

# The Irish Catholic

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## Religious ‘dismayed’ as bishops go it alone to promote priestly vocations

**EXCLUSIVE**  
Chai Brady

Many members of religious orders say they feel “hurt and dismayed” that a new initiative designed to promote vocations will not include them and only promote diocesan priesthood, *The Irish Catholic* has been told.

It is understood that many religious congregations feel that the ‘Year of Vocations’, which is due to begin on April 30 should have included promoting vocations to consecrated life as well as diocesan priesthood. However, bishops were keen to keep the focus squarely on promoting vocations for priests to work in parishes.

Members of orders who spoke to *The Irish Catholic* said that many religious sisters and brothers feel that their contribution is being under-valued.

It is understood that the Association of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland (AMRI), which represents these congregations, is to make representation to the bishops’ conference to express disappointment. One source told this newspaper that it has created “significant hurt and tension”.

Another said that many members are “hurt and dismayed”.

However, a number of sources familiar with the plans who spoke

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### Lá fhéile Bríde!



The Poor Clare Sisters, Carlow, prepare to celebrate St Brigid’s day on February 1, ahead of the first-ever national holiday in honour of the fifth Century saint which takes place on February 6.

### Pause Irish synod until global debate done – Vatican cardinal

Ruadhán Jones

The Church in Ireland should pause its national synod until the conclusion of the global process, the Secretary General of the Vatican Synod has suggested.

Cardinal Mario Grech recommended that Ireland “proceed at a slower pace” while the global discernment process is ongoing.

The Church in Ireland should “wait for the conclusion of the universal synodal process”, said Cardinal Grech, adding that it “might help you to work in a better way on your own synodal pathway”.

The first stage of the Irish synodal pathway, launched a few months before Pope Francis announced the global synod in October 2021, concluded last year.

The Irish bishops’ conference had planned on ongoing synodal interactions before a national synodal gathering in 2025.

However, the global synodal process won’t conclude until autumn 2024, following a meeting of bishops in Rome.

In his interview for the February edition of *Intercom*, Cardinal Grech described the universal synod as “a blessing”.

Ireland is “in an advantageous position” because of the “ecclesial wealth” coming from all the Church as Ireland goes “through its this synodal process,” the cardinal added.

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# The piercing need for good discernment in the Church

**D**iscussing vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Church in Ireland is a subject that oddly causes friction and exposes a lot of underlying sensitivity. This is evidenced by our front page story this week where some members of religious orders have expressed disappointment that the forthcoming 'Year of Vocations' will focus on diocesan priesthood rather than vocations in general. For their part, the bishops have discerned that the primary focus now must be diocesan priesthood where the crisis is most acutely felt.

istic strategy for promoting vocations.

But, facts on the ground have meant that naïve optimism has given way to critical realism. Yet, not everyone is on the same hymn sheet. Despite the fact that there is no Church without priesthood given the centrality of the Eucharist, some are actively opposed to promoting vocations to the priesthood seeing the collapse of the priesthood as part of some divine plan. This provides more comfort than facing the reality of failure and the consequences of a lack of creativity and ability to promote vocations to priesthood.

### Promoting

You would think that as Irish Catholics we could all agree that promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life would be uncontroversial and something that we could all get behind. You'd be wrong.

**“It's almost as if optimism was seen as a realistic strategy for promoting vocations”**

For decades, discussion about vocations in Ireland has been bedevilled by ideology and different visions of the Church. I can remember when even using terms like the 'vocations crisis' was seen as disloyal. “We're about to turn the corner,” I was often told. Those of us who consistently pointed to the sharp decline and what this would mean in parishes were often criticised as “emphasising the negative”.

It's almost as if optimism was seen as a real-

istic strategy for promoting vocations.

But, facts on the ground have meant that naïve optimism has given way to critical realism.

Yet, not everyone is on the same hymn sheet.

Despite the fact that there is no Church without priesthood given the centrality of the Eucharist, some are actively opposed to promoting vocations to the priesthood seeing the collapse of the priesthood as part of some divine plan.

This provides more comfort than facing the reality of failure and the consequences of a lack of creativity and ability to promote vocations to priesthood.

### Sensitivity

Another sensitivity that is sometimes articulated is an exaggerated, if noble, desire to ensure that no-one feels excluded. This is why on Vocations Sunday – a day specifically set aside by the Church to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life – parishioners are often treated to homilies that equate Baptism with vocation and make no specific mention of priesthood or religious life.

A further complication is the presence of so many single people within our parish communities. Undoubtedly in a bid to be kind and inclusive, we hear frequently about what is often described as the vocation to the single life. Following this logic, any talk even of marriage let alone priesthood or

religious life, will lead to single people feeling excluded.

**“A further complication is the presence of so many single people within our parish communities”**

One that I have personally experienced when giving presentations to groups of priests and religious is the debate about whether to speak about 'vocation' or 'vocations'. The latter, I'm told, means we are obsessed about numbers and, so the logic goes, we shouldn't think in terms of numbers but in terms of the general sense of 'vocation' to which we are all called to live out our Christian commitment.

Numbers, of course, are not everything – but they are an indication of the vitality of the Church. A Church with no or few vocations is not a Church in a healthy state. Nor if as we believe the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, does God want a Eucharistic famine. That's bad discernment.

### Discernment

The challenge of discernment is to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, not just canonise our own opinions or the results of our own lack of action.

There will always be a tension in this, what we might even call a necessary tension. This tension is at the heart of being a synodal Church where we hold the tension together and commit to patiently listening attentively to the Word of God.

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# Religious 'dismayed' as bishops go it alone to promote priestly vocations

» **Continued from Page 1**

to this newspaper stressed that there is no reason for religious to feel excluded. “The decision was taken to focus exclusively on diocesan priesthood – where the vocations crisis is most acutely felt,” one source said.

Fr Seamus McEntee, a member of the Church's Vocations Council insisted that it is not about diminishing vocations to religious life, but on keeping

focused on diocesan priesthood.

“I think the feeling is that it [promoting all vocations] might water down the message,” Fr McEntee told *The Irish Catholic*.

It is also understood that bishops were keen to build on the success of the 2008-2009 'Year of Vocation' which saw the number of men entering seminary increase from just 20 to 36 in one year after the intensive focus on vocations.

Figures compiled by this newspaper last autumn revealed that the number of men entering the national seminary in Maynooth to train for diocesan priesthood in the country's 26 dioceses was up slightly on last year.

Nine new students began their studies, up from six last year. Another ten men undertook a propaedeutic or preparatory year ahead of beginning their studies in Maynooth this coming autumn.

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# Catholic schools concerned about push for gender ideology

**Jason Osborne**

Catholic schools are not interested in seeing radical gender ideology forced onto pupils, according to a leading voice in Catholic education in Ireland.

Speaking on *The Week that Really Was* podcast, CEO of the Catholic Education Partnership, Alan Hynes, said that with regard to gender theory “we have to avoid teaching as fact stuff that is not actually established at all”.

“Catholic schools have been dealing with pupils presenting with questions around their gender and different gender identities in Catholic schools for some time now with very little drama because our schools aren’t concerned with the ideology... They’re just concerned with the person in front of them,” Mr Hynes said.

“The schools take guidance from the [child’s] parents about how to address the needs of that pupil and they do so respectfully, so it’s a pastoral response which we take quite seriously. That the child, the

pupil, must be respected, their dignity must be upheld, and their parents’ views have a huge amount of weight in terms of how Catholic schools will address the needs that their child has.”

Mr Hynes said that Minister for Children Roderic O’Gorman has voiced his support for teaching gender ideology in schools, but that the view coming back from medical professionals consulted by Catholic schools’ bodies is that it’s “not established scientific fact”.

“There is still a huge amount of disa-

greement at a scientific level as to what exactly is happening. Now that doesn’t mean we don’t try to meet these people with dignity and respect and to work with them, but that does mean we have to avoid teaching as fact stuff that is not actually established at all,” he said.

Gender ideology is still a matter of “contested public debate,” Mr Hynes said, adding that to try to “crowbar” it into schools isn’t “prudent”.

“It’s to involve schools in a battle that doesn’t really belong to them,” he said.

