

# The Irish Catholic

## NUALA O'LOAN

Cardinal Pell's synod view deserves analysis  
Page 8



## CHRISTIAN UNITY

Challenging ignorance with ecumenism Pages 12-13



## MARY KENNY

Martin Luther King's influence in Ireland  
Page 5



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# Co. Cavan priest 'heartbroken' after missionary friend murdered in Nigeria

Jason Osborne

A Co. Cavan-based priest from Nigeria has described how the brutal murder of his friend and fellow missionary in his homeland has left him devastated.

The body of Fr Isaac Achi was found among the charred ruins of the parish building of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church on January 15, according to the Diocese of Minna, Nigeria.

He died after armed bandits attacked the priest's residence in the village of Kafin Koro in the middle of the night. Another priest at the parochial house, Fr Collins Omeh, escaped the building, but sustained gunshot wounds and is being treated in a hospital.

It is the latest attack in a wave of violence that has seen many priests attacked in the most populous African nation.

Fr Yusuf Bamai, who is currently working in the Diocese of Kilmore, told *The Irish Catholic* that he had been "very close and very friendly" with the late Fr Achi after working with him as a seminarian, and that he was shocked and "heartbroken" by the news.

He described his confrère as "hardworking" and "brave" facing all the challenges in Paikoro, a local government area of Niger state.

» Continued on Page 2

## Praising the Christ child...



Patricia Recla, Ojen Balaoro and Chielo Matulac, members of the Filipino community in Ireland, hold up statues of Santo Nino de Cebú during celebrations held in Berkeley Road Church on Sunday, January 15, on the feast day for the Filipino icon. Photo: Juanito Paraguaya. See P20

## MICHAEL KELLY

Setting out a vision that is based on hope for the future PAGE 2



## YOUR FAITH

How to be a present-day mystic PAGES 29-30



## DAVID QUINN

Ireland has embraced eugenics PAGE 10



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

Learn more about how you can be part of a world without hunger.



AN IRISH CATHOLIC EXCLUSIVE

SEE PAGE 9

## Inside this week

**Fr Brendan Purcell**

**Cardinal Pell kept Church on rails of truth** Page 14



**Shroud of Turin Exhibition reveals man behind the shroud**

Pages 17-19



**Faith in film**

**Joy in an alienating modern world**

Page 31



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## Co. Cavan priest 'heartbroken' as missionary friend murdered in Nigeria

» **Continued from Page 1**

"Fr Isaac was a very pastoral-minded priest, very, very hard-working and very brave, also. I can just give my experience from working with him as a seminarian," Fr Bamai said.

He had major challenges as a priest, Fr Bamai said, because he was attacked by robbers on one occasion and shot on another.

"He was also the parish priest of the church that was attacked on Christmas Day in 2011 in Nigeria," Fr Bamai said, alluding to a series of attacks that occurred during Christmas Day services in northern Nigeria which killed a total of 41 people and were claimed by Islamist group Boko Haram.

Fr Bamai admitted that he and other Nigerian priests ministering in Ireland to ease the vocations crisis are "worried

and concerned" about their priestly brothers in Nigeria because priests are regularly killed and kidnapped there.

"A lot of priests have been going through tough times in Nigeria, so it's a difficult situation for priests especially.

"We don't know why particularly priests because Nigeria is a multi-religious country – there are Islamic religious leaders, Islamic clerics, there are other denominations, other churches, but you hardly hear about Islamic clerics being attacked or other pastors being attacked," Fr Bamai said.

He said that he has received "a lot of messages from parishioners" following the news and that this has offered comfort and support being so far from home.

See page 24

# Setting out a vision that is based on hope for the future

**D**iscernment, listening attentively for the voice of God, is not a new concept in our tradition. But it has come in to sharp focus given the synodal journey that Pope Francis has called Catholics to embark upon.

It's no easy task, and part of the challenge is discerning spirits. That is to say, whether what we perceive is truly from God.

A huge danger in discernment is that instead of listening to the voice of God, we actually bring our own prejudices and pre-set answers to what are complex questions and processes that truly require journeying together.

## Poison

Bad discernment is like a poison – and just like Jesus drew out spirits of disdain and discord masquerading as vision, our own synodal journey is prone to these spirits.

If we're honest, we're probably all guilty of taking the current reality as the will of God. I was at an event for priests a few years ago where a senior priest who had served the Church for many years said that most of his parishioners didn't go to Mass or engage with their spiritual lives in any meaningful way, but that this didn't matter since they were good to one another. Many of the other priests present agreed that since they were good people, regular engagement with the sacraments was not important.

But here's the thing: we don't believe that Jesus instituted the sacraments because he had nothing better to do, or he thought they might be nice rituals. We believe that Christ instituted the sacraments because they are vital to living the Christian life and therefore union with God.

And if we believe that, why would we think it doesn't matter if people don't avail themselves of these instruments of salvation?

It's bad discernment. Discernment is the ability to obtain sharp perceptions or to judge well, not simply comfort ourselves that how things are is how God intends them to be.

Bishop Donal McKeown has become the latest bishop to set out a vision for the future of the Church in his diocese (see page 15). Derry, my native diocese, faces many of the

same challenges as other dioceses in Ireland in terms of declining numbers attending Mass and fewer clergy.

But, what strikes me reading Bishop McKeown's pastoral letter *God has plans for His people: Join in the Mission of Prayer, Exploration and Renewal*, is how hope-filled it is in terms of a vision for the future.

It offers no simplistic or quick-fix solutions, but in contrast with some recent episcopal letters that give the impression of doing little other than managing decline, Bishop McKeown asserts boldly that the future must lie in growth, not fading away.

## A huge danger in discernment is that instead of listening to the voice of God, we actually bring our own prejudices"

The bishop writes: "I believe that we will be more like the Holy Spirit-filled Body of Christ when our diocese is blessed with many:

- Families which hand on the Faith;
- People of all ages exploring and developing their faith;
- Lay people with the official ministries of lector, acolyte and catechist;
- Consecrated virgins – who publicly dedicate their lives to the Lord but live and work among their fellow-parishioners;
- Female and male religious (such as the Carmelites and various communities of religious sisters and brothers);
- Permanent deacons; and
- Ordained priests."

The reality, which seems to escape some commentators who see the Church more as a sociological reality, is that there is really no Church without the sacramental priesthood. So, a lay-led future and a future marked by co-responsibility for the life of the Church is vital, but it cannot be a credible future without the ministry of priests.

Bishop McKeown's letter also contains what we might

discern as a warning to those of us engaged in the current synodal process: "in our time of listening and sharing during our parish synodal conversations, there was a recognition of change in our faith community. There were suggestions about how we need to change as a Church. Many suggestions focused on the role of women, on the disconnect of life and faith, on who should be ordained and sexual morality. All of these are important issues.

"But the key question is not merely how we change so that we can maintain the current model and structures. With that model we have been failing in our mission of bringing people to know and love Jesus," he writes.

## Renewal

The bishop adds: "if we ask the right question, we discover that renewal is not only a question of manag-

ing changed structures and rescheduling parish Mass. This is a time where we need to make space for grace so that God's plans – and not our limited imagination – can renew the mission of the Church.

## Bishop McKeown's letter also contains what we might discern as a warning to those of us engaged in the current synodal process"

"Merely tinkering with the current system is not the divine solution," he insists. It's hard to argue with that.

True discernment is more than arriving with our own limited answers to our narrow questions.

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## Parents call for morality in curriculum

Ruadhán Jones

Parents have called for moral teachings and spirituality to be added to the RSE curriculum, a report on the proposed draft curriculum shows.

More than 4,000 parents wrote to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as part of a consultation on reforming the Junior Certificate relationship and sexual education (RSE) curriculum. An updated curriculum is to be introduced later this year.

A “sub-set of parents” expressed their concern at the “lack of reference to morality, moral teachings or family values”, according to the report released on Monday.

Submissions from parents, schools’ bodies and students also called for the rationale for the curriculum to be

amended to include “spiritual” wellbeing.

In addition, while reference to “values” in the curriculum was welcome, many contributors raised concerns that the draft doesn’t “state explicitly” the underpinning values.

The submissions came as part of a public consultation on the draft Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum that took place between July and October 2022.

A number of parents also called for a specific recognition of a school’s right to teach topics according to their ethos.

However, there was an “equally strong” wish to see an updated SPHE curriculum “free from any religious influence”.

Proposals to include discussions on pornography in relationships and sexual education met with mixed reaction.

Parents expressed “deep concern”

that teaching about pornography might promote its use. Students and teachers said the “damaging impact” pornography is having on young people’s understanding of relationships needs to be discussed.

The report notes that while the draft curriculum was generally well received, the most common cause for concern among parents who expressed “strong criticism” was references to gender identities.

“A number of parents who responded to the survey or who sent email submissions pointed out that gender identity is a highly contested and sensitive topic,” the report says.

“A further commonly expressed view was that the NCCA is seeking to promote ‘gender ideology’ by refusing to acknowledge the binary nature of gender.”

## Dolores longed to be near monastery



On the five-year anniversary of the late Cranberries singer Dolores O’Riordan, her family said that she was really excited to return to her native Co. Limerick and be close to the Benedictine monastery Glenstal Abbey.

In a statement on January 14, the family said: “She loved to take long walks in the abbey’s surrounding

parklands and had gotten to know some of the resident monks there who are world renowned for their Gregorian chant. She had, on occasion in the months and years beforehand joined them for their choir practice in the abbey.”

They added: “She had so much left to give. We miss her deeply but we will never, ever, forget her.”

## Divine Mercy conference returns to ‘speak to all hearts’

Chai Brady

After two years of Covid-19 restrictions the Divine Mercy Conference will return in person again from February 17-19.

It will take place in the Main Hall of the RDS as it did in previous years, with this year’s theme being ‘Act justly, Love tenderly, Walk humbly with your God’ – Micah 6:8.

Explaining the theme, organiser Deacon Don Devaney said it is a mes-

sage that’s applicable and will speak to all hearts, even those who are non-religious, as “it will echo and resonate with them”.

“It is a very simple message, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly – the last probably being the hardest part of the three,” he said.

“We’re hoping it will appeal to people and will bring them back to a sense of what’s right, a sense of wholeness, that with these three things you can live very effectively and very happily.”

Speakers include Fr Hayden Wil-

liams, Fr Brendan Walsh SAC, Fr Eunan McDonnell SDB and Fr Chris Alar MIC. More are to be confirmed soon.

Mr Devaney warned that “we’re running the risk of our Church being buried in fear, people who are nearly afraid to come back, afraid to come out, fear has taken a grip”.

He added that the conference is “a call for people to come together again, to meet and to take up courage”.

Tickets can be bought at the front door or online via <https://www.divinemercyconference.com/buy-tickets>

# Courageous women around the world

THE SYNODAL  TIMES - FEBRUARY 2023

Sr. Dorothy Stang had a passion for people of all cultures and dedicated her life working on social justice, peace-making, fairness, and respect for the environment. She chose to live in poverty to help those most in need and possessed few material things: a mix-match of clothing, spartan furnishings and her Bible, which she carried everywhere and sometimes called her “weapon.”

On a rainy Saturday in February 2005, she carried that Bible while making her way along a muddy Amazon jungle road to a village near Anapu, where she lived in Para, Brazil. The region is known for its wealth of natural resources and the violence that boils over from land disputes.

While Sr. Dorothy walked on toward the village, she heard taunts from men who had stopped alongside her. The rain poured as she stopped and opened her Bible. She read to the men. They listened to two verses, stepped back, and aimed their guns. Sr. Dorothy raised her Bible toward them, and six shots were fired at point blank range. She fell to the ground, martyred.

Read the full story in February’s issue of *The Synodal Times* which is dedicated to the stories and lives of amazing Catholic women all over the world.

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**Sister Dorothy Stang**

A legend and a symbol of the fight for human rights in Para, Brazil

# Clergy encouraged to offer 'holistic' mental health support

Jason Osborne

A leading priest-psychologist has called on priests not to neglect the spiritual side of wellbeing.

Fr Pat Collins CM told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper that most of the people who get in contact with him refer to depression or anxiety as the "number one problem in their life".

"It's particularly noticeable since Covid kicked in – there's constant talk about mental health prob-

lems – but the number one problem clearly to me is depression," Fr Collins said.

## Depression

This comes as a new US-based study out of Duke University in North Carolina revealed that 90% of clergy members surveyed "embrace a medical understanding of depression," with only 10% saying they'd advise their congregations to address depression solely through religious means.

The study noted that

clergy are often a first point of contact for people suffering from depression.

Fr Collins said that from a spiritual director's point of view, sometimes you'll get a person who is "both clinically depressed and spiritually desolate".

"Straight away, you've got to discern – what am I dealing with?," he said, continuing that in general the Catholic position "is very balanced".

"It says, 'Grace perfects nature', so that if a person comes along with depression, there's normally a

human side to it," he said.

"If I'm dealing with somebody who is depressed, I will ask them a lot of questions about is it a reactive depression and so on, and propose human ways of dealing with it. One is to talk to somebody about the whole thing," Fr Collins said, adding that believers should also use spiritual resources for dealing with their depression.

## Holistic

A "holistic" approach is required, Fr Collins said,

saying that it's in accordance with the Bible to use natural methods such as doctors and medication to treat ailments such as depression.

"But, as a man of the Gospel, what has the Gospel got to say about it? What's the spiritual side of the thing, and the healing that can come through Christian means?"

"Yes, we have human resources and we should use them, but we also have spiritual resources and priests should advocate them," he said.

## St Ita's example can help Ireland's smaller Church – bishop

Chai Brady

The "prophetic" words of the late Pope Benedict XVI and the lives of Ss Ita and Brigid 1,500 years ago are examples for the Church in Ireland, which will become smaller, according to Bishop Brendan Leahy.

The bishop was speaking on the Feast Day of St Ita on January 15 at Mass in Raheenagh church, Kileedy – where Limerick's patron saint set up her community of nuns in the 5th Century.

Speaking of a radio interview Pope Benedict did 50 years ago, Bishop Leahy quoted the late pope saying the Church "will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity".

Bishop Leahy said Pope Benedict also had a message of hope, saying he highlighted "how the Church as a 'little flock' will be rediscovered as providing the meaning that so many yearn for..."

He added: "The future may be smaller. St Ita was just one person in one moment of time in a community that was limited primarily to West Limerick. Yet, her example, light and charisma live out fourteen hundred years later."

## Attack on churches an attack on us all – Taoiseach

Ruadhán Jones

An Taoiseach has warned that an attack on a church is an attack on all Ireland and those who carry them out must be held to account.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's comments come after the altar of a church in Kerry was burned and a Mass in Cork City was violently

disrupted last week.

In a statement to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Varadkar said "Any attack on a place of worship or the disruption of a religious service is an attack on all of us".

He added that there is "absolutely no justification or excuse for any such attacks".

"Those who carry them out are breaking the law and must be

held to account."

Mr Varadkar stressed that "Ireland is a free and democratic society in which the rule of law is paramount. This must include freedom of religion and freedom of expression."

However, the Taoiseach did not comment when asked to respond to claims from TDs that anti-Catholic rhetoric in the Dáil "stokes up

anger" and leads to violence.

Speaking to this paper last week, Michael Collins TD of Cork South-West warned that certain politicians in the Dáil are "ranting rather than talking" about the Church.

"It stokes up anger among some people that are fragile in the community and then they carry out these crimes," Mr Collins said.

## A fond farewell...



Presentation Srs Agnes Byrne, Carmel Curran, Colette McCloskey and Rose Wright are pictured with Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin at a Mass to mark the departure of the sisters from their parish in Drogheda, Co. Louth, after 210 years, which took place on January 15.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mayo missionary Fr Tommy Murphy dies in Hong Kong

Former Columban superior general Fr Tommy Murphy has died at the China Mission Unit (CMU) residence in Hong Kong early on January 6, 2023 with his fellow Columbans at his side.

Born in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, August 3, 1949, Fr Tommy was ordained on Easter Sunday in 1974 before he was elected Superior General of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban in September 2006.

During his term the Society's Generalate was moved from Ireland to Hong Kong, which was seen as more central to the society's evolving mission.

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Jean Vanier.

# Martin Luther King's unexpected influence on Ireland...

America celebrated Martin Luther King Day this past week – and unveiled a new sculptural tribute to the African-American civil rights leader and his wife Coretta, named *Embrace*.

Reactions were mixed to the bronze itself, created by Hank Willis Thomas, which depicted hugs without depicting human faces. But sometimes art has to be controversial or even quizical. (There are also at least 15 other, more conventional, statues of MLK, as he is sometimes known, throughout the United States.)

The Baptist preacher deserves the special day



## Mary Kenny

dedicated to his memory – signed into law by Ronald Reagan in 1983 – and the commemorations he attracts. Although it is sometimes forgotten, or simply erased, that MLK was motivated to campaign for racial equality by his Christian faith. He openly prayed for “the day when all men will recognise the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.”

His famous 1963 speech, ‘I have a dream’, was delivered

in the form of an evangelical Gospel sermon, calling for the full emancipation and parity of citizenship for black Americans with their white neighbours in a spirit of peaceful co-habitation. Its tone was based on the black spiritual: “Free at last. Thank God Almighty we are free at last.”

### Responses

Dr King's oration met with constant responses from the crowd of the Biblical ‘Halle-



The controversial sculpture by Hank Willis Thomas.

lujah!’ as they echoed his exhortations to justice. But when the speech was later broadcast, the ‘Hallelujah’ interjections were often edited out. It was thought they were interruptions to MLK's inspiring address: in fact, they were integral to the Southern Baptist style of delivery.

Sixty years on from that historic event, there has been real progress – but there is still much to be accomplished in terms of social justice between all races. And it sometimes seems the pacifist tone in which Martin Luther King preached – his father had been a preacher before him – has been replaced by divisiveness and anger. MLK frequently iterated the

Scriptural theme of ‘love your enemies’, not often heard today.

### Impact

In an unintended way, Dr King had a powerful impact on Ireland. In the North, he became an inspirational figure for the civil rights movement which started in the mid-1960s, and became the seedbed for change.

And among Irish Catholics, he – along with Vatican II – had a revising impact on the reputation of the original Martin Luther. The German Luther had been seen negatively: but after Martin Luther King appeared on our television screens, his very name prompted a reassessment of ‘our separated brethren’.

● Paul Johnson, the Catholic writer who has just died aged 94, worked as a journalist in Paris as a young man. When he was returning to his native England in the mid-1950s, he was carrying a copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in his pocket.

“Thank you – I’ll have that,” said the customs officer at Dover, confiscating the publication which the official regarded as ‘obscene’, Paul told me. As every veteran of the pub quiz trick question knows, *Ulysses* was banned in Britain and the US, but never in Ireland. (In fact, by 1954, the prohibition was lifted in the UK, but evidently the border officials were still implementing the ban!)

Paul Johnson wrote some terrific books himself – his *Intellectuals* lays bare the lives of men and women who have been most influential in our society. His *Modern Times* is superb, as is his *History of Christianity*.

Paul came to believe that one of the most corrosive aspects in the development of modern culture was ‘relativism’ – leading to the abolition of moral standards. This was a theme very much developed by the late Pope Benedict XVI.

## Icelandic equality

Each year, the World Economic Forum (currently in session in Davos) publishes a report measuring the most egalitarian nations globally. Iceland usually emerges as the most equal society, both in terms of class, and as between men and women; it is usually held up as an ideal for that reason.

But the population of Iceland is very small – at 373,520 not even numbering half a million. This is rather

less than the population of Cork County (542,868). Small populations are often more egalitarian because everyone knows everyone else and there isn't so much opportunity to build hierarchies and class structures. And in a harsh terrain like the volcanic Iceland, everyone has to act co-operatively.

It's much easier to have an equal society with a small population in an inhospitable

location than it is in a more populous and more diverse country, like the USA, which is usually rated much lower down the WEF ranks.

Iceland is said to have DNA links with Ireland, because Viking men abducted Irish women and took them off to Iceland, back in the days of Norse raids. I believe that the famous Icelandic sagas really had their roots in Celtic storytelling.

# These are exceptional times

## Now more than ever it's important to support organisations like the Iona Institute

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David Quinn of The Iona Institute

# Priest warns Tallaght bus diversions due to antisocial issues causing 'big problem'

**Chai Brady**

A Dublin priest has said the decision to stop bus services to large areas of West Tallaght after 6pm is causing a "big problem" for parishioners.

Diversions are permanently in place, until further notice, on Dublin Bus routes south of the Square shopping centre due to numerous incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Fr William O'Shaughnessy,

moderator of the grouping of Springfield, Jobstown and Brookfield parishes in West Tallaght, told *The Irish Catholic* that "it's a huge problem for the area because so many people rely on buses for their daily routine".

"It's a desperate consternation for people who are relying on public transport. It's a public service at the end of the day, taxes are expensive, and people do need the bus routes, simple as that, there's

no two ways about it," Fr O'Shaughnessy said.

This week An Garda announced gardaí were travelling on Dublin Bus routes in the Tallaght area to tackle the issue and seven arrests were made in West Tallaght connected to organised criminality and antisocial behaviour.

Fr O'Shaughnessy said: "The gardaí, they're pretty visible here in the area most of the time but I do think, and I know I'm not the only one,

that it would be important to have security on transport.

"I know for a fact antisocial behaviour is one of the issues that stops a lot of people using public transport. Until this is being taken seriously by the authorities – the need for security essentially both for the protection of the driver and the people using public transport – I don't think this issue will go away anytime soon."

In December alone there

were 35 reported violent incidents including threats with knives, attacks and vandalism.

Drivers told Dublin Bus management they would not "risk life and limb, driving buses into estates in west Tallaght, to be attacked and assaulted".

Regarding the push by Government to encourage people to use more public transport, Fr O'Shaughnessy said there's a need for more

services across the country, not just in West Tallaght, "not less".

"It's easy to say people need to rely more and more on public transport but when these issues come up it's going to deter people from using it rather than entice them. It's easy for ministers to say these things but it's a different reality on the ground," he added.

