHILD POLICY

Disproportionately affecting religious families PAGES 14-15



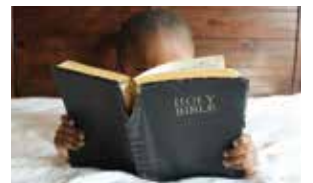
### DAVID QUINN

The ethical issues surrounding surrogacy PAGE 13



### A MOST PECULIAR BOOK

The strangeness of the Bible PAGES 20-21



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN IRELAND

## Renewal of the Faith ACN's Mass Rock initiative

See page 3 for more information.

www.acnireland.org/mass-rocks



## Inside this week

### Fr Rolheiser

A personal Eucharistic prayer

Page 30



### Maria Byrne

Planning summer holidays with God in heart

Page 32



### Fr Pádraig Ó Cochláin

Hospital diary of a grateful priest

Page 18



**Managing Editor:** Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

**Northern Correspondent:** Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

**Multimedia Journalists:** Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

**Newsroom:** news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

**Books Editor:** Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

**Advertising:** advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

**Accounts:** accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

**Magnificat:** magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

**Shop:** shop@irishcatholic.ie

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.

## Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4094 or advertising@irishcatholic.ie



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

# 'Political crisis' in the North is thwarting efforts to address the 'punitive' two-child welfare limit

Chai Brady

Efforts to address a controversial policy in the North which denies a family child benefit for a third or subsequent child is being delayed due to political turmoil between the DUP and Sinn Féin, according to a law professor in the University of Ulster.

The two-child limit came into effect on April 6, 2017 and is believed to be affecting about 3,000 families in the North.

However, Prof. Ciara Fitzpatrick, who is part of the Cliff Edge Coalition NI, said: "We can't actually get a clear idea of how many people in Northern Ireland are affected because it affects not only people that are on Universal Credit which is the relatively new benefit system, but there's also a significant number of people who are of in receipt of, for example, child tax credits, who would also be impacted by the policy.

"The UK data shows that all over the UK, more than one million children are now impacted by the two-child limit."

She added: "Because of the current political crisis that is going on in Northern Ireland, the stand-off between the DUP and Sinn Féin, it's delaying any kind of protections for these families which have been committed to..."

**“The UK data shows that all over the UK, more than one million children are now impacted by the two-child limit”**

More than 21% of families in the North have three or more children compared to the UK average of 14.7%. The Cliff Edge Coalition NI has said this could mean the North is being disproportionately affected by the policy.

## Poverty

Cllr Emmet Doyle of Aontú, who is in the Derry City and Strabane District Council and represents Ballyarnett, said the policy has "pushed more families deeper into poverty".

"Some of our wards are the most deprived in the North and even further afield, we now see people having to rely on foodbanks for example to feed their families because that extra financial support, that people are entitled to, is no longer there. So poverty is the primary outcome of this," Cllr Doyle said.

The director of pro-life group Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth, said the two-child policy is something they "are very concerned about because we are seeing an increase in women from Northern Ireland in particular, seeking abortion because of the two-child caps..."

"We would definitely be wanting to work alongside other like-minded pro-woman organisations that genuinely care for the future of women," Mrs Smyth said.

"We definitely will be addressing it in the new term of government and it will be a big issue for the future, when we re-elect a new government next May 2022. That will be a priority, it will be something we want to address on the doorsteps."

See pages 14-15

# NI Catholics honoured in Queen's birthday list

Ruadhán Jones

The English monarch's annual birthday honours list released June 11 contained happy surprises for Catholic actors and charity volunteers.

Included in the honours list was Derry-born actress and producer Roma Downey OBE, head of the Northern Region of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust Mary (Maureen) Devine and Stephen John McCoy, who has raised funds for the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in France where he's a regular visitor.

Ms Devine, responding to the news, said it came as a "great shock and surprise to her", adding that she was thrilled for the recognition it brings to the Irish Pilgrimage Trust.

The trust organises regular visits to Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto for people with disabilities, and Ms Devine was awarded an MBE for her work with the trust.

"The phone has been hopping all day," she told *The Irish Catholic*. "I am [proud], but I'm proud for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust, it's amazing for them."

Ms Downey became an officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to the Arts, Drama and to the Community in Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, Down and Connor Lourdes Pilgrimage congratulated their "friend and faithful pilgrim" Stephen McCoy on his becoming a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM).

# Priests warn of frustration over Govt 'betrayal' of coastal communities

Continued from Page 1

The regulations were introduced following an audit by the EU Commission in 2018, subsequently confirmed by an SFPA inquiry, which revealed "manipulation of weighing systems" in Irish factories.

Fr Patrick Mernagh, priest in the fishing town of Kilmore, Co. Wexford, said local fishermen and women are "frustrated" over the "totally ridiculous" regulations that require catches to be weighed at landing.

"There's a total lack of understanding, they've put all the facilities in place like they were asked to and now they're asking them to change," Fr Mernagh continued.

He said that communities want "equality in their own waters", as they have already lost much from

Brexit negotiations. It is estimated that between €5,000 and €20,000 in income could be lost because of Brexit for individual fishermen and women.

In Castletownbere, a fishing community in Co. Cork, retired fisherman Brendan O'Driscoll told *The Irish Catholic* that to those "in the halls of power" the fishing industry seems small, but "it's huge to fishing communities".

"The industry is being decimated," Mr O'Driscoll said. "We're sick of it, people can't survive anymore. There's been stuff going on for years, we've been fighting against the tide for many years."

Mr O'Driscoll said that he and his brother retired two years ago, having been "born and reared into it", citing the bureaucracy and "injustice" of the systems in place.

"Injustice is the big thing," he said. "We're Europeans,

we're the best Europeans around, but we want equality in our own waters. We see 30-40 artic loads of fish leaving here, unchecked, on French and Spanish vessels... It isn't that we want all the fish, we just want a fair share."

The chief of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Organisation warned that "we are looking at an impossible situation of entering a new pelagic season in September, without the wherewithal to operate our fisheries".

Mr Brendan Byrne said that the fishing industry has been constantly "undervalued", despite the fact that it supports 16,000 jobs in coastal communities.

"We're in a hopeless situation," Mr Byrne said, warning that the Irish sector is "in a state of collapse".

See page 16

## Princely pooch gets royal treatment



The Dundalk Dominican nuns have a lively new 'novice' on their hands, having adopted Prince the Labrador, June 11, a dog rescued by an ex-soldier from men who were about to throw him into a river.

# Hailey Bieber doubles down on faith despite fame

Jason Osborne

Model and media personality Hailey Bieber recently took to YouTube to talk about the difficulty of maintaining faith in the celebrity circles she moves in.

Married to pop-superstar Justin Bieber, Ms Bieber said we “work in this industry where I feel like a lot of the time people misunderstand God and believing in Jesus and sometimes it can be difficult to be in this industry, believing what we believe in”.

Speaking on her *A Conversation With* show, Ms Bieber said that people ask her what the “biggest thing” is in their relationship, to which she responds “It’s our faith, it’s what we believe in.”

“If we didn’t have that, we wouldn’t even be here – we wouldn’t even be together.”

She said she doesn’t credit herself with changing anyone’s mind about God in America’s celebrity culture, referring the credit to God instead.

“I’m not the one that can do the persuading...it has to be God that

persuades somebody’s heart to believe in what I believe,” she said.

The Biebers are one of America’s highest profile Christian couples, speaking openly of their faith and regularly attributing their relationship to their faith in Christ.

In an interview with *Elle* magazine, Ms Bieber said “Being able to share that with each other—to have that bond of faith and spirituality—is so [important] for us.”

“It’s the most important part of our relationship, following Jesus together, being a part of the church community together. It’s everything.”

As she got older, it “got harder to follow church and the Bible” because it “felt very adult,” she said.

“I don’t want to sound wrong, but it was boring.”

However, finding some community at a church enabled her to “develop my own relationship to church and my own relationship with God, separate from being raised that way by my parents. That’s been a cool journey for me”.



# Project Eden to help children with disabilities

Chai Brady

A fundraising campaign has begun for a new sensory and play garden for 32 children with severe intellectual disabilities, with the director of the charity behind the push saying it will “make a real difference”.

Speaking about ‘Project Eden’, the director of Respect, Sr Zoe Killeen said: “We greatly appreciate any support that people can give to this project that will allow us to create this unique new space for the children to enjoy and benefit from when they return in September.”

The project aims to raise funds for the Development Education Centre (DEC) located at St Vincent’s Centre, Navan Road, Dublin 7.

The garden aims to give each child the opportunity to participate in creative play, gardening, as well as outdoor physio sessions. The hope is that work will begin on the new space in August 2021 during the summer break. The total cost for the project is €180,000.

Respect supports people of all ages within the Daughters of Charity Disability Support Services, by improving their surroundings and allowing them to be more independent.

More information can be found at [www.respect.ie](http://www.respect.ie)

# Renewal of the Faith

## Aid to the Church in Need’s Mass Rock Initiative

There is perhaps no tradition as unique to the Irish Catholic Church as Mass Rocks. Aid to the Church in Need Ireland has organised for a Holy Mass to be celebrated at a Mass Rock in each of Ireland’s 26 dioceses in advance the Feast of the Irish Martyrs on 20 June. These Holy Masses were offered for the renewal of the Faith in Ireland through the intercession of the Irish Martyrs.



**Yes, I would like to make a one off gift to ACN Ireland wherever the need is greatest**

€60
  €130
  €250
  Other €

\*If you are a taxpayer and donate €250 or more in any given year we can reclaim the tax paid and make your donation go 45% further.

Please debit my  Visa  Mastercard  Visa Debit

Card Number

Security Code  Expiry Date

Your Name

Your Address

Your Email

Please Sign Here  Date

For Credit Transfers and Direct Debits our bank details are:  
**IBAN IE32 BOFI 9005 7890 6993 28 | BIC BOFI IE2D**

**Please detach this form and return, with your gift, to the address below.** I do not require an acknowledgment.

PONTIFICAL FOUNDATION  
 Irish Catholic 2021

If you want to learn more about ACN’s initiative please visit: [www.acnireland.org/mass-rocks](http://www.acnireland.org/mass-rocks)

# Many may be affected by mica without knowing, says Mayo priest

**Ruadhán Jones**

As thousands gathered June 15 to protest for a 100% redress scheme for houses affected by mica and pyrite, a priest in Co. Mayo warned that many more may be affected.

Fr Martin Convey of Strade parish Co. Mayo said people and families facing issues with apparent defects in buildings caused by mica and pyrite are in “a terrible situation”.

Speaking of one local parishioner, Ms Anne Molloy and her family, whose house is beginning to crack due to defective building blocks, Fr Convey said he knows “they’re not the only ones”.

“Mayo and Donegal seem to have been particularly badly affected,” Fr Convey told *The Irish Catholic*. “I don’t know of any others in the parish affected, but you can be sure there are, and maybe there are people affected and they don’t even know it yet.”

Ms Molloy, her husband Brian and their two children joined the protest in Dublin on Tuesday and spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the “terrible effects” the situation is having on them.

While they are still living in their house, they are facing “a total demolition” due to the effects of pyrite on their house and believe that

anything less than a 100% redress would be “impossible” due to costs such as storage and renting.

“We heard that [our house was affected] Christmas week 2020,” she explained. “I’m only now able to talk about it... I’ve went from the shock stage to the anxiety stage and it still hits me at times. It’s the unknown – where are we going to go, where are we going to store all our stuff from our house. It’s just scary.”

She added that their house is the first in the area identified with pyrite, but now “everybody is watching their houses”.

# First convictions under human trafficking law ‘key milestone’

**Chai Brady**

The first conviction under current human trafficking legislation has been welcomed as “historic” by a charity that supports women affected by prostitution.

Ruhama CEO, Barbara Condon said last week’s judgement in Mullingar Circuit Criminal Court is “undoubtedly historic and we greatly welcome the verdict”.

She said the charity’s caseworkers had worked “tirelessly” with the women involved as witnesses in the case for three years.

Evidence was heard from four women during the trial. They said they were forced into prostitution in Ireland after undergoing a voodoo ceremony in their native Nigeria.

“The courage and resilience showed by these women was staggering and they are to be commended for their essential contributions to the case. This conviction signals a key milestone in the recovery journey of these women who sought to contribute to justice against their perpetrators,” Ms Condon said.

“It is our hope that they will serve as an important example to other victims of sexual exploitation that justice is possible and they can pursue perpetrators in the knowledge that they will be supported by agencies like Ruhama and An Garda Síochána.”

The charity was founded as a joint initiative of the Good Shepard Sisters and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity.

# Glenstal monk warns of Church ‘collapse’ due to ‘spiritual famine’

**Staff reporter**

The Irish Church faces “collapse” if the Faithful don’t do “something daring and immediate”, according to the former abbot of Glenstal in Limerick in his new book.

In *Crimson and Gold – Life as a Limerick*, Dom Mark Patrick Hederman OSB says there is a “famine in the land”.

“People all over this country, and, indeed, further afield, are looking for

spiritual sustenance,” he writes.

“How do we here in Ireland, in this 21st Century get closer to our God? Much of the social pathology which contaminated Ireland in the 20th century sprang from a spiritual and moral paradigm forced upon us as an island of ‘Saints and Scholars’.

“We had what has been described as an Irish Jansenism and it presented a grim theology, rigid, authoritarian and moralistic. It was certainly responsible

for much fear, guilt and pessimism.”

He says that the Church as an institution is “prone to every form of political intrigue and power-seeking corruption”.

“Let us retrieve our birth right and take back the Church which we inherited and which we are. Either we do something daring and immediate or the whole edifice may collapse.”

The book is available at [www.columbapbooks.com](http://www.columbapbooks.com) and in bookshops.

## Convicted

The people convicted were two women who ran a prostitution ring from a base in Co. Westmeath. They were each found guilty of two counts of trafficking women from Nigeria into Ireland, contrary to the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008.

## Bishop Gavin welcomes Clogheen to the family



Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross, pictured with Clogheen/Kerry Pike church volunteers Breda O’Connor-Ferguson, Deirdre O’Brien and Anthony O’Connor, following Mass at which Bishop Gavin outlined details of the ‘Family of Parishes’ initiative involving four northside parishes. Photo: Mike English.

# Mary McAleese aligning with Anabaptists and Jehovah's Witnesses?

There are several Christian sects which do not subscribe to infant baptism, such as the Baptists, Anabaptists, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses and Plymouth Brethren.

For people like the Anabaptists, baptism is valid only when the candidates confess their faith in Christ and request to be baptised. The Mormons also practice adult baptism.

What characterises most of these denominations, too, is that they are often markedly strict in their lifestyles. The Amish people in North America – who rebuff modern technology and still use horse and carriages for transport – practice a form of Anabaptism. Because the infant is not baptised, it has to be shielded from the evils of the world.

## Autobiography

Sir Edmund Gosse's classical autobiography, *Father and Son*, published in 1907, is often held up as an example of growing up within this Puritan tradition. Because the boy could not be baptised until he chose to, as an adult, his father did everything he could to keep his only child away from "the world, the flesh and the devil". Gosse was virtually imprisoned. After he offended against his father's rules by eating a mince pie which had been given to him by a servant, he had to confess his sin and repent that he had partaken of "the food of the idolator" – Puritans associated mince pies with Roman Catholics.



Mary Kenny



It's interesting that Mary McAleese has chosen to align her views with these sects in their baptism policies, and against the practice of the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches in baptising newborns. Mrs McAleese, in an address at Oxford – 'Baptismal obligations? Revisiting the christening contract' – claims that infant baptism is a breach of human rights. The infant has not exercised his or her choice to be baptised: Catholics should wait until the person is mature enough to make a "personal voluntary commitment" to the Church.

Since I am not a doctor of canon law, I wouldn't undertake to debate Mrs McAleese on the finer points of Church law: but in terms of ordinary logic, I find the argument lacking in common sense. An infant is not in a position to make choices about anything. We make their choices for them, because, in the normal

course of life, we are their protectors, and we aspire to act in their best interest. We give children food that is "good for them" that they might not choose themselves (broccoli?) and provide them with medical vaccinations, even though they might cry at the sight of a needle. So, if parents and guardians make each everyday choice in a child's best interest, why shouldn't christening and baptism be part of such norms?

I have heard it said the trouble with lawyers is that they see everything in a legalistic sense – everything is about "contract law" – rather than seen within a context of personal, social and religious values. This may be applicable to Mary McAleese's analysis. Or she may have come to feel that the Anabaptists, the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are preferable company to the traditions of the Catholic Church.

● Sr Mary Joseph of the Trinity sure is one nun I'd like to have met. She was born Ann Russell, in 1928, in San Francisco – a kinswoman of the wealthy Rockefeller family. She led a busy social life as a young girl – smoked, drank, gossiped and had her hair done regularly by Elizabeth Arden. Aged 20, she married a Mr Richard Miller – also wealthy – and they had ten children. When she was widowed, aged 61, she decided to become a nun with the Sisters of Mount Carmel in Chicago, a cloistered order of discalced Carmelites. She threw a fabulous

party before taking the veil. Before she entered, an old admirer went on bended knee and proposed marriage. "Don't be ridiculous!" she told him. She didn't find the disciplines of cloister easy going, but she stuck with it until her death at the age of 92. It wasn't unusual, in the Middle Ages, for widows to retire to a nunnery once their family responsibilities were discharged. The thought of a peaceful convent – preferably in Tuscany – as life grows more worrisome and wearying often seems very attractive.

## Boris paid some attention in religion class!



TV interviewer Robert Preston asked Boris Johnson if he was now a practising Catholic, after his marriage at Westminster Cathedral. Bojo replied: "I don't discuss these deep issues – certainly not with you." Preston then asks why not – Labour leader Keir Starmer recently said he didn't believe in God – did Boris believe in God? Johnson replied by quoting Psalm 14, verse 1: "The foolish man has said in his heart 'There is no God.'" Indicating he thought such men were fools. A priest friend remarks: "It shows that Boris paid some attention during religion class at school!"

**MISSIO IRELAND**

Sister Nilcéia, on mission in Malawi

**Wherever the Church is, Missio is there**

Missio Ireland is proud to be the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission. They are part of a global network that reaches out across five continents to support some of the poorest and most marginalised communities in the world.

**Only possible because of you**

Through your prayers, generosity, and by supporting missionaries like Sister Nilcéia, Missio is building a vibrant Church for the future. Sister Nilcéia's faith and charitable actions offers far-reaching and long-term solutions for remote communities in Malawi. She inspires people to become missionaries in their own right by sharing God's love in a region that desperately needs compassion and kindness.

**To learn more go to [www.missio.ie](http://www.missio.ie)**

**Please support overseas missionaries serving around the world**

Phone Fiona on 01 497 2035

Use the form below

**YES! I want to support missionaries like Sr Nilcéia who are serving overseas with my donation of:** €

By donating over €250 Missio can reclaim tax at no cost to you, but please give whatever feels generous.

Your Name

Home Address (Please include Eircode)

Phone Number  Email

I enclose a Cheque or Postal Order made payable to Missio Ireland

Or charge my  Visa  Mastercard

Card Number

Expiry Date  CVC  Signature

Please send your donation to **Missio, FREEPOST FDN5 268, 64 Lr Rathmines Rd, D06 N2H1**

We would like to keep you updated on how your support is helping missionaries. Please tick how we can contact you: Phone  Email  If you would prefer not to receive updates by post, please contact Fiona on 01 497 2035 and she will amend your preferences.

IC 06/21

# Irish bishop criticises ‘one-sided’ EU abortion draft resolution

**Ruadhán Jones**

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor, who is vice-president of an EU bishops' body, has defended the "fundamental right" to conscientious objection against abortion, as a draft EU resolution "questions the mere existence" of this right.

The European Parliament Plenary (EPP) is to vote on a resolution to adopt a report on abortion that would put pressure on member states to remove obstacles to abortion and outlaw conscientious objection.

Bishop Treanor, who is vice-president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), criticised the draft resolution, calling it "a one-sided perspective throughout".

He added that it is "deeply concerning" that the draft "negates the fundamental right to conscientious objection".

"The draft EU resolution questions the mere existence of a right of medical institutions and their staff to refuse to provide certain health services, including abortion, on the basis of conscience clauses," said the bishop of Down and Connor.

Bishop Treanor also said that the resolution "disregards the responsibility of member states" regarding the legislation of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Meanwhile, the Life Institute has called on people to lobby MEPs to vote against a report on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in

the EU, in the frame of women's health (2020/2215(INI)) when it comes before the EPP June 23-24.

It's "very important" that Irish people speak up to show how much this matters.

"The EPP has for long time been trying to make the union sign up to the notion that abortion is a right," said spokesperson Niamh Uí Bhriain. "As those calls become louder and those pushing them more extreme, it's also impacting on things like the right to conscientious objection."

Senator Rónán Mullen also called on Ireland's MEPs to dissent, adding that if they don't, it's "really unacceptable, a two fingers to fundamental human rights".

# Comcast stance against internet pornography welcomed by Aontú

**Jason Osborne**

The news that one of the world's largest telecommunications companies has taken a stand against internet pornography has been welcomed by Aontú's Peadar Tóibín.

US giant Comcast cut ties with MindGeek earlier this month, the parent company behind the world's largest pornography website, Pornhub.

Comcast announced that they have decided to drop all MindGeek content from their cable systems, following in the footsteps of other major organisations such as PayPal and Mastercard.

The Meath-West TD welcomed the news, saying it has been an issue that has "concerned" Aontú significantly over the past couple of years, "the access that many children have to hardcore pornography in this country".

"Material which would have been illegal a generation ago is now fully accessible to children as young

as ten years old," Mr Tóibín said, continuing, "We know that many children are accessing this type of material, and we know also that this type of material has a significant influence on their behaviour in the future."

Mr Tóibín highlighted the negative effect exposure to pornography can have on children's "understanding of relationships, sexuality and their understanding of the rights and wrongs of violence".

"We have ourselves created a bill which would make it illegal for these types of companies to supply hardcore pornography to children. That bill is in the Dáil at the moment, we're hoping to be able to proceed with it," Mr Tóibín said.

He added they're "just absolutely flabbergasted" that "Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Greens themselves haven't taken the initiative to implement such a bill given the effects this is having on society".

# Book of Jonah echoes as man swallowed by whale

**Staff reporter**

In what has been described as a "Biblical ordeal", a US lobsterman escaped after being swallowed by a humpback whale.

Michael Packard, 56, of Provincetown, Massachusetts, was diving off Cape Cod when he was swallowed by

the whale for between 30 and 40 seconds, only to be spat out with nothing more than a suspected dislocated knee.

Speaking to *WBZ-TV News*, Mr Packard said that after jumping off his boat in scuba gear into the water, he "felt this huge bump and everything went dark".