## Online Irish delegates to join European synod discussions

**Staff Reporter**

The in-person Irish delegates to the European phase of the synod process will be joined by ten online delegates representing different lobby groups and evangelisation initiatives.

Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin will lead a delegation of four to the assembly in the Czech capital Prague from February 5-12 including Nicola Brady, Chairperson of the Steering Committee, Fr Éamonn Fitzgibbon, convener of the Task Group for the Irish Synodal Pathway and Julieann Moran, General Secretary of the Irish Synodal Pathway.

They will be joined remotely by several other delegates including Ursula Halligan of We Are Church Ireland, Ciara Ferry from Net Ministries, Helena O’Shea of Youth 2000, Gary Carville of the bishops’

conference, Janet Forbes from the Archdiocese of Armagh, Fr Declan Hurley from the Meath Diocese, Sr Kathleen McGarvey, OLA, Provincial Leader of the OLA Sisters in Ireland, Deacon Frank McGuinness from Elphin, Paula McKeown from Down and Connor and Stephen Sherry, a seminarian for Clogher Diocese.

Ahead of the event, Archbishop Martin insisted that “this assembly in Prague will be a further important step in the ongoing synodal process of strengthening the Church through prayer and dialogue, and by sharing experiences, questions and hopes for the future.”

“Those of us who will be taking part in the European assembly are conscious of our responsibility to bring the fruits of what has been shared in many gatherings across Ireland in the past 15 months or so,” he said.

## St Patrick’s prepare for St Brigid...



Ronan O’Hanlon and Ryan McAlary, pupils in St Patrick’s Grammar School, Belfast, show off the fruits of their labours after joining parishioners of St Patrick’s Cathedral to make St Brigid’s Crosses.

## Aquinas’ skull unveiled at 700th anniversary of canonisation

**Staff reporter**

St Thomas Aquinas’ skull has arrived at the Dominican Convent of Toulouse in France, where it’s been placed in a new reliquary as the 700th anniversary of his canonisation is celebrated by the Church.

The new reliquary was created by Augustin Frison-Roche and was blessed during a Mass on January 27.

The Dominican order shared photos on social media of the rare event, saying that the opportunity to witness the opening of a reliquary is rare, “as it is sealed to guaran-

tee the authenticity of its contents”.

“The opening is only done for major reasons that require the renewal of the container,” they wrote in their Instagram post.

The reliquary will now embark on a journey across France and abroad.

## Finding Hope with Charlie Bird and Sr Stan

**Staff reporter**

Veteran RTÉ broadcaster and advocate for those living with Motor Neurone Disease Charlie Bird will visit Sr Stan at the Sanctuary on Dublin’s Stanhope Street on February 7 at 3pm, where Sr Stan will present him with a copy of her book, *Finding Hope*.

Sr Stan dedicated the book to Mr Bird “for his inspiration, positivity,

and courage in facing and living with motor neurone disease” In his contribution to the book, Mr Bird writes that it is friendship that now gives him hope. “I have made one promise to myself now,” he writes, “while I am still on this earth, that I will continue to extend the hand of friendship to everyone.”

Other contributors to the book include the Dalai Lama, Adi Roche, several high profile politicians and members of media and society.

# Catholic schools praised for reconciliation work ahead of GFA anniversary

Ruadhán Jones

The North's Under Secretary of State has praised how Catholic schools promote reconciliation and integration, ahead of the Good Friday Agreement's anniversary.

Lord Caine joined the DUP's Sir Jeffrey Donaldson and members of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) in a visit to St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn, to mark Catholic Schools' Week.

After the visit, Lord Caine said it is "wonderful" to see the "high quality of education available, and how schools are working actively to support integration and reconciliation as we look forward to the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement".

He added that the government in Westminster is keen

for young people "across the UK to be engaged in the conversation around the anniversary of the Agreement and its benefits".

Lord Caine's visit included a tour of school facilities and an opportunity for pupils to add their voice to conversations on diversity and inclusion, curriculum and the future of education in Northern Ireland in a question and answer session with both representatives, according to a release from CCMS.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson praised the "high standard of education" offered by St Patrick's Academy, "supported by the strong Christian ethos of St Patrick's".

He added that it is "mixed with a wide variety of sporting and cultural activities that ensure the young people have a well-rounded learning experience".

The Chief Executive of the CCMS Gerry Campbell

thanked Lord Caine and Sir Jeffrey Donaldson for their engagement "during this important week".

"Catholic schools are naturally inclusive and open to pupils of all faiths and none; all abilities; and all socio-economic backgrounds," he continued.

"A diverse society is enriched by diversity in its educational provision. Catholic schools play a significant role in breaking down barriers through innovative shared education programmes and in partnership working with other schools, from all sectors," Mr Campbell said.

Catholic schools' week took place from January 22-29, with the theme "Walking together in Faith and Love."

# L'Arche release Vanier abuse report

Staff reporter

L'Arche has released an independent report on its founder Jean Vanier, which finds that he belonged to a "sectarian group" with "distorted pseudo-mystical beliefs".

The independent commission established by L'Arche International found that at least 25 women "experienced sexual contact with Vanier which was part of a continuum of confusion, control and abuse" between 1950 and Vanier's death in 2019.

Its 900-page report, published on January 30, finds that Vanier belonged to a "sectarian group" in the L'Arche Trosly community with "distorted pseudo-mystical beliefs and a culture of deliberate secrecy".

The group was influenced by the "deviant mystic" Thomas Philippe, a Dominican priest who also committed abuse.

Evidence of abuse by Vanier first emerged in 2020. He was the founder of the first L'Arche communities where people with and without learning disabilities live together.

L'Arche operates 154 communities in 38 countries, including houses in Ireland.

None of the 25 women whose abuse is recorded had learning disabilities, nor did the commission find any evidence of abuse of people with learning disabilities.

In a letter to all members of L'Arche, the heads of the international organisation Stephan Posner and Stacy Cates-Carney, said they "recognise our institutional responsibility for failing to spot these abuses, report them and forestall them."

# Trócaire CEO 'honoured' with new appointment

Chai Brady

The CEO of Trócaire, Caoimhe de Barra, has been elected the Chief Executive Officer of an umbrella group of Catholic social justice organisations.

Caoimhe de Barra said the appointment to her new role in Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE), is an "honour and a privilege".

Having been a board member since 2020, she said: "Through CIDSE, I have had the privilege of working to achieve change in policies

at global level that impact on the most vulnerable people in our world, as well as having the honour to contribute to CIDSE from a leadership perspective.

"We are living in difficult times, where the most marginalised and vulnerable people on our planet are finding their right to live in peace and dignity under constant attack. CIDSE offers thought, leadership and a moral compass to leaders and citizens alike, and provides practical ways to channel the outrage that ordinary people feel about the deepening inequity in this world," Ms de Barra said.

## Standing out from the crowd...



Rev. Mark O'Farrell is pictured after his ordination to the diaconate by Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan in the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, Waterford, on Sunday, January 29. Rev. O'Farrell will be ordained to the priesthood later this year.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Irish Franciscan appointed archbishop in Honduras

Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Michael Lenihan OFM as the first archbishop of the newly-erected Archdiocese of San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Bishop Lenihan (71) has served as the bishop of La Ceiba for the last 10 years, which will now become a suffragan of the new archdiocese.

Bishop Lenihan was born in 1951 in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. After the primary and secondary studies, he entered the Franciscan novitiate in 1972 and was ordained in 1980.

He served first in Ireland, before being sent to El Salvador in 1989 and then to Honduras in 2004.

### Bloody Sunday families to be nominated for Nobel Prize

SDLP leader Colum Eastwood has said he will nominate the families of the Bloody Sunday victims for the renowned Nobel Peace Prize.

January 30 marked the 51st anniversary of the killings by the British Army in Derry in 1972.

Thirteen people were shot dead when soldiers of the Parachute Regiment opened fire following a civil rights march in the city, with a 14th dying months later.

Fifteen others were injured.

Mr Eastwood said that the prize would be a fitting tribute for the families' "long fight for truth and justice".