## Shock to Sacred Heart church community after vandalism

**Jason Osborne**

Parishioners in Newry have received a "blow" following the destruction of six stained-glass windows at the Church of the Sacred Heart just outside Newry in Co. Armagh.

The Church of the Sacred Heart on Dublin Road in Cloughoge was vandalised overnight between Thursday and Friday, with six windows on the church building smashed and a further four on an outside toilet.

Speaking to *The Irish*

*Catholic* newspaper, parish priest Fr Richard Naughton said that the church "is really a gem of a church".

### Wedding church

"Really, it's very, very beautiful. We restored it five years ago and it's very much a wedding church for this area because it's so beautiful and it has so much going for it."

Discovering the vandalism at 8am on Friday morning, Fr Naughton said local councillors and parishioners have been calling and offering their

support in "whatever way they can", and to describe their "shock" at the crime.

"We'd be hoping to restore the windows," Fr Naughton said, saying "We take great pride [in it]."

"We spent £600,000 there five years ago in restoring the church, so we're taking great pride in our three churches... That is the type of community, so we will definitely be doing that and we're sourcing the specialists who can do that," he said.

## Athlone school in pilot scheme first to divest

**Ruadhán Jones**

Corr Na Madadh National School in Athlone will become the first school to transfer from Catholic patronage as part of a new pilot scheme.

Minister for Education Norma Foley announced January 12 that the Co. Westmeath school will transfer from Catholic patronage to the local education and training board (ETB) and become a multi-denominational community national school.

In a statement, the Department for Education said the transfer marked an "important moment" for the divestment process.

Athlone was one of eight

areas across the country taking part in a pilot scheme intended to provide more multi-denominational schools.

"Positive, constructive engagement" led by an independent facilitator took place with the school community over autumn and winter 2022, Ms Foley said.

"I am delighted that this transfer of patronage will increase diversity of provision in the area and that there will be a multi-denominational primary school option for parents in Athlone," Ms Foley continued.

Reports on engagements in the other seven areas are expected by the end of March.

### JOE WALSH TOURS

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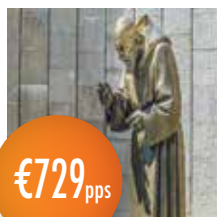


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## Tipp-top young scientists...



Winners of the BT Young Scientist 2023 Liam Carew and Shane O'Connor of the Abbey School in Tipperary town are pictured holding their trophy aloft. Their project examined the impact of second-level education on adolescent development, with a particular focus on the importance of physical activity among secondary pupils and its effects on social interaction and mental wellbeing. They were joined on the stage in the RDS by Minister for Education Norma Foley and BT Ireland managing director Shay Walsh on Friday, January 13. See page 16

# Catholic Church can learn from 'suffering' Anglican community

Chai Brady

The Church in Ireland can learn from the painful experiences of other Christian traditions when it comes to synodality, the Irish monk heading up Vatican relations with Protestant denominations has told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Martin Browne OSB was recently appointed to the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity with responsibility for the Church's relationship with the worldwide Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council.

He warned that some Christian traditions are "suffering greatly" due to the way hot button issues are addressed.

Speaking of issues such as same-sex relationships and the ordination of women which came up in Ireland's synodal process, Fr Browne said: "We know that we can't make our doctrine by referendum...but it would be a strange synod if they were not talked about

"That's one of the big challenges and, for some, one of the

great fears of the next couple of years in the synodal process - where does it all lead?" he said.

A lot can be learned from the experiences of other Christian Churches, Fr Browne continued, saying the Anglican Communion is "suffering greatly around the issue of same-sex marriage".

"Whereas some provinces have moved to celebrate same-sex marriages [in churches], to allow clergy to be in same-sex marriages...huge swathes of the Anglican Communion, particularly in what's called the global south, see it as an absolute departure from the Biblical truth and they are struggling to know how they are going to continue to be part of the same communion".

He said that "There are very strongly held positions on both sides and how that tension is resolved is just as big a problem for the Anglican Communion as it is for their relationships with other groups like us," he said.

As the Catholic Church continues on its synodal journey, Fr Browne said it is important

to look at what is happening in other denominations: what they resolve or don't resolve and how they manage or don't manage certain tensions.

This comes as an Irish Anglican bishop said its approach to meeting in synod "owes perhaps more to often adversarial neo-parliamentary procedure". In an article published in *The Irish Times*, Church of Ireland Bishop Michael Burrows, who is Chair of the Church of Ireland's Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue, said: "We may think we have much to share with Roman Catholic friends concerning our long experience of synodical discernment and governance. But we also have lessons to learn - the Anglican (and certainly the Church of Ireland) approach to meeting in synod owes perhaps more to often adversarial neo-parliamentary procedure than to a more Spirit-infused model of how to hear the quiet voices which can often be the ventriloquists of what might emerge as unity in truth," Bishop Burrows said.

See pages 12-13.

# Hospital chaplain describes strain on system and staff

Jason Osborne

Hospital staff under "huge pressure" are in "crisis management", the Director of Pastoral Care at Tallaght University Hospital Fr John Kelly has said.

This comes as the HSE revealed that attendances at emergency departments across the country have been higher this year than ever before.

"Staff are very much under pressure, I

mean, it's the same number of staff working in a very busy system. We have excellent staff, but the pressure just keeps coming at them and they're being asked to do more and more and more and they're not getting the time," Fr Kelly told this paper.

He said that healthcare workers are being "stretched again" after the pandemic, with constant pressure being experienced by staff, as young staff in particular who couldn't leave the country during the pandemic are opting to do so now for work abroad.

## The Passion part two...



Mel Gibson directs actor Jim Caviezel as Jesus during the filming of *The Passion of the Christ*. Its highly anticipated sequel is set to begin filming this spring. The film, *The Passion of the Christ: Resurrection*, will focus on the days immediately following Christ's crucifixion. Photo: CNS/Icon Distribution

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## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# Cardinal Pell's views on the synod deserve deep analysis and discussion

**T**he death of Pope Benedict on New Year's Eve gives rise to many possible consequences for the Church.

There were stark differences between the papacy of Pope Benedict and Pope Francis, though both based their foundations very solidly on love - the love of God for his people, and both focused on the need for reform in the Roman Curia and in the wider Church. That desire to enable the Church to grow resulted in Pope Francis initiating the current synodal process.

It is now known that after his election as Pope, Pope Francis wrote a letter of resignation should he become

"impaired for medical reasons or whatever".

Most recently on Sunday at the Angelus he said: "It is easy to become attached to roles and positions, to the need to be esteemed, recognised and rewarded...It is good for us to cultivate like John [the Baptist] the virtue of setting ourselves aside at the right moment, bearing witness that the point of reference of life is Jesus... To step aside is to take one's leave. I have completed the mission...I will step aside and leave room to the Lord."

Were Pope Francis to discern that the time had come for him to 'step aside' and 'leave the room to the Lord' it would inevitably lead to a

papal conclave for the election of his successor.

It is reported that a document, signed by 'Demos', the Greek word for people has been circulating among the cardinals, apparently intended to inform any future conclave.

It has now been attributed to Cardinal George Pell who died suddenly last week. It articulates concerns about the divisions which exist in the Church today and describes the papacy of Pope Francis as "a disaster in many or most respects; a catastrophe".

#### Violent words

If they were indeed written by Cardinal Pell, these are violent words from a man who was for many years a close associate of Pope Francis. I met Cardinal Pell just before Christmas - I encountered a warm, strong, caring, pastoral man whose love for the Church was palpable. I have difficulty in believing that George Pell was the author, or sole author, of this document, though I have no doubt that it derives from Vatican insiders.

There is truth in some of the document's assertions and urgent warnings of the difficulties which the Church currently faces - some of which are stated with accuracy and clarity - "the decline in the number of believers, the frequency of Mass attendance, the demise or extinction of many religious orders".

It is critical of 'the Pope', 'Rome', 'the Church' and the former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It singles out Cardinal Angelo Becciu saying that he was removed from his post without any trial or due process, and says that staff, often priests, have been dismissed from the Vatican Curia without good reason and that phone tapping is regularly practised.

The document calls for action by the Church, the Pope and the now Dicastery for the Congregation of the Faith in relation to various issues. The document indicates that the writer believes that the Church and in particular the Pope and the doctrinal dicastery must "ensure that the Church continue to teach what Christ and the apostles taught". It is critical of the synodal process. It talks about the financial position of the Vatican, stating that it has no substantial debts but continuing annual deficits will



The late Cardinal George Pell. Photo: CNS

eventually end in bankruptcy. It suggests that a "visitation on the Jesuit Order" should be considered because of its rapidly declining numbers. It talks of "catastrophic moral decline in some places."

#### “It is critical of ‘the Pope’, ‘Rome’, ‘the Church’ and the former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith”

It states that Christ is being "moved from the centre"; says that "There is a new spring in the step of the Protestant liberals in the Catholic Church", and that "the Holy Father has little support among seminarians and young priests and widespread disaffection exists in the curia".

Change always gives rise to dissatisfaction such as that which is said to exist in the curia. There will be apprehension, and resistance to what is being proposed. There can be no doubt that reform in the curia was long overdue and many, including Cardinal Pell, have fought major battles to bring about some necessary change. It is an ongoing process - the curia is an enormously powerful and important organisation in the Church and it continues to need to become more accountable and more transparent.

In another document published by *The Spectator* magazine last week, Cardinal Pell sets out his views on the syn-

odal process currently underway, describing as a "toxic nightmare" saying that they "have produced a 45-page booklet which presents its account of the discussions of the first stage of 'listening and discernment', held in many parts of the world, and it is one of the most incoherent documents ever sent out from Rome".

#### Teaching

He says that, "it is not a summary of Catholic faith or New Testament teaching. It is incomplete, hostile in significant ways to the apostolic tradition and nowhere acknowledges the New Testament as the Word of God, normative for all teaching on faith and morals. The Old Testament is ignored, patriarchy rejected and the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments, is not acknowledged."

"Two points can be made initially. The two final synods in Rome in 2023 and 2024 will need to clarify their teaching on moral matters.

"The synods have to choose whether they are servants and defenders of the apostolic tradition on faith and morals, or whether their discernment compels them to assert their sovereignty over Catholic teaching. They must decide whether basic teachings on things like priesthood and morality can be parked in a pluralist limbo where some choose to redefine sins downwards and most agree to differ respectfully," *The Spectator* article adds.

His description of the role of diocesan bishops is impor-

tant - they "are the successors of the apostles, the chief teacher in each diocese and the focus of local unity for their people and of universal unity around the Pope, the Successor of Peter...the bishop is also the guarantor of continuing fidelity to Christ's teaching, the apostolic tradition. They are governors and sometimes judges, as well as teachers and sacramental celebrants, and are not just wall flowers or rubber stamps".

#### “The synods have to choose whether they are servants and defenders of the apostolic tradition on faith and morals”

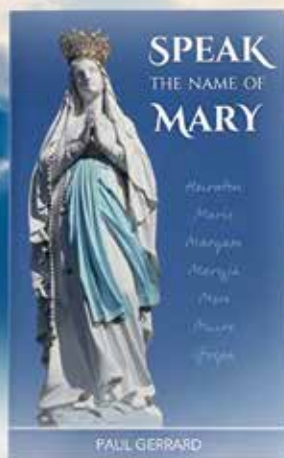
He continues: "none of the synod's participants, lay, religious, priest or bishop are well served by the synod ruling that voting is not allowed and propositions cannot be proposed. To pass on only the organising committee's views to the Holy Father for him to do as he decides is an abuse of synodality, a side-lining of the bishops, which is unjustified by Scripture or tradition."

He concludes: "this working document needs radical changes. The bishops must realise that there is work to be done, in God's name, sooner rather than later."

Cardinal Pell's views on the synodal process as articulated in this second document deserve deep thought, analysis and discussion.

Pope Francis brought to the papacy the products of all his experience, but especially an understanding of poverty and exclusion and a deep faith in the love and mercy of God. His must be a rather lonely journey. Let us pray for him as he continues his great work of reform in the Church, which can and will accommodate the teachings of both Benedict and Francis, because both are founded on the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

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

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



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

It's the same dire, drought-ravaged situation across all the countries in the Horn of Africa. Right now, 16 million people are acutely food insecure. It's estimated one person dies of hunger every 48 seconds. And as climate change causes more extreme weather patterns, experts predict that droughts like these will become even more frequent, and last even longer, with devastating effects for future generations.

## Living in hunger

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



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

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

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

Ahmed, Somalia

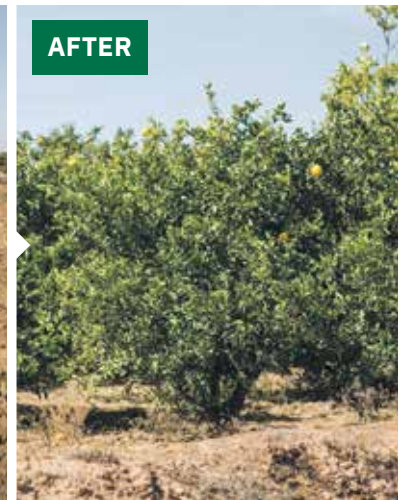
## Miracle innovation

It was in this desperate situation that Concern Worldwide, Ireland's largest international aid charity, and their generous community of supporters, were able to provide a lifeline for Ahmed. For 54 years, the charity has been helping people from the world's poorest communities to build lives free from hunger.

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

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

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



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

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

by supporting this life-saving agricultural programme.

## Leaving a legacy of hope for future generations

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

## The future threat of climate change

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

### Life-saving innovation

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

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

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

helping the families and children of the future survive even the deadliest drought.”

While the threat of mass starvation looms, Concern Worldwide is calling for more people to help them protect vulnerable families like Ahmed's from the hunger caused by drought and climate change. When people leave a gift in their Will to Concern, they're giving hope to children, families and communities facing future challenges of the climate crisis,

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

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

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

Phone: 01 417 8020 E-mail: [siobhan.oconnor@concern.net](mailto:siobhan.oconnor@concern.net) Visit: [concern.net/legacy](http://concern.net/legacy)



# Ireland has embraced eugenics... and become a much darker place



We're no better than the Irish of the past who also preferred to turn away from inconvenient and uncomfortable facts, writes **David Quinn**

Over the Christmas period, the master of the Rotunda Hospital revealed that 95% of parents in Down Syndrome cases choose abortion. The figure is horrific, the revelation stunning, but it caused almost no reaction whatever, even allowing for the fact that most people take a break over Christmas.

If the headline had been run two weeks later, I doubt if it would provoked much reaction either. Most people simply don't want to know, and that reveals an awful lot about the character of modern Ireland. We can be confronted by the fact that almost every unborn child found to have Down Syndrome is aborted, and we shrug our shoulders and look away.

Does this really make us much better than the Irish of the past who also preferred to turn away from inconvenient and uncomfortable facts, for example, all those people locked away in our institutions ranging from the Magdalene homes to the mental hospitals?

The figure of 95% was revealed by Dr Fergal Malone. It does not mean that 95% of all babies with Down Syndrome are aborted. What it means is that 95% of those found to have the condition are terminated. Not everyone undergoes the necessary screening tests. Dr Malone says that between 20 and 25 babies are born in the hospital with Down Syndrome each year.

## Legal

It is not yet legal for Irish couples to abort a baby because it has a non-fatal genetic abnormality, unless it is detected before 12 weeks. Prior to that point, a baby can be aborted for any reason.

But if an abnormality is detected after that period, then the woman must travel to England for an abortion. A growing number of Irish people are doing precisely that. In 2016, the number of women who went to England to have a baby aborted

because it has Down Syndrome was 45. In 2021, that had climbed to 58.

What is going on? One factor is that the Eighth Amendment was repealed in 2018. Of course, that did not stop Irish women travelling to England before then to abort babies suffering from a genetic abnormality. But that seems to make it all the more puzzling that the number should have increased in the meantime.

It is possible that the passage of a permissive abortion law here has had the effect of normalising abortion in all cases, including when a genetic abnormality is detected. This is exactly what pro-life groups predicted would happen and the Government denied.

But another reason for the increase is that pregnancy screening tests are becoming more widespread, cheaper, easier to perform and are used earlier in the pregnancy.

Amniocentesis was the traditional way in the past to detect for genetic abnormalities in the past. But it could only be accurately used from around the 20-week stage of pregnancy and involved putting a needle into the womb. So, it was invasive, and could even cause a miscarriage.

**“A difference between eugenics today and in the past is that in the past it was often state-enforced”**

Now there are so-called 'Non-Invasive Pregnancy Tests' ('NIPT') which are basically blood tests that can be performed at around the nine week point of pregnancy. If an abnormality is detected, it can then be confirmed a little later by a second test.

Last year, the Rotunda performed 3,000 of these early screening tests. About 9,000 babies are born in the hospital each year so only a minority of patients opt for NIPTs, partly because they must be paid for. But they will become more widespread over time, and possibly the State will end up funding them, as has happened in countries like Denmark.

The more Down syndrome babies are detected prior to birth, the more will be aborted. In Denmark almost no babies with the condition are born anymore. In other words, they are wiping them out.

This is partly what prompted the actress, Sally Philips, to make the BBC documentary called 'A World Without Down Syndrome', although her focus was Iceland, rather than Denmark.

Eliminating babies that are not considered healthy enough to live is a form of eugenics, which literally means 'well born'. It is a philosophy which decides what humans are 'fit' for life, and which are not.

Eugenics is associated mainly with Nazi Germany which carried it out in a very extreme form. But in fact, the philosophy was wide-



Conor O'Dowd, a 28-year-old man with Down Syndrome hand delivered a letter to Prof. Fergal Malone in the Rotunda Hospital criticising the abortion of people with the condition.

spread and mainstream in many countries before World War II and it was practiced in countries like the US, Switzerland, the Scandinavian nations as well as Germany.

**“Eliminating babies that are not considered healthy enough to live is a form of eugenics”**

Germany aside, the worst practice was the compulsory sterilisation of those considered not fit enough to breed, something that continued in Sweden until the 1970s. Back in those days, there were no pregnancy screening tests. Without doubt if there had been, they would have been widely used and countless numbers of babies with conditions like Down syndrome would have been aborted.

A difference between eugenics today and in the past is that in the past it was often state-enforced. Today, it is voluntary, in that individuals are asking for screening tests and then making a decision

to abort based on the information they receive. But the end result is the same; the 'unfit' are eliminated.

A pertinent question to ask is whether couples who have discovered their unborn child has a genetic abnormality are put under direct or indirect pressure to abort, which would make the decision to terminate less voluntary than it seems.

## Highlights

This is something Sally Philips highlights. She has spoken to couples who describe how negatively the condition is spoken of by doctors and how medics often simply assume they will opt for abortion.

Even if you are very pro-choice, you should want a couple to make a fully informed decision, and this cannot happen if couples are fed overwhelmingly negative information about Down syndrome.

If Ireland eventually goes down the path of societies like Denmark and detects, and then aborts, nearly every child with the condition, that will be an extremely poor reflection on the kind of

society we have become.

Can we really say we are as 'compassionate' and 'tolerant' as we like to pretend if we are wiping out a whole category of humans because they are not 'perfect' enough?

The lack of reaction to Dr Malone's revelation shows us that liberals are never alarmed by the consequences of their pro-choice mentality no matter what it results in. They simply turn a blind eye, or else convince themselves that anything which happens under the banner of 'choice' is justified, even if the result is a world without Down syndrome.

Far from being alarmed, in fact, pro-abortion groups want to make it legal for Irish couples to abort children with non-fatal genetic abnormalities here in Ireland. In other words, they want to go even further than the present law. The undeniable fact is that modern Ireland has embraced eugenics and will do so ever more as the years pass. Pro-life groups must continue being the voice of conscience in this milieu.

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# Punching holes in the wall of ignorance



It's hugely important to bridge the complicated relationship between Christian communities, Fr Martin Browne OSB tells **Chai Brady** in Rome

**D**ialogue between the Christian Churches in Ireland is more important than ever as the population of different religious traditions continue to grow across the country, according to an Irish monk chosen by the Vatican to assist with ecumenism.

Benedictine monk Fr Martin Browne OSB was recently appointed to the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity with responsibility for the Church's relationship with the worldwide Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council.

Fr Browne, who is a monk of Glenstal Abbey in Co. Limerick, told *The Irish Catholic* ahead of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which runs

from January 18-25 that the celebration must not become "safe and stale".

It is not enough for Christians to come together just because it's a date set in the calendar, Fr Browne said, "it's important because you're actually praying and we trust that God hears our prayers, and it also punches holes in that wall of ignorance and fear that can exist between people".

"What may give something like the Week of Prayer a bit more impetus in Ireland now, because it can get a bit sort of safe and stale, no denying that, is the variety of expressions of Christianity that are present in Ireland now," he said.

"The amount of new Pentecostal and African-led Churches, the huge increase

– sadly because of the war in Ukraine – of Eastern Christians, both Orthodox and Eastern Catholic, all of this creates a whole new set of potential relationships, a whole new set of people who need to know more about one another, a whole new set of opportunities to learn from one another and be enriched."

Due to the changing environment, acting and praying for Christian unity is not something to be done once and ticked off, Fr Browne insisted. "Apart from what might be happening in society and the need for more credible Christian witness, the Christian make-up of Ireland now would have been unimaginable 20 years ago, so that work and adventure and fun of getting to know one another and having the courage to step out and meet one another, and to pray and witness to Christ together, is all the more urgent," he said.

On a worldwide scale, the ecumenical work of the Vatican is complex. The Church has connections and relations with a huge variety of other Churches and Christian bodies around the world. The Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity is organised in two sections, an eastern section and a western section.

**“There’s a lot of very different kinds of relationships, a lot of different levels of similarity and dissimilarity depending on the Church and the history”**

In the Eastern section there are the Orthodox Churches, including the Oriental Orthodox Churches, many of which are very old such as the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. The Vatican has a different kind of relationship with each group, sometimes there are simple conversations and sometimes there are very formal theological dialogues which have been in place for years.