He thought he'd been attacked by a great white shark, but after feeling around and discovering no teeth, realised it was something else entirely.

"And then I realised: 'Oh my God, I'm in a whale's mouth and he's trying to swallow me. This is it, I'm

going to die,'" he said.

The whale "all of a sudden" went up to the surface and "just erupted and started shaking his head," Mr Packard related, continuing "I just got thrown in the air and landed in the water. I was free and I just floated there. I couldn't believe... I'm here to tell it".



Leave a priceless gift.

Please remember GOAL in your will

GOAL

You do not need to re-write your will, you just need to include us in it. Doing so will help us respond to global health crises, continue to provide life saving support for families and communities struck down by disaster or conflict and to feed the hungry. Founded in 1977 GOAL continues to make the world a better place. You too can help change lives.

Talk to someone in confidence.

Contact Courtenay on 01 2809779 or via email at [cpollard@goal.ie](mailto:cpollard@goal.ie)

Registered Charity No. 20010980; CHY 6271, Carnegie House, Library Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland

## Blessing the freedom of the sea



Fr Ciarán McCarthy blesses Saoirse na Farraige (Freedom of the Sea), Ireland's largest domestic ferry, before embarking on her maiden voyage from Galway Docks June 4.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Syro-Malabar Catholics Ireland sends €26,000 to Covid-struck India

The Syro-Malabar Church in Ireland – a Catholic community in Dublin and Wicklow – have praised the "generosity" of parishioners as the community have raised €26,720 for Indian dioceses.

The largely Indian community are working with two dioceses in Delhi and Telangana, helping them buy vital equipment such as oxygen concentrators.

In a statement from the Syro-Malabar Community, they reported that Indian Archbishop Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara said "this financial aid has been crucial for the survival of many Covid patients and has been a great consolation for those who had lost their hope".



Follow The Irish Catholic on Twitter

IrishCathNews

## Martin Mansergh

The View



# Boris Johnson's wedding and the need to ensure consistency of message

**H**earing the news on Sunday morning June 6 that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his fiancée Carrie Symonds had been married privately in Westminster Cathedral, I wrongly assumed, for which apologies, that the RTÉ newsroom must have confused Westminster Cathedral with Westminster Abbey, which is Anglican. Given the strong stance of the Catholic Church over the years on the indissolubility of marriage, I found it hard to imagine them conducting Boris Johnson's after he had been twice divorced. I further assumed that this was probably another example of laxity, or, to put it more politely, latitudinarianism in the Church of England, which has always had a certain difficulty with the subject of divorce, given that it was founded after Pope Clement VII excommunicated Henry VIII in 1533.

**“It is argued that liberalism has not halted the outflow of congregations in the Protestant churches”**

This was after Archbishop Cranmer, presiding over an ecclesiastical court, annulled Henry's marriage to his first wife Katharine of Aragon and recognised as valid his next marriage to Anne Boleyn (only till 1536!). Henry could have been forgiven for thinking that the Papal refusal of annulment was political. The troops of the Emperor Charles V, Katharine's nephew, had sacked Rome in 1527. Yet in 1498, when the King of France Charles VIII died, whose marriage with Anne de Bretagne had joined Brittany to the kingdom, his successor and cousin Louis XII with permission from Pope Alexander VI (Borgia) had his own marriage annulled, so that he could wed Anne for sound dynastic reasons, even if his legal case was no better than Henry's. I had no objection to Boris Johnson marrying his fiancée in Church. Dislike of Brexit, or anything else he has done or stands for, should not be a factor. While he may superficially resemble other populist leaders, he is not in the same league as Donald Trump.



### Concerns

However, I have two concerns, one from a Protestant point of view, and the other from a Catholic one. The rationale put forward, that Boris Johnson was baptised a Catholic, that his Anglican confirmation at Eton was immaterial, and that previous marriages, one of which produced four children, could be regarded as null from a Catholic perspective, since they were not conducted in a Catholic church and were without a special dispensation, is unlikely to be well received by other churches, particularly those with whom the English Catholic Church is in ecumenical relations. Is there no such thing as Christian marriage outside the Catholic Church? The rationale smacks of 'the one true faith', a belief rarely put on public display these days, but also highlights the existence of potential loopholes. Probably, the English, only a minority of whom belong to any religion, do not greatly care.

The decision was not made by the Irish Church. Nonetheless, the argument is that they would have had to make the same decision. There was a similar situation about 60 years ago in this country, when a divorced Catholic public figure, previously married to a Protestant, and with children, re-married in a Catholic church, his spouse a work colleague well-connected in Church and state. The attitude down the country at the time, rightly or wrongly, was that this would not have been allowed to ordinary people.

From 1937 to 1995, there was a constitutional ban on divorce. It did not apply to divorces obtained legally abroad, which allowed some

latitude to better-off people including Protestants to shift their domicile temporarily offshore. Catholic nullity procedures, while stiff in their requirements, were marginally more flexible than state ones protecting the status of children. Catholic marriage tribunal decisions were not matters which the state disputed with the Church.

### Acquainted

I am well acquainted with two people, living in England and Scotland, of Scottish Presbyterian and Church of England stock, both of whom at different stages of their adult lives decided to convert to Catholicism.

**“From 1937 to 1995, there was a constitutional ban on divorce. It did not apply to divorces obtained legally abroad”**

One was ordained rector of the principal church in a large and important English town, but he belonged to the wing of the Church of England that objected to the ordination of women, primarily for theological reasons, but also because it would be an obstacle to church unity. He resigned and became a teacher and later vice-principal of a Catholic secondary school. My view then was that there might be many good reasons to join the Catholic Church, but that an objection to the ordination of women was not one of them. Pope Francis in 2016 made the celebration day of St Mary Magdalene a feast day,

should a decision be taken to enlarge the role of women in the Church, for example, by opening up the diaconate.

### Outflow

It is argued that liberalism has not halted the outflow of congregations in the Protestant churches. This is true, with one caveat. Some decisions may have been made for principled reasons, not just expediency. Equally, a more rigorous approach by the Catholic Church has not prevented a fall in membership, as graphically illustrated in Germany, where resignations are recorded, because of Church tax implications.

The other person, a convert to Catholicism, married in a Protestant church, and had children. The couple eventually divorced. He was remar-

ried in a registry office. His second wife also became Catholic. At some point, at the bishop's direction, in accordance with rules laid down, he was informed that as a remarried person after divorce he was not permitted to take communion at Mass. The Johnson wedding has aggravated a sense of grievance. In all churches, serious offence seems often to be more easily forgiven than breaches of Church rules.

Given how badly the Catholic Church was treated in England historically, satisfaction at a serving British Prime Minister being married in the Catholic Church is understandable. Ensuring a consistency of message that is humane in a deeply entangled world remains a difficult and ongoing challenge.



## Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly

Invites applications from suitably qualified persons for the position of

### DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

This is a 3-year Fixed-Term Contract

The purpose of this role is to assist the Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly and its constituent parishes and agencies in the establishment of the 2021-26 'Seeds of Hope' strategic plan for the pastoral work of the Archdiocese.

The Director will work under the guidance of the Archbishop of Cashel & Emly and the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests. The role is critical to the implementation of pastoral initiatives and programmes at parish level, working closely with parish pastoral teams and other pastoral groups as required.

The appointed person will be accountable to the Archbishop of Cashel & Emly.

A detailed job description is available on [www.cashel-emly.ie](http://www.cashel-emly.ie)

Closing date for applicants by post or email, on or before 5pm on **Friday 25th June 2021** to:

Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly, Archbishop's House, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, E41 NY92

Email: [pastoral.office@cashel-emly.ie](mailto:pastoral.office@cashel-emly.ie)

Phone: **(0504) 21512**

*Please note that incomplete or late applications will not be considered. The Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly is an equal opportunity employer.*

# Calls to dismiss mother and baby homes report one-eyed



Denise Gormley and her 7-year-old daughter, Rosa, pay their respects at the site of the former mother and baby home in Tuam, Co. Galway. Photo: CNS.



Efforts to undermine the Mother and Baby Homes report does a disservice to survivors, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**W**hen one of the authors of the recent *Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* – historian Prof. Mary Daly – was reported as saying that the commission had discounted hundreds of statements made by survivors of the homes, it caused a predictable and justifiable stir.

It would be a great injustice if these personal testimonies, made to the Confidential Committee, were treated as effectively useless because they were not given under oath. It would also confirm for those who hope to overthrow the report that its methodology was suspect, that its findings disregarded the testimonies of survivors and that its language was overly legalistic and cold.

The commission's attitude towards survivors was characterised as "dis-

missive", as Claire McGettrick of the Adoption Rights Alliance put it. Unsurprisingly, Prof. Daly's comments, made before an Oxford University seminar, resulted in renewed calls for the Government to disown the report.

But as the professor's comments saw the light of day in full, it was clear that her statements did not match the initial reports, or were at least more subtle. First off, she stated that the evidence given to the Confidential Committee, which ran in tandem with the commission, was incorporated into that committee's report. This was then used where possible for the commission's final report.

**“They didn't have the time to ensure the individual stories could be incorporated fully while meeting the standards of objectivity”**

"We used what we could," Prof. Daly said regarding the survivors' testimonies, adding that much of the evidence given, while moving, wasn't relevant to the commission. "We got descriptions of cleaning, other jobs, nobody described really heavy work to us. I think what most of them talked about was the monotony of the place."

Aside from the lack of relevance to the commission's report, a second issue they faced in incorporating the testimonies was that they couldn't cross-check the statements. "It would have taken hundreds of hours of cross checking, re-reading against the other evidence available from registers and

so on," Prof. Daly said. "Then maybe interrogation... and then maybe working out how to integrate the two."

In other words, they didn't have the time to ensure the individual stories could be incorporated fully while meeting the standards of objectivity and factual accuracy required for the final report. They were given a rigorous set of guidelines to follow, ones which were laid out by the government of the time.

A letter sent to the Oireachtas Children's Committee by Judge Yvonne Murphy, another of the commissioners, sheds further light on the difficulties the commission faced and the reasons for its choices with regard to survivor testimony. Her letter was sent in response to a request from the Oireachtas for the authors to appear before the committee. She refused, saying: "The independence, procedures and safeguards under which the commission carried out its investigation and its carefully considered conclusions would be set at nought by an appearance before your committee and in circumstances especially where prejudgement is already manifest."

## Refuse

While I believe she is wrong to refuse, especially given that Prof. Daly is willing to publicly discuss the report elsewhere, she is trenchant in defending the report's integrity and her letter sets out in detail the method and aim of the commission's work. I encourage everyone to read it in full. She highlights the strict code they had to follow, the Commissions of Investigation

Act 2004 and the terms of reference, as set out by the Government in 2015.

It was these that determined the scope and shape of the report. It had to be of "a general nature on the experiences of the single women and children which the commission may, to the extent it considers appropriate, rely upon". The commission was directed to investigate 14 mother and baby homes and a sample of county homes over a 76-year period.

**“It would be a great injustice if these personal testimonies, made to the Confidential Committee, were treated as effectively useless”**

In line with the terms of reference, they established a confidential committee "to provide a forum for persons who were formerly resident in the homes... during the relevant period to provide accounts of their experience in these institutions in writing or orally as informally as is possible in the circumstances". It is this committee that heard the testimony of survivors, and the findings of which the commission was accused of ignoring.

But Judge Murphy, as did Prof. Daly, insists that the work of this commission "is reflected in its final report and its interim reports and not by commentators who seek to sweep aside its findings": "While the confidential committee was separately

constituted, its report is an important element of the commission's final report", she writes.

She goes on to note, however, that the "general nature" of the commission's final report required that confidentiality be maintained. She adds that the individual accounts were integrated where the Commission "considered appropriate having regard to the totality of the evidence gathered by the commission and before making its findings". The "totality of the evidence" is an important point, as Judge Murphy says that 304 mothers gave evidence, of whom 18 were in the institutions pre-1960.

## Institutions

Compare this with the 24,207 mothers who were in the institutions investigated in the period 1960-1998 – "the experiences of one per cent of those are reflected in the confidential committee report", Judge Murphy says in the letter and she asserts that, while the value of the report of the confidential committee should not be underestimated, "it cannot be taken as a definitive history of mother and baby homes and associated topics".

That is not to suggest that abuse did not take place in the homes. The report details graphic accounts of the abuses women underwent and the "callous disregard" with which they were often treated. But the use of the testimonies to inform the commission's findings was not and is not straightforward. Calling for the report to be discarded or disowned would not only be a disservice to the work of the commissioners, but also to the survivors, who deserve more than political manoeuvring. They deserve the truth, and the commission's report is an honest attempt to reach it.

**“As the professor's comments saw the light of day in full, it was clear that her statements did not match the initial reports, or were at least more subtle”**



# Online move for Mass cards sees surge in sales

**Jason Osborne**

Mass card suppliers have seen a “huge increase” in demand for Mass cards since they moved online at the beginning of the pandemic.

This increase has been accompanied by a rise in requests for memoriam cards in recent months, as the year’s anniversary of many of the pandemic’s initial deaths comes about.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Sr Fiachra Nutty of St Mary’s Abbey, Glencairn, Co. Waterford said that the demand was “out of the blue”, but that they came to understand it was because many of the parish offices were closed around the country.

“As the lockdown persisted, we came to understand that an awful lot of parish offices were closed because they’re manned by volunteers in many cases, so all the shops closed. People who wanted a Mass said, where could they go?” she said.

The online shop was integral to their success, Sr Nutty said, adding that people came “directly to us” when they realised they could both supply Mass cards and arrange to have them signed.

“It grew from there. It wasn’t that we set out to market Mass cards or anything like that, it’s just the way it came about. We were astonished by the number of them that we sold over the months.”

A visiting priest from Dungarvan who acquires his Mass cards from St Mary’s Abbey revealed that he’d never seen such a demand for Mass cards in his own parish, Sr Nutty said, continuing, “it seems to be the flipside of the downward movement in one area”.

“What greater gift can you give to anybody who is *in extremis*, whatever that crisis is, than the gift of the Mass? That’s the greatest gift you can give anybody,” she said.

The increased demand since moving online was also seen by the Augustinians, who only moved their Mass cards online at the onset of the pandemic by chance.

Executive Assistant to the Provincial Clare

Brophy said that the online shop was a lifeline, as it “literally was our only income” during the depths of lockdown.

“We were lucky, really. When everything closed down, we were able to launch the online shop and it was slow to start off with, it took a couple of months, but then slowly but surely, it seemed to gather momentum because people were ringing up asking us did we do online cards,” Ms Brophy said.

Not limited to the domestic market, “loads of requests” for cards came from Germany and America, she said, with their Mass and Christmas cards being the top sellers.



Bishop-elect Fr Ger Nash (right) and Bishop Denis Brennan.  
Photo: John Mc Elroy.

## Fr Ger Nash ‘excited’ after Pontiff appoints him new bishop of Ferns

**Chai Brady**

Co. Clare priest Fr Ger Nash (62) has said it is “exciting to be asked to take a leadership role” after Pope Francis appointed him as the new bishop of the Diocese of Ferns last week. He will be taking over from Bishop Denis Brennan.

Bishop-elect Nash said he looked forward to walking with the people and parish communities throughout the diocese of Ferns “as we respond to that call to synodality”, in the Cathedral of Saint Aidan, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, June 11.

Speaking of the upcoming national synod in Ireland, he said: “I have a sense that we are at a turning point in our Church story in Ireland, and it is exciting

to be asked to take a leadership role at such a time.”

Bishop Brennan welcomed the incoming bishop, saying his ministry begins in Ferns “at a time which poses many choices and challenges for the Church but at a time which is also blessed by possibility”.

Bishop-elect Nash has been working as the Director of Pastoral Development for the Diocese of Killaloe since 2016. Bishop-elect Nash was born in Glendree in the parish of Tulla, Co. Clare, was ordained in 1991, and has been working in the areas of pastoral and diocesan planning, Catholic education and youth ministry since then.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Clonard Redemptorists at ‘wits end’ over anti-social youths

The Rector of Clonard has said the Redemptorist community have been left at their “wits end” by anti-social youths, *The Irish News* reported.

The west Belfast church was targeted four times over the weekend by boys aged between 14 and 15, who broke a window, stole food from the kitchen and one teen exposed himself to an elderly priest.

Fr Peter Burns said the youths had broken into Clonard’s gardens, destroying lights and tearing up flowers.

“We can’t go out to the garden because we don’t know when they will be there,” he said. “We are at our wits end.”



**St. Francis Hospice Dublin**

## Support Sunflower Days

Month of June

Donate and Dedicate a Sunflower

**CALL 01-8327535**

OR ONLINE

[hospicevirtualflowergarden.com](http://hospicevirtualflowergarden.com)

**Thank You**

Company Registration Number 153874 Registered Charity Number 20027193



# Christ marches through the streets of Cloghroe, Co. Cork



Fr Lynch of Inniscarra parish raises the Blessed Sacrament.



The Blessed Sacrament is processed through Cloghroe, Co. Cork, accompanied by canopy bearers Eamonn Hegarty, John Lane, Billy Kelleher and Joe Ambrose and altar servers David Enright, Patrick Roche-Sheehan, Mary Clare and Tomás O'Connell, David Moynihan and Emma Dilworth.



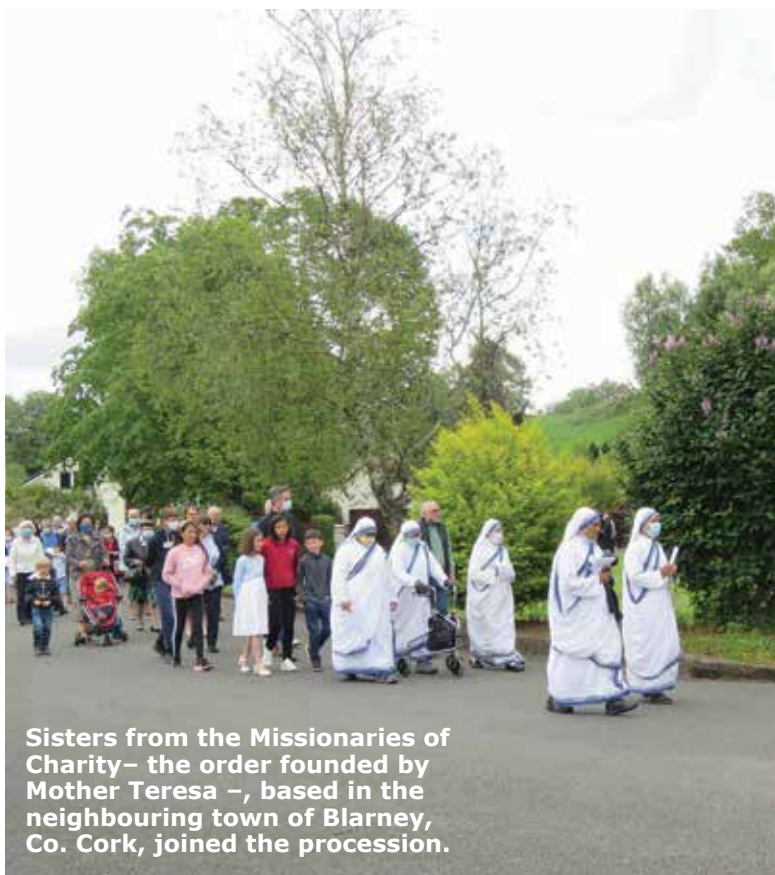
Inniscarra parish priest Fr Paddy Buckley speaks at the Corpus Christi procession.



A large crowd attends the Corpus Christi procession in Inniscarra parish, June 6.



Fr Damien Lynch carries the Blessed Sacrament through Cloghroe in the parish of Inniscarra, Co. Cork, for the feast of Corpus Christi, Sunday June 6.



Sisters from the Missionaries of Charity– the order founded by Mother Teresa –, based in the neighbouring town of Blarney, Co. Cork, joined the procession.



Pat Cashman is pictured by an image of the Sacred Heart as he watches the procession go by.



Fr Lynch kneels before the blessed sacrament.



A Marian altar is displayed in the drive of a local house as the procession goes by.



**Maria Steen**

The View



**Michael Kelly**

Managing Editor



Baroness  
**Nuala O'Loan**

The View



**David Quinn**

Columnist



**Chai Brady**

Multimedia Journalist



Baroness  
**Nuala O'Loan**

The View



**Breda O'Brien**

The View



**Mary Kenny**

Columnist



**Jason Osborne**

Multimedia Journalist



**Ruadhán Jones**

Multimedia Journalist



# Proudly reporting the beauty and truth of our faith

Subscriptions start at €45\*  
Phone 01 6874028 to subscribe today



\*Special offer for new subscribers.

# Tempest of the heart

About ten years ago we celebrated the Year of Faith and the logo chosen as a symbol of the times was the boat tossed about in a storm, today's Gospel, Mark 4:35-41. In this series of Sunday Reflections, we have already referred to the problems of the Church on several occasions, so let us change our focus today to the storms and turbulence that we might experience as individuals. Giuseppe Verdi in his opera *Il Trovatore* composed a wonderful aria known in English as 'Tempest of the Heart', a song filled with hope for a joyful future after years of winter's frown.

## Lockdown

We have lived with winter's frown for more than a year. The restrictions on normal life during the lockdowns of the past year have been very painful for many people. You may have missed your workplace, colleagues, normal recreation and social life. Keeping energetic children occupied must have been very difficult. Some people really missed going to church. And hanging over everything was the fear of family members contracting the Covid-19 virus. It has been a continual task to keep tempers under control, keeping heads above water in a sea of despondency, trying to be cheerful and positive at times of deep inner struggle.

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



## Storms in the subconscious mind

For many years my main ministry was preaching retreats or directing individuals on retreat. While no two people are exactly the same, a certain pattern often emerged when the retreatant changed into frustration or dryness. The days of peace and tranquillity allowed the mind to listen to its deeper parts and what was now coming to the surface was not always pleasant. Henri Nouwen, a very busy priest-lecturer-writer-guide, decided to spend one entire summer in the quietness of a Trappist monastery. The first few days offered a great release from the pressures of work and the invasive noises of contemporary life. But after a few days his feelings changed. This is how he described it in his diary: "The first thing we discover in solitude is our restlessness, drivenness, compulsiveness, the urge to act quickly, to make an impact, to have an influence". That was his experience as a compulsive activist. For other people, the space of solitude will

be taken over in different ways such as deeply seated feelings of loneliness, unattended grief, inadequacy, fear, anxiety, sexual compulsions, festering anger or frustrations. Identifying the root of the problem is the first step towards healing. After respectful listening, the retreat director will usually offer readings from sacred Scripture as a means of being open to the light of God's word. So, let us return to the narrative of the stormy sea in today's Gospel.