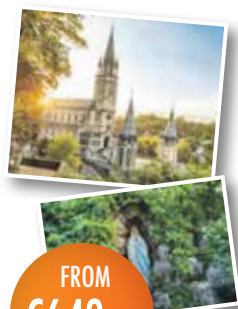
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# Justice, yes – but the soldier has also paid a price...

The memory of 23-year-old Aidan McAnespie will surely live on in the annals of history: his life, and tragic death, have assumed considerable significance. A stone tablet has been erected on the spot at Auchnacloy, Co. Tyrone, which commemorates him, noting that he was 'MURDERED at this spot by Crown Forces' on February 21, 1988.

His local GAA club has memorialised him; in Boston, a GAA club has been named in his memory, and he has been the subject of a ballad written by Gerry Cunningham.

## Sentence

The British soldier convicted of Aidan's manslaughter, David Jonathan Holden, now 53, may serve a custodial sentence for that deed, which he has always claimed was an accident. He claimed he didn't know the gun was cocked, and his hands were wet and slipped on the trigger. Although the RUC initially accepted the 'accident' version of events, it was later dismissed by a PSNI inquiry as "least likely".

Aidan's family say that he and other Catholic lads



## Mary Kenny

in Co. Tyrone had been subjected to constant harassment when attending GAA matches, and when crossing the border – Aidan had a job in Co. Monaghan. There was apparently a toxic atmosphere.

**“A stone tablet has been erected on the spot at Auchnacloy, Co. Tyrone”**

It is evident that the Grenadier Guard was responsible for Aidan's death – he has been called “criminally culpable”. But there is one other relevant fact: Mr Holden was 18 years of age at the time. Whether 18-year-old soldiers should be in possession of notably lethal guns is a question that also might be asked. Neurological research has repeatedly shown that the brains of teenage males are more prone to reckless behaviour and risky decisions.

Justice must be done, and must be seen to be done: if David Jonathan Holden is given a custodial sentence, then the law must be implemented. Aidan's death was an irreparable loss. But the principle of justice shouldn't rule out some Christian pity: Mr Holden has paid a price for an absolutely calamitous teenage decision.

## Report

He was first charged in September 1988; the PSNI carried out a report on the manslaughter in 2008; in 2018 a decision was taken to prosecute through the courts; in November 2022 he was found guilty. All his life, this terrible decision to pull that trigger has followed him, and whether he is jailed or not, that will follow him to the grave. I think there are many people who might look back on some dreadful act that occurred, at their own instigation, in their immature years and feel fortunate that they have not had to pay such a penalty.

**“It is evident that the Grenadier Guard was responsible for Aidan's death – he has been called ‘criminally culpable’”**

## A point of division

A Church of England parish is in trouble for displaying the multi-coloured Gay Pride flag over its altar table. St Nicholas Church in Leicester has been displaying the LGBT flag, with the intention of letting visitors know they were 'welcome and safe', according to its lady vicar, Canon Karen Rooms. The gesture has divided its parishioners, as well as the synod of the Anglican Church.

Shouldn't everyone who enters a church feel 'welcome and safe' anyway, whatever their background or orientation? Does that need to be, literally, flagged up?

To be honest, I'm not very comfortable with any flags prominently displayed in church: it's politicising a sacred space. There may be exceptional moments, perhaps, when a flag indi-

cates a particular service to the people of the nation or locality, but I've never really liked the way, for example, regimental flags are displayed in Anglican churches, (including the admirable St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin).

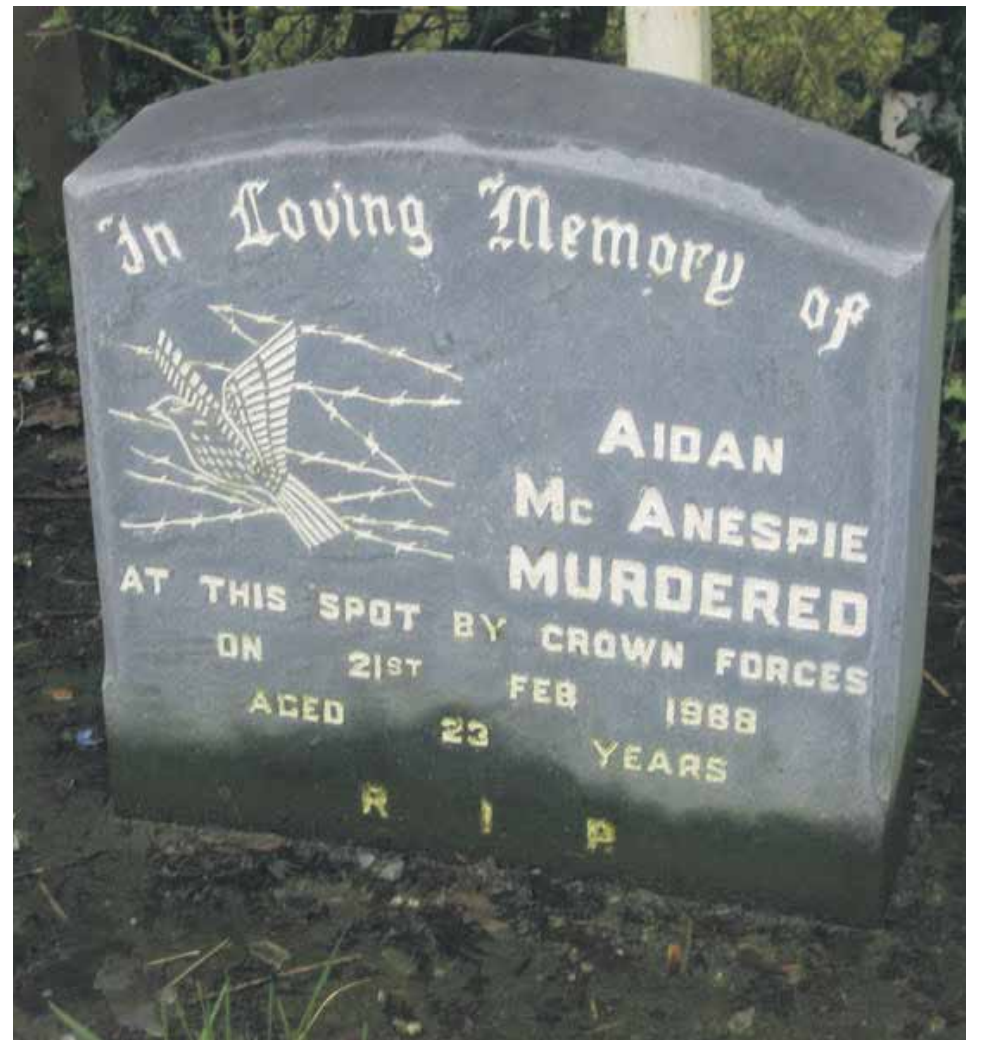
Flags and symbols can unite, but, as Leicester's gesture has shown, they can also divide. That's not what the church space is for.

● Dublin's Archbishop John Charles McQuaid – who died 50 years ago in April – had a rather archaic, not to say eccentric, view of athletics for women: he didn't approve of girls and women participating in such sports.

Daft, yes: but there may have been a scintilla of medical knowledge behind his thinking. A consultant orthopaedic surgeon in London, Michael Wilkinson, last week pointed out female vulnerability to sports injury. “Female athletes carry an increased risk of anterior cruciate ligament rupture of between three and eight times that of male athletes, depending on the sport played.” (This cruciate ligament refers to the complex working of the knee joint.)

Mr Wilkinson, who specialises in pelvic and knee injuries, has also underlined the anatomical differences between male and female athletes: there is a considerable gap between maximum cardiorespiratory physiology and lung capacity as between males and females. Those born biological males will have an unfair advantage if competing with biological females. (The maximum male cardiac output is 24 litres per minute; the female output is 18 litres.)

It comes down to this: men are different from women, on the sports field (as perhaps elsewhere). I imagine that is a point that the late Dr McQuaid certainly would agree with!



The spot close to the border with Co. Monaghan where Aidan McAnespie was shot dead.

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# TD dubs calls to change law on killing newborns 'chilling'

Chai Brady

A senator's call to differentiate in law between the killing of a child within the first 24 hours of birth and the first 12 months of life has been described as "alarming and chilling", by Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan.

This comes after Fianna Fáil Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee issued a statement regarding concealed pregnancies and births last week.