In the Western section they dialogue with a plethora of Protestant Churches, including the Anglican Communion, the World Methodist Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Baptist World Alliance, the World



Pope Francis laughs while speaking to members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission on May 13, 2022, in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

Evangelical Alliance, the Salvation Army, the Quakers and some newer Pentecostal and independent non-denominational Churches.

Speaking of the different dialogues between the various Churches, Fr Browne said: "There's a lot of very different kinds of relationships, a lot of different levels of similarity and dissimilarity depending on the Church and the history. Some are characterised by very complicated histories, mutual condemnation and so on.

"Particularly since Vatican II the effort has been to try and attend to all those relationships and work on them and see what progress can be made and that is done on several different fronts," he said.

"Some of it is the ecumenism of life, just getting to know one another, or the ecumenism of love, learning to know a bit about one another, meeting one another, praying together. Some

are also at a different level where we're addressing really complicated theological questions.

"Some of the Churches that separated from the Catholic Church first, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, like the Assyrian Church in the East, did so over very serious disagreements on questions like the divinity and humanity of Christ and so on. In most of those cases, thanks to the dialogue, those disagreements have been overcome, or understood, or brought into new context and

so there's a considerable level of new agreement that has been reached."

In the West, Fr Browne said the situation is a bit more complicated. Regarding his responsibilities, which are the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council, the dialogue began shortly after Vatican II in the late 1960s.

**“That’s what the dialogue is about, trying to understand how Churches have come to these decisions, what hope there is for convergence”**

ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) are currently working on their final report on

moral discernment in the Churches and how Churches reach decisions on moral issues, which Fr Browne describes as "a complex and hot topic".

He said often when the issue of moral discernment is broached, people think it's only about questions of sexuality, but it's also about various issues, such as slavery. "Of course the Churches reached the same decision on that [slavery] as part of their discernment," Fr Browne said, "But they'll come to different

conclusions on other issues. That's what the dialogue is about, trying to understand how Churches have come to these decisions, what hope there is for convergence. Sometimes people can think that theological dialogue sounds very ivory tower and remote but currently we're looking at very concrete issues."

## Discussion

Asked about discussion regarding the ordination of women to the priesthood and same-sex marriage, Fr Browne said they "certainly make agreement more difficult", but the Vatican is not "in the business of breaking off relations".

He gave the example of the Russian Orthodox Church, which the Church is still very actively engaged with despite major disagreements about their attitude to the war in Ukraine.

Even within the various Anglican Churches there is disagreement, which has led to "huge trauma", Fr Browne said.

"The hot button issues in the West around women's ordination and sexuality and so on, undoubtedly there are huge disagreements on some of these issues within the Churches. The Anglican Communion is experiencing huge trauma at the moment around that and there's a danger of having some very serious division between its global south members and other more liberal Anglican provinces," he said.

Speaking on the Catholic Church's position, he said: "We're unlikely to agree on something like the issues of women's ordination or same-sex marriage any time soon.

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# with ecumenism



The Catholic Church has a very firm position. On one level that makes it all the more pressing to do as much as possible together on things we do agree on. That we do bear witness to Christ together, that we don't let our relationships be defined by what we disagree on."

**“Many of the ‘hot button’ issues came up in the synthesis of Ireland’s national synod”**

"It's important we continue talking to one another, it's important that we don't let those differences define us, that we do continue to pray about them, but certainly with some of those things it's hard to see how we could ever agree," he continued. "Unity is God's gift, it's something that Jesus prayed for the night before he died so we've got to take that imperative very seriously and keep working at it no matter what the obstacles are even if it's hard to see how we'll be able to agree on certain things."

Many of the 'hot button' issues came up in the synthesis of Ireland's national synod. It was clear that there are some within the Church that feel the Church's position should change on same-sex marriage

and female ordination.

Fr Browne said this is one of the reasons some people found the synod difficult, as "everything is being spoken about".

"We know that we can't make our doctrine by referendum either, but it would be a strange synod if they were not talked about. If the whole idea of consulting the people of God is to get a sense of what the people of God think you've got to be willing to hear what the people of God think even if it isn't exactly what the official positions of the Church would be," he said.

"That's one of the big challenges and, for some, one of the great fears of the next couple of years in the synodal process – where does it all lead? I don't think anybody knows but we do trust that God is part of that process, it's not just wait and see, it's wait and see hopefully."

A lot can be learned from the experiences of other Christian Churches, according to Fr Browne, who said the Anglican Communion is "suffering greatly around the issue of same-sex marriage".

"Whereas some provinces have moved to celebrate same-sex marriages, to allow clergy to be in same-sex marriages... huge swathes of the Anglican Communion, particularly in what's called the global south, see it as an absolute departure from the Biblical truth and they

are struggling to know how they are going to continue to be part of the same communion. There are very strongly held positions on both sides and how that tension is resolved is just as big a problem for the Anglican Communion as it is for their relationships with other groups like us," he said.

As the Catholic Church continues on its synodal journey, Fr Browne said it is important to look at what is happening in other Churches: what they resolve or don't resolve and how they manage or don't manage certain tensions.

He added: "I think that's what this synodal process is probably about and that's not tidy, it's messy and it causes a lot of anxiety and in some places suspicion that there's some strange agenda being played out whereas if we take it on its own terms, that it's about listening to the people of God and ultimately trying to hear the voice of the Spirit of God, well then you just keep at it and see. I'm inclined to trust God when it comes to these things even if it looks a bit messy."

## Ecumenical landscape

Speaking of the ecumenical landscape in Ireland, Fr Browne said there is a tendency to see it through the lens of Irish history, through political and rec-

conciliation issues.

"When it comes to relationships between the Churches, certainly at a leadership level, they're very good, and I think in most places certainly, in the parts of Ireland I know well, the relationships locally are very strong," Fr Browne said.

"Again it has to be more than singing Christmas carols together but you do see in places all around the country that there is practical cooperation."

He said that sometimes in Ireland people don't realise that the need for reconciliation has driven the Churches together because the reality of the need for a common witness is more clearly perceived than it might be in a place where everything is simpler socially.

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

However, Fr Browne believes that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity needs a "kick-start" in Ireland.

"I think in some cases certainly the issue has ceased to be important to people," he said. "Sometimes it can be that in places the relationships are so strong already and they're doing things together anyway, they say why would we need to be doing something special for the week of prayer – but I wouldn't stretch that point.

"In some cases I think it is

that the energy has gone out of it and we need leaders to promote it more, to talk about it more and to encourage."

He said that local events, even if they are not based off the formal materials sent out every year, can be beneficial and parishioners don't need to depend on clergy to organise something.

**“For Fr Browne the trip is important for a plethora of reasons, one of which is the political turmoil and general instability in the country”**

"I think nowadays in most parishes and communities there are lots of different people involved in identifying priorities and planning events and certainly I would hope that people would re-tune into that," he advised.

## South Sudan

The Pope will soon be travelling on an ecumenical pilgrimage to South Sudan with Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury, head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and Rev. Dr Iain Greenshields, moderator of the General Assembly of the

Church of Scotland. The pilgrimage will take place from February 3-5 in the capital city of Juba.

For Fr Browne the trip is important for a plethora of reasons, one of which is the political turmoil and general instability in the country.

"The Presbyterian, Catholic and Anglican Churches are the main Christian groups in South Sudan so there's a logic to the three of them going together. Over the years the Council of Churches in South Sudan was hugely instrumental in working for reconciliation in witnessing to unity together," he said.

"This isn't a manufactured intervention, it's organic. They wanted to go for several years and then between the Pope's illness and the pandemic it wasn't possible. This has been long desired by the three Church leaders and it's been long desired by the Church leaders in South Sudan. It is welcomed and desired by the political leaders in South Sudan too, they've recognised the importance of the Christian contribution to any progress that is being made in what is still a very volatile situation."

Another "incalculable" positive is the ecumenical message it will send to the world, Fr Browne said, a message that is hugely important to all Christian Churches.

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**“The Presbyterian, Catholic and Anglican Churches are the main Christian groups in South Sudan so there’s a logic to the three of them going together”**

# Cardinal Pell: Keeping the Church on the rails of truth



Cardinal Pell's 400 days in tough prisons in solitary can be seen as the best thing that happened to him, writes  
**Fr Brendan Purcell**

**W**hen I was a philosophy lecturer at University College Dublin, our staff Newman group wanted to invite some notable figure or other to give a talk in the millennium year. We knew we'd never get someone like Cardinal Ratzinger. Who else?

I knew nothing of then Archbishop George Pell, but had noticed that *The Tablet* hated his guts. I figured anyone *The Tablet* can't stand must be good, so myself and my pal Dr Joe McCarroll, then heading the Pro-Life Campaign, arranged to call on him in Melbourne when we were on holiday in Australia. I was surprised when the archbishop opened the door of his residence himself, and made us tea – first time that sort of thing had happened to me.

He came in 2000, and I've particularly warm memories of our welcome to Ara Coeli by Cardinal Brady.

When, retired from UCD, I asked if I could work in Sydney (which Archbishop Martin kindly permitted) I lived with Cardinal Pell from 2010 until he left for Rome in 2014. One of my favourite interactions with him was when he was preparing for a much-publicised debate on ABC television with the archbishop of atheism, Richard Dawkins. He asked a bunch of his advisers to throw up all the questions he might be asked, and when Dr Michael Casey, his private secretary, said, "the Eucharist", I figured Dawkins would never ask that. But he did, as you'll see below. Here are a few exchanges from that 2012 debate:

**On Lawrence Krauss' *A Universe from Nothing***

Pell: What he says is what Richard is describing as nothing is



Australian Cardinal George Pell is pictured during the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family at the Vatican on October 6, 2014. Photo: CNS

a sort of mixture of particles and perhaps a vacuum with electromagnetic forces working on it. That's what [physicist Lawrence] Krauss is talking about under the heading of nothing and there's a very good review of this in the *New York Times*, not a pro-religious paper at all, where Krauss is absolutely denied and demolished, although especially by his supporters claiming that he says things come out of nothing. He doesn't say that. *Dawkins*: You can dispute exactly what is meant by nothing but whatever it is it's very, very simple. (Audience laughs) *Dawkins*: Why is that funny?

**“I often compared Pell's travails to those of Saints Thomas More and John Henry Newman”**

Pell: Well, I think it's a bit funny to be trying to define nothing.

**Later, on Darwin:**

Pell: Darwin was a theist because he said he couldn't believe that the immense

cosmos and all the beautiful things in the world came about either by chance or out of necessity. He said, "I have to be ranked as a theist." *Dawkins*: That is just not true. *Pell*: It's on page 92 of his *Autobiography*. Go and have a look.

**And on the Eucharist:**

*Dawkins*: I don't believe you really mean that the wafer turns into the body of Christ. You must mean body in some rather special sense. *Pell*: Mr Dawkins, I don't say things I don't mean. *Dawkins*: Well, then what do you mean then? *Tony Jones* (moderating the debate): Can I ask you whether you mean it in a metaphorical sense...? *Pell*: No, I don't. I understand it according to a system of metaphysics. It was spelled out by the Greeks before Christ came, which we have adopted, that is there is a substance which is the core of a being and it is revealed to us through what are called accidents. Now, I believe that the core of the being becomes the bread, becomes the body and blood of Christ and continues to

look exactly as it was. We believe that in the Catholic Church.

**Transubstantiation**

Next day, Helen Hofman, a Baptist and our house manager, said that was the first time she understood the Catholic doctrine we call transubstantiation.

I often compared Pell's travails to those of St Thomas More and John Henry Newman. More was imprisoned and lost his head for high treason. Cardinal Newman was falsely accused of libel by an apostate priest, lost the case, and received a heavy fine. This led a commentator to say: "A great blow has been given to the administration of justice in this country, and Roman Catholics will have henceforth only too good reason for asserting that there is no justice for them in matters tending to rouse the Protestant feelings of judges and juries."

When the proprietor of Alfredo's restaurant near Circular Quay expressed his concern for him, then before the courts, Cardinal Pell said with utter conviction that he was completely at peace; he and God knew he'd done

nothing wrong. And that was all that mattered. It was a peace that never left him.

**“Cardinal Pell's spending over 400 days in some of Australia's toughest prisons in solitary”**

A quick summary of the injustice of the legal proceedings is Fr Frank Brennan SJ's Youtube lecture, 'The Pell Case: Lessons for Church and State'; and Gerard Henderson, 'Cardinal Pell, the Media Pile-on and Collective Guilt' and Keith Windschuttle's 'The Persecution of George Pell' fully account for the media/Victoria Police/academic publishing that led to the tsunami of hate-waves undermining the presumption of innocence. The High Court's unanimous reversal of the Victoria Supreme Court's denial of Pell's appeal was scathing in its denunciation of Victoria's legal process regarding Pell.

Cardinal Pell's spending over 400 days in some of Australia's toughest prisons in solitary, in the light of Providence, can now be seen as the best

thing that ever happened to him. When I visited Cardinal Pell in prison, the prison staff were incredibly kind, allowing an almost two-hour visit (double the official time).

Utterly unbowed, Cardinal Pell seemed to be thriving. I wasn't surprised to hear that Emeritus Pope Benedict in the later years of his retirement thoroughly enjoyed having the cardinal's *Prison Journals* read to him. The thousands of letters he received nearly broke the prison postal service – including some deeply appreciated letters from Pope Francis. Like Pope Benedict's writings, Pell's *Prison Journals* are a classic of Christian spiritual literature. I advised him to condense the *Journals* into a single volume. Now I'm grateful to Fr Fessio SJ, of Ignatius Press that he printed the lot, they're an enthralling read, the best thing the cardinal had ever written.

Not all that long ago, I was coming back from a class in English with Korean friends when I met Cardinal Pell in our sitting room. He was bellowing "Babylon has fallen!" The news had just come in that Cardinal Becciu, the *bête noir* of the cardinal, had been fired by Pope Francis. But as someone who himself had undergone an abuse of process, Cardinal Pell felt his fellow cardinal had been most unfairly treated. Another time, when I accompanied Cardinal Pell to a film, *The Death of Stalin*, where there's huge jockeying for power in the Central Committee, he remarked that the Kremlin was just like the Vatican.

Why did so many, including me, a mere member of the *basso clero*, love him? He used to call Lesley, the lady who cleaned our rooms, his angel. So when he left for his appointment in Rome, she presented him with an angel. For the cardinal, everyone mattered, whether they were a visiting patriarch or Lesley. A rather pompous bishop demanded some liturgical garment for a ceremony in St Mary's Cathedral and our hardworking sacristan had to tell him he wasn't Gammarelli (the papal tailor). Stung, the high-ranking cleric complained to Cardinal Pell, who told our sacristan he'd been quite right.

From a loftier view now than his earthly 6-foot 4-inches of height, may he continue to keep the Church on the right rails of truth and governance as he tried to do all during his life as seminary rector, archbishop, cardinal, Prefect of the Secretariat for Economy, in his retirement, and even beyond the grave.

**i** Philosopher Fr Brendan Purcell is a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin currently ministering in Sydney, Australia.

Article first published on *blogsite Mercator*.

**“He came in 2000, and I've particularly warm memories of our welcome to Ara Coeli by Cardinal Brady”**

# Derry plan aims to help parishes think outside local boundaries



Building open and welcoming faith communities is seen as key to a vibrant future, writes Michael Kelly

**B**ishop of Derry Donal McKeown has asked people across the 51 parishes to put their shoulder to the wheel and embrace the mission of renewal of the local Church.

At the weekend, Bishop McKeown published a pastoral letter to the people of the diocese entitled *God has plans for His people. Join in the Mission of Prayer, Exploration and Renewal*.

In it, Bishop McKeown points out the direction of travel for the diocese over the next number of years and invites "all our local parishes to have prayerful discussions about how each can explore and review our way of being Church so that we:

- Build an open and welcoming community, reaching those who feel like outsiders in our churches;

- Grow in faith together throughout our lives; and
- Make Jesus known and loved."

In the coming weeks and months it is hoped to run a programme of prayer, guidance and engagement with all parishes by deanery area on this mission of renewal.

*The Irish Catholic* understands that the feeling expressed by priests in preparation of the letter was that parishioners should be encouraged to think not just of their local reality, but the wider picture in the diocese as a whole.

Bishop McKeown writes that: "Faith means believing that God is at work, even in difficult times. Faith involves discerning where God is in the middle of fear and loss, anger and division".

## Difficulties

The letter continues: "it is very clear that, like much of Europe, the Diocese of Derry faces many difficulties.

1. The model of Church that seemed so confident 50 years ago is no longer marked by large numbers at Mass. Where smaller numbers attend Mass, there is a lesser chance of bringing people to know and love Jesus, of numerous vocations to priesthood and religious life.
2. The scandal of abuse and cover-ups from the past have damaged our ability to speak about Jesus with moral authority.
3. To a large extent we have failed to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to young people.
4. We face a secular culture

which has little time for faith communities. Along with other Christian churches, we know that the problem in the future will not be religious difference so much as religious indifference.

5. Our society is stalked by fears of poverty, war in Europe and a climate emergency.

"In our time of listening and sharing during our parish synodal conversations, there was a recognition of change in our faith community. But the key question is not merely how we change so that we can maintain the current model and structures. With that model we have been failing in our mission of bringing people to know and love Jesus," the bishop writes.

## Bishop McKeown points out the direction of travel for the diocese over the next number of years"

He insists that "if we ask the right question, we discover that renewal is not only a question of managing changed structures and rescheduling parish Mass. This is a time where we need to make space for grace so that God's plans – and not our limited imagination – can renew the mission of the Church.

"I believe that we will be more like the Holy Spirit-filled Body of Christ when our diocese is blessed with many:

- Families which hand on the Faith;
- People of all ages exploring and developing their faith;
- Lay people with the official ministries of lector, acolyte and catechist;
- Consecrated virgins – who publicly dedicate their lives to the Lord but live and work among their fellow-parishioners;
- Female and male religious (such as the Carmelites and various communities of religious sisters);
- Permanent deacons; and
- Ordained priests."

Bishop McKeown lays out a plan that sees the Church as growing, rather than simply managing decline. "At the end of St Matthew' Gospel, Jesus gives the apostles a commandment – go, make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19). In renewing the diocese, our main question

has to be, 'How do we use our resources and people so that we make new disciples for Christ in this diocese?'

"And, in seeking that way forward, the New Testament tells us that there is another vital consideration. Since the Church belongs to God and not to us, we have to discern where God wants us to go in 2023. That is why all parish conversations need to be synodal and steeped in prayer. Otherwise, we end up merely with our limited answers to our narrow questions," he writes.

The bishop writes that a "Church that merely provides religious service to those who come is not an image of Church found in the Bible!"

## Gifted

"If we take seriously St Paul's image of the Church as the Body of Christ where we are all living cells, each person is uniquely gifted because of our Baptism. Each of us at Baptism received the seeds of Christian life which grow and bear fruit as we develop

our relationship with God during the course of our lives. This means that each of us has a role in building up the Body of Christ. We all can play a part in searching out God's way forward".

He lays out in stark terms the future in terms of priestly vocations as things stand now: "by 2032, we might expect to have about 35 priests for the current 51 parishes in our diocese".

## Bishop McKeown lays out a plan that sees the Church as growing, rather than simply managing decline"

In terms of structures, the letter envisages that the large city parishes in Derry will remain as individual parishes with at least one priest. "But, for the parishes outside Derry city, we have two choices. Either, we plan to load multiple rural parishes on individual priests, or we aim to

create missionary pastoral communities with at least two priests in each."

After discussions with clergy, Bishop McKeown proposes the latter:

- In Co. Derry, five pastoral communities with 14 parishes;
- In Co. Tyrone and Finn Valley, five pastoral communities with 17 parishes;
- In Inishowen, three pastoral communities with 8 parishes.

"These challenges and changes will involve letting go of some of the familiar. It will give parishes more of an opportunity of working cooperatively with neighbouring parishes, sharing their gifts, talents and resources. Parishes will retain their individual parish identity but will share a priest. These changes will involve imagination, training and a gradual introduction over a period of time. In some parts of the diocese, however, sudden changes have already been forced on us," the bishop insists.



Bishop Donal McKeown



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Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

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## Faith Seeking Understanding - 'How to be a Mystic' Introductory Course in Theology

The Faith Seeking Understanding series will explore the relationship between theology and mystical spirituality, and its relevance for the task of becoming mystics.

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# Burgeoning scientists show off their skills in Dublin

Ruadhán Jones

**B**urgeoning future scientists from around the country gathered in the RDS last week for the annual BT Young Scientist.

The young men and women showcased a wide variety of projects from saving Ireland's ash trees to improving attitudes around recycling, from January 11-13 in Dublin.

"It's been an amazing experience," said Daniel Castles from Coláiste an Spioraid Naomh, Bishopstwon, Co. Cork and his teammates agree.

Their project investigated how movement skills affect participation in sport and the long-term health effects, positive and negative.

Meanwhile, a team of students from Loreto College, Balbriggan, were out to save the common ash, which is being threatened by disease, while three students in Blarney hoped to counteract stress-induced panic attacks with a portable heart monitor.

"We've tested it on a couple people to see if it works, including my sister," explains Michelle O'Shea.

"She is studying for her driver's exam, so she's still quite nervous. Her heart rate spiked really quickly."



An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and BT Ireland managing director Shay Walsh meet Hazem Ahmed of Coláiste Phádraig CBS, Lucan. Photos: Ruadhán Jones



Reuben Florisson, Riain Kennedy and Andrew Gordon from Coláiste Iognáid SJ in Galway.



Transition year students Michelle O'Shea, Ella Lesniak and Katelyn Dineen from Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, Blarney, Cork.



Erica O'Brien Murray, Abigail O'Brien Murray and Olivia O'Shea from Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, Dublin, show off their work.



Donal Bird, Daniel Castles and Jack Brady from Coláiste an Spioraid Naomh in Bishopstwon, Cork, sit in front of their stand.



# The Man from the Shroud of Turin unveiled



An exhibition in Spain shows a hyper-realistic model of the man who is represented in the Turin Shroud, writes **Filipe d'Avillez**

**F**ew religious items have been more thoroughly analysed than the Shroud of Turin.

The burial cloth has been at the centre of intense scientific debate for decades, and with each new discovery and revelation, the mystery only deepens.