## Jesus was asleep

How could anybody sleep through the turbulence and shouting while the boat was close to sinking? Yet Jesus was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep. There is a lesson for us here. It often happens when people are experiencing the tempest of the heart, they pray and plead with God but it seems that God is asleep. When Jesus did eventually wake up, he rebuked the wind as he would act in casting out an evil spirit. "Quiet now! Be calm!" And the wind dropped and all was calm again.

Then he asked the disciples, "Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?" It's easy for me sitting at my desk to say that faith tells us that God is always watching us. As a popular song puts it, "God is watching, at a distance." But for a person

in deep darkness or turbulence all these nice words may offer no comfort.

## Three pieces of advice

Is there any advice one can give? If the person wants to let fly in anger against God, my advice is to let fly. Some of the sacred psalms show us how to give out to God. We wouldn't be giving out if we did not believe that we expected more from God. Angry prayer is honest prayer. It invariably happens that, when peace of mind returns, the one who was angry is now humbly apologising to God!

Another piece of advice, if the person is calm enough to listen, is to recall what St Paul said that when we do not know how to pray, then the Spirit of God within us prays in ways that cannot be put into words. Hand it over to the Holy Spirit to do the job on our behalf. Another piece of advice comes from the Gospel story where the friends of a crippled man stripped the roof off a house to bring their friend to Jesus. If you are in deep darkness and feel that you cannot pray, is there any person you can contact to pray in your name? Even if no name comes to mind, remember that you are part of the body of Christ which is the Church, and at any given moment there

are people at prayer in your name. You may not know them, but you have many faith friends who are carrying you, poor cripple, through the roof

to God. There are many contemplative orders of men and women whose lives are dedicated to prayer. These people keep the flame of faith burning at all times.

## Prayer

Mindful of God's eternal love, we pray.

The Church is a boat on stormy seas at the moment. May we never lose faith in the presence of the Lord, even when it seems that he is asleep.

When our lives are tossed about in turmoil, may we draw hope and courage as we

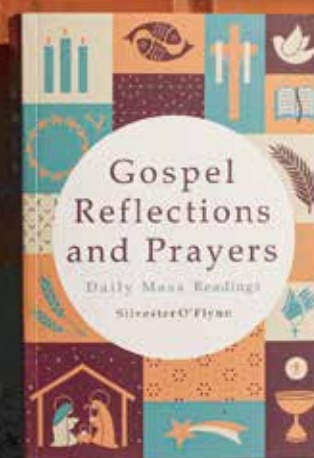
remember that God, our loving Creator, is always holding us in his loving hand.

And we pray for people who have lost hope. May the light of God's love shine in their darkness.

Loving Father, hold us in the palm of your hand as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, our Lord. Amen.

## More of Fr Silvester's Gospel Reflections

ARE AVAILABLE



ORDER  
Gospel  
Reflections  
and Prayers  
TODAY

€19.99  
+€4.50 P&P

columba BOOKS

Phone 01 6874096 | Visit [www.columbabooks.com](http://www.columbabooks.com)



Irish media make it appear simple and humane to give intended parents automatic legal rights, but surrogacy is complex, writes **David Quinn**

**A** campaign in favour of the rights of Irish people who use international surrogacy to have children has been substantially stepped up in the last couple of weeks. As usual, the ethical pitfalls of surrogacy have not been aired, even though they are substantial, and in some countries have led to the practice being totally banned. But not here, because we appear to have decided that giving full recognition to it is the latest 'modern' thing we must do.

Before proceeding, we need to set out some of the terminology used in this debate. A surrogate mother is the woman who will give birth to the children. The 'commissioning adults' are those who have sought out the surrogate and are paying her for her services. This might involve expenses only (which will be substantial), or a fee as well.

The commissioning adults are also sometimes known as the 'intending parents' because once they take delivery of the child, they intend raising it.

The 'intending parents' might or might not be the biological parents of the child. They might have provided their own sperm and egg, or they might use donated sperm and/or a donated egg.

### Possibility

This gives rise to the possibility that the woman who intends raising the child is neither the biological mother of the child, nor the birth mother. The man who intends raising the child might not have provided his own sperm, and therefore will not be the biological father.

**“In some cases, the surrogate mother loses the right to keep the child she has given birth to once the child is born”**

As Irish law currently stands, it can be difficult for people who use surrogates to be recognised as the child's legal parents. Where the intending father is also the biological father, that is, his sperm was used in the process, it is much easier to be made the child's legal parent.

But where the intending mother is neither the biological mother nor the birth mother, it can be very difficult.

# Pro-surrogacy campaign ignores the big ethical problems



Campaigners want the law changed so that anyone who goes abroad to use a surrogate and then comes home with a child will automatically be recognised as the child's parent regardless of the degree of biological connection.

This would make it far easier than adoption which these days involves a rigorous and arduous screening process.

Ireland still does not have a law regulating matters like assisted human reproduction (AHR) and surrogacy. One has been in the pipeline for years, and under current plans domestic surrogacy will be recognised, but not international surrogacy, not on paper anyway. In addition, only 'altruistic' surrogacy will be recognised not commercial surrogacy which involves a fee.

### Fee

Almost all international surrogacy involves a fee. Many Irish couples go to Ukraine and hire surrogate mothers there, usually through agencies, because it is cheaper than places like California, but it can still cost around €35,000, with Irish legal fees on top of that.

The surrogate mother herself will receive around €18,000 in fees and expenses. That is considerably

more than the average Ukrainian wage.

At present, if a couple (or individual) come home from abroad with a child obtained via surrogacy, they must apply to court to be recognised as legal guardians of the child.

So, should we simply change the Irish law to make this process as easy as possible, or is the issue more complicated than that?

Certainly, if you are following this issue in the Irish media, it will appear both simple and humane; given the intending parents automatic legal rights.

**“As Irish law currently stands, it can be difficult for people who use surrogates to be recognised as the child's legal parents”**

In fact, to do so without any further debate does a total injustice to the complexity of the issue.

To start with, do we really want to legalise commercial surrogacy, that is, paying a woman to have a baby for you? Doesn't this sound uncomfortably like turning both pregnancy and the babies themselves into a commodity? This

is why most European countries ban the practice outright.

Another issue is the nature of surrogacy contracts. In some cases, the surrogate mother loses the right to keep the child she has given birth to once the child is born. She will have signed a contract to this effect.

This means that if she changes her mind, the baby can be removed forcibly from her. Is this really what we want, particularly given the history of mother and baby homes in Ireland and elsewhere?

Usually, the surrogate will be implanted with two or more babies in the hope that at least one successful pregnancy results. Sometimes the contract will stipulate that if more than one baby looks like it will make it to full-term, other babies must be aborted. This is euphemistically called 'foetal reduction'.

### Comfortable

Are we comfortable about this? Suppose the surrogate mother gives birth to more than one baby having refused to abort the 'surplus' one? What happens then? The commissioning couple will be under no obligation to take home the second baby, but the surrogate might

not want to raise it either. Pity the poor child.

In fact, there are documented cases of surrogates giving birth but then the commissioning couple change their mind because the child turns out to have a disability.

This was exactly the fate of one little girl in Ukraine named Bridget. The surrogate did not want to raise the child, and had not changed her mind about the matter. She was having the baby for another couple. That is the whole purpose of surrogacy.

**“Usually, the surrogate will be implanted with two or more babies in the hope that at least one successful pregnancy results”**

But the American couple who hired her changed their minds when they discovered Bridget had a disability. The law can do nothing about it. The result is that Bridget is now growing up in an orphanage.

These are only some of the problems that surrogacy gives rise to, but as usual they are not being raised in public discussions about the practice. Instead, highly emotional personal stories are being used to make us agree to something that is deeply problematic in practice. The ethical problems must be honestly and fully aired so the public can make a more informed choice about the matter. Nothing else will do.

**“Campaigners want the law changed so that anyone who goes abroad to use a surrogate and then comes home with a child will automatically be recognised as the child's parent”**

# NI two-child welfare limit 'heavy burden' on poorer families



Religious families in the North could be disproportionately affected by the two-child policy, writes **Chai Brady**

**A** decision to deny child welfare supports for the third or subsequent children born into families struggling financially may have gone unnoticed in the south of the island, but it is causing "deeper poverty" in the North, according to politicians and campaigners at the coalface.

Under the two-child limit, in the North and Britain, families are not able to claim child benefits for any third or subsequent child born on

or after April 6, 2017. It's believed that there are about 3,000 families being affected by the two-child limit. Job losses due to Covid were also causing a weekly rise as people were forced onto Universal Credit.

**“An individual is considered to be in absolute poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60%”**

The effects are certainly being felt in Northern Ireland as 21.4% of families in the North have three or more children compared to the UK average of 14.7%. While the two-child limit affects a relatively small number of claimants, it can have a significant effect on poverty.

According to The Institute for Fiscal Studies this is because larger families are already more likely to be in poverty or near poverty, families affected can lose a large amount of income and since the two-child limit by definition affects

families with more children, if one household moves into poverty, then it means a substantial extra number of people in poverty.

According to the Cliff Edge Coalition NI, a group of over 100 organisations from across Northern Ireland which came together to highlight concerns about the potential 'cliff edge' of the end of the welfare reform mitigations, the two-child policy is causing families with three or more children to be financially disadvantaged by £2,780 per year, per child for their third or additional child.

## Bulletins

The Department for Communities (DfC) publishes regular bulletins of poverty statistics in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Poverty Bulletin, published by the DfC on March 25, 2021, covering 2019-2020, stated that 22% of children are living in households in relative poverty, which adds up to an estimated 100,000 children. This represents a decrease of 2% compared to the 2018-2019 figures. It also found that 17% of children were in absolute poverty, representing approximately 75,000

children, a decrease on the 2018/19 estimate of 21%.

An individual is considered to be in absolute poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of the (inflation adjusted) UK median income in 2010/11. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms.

**“While the administrations in the North, Scotland and Wales are concerned, the control of benefits is not devolved”**

Defending the policy, a UK government spokesperson said: “We are committed to supporting families that are most in need and the latest figures show that the percentage of children in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland living in absolute poverty has actually fallen since 2010.

“Four out of five households across the UK have two or fewer

children, and this policy ensures fairness by asking families in receipt of benefits to make the same financial choices as people who support themselves solely through work. There are also careful exemptions and safeguards in place to protect people in the most vulnerable circumstances.”

## Decrease

Despite the decrease in poverty rates among children represented by official figures, on the ground families are struggling due to the two-child policy. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Cllr Emmet Doyle of Aontú, who is in the Derry City and Strabane District Council and represents Ballyarnett, said the policy has “pushed more families deeper into poverty”.

“Some of our wards are the most deprived in the North and even further afield, we now see people having to rely on foodbanks for example to feed their families because that extra financial support, that people are entitled to, is no longer there. So poverty is the primary outcome of this,” Cllr Doyle said.

“I think it's particularly difficult for families because I've come across a number of scenarios where, for example, one of the parents would have had to go back to work full time in order to try and cover the costs.”

He said families are having to make “very difficult choices in terms of how they are able to raise

**“We now see people having to rely on foodbanks for example to feed their families because that extra financial support, that people are entitled to, is no longer there”**



Director of Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth.

## “We have been campaigning people on the ground to try and highlight the fact that this is pushing people into poverty”

their family... There are a lot of knock-on effects”.

“We have been campaigning people on the ground to try and highlight the fact that this is pushing people into poverty, it doesn't do what the Tories said it would in terms of being able to get people back into work. Obviously, the economy here, particularly in the north-west, is not as robust as what we would hope so there are not jobs for people to go out to so it does trap people in a cycle of ever diminishing income.”

### “There's effectively an economic sanction for having more than two children”

The children's commissioners of Northern Ireland – Koulla Yiasouma, Wales – Sally Holland, and Scotland's Bruce Adamson wrote to the UK government late last month, calling for the two-child limit to be scrapped. The joint letter, sent to pensions secretary Thérèse Coffey, said the policy is a “clear breach of children's human rights”.

However, while the administrations in the North, Scotland and Wales are concerned, the control of benefits is not devolved, which limits their power to make changes.

Speaking about the impact on children, Cllr Doyle said: “I think it tells children that after you cross a certain threshold you are not valued, you are not cared about. I think it almost solidifies the view particularly in working class com-

munities that there is a ceiling, that if you don't have a certain income, if you didn't come from a certain area, that you are worth less and we see that imbedded in communities. It's because of the out-workings of this draconian policy.

“There's effectively an economic sanction for having more than two children, if nothing else it's entirely immoral but certainly from my perspective it is criminal, it is telling people their options in life are limited based on how people in London perceive working class communities. Poverty is man-made and this is just another block in that wall for people.”

He added: “Welfare reform has to be reformed, benefits and the welfare state are there to help people, they are not there to drive people into poverty and that in itself creates so many other societal problems. Welfare reform has to be reformed.”

### Conscientious objection

There are also concerns families who oppose abortion on religious grounds will be faced with heightened challenges compared to others due to the policy – which may infringe on their religious rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

A joint report by the Church of England, the Child Poverty Action Group, Women's Aid, Turn2us and the Refugee Council found that not only are larger families more prevalent in faith communities, but that the decisions that those families make about having children are also

likely to be motivated by their religious convictions and practices.

They stated: “The two-child limit is having a significant negative impact on faith communities where larger families are more prevalent. Amongst the general population, 31% of children live in households with more than two children. Within some faith communities, the proportion is significantly higher... Within these communities, raising children is closely bound to their faith and culture. When introducing the two-child limit, the government envisaged that it would influence the choices that families make about the number of children they have, and lead to more 'responsible' decision making. However, where reproductive choices and family planning are motivated by deep faith and devout practice, financial considerations about child-related benefits are likely to play a limited role.”

### “The two-child limit is having a significant negative impact on faith communities where larger families are more prevalent”

This was echoed by lobbying group the Women's Resource and Development Agency, who said in a report the policy “will disproportionately affect families from specific cultural and religious backgrounds where there is a trend for bigger families or a moral

opposition/conscientious objection to contraception, emergency contraception and abortion, such as Orthodox Jews, Catholics or Muslims. This may also breach Articles 9 & 14 of ECHR (freedom of religion and anti-discrimination)”.

### Special circumstances

There are some special circumstances in which people can still receive child benefit for a third or subsequent child or young person born on or after 6 April 2017. These include adopted children, with some exemptions, and when a woman has multiple births such as twins, triplets etc. However, if a family already has two children and the mother has twins or more, only one of the twins, two of the triplets etc. can receive child benefit.

Special circumstances also apply for children living with family, friends or in non-parental caring arrangements. It also applies when children are likely to have been conceived as a result of rape.

### Abortion

The director of pro-life group Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth, said the two-child policy is something they “are very concerned about because we are seeing an increase in women from Northern Ireland in particular, seeking abortion because of the two-child caps that the government introduced a few years ago”.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service said in December 2020 that more than 50% of women it surveyed who had an abortion during the pandemic and who were aware of the two-child limit and likely to be affected by it, said the policy was “important in their decision-making around whether or not to continue the pregnancy”.

A combination of job insecurity and economic issues caused by

Covid-19 removed their choice regarding whether they could continue with a pregnancy, according to some women who spoke to BPAS.

Mrs Smyth said: “I'm dealing with a woman in Northern Ireland who is pregnant with her fourth baby. She's very concerned, because she continued with the third pregnancy, and is feeling the effects of that.

“This is something, if you want to look at it to the extreme, that is happening in China. Women may be forced to have abortions, even though they're not physically forced, but they could be forced by circumstances to abort a very wanted baby, because they don't have the financial means and support.”

For this reason, Precious Life are “heavily involved” with Stanton Healthcare in Belfast “to help to provide support to alleviate some of the problems, but it's a long-term social problem, it's not something that the pro-life movement will be able to fix, because giving birth, who's going to finance that child?

“It's putting pressure on women already. And now with abortion so freely available, women would be opting for the quick fix in this situation. At the minute politics is up in the air in Northern Ireland but come September, and obviously we have a new election next year 2022, it's something that not just the pro-life movement should be concerned about.”

### “A combination of job insecurity and economic issues caused by Covid-19 removed their choice regarding whether they could continue with a pregnancy”

Mrs Smyth added that all women's rights organisation should be getting behind a push to have the two-child policy scrapped. “It should be a unified approach to ensuring that women are given support, and in this case, choices to be able to continue with the pregnancy, without the fear of a financial burden or being unable to support their child in the future. So that's definitely a big concern that we have,” she said.

The pandemic has put many things on the “back burner”, Mrs Smyth said, with opportunities to lobby and hold meetings greatly decreased.

“We would definitely be wanting to work alongside other like-minded pro-woman organisations that genuinely care for the future of women. But we want to ensure that those women are supported in the meantime, but it definitely is causing pressure for women to choose to consider aborting their child because they haven't got the financial means in some cases to continue the pregnancy. So we can see the effect already.

“We definitely will be addressing it in the new term of government and it will be a big issue for the future, when we re-elect a new government next May 2022. That will be a priority, it will be something we want to address on the doorstep.”



This year has proved a hard one for an already struggling fishing sector, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**Y**ou might have heard the names – Castletownbere, Killybegs, Kilmore – or read them on packets of fish without thinking much of it. They produce nice seafood to eat, stocking the shelves of supermarkets around the country. You probably wouldn't give them a second thought, unless their produce was suddenly to go missing.

That might sound over the top and perhaps it is. But coastal communities are warning that recent European and Irish decisions have “decimated” the fishing sector – which employs 16,500 men and women around the country – and that the new fishing season in September may not get underway.

“There's a complete lack of leadership on this issue at political level and there's a complete lack of engagement between the control authority – the Sea-Fish Protection Authority (SFPA) – and the sector,” says Mr Brendan Byrne, chief of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association. “We now find ourselves in an impossible situation where we're ready to go into another pelagic season, which would start again in September, and we don't have the wherewithal to operate our fisheries.”

**“What they're effectively doing is they're bringing the entire industry to a halt”**

This year has brought the neglect of the fishing industries to the fore, with three strikes against Irish fishing communities leaving them feeling upset, frustrated and betrayed, culminating in a protest in Cork and the proposal for a second one in Dublin on June 23. The first strike was the €40 million worth of fish lost as a result of Brexit negotiations. The second was a decision to deny Irish fishers the right to land their catch at their own port or pier uninterrupted. The third was a system of penalty points that allow little or no right to appeal.

### Neglect

All this has left the “ordinary man” to suffer for what the Mr Byrne calls “years of neglect” of the fishing sector. More than 16,000 men and women across the country depend on the sector for their livelihoods, Mr Byrne tells *The Irish Catholic*, and they have been left to carry the burden for failures at political and organisational levels.

“It's actually devastating to the



entire sector, when you consider that in December, they (the EU) took €44 million worth of fish that the Irish fishermen would traditionally catch away from us,” Mr Byrne says. “And then on the April 13, they (the EU Commission) took the right to land our own fish into our own country away from us as well. We're in an incredible situation where we have 12% of the EU waters and yet we can't catch fish that surround our island.”

### Collapse

“The entire fisheries sector is in a state of collapse and there's complete political intransigence or lack of understanding to save it.... And meantime who suffers? The ordinary people suffer. The people depending on getting a number of weeks work in the fish processing factories, those that are dependent on getting a number of weeks work in the fishing vessels, those that are in the service sector.”

But while the first half of 2021 has seen conflict between fishing communities and the Department of Marine and the Sea-Fishery Protection Authority come to a head, it is only the latest in a long line of issues going back almost fifty years, says retired fisherman Brendan O'Driscoll of Castletownbere, Co. Cork, one of the largest fishing towns in Ireland. Mr O'Driscoll's father and uncles founded the fishing sector in the town he says, but ever-increasing bureaucracy drove

him and his brother out.

“At the moment we have what's called the Common Fisheries Policy,” Mr O'Driscoll explains. “It was set up to look after all coastal states. The biggest part of that is what's called Zonal Attachment. It means you should get the greatest share in your own waters to look after your own coastal communities. Whereas here, it's the complete opposite.

**“This year has brought the neglect of the fishing industries to the fore, with three strikes against Irish fishing communities leaving them feeling upset”**

“When we joined the EU back in '73, we didn't have the paperwork ready to join it, that was all of it. And we didn't have the boats at that time to compete with our neighbours. But we built up a fantastic fleet over the years with the help of BIM (An Bord Iascaigh Mhara) and everybody else. But we never got the quotas to keep the fleet going.”

Mr O'Driscoll warns that there is a growing sense of injustice among coastal communities as Irish fishers are squeezed out of their waters.

“Putting it bluntly, the Irish fishing fleet en masse have 15% of the

quotas in our own waters. The rest of the EU decided to take the rest of the quotas and we have nobody fighting our corner. Those in the hallowed halls of power don't seem to be interested in taking up the mantle for us and fighting for us – any one of them, to be quite honest, for years.”

### Waste

“They see it as, how would I put it, as a bit of a waste of their time because I suppose the fishing industry is so small in the overall scheme of things in Ireland – that's the way they look at it. But it's huge in the coastal communities and it is being decimated in fairness... Injustice is the big thing. All we want is equality. And like we're Europeans, we're the best Europeans around, but we want equality in our own waters. That's the bottom line. We're here in Castletownbere and we see between 30 and 40 artic loads of fish leaving here every week from the French and the Spanish, unchecked by the authorities. And these guys are getting fish outside our own door here, while most of our own boats are fishing on really tight quotas and fish maybe two weeks in the month. And they have to tie up and look at these fellas drawing fish for the rest of the month.”

Fr John Joe Duffy of Dunfanaghy (Clondahorky)/Creel, Co. Donegal, also warns that feelings of betrayal and frustration continue due to “draconian regulations”

introduced by the Irish Department of Marine and the SFPA.

“The fishermen and fishing communities feel very betrayed by the department, Government and SFPA,” Fr Duffy says. “They have issued the most draconian measures against Irish fishermen that doesn't exist against other fishermen. They're demanding this weighing system that is not replicated in other parts of Europe. They're allowed to weigh their fish in the factories of other European countries and allowed to land freely in Ireland without check. So the Irish fishermen feel very betrayed that one law applies to them but no law applies to other European vessels.

**“The entire fisheries sector is in a state of collapse and there's complete political intransigence or lack of understanding to save it”**

“So what they're effectively doing is they're bringing the entire industry to a halt. There is a lack of political leadership within Ireland, never mind the EU... the SFPA seem to be using fishermen to cover up their own incompetence and then requests are coming from the EU and the whole burden for the failure of the Department of Marine, the SFPA and poor political leadership is thrown upon the Irish fishermen.”

While not all coastal communities are affected badly – Fr Patsy Lynch reports that the small fishing community in Ballyskelligs have fared well – the overall sense is of a sector staring down the barrel unless action is taken.