Concealing a birth in Ireland is currently a criminal

offence under the Offences Against The Person Act 1861, due to a range of abuses that can occur if births are not registered.

Arguing against this, Ms Clifford-Lee said: "Some women who conceal their pregnancies and the birth have very traumatic histories of violence, abuse, control, sexual assault and other experiences such as poverty and lack of support structures. Concealment is a coping strategy and fear is strongly present."

She said: "Furthermore,

there is no distinction in law between neonaticide (death within the first 24 hours of birth) and infanticide (death within the first 12 months of life). They need to be approached differently and appropriate responses developed." Ms Nolan said that while Ms Clifford-Lee may be well intentioned: "I reject absolutely any attempt to further diminish the value of human life, be that pre-born, newborn or adult."

"This statement is further evidence of an alarming and

chilling linguistic turn in Irish politics with respect to the value of human life. Is this really where we are at? Are we now parsing the days and months of a newborn child's life to see what value or protection we can or will afford it at any particular part of its journey?"

Over the weekend in a response to a query from *The Sunday Times* regarding changing the law, Minister for Justice Simon Harris said it was "a matter that requires detailed consideration".

## EU and religious leaders hold high-level meeting on Ukraine

Ruadhán Jones

European bishops met with the European Commission (EC) to share their perspectives on the impacts of war in Ukraine, emphasising the positive role played by Churches.

Churches are "frontline operational field actors" in providing humanitarian care to Ukraine and neighbouring countries, Archbishop Cyril Vasil told the EC.

The archbishop of the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Kosice, Slovakia, "pleaded" for the EU's continued support for "voluntary engagement of individuals and

organisations committed to accompanying the most vulnerable coming from Ukraine".

Archbishop Vasil and the Archbishop of Dijon Antoine Hérouard of the European bishops' umbrella body COMECE met with the EC on January 27.

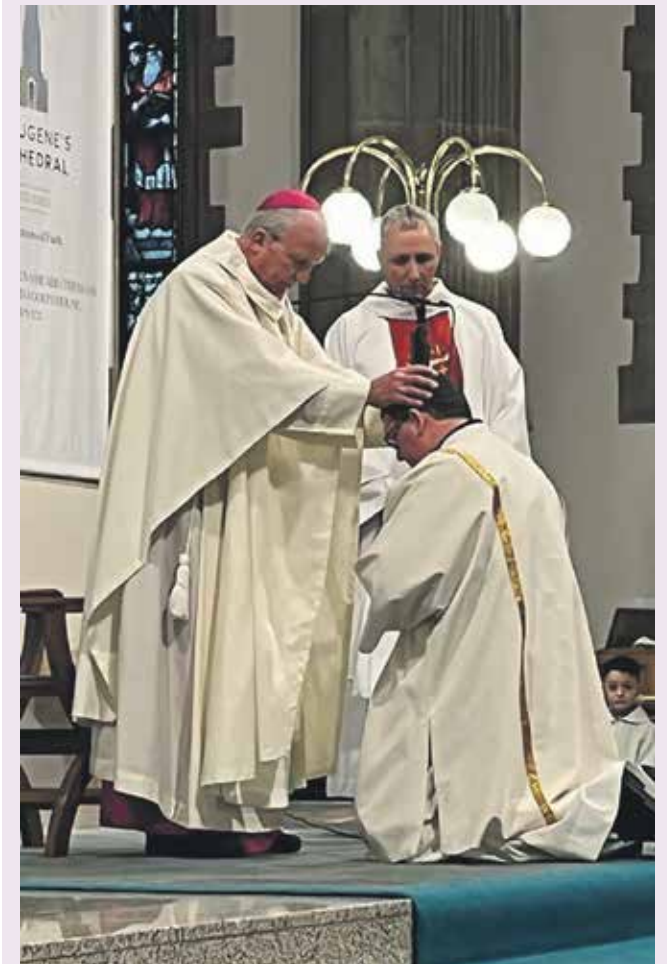
Archbishop Hérouard called for the EU's member states to develop policies "aimed at achieving concrete solidarity towards the most fragile members of our societies". Due to the effects of the war in Ukraine, "persons and families... are unable, or have great difficulties, to meet their basic needs due to ris-

ing prices, especially energy and food prices".

The high-level meeting between the EU and religious leaders occurs annually, based on Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which foresees an open, transparent and regular dialogue between the EU institutions and Churches.

At the meeting, the President of COMECE Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ highlighted that "the contribution of Churches is... an essential ingredient for advancing EU policies promoting the common good".

### A new shepherd for Derry...



Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown lays his hands on Fr Michael McCaul during his ordination to the priesthood in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, on Sunday, January 29. Photo: *The Net*.

# THE SYNODAL TIMES



FEBRUARY  
2023 ISSUE

In an exclusive interview with Cardinal Grech *The Synodal Times* reports on the Cardinal's views on women and the Church; will doctrine be discussed at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in September and does he think Synodality can survive if Pope Francis dies or retires?

Also we discover why African Catholics really dislike the symbol of a tent which is being used for the Continental Phase of the Synod process

We meet two women who, like St Therese of Lisieux always wanted to be priests.

And where to women find hope, Sr Stan spoke to many who find hope in many different ways.

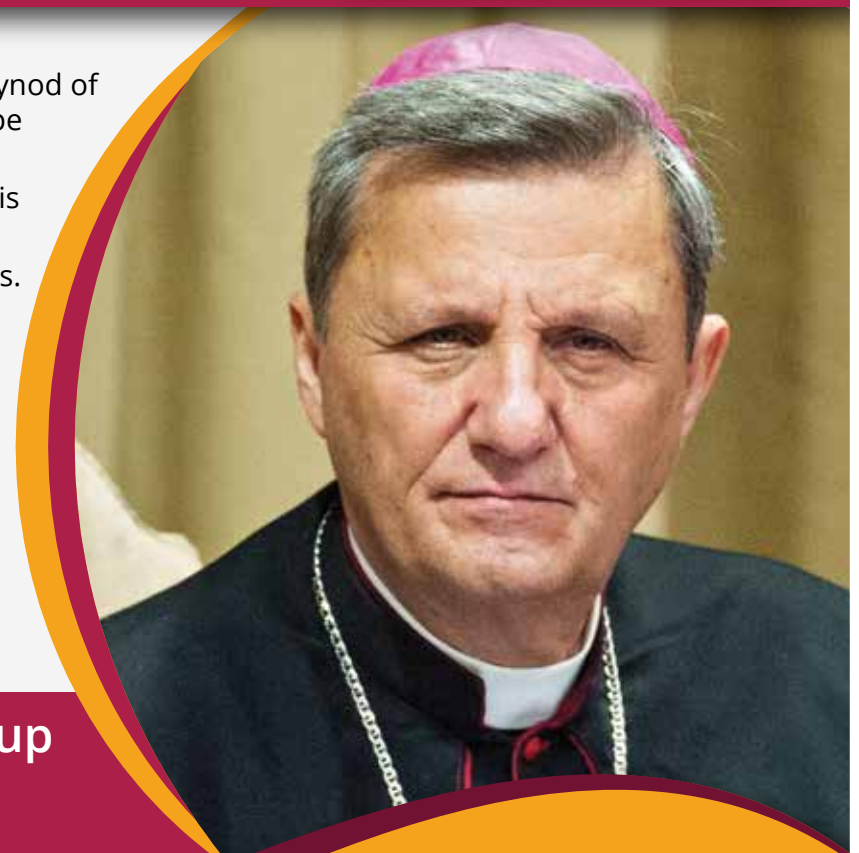
Other articles include exclusive extract from a new book on St Brigid and other amazing female saints; an analysis of the life of Cardinal Ratzinger, Rafael Luciani continues his series on Synodality, and we join with the International Presentation Association to look at their work at the U.N. to support international efforts to reduce violence against women and children.

**Read these and other stories in February's issue of *The Synodal Times*, dedicated to the voices, stories and lives of amazing Catholic women from all over the world.**

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## Niamh Uí Bhriain

### The View



# Pro-lifers in the US take the lead in helping women

Last June, in a boost to the pro-life movement worldwide, *Roe v Wade* was overturned by the US Supreme Court. As delighted right-to-life activists celebrated, much of the media commentary in Ireland expressed dismay and warned that women would suffer if abortion was made illegal.