Initial Carbon-14 testing seemed to prove that the shroud was a medieval fake, but since then the accuracy of the testing itself has been called into question, and regardless of the shroud's age, nobody has been able to explain how the image was produced.

**“Mr Blanco was inspired to make the model after years of curating exhibitions on the shroud”**

One thing everyone agrees with, though, is that at some point in its history the shroud was, in fact, wrapped around the body of a severely beaten man who was then crowned with thorns, crucified, and died of asphyxiation before being pierced in the side with a lance.

For many there is little doubt that the person depicted on the shroud was Jesus Christ, but regardless of his identity, there was a man, and now visitors to ‘The Mystery Man’ exhibition, which opened in Octo-

ber in Salamanca, Spain, can see that person in more detail than has ever been possible.

At the centre of the exhibition is a unique creation. Alvaro Blanco brought together a team of specialists from different fields to form a hyper-realistic rendering of the man from the shroud, using all the currently existing evidence. The result is a life-size, 75-kilo model of a corpse, complete with silicone skin and human hair, that bears all the wounds that the blood marks on the shroud reveal.

#### Authenticity

The model is disturbing in its authenticity. “I think that this body will change everybody as it changed me”, says Mr Blanco. “We have all heard Jesus’ story, but when I stood in front of this body, I had never seen a representation which took me back to his original story like this, as he was, without the filter of an artistic movement. This is the closest we can come to being faced with his actual sacrifice. Each time I looked at it I have seen something

**“Initial Carbon-14 testing seemed to prove that the shroud was a medieval fake, but since then the accuracy of the testing itself has been called into question”**

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different. Having seen Jesus represented in works of art, and in movies, to stand before the actual image is something that strikes you deep in the heart."

**“I think that this body will change everybody as it changed me”**

Mr Blanco was inspired to make the model after years of curating exhibitions on the shroud. He says he was completely caught up in all the scientific debates before he had something of an epiphany. "I was treating the shroud as a scientific object, when I should have been looking at it as a work of art. There comes a time when you just have to accept that the most wonderful things in the world cannot be fully explained", he believes.

His drive to recreate the body was also motivated by

evidence that the shroud was known to artists in the earliest centuries of Christianity, who based their depictions of Jesus on it. In that sense, genuine or not, it is the pictorial original for most of the images of Jesus that form the Christian imagination today.

#### Impact

"When you first see the body, the impact is strange. The closer you get, as you see the pores, the hairs, that is when it becomes completely real. We use natural lighting so that you can see all the details of the skin. I have never seen anybody left indifferent when looking at it. A Christian will see Christ, but a non-believer also sees Christ, because this is the pictorial original of Jesus of Nazareth. We only know the image of Jesus through artists, and artists have based the details of their

images on the Shroud. This is the original."

**“Visitors then enter a dark room where they are treated to a five-minute image-mapping experience, during which 500 images of Christ, from different cultures and styles”**

The model of 'The Mystery Man' is presented in the final room of the exhibition. Leading up to it, visitors are treated to a quick but compelling history of the shroud itself, as well as all the scientific background that to a large extent points to the veracity of the Christian narrative, while failing to prove exactly how an image could be formed

in negative, in a zero-gravity atmosphere, without the cloth having been opened or removed – which would have affected the blood markings – apparently through a sudden burst of radiation that nobody in the past would have had the ability to replicate.

The supposed journey of the shroud from the first centuries to Constantinople and then, following the sacking of the city, to Western Europe, is also told, and the many coincidences between early representations of Christ and the unique markings on the shroud are pointed out.

Visitors then enter a dark room where they are treated to a five-minute image-mapping experience, during which 500 images of Christ, from different cultures and styles, flash across the walls, before entering the final room and being allowed to examine – but not touch – the unique



model of the man all those pictures likely represent.

**“The model of ‘The Mystery Man’ is presented in the final room of the exhibition”**

"If this hyper-realistic creation is in fact an exact reproduction of Jesus Christ, according to tradition, this means that our eyes are about to contemplate the exact physical signs of Jesus' Passion, the fulfilment of God's love, who was made flesh in Jesus Christ and who died as a sinner, through a terrible sacrifice, for our salvation. There is no greater good in the world. Overwhelmed by so much love, our heart is filled with sweet

gratitude," said the bishop of Salamanca, José Luis Retana Gonzalo, during the unveiling ceremony of the exhibit.

Álvaro Blanco explains that "Picasso used to say that art is a lie that allows you to understand the truth. This body is not real, but it allows you to understand the truth". That truth is that there was a man inside the shroud, and this is what he looked like. Whether that man was Jesus Christ or not, is a question of faith that each person has to decide upon for themselves.

**i** The exhibition will be in the New Cathedral of Salamanca until March 2023. Organisers ArtiSplendore hope to take it next to Lisbon, Portugal, for World Youth Day in the Summer, and then on a world tour.





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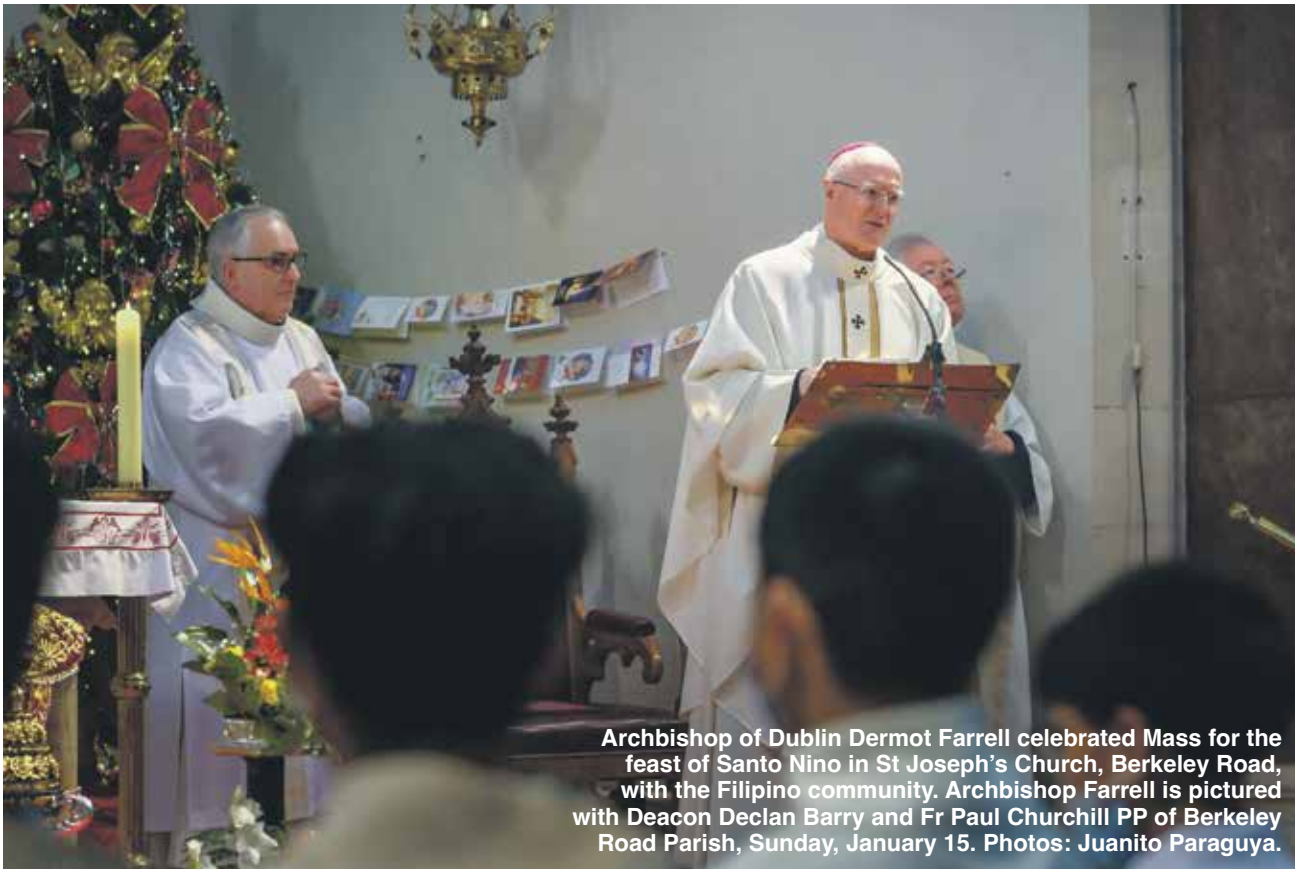
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# Filipino Catholics bring Santo Nino to Dublin



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell celebrated Mass for the feast of Santo Nino in St Joseph's Church, Berkeley Road, with the Filipino community. Archbishop Farrell is pictured with Deacon Declan Barry and Fr Paul Churchill PP of Berkeley Road Parish, Sunday, January 15. Photos: Juanito Paraguya.



A dance offering is made by Roxanne Capacite.

## Ruadhán Jones

The Filipino Catholic community celebrated the feast of Santo Niño de Cebú on Sunday in a packed Berkeley Road church.

Santo Niño is the title given to the oldest Catholic artefact in the Philippines, a statue gifted by the Spaniard Conquistador Ferdinand Magellan to Rajah Humabon in 1521.

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell celebrated Mass with concelebrant Fr Paul

Churchill and Deacon Declan Barry during a colourful turnout from the Filipino community.

"Santo Niño is the promise that such hope is better than we can imagine, and the reminder that the way to it is through God's mercy rather

than our own strength," Archbishop Farrell told the Faithful.

He prayed that Santo Niño would "continue to bless the Filipino people and to sustain you in your Christian vocation to be witnesses and missionaries of the joy of the Gospel here in Ireland".

The statue of Santo Nino is escorted by the Kildare Filipino community during the outdoor procession in Dublin.



The family of Yoy and Annabel Cabrera at prayer during the feast day celebrations.



Outdoor procession with Our Lady of Knock.



A devotee presents his gifts to Fr Paul Churchill during the offertory procession.

# Out&About

## The Red, white, blue...and green



▲▼ **USA:** Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey celebrated Mass to mark the 70th reunion of Carlovian priests serving in the southern United States in the Most Holy Trinity Parish, Mississippi, where Fr Paddy Mockler from Ireland is PP, January 11.



**SOUTH SUDAN:** Sr Orla Treacy joins Rev. Dagmar of the Bread for the World aid agency, Germany, Anglican Archbishop of Rumbek Alapayo Manyang and Fr Andrea in taking the first step on their Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage to Juba to welcome Pope Francis.

### IN SHORT

#### Record November homeless figures 'disappointing' – McVerry Trust

Homelessness hit record levels for the fifth straight month in November 2022, with the Peter McVerry Trust calling the news "disappointing".

The figures, released on January 6, show that 11,542 people are in homeless accommodation across Ireland.

The Homeless Report for November 2022 was issued by the Department of Housing and showed that 8,048 adults and 3,494 children needed beds in November. Some 1,616 were families while 1,371 were young people aged 18 to 24.

CEO of Peter McVerry Trust Pat Doyle called the figures "disappointing", saying there needs to be a "swift" ramp up of social housing.

The Government should utilise "every opportunity, including bringing vacant and derelict properties back into use as new homes", he continued.

"We can't afford to be downbeat or frustrated, there are too many people in need of solutions and that's where our energy has to be focused."

#### New book on Pope Francis launched in Belfast

A new book shedding light on the pastoral leadership of Pope Francis was launched in Belfast on January 4 by the community of Koinonia John the Baptist.

Guest speaker Fr John Murray PP Downpatrick, praised *Journeying with Pope Francis* by Fr Alvaro Grammatica at the book's launch in St Colmcille's Parish.

Fr Murray said that, according to Fr Grammatica, Pope Francis is primarily a pastoral theologian and his theology takes on a "different light" from his predecessors.

"What matters to Pope Francis is the individual person, with all their life experience, who is in need of love, rather than the affirmation of some abstract truth," Fr Grammatica writes, calling it the "theology of tenderness".

Fr Alvaro Grammatica holds a Doctorate of Theology from Olomouc, Czech Republic. He served as Pastor General of Koinonia John the Baptist from 2007-2019 and before that, he was director of its International School of Evangelisation.

#### Crisis could delay cancer detection, charity warns

Efforts to catch cancer cases early are at risk due to concerns about overcrowding in the healthcare system, the Irish Cancer Society has warned.

The society's director of advocacy Rachel Morrogh expressed concern that "people with cancer symptoms are putting off seeking medical care because they do not think it is serious enough amid the ongoing hospital overcrowding crisis".

Ms Morrogh added that "any delays to a cancer diagnosis being picked up can negatively impact the chances of a good outcome for patients".



**DERRY:** Rev. Stephen Ward was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown in Waterside parish on January 6.



**DERRY:** Deputy Mayor of Derry and Strabane Cllr Angela Dobbins hosted a reception for Mairead McHugh, along with family and friends, in the Mayor's Parlour to mark Ms McHugh's retirement from the role of principal of St Caireall's Primary School, Aghyaran.



**SLIGO:** Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran is pictured in Sligo Cathedral with Cameroon seminarians Revs. Conrad Forzeh and Frankline Nkopi after ordaining them to the diaconate, January 6.



**CLARE:** Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan is pictured with teachers, staff and students from St Joseph's, Spanish Point after presenting the students with their St John Paul II awards, January 10.



**BELFAST:** A new book shedding light on the pastoral leadership of Pope Francis entitled *Journeying with Pope Francis* by Fr Alvaro Grammatica was launched at St Colmcille's parish by the Community of Koinonia John the Baptist. Fr John Murray PP Downpatrick, guest speaker on the evening, is pictured with Sr Christine Sawey who leads the Koinonia John the Baptist Community in Ireland and her community members. Photo: Gerard Smyth.



**DUBLIN:** Tatyana Kozakova and Andrey Pivovarov from Mariupol, who fled the besieged Ukrainian city for Dublin last July, celebrate Christmas near Dún Laoghaire harbour with a picnic crowned by barbecued lamb on Saturday, January 7. Photo: Joe Little.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LAOIS:** Fr David Vard of Portlaoise parish wishes Louise Allen a happy birthday as she turned 101 on Sunday. Pictured here with her daughters, Anne and Deirdre and Fr Vard, who celebrated Mass in Ballard Nursing Home on January 9 to mark the occasion.



**DUBLIN:** The first Irish men's rosary rallies of 2023 took place across the country the weekend of January 7 and 8, including in Dublin's city centre.



**ROME:** Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, Archbishop-emeritus Diarmuid Martin and Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin are pictured at the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Square, January 5.

### ANTRIM

Living Church office are to host a faith development conference in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast, on Saturday, January 28. Keynote speaker is David Wells. Delegates receive lunch and resources to take home. For more information or to book visit [livingchurchevents.com](http://livingchurchevents.com).

### ARMAGH

Armagh Parish Holy Spirit prayer group are hosting 'New Life in the Spirit Seminars' on Wednesday evenings at 8pm beginning on February 8 in the Synod Hall, St Patrick's Cathedral. First speaker will be Fr Eamonn Kelly.

### CARLOW

A novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour takes place every Saturday at 10am in Carlow Cathedral, followed by Confession.

### CAVAN

Lectio Divina, a prayerful reading of the Sunday gospel, has resumed each Tuesday after 10am Mass in the Cathedral of St Patrick and St Felim. It takes place in the conference room behind the altar and lasts half an hour.

Legion of Mary meetings take place on Tuesdays at 8pm in St Clare's Chapel.

### CLARE

Mass is celebrated on the first Monday of every month at 7:30pm in Ennis Cathedral for those struggling with addiction, their families and all those affected by addiction. The names of those enrolled in the Matt Talbot Prayer Society are placed on the altar.

### CORK

A Youth 2000 prayer group for young adults aged 18-35 meets Mondays at 7:30pm for prayer followed by refreshments in Ladysbridge parish.

### DUBLIN

The Thomistic Institute in Trinity College Dublin is hosting a lecture on paganism in Irish Christianity entitled 'Fire in the Head', by Fr Conor McDonough OP on Thursday, January 26.

The Aquinas Lecture 2023 will be given by Fr Pierre Januard OP in St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, on Friday,

January 27 at 7:30pm. Admission free, visit [prioryinstitute.com](http://prioryinstitute.com) to register.

### GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (18-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral.

An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact [youth@galwaycathedral.ie](mailto:youth@galwaycathedral.ie) for more information.

### KERRY

The diocese of Kerry is hosting an online mission January 22-25. Each day will include: daily prayer in the mission booklet; Mass in your parish; daily reflection online; prayer petition online; family time in the mission booklet; Just a Thought on Radio Kerry; mission talk at 8pm online, which will include a variety of guest speakers.

### KILKENNY

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place St John's Church, Kilkenny town, between 11am and 1pm on Wednesdays.

### LIMERICK

Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia are to host a course on 'Come Follow Me', a catechetical programme aimed at children, on February 3-5. For persons age 18 and over. Contact [limerick@op-tn.org](mailto:limerick@op-tn.org) for more information. Registration closes January 18.

### LOUTH

Mass for the African Community takes place in St Nicholas' Church the third Sunday of each month at 2pm.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal novena takes place on Mondays at 10am (except holidays) in Holy Redeemer parish, Dundalk.

### MAYO

Adoration takes place at Knock International Marian Shrine in St Brigid's (next to Knock Museum) from 7-9pm daily.

### MEATH

Legion of Mary rosary takes place in the community centre daily at 6:30pm. Meetings Monday and Tuesday at 7pm in the

community centre. New members welcome.

### ROSCOMMON

Legion of Mary, Our Lady of Aparecida Praesidium, meet on Saturdays from 4-5pm in St Coman's Club, Roscommon town.

### SLIGO

The next Living Family retreat will take place in the College of the Immaculate Conception, Summerhill, on Sunday, February 5, beginning at 10.30am with registration and closing with a Eucharistic family blessing at 5pm. Booking will open soon.

### TIPPERARY

Cherished Catholic women's ministry weekend retreat, led by the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, takes place January 20-22 in Glencomeragh House, Kilsheelan. For ages 18 and up. Full board accommodation at €210pp. For more information or to book contact [info@holyfamilymission.ie](mailto:info@holyfamilymission.ie).

### TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meet in the pastoral centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.40pm, followed by prayer meeting at 8pm.

### WATERFORD

Lectio Divina with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus takes place Tuesdays 2:30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre and Thursdays 7:30-9pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge, Newtown Rd. A time of reading the Sunday gospel, prayer and sharing, followed by conversation over a cup of tea. For more information, contact Sr Kathryn 087 404 2784.

### WEXFORD

Divine Mercy devotions take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in Wexford Friary, including Mass and blessing with the relic of St Faustina. Rosary and devotions at the Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford take place every Tuesday at 2.30pm.

# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Spanish Christian lawyers demand series promoting paedophilia be axed

● The Christian Lawyers Foundation in Spain has begun an online petition calling for the cancellation of *Scandal, Story of an Obsession*, a television series that portrays the relationship between a 42-year-old woman and a 15-year-old boy.

For Christian Lawyers, the series promotes “the most absolute whitewashing of paedophilia”, which “crosses the unhealthy line” of sexual attraction towards children.

*Scandal, Story of an Obsession* is a Mediaset España production that began being broadcast on Telecinco January 11.

Christian Lawyers warned that this series will show scenes of explicit content “between an adult and a minor”.

The jurists charged that this production is a “disgusting normalisation that minors can enjoy these relationships in which their will is annulled and their vulnerable position is abused”.

### Swiss bishops call for respect for ‘rules’ after woman appears to concelebrate Mass

● Only ordained priests may preside at Mass, and the liturgy should not be “a testing ground for personal projects”, three Swiss bishops have said.

Their intervention follows internet controversy over a video of a laywoman who seemed to concelebrate Mass with priests.

“You all know that only the priest validly presides at the Eucharist, grants sacramental reconciliation, and anoints the sick. This is precisely

why he is ordained. This rule of the Roman Catholic faith must be respected without restriction in our dioceses,” Bishops Joseph Bonnemain of Chur, Felix Gmür of Basel, and Markus Büchel of Sankt Gallen said in a January 5 letter to people active in pastoral care, the French Catholic newspaper *La Croix* reported.

Their three dioceses are the predominantly German-speaking dioceses of Switzerland

### Catholic agencies in California organise relief for storm victims

● Catholic organisations in California, strengthened by years of responding to disasters in the Golden State, responded quickly to bring aid to those affected by the ongoing brutal winter storms.

Since late December, a series of atmospheric rivers have brought record-setting rainfall to the state, leading to flooding, mudslides and evacuations.

Nineteen people have died, while a 5-year-old boy remained missing after being swept away in a flash flood earlier in the week.

One state official estimated the storms could cause more than \$1 billion in damages, and more than two-thirds of California’s counties are eligible for federal emergency assistance.

Years of disasters in the region, especially wildfires, have given Catholic Charities and other nonprofits critical experience in emergencies.

### Pontifical university in Poland honours Vatican journalist

● Valentina Alazraki, a veteran Vatican journalist who has covered papacies for nearly five decades received an honorary doctorate from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, January 11.

“I never imagined this moment,” she told OSV News, deeply moved to receive an honour she doesn’t just see as an academic one.

“I interpret it as perhaps the recognition of the love I had for John Paul II and what I was able to convey about him to my countrymen and also other people from Latin America,” she said.

The doctorate *honoris causa* (Latin for the “sake of honour”) is given for extraordinary academic and lifetime achievements from universities across the globe.

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow is the only pontifical university in Poland, homeland of St John Paul.

## Cardinal Pell’s faith amid trial remembered at funeral

The death of Australian Cardinal George Pell was a shock because just five days earlier he had concelebrated the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI and “seemed in good health,” said Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals.

In his homily at Cardinal Pell’s funeral Mass January 14 in St Peter’s Basilica, Cardinal Re described the Australian prelate as often being “a strong-willed and decisive protagonist” with “a strong temperament that, at times, could appear harsh”.