**“The fishermen and fishing communities feel very betrayed by the department, Government and SFPA”**



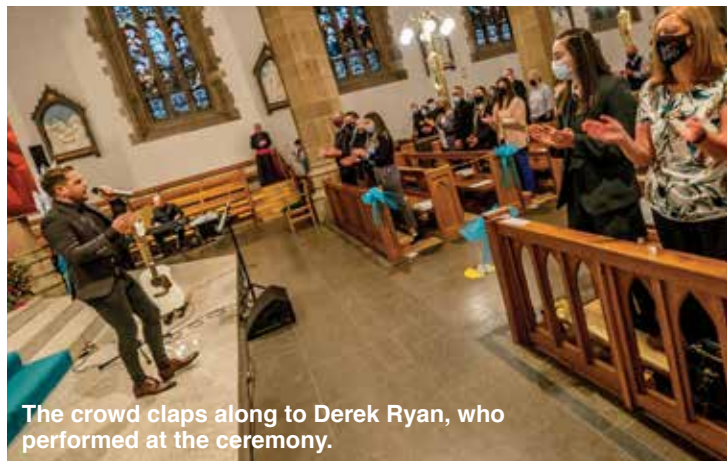
# Derry Diocese JP II award ceremony



Holy Cross College student Hollie represented the 12 other students who received the JP II award. Also pictured are Hollie's family, Derek Ryan, Bishop McKeown and religious education teacher Miss Mullan.



A banagher parish student receives the Pope John Paul II award from Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry on behalf of her school. Overall, 301 young people in the diocese of Derry received the award this year.



The crowd claps along to Derek Ryan, who performed at the ceremony.



The Long Tower folk group perform at the ceremony.



Carlow-born musician Derek Ryan performs before a poster of Pope St John Paul II



Fr Paul Farren, administrator of St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, speaks to the students and parents gathered in the cathedral.



Students and family from Scoil Mhuire Secondary School Buncrana receive the award on behalf of all the students of Scoil Mhuire.



Baroness Nuala O'Loan delivered the keynote address.



Students are interviewed about their experiences on the JP II award.



Lizzie Rea, youth coordinator for the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, speaks at the ceremony.



Bishop McKeown looks on in thought during the May 26 ceremony in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry.

# Hospital diary of a grateful priest



Fr Pádraig Ó Cochláin

**“I**s aít an mac an saol” is an old Irish saying, meaning that life is strange. I was released from hospital recently and am now on the road to recovery from Covid-19, a mysterious virus which seems to have originated in China, in late 2019. Many people by now have been affected in various ways even to the point death. I was saddened to hear of the death of a dear friend, Liam Hayden, during my illness. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal!

I am lucky to be stationed in Arklow, Co Wicklow in the parish of St Mary and Peter and St David's, Johnstown. The parish took all its duties seriously in relation to the dangers posed by Covid-19. Copious supplies of hand-gel, separate entrances and exits, one-way systems, enlisting a large number of volunteer stewards to oversee safety for our people, new signage, large quantities of personal protective equipment, were all put in place. The two-metre separation requirement meant an 80% reduction in capacity at Masses and people remained in their seats for the reception of Holy Communion.

In early February 2021 I was not feeling well and attended my local GP but I had none of the typical symptoms of Covid-19. I was not overly weak or affected until mid-February. I was scheduled for a funeral Mass on Monday February 15 but was not well and Fr David Brough, my fellow priest kindly looked after the celebration while I retired to bed. Little did I know that Fr David himself was also unwell.

**“I was not feeling well and attended my local GP but I had none of the typical symptoms of Covid-19”**

On February 17 I rose at my usual time and had my breakfast. After lunch I again felt weak and retired to bed. In the afternoon, I was awoken by some commotion outside the house and heard that there was an ambulance at my door. I rolled out of the bed and on to the floor intending to get to the window or to get down the stairs and open the door. When I got to the floor I could not move. I had zero energy. I did not want the ambulance to go away and I tried to shout out that I was inside but unable to let them in. By the grace of God, Anne, a keyholder of the house was passing and opened the door to allow them access. My oxygen levels were alarmingly low. I was immediately hooked up to oxygen and taken to St Vincent's Hospital but there was no room at the inn.



Medical workers take care of patients in the emergency room of the Nossa Senhora da Conceicao hospital in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Photo CNS.

There were a few vacant beds in St James' Hospital Covid ICU so, by the grace of God, I was transferred there to be treated.

## Sedation

I was placed under sedation on a ventilator while the medical teams fought to save my life. I spent the next six weeks in Intensive Care. I cannot thank the medical staff enough for all their hard work, for their genuine care, their extreme patience, and their pleasant demeanour at all times. We hear of problems in the health service, but all I can say is that the consultants, the doctors, the nurses, assistants, student nurses, cleaners, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and all concerned, from all corners of Ireland and indeed the globe, are worthy of our gratitude and of a decent wage commensurate with their vital role in caring for the sick. They are without doubt heroes and heroines. One day a nurse passing by engaged in conversation with me and asked what I would like. All I could see was a Coke with ice and lemon, a simple thing which up to now I had taken so much for granted.

On Holy Thursday, the feast day of priests, early in April, I was released into a general ward and out of ICU. I was still dependent on oxygen and a nasal feeding tube. I received my medication and hydration through a tube and was not allowed to swallow food or liquids in case of infection. How I looked

with longing on the other patients who were eating real food and drinking real drink. I remember a dietitian in ICU passing by and offering me a drink of water. I gratefully accepted the offer. She placed a small teaspoon in a glass of water and placed it in my parched mouth. I cried “Water! Jesus thank you for the gift of water!” Five drops was all I was permitted in case I had lost the ability to swallow. From then on all liquids fed through my mouth needed the addition of a thickener. I had lost much of my muscular power, especially my mobility. I feared I might not be able to walk again, to breathe without oxygen, to celebrate Mass in public, or to enjoy a quiet game of golf. During my two-weeks in the general ward I commenced physiotherapy and was gradually re-introduced to real food.

**“I received my medication and hydration through a tube and was not allowed to swallow food or liquids in case of infection”**

St James' Hospital had fulfilled admirably their role in my treatment. It was time to return to St Vincent's. But my stay there was

short-lived. What I needed now was rehabilitation and physiotherapy. I was transferred to St Michael's in Dún Laoghaire for their dedicated two-week post-Covid programme.

## Treatment

Once again, I received the very best of treatment. I arrived there with my nasal gastro tube still in place, with an oxygen tube in my nose, and barely able to walk with the aid of a frame. Within a few days the physiotherapists progressed me from walking the corridors with the frame hooked up to oxygen to the removal of the nasal feeding tube, the removal of the oxygen tube, and finally the removal of the walking frame. I had to survive on my own two feet! They finally helped me climb and descend sets of stairs. I was ready for discharge. The Irish health system had cared for me in a very satisfactory manner, saving and re-building my life. I am eternally grateful to all who cared for me with kindness, compassion and professionalism. I am forever indebted to you. The nurse, based in ICU who had heard of my yearning for Coke with ice and lemon showed up the day before I was discharged from St James at my bedside a few hours before my transfer to St Vincent's and producing a beaker of Coke with ice apologised for not being able to

find any lemon. It was one of the sweetest gestures I ever experienced – someone who really cared!

## Shocked

All the while my family, though initially shocked, rallied around me proving the dictum “Blood is thicker than water”. They were unable to visit due to restrictions but when I needed them they were always there. Family is so important when we hit the rocks. My dear mother prayed the rosary and the divine mercy chaplet daily for my recovery and lived for the day of my release. My family set up a Zoom prayer meeting weekly, which I only discovered late in the day. When I got my phone operating after several weeks I was very touched to connect with them live and to join in prayer. It was a special and spiritual moment bringing a tear to my eye.

**“I had lost much of my muscular power, especially my mobility. I feared I might not be able to walk again”**

My wider family in the Church was not idle either. I know that many parishioners were concerned about my health. Candles were lit. Prayers and Masses were prayed. Novenas and get-well cards were sent, convents of religious sisters were enlisted in prayer, and people all over Ireland and indeed the world joined in supplication on my behalf. Legionaries of Mary worldwide opened up their batteries of prayer. How could the Lord and his Blessed Mother not listen? I am indebted to all those whose prayers and support lifted me up. And listen they did. I have survived to tell the tale.

**“I was placed under sedation on a ventilator while the medical teams fought to save my life”**

# Congra-duations to St Mary's Baldoyle Sixth Years



A view from above.



Sarah McDonald and Alicia Sherwin with the Tree of Photos.



Principal, Dr Edel Greene, addressing the sixth years.



Alicia Sherwin being photographed by sixth year photographer Linda Abassm with the help of Abby Kelleher.



Cody Fitzsimons, Precious Edah, Benedicte Luzemba and Ana Luisa Tavares prepare St Mary's Secondary School Baldoyle for the sixth year graduations by putting up banners.



Sportsperson of the Year Amy Reidy with nominees Molly Butler, Kate O' Hanlon, Ciara O'Connor, Amy Reidy, Rachel Crowley and Shannon Larkin.



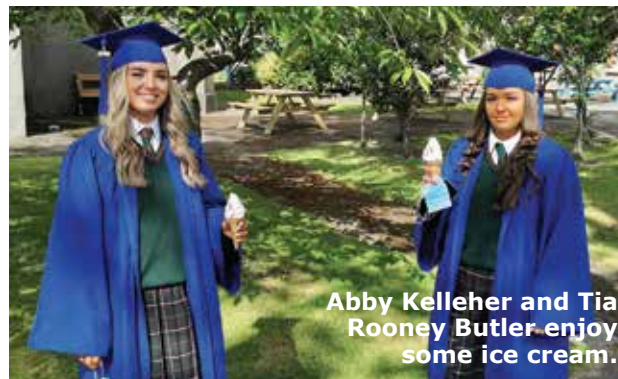
Sarah McMahon, deputy head girl, 2021-22, Emma Duffy, head girl 2021-22, receive the reins from head girl Amy Reidy and deputy head Girl Emma O'Toole.



Students celebrate with the traditional throwing of the cap into the air.



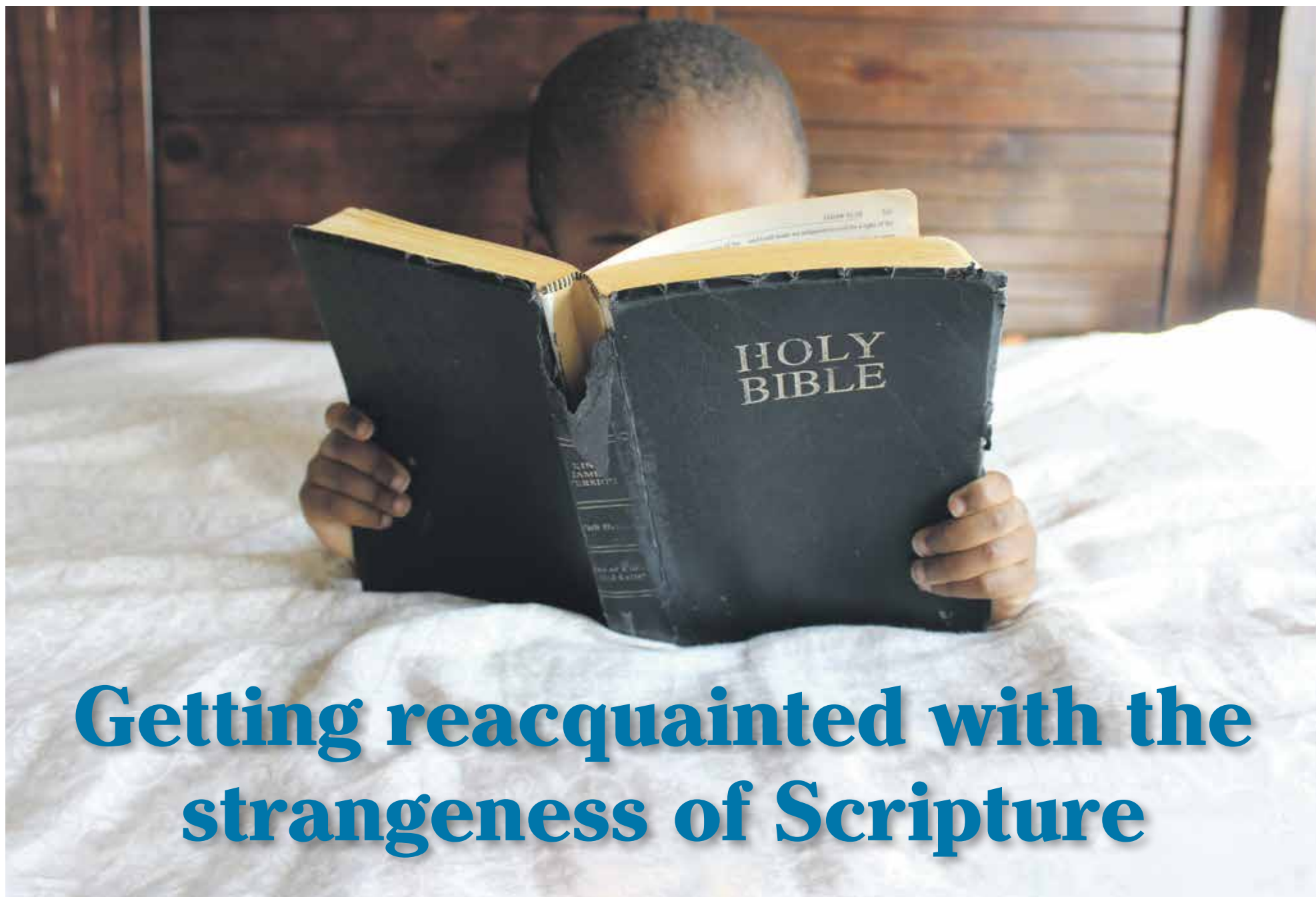
Nominees for the Student of the Year Cody Fitzsimons, Rachel Crowley, Emma O' Toole and Amy Reidy.



Abby Kelleher and Tia Rooney Butler enjoy some ice cream.



Student of the Year, Rachel Crowley.



# Getting reacquainted with the strangeness of Scripture



Kristin Swenson aims to show that Scripture's strangeness is one of its greatest strengths, writes Jason Osborne

**A** talking snake convincing the first humans to eat some fruit; God wrestling with one of his earliest followers before touching his hip and putting it out of joint; angels appearing as wheels with eyes: these are but a few of the curious stories smattering the pages of the Old Testament.

Many people see these stories and limit their consideration of them to a superficial analysis – we know snakes can't talk, we know God doesn't wrestle with people, if he exists at all, and angels most certainly don't look

like anything other than toddlers with wings, if they exist at all.

However, Professor of Religious Studies and biblical scholar Kristin Swenson examines the Old Testament with anything but a passing glance. "Falling in love" with the ancient texts after being exposed to some of the "provocative" wordplay in Genesis, Ms Swenson realised quickly that there is far, far more to these tales than we often acknowledge.

**“The Bible within itself, argues with itself. Many folks have discovered the places where the Bible actively disagrees with itself”**

"I had an opportunity to take some really rigorous religious studies classes in college, and there I learned about a provocative wordplay in Genesis that appealed to my enduring concerns about the environment and the human relationship to the non-human, natural world," Ms Swenson tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"Namely, that in the Adam and Eve, Garden of Eden creation story, we read that God created *adam*, with a lowercase 'a', which can generally mean human being, out of *adamah*, which is

**“I wanted to give people the space to recognise that there's a lot of weird stuff in the Bible and the Bible itself is a strange book to us”**

often translated dust or ground. It's earthy stuff. That wordplay, *adam* out of *adamah*, human out of humus, was so provocative for me," she says.

## Hebrew Bible

"I thought, 'Oh my goodness, there is embedded in this story so much more than we get when we read an English translation'. I was studying biology, so I thought I would be doing a lot more with the sciences and then other things conspired as well to lead me into religious studies, but I did start really with this real concern about environmental issues and I thought, 'If folks could see some of the things that the Bible has to say about topics of real concern for us today, maybe we would be a little gentler with each other and the world,' so that was actually how I got started in the Hebrew Bible, biblical studies. Specifically Hebrew Bible or Old Testament."

While that explains the origin of Ms Swenson's love of Scripture, what compelled her to write a

book about it? As the title of her new book, *a most peculiar book: the inherent strangeness of the Bible*, may suggest, Ms Swenson believes the Bible's "strangenesses", that we so often turn our nose up at today, are actually its greatest strength.

**“Many people see these stories and limit their consideration of them to a superficial analysis”**

"I believe the Bible's 'strangenesses' may be its greatest gift. We tend to approach the Bible as though it is a, kind of, authoritarian dictator of what we generally accept as good stuff. So, guides for living, inspiration, etc. And of course, it contains those kinds of things, but our approach to it tends to be a one way approach – that we read what we're supposed to do and be, for instance.

"But the Bible within itself, argues with itself. Many folks

have discovered the places where the Bible actively disagrees with itself. Then there are all of the other things that are both strange about the Bible for us as modern readers, and that are strange in it. There is just a lot of weird stuff in it. I wanted to give people the space to recognise that there's a lot of weird stuff in the Bible and the Bible itself is a strange book to us. But also, that those 'strangenesses' invite us to be in conversation with it rather than it being that one-way dictatorship," she says.

## Oddities

When these oddities are met and entertained rather than discarded as foolish superstition, Ms Swenson believes the Bible is engaging our "intellect and learning and our humanity". She feels the only wrong way to engage with Scripture is superficially, with surface-level readings often leading us to "judge others" or "employ damaging actions because we somehow believe that's what the Bible tells us to do".

The example she gives of this is, what is in her opinion, the common misreading or misinterpretation of God's commands regarding the created world in Genesis.

### Genesis

"Some folks read in Genesis one, God's declaration of the creation of human beings as beings who would have dominion, as a licence to despoil the non-human, natural world when, if you read a bit better in context, and this I unpack in a different book called *God of Earth: Discovering a radically ecological Christianity*, I find that the Bible instead is urging us to again bring our best intellect to bear on our engagement with the world around us, with one another and our relationship to the Divine, whatever that looks like to people.

"So, rather than licence to despoil, that text I think is in its context actually expressing an urgency to us to take care of and be responsible for the health and wellbeing of the non-human, natural world," she explains.

**“It would be great if we knew exactly what all of the different cultural circumstances were out of which these texts come”**

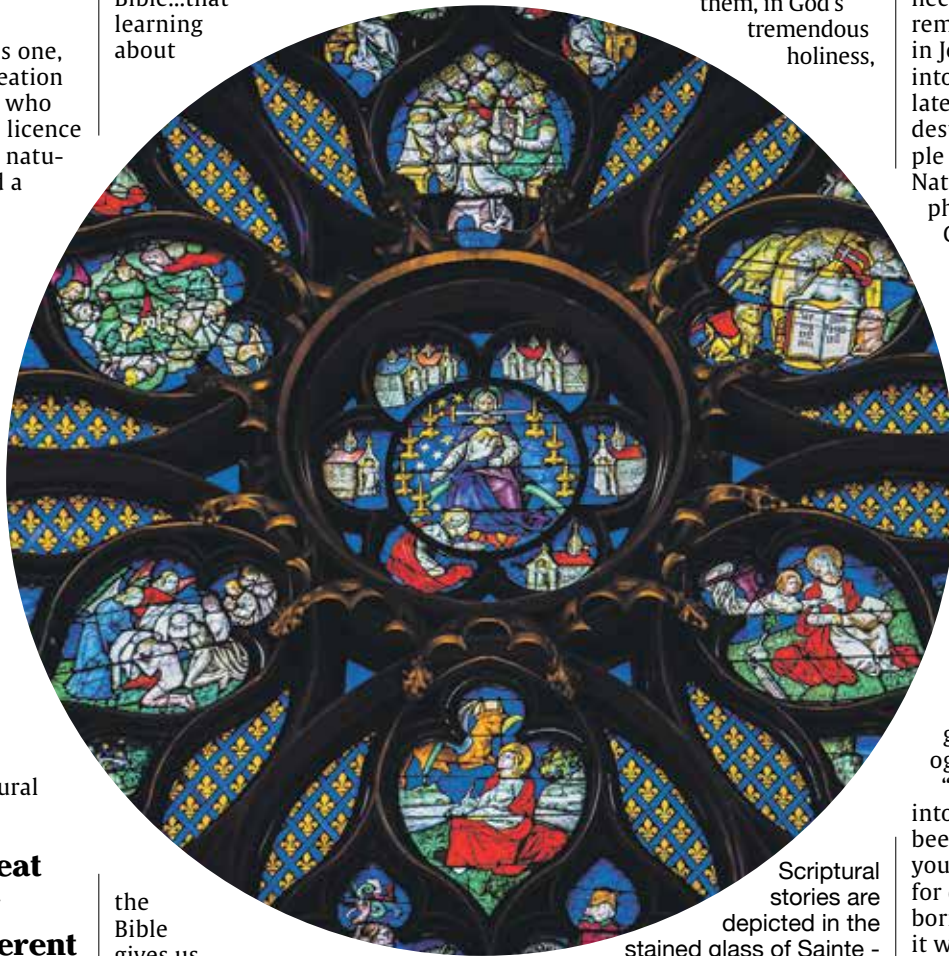
Another vital piece of information Ms Swenson feels has been lost in people's dealings with Scripture today is the fact that, although it is God's inspired Word, it was also related to us through human authors who were situated in "real, concrete historical and human circumstances, in particular times and places that are different than our own". As a result, without some background context and understanding of the historical situation out of which the Scriptures emerged, it can be very difficult to understand fully what God is saying.

"That alone is a really important thing for us to remember," she says.

"Because the Bible is so prevalent and because people use it today as an authoritative text, it's easy to forget that. But when we do, then I think again we assume a posture of humility. Yes, it would be great if we knew exactly what all of the different cultural circumstances were out of which these texts come. So, for one thing, they evolved over a long period of time and so there isn't just one historical or cultural

context unfortunately for us to unpack, but whatever we can learn about that, and again this is bringing our intellect and our learning to bear, to learn as much as we can about the Bible...that learning about

capital of Judah, the place where the Temple stood and the seat of national power. The Judeans, or Judahites...they believed that God, the God of this people, would be especially present to them, in God's tremendous holiness,



Scriptural stories are depicted in the stained glass of Sainte - Chapelle, Paris.

the Bible gives us tools for making sense, or maybe at least peace with, some of what's really weird in it."

Asked for an example of how cultural context and an awareness of the history the texts emerge from can shape our reading and understanding of Scripture, Ms Swenson elucidates a famous passage from the Old Testament which sees the prophet Ezekiel receiving a cryptic vision from God – wheels with eyes appearing during Ezekiel's vision of the chariot, which some traditions have identified as being spiritual beings in and of themselves.

To the average modern reader, such an image seems like nothing more than a fantastical occurrence, one of those dense biblical passages that our eyes gloss over in favour of more easily interpreted passages. However, these passages contain troves of wisdom for those who delve a little deeper.