Those reports ignored the reality on the ground in the United States and elsewhere: that it has been the pro-life movement, and not abortion supporters, who have always offered women real choices.

It's easy, after all, to pat yourself on the back as being fashionably 'pro-choice' by offering women in crisis an abortion. But the truth is that most women seek abortion in fear and panic because they have been offered no real choices. All too often, and this applies to politicians in particular, taking a 'pro-choice' stance actually means telling women they're on their own.

That's why pro-life activists, the world over, have always been to the fore in offering women real support and choices. In the US a vast network of thousands of pro-life pregnancy centres have been funded by millions of dollars, not from the government but from ordinary people who want women to have a better option than abortion.

**“It has been the pro-life movement, and not abortion supporters, who have always offered women real choices”**

So when state after state announced 'Heartbeat Laws' or other significant restrictions on abortion, no-one had to tell pro-lifers to step up to help women: they were already doing that - unsung heroes quietly helping mothers and babies every day, offering life instead of death.

Now those efforts have been joined by a very welcome new initiative from pro-life leaders in America who have issued what is being described as an "unprecedented joint statement" from "activists, leaders, and academics from across the political spectrum" seeking public policies designed to reduce the economic and social pressures that drive many women to seek abortions.



Pro-life demonstrators are seen near the Supreme Court in Washington after the historic reversal of *Roe v Wade* last year. Photo: CNS

While maternity services and family supports may need improving here in Ireland, we forget how dismal they can be in other countries, including the US, where there is no national paid maternity leave scheme, for example, and where the cost of having a baby averages out to almost €19,000 according to recent research, with at least €3,000 not recoverable through insurance.

#### Statement

As the pro-life statement, 'Building a Post-Roe Future' spells out "more can be done on both the state and federal level" to eliminate abortion".

"We know that a wide range of circumstances drive women to seek abortion, and that there are concrete steps we can take to reduce the demand," renowned activists and scholars such as Eric Scheidler, Jonathon Van Maren, Charles Camosy, John Brahm and others point out. They say that the following policies are a good basis to build a society that loves both mother and child.

Accessible and affordable healthcare for parents and children - including expanding Medicaid funding for prenatal care, delivery, and postpartum expenses - to reduce the financial barriers to welcoming a new child;

Expanded child tax credits that promote family formation and lift children out of poverty;

Paid parental leave that ensures every infant can receive the close attention and nurturing care they need from their mothers and fathers in the early months of life;

Flexible work hours to enable families to establish a

tranquil home life, with predictable work schedules and better options for meaningful part-time employment;

Affordable childcare options that support working parents, without disincentivising the choice to raise young children at home that many families say they would prefer;

Full enforcement of existing prenatal child support laws and effective new ways to demand that all men take responsibility for children they father;

**“Expanded child tax credits that promote family formation and lift children out of poverty”**

These are sensible and life-affirming changes in building a society that cherishes and protects life, and genuinely wants to help women by helping them have their babies. And the statement points out that the onus should actually be on the government, given its capacity, and not on overstretched volunteers to take these actions.

"In a post-Roe landscape, with some states restricting abortion and others expanding access to it, the support offered by non-profits, donors, and tireless volunteers will not be enough to address the scale of the need. State and federal governments must take action to eliminate or reduce the significant economic and social pressures that drive women to seek abortion in the first place. We would like to see the demand for abortion aggressively addressed," they write.

American people that we are collectively committed to helping mothers, babies, and families with all of the tools at our disposal, including political ones," the statement continues.

**“It is shameful that it is left to voluntary groups like Gianna Care and Every Life Counts to do the frontline work”**

"We are from all over the ideological map, united in our conviction that every human life has intrinsic worth and value, including the lives of both the unborn child and that child's mother. We believe that our society must prioritise the needs of both, and that public policy can be drafted and passed to support those ends."

#### Attitude

It's to be hoped that the shift in attitude and policies they recommended is taken up and driven by those with political power. Certainly, it has been revealing to see that, in our own post-8th Ireland, the politicians and NGOs who shouted loudest for abortion seem to be entirely quiet - or actively opposed - to any measures that would help women keep their babies.

It is shameful that it is left to voluntary groups like Gianna Care and Every Life Counts to do the frontline work that a truly compassionate state would offer to women with unexpected or difficult pregnancies. But, just as *Roe* finally fell, the wheel shall turn here too. In time, instead of the quick-fix of abortion, we will realise again that the only truly progressive answer is to love and support them both.

17TH, 18TH & 19TH FEBRUARY 2023

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# Conscientious objection in Ireland is under serious threat



We are moving towards a society that will no longer be liberal in any true sense, writes **David Quinn**

**E**noch Burke must by now be the most famous teacher in Ireland, and possibly in the history of the Irish State.

Mr Burke has been in the news for weeks due to his showdown with his former employer, Wilson Hospital School in Westmeath, which is a Church of Ireland-run.

A few months ago, the school informed teachers about a pupil who said that they no longer wished to be addressed by the sex they were born as. The pupil changed their name and now wants to use the pronouns 'they/them' because they identify as neither male nor female.

This is something many people find extremely confusing. Surely everyone is either 'he' or 'she', 'him' or 'her', male or female? But in recent years, something called 'gender ideology' has become extremely influential in Western societies, not least here in Ireland.

**“The school decided to discipline him for what is regarded as confrontational behaviour towards its then principal”**

This radical ideology says that just because we are born male or female doesn't mean we have to identify as such. We might be physically male or female, but we can declare we are a different gender. A boy might say he is really a girl, or vice versa. A person might say they don't want to identify as either, and therefore declare themselves to be 'gender non-binary' (meaning they reject the binary of male/female).



Enoch Burke speaks to reporters.

A person who says they are 'gender non-binary' replaces 'he' or 'she' with 'they', and 'him' or 'her' with 'their'. This is what the pupil at Wilson Hospital wants.

You might still be confused about the matter even after this explanation. That's because it is confusing, and I've just presented what I think is the simplest version of it. The deeper you go, the more confusing it gets, even for those who fully subscribe to, and promote, gender ideology.

## Refused

In any case, Enoch Burke has decided he wants neither hand, act, nor part in it. He has refused point-blank to use the pupil's preferred gender pronouns and seemingly told the school his decision in decisive terms before the summer break.

To cut a long story short, the school decided to discipline him for what is regarded as confrontational behaviour towards its then principal. It suspended him with pay. The school says the suspension was not because of his refusal to use the pupil's preferred pronouns

but because of his conduct towards the principal.

For his part, Mr Burke insists he has been suspended before because of his religious belief that we are born male or female and that is that.

After the summer break, Mr Burke returned to the school in defiance of a court order to stay away. He was then put in prison for contempt-of-court. He was held there for 108 days and released just before Christmas. He had not purged his contempt.

After the Christmas break, he returned to the school again. He and other members of his family then had a showdown with the school board. He was sacked shortly thereafter. At the time of writing, he keeps coming back to the school. Rather than return him to prison, the court is fining him €700 per day and will likely increase the fine if he persists in his behaviour.

Meanwhile, Mr Burke is appealing the school's disciplinary actions against him.

Enoch Burke is from a family of evangelical Christians in Mayo. There are 10 children, plus the two parents. They don't worship in

any local church, and are probably best likened in their theological outlook to the late Ian Paisley.

In their minds, they are taking a prophetic stance in a world where too many Christians have watered down their faith too much.

**“Meanwhile, Mr Burke is appealing the school's disciplinary actions against him”**

Unfortunately, the row with the school over his conduct has blurred whether this really is a conscience case in the way Enoch Burke insists.

If there had been no row, and he had simply told them quietly he would not use the pronouns 'they/them' (of course, we still don't know the full details of exactly how things got to this point), and the school insisted he use them anyway, and then suspended him, this would be a much clearer matter of conscientious objection.

We would then have a case where a school was

telling a teacher to assent to something they don't believe and to say it out loud. It would be an example of compelled speech. The teacher would not have a right to remain silent.

In schools where some accommodation has been made with gender ideology, what should teachers be forced to do?