Cardinal Pell, 81, died of a heart attack January 10 at a Rome hospital after undergoing hip surgery. His burial was scheduled for February 2 at St Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney, where he had served as archbishop before Pope Francis chose him as prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy.

The Pope, who had praised the cardinal for keeping his faith “with perseverance even in the hour of trial,” arrived in St Peter’s Basilica at the end of the Mass to preside over the final rite of commendation, as he usually does for cardinals who die in Rome.

“The last years of his life were marked by an unjust and painful condemnation,” Cardinal Re said, referring to Cardinal Pell’s conviction on charges of sexual abuse and his 404 days in jail before the Australian high court overturned the conviction.

Cardinal Re told mourners



Pope Francis leads the final commendation at the funeral of Australian Cardinal George Pell in St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican January 14, 2023. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

at the funeral that the court “exonerated him with a sentence of full innocence, and he was finally able to leave prison”.

### Suffering

Cardinal Pell’s trust in God amid such suffering, Cardinal Re said, is an example of “how to accept even unjust punishments with dignity and inner peace”.

The cardinal’s three-volume “Prison Journal” made clear “how much faith and prayer” helped him, and the books could help others who “suffer unjustly,” Cardinal Re said.

“A man of God and a man of the Church, he was char-

acterised by a deep faith and great firmness of doctrine, which he always defended without hesitation and with courage, concerned only with being faithful to Christ,” Cardinal Re said. “As he repeatedly pointed out, the weakening of faith in the Western world and the moral crisis of the family grieved him.”

Soon after the cardinal’s death, the Italian blogger Sandro Magister, claimed Cardinal Pell was the author of *A Memorandum on the Next Conclave*, which Magister published on his blog in March under the pseudonym “Demos.” The author of the memo begins by saying,

“this pontificate is a disaster in many or most respects; a catastrophe.”

Also after Cardinal Pell’s death, the British magazine *The Spectator* published an article by the cardinal criticising the current process for the Synod of Bishops as “a toxic nightmare” and describing the working document for the synod’s continental stage as an “outpouring of New Age good will”.

Cardinal Re ended his homily saying, “To God, who is good and rich in mercy, we entrust this brother of ours, praying that God may welcome him into the peace and intimacy of his love”.

## Catholic priest burned to death in Nigeria

A Catholic priest burned to death on Sunday after bandits set fire to his parish rectory in northern Nigeria.

The body of Fr Isaac Achi was found among the charred parish building of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church on January 15, according to the Catholic Diocese of Minna, Nigeria.

He died after armed bandits attacked the priest’s residence in the village of Kafin Koro at 3am. Another priest at the rectory, Fr Collins Omeh, escaped the

building, but sustained gunshot wounds and is being treated in a hospital.

Alhaji Sani Bello Abubakar, the governor of the Nigerian state of Niger where the attack took place, described the attack as “ungodly and inhumane” and directed the local security agencies to pursue the attackers, according to *The Daily Post*.

“This is a sad moment, for a priest to be killed in such a manner means that we are not all safe, these terrorists have

lost it, and drastic action is needed to end this ongoing carnage,” Mr Bello said.

Fr Achi served as the parish priest of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church where he died. He was also the chairman of his local branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

“May the soul of Very Reverend Father Isaac Achi and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in perfect peace,” the Diocese of Minna said in a statement shared by the Nigeria Catholic Network.

## Court rules Nicaraguan bishop charged with conspiracy will stand trial

A court ruled at a January 10 hearing that a Nicaraguan bishop, who has been detained since August, will stand trial on the charges of spreading false information and conspiracy.

Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who has been accused of “conspiracy to

undermine national integrity” and “to spread fake news” appeared wearing a white shirt and looking gaunt, according to a photo shared by the court in Managua.

A statement released by the court’s press office stated that “the initial hearing of the

penal process where Rolando José Álvarez Lagos appeared as the accused took place” on that day.

Bishop Álvarez has been a vocal critic of the Nicaraguan government and was put under (forceful) house arrest in August, an act widely criti-

cised by human rights defenders worldwide. The bishop was charged December 13 – nearly four months after being detained without due process. He was assigned a public defender, told his trial date and was ordered to remain under house arrest.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
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## Rampant protest in Peru



Demonstrators clash with security forces near the Juliaca, Peru, airport during a protest January 9, demanding early elections and the release of jailed former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo. Photo: OSV News/Hugo Courotto, Reuters

## Dozens reportedly still in captivity after Christmas Day attack in Nigeria

Dozens of abductees are still being held in captivity following the Christmas Day attack on Angwan Aku Village in Kaduna, a state located in the north of Nigeria, a Catholic priest in the West African country has told *ACI Africa* in an interview.

On Christmas Day 2022, militant Fulani herdsmen and other terrorists attacked Angwan Aku village, reportedly killing one person and abducting 53 others, according to a *Persecution.org* report.

In the report, an eyewitness is quoted as telling *Morning Star News*: "The church worship service was about to commence when

the attackers arrived at the village riding on motorbikes and shooting sporadically.

"They killed one Christian and kidnapped 53 other Christians who are still held captive," he said.

In a Tuesday, January 10, interview with *ACI Africa*, Fr Justine John Dyikuk confirmed the December 25 attack, saying: "We got the sad news of the Christmas Day attack on Angwan village with dozens kidnapped and one person killed.

"As we speak now some dozens are still in captivity while a few managed to escape back to the village," Fr Dyikuk said.

Fulani herdsmen and other

unidentified bandits are said to have also staged attacks on Mallagum and Kagoro villages in Kaduna State some days before Christmas Day, during which 40 Christians were reportedly killed in Mallagum village. Three Christians lost their lives during the attack on Kagoro village on December 23.

Confirming the attacks on the two Nigerian villages, Fr Dyikuk told *ACI Africa*: "Eyewitness on the ground confirmed to me that on Sunday, December 18, 2022, not fewer than 40 people were killed; many were injured, over 102 houses and harvested grains were burnt down, and many were displaced in Mallagum

and Sakong communities, in the Southern Kaduna area of Nigeria."

"The terrorists had sophisticated weapons," the Nigerian Catholic priest told *ACI Africa*.

He went on to highlight some of the reasons for the recurrent attacks in what is Africa's most populous nation.

"Locals suspect that they were attacked because of three reasons: they are Christians comprising Catholics, evangelicals, and Baptists; because the assailants want to decapitate the region economically; and to scare the people of Southern Kaduna ahead of the 2023 general elections," Fr Dyikuk said.

## Peru's bishops urge peace amid violent protests

Peru's bishops have called on the country's government to stop violence that claimed at least 18 lives in anti-government protests January 9-10 and has left more than 40 people dead and hundreds injured since early December.

After expressing their condolences to the families of those killed and promising pastoral accompaniment to the wounded, the bishops in a message issued January 9 wrote that the deaths were a consequence

of the "distortion of the right to protest," in which people "resorted to illegality," combined with the "excessive use of force" by security forces.

The brutal confrontation January 9 occurred when protesters tried to seize the airport in Juliaca, a city of around 280,000 people two miles high in the southern Peruvian Altiplano, near the border with Bolivia.

Videos circulating on social media

showed civilian victims arriving at the local hospital in ambulances, a motorised rickshaw and a cart.

Protesters later set fire to a police car, burning one officer alive and injuring another.

On January 10, the bishops wrote, "We cannot return to the dark times of terror that left our country in mourning for 20 years," a reference to the political violence of the 1980s and 1990s.



## Old rivalries take centre stage at Vatican trial

● Francesca Chaouqui, convicted by a Vatican court in 2016 of leaking confidential Vatican documents, was back on the stand before Vatican magistrates January 13, testifying in a long-running trial on financial misconduct.

Ms Chaouqui, once a member of the now-defunct Pontifical Commission for Reference on the Economic-Administrative Structure of the Holy See, testified that she helped the Vatican's star witness draft his statement because she wanted to help Pope Francis.

But her version of how that came about differed from the version offered to the court the same day by Genoveffa Ciferri, who worked with Ms Chaouqui to assist Msgr Alberto Perlasca, the former head of the Vatican Secretariat of State's administrative office, when he turned from suspect to key witness.

Ten people, including Cardinal Angelo Becciu, are on trial in the Vatican, facing multiple charges related to financial malfeasance, particularly regarding the Vatican Secretariat of State's investment in a property on Sloane Avenue in London.

The Vatican lost more than \$200 million on the deal.

Msgr Perlasca's cooperation with investigators helped seal the indictment against Cardinal Becciu.

## Church in Argentina to celebrate 10 years of Francis' papacy

● The executive committee of the Argentine Bishops' Conference invited the country's Faithful to celebrate "with joy and fervour" the 10th anniversary of the election of Pope Francis as the successor of St Peter.

Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, then-archbishop of Buenos Aires, was elected Pontiff on March 13, 2013, on the second day of the conclave following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. Francis is the first Latin American Pope and the first Jesuit to serve as Pontiff in the history of the Catholic Church.

In a letter, the Argentine bishops, headed by Bishop Óscar Ojea, encouraged the dioceses of Argentina to join the celebrations from March 11-19, marking the 10th anniversary of the start of Pope Francis' Petrine ministry, in order to "renew along with our holy faithful People of God the affection" for the Holy Father.

The prelates noted that "this profound affection" is not only shared by members of the Catholic Church but also "by a huge number of people, believers and nonbelievers, who value his leadership".

## Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni meets Pope Francis

● Pope Francis met Giorgia Meloni, Italy's first female prime minister, at the Vatican January 10.

The private meeting, which lasted a little over 30 minutes, marked the third time in nine days the 45-year-old politician was at the Vatican.

Ms Meloni was among the first to pay her respects to the late Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's Basilica on January 2, together with Italy's President Sergio Mattarella. She also attended the funeral of the pope emeritus on January 5.

Ms Meloni introduced her team to Pope Francis. Her 6-year-old daughter, Ginevra, also took part in the meeting — Ms Meloni's first papal audience since becoming prime minister on October 22, 2022.

According to the Vatican, the discussion focused on the country's top social issues, including the family, the demographic situation, poverty, and education.

International topics included Europe, immigration, and the conflict in Ukraine.



# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

## For Italians, disappearance of 'Vatican girl' remains 'mother of all mysteries'

To judge by sensationalist newspaper headlines and breathless social media posts, one might assume that the open conflict in Catholicism unleashed by the death of Pope Benedict XVI and fanned by a series of tell-all revelations from his long-time aide, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, would be the talk of the town in Rome — which, after all, is where the drama is unfolding.

In reality, it's just not so.

Walk into any Roman barbershop, restaurant or private home these days that's more than a three-block radius away from St Peter's Square, and, to the extent anyone's talking about a Vatican story, it isn't Pope v. Pope, or Francis's recent crackdown on his own Vicariate of Rome, or the Rupnik affair about a Jesuit artist accused of sexual abuse, or anything else.

Instead, the conversation in the streets once again is about Emanuela Orlandi, the 15-year-old daughter of a Vatican family who disappeared in 1983, and whose fate remains the country's most celebrated unresolved mystery.

A Vatican prosecutor has reopened an investigation into the Orlandi case, with the mandate to reexamine "all files, documents, reports, information and testimonies," and to leave "no stone unturned." The move comes in the wake of a popular four-part Netflix series on the Orlandi case called *Vatican Girl*, coupled with calls in the Italian parliament to open its own inquest.

While the Orlandi saga may be relatively unknown outside Italy, it's almost impossible to overstate the fascination it still exercises here a full four decades after the fact. Among many examples of this popular obsession, here's one from my personal experience.

### Recovering

Back in October, I spent 25 days in a local hospital recovering from a surgery. One of my fellow patients was a 50-something wife and mother, a native Roman who's seen five popes come and go, and a reasonably devout Catholic. Early on she learned what I do for a living, but didn't make much of it until the day before her operation, when she seemed haunted by a sense of unfinished business.

"There's one question I've always wanted to ask," she finally told me, speaking *sottovoce* and glancing around in conspiratorial fashion: "What do you think really happened to Emanuela?"

The fact she didn't even feel the need to supply the girl's last name spoke volumes.

Over the years, the Orlandi case has been linked in Italian speculation to pretty much every storyline imagi-



Workers inspect an ossuary at the Teutonic Cemetery at the Vatican in this July 20, 2019, file photo. The ossuary was inspected in the hope of finding the missing remains of a German princess and duchess and possibly the remains of Emanuela Orlandi, who disappeared in 1983. The Vatican prosecutor has opened a new investigation into the disappearance 40 years ago of Orlandi, the 15-year-old daughter of a Vatican employee. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

nable, from Mehmet Ali Agca and the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II to the Roman mafia, the Masons, bankers and international finance, not to mention the clerical sexual abuse scandals.

To try to understand why this story resonates so much with ordinary Italians, I turned to Fabrizio Peronaci, a reporter who covers the Orlandi story for *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's most authoritative newspaper, and author of *Il Crimine del Secolo* ("Crime of the Century"), a 2021 book about the assassination attempt on John Paul, in which Orlandi is discussed at length.

**“The fact she didn't even feel the need to supply the girl's last name spoke volumes”**

Referring to the Orlandi case as “the mother of all mystery stories,” Mr Peronaci pointed to three intersecting reasons why it retains such a hold on the Italian imagination.

Italians love a good *giallo*, meaning a mystery, and the Orlandi case is a perfect storm, with elements of political intrigue and espionage, the Vatican, high finance, the Masons, etc. — “It's got all the ingredients of an updated Dan Brown, like a Dan Brown for our times,” Mr Peronaci said.

The Orlandi case is also “where the great themes of recent history intersect, above all that phase of our country's history characterised by deep shadows.” Mr Peronaci was

referring to a period in the 1970s and 80s in which Italy suffered a series of traumas still surrounded by question marks, from the assassination of Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978 to the 1982 collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano.

At the heart of the Orlandi story is a young girl and her grieving family, in a culture in which children and family remain deeply rooted, sacrosanct values. “Everyone remembers this girl with the headband, and she's generated a level of attention and empathy that has no media precedent,” Mr Peronaci said. “The face of that girl still has power today.”

“Public opinion has made the case very visible,” Mr Peronaci said, “and highlighted the power games that surround it.”

### Reopen

In terms of why the Vatican has decided to reopen the case now, Mr Peronaci said he sees two factors at work.

“On the one hand, there's a desire on the part of the Church to give a strong signal of change and renewal,” he said. “The Orlandi case is a symbol to give to everyone a demonstration that the Holy See won't tolerate the shadows and question marks from the Vatican bank era, from a dark and opaque time.”

In terms of that desire to signal change, Mr Peronaci noted that news of the investigation came just days after the public row over Archbishop Gänswein's revelations began, which, to many Italians, is reminiscent of the

bad old days of Vatican intrigue and power struggles.

Second, Mr Peronaci said, the Vatican has also been forced to act by the findings of investigative journalists.

“This work has demonstrated that there are strong elements that have never been pursued, and you can't just pretend they're not there,” he said. “The people know it, and if you ignore it, they'll have a negative judgment.”

**“Italians love a good giallo, meaning a mystery, and the Orlandi case is a perfect storm, with elements of political intrigue and espionage”**

“When too much comes to light, when something that was hidden for so long comes out, it's impossible to go back and pretend nothing has happened,” he said. Among other things, he pointed to recent revelations that two other girls with Vatican ties claim to have been followed immediately prior to Orlandi's disappearance, suggesting this wasn't a random event but the product of careful advance planning.

Mr Peronaci described himself as cautiously optimistic about the outcome of the investigation, with the proviso that “there has to be someone with the courage to present himself to the authorities, to the magistrates,

and give testimony,” voicing the conviction that someone involved in the case knows far more than they've said.

Mr Peronaci's own theory as to what happened to Orlandi revolves around a set of personalities he calls “the ganglion,” literally referring to a loosely connected cluster of cells in an organism's nervous system.

This metaphorical cluster, he believes, was composed of “lay criminals, clerics, members of the secret service, even Masons,” with the objective of pressuring John Paul II's Vatican to moderate its strongly anti-Communist position and to recover money that had been directed toward Poland and the Solidarity movement. The kidnapping of Orlandi, he believes, was an effort to bring pressure to bear on John Paul II to change course.

Mr Peronaci expressed confidence that the truth, sooner or later, will emerge.

“The people just won't let this go,” he said — and at least in Italy, it's hard to dispute his confidence.

We saw that determination on display again on Saturday, when Orlandi's older brother Pietro, who's dedicated his life to finding the truth about his sister, staged a sit-in near the Vatican to demand that it come clean. It's one of two such protests he organises every year on January 14, Emanuela's birthday, and June 22, the anniversary of her disappearance.

By the way, a flyer for the sit-in has a picture of Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, with the phrase “silence has made them accomplices”.

# Pope: Cardinal Pell kept the Faith even amid tribulation



Pope Francis greets Australian Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, during an audience to exchange greetings with members of the Roman Curia in Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican in this December 22, 2016, file photo. Cardinal Pell, former prefect of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy, died January 10 in Rome at the age of 81. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring



Cindy Wooden

Pope Francis praised the late Australian Cardinal George Pell as a faithful servant of God and of the Catholic Church, who steadfastly followed the Lord even “in the hour of trial” when he was jailed for sexual abuse before his conviction was overturned by Australia’s highest court.

Cardinal Pell died in Rome January 10 at the age of 81 after suffering a heart attack following hip replacement surgery.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, presided over the cardinal’s funeral January 14 in St Peter’s Basilica with Pope Francis presiding over the final commendation and farewell at the end of the Mass. Cardinal Pell reportedly will be buried in St Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney, but further details were not available immediately.

In an interview with Italy’s *Mediaset* broadcast December 18, Pope Francis was asked what part

of his job he would have preferred not having had to deal with, and he responded, the Vatican’s financial chaos and scandals.

The need for a thorough clean up “was clearly seen by Cardinal Pell, who is the one who started” making progress, the Pope said, but then he was required to return to Australia “because of this calamity” of being accused of sexual abuse.

**“Pope Francis was asked what part of his job he would have preferred not having had to deal with, and he responded, the Vatican’s financial chaos and scandals”**

“He was innocent,” Pope Francis said in the December interview. “He is a great man, and we owe him so much.”

#### Telegram

The Pope made the same points in a telegram addressed January 11 to Cardinal Re.

Offering his condolences also to Cardinal Pell’s brother and family members, Pope Francis said the Australian prelate would be remembered for “his consist-

ent and committed witness, his dedication to the Gospel and the Church, and particularly his diligent cooperation with the Holy See in its recent economic reform, for which he laid the foundations with determination and wisdom.”

He prayed that the cardinal, “who without wavering followed his Lord with perseverance even in the hour of trial,” would be “received into the joy of heaven and receive the reward of eternal peace”.

#### Impact

Australian Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, said, “Cardinal Pell’s impact on the life of the Church in Australia and around the world will continue to be felt for many years. As we remember him and reflect on his legacy, I invite all Catholics and other people of goodwill to join in praying for Cardinal Pell, a man of deep and abiding faith, and for the repose of his soul”.

Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane, former president of the conference, said, Cardinal Pell “didn’t claim to be a saint; he knew he was flawed. But he did claim – and rightly – to be a man of faith and a man of the Church”.

Cardinal Pell “became the victim of an outrageous injustice as he was convicted and jailed for 13 months before a final vindication,” Archbishop Coleridge said, referring to the cardinal’s conviction in late 2018 on five counts of sexual abuse. The cardinal had served more than 400 days of a six-year sentence when the judges of the High Court of Australia overturned the conviction, concluding there was “a significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted because the evidence did not establish guilt to the requisite standard of proof”.

**“Cardinal Pell ‘became the victim of an outrageous injustice as he was convicted and jailed for 13 months before a final vindication’”**

“The spiritual poise and strength he showed through all of this was extraordinary,” Archbishop Coleridge said. “It revealed a depth to George Pell that often went unrecognised.”

“Through his legal troubles,” the archbishop said, “he was identified wholly with the Catholic

Church and vice versa. Pell was the Church, and the Church was Pell – big, powerful and heartless in the eyes of many.”

“Yet,” he continued, “if George Pell had anything they were a good heart and a sense of humour. It was a pity that more of this didn’t show in his media appearances.”

#### Football

Born June 8, 1941, in Ballarat, Australia, he was a star football player in high school and college, but left that behind to enter the seminary, studying first in Australia and then at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1966 at St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican.

St John Paul II appointed him an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne in 1987, archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, archbishop of Sydney in 2001 and gave him the cardinal’s red hat in 2003.

Soon after his election, Pope Francis named Cardinal Pell to his international Council of Cardinals to advise him on the reform of the Roman Curia and, in 2014, Pope Francis named him prefect of the new Council for the Economy.

Cardinal Pell’s death leaves the College of Cardinals with 223 members, 125 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave.

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Irish politicians are stoking up Church hatred

**Dear Editor,** Without a doubt, a number of Irish politicians are continuously stoking up hatred for the Church in their poisonous, insidious speeches in the Dáil. Thank you for highlighting this [*The Irish Catholic* – January 12, 2023] and to the TDs who call it out.

Not a day goes by when there isn't another criticism of the Church in the Dáil. I won't defend the abuses perpetrated by those claiming to represent the Faith, and the cover up facilitated by Church leaders. But I will say there is a one-sided narrative being pushed by unscrupulous extremist politicians who are trying to further their own agendas.

There is barely a mention of all the good work that has been done in this

country and overseas by priests and religious who work tirelessly to improve living standards here and help those that were being totally abandoned by the State through education, healthcare, or other charitable pursuits.

The Irish Government can thank Irish missionaries for forging strong diplomatic links with countries that Ireland previously had no diplomatic relations with. These priests and sisters have given and are giving Ireland a good name around the world, due to their development work in poorer countries.

It's good to see the likes of TDs such as Peadar Tóibín, Michael McNamara, Michael Collins and Danny Healy-Rae calling out the Irish politicians who

regularly drum up hate. As they say, their rhetoric no doubt seeps into the minds of the populace. This makes the Catholic Church a target, which includes church buildings and even parishioners themselves.

The modern Irish Faithful should not be blamed for the crimes of the past and should be allowed to practice religion freely and openly without fear of rebuke, as it states in the Constitution.