### Ezekiel

"In that story at the beginning, Ezekiel describes himself sitting by a river, the river Kebar, he names it, and he says 'I saw this fantastical thing', and then he narrates that. Ezekiel, we know, was a prophet in Judah, in Jerusalem in particular, the

within the Temple in Jerusalem. And that someone from David's line would be on the throne, that there would be a king from David's line as king of the nation indefinitely, forever and ever."

However, as the Scriptures details, in 597 BC, the Babylonians – "the powerhouse of the ancient near-east at that time," as Ms Swenson puts it – came in and rolled over Judah.

**“Although it is God's inspired Word, it was also related to us through human authors who were situated in 'real, concrete historical and human circumstances”**

"In that moment, they took the best of the best, the most well-educated, the finest artisans, they took them from Judah and brought them back to Babylon. This was their practice in war. When they defeated a country, they took the best and brightest, the cream of the crop and brought them back to Babylon and employed them not as base

slaves but employed them in the areas in which they had expertise. And so, they continued to build this incredibly rich Babylonian culture."

Returning to Ezekiel after necessary context, Ms Swenson reminds that Ezekiel was a priest in Jerusalem who had been taken into exile in 597 BC. Ten years later, in 587 BC, the Babylonians destroyed Judah, razing the Temple in Jerusalem to the ground. Naturally, this came not only as a physical blow to the people of God, but as a theological blow, too. Had their God been cast down by the Babylonians?

"This was a huge theological crisis for the people, for the reasons I noted before: these assumptions about the holiness of God being present in the Temple for one, and the other being the continuity of David's line. That threw people into such a tremendous crisis of theology and cultural identity that it had to be addressed. We know that a lot of people in that moment, sort of, gave up on their nation and gave up on this religious ideology – they became Babylonian. "They simply just assimilated

into Babylon because they'd been taken there as captives, if you will. And they were there for decades and so people were born and raised in Babylon and it wasn't necessarily all really super-horrible," she says.

"It gets that reputation because of how we read its description in the Bible. Ezekiel had been taken as this religious leader to Babylon and then he faced the questions these people had: Was God destroyed? Was the Babylonian god more powerful than Yahweh? Was our God destroyed by the Babylonian god? Did our God lie to us, that someone from David's line would always be on the throne in Jerusalem? And was God's holiness completely compromised by these foreigners, their taking over the Temple and destroying things, and taking away the Ark of the Covenant, which was the Holy of Holies, the place to which God had entrusted God's instructions for the people?"

### God's holiness

"Ezekiel had to tell the people that God had not been destroyed. That God's holiness was intact. And that God could be present to them in this foreign country. So, you have this vision that Ezekiel narrates. He says, 'I was by the river Kabar,' which is in Babylon. And he says, 'And I saw this chariot, this heavenly chariot and it has eyes'. It's mobile, so God can move, God can even be present to people in the land of their enemies. God can see them

there. God can witness their experience."

The passage from Ezekiel is "a great example" how context "illuminates" our understanding of it, Ms Swenson says, continuing "Ezekiel had an uphill battle to help the people to retain their faith after they had had this tremendous crisis of theology".

Despite the benefit that comes from much learning of Scripture and its history, Ms Swenson is keen not to put anyone off, either – God's text is accessible to everyone and anyone.

### Strangeness

"Cultural context helps us to understand a lot, and sometimes to make sense of the 'strangenesses', but that's not to say that the Bible can't make sense to us without knowing absolutely every bit of background, though I do urge folks to learn as much background information as they possibly can," she says.

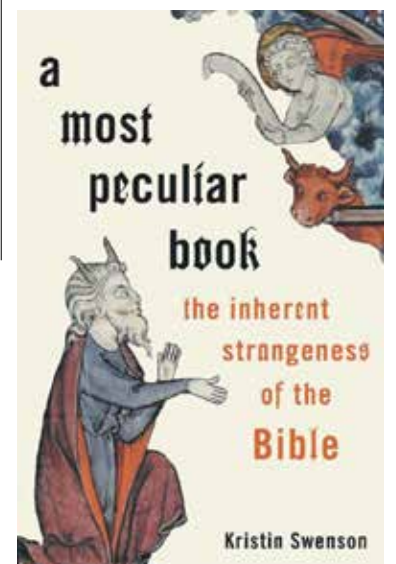
**“Cultural context helps us to understand a lot, and sometimes to make sense of the 'strangenesses”**

"That's a lifetime of learning, though – I am barely touching it, and I was lucky to get a PhD in the area. So, this is a lifetime of learning. Yes, I think that, again, one of the gifts of the Bible's 'strangenesses', or the fact that the Bible is so strange, is that I think it allows again for us to bring our experiences, our ideas, our thoughts into conversation with what we're reading there. In that, almost paradoxically, we are able to make it a little bit more relevant for ourselves."

Ultimately, her hopes for the new book are that it "honours" people's reading of the Bible, and she hopes it encourages them to engage with it more deeply.

"To recognise that it is authoritative for a lot of people, that it of course has this long history of import. And that within it, it argues with itself, and so it dignifies our questions. Maybe that," she says.

"It dignifies those questions and it demands that we bring our whole selves to our reading of it. Not necessarily to find answers for things, but to discover things for ourselves."



**“I learned about a provocative wordplay in Genesis that appealed to my enduring concerns about the environment and the human relationship to the non-human, natural world”**

# Out&About

## Pius youths support SVP



**DERRY:** Members of St Pius X College Young St Vincent de Paul attended a Volunteer's Week event at Laurel Villa, Magherafelt. Pictured with Mary Waide, Regional President of SVP North Region, are teacher Ms McNulty, Nathan Hatton, Katie Craig, Aimee Moore, Hollie McManus, Eimear Kevin and Hannah McLernon. Geraldine Kieft who hosted the event is also pictured, June 4. Photo: Jim Corr.



**DUBLIN:** Redemptoristine nun Sr Gabrielle enjoys some downtime with nun's best friend, Toby the dog.



**CORK:** Some of the Cloyne Lourdes Family from Cobh attend Mass at Cobh Cathedral for a slightly different group pilgrimage photo this year, but the smiles are the same, June 5.



**TIPPERARY:** Pilgrim walkers are pictured before setting out from Our Lady of Lourdes Church Toor, on Monday June 7, on the final stage of a 64km, three day pilgrim walk from St Mary of the Rosary Church, Nenagh, to Glenstal Abbey.

## IN SHORT

### Calls to support 5km walk to support ICU services

The family of Nuala McLaughlin, who died of Covid-19 aged 43, are inviting people to take part in and support a 5km walk in her memory July 4.

The proceeds from the walk will support Intensive Care Unit and Child Support services, a cause that was close to Nuala's heart.

According to a June 7 statement, Nuala was a native of Glencul, Ballygawley, and was cared for by the "committed staff" in South West Area Hospital ICU, Enniskillen.

The walk will begin and end on Errigal Road and signs to the start point will be in place on the day on the main Ballygawley to Omagh Rd, Co. Tyrone.

People can now register for the fundraiser which will take place from 5am-9pm on the day. For anyone who is unable to book a time slot on the day, organisers suggest that people consider doing the walk close to their own home.

To register for the 5k Walk and to donate please follow the link: <https://www.klubfunder.com/Clubs/WALK%20FOR%20NUALA/EventRegistration>

### €4,000 raised for Pioneer Association nationwide

The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association (PTAA) have expressed their "heartfelt thanks" for the €4,000 raised nationwide in aid of the association.

The PTAA has struggled as a result of the pandemic, as church gate collections, socials and other fundraisers could not go ahead.

Former chairperson Mary Brady led the fundraising campaign, conducting 'Walks for PTAA'.

The fundraising campaign continues to June 30 and the PTAA have appealed for continued support.

"It would be a great tribute to someone who has always put her heart and soul into the Pioneer Association," the PTAA said in a statement June 9. "Please consider making a donation but also spread the word about this fundraiser and encourage your friends and colleagues to donate if they can."

You can make a contribution here: [https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/11399703\\_marybrady-s-walks-for-ptaa](https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/11399703_marybrady-s-walks-for-ptaa)

The statement also announced an online gathering for the Munster region on June 20 from 5-6pm.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LEITRIM:** Three young local girls pray in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village, where there is a daily Rosary at 6pm.



**DUBLIN:** Third year representatives from Coláiste Bríde, Clondalkin, who were involved in the Christmas Jumper Fundraiser presented Joe Moon, president of the St Vincent de Paul Society, with a cheque for €722.11, representing the total raised, May 24.



**DOWN:** Mickey Harte, former Tyrone football manager, joins pilgrims on St Patrick's Way, Downpatrick, June 2.



**LAOIS:** Fr Paddy Byrne of Abbeyleix was delighted to baptise baby Emma, pictured here with parents Niall and Claire, June 5.



Patsy Stone, Breda O'Flaherty, Bridie O'Connor and usher Bridie Courtney, attend the annual parish novena at St John's, Tralee.



Matt and Peggy Scanlon, Tralee.



**KERRY:** Arriving for the annual parish novena in honour of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus on Saturday evening until 11 June, at St John's Church Tralee, are (from left) Karen Brosnan, Josh O'Mahony, Michaela O'Brien, Joe Flaherty and June Brosnan, Tralee. Photos: John Cleary.



Usher Michael (Fox) O'Connor, Tralee, with PJ Costello, Tralee.

### Events

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



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Euthanasia deaths soared last year in Canada

● The number of Canadians who ended their lives by euthanasia and assisted suicide increased by 17% in 2020, the country's health department announced on June 7.

According to Abby Hoffman, assistant deputy minister of Health Canada, 7,595 people received "medically assisted deaths" last year, a figure which amounts to 2.5% of all deaths in Canada for the year.

In 2019, 5,631 people died by physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia in Canada, which accounted for 2% of all deaths in the country.

Ms Hoffman revealed the numbers at a joint parliamentary committee meeting. Members of the committee are reviewing the country's euthanasia practices.

On June 7, Ms Hoffman stated that in 2020, as in years past, cancer was the most commonly-cited illness among people who requested lethal drugs.

### Mexican bishops: Respect election results

● The Mexican bishops' conference on Monday asked the political forces in the country to respect the results of June 6 elections and encouraged the resumption of dialogue to find a common path "beyond partisan differences."

In a June 7 statement the bishops of Mexico praised citizens for their participation but lamented the violence that took place around the elections.

"We note that this has been a political process marked by a great deal of violence, and so we lift up our prayers for those who have taken up the vocation to politics and held up dreams for a better Mexico and have been attacked or lost their lives," the bishops said.

During the 2021 election cycle, 91 politicians were killed and almost 700 candidates were attacked.

### French papal vineyard helps local community

● The Benedictine monks and nuns who tend to the first papal vineyard in France have launched an appeal to sell their wine to help the families of local wine growers.

Located in the Rhône Valley, the Abbeys of Le Barroux work together with the local wine-marking community to cultivate the land first established as a vineyard by Pope Clement V in 1309.

The monks are hoping to sell 15,000 bottles of their Via Caritatis wine this month to help support the community after it was hit hard by a loss of sales due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fr Michael, an American who has been a part of the French monastery for more than 30 years, told CNA that around 80 families directly depend on the winery for their livelihood.

### Cardinal 'worried' about German 'Synodal Way'

● An influential theologian considered to be close to Pope Francis has said that he is "very worried" about the German Catholic Church's controversial "Synodal Way".

Cardinal Walter Kasper said in a June 8 interview with the *Passauer Bistumsblatt* that he hoped the prayers of faithful Catholics could serve as a corrective.

The 88-year-old German cardinal said: "I have not yet given up hope that the prayers of many faithful Catholics will help to steer the Synodal Way in Germany on Catholic tracks."

Cardinal Kasper asked: "Why did the Synodal Way not take Pope Francis' letter more seriously and, as befits a synod, consider the critical questions in the light of the Gospel?"

Commenting on the Synodal Way's high media profile, he said "It truly does not give a good public image".

## European Union bishops express caution about hate crimes legislation

The Brussels-based commission representing the Catholic bishops of the European Union is backing tougher steps to combat hate crimes, but warned that current EU proposals could violate religious freedom and have a "chilling and self-censoring effect".

"Hate crimes are more and more common and are cause for increasing concern – a grave phenomenon to be condemned without reservations," the Commission of European Union Bishops' Conferences (COMECE) said in a June 7 statement.

However, while supporting such measures, the bishops' commission, known as COMECE, expressed concern that establishing provisions uniformly across the EU would potentially criminalise "the mere expression of an idea, at actions carried out by the Church in exercising its magisterium and teaching activities".

### Effective policies

Acknowledging that the Catholic Church was committed to "effective policies" against hate crimes, and favoured "sound reporting mechanisms" and "effective and regular data collection", COMECE said such measures were best addressed by individual EU nations.

The commission noted that the EU's Lisbon Treaty of 2007 recognised "different legal systems and traditions" among the bloc's 27 member-states, and said categorising



Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, president of the Brussels-based Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community. Photo: CNS.

the offenses as "EU crimes" risked restricting "core fundamental rights", including freedom of speech and faith.

Headed by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, COMECE's statement was released ahead of the planned debate on EU-wide legislation.

"The risk of a chilling effect on democratic debates and open discussions in society is always present, precisely due to the unsure borders for conduct and expression. While aiming at promoting tolerance and prudence, the relevant laws often entail the danger of fostering self-censorship. In some cases, such initiatives

harbour ideological and political aspects," COMECE said.

In recent years, human rights groups have warned of increased abuse and harassment against social and ethnic groups across Europe, fuelled by social media, and have urged tighter measures to identify and prosecute perpetrators.

However, Church leaders have warned against extending "hate speech" to penalise valid criticisms of practices such as abortion, homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

In its statement, COMECE said "highly sensitive legal questions" were best tackled at national level, adding that

"uncertain and vague" terms such as "hate speech", with no globally agreed definition, could be "used as a pretext for censorship".

"It is important to distinguish between hateful, nasty, vicious or malevolent attacks on the person on one hand, and disagreement or dispute with an ideological position on the other," COMECE said.

"Persons belonging to any religion should be protected by hate crime provisions and care taken not to foster a minorities-versus-majorities dynamic – according to which protection would be primarily aimed at the former," the commission said.

## Theology can help guide speculation about aliens, professor says

Fundamental theological principles provide the framework for any doctrinal questions over the discovery of extra-terrestrial beings, a theologian claimed in a lecture on June 5.

While the Church does not have any specific teachings on extra-terrestrial life, theologians can speculate on the existence of these beings and their nature due to the "underlying principles" which influence Church doctrine, said Dr Christopher Baglow, director of the Science and Religion Initiative at the University of Notre Dame's McGrath Institute for Church Life, on June 5.

"We have something, in a way, more essential than doctrine to guide us: What St John Henry Newman identified as the permanent elements in the development of doctrine, the underlying principles which animate doctrines," he said.

"According to Newman, these principles are so important that they are the very life of doctrines," and "an even better test of heresy than doctrine", Dr Baglow said at a conference for the Society of Catholic Scientists in Washington DC, where he delivered the keynote speech titled "Extra-terrestrial

Life and Catholic Theology".

Regarding the possibility of an extra-terrestrial incarnation, Dr Baglow cited sacramentality and solidarity for why it could have occurred.

If rational life existed outside of earth and were to be discovered, it would not be theologically inconsistent to believe that the extra-terrestrial rational beings were creatures of God in need of a saviour to achieve salvation, he said. Dr Baglow referred to this as "incarnational plurality", adding that God would not be limited by constraints.

## Third Catholic church in eastern Myanmar hit by military strikes

Another church in Kayah state, a Catholic stronghold in eastern Myanmar, was damaged by indiscriminate shelling by the military.

Military fire hit Our Lady, Queen of Peace Church in the village of Doungankha the morning of June 6.

Church leaders said there were no casualties as people had fled to relatives' homes and into the jungle, ucanews.com reported. The church's walls were badly damaged and the windows were broken by the shelling. It was the third church in

Kayah state to be attacked by the military in two weeks.

Sacred Heart Church in Kantharyar, a village near Loikaw, was hit by artillery shelling that killed four Catholics and wounded at least eight others May 23.

St Joseph Church in Dem-

oso, one of the key areas of fighting, was hit by military artillery May 26. The latest attack came despite a plea by Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon, Myanmar, for the protection of religious buildings as places of worship.





Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



## 'Dancing Devils' pay penance during Corpus Christi



Members of the Venezuelan brotherhood 'Dancing Devils' pay penance during their annual Corpus Christi celebration with a call for the end of the Covid-19 pandemic in Naiguata, Venezuela June 3. Photo: CNS.

## Collaborative effort to end human trafficking takes shape in West Africa

Clergy, women religious and laypeople pledged to strengthen existing networks and build new partnerships to fight human trafficking in West Africa during a five-day conference.

Recognising that the coronavirus pandemic has not slowed the work of traffickers who force young people into prostitution, pornography, erotic entertainment and forced labour, more than two dozen participants agreed to strengthen efforts that stress Church teaching on human dignity and the need to protect people who are most vulnerable to trafficking in the region.

Conference participants from Ghana, Nigeria and

Burkina Faso, who are members of Talitha Kum, an international network of women and men religious fighting trafficking, said the work was crucial because people are being trafficked into dehumanising conditions.

### Action plan

In a seven-point "Action Plan", the group resolved during the June 1-5 gathering to improve communications and expressed a desire to connect with conferences of major superiors in their respective countries. They also planned to regularly convene online to pray to end trafficking.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has magnified the scourge

of human trafficking. Traffickers prey upon the most vulnerable and look for opportunities to exploit them," participant Sr Monica Onwunali, a member of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles in Nigeria, told *Catholic News Service*.

"As the whole world stood still, traffickers did not shut down. They continued to harm people, finding ways to innovate and even capitalise on the chaos," Sr Monica said.

Seeking to escape dire poverty, most people are unaware that they are being recruited by traffickers, she explained to the conference, which was organised by the Ghana Network of Talitha Kum.

Migrant people are particularly vulnerable because they "view the services of smugglers as an opportunity to move from impoverished conditions in their home countries to more stable, developed environments", she added.

Sr Philomena Okwu, a member of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and coordinator of the Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women in Nigeria, told participants that steps to boost networking among religious communities can lead to long-lasting professional relationships that strengthen efforts to disrupt trafficking networks.

visas, even if the documents eventually expired.

But many, like plaintiff Jose Santos Sanchez, of El Salvador, applied and qualified for TPS after entering the country "unlawfully".

In those cases, the high court ruled, "a TPS recipient who entered the United States unlawfully is not eligible" to become a permanent resident, a status that would put the person on a path toward citizenship.

## US court decision deals blow to some immigrants with temporary status

A June 7 US Supreme Court decision ruled that hundreds of thousands of immigrants with a temporary immigration status cannot apply for a more permanent way to remain in the country if they first entered without authority to do so.

The unanimous ruling applies to those with Temporary Permanent Status, popularly known as TPS – an estimated population of 400,000 immigrants from countries such as El Salva-

tor, Haiti and Myanmar. They have been allowed to live and work in the US for a variety of humanitarian reasons and while the ability to stay is considered temporary, many have been in the country for decades and now call the US home.

The court's decision hinged on how the person first entered the United States. The ruling held hope to those who were granted the status after they entered the US with student or tourist

## Room to improve for Vatican handling of financial crime

● Moneyval, the European financial watchdog committee, said that while the Vatican has made progress in combatting financial crimes, its investigations into potential crimes committed by senior officials needs more fine-tuning.

The group, also known as the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism, released its assessment of the Vatican's compliance with financial regulation standards June 9.

The 275-page report was published after experts from Moneyval conducted a two-week onsite inspection of the Vatican in October.

In the report, Moneyval said control measures enacted to prevent financial crimes such as money laundering and terrorism financing "have significantly improved in recent years" and that the Vatican has a "sound understanding" of determining risks.

However, it also noted that "cases which have received wide coverage in the media have also raised a red flag for potential abuse of the (Holy See/Vatican City State) system by mid-level and senior figures within the jurisdiction – insiders – for personal or other benefits".

Moneyval recommended that the Vatican focus on spotting potential threats, "including those presented through abuse of the system by insiders".

## Search for Christian unity must start with love

● While theological dialogue is important in the search for Christian unity, it cannot take the place of Christians simply sharing a meal, recognising they are brothers and sisters and loving one another, Pope Francis said.

"Together in love, we Christians can change the world, we can change ourselves, because God is love," the Pope said in a video message to evangelical and Pentecostal pastors and Catholic Church leaders gathered at St Joseph's Seminary and College in Yonkers, New York, and online for a retreat June 9-10.

The retreat, which included Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, and Auxiliary Bishop James Massa of Brooklyn, was sponsored by the John 17 Movement, an Arizona-based initiative founded by a Pentecostal pastor to promote Christian unity.

In his message, Pope Francis said, "The John 17 Movement is about those who, around the table... discover they are brothers and sisters, not on account of their colour, nor their nationality, nor their place of origin, nor the different forms in which they live out their faith, but as children of the one same Father".

## Call for bishops to expand pastoral ministry to migrants

● A Vatican official asked a group of bishops gathered at Mundelein Seminary June 2 to think of migrants, whether they arrive for the short or long term, as "parishioners" and organise pastoral plans to tend to them.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, addressed via Zoom an emergency meeting of bishops from the US, Central America and Mexico, which included heads of major US Catholic organisations that help migrants.

"I hope that, after this meeting, you can call your priests together and consider the pastoral task incumbent on us all: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate," Cardinal Czerny said.

"And in each case, the migrants are 'our' parishioners, whether briefly or long-term, whether practicing Catholics or of other faiths or no religion at all."

Cardinal Czerny, in particular, praised the "effective ministry" of women religious and spoke of "the recent deployment of religious sisters from all across the United States to care for unaccompanied youth and children arriving at the border".



# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

## No matter how it's framed, report card on Vatican reform a mixed bag

Every kid knows that bringing a report card home to the parents is, to a large extent, a challenge in framing things your way.

A disappointing C in English?

"Everybody knows Mrs Smith is the toughest grader in school ... that's like an A from anybody else."

A surprising B+ in math?

"It's because of all of your help, dad. By the way, can we talk about my allowance?"

In that spirit, the Vatican did a heroic job yesterday of attempting to frame its latest report card from Moneyval, the Council of Europe's watchdog unit on financial crime. It touted the positive things the Moneyval team had to say, including the construction of a legal framework now in accord with best practices and generally strong levels of international cooperation.

### Critical

When it came to anything critical, a lengthy interview with Italian banker Carmelo Barbagallo, since 2019 the president of the Vatican's Financial Supervision and Information Authority, described the findings rosily as "an encouragement to do even better" while also pointing out that even the Vatican's lower scores, of only "moderate" effectiveness on six of eleven key measures, compare favourably to other states, including some which are much larger and more advanced financially.