Some argue that the pupil's rights come first. If a pupil wants to be treated as a different gender to the one they were born as, then that should be the end of it. Their rights should be respected. If a teacher refuses to do so, then the teacher is making the pupil feel uncomfortable and 'unsafe' and the teacher should resign.

## Conscience rights

The teacher is not regarded as having conscience rights at all, except in the sense of a right to resign, which isn't much of a right at all.

But the teacher could easily believe that giving into gender ideology is a recipe for undermining the rights of other pupils in the school. The ideology could easily confuse them about

the sex they are. Is it really a good idea to tell boys and girls they might not really be boys or girls in the way we have always understood as a matter of simple observation and common sense?

In addition, giving into gender ideology could mean a pupil who is biologically male being provided with access to girls' changing rooms, toilets and sports teams once they say they are female. Is that fair?

## Question

Similar questions about conscience rights arise in other fields. Medicine is an excellent example. In Sweden, all doctors and nurses must take part in abortions if asked. Two midwives in Sweden were sacked when they refused.

**“The row with the school over his conduct has blurred whether this really is a conscience case in the way Enoch Burke insists”**

The argument pro-choice advocates use is that giving doctors and nurses the right to say no, attacks the 'right' of women to have an abortion.

At present in Ireland, doctors can opt-out of taking part in abortions, but they must refer a patient to doctors who will perform terminations or prescribe the abortion pill. This already weakens their conscience rights.

But there are some in Ireland who think the present conscience rights pro-life medical personnel have in law go too far and impede women's 'rights'. This is bad things have become.

We are moving from an Ireland where abortion was banned (except where a termination saved the life of the mother), to one where doctors can perform abortions if they want, into a society where one day they might not be allowed to opt out at all.

A society like that will no longer be liberal in any true sense. Likewise, if people are made to assent to gender ideology against their will.

But this appears to be the way we are going. In such circumstances, we will need brave people willing to fight for the right to conscientiously object and make a stand for what they believe.

**“Mr Burke insists he has been suspended before because of his religious belief that we are born male or female and that is that”**





Ireland's International Eucharistic  
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## SATURDAY 11TH FEBRUARY

Screening of 'The Letter: A Message for our Earth'

'The Letter: A Message for our Earth', is a 2022 documentary film, telling the story of the Laudato Si' encyclical by Pope Francis.

The film was launched in the Vatican on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4th, 2022. It is a powerful film which tells the story of four people from very different backgrounds and the roles they are playing to care more deeply for our common home. We are delighted to offer two screenings of the film at Knock Shrine, a wonderful way to begin our series of events for 2023 on the theme of 'Caring for God's Creation'.

**Location:** The Prayer Centre, Knock Shrine

**First screening:** 11am - 1pm

**Second screening:** 2pm - 4pm

**Film Duration:** 80 mins plus Q&A / Discussion

## SATURDAY 25TH FEBRUARY

'Following in the footsteps of Jesus to his Passion'

with **Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R**

Taking place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Knock Shrine

**Time:** 10am - 4pm

**Cost:** €30

Denis McBride is a Redemptorist priest, lecturer, author and publishing director of Redemptorist Publications.

Fr Denis hopes to make a crossover into people's lives, and that the issues that Jesus faced might, in some way, speak to the challenges people face in their own lives.

Fr Denis McBride will also celebrate 12 noon Mass in the Basilica on the 26th of February.

## SATURDAY 1ST APRIL

'The Spiral and the Cross - symbols of hope through challenging times.'

Day Retreat with **Deirdre Ní Chinnéide**

Taking place in the Prayer Centre, Knock Shrine

**Time:** 10am - 4pm

**Cost:** €30

This retreat will weave together an experience to inspire, nourish and prepare us for the Easter message of Hope. Using scripture, music, prayer and reflective time, Deirdre guides us on a journey of light through darkness, home to the presence and guidance of God in our everyday lives.

## LENTEN REFLECTIONS

Weekly short talks

Taking place in the St. John's Welcome Centre, Knock Shrine

**Tuesday's: 7th, 14th and 21st March**

**8pm - 9pm**



To find out more or to book your place, visit [www.knockshrine.ie](http://www.knockshrine.ie)

# The childhood of St Brigid



St Brigid's sanctity and miracle-working were obvious from her childhood, writes **Lorraine Mulholland**

**H**ave you ever heard of St Brigid of Kildare? Of all our wonder women, Brigid of Kildare is by far the star! Brigid is so important that from February 2023, St Brigid's Day is going to be a yearly national holiday in the Republic of Ireland.

Bountiful Brigid is one of Ireland's three patron saints. The other two patron saints are St Patrick and St Columba/Colmcille. Brigid is known not just throughout Ireland but the world. She lavishly loved and served everyone, especially the poor, the destitute, prisoners, the sick, the elderly, and even animals of all kinds. There are so many wonderful stories about her that they would fill lots and lots of books!

From the start, it was clear that Brigid was especially holy and set apart from pagan things for God's purposes. Her father was called Dubhthach, and he was a pagan chieftain of Leinster. Her mother was a Christian, called Broicseach.

## Slave

Sadly, however, she was a slave owned by Dubhthach. It is hard to understand how her slavery came about, but there is one story that it happened as she was kidnapped by Irish pirates, taken to Portugal, and then somehow returned to Ireland to be sold to Dubhthach!

Whatever happened, since her mother was a slave, Brigid was born as a slave too. What's more, Brigid had been born out of wedlock, so she really did have a low status at the start of her life. But from birth, Brigid showed her pagan father that she was special.

Brigid's father and her pregnant mother, Broicseach, were travelling in a chariot one day. They passed a druid and his servants. They could hear the druid remarking that the chariot was resounding "under a king". His prophetic words spoke of the future greatness of Brigid.

Another time, the local druid, Maithgen, said of Brigid while her mother was pregnant with her, "Marvellous will be the child that is in her womb... The bondmaid will bring forth a daughter conspicuous and radiant, who will shine like a sun among the stars of heaven!"

Brigid was born at the foot of the Cooley mountains in Faughart, just north of Dundalk in Co. Louth. We don't know the exact year, but it was



sometime between the year 436 AD and 468 AD. It is said that angels hovered over her mother's cottage there and a bright light could be seen as far as Dundalk Bay.

Another story tells us Brigid was born at the threshold of the door of the house. Her mother Broicseach had one foot inside the house and the other outside when Brigid's time to be born came about. This had been prophesied the day before: "The child born tomorrow at the rising of the sun, and who is born without being inside or outside a house, that child will surpass every other child in Ireland."

A special thing that happened was that Dubhthach had a series of dreams about Brigid. Before a name had been given to his child, he had dreams of three Christian clerics baptising her. In the dream, one of the clerics told him, "Let Brigid be your name for the girl." Now, when Brigid was born in the fifth Century, there were still many pagan people who followed the religion of the druids.

Brigid was the name of a very famous Irish goddess of three sisters (each with the same name). The three Brigid goddesses were Brigid the poetess, Brigid the healer, and Brigid the smith. Dubhthach wondered to himself, "Why on earth does my daughter deserve such an important name?" But, puffed up with pride, the pagan chieftain agreed. It was a sign of important things to come.

## Differences

Now, there were seven medieval 'lives' of St Brigid, and there are some small differences in the story about where Brigid lived in her childhood. However, it would seem that Dubhthach's proper wife was jealous of Brigid's mum and insisted that Broicseach be sold.

First, she was sold to a poet, then to a druid. She was sent far away, right over to the west of

Ireland in the province of Connaught. However, for part of her childhood, Brigid was allowed to live with her mum and the druid, and for part of it at least she lived with her father Dubhthach in Co. Louth.

So even though Brigid was a chieftain's daughter, she was raised in part by a pagan druid, with many chores to do on his farm. She worked extremely hard, giving honour to God through this daily work. She herded sheep, pigs and cattle, and grew to love animals.

**“It is hard to understand how her slavery came about, but there is one story that it happened as she was kidnapped by Irish pirates”**

However, it is the cow especially beside which Brigid is shown in religious art. To start, let me tell you the story of Brigid's red-eared cow, Bó Chluasach Dearg Bhríde.