The disruption of a Mass by a woman screaming at parishioners and a man playing guitar in Cork City earlier this month was very disturbing.

*Yours etc.,  
Shane O'Brien  
Tullamore, Co. Offaly*

## Security needed for churches

**Dear Editor,** Senator Sharon Keohan was spot on when she suggested that churches need better security [*The Irish Catholic* – January 12]. While churches must be places of welcome to all, some churches, particularly in city centres don't always feel safe.

While hiring a security guard is not an option due to expense, parish councils should consider updating their current security systems. Lives-treaming high-definition security cameras are relatively inexpensive these days, and could go a long way to ward off thieves and vandals.

*Yours etc.,  
Helen Doyle  
Bray, Co. Wicklow*



## The price of everything, the value of nothing

**Dear Editor,** Mary Kenny alleges that we 'Gaelgoiri's' don't like to agree [*The Irish Catholic* – January 5, 2022] that we are an "English-speaking country", and that we only attract American or foreign investment on this basis. While noting that Mary has "great affection for the Irish language", it seems Mary is emulating one of Oscar Wilde's people who know

only "the price of everything and the value of nothing". Here it is worth noting one of our national paradoxes: Whilst the historical track record of the Catholic Church when it comes to preserving and promoting our native Irish language has been mixed, with high points and low points, Catholicism in Ireland today remains strongest where the Irish language

is strongest – and vice versa. Supposing this is not some happy accident, does it not therefore behove us to treasure our native Irish language in its own right? Why should we resign ourselves to being a mere "English-speaking country" when we remain, as with practically every other nation on earth, a varyingly bilingual country?

Pope John Paul II once

remarked that "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" – should we not similarly regard our English and Irish languages as two wings of the same bird also, not in competition but rather rising together?

*Yours etc.,  
Blaine McCartney  
Castlewellan, Co. Down*

## Millions spent by State on abortion

**Dear Editor,** In a recent post for the last Sunday of Advent Bishop Paul Dempsey highlighted the plight of refugees, drawing on the Gospel episode of the Holy Family having to flee to Egypt because of King Herod's desire to kill the male children in Bethlehem. He highlighted the crib as a point of reference for his reflection. The Bishop states, "It would be sad and frightening to think that at some point in the future, our own shortfalls in

the care of migrants and those in need might be brought into question".

Thanks to a recent parliamentary recent question submitted in the Dail, it has been revealed that €9,519,300 was paid to GPs as reimbursements for carrying out abortions in the first three years of Ireland's abortion regime. The vast sums being spent on ending the lives of unborn babies and attacking the dignity of motherhood in Ireland is nothing short

of shocking beyond belief, whilst there is no investment in providing mother and unborn with alternatives to abortion.

I wonder if Bishop Dempsey sees the comparison with the Gospel of Matthew in this regard and the state sponsored killing of the unborn that is taking place in modern Ireland?

*Yours etc.,  
David Walsh  
Malahide, Co. Dublin*

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

### Dáil attacks on Church are leading to violence – TDs warn

In the event of a border poll Northern Catholics would need to reflect at length (and without sentimentality) as to whether joining a state ruled from Leinster House would be in their best interests or not. – **Charles Glenn**

### Ireland's forgotten witnesses to the Faith

It is incredible that only one person from Ireland who lived since the Reformation has been canonised, England and Wales have at least 43. – **Declan McSweeney**

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

## Pope Benedict predicted a downsized Church

**Dear Editor,** Those fortunate to be present at Pope Benedict's funeral experienced an inspirational, moving, and real Requiem Mass, ordered from start to finish to prayer for the repose of his soul. As a realist that's what he most desired. It was a reminder of what every soul in purgatory yearns to observe at his or her own Requiem Mass. Benedict's admirers also benefitted greatly from the many tributes paid him by Catholic media, including *The Irish Catholic*, and even by atheists.

Benedict's realism is evident in a radio talk given in 1969 as a youngish priest, shortly after Vatican II. Based on his clear grasp of the then ongoing direction of culture including the growing inability of humanity to preserve awareness of God, he predicted the current downsized practice of Catholicism. He anticipated the disposals of property, loss of institutions and reduced budgets now in train in Ireland. This amazing prescience confers a probability on his anticipation of continued decline, where the Church "will be small and will have to start over, more or less from the beginning". Her authenticity will not fall to pieces. She will "find her essence afresh".

This vista must have influenced Benedict to preserve in truth, in his papacy and writings, the authenticity, veracity and clarity of Church teaching among the faithful. Those bishops, clergy and laity who currently convey their ability to create a successful remake of our Church should realise that it is God's Church that will persist, not one ever made or makeable by humanity.

*Yours etc.,  
Neil Bray  
Cappamore, Co. Limerick*

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, January 19, 2023

**Maria C. Morrow**

The positive side to fear of God

Page 32



## How to be a mystic in the present day



**T**he prominent Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner made an astonishing claim about how he saw the future of the Church and of Christian faith. “The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or they will not exist at all.”

It is a stunning statement. We are used to thinking of mystics as special individuals who have extraordinary experiences of God. We think of saints who devoted themselves ‘full-time’, to lives of prayer and service of God in the special religious environment of an enclosed monastery or a convent.

### Rethink

If Karl Rahner is correct, about every Christian in the future



**If people of faith are going to sustain Christian commitment in a world swirling with endless possibilities for re-invention they need to have had an authentic experience of God, writes Fr Michael Kirwan SJ**

being a ‘mystic’, then we need to rethink what we understand by the term. And we then have to ask the question: so, how do we become ‘mystics’? The forthcoming ‘Faith Seeking Understanding’ series of evening talks at the Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin (co-sponsored with the Jesuit Education Desk) will be exploring this, with reference to the classical tradition, to the theological voices

of women, and to the needs of Christian faith, today and tomorrow.

Fr Rahner’s statement is challenging, but is not news. Nearly 60 years ago, Vatican II spoke to us of the Church’s “universal call to holiness” – for ‘call’, read ‘vocation’. Every Christian is called to lead a holy life, and not just groups of men and women leading separate lives as clergy or religious, whom we admire,

support, and cheer on, as if we are watching a football game. The council turned away from the idea of a ‘split-level’ Church, where sanctity is the business of an elite few, with the rest of us looking on admiringly. But we are not spectators, we are players.

### Understanding

Most of us know this by now, but it is difficult to shake off

this earlier understanding of holiness. Karl Rahner liked to shock people into thinking differently. During the discussion after one of his talks, one person said, “I’ve never had a religious experience”. Rahner replied: “I don’t believe you!” What Rahner was getting at is that we have all had special experiences of closeness to God, but often we are incapable of describing them in these terms, or else we choose not to. These experiences can include being in love, giving birth, falling seriously ill, losing someone special, enjoying deep companionship – all the way down to having a fine meal. As St Teresa of Avila declared: “There is a time for penance, and a time for partridge”. When

we are willing to recognise God in these special but everyday experiences, and have the confidence to name him, we are being 'mystics'.

**“The Church of today – and tomorrow – has had to recognise that people have alternatives: we are one option among several”**

In some ways, the surprising, important, exciting, difficult word in Karl Rahner's sentence is not 'mystic', but 'Christian'. How we are to live as Christians has changed. First of all, we get to *choose*, which was not always the case in the past, when religious practice was more or less a social norm. This is exciting. We are immersed in a culture which places a huge value on choice, optionality, the freedom to invent oneself as often as one likes... not all of this is healthy, by any means, but it should be made to work in our favour. There is so much choice, so many options in my life: why *not* be a Christian? Why *not* be a mystic?

**Volunteers**

Secondly, if these 'volunteers' are going to sustain any kind of Christian commitment, in a world swirling with endless possibilities for re-invention, they need to have had an authentic, conscious experience of God. Not a dramatic, ecstatic meeting on a mountaintop, or beside a burning bush; but something of what was hinted at by Karl Rahner: a way of reading our own everyday life-experiences with a particular kind of attention to what is going on. Perhaps God is only recognised after the event, as in the *Footprints* meditation; but it is important that he is recognised.

So, how does one become a mystic? More to the point, how does one become a mystic in the world of today? I can think of two sets of challenges. The first one we are familiar with: it comes from a secular (or secularist) mentality that wants to remove traces of religion from public life as far as possible, and seeks to do so by sapping the confidence and energy

of believers, so as to make us ineffective. This can be literally dispiriting, and it is important that our faith does not become a place of escapism or resentment in the face of this. There is a subtler challenge, from people who see themselves as neither secular nor believers: describing themselves as 'spiritual but not religious', or perhaps as 'seekers'.

Neither of these options would have been available in the past. The Church of today – and tomorrow – has had to recognise that people have alternatives: we are one option among several. Why, exactly, should one be a Christian, rather than an atheist, or even a religious seeker? Why is faith *better*? In the end, all we can point to is our direct relationship with something, someone, who is *real* and *life-giving*. And it is no use reporting this at second-hand. The classical mystics, such as Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, have always been drawn further into the Church, not away from it – despite undergoing fearful experiences of suspicion, marginalisation, and spiritual abuse.

**“We get to choose, which was not always the case in the past, when religious practice was more or less a social norm”**

Ignatius, the broken soldier, and founder of the Jesuits, captured his own mystical experiences in the *Spiritual Exercises* and other spiritual writings. He is very influential upon the two Carmelite saints, Teresa and John, though their classic writings, such as the *Interior Castle* and the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, are very different from his. Reading these three authors together, we see a rich variety of possibilities for praying, for inviting God to come closer.

To take one example: should one use images and concepts to think about God, or is it better to avoid these, and simply try to clear or 'purify' the mind of all 'distractions'? In fact, both ways are necessary. We do not have to choose between them. Nor do we need to choose between their dif-



St Teresa of Avila

ferent imaginary styles: Ignatius draws on imagery of military service, while John famously uses the romantic imagery of *Song of Songs* to describe the soul's love affair with God.

The mystics of the Spanish 'Golden Age' lived and wrote at a time of immense

suspicion toward any suggestion that God could be encountered directly in the depths of the individual soul. Ignatius was bruised by the Inquisition; John was badly mistreated by his fellow Carmelite friars; Teresa was under suspicion, both as a woman and as a person of hidden Jewish heritage. All three were, at times, very shabbily treated. Being a mystic, perhaps, may have something fruitful to offer, for how we live and thrive in a Church which often disappoints.

**Goal**

One goal of the Faith Seeking Understanding series

is to focus on themes of faith which are relevant to those working in Catholic education (the series is offered in partnership with the Jesuit Education Desk). *With this in mind, the final session in the series will try to crack one of the biggest nuts: how do we make the link between fidelity to God, and a commitment to compassion and action for the poor and excluded? Our teachers and chaplains testify to pupils' readiness to champion the vulnerable, to protect the planet, and to be tolerant and exclusive. But what has any of this to do with*

God? Many 'get' the justice imperative; but too often we have failed to help them make the connection with faith. So we will need ask: can there such a thing as a 'mysticism of social justice'?

**i** Fr Michael Kirwan SJ is Director of the Loyola Institute at Trinity College Dublin. The 'Faith Seeking Understanding' evening lectures are on February 1 and 8 and March 8, from 5.30-8.00 pm. The cost for the three sessions is €50. Booking details can be found at [www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute/](http://www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute/)

**“How does one become a mystic? More to the point, how does one become a mystic in the world of today?”**

# Dignity, joy and humour in an alienating modern world

## Faith in film



### Ruadhán Jones

**C**harlie Chaplin is one of the few silent film stars likely to be known well even by people who have never seen a silent film. The American comic, whose character 'The Tramp' was iconic in the silent era, unsurprisingly makes the Vatican list of 45 significant films.

The film they chose is the last film for his Tramp character. It's also an unusual silent film – it's not fully silent. Shot and released in 1936, a full nine years after the advent of 'talkies', it incorporates sound effects and some dialogue.

*Modern Times*, which Chaplin produced, directed, wrote and starred in, tells the story of a charming but gormless worker who is constantly frustrated and bamboozled by the rapid social and technological changes of the 20s and 30s.

### Imprisoned

Fired from his job as a factory worker, and having been imprisoned when mistaken as the leader of a communist protest, The Tramp finds his factory job has been eclipsed by new machinery. Without work, he falls for a young orphan played by Paulette Goddard.

All they dream of is a small house together where they can live happily as a couple. But for that, The Tramp needs a job. And everything from the law to unfortunate mishaps conspire against him, frustrating their desires.

As with any selection on the Vatican's film list, their reasons for choosing it are somewhat



Charlie Chaplain stars as The Tramp in *Modern Times* (1936).

inscrutable. However, listed as it is under the 'art' category (the other two are religion and values), there are a couple of possible reasons. For a start, it's perhaps an easier entry into the world of silent cinema for those who are used to talkies. It does include sound elements, which just eases the process.

**“All they dream of is a small house together where they can live happily as a couple”**

But it is still decidedly a silent film. The dialogue is conveyed through intertitles, it is shot at a slower rate of giving it the distinctive jerky silent look. And the comedy is typical of Chaplin, physical but with a dancer's grace.

Another possible reason, and

this strikes me as more pertinent, is that it's one of Chaplin's best films. I like Chaplin, I think he's very funny and had his own distinctive comedy style. It's more sentimental than Buster Keaton, for instance, and less technically innovative. But it always strives at heart warming, wholesome adventure.

The downside to this is he tends to be trite and sickly sweet. This comes through particularly in his later talkies. But even in his silent days, he was prone to easy endings that improbably resolved what were obviously tragic situations.

But in *Modern Times*, he addresses squarely the tragic element in life. It's one of his few deliberately political films. Themes of social justice are obvious and give cause for any Catholic to pause and think. While he is too friendly to communism – it has to be remembered this was

before the full scale of Russian atrocities were revealed – he was grappling with problems that are still relevant today.

### Ending

The ending, which I won't give away, is a much more satisfying resolution too, bittersweet rather than sickly so. The final shot is clearly metatextual, acknowledging the end of an era – the era of the Tramp and silent comedy – but is also perfectly suited to a story about characters who haven't found their place in a world seemingly determined to frustrate their legitimate desires.

### Serious

*Modern Times* is a serious film, but it's also a comedy and I have focused a little over much on the serious so far. Let me reassure you that it as funny as any of Chaplin's other films.

It is quite episodic, typical of Chaplin, with one set piece being loosely linked to the next. It begins with a laugh-out-loud series of gags based around the automation of a factory. It involves the latest innovation, an automatic feeder, that malfunctions to increasingly chaotic and hilarious effect.

Chaplin's whimsical humour is always on display. The standard gags are all there, such as the delicate way he eats even the grossest meal, or the improbable lengths he goes to maintain cleanliness and dignity. In Paulette Goddard's waif he finds the perfect match – she similarly desires dignity in the midst of dirt and grime, constructing a haphazard little home for them, which seems determined to collapse around them.

**“It's one of his few deliberately political films. Themes of social justice are obvious and give cause for any Catholic to pause and think”**

Then there's the physical grace of Chaplin's movements. As I said, he is like a dancer, light on his feet and with supreme control of even the smallest movement. Contrast this to someone like Buster Keaton, the other silent film great, who in his physical humour was more akin to an athlete than a dancer.

Another of the famous gags of the film is the build-up to a song and dance sequence involving The Tramp. It's a great little set-up, because of course this it seems is the first and only time we'll here The Tramp's voice on screen! But then, when he forgets the words of the song, what we get instead is a nonsense rhyme – it's the perfect build up and payoff. All-in-all, *Modern Times* is a fitting farewell to The Tramp, and a good introduction to silent cinema for those unacquainted with it.

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



Painting of St Anthony, a part of The Visitation with Saint Nicholas and Saint Anthony Abbot by Piero di Cosimo, c. 1480.

# St Anthony: The father of all monks

**I**n 360AD Athanasius of Alexandria – one of the great Doctors of the Church – published a biography simply titled *Life of Anthony*. In it, he told the story of an illiterate and holy man who out of devotion to God went out into the desert to put into practice Christ's words to the rich man: go and sell all you have, give to the poor and you will have treasures in heaven.

St Anthony of the Desert, known sometimes simply as Anthony the Great, was a Christian monk and ascetic of great importance among the Desert Fathers. He is also credited as being the “Father of All Monks” and with some justification.

Born in Egypt around the year 251 and dying at the age of 105 in 356, St Anthony was the son of

wealthy parents. When they died, however, he was free to pursue an ascetic life.

### Hermit

At first he lived as disciple to a local hermit. Through him, St Anthony learned of the tradition of asceticism that had developed since the First Century AD. Anthony, however, was soon to surpass this tradition, heading out into the desert proper and maintaining a diet of only bread salt and water, sometimes going without food for days on end.

He suffered many attacks from the devil, who inflicted him with laziness and boredom and phantoms of women. Many stories, some true, some legend, have passed down to our own age about these tussles. They became

a popular subject in art during the Middle Ages, and artists including Hieronymus Bosch and Salvador Dalí have depicted the great saint.

St Anthony took up residence in an old abandoned Roman fort near the river Nile for 20 years. Food was thrown to him over the wall and pilgrims came, who he initially refused to see. But more and more came and some stayed, forming a community of would-be disciples.

They convinced him to come out around the year 305 and for five years he instructed them and organised a great body of monks that had grown around him into a proto-monastic lifestyle. For this reason he is sometimes credited as being the Father of Monasticism in Christianity.

After this time of instruction, however, he withdrew again into the inner desert that lay between the Nile and the Red Sea. He lived on Mount Colzim, where a monastery still stands bearing his name.

### Seclusion

Here he spent the last 45 years of his life in seclusion. It was not as strict as his previous retreat, as he saw those who visited him and amid the persecution of Christians he went to Alexandria and visited those in prison.

In his own lifetime his fame spread to Roman Emperor Constantine, a convert to the Faith. To this day he is venerated for his miraculous cures and by some as the pinnacle of the holy monks. His feast day took place on January 17.

# The positive side to fear of God



**Maria C. Morrow**

**T**he word “fear” has such a negative connotation to us. We fear our kids getting hurt. We fear spiders. We fear failure. We fear a tragic and untimely death. In other words, we fear the things that we don’t like or want. And sometimes our fears stand in the way of our goals and make us miserable and anxious.

Of course, fear is nothing new. We find in the Bible many examples of people experiencing fear, and such fear is a natural response to difficulties, unfamiliar situations and real dangers.

In the Gospel of Matthew, for example, we hear that Joseph was afraid to go back to Judea where

Herod’s son now ruled (2:22). Given Joseph’s task of protecting Jesus, this fear makes sense, as does Joseph’s choice to follow the guidance given him in a dream and make for Galilee rather than Judea.

In this case, we see how fear can guide us away from something dangerous. A response of fear may be crucial in helping us to make the right decision. While courage can help us face necessary difficulties, prudence in interpreting our fear may help keep us away from unnecessary dangers.

## Consequences

We see this, for example, when we fear the consequences of our actions. In fact, this often prevents sin! We may fear the breaking of a relationship if we choose to send an angry text. We may fear embarrassment if others witness us in our impatience or rudeness to our children. These fears can thus be seen positively. As with Joseph, the experience of such fear helps us to make a good decision.

Of course, fear can also have the opposite effect. We can fear others’

judgments if we stand up for what we believe is right. We may fear added stress if we start a new job. Sometimes these fears can be crippling, preventing us from what we need to do and making us miserable when we try to act despite our fears.

At such times, it may be helpful to recall the words of Psalm 111:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; prudent are all who practice it. His praise endures forever.” The fear of the Lord is the one fear that should put all others in perspective, allowing us the wisdom to discern whether fear is guiding us helpfully or restricting our flourishing.

**“We find in the Bible many examples of people experiencing fear, and such fear is a natural response to difficulties, unfamiliar situations and real dangers”**

Fear of God is fundamentally relational. We are sons and daughters of God; God is our father whom we love. We may recall from our young childhoods that our parents seemed to know and be able to do so much that we couldn’t do: driving, cooking, comforting us, mowing the lawn, tying shoes, etc. There is a natural respect and a dependence that comes from the recognition of parental superiority.

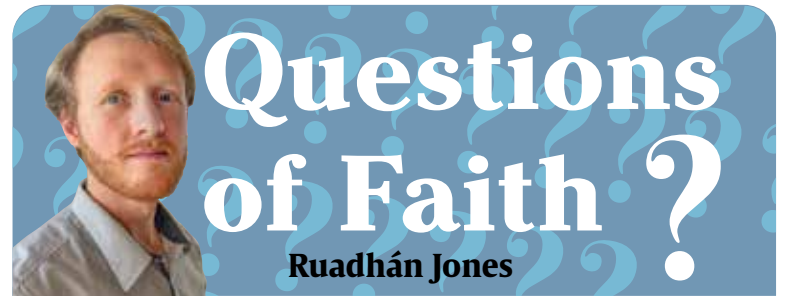
The fear of God implies a similar childlike recognition; God is so far beyond us, with perfect knowledge and ability far superior to our own. We should feel profound respect from this realisation. In God there is a grandeur that brings out our wonder and awe. Thus in Luke 1:12, the priest Zechariah feels great fear when the angel Gabriel appears to him. The greatness of God, seen in his messenger, is overwhelming.

Fear of God evokes in us a desire to be our best, despite our weaknesses. We have humility in our fear of God because we know we, like Zechariah, will never do anything to be as great as God. Yet we also have hope because we know that God is our beginning and our final end; God is our refuge and stronghold (see Ps 18:3). Like Zechariah, we recognise with gratitude that we are called into God’s plan. We are asked to do God’s will. Though we continue to experience fear as an emotion, we can face our fears with confidence.

**❗** *Maria C. Morrow is the author of A Busy Parent’s Guide to a Meaningful Lent and Sin in the Sixties: Catholics and Confession, 1955-1975. She earned her doctorate in theology from the University of Dayton. She is the mother of seven children and resides with her family in New Jersey.*



An icon depicts the birth of John the Baptist with his mother Elizabeth, father Zechariah, and Mary present. In Luke 1:12, the priest Zechariah feels great fear when the angel Gabriel appears to him. The greatness of God, seen in his messenger, is overwhelming. Photo: CNS.