**“Many years ago, I recall asking a veteran churchman what it would take to achieve a genuine Vatican reform”**

All that's fair as far it goes, and certainly the Vatican deserves credit for participating in the Moneyval process in the first place. When that decision was made under Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, it marked the first time the Vatican had subjected itself to independent outside review of its financial operations – a step away, in other words, from the Vatican's historical fetish about protecting its own sovereignty.

(Granted, the Vatican didn't have much choice. By now, any state that refuses to participate in such external reviews is likely to be viewed as a financial pariah, which could mean being frozen out of currency and investment markets or paying significantly higher transaction costs to cover the presumed risk. Nevertheless, the Vatican accepted reality and began overhauling its financial rules.)



Pope Francis leads a meeting with experts from Moneyval, the European financial crime evaluators, at the Vatican in this October 8, 2020. Photo: CNS.

Still, there are troubling elements of the Moneyval findings that can't simply be spun away or chalked up to "areas for growth", especially for a financial reform under Pope Francis that's supposedly been underway for the better part of a decade.

For one thing, the Moneyval team found that the Vatican still doesn't have an accurate grasp of the risk it faces. It's properly identified the danger that its bank might be used to launder the proceeds of crimes committed by foreign entities, Moneyval said, but still under-values the risk of such crimes by insiders – i.e., mid-level and senior officials, including bishops and cardinals – seeking personal gain or some other benefit.

### Financial regulator

One financial regulator with whom I spoke yesterday said that's a serious red flag.

"We live in a world of limited resources," he said. "If you haven't honestly identified the risks you face, then you can't allocate your resources properly to deal with them. What people in my line of work want to know in looking at a report like this is, 'Do they have an honest risk assessment, yes or no?'"

The most chronic source of frustration for Moneyval evaluators,

however, is that the speed with which the Vatican has adopted new legislation hasn't been matched by a similar aggressiveness in prosecutions.

If this were an episode of "Law and Order", the Vatican probably would get an A for "law" but a D for "order".

**“If you haven't honestly identified the risks you face, then you can't allocate your resources properly to deal with them”**

Moneyval found that the Vatican's prosecutors office is short-staffed and inexperienced, and said it's been slow to bring cases to trial. It also warned that because some Vatican prosecutors also practice law in Italy, they may have conflicts of interest and recommended hiring attorneys who work exclusively for the Holy See.

Only a handful of cases have been brought to trial over the last decade, the report noted, and also concluded that in those rare instances, the penalties imposed were so weak as to create no real sense of deterrence.

To date, not a single senior Vatican prelate, meaning someone at the rank of archbishop or cardinal, has ever been indicted for a financial crime. In the few instances in which lower-level figures have faced prosecution, for the most part senior clergy haven't even been called as witnesses. Instead, what we've seen is generally the time-honoured pattern of smaller fish taking the fall while top officials are insulated from blame.

### Ending

Pope Francis recently took one step toward ending that pattern by stripping cardinals and bishops of immunity from criminal prosecution, but the capacity to do something still isn't the same as actually doing it.

The Moneyval assessment comes as the Vatican continues to grapple with the fallout of its London property scandal, a \$425 million debacle that's seen several Vatican personnel fired and a pair of Italian financiers under indictment for allegedly charging excessive fees. While there's a paper trail demonstrating the transactions were approved by two successive "substitutes" in the Secretariat of State, meaning archbishops, and by the Cardinal Secretary of State himself, to date there's

no indication any of those clergy are even under investigation, let alone likely to be charged with a crime.

Many years ago, I recall asking a veteran churchman what it would take to achieve a genuine Vatican reform.

"Heads on pikes up and down the *Via della Conciliazione*," he responded, referring to the broad street in Rome that leads up to St Peter's Square.

"That," he said, "they would understand."

**“If this were an episode of 'Law and Order', the Vatican probably would get an A for 'law' but a D for 'order'”**

While perhaps a bit overstated, the point is well-taken: Until people see someone senior in the system held accountable for financial crime, the take-away is likely to be that the "reform" is sound and fury signifying relatively little.

With regard to London, the Moneyval report said suspects are expected to be brought to trial by summer 2021. It's early summer 2021 now and, so far, no dates have been set for any court proceedings.

Safe to say people are watching ... and, until then, the Moneyval grade for Francis's financial reform probably can best be described as an "incomplete".

**“The Moneyval assessment comes as the Vatican continues to grapple with the fallout of its London property scandal”**

# German bishop says Pope made right call in refusing cardinal's resignation over abuse crisis



German Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising is pictured in a 2019 photo. Cardinal Marx says he was surprised by Pope Francis' decision not to accept his resignation. Photo: CNS.



**Inés San Martín**

A leading German bishop says Pope Francis made the right decision when he refused the resignation of German Cardinal Gerhard Marx, who had asked the Pope to release him from his role as archbishop of Munich in an attempt to assume collective responsibility for the clerical sexual abuse scandals.

"It creates security for the others: You never know for what mistake a bishop might be obliged to resign," said Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen.

Bishop Overbeck was in Rome in his role as vice president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE).

He and COMECE's president, Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, spoke to journalists on Friday after meetings with Pope Francis and top Vatican officials.

## Refused

Cardinal Hollerich refused to comment on the specifics of the Marx case, saying simply that he believed Pope Francis's letter to be of use to

all the bishops in the world, despite being addressed to the German prelate.

Among the questions posed to the prelates was the ongoing debate regarding the blessing of same-sex couples.

"But what does it mean to bless? A nuptial blessing? It's not going to happen, because for us marriage is between a man and a woman. But when I am with young people, of course, there are also homosexuals who come to me and ask me what can they do," Cardinal Hollerich said.

**“Both prelates also discussed the issue of migration, a key concern for the European Union”**

"The pastoral attitude is always to seek the best possible solution, not the best abstract option," he said. "Because the best abstract thing can defeat man, while the Church is here to help the person. We have to be careful not to discriminate, but the theory and teaching of the Church and the pastoral attitude are both important."

The cardinal also noted that sometimes, "the conservative side and the liberal side of the Church, they don't talk to each other anymore, only through the Internet, and they are very radical", which doesn't work, because the Catholic Church is called to "help the people of our time, all of them".

**“The Church, first of all, has to call on the world to do everything possible to keep people at home”**

Both prelates also discussed the issue of migration, a key concern for the European Union, and at the centre of the conversations they held with Pope Francis and other Vatican officials.

"The Church, first of all, has to call on the world to do everything possible to keep people at home," Bishop Overbeck said. "But seeing the people, where they are fleeing from, seeing that the Mediterranean is the biggest cemetery in Europe, what can we say but welcome? The question of migration is a key issue, maybe for the next 100 years."

## Migrants

When it comes to migrants fleeing some of Africa's most conflict-ridden areas, or those affected by drought and climate change, the prelate said that for them, the question is no longer about "how to live, but how to survive. And we, Europe, as Christians, have to have enough neighbourly love to welcome them".

Seeing that many of the migrants arriving in Europe are Muslims, Cardinal Hollerich was specifically asked if he feared a prevalence of Islam in a continent that has historically been Christian.

"I'm not responsible for Muslims, only for Catholics," he said. "But I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid because I know the Muslims in my country, and we have a truly good relationship. It's a matter of integration into Europe, but also, of an Euroisation of Islam. I think that the Church, even if as a minority, due to its history, will always be present. But it's our duty to build a lively Church in Europe, and I don't mean this as proselytism, but truly preach the Gospel in the continent."

**“Priestly vocations are basically zero, and this is not only in Germany”**

As the only German in the COMECE leadership, Bishop Overbeck was also questioned about his country's Synodal Path, which has received a lukewarm response from many in the Vatican for its willingness to question Catholic doctrine, including gay marriage and the ordination of women.

The prelate was very adamant in denying any accusation that the Synodal Path risks schism, saying instead

that the German Church is one that is "alive", even if the path is an attempt to address a crisis. Cardinal Marx, in fact, said that the local Church was at a "dead end", which Bishop Overbeck didn't agree with when speaking about the Church as a whole.

## Celibacy

"When it comes to celibacy, then yes, we're at a [dead end]: Priestly vocations are basically zero, and this is not only in Germany, but virtually all through the Western culture," he said. "We have to see what is God asking from us. Maybe a well-educated man, who's married, can be a priest. We have cases of this in the Eastern Churches."

Speaking about his diocese, Bishop Overbeck said that in the decade he's been a bishop, there have been one or two priests ordained each year, while 20 or 30 died.

The prelate argued that a Catholic Church that has no priests is one that would lose its sacramental aspect. Asked if women could be ordained into the priesthood, he said that his priority is "getting some men ordained into the priesthood, then, we'll see".

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Catholic ethos in schools deserves support

**Dear Editor,** Some national politicians have questioned why a Catholic ethos should be present in our schools.

Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the overwhelming majority of children are from a Catholic background and that their parents have a sneaking feeling that the Catholic ethos is the most compassionate, coherent and comprehensive available. These parents are delighted to see kindness and a belief that our lives have a significance beyond our ability to fit into a consumerist-driven economy, taught alongside mathematics, geography, etc.

Those who do not appreciate this are largely unwilling to put the time, effort and money into founding and

sustaining schools having an alternative ethos. It would be strange if the presence of children from these parents – who are unwilling to set up their own schools – should result in parish schools dumping what is distinctively Catholic. If the tables were turned, would these parents, having gone to the trouble of setting up their own schools, consider it fair to be forced to abandon their preferred ethos, on account of the presence of few children from some other background?

Democracy is founded upon the interchange of ideas, not an obsession with obliterating particular perspectives, Christian or otherwise. The dominant political, media and

corporate driven ideology of today's world, trivialises sex, relationships and even life itself; marriage, family-life and having children are optional extras. Currently the birth rate of every European country has fallen below its self-replacement value. In other words, we are in the process of self-extermination.

The Christian approach to life, including relationships and our sexuality education, helps our young people to embrace a life of meaning and personal responsibility that is both rewarding and sustainable. It is indeed worthy of our support.

*Yours etc.,  
Gearóid Duffy,  
Cork City, Cork*

### Congratulations for Boris Johnson marriage explainer

**Dear Editor,** Congratulations to Jason Osborne for his fine elucidation of the full doctrinal facts relating to the marriage of Boris Johnson at Westminster Cathedral [IC 03/06/2021].

How sad to read in the same article that an unnamed English priest was looking for an explanation of the whole thing.

The question arises surely in his case as to what he was taught in seminary about the Church's laws on marriage. They do form the sixth precept of the Church.

*Yours etc.,  
John O'Mahony,  
Renmore, Co. Galway*



### Colosseum of online world 'drenched in blood'

**Dear Editor,** Mary Kenny's article about cricketer Ollie Robinson hit the nail on the head [10/06/2021] regarding the 'cancelling' of people because of something they said, however mild and however long ago. This is the case particularly if it relates to something the baying mob deems to be sexist or racist.

Mr Robinson was suspended by the England and Wales Cricket Board for a post on social media. The post was seen as sexist and racist. He was a teenager at the time and while what he

posted was certainly childish and silly, Mrs Kenny does a good job outlining how many of us who were teenagers before the advent of social media would be duly embarrassed by some of the things said and done at the time, but they are fortunately no longer on the radar.

Despite the cricketer's apology, quite drastic action was taken against the now 27-year-old.

'Be kind' is the phrase used online to encourage people not to be so terrible to each other, unfortunately

many people who are happy to shout this from the rooftops are the first to pile-on someone for making a mistake.

Sometimes it can just be an unfounded allegation that destroys someone's career, or worse, their mental health. If a well-known person who has a lot of followers on social media decides to condemn someone, their devotees obediently join in the attack: it is a perfect example of a mob mentality, sometimes driven by what can only be described as a

cult of personality.

Social media has created an age in which everything people post online is forever subject to public scrutiny, you are never forgiven for something you said in the past regardless of whether apologies have been made. It's our modern day hanging with no judicial process. People still love to see blood and the colosseum of the online world is drenched in it.

*Yours etc.,  
Gerry Nolan  
Waterford City, Waterford*

### Govt double standards on return to some sacraments

**Dear Editor,** Although it was certainly a relief to read on your front page [IC 10/06/2021] that First Communion and Confirmations will return in early July, it irks me to think that this is only happening after Government permission was given. I understand there is a fear that people will have parties after these important sacraments but what more can the Church, and each individual priest, do other than ask people not to organise gatherings afterwards that could lead to spreading the virus?

It's not as if pubs or restaurants were not allowed to open for outdoor dining/drinking because people might go to a house party afterwards. The onus is not on these businesses to ensure the good behaviour of their patrons after they have left.

Although I understand there was a time, particularly after Christmas, that stringent measures were needed because the spread of the virus was totally out of control, but now a huge proportion of the elderly and more vul-

nerable have one jab if not two, so why has there been such a huge delay for First Communion and Confirmation? It was great that in-person Mass returned quite early on in the stages of reopening – not without pressure on Government who would have been happy to make religious people wait much longer – but there still seems to be double standards when it comes to the sacraments.

*Yours etc.,  
Maria Kelly  
Tallaght, Dublin 24*

## facebook community

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

### Edwin Poots' refusal to say whether he would attend Mass dubbed 'regressive'

I think we're entering into dangerous territory when we place expectations on politicians to attend religious ceremonies that might trouble their consciences. – **Bernard Healy**

Yes in one way, but it begs the question of why it would trouble his conscience. Attending a Mass does not mean endorsing the theology behind it, no more than attending, for example, a Hindu ceremony would mean converting to that creed. I have often been at Masses which clergy of other churches attended – at my father's funeral Mass, the local Methodist minister sat with the priests at the altar, and I have seen Anglican and Presbyterian clergy likewise. – **Declan McSweeney**

It shows contempt for a faith if he for example refused to enter a Catholic church as a mark of respect at a funeral. We don't need leaders like that. – **Caroline Hendron**

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

### Gandhi trenchantly opposed contraception

**Dear Editor,** David Quinn remarks [IC 03/06/2021] that Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to artificial contraception "because he suspected it would undermine sexual morals". In truth, Gandhi was trenchantly opposed to contraception in any circumstances. Drawing on his personal experience he wrote that when he learned to practice restraint the spiritual love he enjoyed with his wife was further enhanced.

The growing casual sexual mores in India among young people appalled him: "I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning, even between members of the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery and defeat' awaits the youth of the country... Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement, of unnatural vice."

Another voice in the modernistic wilderness, economist and primary thinker, Fritz Schumacher, author of *Small is Beautiful*, wrote, concerning *Humane Vitae*, that "If the Pope had written anything else I would have lost all faith in the papacy".

*Yours etc.,  
Colm Ó Tóirna  
Artane, Dublin*

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

# Around the world



▲ **IRAQ:** Sahar Shaaban, 11, an Iraqi girl who provides for her family, collects cans from a garbage area in Kirkuk. Photos: CNS.

◀ **ENGLAND:** A group of world leaders pose for a photo at the G-7 summit in Carbis Bay. Photos: CNS.

▼ **USA:** A sea lion shares the beach with people in La Jolla, California.



**AFGHANISTAN:** An Afghan police officer inspects a damaged van after a blast in Kabul.



**MEXICO:** Religious figures are seen inside a house in Ciudad Juarez June 9, where 140 migrants from Central America were held against their will.



**ISRAEL:** People celebrate at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, after the Israeli parliament voted in a new coalition government, ending Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year hold on power.



# A Eucharistic prayer

**A**s a seminarian, I was privileged one summer to take a course from the renowned liturgist, Godfrey Diekmann. This was back in those heady days shortly after Vatican II when it was very much in fashion to frown on prescribed ritual prayers and write your own. This was particularly true for the Eucharist Prayer, the 'Canon' of the Mass, which a number of priests began writing for themselves. Diekmann, it turned out, was not a great fan of this. Asked about it in class one day, he said: "It seems today that everyone who has a tiny bit of imagination and even less theology feels obliged to write a Eucharistic Prayer."

**“You miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea and led them to safety by suspending the laws of nature”**

Because of the Covid restrictions this year, I have often celebrated some form of the Eucharist virtually. At first, leading those services, my thought was, what's the value of a Eucharistic prayer if there is to be no communion? Therefore, I simply jumped from the Liturgy of the Word straight to the Lord's Prayer. Eventually though I deemed that something more might be offered. Thus (with Godfrey Diekmann's words now 40 years distant) I wrote a Eucharistic Prayer for a virtual mass.



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

What is a Eucharistic Prayer? Most people would say it's that part of the Eucharist where the priest consecrates the bread and wine, but that's only part of it. The Eucharistic Prayer is that part of the Eucharist where we make memorial (*Zikkaron*, in Hebrew) of the major event by which Christ saved us, in order to make that event present for us to participate in today. We come to the Eucharist not just to receive the body and blood of Christ, but (just as importantly) to participate in an event, namely, the saving action of Christ as he undergoes his Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost. The Eucharist is the Christian Passover Supper and, like the Jewish Passover Supper, its purpose is to make a past event present to us.

### Metaphysics

How does this work? We don't have a metaphysics within which to understand this. In sacred ritual,

in the Eucharist, as in a Passover supper, something happens that transcends time. This doesn't contradict the intellect, the imagination, or the laws of nature; it only takes them beyond their normal limits.

**“Because of the Covid restrictions this year, I have often celebrated some form of the Eucharist virtually”**

Here's a Eucharistic Prayer for those times when there is no bread and wine to be consecrated:

"Lord, God, you break into our lives in extraordinary ways to manifest your love and save us.

"For your chosen people you miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea and led them to safety by suspending the laws of nature. Then, in the desert, you

miraculously fed them with manna and revealed to them the law within your heart."

### Generation

"Since only one generation walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea and only that generation ate your manna in the desert, You, Lord God, instituted the Passover supper as a ritual through which every generation until the end time could walk through the parted waters of the Red Sea and eat your bread in the desert. The Passover supper calls these saving events to mind in a way that, in your timelessness, makes them real again for us today.

"This is true too for the saving actions of your son, Jesus Christ. His Passion was a new bondage; his trust in death a new faith; your raising of him in the Resurrection and his Ascension a new Exodus; and his sending of the Spirit at Pentecost a new entry into the Promised Land.

"Therefore, Lord God, on the night before he died, your son left us the Eucharist as a Passover supper through which you make these saving events present again.

"We ask you, therefore, to send your Spirit upon all of us gathered here to make memorial of your

Son's saving acts. Grant that through this ritual remembrance each of us, and all of us as one community, may be united with Christ in his Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and in his Sending of the Spirit. You who are beyond time, grant us today the grace of being one with Christ in his sacrifice, one with him in his dying and rising.

**“It seems today that everyone who has a tiny bit of imagination and even less theology feels obliged to write a Eucharistic Prayer”**

"As we celebrate this memorial, help us know that we are one with Your Son, our Lord, Jesus, united with him as he is undergoing his Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost.

"Lord, God, help us to know that the food of this Eucharist is the new manna by which You feed your people with heavenly food.

"Lord, as we make this memorial, above all we ask you to help us break down everything that separates us from each other, all division in our world, so that You may be able to feed us all at one table, as one family, as one God of us all.

"We pray all of this through, with, and in your son, Christ, our Lord... Amen."

In the Eucharist, we don't just eat the bread of life, we also die and rise with Christ.

**“In sacred ritual, in the Eucharist, as in a Passover supper, something happens that transcends time”**

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, June 17, 2021

**Personal Profile**  
Giving thanks  
to God in  
the family

Page 34



## Keeping insomnia at bay

**R**ecent conversations with some family and friends have made me very grateful for the ease with which I sleep. I've heard many reports of people struggling to get comfortable and drift off due to the warmer weather, but I'm also aware that there is a large number of people who find it difficult to enter sleep's comforting embrace all year round.

A couple of times during college, I discovered with horror the sun coming up behind my curtains as I crammed last minute essays. The despair was drawn from the fact that I knew the rest of the day was going to be severely affected for the worse due to my lack of sleep. Even



**The warm weather will make sleeping more difficult for many of us, but for some, it's a problem all year round, writes Jason Osborne**

today, a few later-than-usual nights in a row are enough to throw me off my stride. I can't imagine what it's like to suffer from a sleep issue long-term.

However, we ought to thank God yet again for the advances we've made in many areas of science, technology and medicine. There are few conditions can't be helped, and difficulty with sleeping

is rarely one of them. If the warm weather, stress, or a more deeply rooted mental or physical ailment is causing you insomnia, there are many ways to address the issue – foremost among them visiting a doctor if needs be.

### What is insomnia?

Insomnia means you have an ongoing problem sleeping, according to the HSE, who also

say that it usually gets better if you change your sleeping habits.

You have insomnia if you regularly:

- Find it difficult to go to sleep.
- Wake up many times during the night.
- Lie awake at night.
- Wake up early and can't get back to sleep.
- Have difficulty napping.
- Are affected by tiredness throughout the day; whether irritableness or difficulty concentrating.

In some instances, these symptoms may persist for months or years. The diagnosis of insomnia may include the

need for a physical exam, or simply a review of sleep habits. A physical exam can be required to look for medical problems that may be related to, and causing, the insomnia. On occasion, a blood test may be done to check for thyroid problems or other conditions that may be associated with poor sleep.

A review of sleeping habits is more likely the path to be taken, as this can help to identify patterns of behaviour that contribute to sleeping difficulties. In the rarest of cases, a "sleep study" (also known as a polysomnogram test) is conducted, which sees you

» Continued on Page 33

## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### REMOTE WORK HERE TO STAY AS FACEBOOK REOPENS OFFICES

Facebook has said it will give its employees the option of sticking with remote work for the long-term, going as far as to aid employees interested in moving to other countries.

The social media giant told AFP that beginning June 15, it will let any employee whose job can be done remotely work that way permanently, if they wish.

"We believe how we work is more important than where we work," Facebook said.

"We want to be the place where people can do the best work of their careers while ensuring a consistent experience for employees no matter where they're located," it added.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said he expects the remote-shift to be a permanent one as the company seeks to enable employees to do their jobs from wherever they live.

#### A THIRD OF PEOPLE 'NOT AT ALL WORRIED' ABOUT SKIN CANCER HEADING INTO SUMMER

A third of people are "not at all worried" about skin cancer as the northern hemisphere heads into the summer, the Irish Cancer Society has revealed.

A survey of 1,000 people conducted by Core Research on behalf of the Irish Cancer Society during Skin Cancer Awareness Month in May has also found that 3 in 10 people never check their skin for signs of cancer.

The number of people who are "not at all worried" about skin cancer increases to 4 in 10 among groups who are higher risk, such as males and those aged over 55.

The survey also found that people "mostly associate" skin cancer signs with moles, with over half of those surveyed saying they would seek attention within a matter of days if they noticed a "worrying" sign with a mole.