Brigid was so holy that she would vomit when the druid tried to feed her! You see, he with his pagan beliefs was impure. But God did not forget her. He sent a white cow with red ears to sustain her with its milk instead.

It is significant that in old Irish folklore, white cows were sacred (so this would have been another sign that Brigid was special). Then, of course there is the story of the butter. Brigid once gave away her mother and the druid's entire supply of butter to someone in need. She then prayed for God to replenish the supply, and butter miraculously appeared!

When she was older, it came time for Brigid to live at her father's home. Her foster-mother wasn't pleased with

that, but she had no choice, and over time Brigid, of course, performed miracles involving her. Some say she was perhaps ten years old when she moved back to her father's home.

And, of course, Brigid got up to mischief giving away copious amounts of food and other items to show God's love. Yet, when they were counted, often the things Brigid had given away were miraculously returned, as if they had been replaced by God. From childhood, the miracles associated with Brigid showed God's love for animals.

## Guest

Once, her father had a guest and he asked Brigid to boil five pieces of bacon. Now, it happened to be that two very miserable, sad-looking hounds came into the kitchen. Those two hounds looked adoringly at the rashers, as they were extremely hungry. The bacon's smell was simply irresistible to them!

Brigid had always loved animals and so she couldn't stop herself giving two pieces to the dogs. When her father asked about the bacon, she said for him to count them. She thought to herself, 'I'm really trusting God to do a miracle here!' Low and behold, all five pieces were there. Now, the guest who had appeared to be asleep while all this was happening had actually seen everything!

He told her father everything, and in the end no one ate the meat. They decided to give it to the poor, as they felt that they weren't worthy of it. Yes, even her pagan father felt that way. God, you see, was working on him!

**📖 This is an abridged expert from Saint Brigid & Other Amazing Irish Women by Lorraine Mulholland and published by Columba books. Available in store and online.**

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# Swimming against the tide

CONSECRATED LIFE 2023



The Irish Catholic

# The call to be countercultural in consecrated life



Religious orders continue to bring Christ's teaching to life in a changing, challenging landscape, writes **Chai Brady**

**I**t is understandable when Christians in Ireland feel dispirited each time they hear another religious house has closed, sometimes after almost 1,000 years of dedicated local ministry, but huge efforts are being made behind the scenes to adapt to a new era for the Church.

Bro. Martin Bennett OFM Cap., Director of Communications for the Irish Capuchin Friars, told *The Irish Catholic* his order continue to follow the message that Christ gave to their founder St Francis, "go and rebuild my Church".

"That rebuilding project is something that's constantly ongoing and it's something that's constantly evolving over time as well. The needs of Ireland 20 years ago are not the needs of Ireland today," he said.

"Another one of the great things that was very important to Francis – and he always admonished the friars about it – is to read the signs of the times, to be prophetic, to feel the pulse of what's going and see how we can help."

## Transition period

Bro. Bennett explained that the order is going through a transition period due to the rising age demographic of their friars – a situation reflected across all Ireland's orders. The challenge is how to use resources most effectively, a reality the Capuchins are already reacting to with the recent decision to close two friaries, one in Carlow and the other in Rochestown, Co. Cork. In addition they also withdrew from a residence in Priorswood parish in Co. Dublin, the administration of the parish is now done from their fraternity in Raheny.

However, Bro. Bennett said: "Even though we've closed houses we've opened a new house in Knock, we're going to have a new presence in Knock this year and will have a community living there – Capuchin friars on site.

"So even though certain places closed, we made a decision as a province of friars to do something new, to show that even with the closing there's always opportunities for new life and new hope."

He admits there's no one answer



Capuchin Franciscans in discussion.

to any of these questions, but adds: "I think it's about being honest about the reality, about being authentic and staying true to our own charism and calling, and to invite others to come and share this with us. Our life won't be for everybody but it will be for some."

The Capuchins came to Ireland in the early 1600s helping people through persecution, famine, poverty and more. One of the Capuchins' claim to fame is the acclaimed and venerated St Padre Pio, one of the most popular saints in Ireland who is held close to Irish hearts.

**“Friars will find themselves doing very different things but in many ways, it's about bringing this kind of charism of fraternity, this charism of being brothers to the people”**

Explaining what makes the Capuchins tick, Bro. Bennett said: "Ultimately our charism is around that idea of brotherhood, as friars we live together, we pray together, we work together. We're mixed communities, we have younger friars, we have very elderly friars – it goes right up to over 90 years of age."

The Capuchins work across many areas, bringing their charism into all they do, whether that is being a parish priest or a hospital chaplain, for some friars their ministry is within the community, within the friary, ministering to the brothers themselves and to people who come to their friaries for Mass, Confession, counselling or spiritual direction. In

addition they have the famous Capuchin Day Centre, which continues to feed the poor and is a monument to their good works.

Bro. Bennett adds: "Friars will find themselves doing very different things but in many ways, it's about bringing this kind of charism of fraternity, this charism of being brothers to the people. This was one of original titles of the order. Capuchin is kind of a nickname that was given to us a few hundred years ago to do with the long hood that we wear on our habits, but the original name of the order, was 'the brothers of the people'. This is really what we aim to do in what we do."

For example, Bro. Bennett worked as a school chaplain, then in parishes and is now the parish priest of Halston Street in Dublin as well as working in communications for the order.

## Life and charism

When asked what the life and charism of the Capuchins can offer young men who are discerning a vocation, Bro. Bennett said that if they are called to the Capuchin way of life, they can be supported.

"If they're searching for a vocation we have very good discernment processes so we can help people figure that out, which is the first step before they join us, they have to go on that journey," he said.

"We have a lot of experience in this and we're well equipped to be able to help young men who come to us and make contact, to figure out what's going on inside them and see if they are able to make that decision."

That one thing people often say about the Capuchins, Bro. Bennett said, is that they are "very much on the level with people wherever we are, we try to enter into their experience".

"Every one of the friars that I



Capuchin friars huddle around a Bible.

met has done that in their own way, we've had friars who are academics, have books published, do a lot of publicity things, and friars who live very simple lives, who live prayerful lives in communities, who the outside world may never really know. But every single one of them has something that they bring to that pot of fraternity. They all have an ingredient that they bring into that stew," he adds.

Currently there are 72 Capuchin Franciscans in Ireland, but they also have missions in Zambia, South Africa and South Korea. Last year the Irish Capuchins took on the Province of Great Britain.

The Irish province is comparatively small to others, considering Capuchins number about 11,000 worldwide and are represented in almost every continent and country. As part of the order's re-evaluation efforts, they currently have friars visiting them from areas as far flung as Kerala in India and South Africa.

For example, in the Capuchin

community in Raheny in Dublin – where Bro. Bennett is based – they have a friar from Kerala studying in Maynooth and another friar from South Africa who is studying on the Loretto Formation Programme.

"Even though Ireland might be declining our Capuchin brotherhood extends globally, and globally we're not declining – it's a Northern European problem. You go to Poland, Italy, there's plenty of Capuchins, so we can draw on that," Bro. Barrett explained. "We're in that process in which we're developing relationships and deeper connections with some of our other provinces."

## Milestone

For Fr Colm Mannion OP, the Vocations Director of the Irish Dominicans, the work of their order is as relevant in Ireland today as it was when they began their ministry in the country almost 800 years ago – a milestone they will celebrate next year.

He said the vision of their



Irish Dominicans young and old sit in conversation.

## “Currently there are 72 Capuchin Franciscans in Ireland, but they also have missions in Zambia, South Africa and South Korea. Last year the Irish Capuchins took on the Province of Great Britain”

thing,” he added.  
Fr Mannion said that the Dominican charism strikes a balance between the contemplative – as there’s a strong emphasis on prayer and how they live – but also on evangelisation as well.

### “For those discerning a call to religious life, Fr Mannion says young men are attracted to their community way of life”

“We’re also engaging with people in the pastoral side of our work. There’s a complementarity between the prayer and the pastoral which goes hand in hand, which I think is another reason young people today are attracted to the Dominicans,” he said.  
“There’s great scope and great possibilities, as Dominicans we’re always looking at how to preach the Gospel and to connect with people in the times we’re living in, we take universal truths and apply them to the contemporary age.”