## Questions of Faith?

Ruadhán Jones



## Why do we have priests?

**O**ne of the great products of the Second Vatican Council has been a renewed understanding of the common priesthood of the baptised. We are all called to exercise our baptismal priesthood through participation, “each according to his own vocation, in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet, and king”, the Catechism tells us.

By virtue of this common priesthood, preached by Christ in the New Testament, a number of Protestant critics questioned why we need priests or bishops at all. They claimed the ministerial priesthood was a corruption of Christ’s method.

If so then the corruption appeared early, with First Century Christian texts like the Didache and second century writers like Tertullian already testifying to its existence. But the fact that the ordained priesthood existed still doesn’t answer the question; why do we have priests at all?

To find out, we can begin in the Old Testament. God chose the Jewish people as a kingdom of priests and holy people. From that community, he drew men to act on behalf of the Jewish people “in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

But this priesthood was powerless to bring about salvation, awaiting Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for this to be accomplished. And indeed everything that it prefigured finds its fulfilment in Jesus, the true priest.

## Sacrifice

But since it found fulfilment in Christ’s redemptive sacrifice, doesn’t that mean it’s no longer necessary? Not in the Catholic understanding. Although Christ’s redemptive sacrifice is unique, accomplished once for all, it is made present for us today in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ. It is not diminished but made present through the ministerial priesthood. As St Thomas Aquinas puts it, “Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers.”

Now, as we’ve already highlighted, there are two participations in this one priesthood: the common priesthood of all the Baptised and the ministerial

priesthood. These two are ordered towards the same end but differ essentially.

To begin with, the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. Priests help to unfold the baptismal grace of all Christians and are a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church.

Think of it in the image of the Church as the Mystical Body with Christ at its head. Each parish is the mystical body, with the priest acting in the role of the head and the laity the body.

The priest does not in this way act as a delegate for the community, as a local politician or TD might come before the State on behalf of the community. Nor is it the case that the priest is exalted as himself perfect or free from all sin. It is that through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers.

His is a term of service, taking always for his model Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. But his service is more than representing Christ before his flock. The priest acts in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice.

And it is in the Eucharist that “the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body,” the Catechism says. “The lives of the Faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ’s sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.”

The ministerial priesthood, then, was prefigured in the ministry of priests in the Old Testament; it was perfected in the sacrifice of Christ, the one true priest and head of the Church; and in the ministry of those ordained to Holy Orders, Christ’s headship is brought before us and his sacrifice commemorated.

And it is for this reason that the ministerial priesthood is needed and will always be needed by the Church.



# How serious is laughter?



In a homily, Karl Rahner once commented that in the Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel, Jesus makes a rather stunning statement. He says, "blessed are you who are now weeping, for you shall laugh". Rahner suggests that Jesus is teaching that our final state of happiness in heaven will not just lift us out of our sadness and dry away our tears, it will bring us to laughter, to "an intoxication of joy". Laughter is integral to the final ecstasy.

**“There are many kinds of laughter and not all of them are healthy or godly”**

Further still, if laughter constitutes the final happiness in heaven, then it should follow that whenever we are laughing, we are on good terms with reality. Laughter, Rahner submits, is part of the eternal praise of God at the end of time.

However, this can be glib and misleading. Not all laughter gives God praise and not all laughter suggests that we are on good terms with reality. Laughter can also be cheap, glib, and wrong. The final joy of heaven is not always found at that place in a room where folks are cracking up with laughter.

There are many kinds of laughter and not all of them are healthy or godly. There is the laughter of drunkenness, of deadening your senses and jettisoning your moral compass and normal sensitivity.



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

That kind of laughter will not be heard in some noisy little corner of heaven. Then there is the laughter of sarcasm, laughter that belittles others, that delights in others' problems, and sees itself as superior. That too won't be heard in heaven. Then there is the laughter that's predicated on being insensitive and blind to the pain of others, that can enjoy itself even while Lazarus is starving just outside the door. The gospels are clear as to where that kind laughter lands us. As well, there is the laughter of pure superficiality, laughter that comes easy because it really doesn't care about anything. Such laughter, though harmless, speaks of nothing.

However there are other kinds of laughter that speak of health and of God. There is the laughter of pure spontaneous energy, seen most clearly in the natural joyous bubbling over of the life – princi-

ply inside of a young person, like the delight you see in a toddler delighting in her first steps. This is the laughter of sheer delight, one that says, "It's great to be alive!" When we laugh in this way, we are honouring God and thanking God for the gift of life and energy – since the best way to thank a gift-giver is to enjoy thoroughly the gift and delight in it.

### Spontaneous

This kind of laughter is most spontaneous is us when we are young and, sadly, generally becomes more difficult for us as the wounds, failures, pressures, and anxieties of adulthood begin to depress our spontaneous energies. We still laugh, but when we stop feeling spontaneous delight in our lives, when healthy laughter dries up, we tend to turn to unhealthy kinds of laughter to try to lift ourselves out of our depres-

sion. Hence, the loud, boisterous, cranked-up laughter we hear at our parties is often really only our attempt to keep depression at bay. See how happy I am!

Peter Berger once wrote that laughter is one of the proofs for the existence of God in that our capacity to laugh in any situation shows that, deep down, we are aware that no situation ultimately binds us. Our capacity to laugh in any situation, no matter how grave or threatening, shows that on some level we are aware that we transcend that situation. That's why a prisoner being led to his execution might still joke with his executioner and why a dying person can still enjoy a bit of irony. Healthy laughter isn't just godly. It manifests transcendence inside us.

But, not all laughter is born equal. There is a laughter that simply bespeaks superficiality, forced lightness, insensitivity, drunkenness, or a thinly disguised attempt to keep depression at bay. That is not the laughter of heaven. However, there is another kind of laughter, spoken of by Jesus in the Beatitudes, which is a laughter that simply delights in the joy of

being alive and (in that delight) intuits its own transcendence. That kind of laughter is a key component in love and sanctity. It will be one of the "intoxications of joy" that we will feel in heaven.

If this is true, then the holiest person you know is not the humorless, dour, easily offended, over-pious person you deem as serious, deep, and spiritual whom you do not necessarily want as your table companion. The holiest person you know is probably the person you want beside you at table.

**“That kind of laughter is a key component in love and sanctity. It will be one of the ‘intoxications of joy’ that we will feel in heaven”**

When I was a novice in religious life, our assistant novice director, an over-serious, fearful man, frequently cautioned us against levity and humor, telling us, that there isn't a single recorded incident in the gospels of Jesus laughing. Now deceased, I suspect the man is in heaven. I also suspect that from that vantage point, he would drop that caution.

**“Peter Berger once wrote that laughter is one of the proofs for the existence of God in that our capacity to laugh in any situation shows that, deep down, we are aware that no situation ultimately binds us”**

# The Kingdom of God and its taskforce

**T**he voice of John the Baptist is now silenced behind prison walls. It is time for Jesus to begin his mission. He leaves his home and work in Nazareth and settles initially in Capernaum, a lakeside town not too far away. There he begins his preaching with a short but challenging message. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Referring to a kingdom might suggest territorial domination so it is probably better to speak of the reign of God as an expression of personal following rather than political power.

## The dream of Jesus

Jesus had a dream for our world. He dreamt of life on earth being a mirror of heaven. Towards the realisation of his dream, he began to tell the people that there is another way. Instead of the nightmare of constant wars, he spoke of brothers and sisters in the one family of God.

**“This is nothing less than a revolution turning a value system upside down like the revolution of a wheel”**

Instead of bitterness and retaliation, he spoke of a love that refuses to be poisoned and even prays for the oppressor. In place of the spectre of famine which will always haunt a greedy, selfish world, he set up the practical criterion of how we feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

In the murky world of deeds of darkness, he wanted all of life to be a clear reflection of the light of heaven. He prayed that the will of the Father would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So, when Jesus began to tell the people that there is another way, his first word, repent, was about thinking in a new way, and letting go of the old, sinful way of life. Repent ... ponder in a new light ... let go of the old hatreds ... put on a new mind ... enter a new set of values ... be born again of water and the Holy Spirit. This is nothing less than a revolution turning a value system upside down like the revolution of a wheel.



Pope Francis called it a revolution of tenderness.

## The Sermon on the Mount

Nowhere is this revolution of values and ideals expressed so clearly as in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, Chapters 5-7). It begins with the Beatitudes, which Pope Francis calls the identity card of a Christian. The audience that Jesus addressed believed that the signs that a person was blessed by God were prosperity, power, prestige and popularity (according to Albert Nolan, a South African Dominican, recently deceased). Jesus turned these standards upside down. For Jesus, the signs of the blessed were a lack of desire for prosperity, with gentleness in place of power, working for justice and peace, people who are pure in heart so that they see God's presence, and the spiritual strength of those who stand firm even when they are persecuted on account of their faith.

Jesus began to proclaim his dream. There is another way. The world is meant to be a mirror of God's justice, compassion and love. To realise the dream, we must let worldly values be turned upside down. We must repent, we must think again.

## The taskforce of the dream

Dreaming about a better future is not much use unless there is a plan and taskforce for its implementation. Immediately after announcing the reign of God, Jesus called four fishermen to leave their nets to follow him. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

The brothers Simon Peter and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, felt the call of Jesus so strongly that they immediately left their jobs and family. They were the first members of the taskforce called to implement the dream of Jesus for the world. Later this taskforce acquired the Greek name, *ekklesia*, which literally means people who are called out.



The Gaelic name, *eaglais*, derives from *ekklesia*, but unfortunately the English word *church*, comes from *kirk*, referring to the building rather than the people who are called. The taskforce for implementing the dream of Jesus would be this Church or ecclesia.

## Mission and maintenance

It is significant that of the first four to receive the call, two were casting nets and two were mending nets: mission and maintenance, the twin arms of the apostolate. Mission goes out to those not yet in Christ's net. Maintenance involves the routine tasks of serving those who already are disciples. Catholic evangelisation has been compared to a fisherman waiting for a fish to jump into a boat! Mind you, it can happen. One day I had sea trout hooked. Coming close to the boat the fish made a wonderful leap, escaped from the hook ... and landed at my feet!

The world today is becoming increasingly secular. Sadly, there are

many who are nominally Christian but are far from the ideals of the gospel. On the other hand, there are people who belong to no particular Church but are deeply committed to justice, peace, caring for the sick and sharing with the poor. As St Augustine expressed it, there are many in the Church who do not belong to the kingdom, while there are many in the kingdom who do not belong to the Church.

**“The charity of works is the unmistakable proof of the charity of words”**

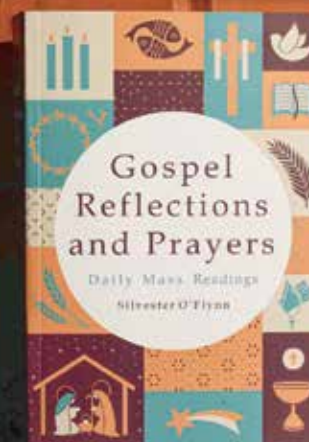
Pope Francis said that Jesus wants evangelisers who proclaim the Good News not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence. The charity of works is the unmistakable proof of the charity of words.

## Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come in the light of your Word made flesh  
And with the fire of the Holy Spirit.  
Renew the heart of the Church, renew the face of the Earth.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

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# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## An uplifting tour of our folk music heritage

One of my favourite Christmas albums is *Phil Cunningham's Christmas Songbook* and one of my favourite TV shows is the *Transatlantic Sessions*, so I was in my element last Friday night on BBC Four.

It was the start of **Way-faring Stranger with Phil Cunningham**, a three part series on the links between the folk music of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the USA, presented by Scotland's best known accordion player. Phil Cunningham was a genial and laid-back host as he explored his musical roots. There were so many strands it was hard to keep track of them all, but it was always fascinating and entertaining. The 'angelic harmonies' of 'sophisticated' Church music were designed to lift thoughts to heaven, but congregations sometimes became just observers. The Reformation, especially with John Calvin in Scotland, dispensed with the 'ornate' music of the Catholic Church and introduced congregational singing in the vernacular. With the plantations of Ulster this had an influence on the music of Ireland as the emigrants-colonisers brought their music with them, gradually forming fusions with the indigenous music. Later, with further emigration westward the music was brought to the USA, especially the Appalachians, where it morphed again.



Phil Cunningham

The music and commentary blended well, with performers including Paul Brady, Máiread Ní Mhaonaigh and Rhiannon Giddens – she sang a plaintive version of the title song, an old hymn about the longing for heaven and as Rosanne Cash pointed out, connection with loved ones who died before us. The show also featured the secular music of the times, especially romantic ballads – often

condemned by the Presbyterian Church in the North for being allegedly 'obscene', as one contemporary document put it.

### Show

While it was a great show, I thought it could have been a lot more comprehensive if the full all-Ireland influence figured more strongly. In a particularly apt piece of programming this was followed

that Friday by the start of a repeat of the brilliant first series of **The Transatlantic Sessions**, from 1995, featuring a much younger Phil Cunningham and the likes of Mary Black, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, Emmylou Harris and more.

A long way from being my favourite programme is **Big Sky** (Disney+) yet another US crime drama series. Don't be fooled by the Disney branding, this one is from their more adult orientated Star channel, and this is certainly for adults, with grim crime violence and bad language, though not overly graphic. It started well with quirky characters and occasional humour topped off with a shocking end to the first episode. However, three episodes in, the appeal is beginning to fade as it becomes more formulaic and predictable. The Montana scenery is striking but if the plot isn't up to it you might as well watch a travelogue. Religion figures, but, as so often happens in TV drama, the supposedly religious people are weird. There's a cult in the woods but so far this seems random and not connected to the main plot, which concerns disappearing women and human trafficking. We get a wad of transgender promotion from one character who also says that psychotic people are usually religious! To appeal to the psychotic man keeping them hostage the

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### WALK FOR LIFE: WEST COAST

EWTV Saturday January 21, 7.30pm

Live coverage of the important pro-life event.

#### THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST MANUSCRIPT: JULIAN OF NORWICH

BBC 4 Sunday (night) January 22, 12.05am

Dr Janina Ramirez tells the story of Revelations of Divine Love, the first book ever written in English by a woman - Julian of Norwich, in 1373 - and kept hidden for centuries.

#### HOW THE HOLOCAUST BEGAN

BBC Two Monday January 23, 9pm

Historian James Bulgin reveals the origins of the Holocaust in the German invasion of the Soviet Union, exploring the mass murder, collaboration and experimentation that led to the 'final solution'.

victims start singing hymns – musically excellent but in context it felt rather cynical. Further, the kidnapper has a dysfunctional relationship with his overbearing mother who, wouldn't you know, has a crucifix on her wall.

### Drama

Contrast this with **Happy Valley** (BBC One, Sunday), recently returned for a third series. This is also adult drama with crime violence and bad language, but it is so much more genuine on a human and dramatic level. It can be emotionally searing – after a one-hour episode you can feel you've been through the wringer, and each episode packs so much in that it feels like a feature film. The acting, especially by the three female

leads – Sarah Lancaster, Siobhán Finneran and Charlie Murphy is outstanding – BAFTAs ahead I hope.

There's a crime plot as expected but also the ongoing story of jailed psychopath Tommy Lee Royce (James Norton, the minister from *Grantchester*) and the ongoing effect on his traumatised victims. There's an odd plot device where a prison chaplain (a clergyman of indeterminate denomination) tells the police something presumably told in confidence.

In last Sunday night's episode there was a touching but difficult discussion on forgiveness in the most challenging of situations in *Happy Valley* – ironic title or what!



Pat O'Kelly

# Music

## A fascinating score for a small orchestra

While the National Symphony Orchestra saluted 2023 at the National Concert Hall (NCH) with a programme of Viennese and other bon bons on New Year's Day, it later returned to its 2022/23 Subscription Series with Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto and Stravinsky's Pulcinella ballet.

The latter dates from 1919 around the start of what is termed Stravinsky's 'neo-classical period'. After the extravagance of *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* for the Paris-based Ballets Russes, *Pulcinella* was something of a surprise.

Finding a score that he thought was by Pergolesi (1710-1736), although this was later attributed to three



Russian composer Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky.

lesser-known composers, the impresario Sergey Diaghilev asked Stravinsky to arrange the music for a scenario conceived by the dancer Léonide Massine with designs by Pablo Picasso.

Although initially hesitant,

Stravinsky agreed and provided a fascinating score for a small orchestra, without percussion but with, unusually for ballet, solo soprano, tenor and bass voices. With maestro Peter Whelan joined by Paula Murrin, Nick Pritchard and John Molloy, *Pulcinella* proved highly enjoyable at the NCH.

### Soloists

Before Stravinsky, the Mozart Concerto had soloists Maedhbh O'Rourke and Richard Allen responding to the music with alluring fusions of delicacy and panache. Interestingly, while the harp was not among Mozart's favourite instruments he wrote beautifully for it.

The piece dates from 1778 when the composer was in

Paris with his mother Anna Maria. Far from well, she actually died there on July 3 that year leaving her devastated son financially insecure. However, some relief came through a commission from aristocratic diplomat and flautist, Adrien-Louis de Bonnières requesting a concerto for his harpist daughter Marie Louise-Philippine and himself.

Writing to his father in Salzburg, Mozart described Bonnières playing his instrument "extremely well" with the daughter "magnifique" on the harp. With its central Andantino being particularly lyrical, the three-movement work, devoid of any hint of Mozart's personal trauma, established itself as a concert favourite.

Before Christmas, I intended mentioning a CD but with space at a premium Claves label No. 50-3053 had to be pigeon holed. Recorded in Drogheda's St Peter's Church, 'The bright day is done' features virtuoso pianist Finghin Collins.

Set in train by Cécile Chaminade's *Aubade*, this potpourri of delights covers a musical journey from dawn to dusk with some of the pieces better known than others. En route are two 'Hermit Thrushes' courtesy of America's Amy Beach and well-contrasted nocturnal essays by Clara and Robert Schumann.

There is also room for Schubert, Debussy, Bartók and Liszt – his *Harmonies du Soir*, from

his *Transcendental Studies*, with its highly dramatic central section brilliantly controlled in Collins' interpretation.

Irish music comes through John Field's mostly gentle *Midi*, Eric Sweeney's *Evening* – The Lighthouse at Hook Head and Gerard Barry's *Middy*. These latter two are part of the New Ross Piano Festival's *Ros Tapestry Suite* commission.

With the music's sense of trepidation, Barry's *Middy* has Finghin Collins equally tense in conveying fearful expectancy as the New Ross inhabitants, almost afraid to breathe, await the approaching Norman invasion in 1169. Silence creates as much, if not more, tension as sound.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Dom Marmion Centenary: the upcoming great commemoration of 2023

**Becoming Human, Becoming Divine: The Christian Life According to Blessed Columba Marmion** by Columba McCann OSB (Veritas, €9.99/£8.50 – prices subject to change)

Peter Costello

This year marks the centenary of the death of Blessed Columba Marmion in 1923. This is an anniversary which will be of great interest to many across Ireland, given his Dublin birth and his service to Dundrum parish (then a place in the country), where there is an active devotion to him, which means much to the older parishioners.

This book will play, I suspect, an active part in the upcoming celebrations. Over that century, which coincides with the decade of commemoration we are passing through, has Ireland as a whole greatly changed?

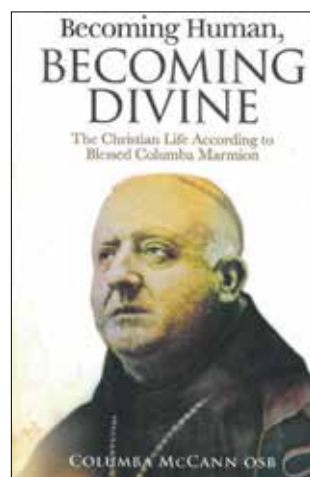
**“He stands out as one of Ireland’s most engaging spiritual writers of the last hundred years”**

The state of religion, not just Catholicism, but all religions has changed greatly. Blessed Columba would find it hard to recognise the places he had once known, and indeed the nation.

The street he was born in, Queen’s Street off the north quays, dates back to the 17th century, but in 1859 its appearance was typical of inner city Georgian Dublin. Today it is totally changed, a place with an unsettled atmosphere and a strange unpopulated appearance, a place to pass through rather than linger in, after most of the former inhabitants migrated or moved out to the new suburbs.

### Indication

These indications of change may well affect the current reception of this book. To my mind the editor Columba McCann, a monk at Glenstal, has managed to create an excellent and readable resumé as an essential expression of Mar-



mion’s three famous books.

The content of these was based on talks that he gave to his monks in the years just before his death in Belgium. On publication they became immediately popular all over Europe and remained so until the 1960s. They are preserved in English still in a collected edition available in an edition published in Paris.

This present book will form not only a fine introduction to his spiritual thought, but also to those aspects of it which are relevant to today, a flexibility to allow the individual to draw from this deep well.

**“The state of religion, not just Catholicism, but all religions has changed greatly”**

But what will be the effect of his writing on the present and rising generations? That the historian will watch over the next 12 months with great interest.

He stands out as one of Ireland’s most engaging spiritual writers of the last hundred years. There are those who will pray that his influence, so strong in the past, will remain so into the coming century. It will be the work of 2023 to develop a better knowledge of the man himself, his writings, and teachings and so renew those aspects of them that can infuse with the present day and inspire the future.

Certainly a book to read now and to be inspired by for the present. But does the changed Irish scene imply a changed Irish psyche as so much public discussion seems to imply?

Peter Costello

**T**here is still time to catch the annual showing of the Henry Vaughan Bequest of Turner watercolours at the National Gallery of Ireland before it closes at the end of the month. It is in the Print Gallery, reached from Clare Street, and is free with no booking needed.

The Henry Vaughan Bequest is a free annual display of light-filled Turner watercolours, bequeathed by English collector Henry Vaughan in 1900. This year’s selection will include the 31 Vaughan Bequest works, and five additional Turner watercolours, alongside eight of the artist’s much-loved *Liber Studiorum* prints.