However this drops to 4 in 10 for other, less well understood skin cancer signs like lumps, spots and rough, scaly patches on the skin.

#### VIKING WARRIORS REUNITED AFTER 1,000 YEARS APART

Two Viking warriors believed to be from the same family have been reunited at Denmark's National Museum after 1,000 years apart.

This comes as DNA analysis sheds light on the Vikings' movements across Europe.

One of the Vikings died in England in his 20s around the 11th Century, as a result of head injuries. He was buried in a Mass grave in Oxford.

The other appears to have died in Denmark in his 50s, his skeleton showing signs of impacts that suggested he took part in battles.

DNA mapping of skeletons from the Viking era enabled archaeologists to determine that the two were related.

# Planning summer holidays with God in heart

I found an old book on the bookshelf recently that had been a present from my mother to my two eldest sons. In the inside of the publication, *Yes! The Life of Blessed Josemaría for Young Readers*, I discovered a lovely inscription. It said "To Adam and David, with love from Grandma xxx 000. This is the story of a little boy like you, who became a saint because he tried his best to do everything very well for God. He always said 'Yes' to God." That was written in September 1995. My mother died a few years later and Blessed Josemaría is now St Josemaría, my two sons are married, but the message about doing everything well for God is still central in their lives. My dear mother always made sure that, in every aspect of family life, God was central and that there was always a place for him at the table. Never a shrinking violet, her children, grandchildren and everyone she met could have had no doubt that she was a woman of great faith. She had that special gift of making Jesus present to people, always wearing her heart on her sleeve with her love of God central to her interactions with others.

### Struggle

I sometimes struggle to put my finger on what exactly my mother did to make faith and religion so attractive. There are so many parents who try hard to pass on the faith and keep the fire burning in their children's hearts but they sense that they're failing. One of my mother's secrets was focused on involvement. Whatever the topic of debate or the faith-related question, there was enthusiastic debate and discussion, often involving the whole family. There was no question of a private, insular Catholicism which didn't reach out to others. Even when



## A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

there was eye rolling or sighs, the rosary was said, we'd be invited to attend daily Mass during the school holidays and, during the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, there was no question of missing any of the proceedings on television. After an exciting day in the Phoenix Park, every other appearance, in every venue, saw me and my younger siblings squeezed onto the small couch in our sitting-room under my mother's watchful eye. There was no question of opting out. We didn't even want to as my mother made the lines of the Catechism sparkle, and that was no mean feat.

**"I sometimes struggle to put my finger on what exactly my mother did to make faith and religion so attractive"**

With summer stretching out ahead of us, I was thinking of how I could emulate my mother's approach to making sure that faith, and passing on the Faith, is not pushed to the bottom of the holiday agenda. I enlisted the help of some 11- and 14-year-old children to come up with suggestions that focus on sanctity as well as sea, sun and sandy beaches. I was impressed with the range of ideas they generated. My own 11-year-old focused on starting each morning of your holidays well with an "I love you, Jesus" and morning prayers. He

also added that going to morning Mass more often would be good too. I could just imagine my mother beaming at that one. I must have done something right as he was also suggesting going to Confession often, visiting the church for Adoration and saying the rosary every day. Even if they can't do everything, it's good for children, heading towards their teenage years, to start to be the authors of their own little faith plans. A simple plan of life to encourage a summer prayer-and-faith routine can be designed to suit each child's level and each family's unique holiday routine.



Pope John Paul II on his visit to Ireland.

### Involved

A friend of my son's got involved with the project too with more practical ideas to do with caring for the environment and looking beyond our immediate needs. He mentioned not throwing litter around and being concerned about "our amazing world". This is a popular theme in school lessons but we can

focus on the Christian aspects and on our role as stewards of God's creation. It's fun to get involved in community clean-ups or creating colourful flower beds that everyone in an area can enjoy. St Hildegard of Bingen said, "Every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of humanity" which reminds us to teach our children that even planting seeds or volunteering to foster a sick puppy or kitten is cooperating in God's plan.

**"Whatever the topic of debate or the faith-related question, there was enthusiastic debate and discussion"**

After months of not being able to socialise, it's no surprise that a 14-year-old's plans for summer are about meet-ups and making friends, with great ideas like gathering to do some work of mercy, having bake sales after Sunday Masses and even setting up a singing group with an evangelisation element. It's often friendships that lead others to grow closer to God—a little kindness and camaraderie goes a long way. My 14-year-old daughter thought that a Christian movie night was a fantastic idea, choosing films that focus on family, faith or on qualities like resilience, fortitude, love and leadership. At a very vulnerable age, preteens and teenagers are very influenced by what they see and what they listen to. We feed our children's souls by offering them what is noble and good and true. Let them set themselves some standards and lay out some challenges for themselves and their friends to make summer a great holiday, but definitely not a holiday from God.



» Continued from Page 31



spending a night at a sleep centre, with tests done to monitor and record a variety of body activities while you sleep, such as brain waves, breathing, heart rate, eye and body movements.

### Risk factors for insomnia

While insomnia may arise from an underlying problem, some people are more susceptible to insomnia symptoms based on certain risk factors. These include:

- **Age:** Insomnia can be developed and experienced at any age, but your risk of insomnia generally increases as you get older.
- **Sex:** Insomnia is more common for women than for men. In particular, the hormonal changes a woman undergoes during pregnancy can result in disrupted sleep and sleeping problems.
- **Family history:** It appears as though insomnia symptoms can be genetically inherited, as can your likelihood of being a light or heavy sleeper.
- **Lifestyle factors:** A range of lifestyle factors can increase your risk of suffering sleeping problems, including jobs with unorthodox hours, a lack of exercise, or consumption of caffeine, tobacco and alcohol.
- **Bedroom environment:** You sleep best in a bedroom that is quiet and, come bedtime, relatively light-free. As mentioned above, a balanced temperature is generally important as well – neither too hot nor too cold – as well as a comfortable bed.
- **Stress:** An excessive level of stress can seriously disrupt sleep, whether the source of that stress is work or school, personal difficulties, or anything else, undue stress can impact sleep onset, duration and quality.

### How much sleep do we need?

With everyone needing different amounts of sleep, it might be difficult to tell whether you've departed from

the baseline in terms of how much you're getting. In general, though, adults need anywhere between seven to nine hours of sleep, children somewhere between nine and thirteen hours (depending on their age and stage of development). Toddlers and babies need between twelve and seventeen hours.

### How you can improve your sleep habits yourself

Insomnia is generally set right by a change in your sleeping habits. As so many of us do these days, watching TV or using a laptop, smartphone or tablet right before going to bed can result in a poor sleep. Smoking, drinking alcohol, tea or coffee should also be avoided at least six hours before going to sleep, if you're looking to maximise your chances of getting a good night's sleep.

**“Insomnia means you have an ongoing problem sleeping, according to the HSE, who also say that it usually gets better if you change your sleeping habits”**

Other factors that contribute towards a restless night are:



- Eating a big meal late at night.
- Exercising close to bedtime.
- Napping excessively during the day.
- Sleeping in after a previous bad night's sleep.

Better ways to prepare yourself for sleep include:

- Striving to set a stable sleep-pattern, including going to bed and waking up at the same time every day.
- Relaxing properly for at least one hour before sleeping. Good ways to do this include reading, taking a bath, or for a Catholic, praying.
- Only go to bed when you're feeling tired.
- Make sure your bedroom environment is suitably comfortable, with an appropriate mattress, pillows and covers, as well as a quiet, light-free environment as mentioned above.
- Try to get into a regular exercise habit.

### Other sources of relief

Herbal remedies are available from pharmacies, but they're rarely successful in 'curing' insomnia, and they often come with side effects. If they are sought and used however, beware of drowsiness the following day, and try not to drive during the same period. Always receive advice from either a pharmacist or GP before taking anything you're unsure of.

GPs are also to be considered if none of the above works. They will often try to get to the source of the insomnia, rather than just covering over the issue with sleeping pills (which are rarely prescribed anymore due to increased risk of dependency, hip fractures and dementia).

Instead, they are more likely to refer you to a therapist for cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which can help change the thoughts and behaviours that keep you from much-needed sleep, poor sleep often being connected to anxiety, panic and low mood.

# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Some friends kindly left us look after their cottage on an island off west Cork during the past month. Each Friday, we packed the kids into the car straight after school and rushed westward to catch the ferry. As soon as we stepped ashore on the island, we entered into another world, where time goes by more softly. The island is fragrant with ferns and wildflowers, and the hedges abound with butterflies. Each turn in the quiet breen reveals a new vista of sea and shore. Amid such beauty and tranquillity, the cares of the mainland are soon forgotten.

**“Each Friday, we packed the kids into the car straight after school and rushed westward to catch the ferry”**

The children adore the island. They spent hours gazing into rockpools, fishing, swimming and exploring. Life is simplified without a car, and we took many long walks to the beaches on the far shore, building up our fitness again after the long winter lockdown. In the wake of a winter that was far more grim than most, the sun shone brighter as a cold and damp spring yielded reluctantly to the warmth of summer.

Family were holidaying nearby and so we were able to catch up with aunts, uncles and cousins into the bargain. The kids were delighted to have other children to play with in the kayak, on the beach and around the garden. They were back in the water again, swimming further than last year, and with greater confidence. The older kids' skills on boats hadn't deserted them over winter either. I had brought my old sailing boat down west for the duration and we had some lovely trips out. For the first time, I gave my eldest the responsibility of managing the tender on his own. With great pride, he became skipper of the dinghy, ably bringing people to and from the shore. I've always noticed that holidays

are often a time of accelerated growth for the kids, where they try new things and develop new skills. I suppose it's because there's plenty of idle time together to tinker with things. One evening, we even patched together a makeshift lobster pot from bits which had drifted ashore.



One of the girls took up photography, and managed to take some beautiful shots around the island. Another became absorbed in learning all about sea creatures. We saw a whale offshore one day and plenty of dolphins too.

**“Life is simplified without a car, and we took many long walks to the beaches on the far shore, building up our fitness again”**

One day, I had to make a dash from the island back to my GP to get the Covid vaccination. It was a great relief to have it done. Yet that relief was tinged with the sadness of knowing that if my mother had been given that simple small injection last January, she would still be alive today. In quiet moments during the holidays, I had time to think about her. The kids too, at times, came to me and spoke about her, with tears in their eyes. Yet even amid our lingering grief, our time spent on the island was healing. It reminded us that life goes on, the sun still shines and that even on the saddest days, there are always better days ahead.

# Giving thanks to God in the family

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones



David Mullins, who works in journalism and politics, specialising in areas of bioethics.

When David Mullins was 18, he spent a year in the Franciscan postulancy. After the year finished, he decided to take a break, intending to return at a later date. “But things changed,” Mr Mullins tells *The Irish Catholic*, “and I got married and now I have five kids!”

He maintains a great respect for religious life, but says that in the current cultural environment, “it’s more important than ever to foster the Faith in the home”.

“Myself and my wife, we’ll bring them to Mass, it’s crucially important,” Mr Mullins continues. “For all of our kids, the eldest is 17, down to 5. We’re not sitting down and saying the rosary every night of the week. But at the same time, my wife in particular would nourish the Faith of the children, every night there’s prayer with them in bed. It’s not a big formally structured thing, it’s natural, it’s about giving thanks to God.”

**“His decision to study bioethics was also informed by a natural inclination to think analytically”**

“We bring them into the Church, lighting a candle,” he continues. “For myself and my wife, it’s important that they see us practising the Faith. Going into church, kneeling down before the Blessed Sacrament, that we teach them stuff like that. I think it’s through example, my wife and

I are big on that. We live the Faith by example, obviously failing like everyone else!”

### Important

“But we do it because we think it’s important. Especially during the current cultural environment, where we can’t be sure what they’re taught in school, you can’t be certain through the culture. So it’s more important than ever to foster the Faith in the home. In a relaxed way, but also being serious.”

Mr Mullins has always maintained a firm connection to the Faith, not only in his family life, but

in his work as well. Having left the postulancy, he attended Maynooth University, where he studied theology, before completing a masters in bioethics. The decision to follow this line was in part determined by his commitment to the Faith, Mr Mullins says, adding that “At all times you try to be as faithful as possible to the guidance of the Spirit and your own conscience”.

His decision to study bioethics was also informed by a natural inclination to think analytically: “Part of it is that I have a naturally analytic mind and ethics and bioethics – I think they’re given to that. It’s also

interdisciplinary, you’re not just dealing with theological aspects. There’s also social, the philosophical, the political – it all converges into the area of bioethics.

**“There should be nothing wrong with someone putting forward a Catholic perspective in terms of the social doctrine of the Church”**

“Professor Pdraig Corkery, who I had in college for moral theology, he was just such a good teacher, so clear and gave great guidance on the issues. The staff generally, when I was there in Maynooth, a lot of the professors there encouraged you to the areas you would be drawn to.”

“At the time when I was doing it, the degree and then the masters, the whole area especially in terms of embryonic stem cell research, was huge at the time. There was a huge cultural moment around the possibility of embryonic stem cell research. I was naturally drawn through that as well.”

### Politics

Mr Mullins, who now works in politics and journalism – two fields frequently hostile or indifferent to religion – believes it’s important for Catholics to be “unashamed” in drawing on the wealth of the Church’s teachings.

“There should be nothing wrong with someone putting forward a Catholic perspective in terms of the social doctrine of the Church, or in terms of how their politics has been informed by teaching like that,” he says. “We should be quite unashamed about that, without becoming theocratic. Politicians who are Catholics, should not be embarrassed by responding to political issues from an understanding formed by Catholic social teaching, which is inherently respectful. It is inclusive in the proper sense, it’s not intolerant, that we try and engage.”

“The Church has such beautiful things to say and such powerful things to say,” he continues. “I always felt it was a great pity, that how the Church understands these issues regarding the protection of life at all stages isn’t better known or understood. Part of me was drawn through that too, as well as deepening my own understanding, and saying, how do we as the Church respond at a cultural and political level to these, how does it promote a greater sense of the dignity of life at all stages?”

### Analytical

When asked if he ever found his analytical mindset and his religiosity coming into conflict, Mr Mullins answers firmly in the negative: “Part of me used to laugh, part of me used to get really annoyed when people would say, oh, religion and faith are just for people... you’re just accepting what the Church is telling you, you’re not critically engaging with it. Your Church is just handing down this doctrine and you’re just accepting it. For me it was always the complete opposite. It’s about committing to truth.”

**“The Church has such beautiful things to say and such powerful things to say”**

“A lot of it was basic ignorance on the part of people. When I was in college, it was the New Atheists and Dawkins was taking off – it was a huge thing at the time. But the Church has powerful responses to these things, historically, philosophically, politically, but it’s getting people to be able to say, we’ve wrestled with these issues for not just centuries, for millennia.”

“It’s all there for the taking, a vast rich heritage, a stream of thought within the Church that is unfortunately going untapped. That’s the tragedy, there’s a huge wealth and it’s a pity more people don’t know about it.”



## Children’s Corner

Chai Brady

# Getting a good grounding with parachutes

Not many people have had the opportunity to majestically descend through the air at jaw-dropping heights with a parachute. It certainly isn’t for someone with a fear of heights! It can be defined as a device that slows the vertical descent of something falling through the atmosphere.

Reports of parachutes date back to the 14th Century in China, while the first record of a parachute in the West occurred about two centuries later. There was even a diagram of a parachute along with a brief description of the concept found in Leonardo da Vinci’s notebooks.

It is believed the first person to demonstrate the use of a parachute in action was Louis-Sébastien Lenormand of France in 1783. How does it work? Before looking into the science behind the parachute, the best way to learn is by example, so it’s time to build one that can fall slowly to the ground; making modifications as you go.

### Apparatus:

- A plastic bag or light material
- Scissors

- String
- A small object to act as the weight, a little action figure would be perfect

### Method:

- Cut out a large square from your plastic bag or material.
- Trim the edges so it looks like an octagon (an eight-sided shape).
- Cut a small whole near the edge of each side.
- Attach eight pieces of string of the same length to each of the holes.
- Tie the pieces of string to the object you are using as a weight.
- Use a chair or find a high spot to drop your parachute and test how well it worked, remember that you want it to drop as slow as possible.

### What’s happening?

Hopefully your parachute will descend slowly to the ground, giving your weight a comfortable landing. When you release the parachute, the weight pulls down on the strings and opens up a large surface area of material that uses air resistance to slow it down. The larger the surface area the more air resistance and the slower the parachute will drop. Cutting a small hole in the middle of the parachute will allow air to slowly pass through it rather than spilling out over one side, this should help the parachute fall straighter. Parachutes have found wide employment in war and peace for safely dropping supplies and equipment as well as personnel, and they are deployed for slowing a returning space capsule after re-entry into Earth’s atmosphere. They are also used in skydiving for those with a hunger for adventure!



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Programmes that are outgoing, incoming and ongoing

**The Leap of Faith** (RTE Radio 1) is nearing the end of its run and last Friday's edition dealt with water, which has long been a central symbol in religious ritual. This episode marked National Holy Wells Day (June 13) with Fr Brian Grogan SJ and Sr Helen Greal, who is involved in the Loving Sister Earth initiative to support the ecological concerns of Pope Francis. They spoke about the virtual event last weekend that drew attention to the role of water in social justice. Fr Brian Grogan was concerned about the commercialisation of water and he feared a pattern of drought, famine and death. The historical background was intriguing – there are around 3,000 holy wells in Ireland, many with pre-Christian origins. The early Christian saints, including St Patrick, recognised their importance and blessed them, resulting in many of them being named after these saints. There was a time when these devotions were discouraged by Rome because of a certain rowdiness surrounding them, but Sr Helen is involved in moves to revive the devotions, with some wells being reconstructed. We heard of wells in Kerry, including one in Ballyheigue, and another in Ardferd dedicated to St Brendan – a great saint altogether of course!

### New series

Last Sunday saw the beginning of a new series of **Sun-**



Fr Len Black in his oratory, where he livestreamed Mass during the pandemic, which won Shed of the Year in Inverness, Scotland.

**day Morning Live** (BBC One). Sean Fletcher was joined by Rev Kate Bottley, but later in the series will be re-joined by regular co-presenter Sally Phillips – this week however she joined the show by video link from Australia. In the news review of the week two stories stood out – actor Riz Ahmed complaining about the 'toxic portrayal' of Muslims in film and also tiny churches doing well in the Shed of the Year awards, including that of Fr Len who was able to broadcast Mass from his mini-church during lockdown. There was also a beautiful item about two

people of faith that had disabilities. Alex is an adult confined to a wheelchair and we saw him returning to Mass as an altar server for the first time since lockdown restrictions eased – very moving, while Chelev, a young Jewish man, was getting help from his carers and his faith community in the absence of being able to go to synagogue for now.

There was a story of suffering followed by great hope – that of a young Afghani refugee, Waheed, who had been sent away from the war zone to the UK when he was 15. Before this he was inspired

by a doctor who treated him for TB – this prompted him to study medicine and now he is a doctor and has founded a medical charity which looks after the needy worldwide including his native Afghanistan. He still talks to his father every day on the phone – on the call we saw the father telling him how proud he was of his son.

### Sunday Sequence

Not going anywhere, as far as I know, is **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster). Last weekend's episode was particularly good, with some unusual issues explored. It started

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### MASS

**RTÉ One Sunday June 20, 11am**

Fr Pius Faruna celebrates Mass with members of St Patrick's parish, Esker, Dodsboro and Adamstown in Lucan, Co. Dublin. Music is from the Aontas Choir, directed by Adam Hodgkinson.

#### UNREPORTED WORLD

**Channel 4 Friday June 25, 7.30pm**

Unreported World meets the migrants being beaten back from the European Union by border guards on the notorious Balkan Route.

#### LEAP OF FAITH

**RTE Radio 1 Friday June 25, 10.05pm**

Last episode of the season, with live music.

with a review of the biblical tradition of lamenting and generally dealing with grief with Fr Martin McGill and Rev. Stephen Forde who are organising a cross community service of lament in Belfast for June 21. Then we learned from Dr Marie Coleman and Dr Éamon Phoenix about the experiences of Protestants in the south during revolutionary times in early 20th Century in Ireland. The main discussion, about education and religion in the North of Ireland, was a mature, nuanced and generous discussion of a topic than can get quite fractious. Tracey Harkin of the Iona Institute gave a spirited defence of Catholic schooling and of diversity and pluralism in school models and thought it insulting to accuse faith-based education of contributing to sectarian-

ism. Prof. Jon Tonge, though positive about integrated education thought that was a lazy accusation and pointed out how there were more Catholic schools in Liverpool than in Belfast but sectarianism had 'died out decades ago'. Róisín Marshall of the Council for Integrated Education believed such education helped to reduce sectarianism, but all seemed agreed on the importance of school choice, effectively parental choice.

Finally, our editor Michael Kelly provided a report from his sojourn in Rome, with its recently relaxed curfew and indoor dining. Like presenter Audrey Carville I was jealous!

[boregan@hotmail.com](mailto:boregan@hotmail.com),  
[@boreganmedia](https://twitter.com/boreganmedia)

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Back to the big screen with visually challenged extra-terrestrials

It will be a strange experience for many people going back to cinemas after being so long out of them. I don't think I ever spent 16 days outside a cinema as an adult, let alone 16 months. Little did any of us know in February 2020 that this would be our lot.

Having said that, sequestering had its own charms "far from the madding crowd". How strange, though, that one is confronted not with cacophony in the return to cinemas but a film that's more like a throwback to the silent era.

*A Quiet Place Part II* takes up where its predecessor ended. *A Quiet Place* had the farm of John Krasinski and Emily Blunt being attacked by aliens. Their two teenage children have shot up in height

between the two films. To preserve the illusion of Blunt being bigger than them she had to stand on a box for some of the scenes.

### Nature

Another aspect of the film that's like a throwback to the past is the nature of the aliens. Krasinski – who also directs – isn't interested in Steven Spielberg's cuddly extra-terrestrials. No, these are more akin to the horrific creatures I grew up watching as a child.

You'll probably remember from the original that they're visually challenged and hunt by sound. They were driven crazy in that film when Blunt's daughter held a hearing aid up to a microphone and created a deafening noise.



A still from the film *A Quiet Place Part II*.

*A Quiet Place* was made for \$17 million and netted \$340 million. Nobody was surprised that the makers

wanted to go back to the well. Or rather the farm. Who's to say this one doesn't do as well?

*Land* is another film featuring the director in a starring role. Here it's a woman, Robin Wright, in her first time behind the camera. Like *A Quiet Place* it's an appropriate post-Covid film as it deals with survival in a primal environment without creature comforts.

### Bereaved

Wright plays a bereaved woman trying to deal with her loss by removing herself from everything she knows. Driving off to a remote part of Wyoming she rents a cabin, throws away her phone and prepares for a life without any trappings.