These often very delicate images are shown in carefully controlled conditions, but they are truly remarkable. They show scenes in many countries captured in the swiftest and most impressionist brush strokes, moments of calm contrasting with storm and wave.

These works were most often the basis of later paintings, but also of engraving for travel and topographical works in those “scenes of our own and other nations” sort of titles. They were used so often that we will all have seen them used as illustrations without knowing we are looking at a Turner image.

**“Turner’s genius, by contrast, was to deftly capture the essence of a scene or landscape”**

The earliest of the images here, *Edinburgh from below Arthur’s Seat* might be called a very “Celtic” scene, captures well the often sodden air around the Scottish capital. It is in contrast to the two scenes from forty years later, *The Harbour at Ostend* and *The Doge’s Palace, Venice* which are brilliant with light and sea mist in contrast.

### Children

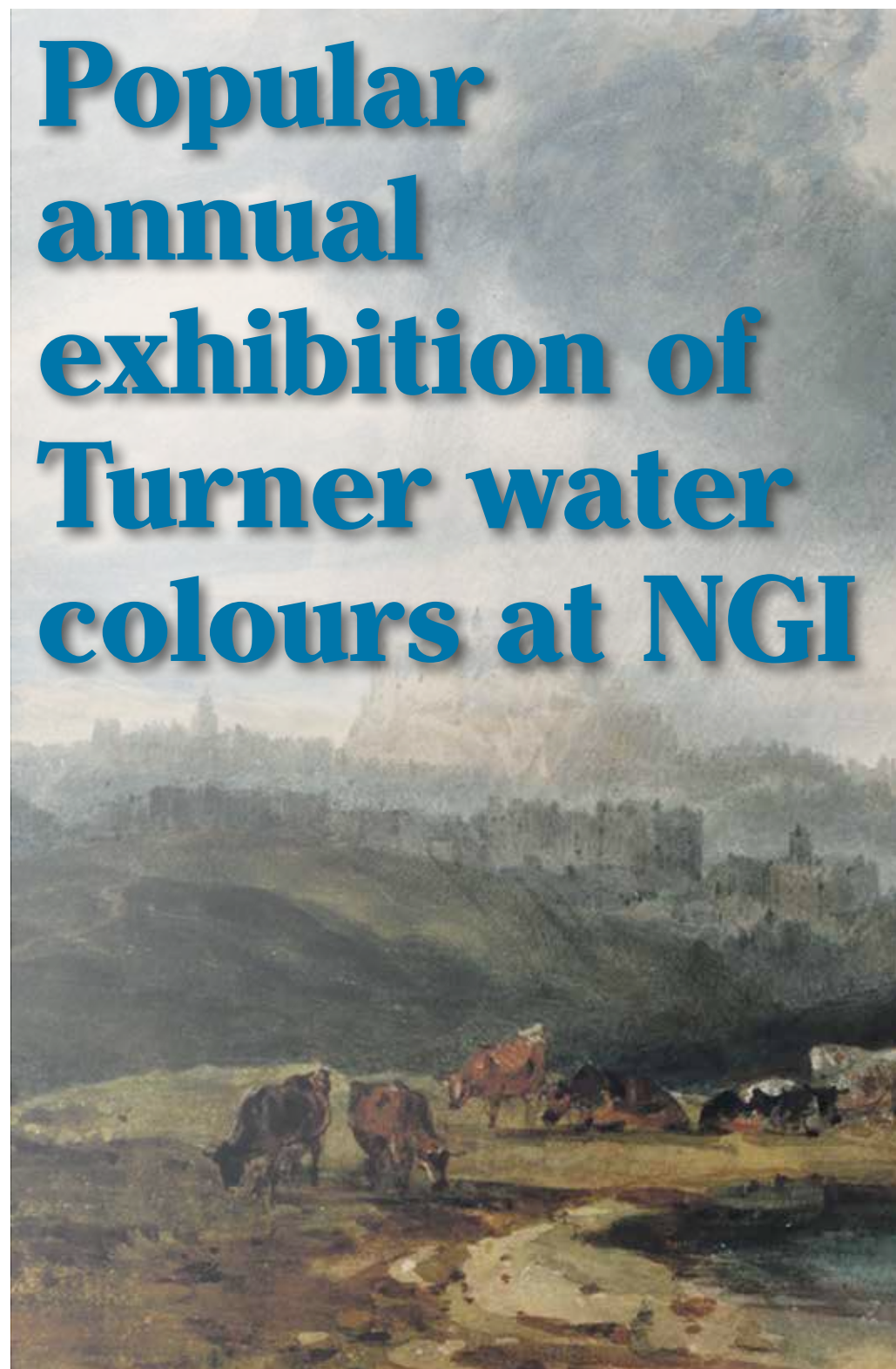
Water colour is often the first medium that children learn to use. It may seem easy compared with painting in oils, but the amateur has to work hard to achieve a memorable image

Turner’s genius, by contrast, was to deftly capture the essence of a scene or landscape. I have seen these images many times in the past. But they are always a source of pleasure, which brings light to the grim of dark days of January.

Curator: Niamh MacNally. Continues to 31 January 2023 in the Print Gallery, admission free.

Meanwhile, the full scale Turner show, “The Sun is God”, on loan from the Tate in London continues to February 6. That too is well worth seeing, though there is an admission charge and visits must be booked.

# Popular annual exhibition of Turner water colours at NGI



Ostend Harbour, c. 1840.

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.

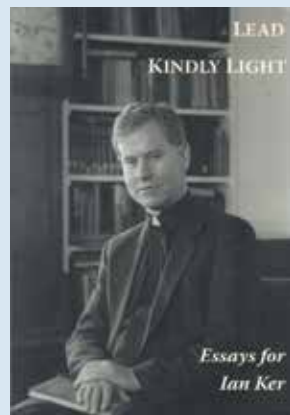


Edinburgh from below  
Arthur's Seat, JMW  
Turner, 1801.



The Doge's Palace Venice, c. 1840.

## Wide-ranging tributes to a great Newman scholar



**Lead Kindly Night: Essays for Ian Kerr**, Ed. Paul Shrimpton  
Gracewing, £20.00/€22.75)

**Peter Costello**

This book is a *festschrift* to mark, the editor says, the fourscore years of the life of Ian Kerr, the Newman scholar. He succeeded to the eminence of the late Fr Charles Dessain who sustained over so many years the great project to edit and publish the papers of St John Henry Newman. (The quietly charming Fr Dessain had Irish family connections and paid several visits to Ireland to see his cousins.)

Kerr's monument was his great biography, which despite the appearance of works by other authors continues to hold the esteem of both scholar and readers. This

book was conceived at a meal in Oxford in September 2021.

Those familiar with the production of such books will be amazed as I was to read that this attractively produced book with an international roll call of friends, admirers and academics went from conception to birth in only ten months. Such is the result that sheer love, regard and respect can at times achieve. All honour to Paul Shrimpton, his publisher Gracewing and all those who contributed.

### Reminiscences

There are some 18 pieces altogether, which move seamlessly from reminiscences and tributes from eminent churchmen (including the late Cardinal Pell) through consideration of Newman and devotional theology, Newman as a man of letters in his time, Newman's ideas and about education and the role of universities, to conclude with what the editor terms "The Great Battle", the resistance to the rise of heresy as Newman and, by extension Chesterton, saw.

Gracewing is a traditionalist publishing house and naturally many of the articles reflect this outlook. All the material makes for excellent reading. But I have some reservations. The trend of the book is to see Newman as

an English saint and scholar. (He was certainly a part of the canon of Victorian literature that I studied at my American university, and to see him in the total range for British writing between 1800 and 1900 was very revealing – this would not I think have been possible in these islands on an undergraduate course.)

I have a major reservation arising from this. The contributors pass over Newman's Irish experiences. These, however, had an important role of defining the man and his outlook, but one which British writers are happy to ignore. There is no presentation of what kind of Catholic university it was that the Irish bishops wished to have (a reflection of Louvain) and what Newman gave them (an echo of medieval Oxford).

However, this matter is amended in another context, for Dr Shrimpton has edited from the Newman archives *My Campaign in Ireland Part II*. In this the controversial and "sensitive matters" that caused Newman some anxiety and which he wanted to have kept confidential are addressed. This solid and important volume will be reviewed in the pages shortly.

Meanwhile devotees of Newman will have much to enjoy and to reflect on in this finely produced book.

## The art and craft of persuasion in private and public life



**The Art of Disagreeing Well: How Debate Teaches Us to Listen and Be Heard**  
by Bo Seo  
(William Collins, £14.99/€16.99)

**Peter Costello**

Bo Seo, the author of this very interesting book, is of Korean background but was raised in Australia. He made his name as a school and college debater, and went on to build on this to work as a journalist but is now pursuing a legal career at Harvard. Altogether an interesting young man, and in this book he writes revealingly about his vocation as a persuader.

Having myself attended a school where the debating society was a renowned feature of our last years as school boys, I was in position to witness en blé some young men later distinguished in law, politics, and academic life.

Bo Seo is one of this ilk. He sees debating as a matter of winning support for your view to win out over your opponent. This is the model for law and politics that we derive from Greece and Rome, and still influences our social life.

From another point of view, however, what is required in both public and private life is not conquest but compromise, winning the widest possible acceptance for a position that allows for social cohesion. But as we have witnessed in the ballots for the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the USA, "No compromise" is the motto of all too many people active today in the world.

The culture of Greece and Rome, which was often far from peaceful and philosophical, is not the only way in the world, as anthropologists have shown us. But we in Europe, say, expect Asia to accept what we teach, it is not for

us to learn from Asia. All too many Christians are happy to accept things from the Old Testament but to ignore the words in the Gospels that run quite contrary to them. They forget they are living under a new rather than an ancient covenant and dispensation.

As the book passes on to dealing with a bully, raising citizens, and "how to fight and stay together", it becomes more serious. The final chapter, "How to debate in the future", dealing largely with the internet, is altogether the most interesting.

This is a book for the school debater as well as those in public life. While a reader might want to have other aspects of debate, disagreement and resolution dealt with, this book will open horizons to even the most accomplished debater. Anything that can improve the quality of discussion in public life will be a worthy contribution to modern culture.

Though our own national assembly is, for the most part, a decorous place, compared with what we see in Washington, even our own TDs might learn from these pages.

# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)

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Image: Roge Wavio (29) of Kalacha, Marsabit, Kenya holds produce she has grown with support from Concern. Photographer: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide

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[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)



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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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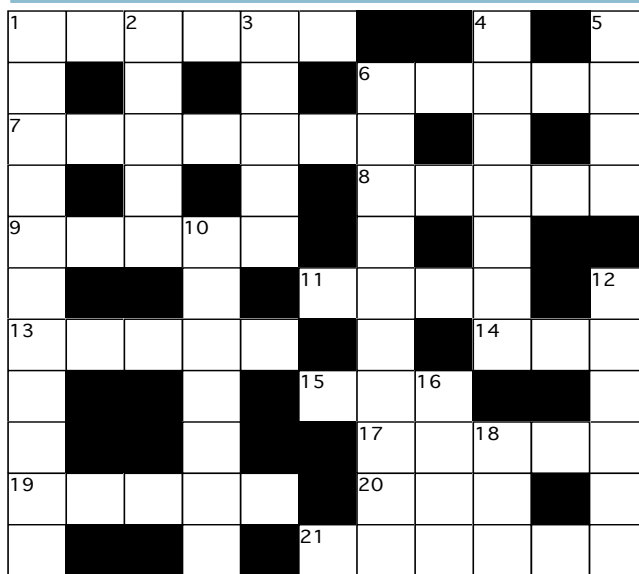
**Trócaire**

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 466



#### Across

- 1 'Ready, \_\_\_\_\_, go!' (6)
- 6 Below (5)
- 7 Enjoying a book (7)
- 8 Truck (5)
- 9 It falls from the sky as rain (5)
- 11 Puts a question (4)
- 13 Travels like a ball or a wheel (5)
- 14 Notice with the eyes (3)
- 15 Its wood is used to make hurleys (3)
- 17 Rips (5)
- 19 Rub out (5)
- 20 You listen with this (3)
- 21 Commands (6)

#### Down

- 1 Tool you turn (11)
- 2 Spot on, not just close (5)
- 3 Not as wet (5)
- 4 Write this on an envelope to show where it should be delivered (7)
- 5 Speak to God (4)
- 6 One of the pair who treated Cinderella very badly (4,6)
- 10 It happens when the sun is blocked by the moon (7)
- 12 Banquets (6)
- 16 The top part of your body (4)
- 18 I am; you \_\_\_\_ (3)

### SOLUTIONS, JANUARY 12

GORDIUS NO. 593

**Across** — 1 Get a move on 6 Hand 10 Veins 11 Rapturous 12 Blanket 15 Lingo 17 Riga 18 Page 19 Bible 21 Country music 23 Enter 24 Role 25 Anil 26 Humid 28 Enemies 33 Ecumenism 35 Sate 36 Playschool

**Down** — 1 Give 2 Tail light 3 Mason 4 Verve 5 Oops 7 Adorn 8 Discovered 9 Lullaby 13 Kilo 14 Trundle 16 Speechless 20 Broke into 21 Cradled 22 Rake 27 Mount Sinai 29 Nimby 31 Vial 32 Fill

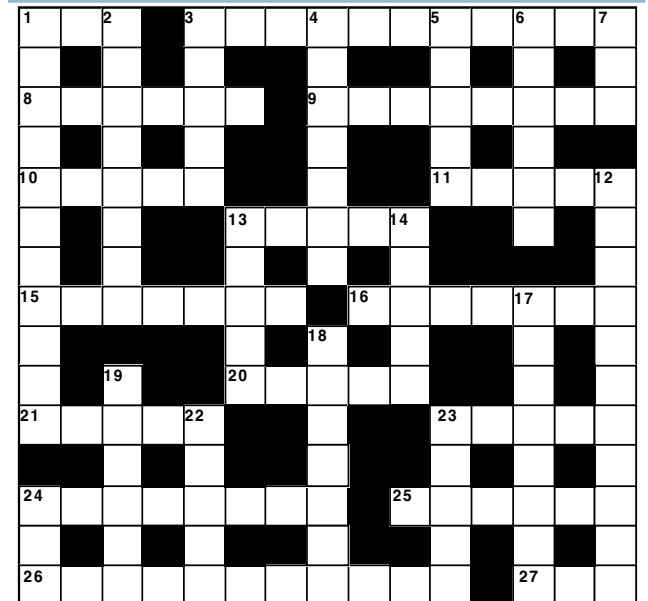
CHILDREN'S No. 465

**Across** — 1 Sam Maguire 7 Bullets 8 Eager 10 Apricot 13 Iran 15 Each 16 Above 17 Ends 19 Laid 20 Tie 21 Away 22 Riding

**Down** — 1 Submarine 2 Malaria 3 Ate 4 Upset 5 Rung 6 Fur 9 Election 11 October 12 Peeled 14 Nasty 18 Now

### Crossword

Gordius 594



#### Across

- 1 Cleaning equipment (3)
- 3 Chips (6,5)
- 8 & 6d Managers give out objects of pagan worship (6,6)
- 9 America's national sport (8)
- 10 Fledgeling (5)
- 11 Reverie (5)
- 13 Chopped into cubes (5)
- 15 Are mink moved around when you make this small dish? (7)
- 16 Perfect example (7)
- 20 Carly is upset by synthetic material (5)
- 21 A molar, for example (5)
- 23, 27a & 7d Spanish resort area whose name means 'Coast of the Sun' (5,3,3)
- 24 Tangy sweet (4,4)
- 25 Respect, high regard (6)
- 26 Sceptical, disbelieving (11)
- 27 See 23 across

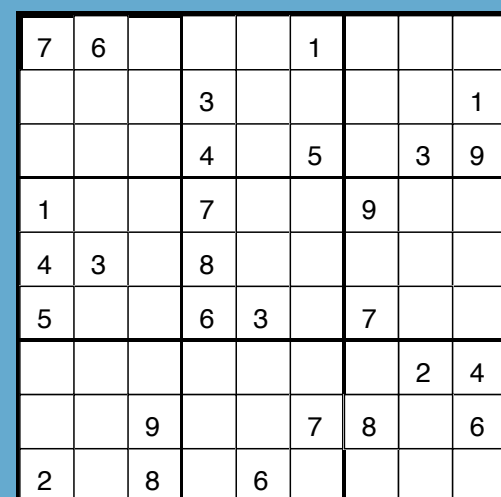
#### Down

- 1 Method of flying in the legends of the Middle East (5,6)
- 2 Extremely valuable metal (8)
- 3 A dappling of spots of colour (5)
- 4 Old-style golf club (7)
- 5 Devil, demon (5)
- 6 See 8 across
- 7 See 23 across
- 12 Holy peak associated with Elijah, that gives its name to a religious order founded in the 13th century (5,6)
- 13 Machine with which to bore holes (5)
- 14 A play (5)
- 17 Prayerful wish to one embarking on a journey (3,5)
- 18 Surgical instrument (7)
- 19 System of star-signs (6)
- 22 Privet, for example (5)
- 23 Barrels (5)
- 24 Ms Hewson can be seen in part of Somalia (3)

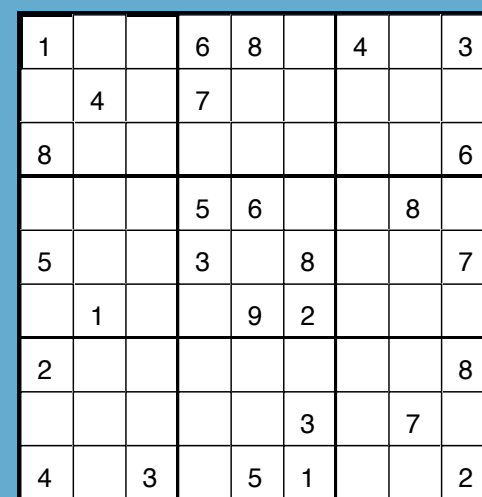
## Sudoku Corner

466

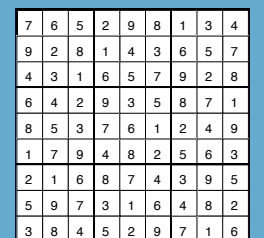
### Easy



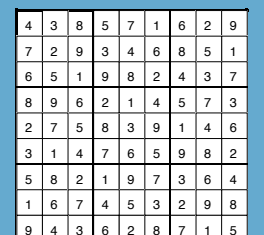
### Hard



### Last week's Easy 465



### Last week's Hard 465



Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# Senior hurling dedication needed among laity

**In the last 30 years** I have worked in seven different parishes. They were a mixture of city, small town, and rural communities. The one thing they all have in common is the very strong presence of the GAA. The GAA is based on parish structures and the greatest strength of the organisation is that local community. In each parish there are many people of all ages involved in the local club at different levels and with various degrees of commitment.



**Commitment**

Probably the group that must give the greatest amount of time and commitment are the members of the senior hurling panel. In different parts of the country this could be football, camogie or ladies football but in our corner of the country, it is senior hurling. The senior hurling panel in the 21st Century is asked to give a total commitment. In many cases they must follow a particular diet, they must attend training a number of times a week, and they give up many aspects of their social lives and personal relationships for most of the calendar year. Why are they prepared to do this? They want to because they love what

they do. They love their parish, and they are driven by a pride to represent their community. They believe in who they are, what they are capable of, and they know that this is something bigger than themselves. They are part of a team, and they are part of a tradition going back centuries. Despite this level of commitment, the players do it voluntarily and receive no monetary payment for their work.

**Attention**

Why am I drawing attention to this unique aspect of Irish life in a Catholic newspaper? Well,

to put it bluntly, I believe that if our parish communities are to survive and thrive into the future then we are going to need a group of people in every parish with a commitment like that of the senior hurling panel. Many of our parishes no longer have resident priests and that number will grow very quickly. For years we have tinkered with the concept of greater lay involvement and parish pastoral councils but much of our lip service to the role of laity has been the equivalent of Junior B hurling. I mean no disrespect to either Junior B hurlers or the many wonderful people who contribute in various ways in our communities but if our parishes are to grow, then we

all will have to wake up to a very different type of ministry which goes way beyond an involvement of convenience to one of commitment like that of the senior GAA players. This will involve many priests having to let go of some of the sacred cows of administration and other aspects of ministry which we think only ordained people can do. It will call for an equal stepping up to the plate of a group of faith filled individuals in each community who are prepared to honestly take responsibility and work together for the future of their parish and its spiritual life. There will be need for education and formation on all sides and serious reflection on the role of a priest in such a

new pastoral setting. But most of all there will have to be a new understanding of commitment that moves from Junior B to senior hurling!

**Postscript to Christmas**

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone  
when the kings and princes are home  
when the shepherds are back  
with their flocks  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost, to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner, to rebuild  
the nations  
to bring peace among the people  
to make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

**No Plan B**

This weekend I'm getting a new boss when Fr Niall Coll from Donegal is ordained as the bishop of Ossory. Forty years ago, one of Niall's predecessors Bishop Larry Forristal visited the schools of the diocese before Confirmation. It was learned through the grapevine that the new bishop was asking the children the same question in every school; "Do you know what a Pectoral cross is?" The standard expected answer was; "It is the big heavy cross that hangs around the bishop's neck". All was going well until the bishop arrived in the school of his vicar general's parish and as this was the only parish in the diocese to have a monsignor the bishop decided to change his question to "Do you know what a monsignor is?" The children had only learned one possible answer.....!



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Millions of children throughout the world are suffering from hunger and malnutrition due to conflict, disease, displacement, and other factors. And the situation in Africa is only getting worse. Millions of women and children are struggling with inadequate diets which can lead to stunting and other health problems. Countless children are dying of malnutrition each day.

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**Your gift will assuredly help a missionary to relieve a child's suffering. It could save a life. Whatever you can spare will be sent WITHOUT DEDUCTION and will be gratefully received.**



"Insofar as you did this to one of the least of My brethren, you did it to Me".



"It is love alone that matters."  
- St Therese

**MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS**

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

**We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass**

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**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?**

**Please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children**

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

**Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.**

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