But this tenderfoot hasn't bargained on hypothermia, or bears, or the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to

in the wilds. Help comes in the form of a man carrying a similar psychological burden, Damien Bichir.

*Never Give In* (Amazon Prime) is a documentary about the indefatigable Alex Ferguson, the former manager of Manchester United. Sir Alex never seemed to know how to lose matches. His team won many in what came to be known as 'Fergie time' (i.e. after the allotted ninety minutes).

United plc has tried every kind of successor to him, most of them over-paid. None has reprised his magic. The present film, directed by his son Jason, follows his life from a rough childhood in Glasgow to a brain haemorrhage he suffered in 2018. He beat that too.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Varied thoughts on the historical Jesus

**Revolutionary: Who Was Jesus? Why Does He Still Matter?**

edited by Tom Holland (SPCK Publishing), £19.99 / €23.99

Ruadhan Jones

It is a very popular question today to ask 'who is X'? The answer expected is one that must, in a few short sentences, sum-up exactly who X is. That is an ambitious target, so to add on a second question – why does X still matter? – is setting quite a task.

It is one which *Revolutionary: Who Was Jesus? Why Does He Still Matter?* never manages to complete, with honourable exceptions, including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams' concluding essay.

The book is a collection of essays, nine in total, by a variety of contributors from different faiths and perspectives. The editor Tom Holland has quite a following in Christian circles, being an inventive popular historian and author of *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind or How Christianity Shaped the West*.

He returns in this collection to a beloved theme of his: the ways in which the Christian revolution shapes our conception of the world two millennia after the death of its founder. Here, his focus is on the revolutionary nature of Christ's life and death, and the following he garnered.

### Heterogeneity

The immediate problem the book runs up against is the heterogeneity of its authors. This is a deliberate choice, but it results in a book that is quirky and contrarian, without ever making much sense. Jewish, Muslim, atheist and Christian scholars and journalists rub shoulders. Each contributor has the opportunity to elaborate their own pet theory about Christ's revolutionary character. Unfortunately, as with most pets, these are irrational creatures and prone to biting their master's hand.

For instance, it's hard to grasp how Jesus can be considered revolutionary when you believe he never even existed; and yet this is Julian Baginni's

view. It's also understandable that you wouldn't consider Jesus especially revolutionary when you don't think he is the son of God; this view can be attributed to a number of the authors. From that starting point, most contributors render themselves redundant or at best curiosities.

But there is some interest in the book, mostly from quarters you would expect. The essay of the greatest subtlety is Rowan Williams', which follows on from Baginni's confused view of Christ as an imaginary figure, revolutionary in his ambiguity and the impossibility of explaining what any of his teachings mean.

### Reception

Williams' approach is phenomenological and narrative based, attempting to explain how and what the Gospels teach us about the reception of Christ's life and teachings. Williams explains that a tradition gradually developed among followers, which quickly agreed on a number of issues, including Christ's divine origins. It also established the areas of debate, such as the scope of his invitation to be Children of God – Gentiles as well as Jews are invited.

The ambiguity Baginni praises Christ for only exists if you consider biblical sources as all that we know about Christ's life; but these are a part of the Christian tradition, not its sum.

The other interesting sections are those written by, as it were, actual theologians. The Islamic perspective on Christ, taking a chronological approach to his reception in the Muslim faith, was very illuminating. It was well laid out and educational, suggesting that the author – Tarif Khalidi – is a man of great learning, and skilful in conveying what he knows.

In all, however, the book fails to answer the questions it asks; in what way was Jesus revolutionary? The only certain answer you come away with is that it is unlikely to be in the manner described by the authors of these essays – with honourable exceptions.



Jesus preaching to the people by the Sea of Galilee, painting by J. J. Tissot.

## The Pope, Napoleon and the struggle between Church and State

**To Kidnap a Pope: Napoleon and Pius VII**

by Ambrogio A. Caini (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, £ 20.00 / €24.00)

Frank Litton

**O**f all the themes in European history, the relationship between Church and state, religion and politics, has had the greatest impact in making Europe what it is. With the French Revolution, European history turned in a new direction.

Ambrogio A. Caini's account of the interactions between Napoleon and Pius VII traces how their efforts to remake the relationship between Church and state lead to a papacy with increased effective authority and a sharper distinction between Church and state.

### Intention

This was not Napoleon's intention. On the contrary he worked hard for a Church subservient to the state, with the Pope a mere figure head. It is a fascinating story, well-told based on research in the Vatican archives historians had left previously unvisited.

**“Pius was not a defender of the *ancien regime*. He believed that democracy was compatible with Christianity”**

The state needs the Church, the Church needs the state. The state needed the Church to underpin its legitimacy providing it with a sacred aura that enhanced its authority. The Church needs the state's laws to secure its institutions and give it the space to pursue its mission. If interests converge they can also conflict as the aftermath of the French revolution illustrates.

The revolutionaries went about recasting the relationship between Church and state. The atmosphere was hostile to both the Church and

its teaching. The French episcopacy had been well-integrated into the upper echelons of the aristocratic order that the revolution was dismantling. The Enlightenment taught the revolutionaries that Church doctrine was baseless superstition crafted to enslave the ignorant.

When efforts to concoct a secular religion that would sacralise the state failed the next step was to take over the Church, confiscate its properties, turn its clergy into state officials and appoint its bishops. This state-sponsored Church was under the control of a 'minister of religion'.

**“The French episcopacy had been well-integrated into the upper echelons of the aristocratic order that the revolution was dismantling”**

While many of the lower clergy and their flock had little reason to support the *ancien regime* and could have been co-opted into the Republic, these proposals went too far. They provoked considerable resistance that was put down with many deaths and much bloodshed.

The outcome satisfied neither Church nor state. The Church was divided and weakened. Some bishops and priests, more or less reluctantly, join the state Church, many refused and were dismissed from their parishes. The state did not receive the benediction that would have strengthened its authority. Indeed its actions increased the opposition.

### Context

This was the context in which Pius and Napoleon manoeuvred to reset the relationship and find a balance among their competing interests.

Pius was not a defender of the *ancien regime*. He believed that democracy was compatible with Christianity. Indeed the equality of all in the eyes of God supported it.

**“The state needed the Church to underpin its legitimacy providing it with a sacred aura that enhanced its authority”**



Napoleon recognised the contribution of religion to the well-ordering of society and political stability. Both found the situation in France intolerable. There was a basis for agreement.

Cainani traces the twists and turns of the negotiations with skill. He combines the personalities and the issues in a narrative that keeps the reader reading, anxious to know what happened next.

What happened was a concordat signed in 1801. Both parties

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.



Pius VII resisting the demand of the Emperor Napoleon, from a painting by Joseph Frapaa.

made concessions. The Church had to give up its claim to be recognised as the 'one true faith' with the authority that followed and accepted acknowledgment as 'the faith of the majority of the French'. Napoleon had to concede the Pope's final authority in the appointment of bishops.

### Coronation

The rapprochement was marked by the Pope's attendance at Napoleon's coronation as emperor in 1804. The complexities of the concordat were manifested in the choreography of the event.

This was not the end of the story. Pius believed, as most did that the Pope's authority as head of the universal Church required his independence of all political authority. This could only be secured if the

Pope himself was a head of state. The papacy could not function without the papal states.

Napoleon cast himself in the role of a second Charlemagne and his imperial ambitions could not accept independent papal states. The imperial army invaded Rome. The Pope refused to surrender his sovereignty and submit to the emperor. Five years of imprisonment in France followed, when Pius, isolated from his followers was bullied by Napoleon and his agents. Despite the psychological pressures and physical illness, Pius did not submit.

This well told story casts a perspective on Church-state relations quite different from the limited perspective dominant in present-day Ireland.

## What colour is the face God turns upon the world?



Chine McDonald

**God is Not a White Man: And other revelations**  
by Chine McDonald  
(London: Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99 / €19.70)

**Kevin Hargaden**

Have you ever noticed the way tights are marketed?

The hosiery section of Marks and Spencer is an unlikely place to experience a revelation, but God can use any means to illuminate us. Dispatched to buy some things for my wife, I noticed that many of the packs of tights were described as being "nude"-coloured. They were a creamy white.

"That isn't nude for my friends who are black," I thought.

At that moment, the penny finally dropped on what it means to live in a society that perpetuates white supremacy. I cannot imagine going through life being perpetually confronted by the ways in which I don't fit in. This is the norm for all Irish people who are not white.

**“She demonstrates how we have all imbibed the culturally prominent ideas of a “white Jesus” and how this harms our understanding of the Faith”**

Once you are sensitised to it in one place, you start to see it everywhere. Tights, then make-up, hair products, and other relatively trivial examples, through to life shaping norms including school curricula and government bias. Even the tone-deafness of the Church; the normative assumption of "whiteness" was never something I signed on for, but it is something that benefits me and handicaps my neighbour.

In *God is Not a White Man*, the British-Nigerian journalist Chine

McDonald explores how white supremacy functions in today's society and the Church. This is a work that is more memoir than manifesto, and much stronger for it.

The sceptic who needs to be convinced about the contemporary conversation on race will be convicted by McDonald's own experiences and the sympathiser who would prefer to not think too deeply about the structural forces at work will be challenged by her keen social analysis.

### White supremacy

Across seven chapters, McDonald considers the problem of white supremacy from a range of trajectories. In the first chapter she demonstrates how we have all imbibed the culturally prominent ideas of a "white Jesus" and how this harms our understanding of the Faith.

In the second chapter, she explores the sensitivities that arise in forming relationships across the race barrier, centring on her marriage to a white Englishman.

The third chapter is a fascinating reminder that "Africa is not a country", which functions as an appeal to attending carefully to our cultural origins. The fourth

chapter examines how racism and misogyny intersect. The role of education, both as a means of identity-formation for immigrant communities and as a site for exclusion is discussed in the fifth chapter.

The sixth chapter is a harrowing review of the violence that is so often directed to those whose skin is not white. The final chapter is a gripping call to address all these various issues within the Church.

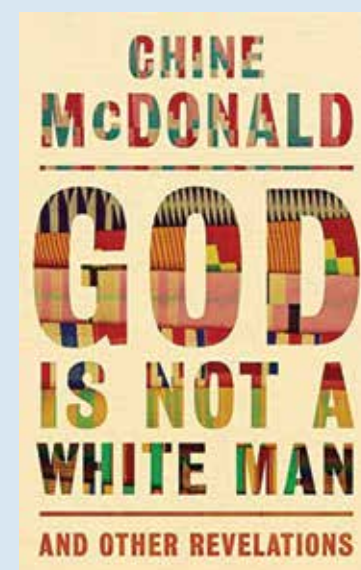
McDonald is clear that "the call to dethrone white supremacy and patriarchy within the Church is not an issue of political correctness nor is it merely an appeal to 'wokeness'".

**“The normative assumption of ‘whiteness’ was never something I signed on for”**

Rather, "it is a gospel issue. It is for Christ's sake that we should remove the barriers that keep people from seeing God for who God is" (p. 101). This is a theologically critical point, which cuts through the easy distractions of whatever culture war may be imported from abroad. These issues are not relevant to Christians because they interest the broader society. They are essential to Christians because they concern the true worship of the true God.

McDonald writes as an Anglican in Britain. As such, there are times when the conversation will not apply directly in Ireland or in the Catholic church. But there is no point in the book where the conversation is irrelevant. This book warrants being widely read. And I look forward to the day we can read similar texts written from an Irish perspective as we grapple with increasingly evident racial tensions.

**i** Kevin Hargaden works for the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Dublin, Ireland; khargaden@jcfj.ie





# Leisure time

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Clare Martin at [clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie) or call 01 679 3188



[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)



## Your heart for the homeless

Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering

Merchants Quay Ireland in your will, ring Emma Murphy, Legacies Manager at 01-524 0965 or email [emma.murphy@mqi.ie](mailto:emma.murphy@mqi.ie)

Please pray for the beatification of

## Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

## Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork. Tel: 021-4545704 Email: [info@mscmisions.ie](mailto:info@mscmisions.ie)

[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

**Trócaire**

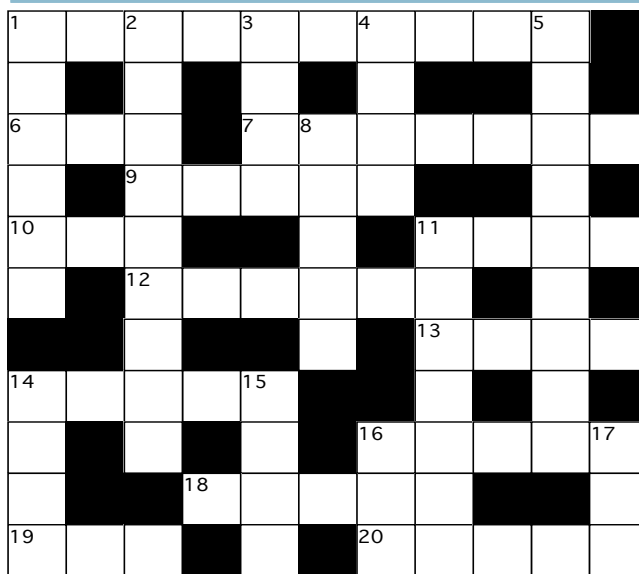
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email [grace.kelly@trocaire.org](mailto:grace.kelly@trocaire.org) or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.

Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 387



### Across

- 1 You use your mouth to imitate drums in this kind of music (10)
- 6 You may wipe your shoes on this when you come in the door (3)
- 7 Helps someone learn (7)
- 9 Someone you fight against in a war (5)
- 10 Row a boat using this (3)
- 11 Pain (4)
- 12 Bees gather this to make honey (6)
- 13 A hint in a crossword, like this one! (4)
- 14 Yell (5)
- 16 You might call this when a coin is tossed (5)
- 18 Engine (5)
- 19 Turn it on to get water (3)
- 20 You pump up these parts of

### Down

- 1 Giant pandas eat the shoots of this plant (6)
- 2 This part of the day follows midday (9)
- 3 Use your teeth to do this - to an apple, for example (4)
- 4 This 'picture' lets a doctor look at your bones (1-3)
- 5 A dog bred for racing (9)
- 8 Containing nothing (5)
- 11 Sport involving bows and arrows (7)
- 14 Closed (4)
- 15 A hammer, saw or spanner, maybe (4)
- 16 More than just warm (3)
- 17 These letters mean someone is in trouble! (1.1.1.)

## SOLUTIONS, JUNE 10

GORDIUS NO. 511

Across - 1 Egg 3 Wilberforce 8 Dilute 9 Farewell 10 Refer 11 Sleet 13 Welsh rarebit 15 Teheran 20 Knits 21 Yodel 23 Creep 24 Blissful 25 Curl up 26 Ejector seat 27 Gask

Down - 1 Ex-directory 2 Goldfish 3 Water buffalo 5 Frets 6 Reeked 7 Eel 12 The Two Popes 13 Whack 14 Heaps 17 Blue flag 18 Circles 19 Advise 22 Liszt 23 Court 24 Bee

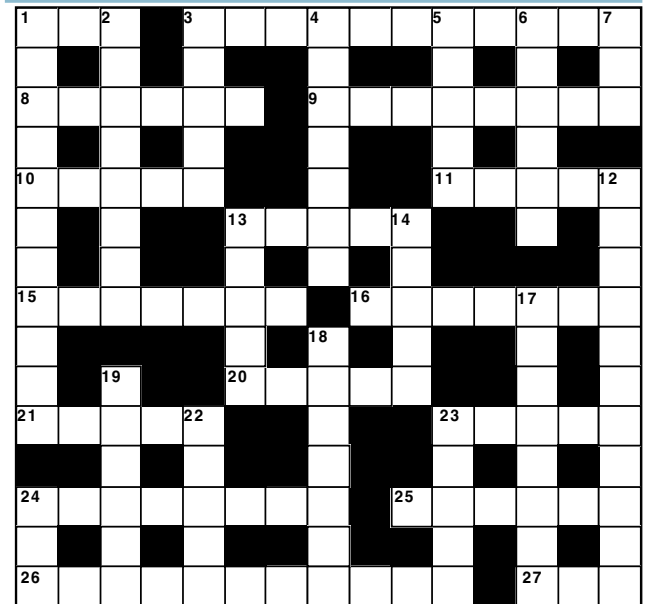
CHILDREN'S No. 386

Across - 1 Cycle path 7 Ree 8 Damaged 9 Laptop 14 Eve 15 Idiots 16 Order 18 Echo 21 Adventure 22 Dam 23 Statue

Down - 1 Circle 2 Cheaper 3 End 4 Army 5 Hug 6 Rude 10 Avoided 11 Pirates 12 Diver 13 Itch 17 Dream 19 Cent 20 Once

## Crossword

Gordius 512



### Across

- 1 Circuit of an athletics track (3)
- 3 Some kind of special, slow items of bed-linen (11)
- 8 Lowing, as a cow does (6)
- 9 Give up the throne (8)
- 10 French singer Ms Piaf (5)
- 11 Ancient Roman marketplace, or a place where matters may be discussed (5)
- 13 Invitee (5)
- 15 Observed that the cake had no covering (7)
- 16 Capable of being read (7)
- 20 Weary (5)
- 21 Ancient Greek philosopher (5)
- 23 Surplus (5)
- 24 One who eats human flesh (8)
- 25 Illegally and forcibly commandeer a plane or other vehicle (6)
- 26 Let me try Jordan out for an animated cat and mouse pairing (3,3,5)
- 27 Cooking utensil (3)

### Down

- 1 Getting ready to compete just before commencement (9,2)
- 2 Ban, outlaw (8)
- 3 Nip or steal (5)
- 4 Tanned animal-skin (7)
- 5 Native American tribal leader (5)
- 6 Sets of steps (6)
- 7 Espy a diocese (3)
- 12 It's woven for an infant and named for a Biblical character (5,6)
- 13 Welcome, or call by name (5)
- 14 Fabric associated with Donegal and Scotland (5)
- 17 Where military training is given to footwear? (4,4)
- 18 Reading system for the blind (7)
- 19 Double-sized wine bottle (6)
- 22 Constellation named for a giant hunter (5)
- 23 My lie was exploded by Ms Bronte (5)
- 24 Infant's bed (3)

## Sudoku Corner

387

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 386

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

### Last week's Hard 386

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



Fr Martin Delaney

Notebook

# Disquieting when faith is removed from commemorations

**WE ARE IN A DECADE** of centenaries marking one hundred years since our war of independence, the civil war and the establishment of the Irish State. These milestones and how we commemorate them provide opportunities for celebration but of course there are also many sensitivities to be aware of. The role religion and faith played in all of those events one hundred years ago is certainly one of the sensitivities to be aware of. What part does religion and faith play as we journey through these commemorations? I want to reflect on one recent commemoration which I found disquieting.



**Planning**

Five years of planning went into the centenary commemoration of the events of Bloody Sunday in Croke Park in November 1920. The result of that planning was a very impressive ceremony in the stadium on Saturday November 21, 2020. The moving ceremony featured beautiful traditional music and actor Brendan Gleeson gave an eloquent commentary on the 14 people who were killed in the massacre. When each name was mentioned a powerful torch was lit on Hill 16. The evening was

interspersed with short interpretive video clips telling the stories of some of those who died that day. I was particularly struck by the video of young Michael Hogan from Tipperary showing him in a pub drinking a pint of Guinness on his way to play the game in Croke Park. The President and Taoiseach were there and all in all, it was a beautifully evocative commemoration. So what did I find disquieting? There was absolutely no element of prayer or faith. The question might be asked; why should there be any prayer or faith in such a celebra-

tion? A few considerations might help to answer that question. It is well documented that the person who reached Michael Hogan on the pitch could clearly hear the young Tipperary man praying as he lay dying. While it is debatable if Michael Hogan ever visited a pub to drink Guinness in the hours before he played a big game I would imagine that it is much more certain that he, and indeed the other thirteen who died, had all been to Mass that Sunday morning. And yet, one hundred years on, there was no space for a prayer as the events of that fateful day were being officially remembered by the Irish State. I also find it somewhat ironic that the entire event was hosted and coordinated by the GAA. The GAA is organised on a parish basis and to my best knowledge the Patron of the GAA is still the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel.

**Concerns**

When I contacted the authorities in Croke Park to raise my concerns, I got quite a detailed response and explanation why there had been no religious element to the commemoration. I was told that one of the fourteen families of those who were killed had specifically asked that there be no religious element to the event. This request seemed to be the determining factor in leaving out any element of prayer. I was also told that because the President and Taoiseach were present, any religious dimension would have to include all the main religions of the state. Again, I found this slightly baffling as I'm assuming that all those who died were actually Catholics.

While I can understand that the Catholic Church in Ireland has long since lost the privileged place it once occupied in

every area of our society, does that mean that the dimensions of Catholic faith and prayer also have to be obliterated from the public square?

**Lord of life and love**

Lord of life and love,  
as we give thanks for times past,  
grant us courage to embrace the present  
and grace to share the future.  
In memory of loved ones dear,  
kindle their flame to shine in the dark  
and light the path ahead.  
Show the way that leads to life  
as we cherish days gone by  
and inspire us with the touch of love  
that faith and hope live on.

Annabel Shilson-Thomas

**What's seldom is wonderful!**

● A man is out on the sea in his rowing boat. In a storm he loses one of his oars and eventually the second one also goes. As a last resort he turns to God in prayer, pleading: "Dear Lord, You know I haven't troubled you for years, and I promise, if you get me out of this mess, I won't trouble you again for a long time more".



## The Little Way Association HELPING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY VIRUS

India is bearing the brunt of a new wave of the pandemic. A doctor in Mumbai has described a covid ward there as resembling a scene from Dante's Inferno. Priests are among those dying from the illness, crematoria are overloaded, and at least one diocese has been offering its facilities to be used for treating covid patients. Even those who have not contracted the virus are suffering from the disease's impact on the Indian economy and society.

**Can you spare a donation for covid-stricken India?**

The Little Way Association is in touch with the church in India, gathering details of the most pressing needs there. Many of our supporters in Britain and Ireland have themselves been affected by the pandemic but, if you can spare a donation for India, it will be forwarded to clergy and religious there without deduction.

**Every penny that you donate goes intact to provide basic sustenance, water, medicine and housing for the children, families and individuals who need them.**

**Please give what you can. Thank you and may God reward your generosity.**

**All our donors are remembered at Masses offered for their intentions and the missionaries always promise prayers for their benefactors.**



*"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ St Therese*

**MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS**

In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their communities. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

**We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass**

**WELLS NEEDED**

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean 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?

**Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

- I enclose €..... to be allocated to:
- €..... **POOR AND NEEDY PEOPLE OF INDIA**
- €..... NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES
- €..... WELLS AND CLEAN WATER
- €..... MASS OFFERINGS  
(Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)
- €..... LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**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