For those discerning a call to religious life, Fr Mannion says young men are attracted to their community way of life.

“I guess for young men today thinking of a vocation, there’s something very attractive in that, that they’re not just going to be out on their own, given the challenges facing the future of the Church,” he said.

“I think community life is important, and I think it’s a draw for many young people to know that they will also be formed with other people, with peers, people their own age. They will be praying with other men who share their values and their beliefs.”

There are currently 16 young men in formation with the Dominicans in Ireland, three are novices who are doing a year in Cork and the rest are at various stages of the formation after finishing their novitiate. They are studying in St Xavier’s College in Dublin. Overall, there are 130 Irish Dominicans, with 102 ministering in Ireland and 28 abroad.

#### Future

Asked about his hopes for the future, Fr Mannion said as Christians there must always be hope and that “the Lord promised to be with us until

the end of time so he fulfils the promise in the Church”.

“As Dominicans we do have hope for the future and the young men who are going to our formation programme and even the young men who are enquiring at various stages of discernment, they’re very impressive young men who are very dedicated and very sincere.”

“There may not be vocations in huge numbers like in days gone by, but I think the quality of young men who are putting themselves forward now is exceptional and there’s great hope in the younger generation that are coming through and maybe it’s worth saying that very often young people in Ireland today, they have to go against the culture.”

He added: “I think younger people don’t take their Faith for granted anymore, they realise their Faith is a gift and very often their family and friends don’t understand but yet they have this dedication and a sincerity in the truth they have discovered and I think there’s great hope in that – despite all the challenges facing the Church, young people are still experiencing the love of Christ in new ways. That is encouraging.”

founder, St Dominic, was to have friars who were dedicated to study, to learning the truth of the Faith, with the view of reaching out and sharing it with people.

#### Gift of Faith

Speaking of the importance of their charism in Ireland today, he said: “I think for a lot of young men today they see the need to help people understand the truth of what we believe and very often in Ireland we feel people have abandoned the Faith

but in actual fact many people never understood it to begin with.

“So I think for a lot of young people now who have the gift of Faith, they have this desire to be able to explain it to other people and help people to see not just what we believe but why we believe.”

“It’s not study for our own sakes, not just something to enrich our own prayer lives but something that we share with others by extending the gift of faith and helping other people to grow in their faith. It’s a two-way

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# Living Consecrated life as a Capuchin Franciscan Friar



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Our life as Capuchin Friars is centred on what we call brotherhood or fraternity – this was the great plan St Francis had to bring new life to the Church. When we live in brotherhood we live in deep connection with those around us – we aim to see them and treat them as our brothers and sisters. We recognise that we are all children of God and so dependent upon God’s mercy and love.

Choosing to live as a Consecrated Religious is a big step. It means trusting deeply that God is leading you on a pathway that will challenge and encourage you to grow in all aspects of your personhood. This can be a daunt-

ing journey however we don’t go it alone - we undertake this journey together as brothers. Each Friar has his own unique story to tell, and each Friar brings his unique gifts and talents to enrich and enliven our brotherhood. The journey is made richer because of the diversity of our Capuchin Brotherhood. We are indeed stronger together.

Like all Consecrated Religious we take vows – these vows enable us to live and work in a way that is centred on Christ’s command to love God and neighbour. We aim to do this by living together in community sharing meals, prayer, and recreation; by working in a synodal and collaborative way no matter what type of ministry we find ourselves in and by creating a special place in our hearts for the sick, the poor and the homeless.

Pope Francis has often reminded people to take a risk for Christ. As a Consecrated Religious you will take that risk everyday and it’s always a risk worth taking.



To find out more about consecrated life as a Capuchin Franciscan Friar email our Vocations Director, Brother Antony, at [vocations@capuchins.ie](mailto:vocations@capuchins.ie)



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**W**e Franciscans are a *Fraternity in Mission*, inspired by the life of St. Francis to bring the *Gospel of Joy and Grace* to the world. We devote our lives to the search for God in a fraternal life of prayer, simplicity of life and service to others.

At the heart of Francis' Gospel vision is delight in the Lord and his overflowing goodness. We strive to continue our Order's 800-year-old mission as we serve the Church and the world as brothers and priests in a wide variety of ministries. The Irish friars are part of the world-wide Franciscan Order present in 120 countries with some 12,000 friars.

St. Francis was a man on fire with the desire to tell others of the love of God that Jesus had made known to us. Irish Franciscans are present today in Central America and South Africa. We are still inspired by the words of St. Francis: "God



Sharing God's goodness: Caoimhín Ó Laoide OFM in conversation.

has sent us into the whole world so that by word and deed we may bear witness to him."

### **All God's Creatures**

Francis found his true meaning and identity in being a child of God living in union with creation, reflecting God's generosity and love. Gradually Francis realised

that he was truly a brother to the sun, moon, stars, fire and water, and to the whole cosmos for he along with them was being given existence at every moment by God. Through a life of prayer and relationship, Francis came to see God's goodness at the heart of all he has created.

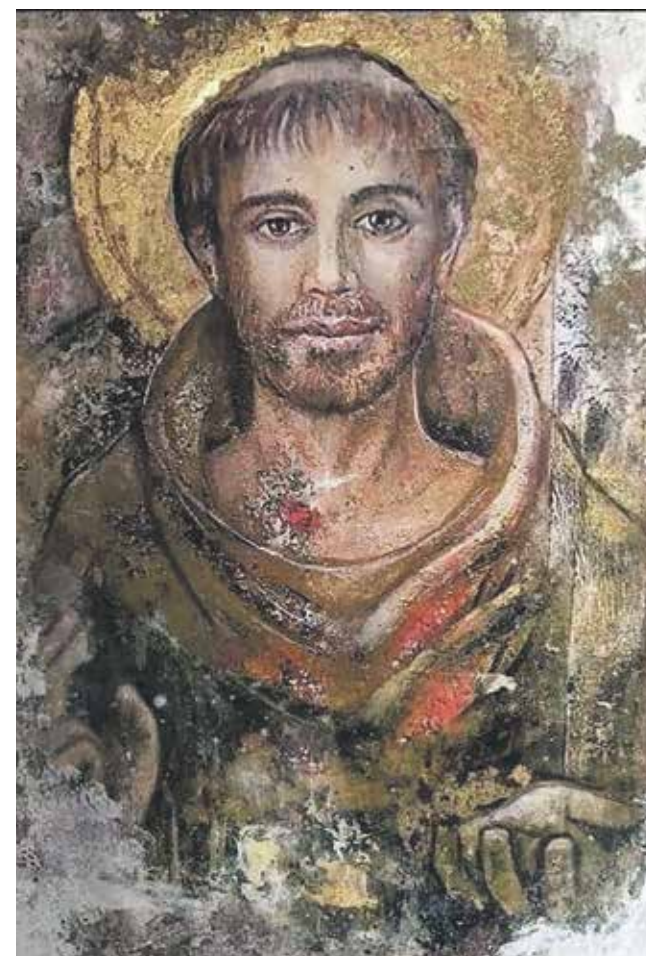
As God's children we are

called to praise and thank God daily for the gift of creation, a world that mirrors God's beauty and goodness. Francis shows us how to live with a spirit of gratitude for the gift of creation and how to joyfully embrace our responsibility to care for that same creation.

### **Peace and Good**

Pope Francis, who chose St. Francis as his patron and model when he became Pope, said, "Francis of Assisi - for me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. He is the man who gives us the spirit of peace, who tells us we should work to build peace, within our hearts and among ourselves."

"Pace e Bene!" (Peace and Good!) is a greeting used on all continents by Franciscan men and women since the time of Francis. In the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis, the Irish Franciscan friars are dedicated to sharing the Gospel of Christ by serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, and the care of creation.



Saint Francis: A man on fire with Christ's love.

**If you would like to know more about following Jesus as a Franciscan Friar contact:**

Friar Liam Kelly OFM. Phone: 087 396 0262

Email: [irishfranciscansofm@gmail.com](mailto:irishfranciscansofm@gmail.com)

Postal address: Franciscan Friary, The Abbey, St Francis Street, Galway City.

**We look forward to hearing from you and having a conversation. God will do the rest!**

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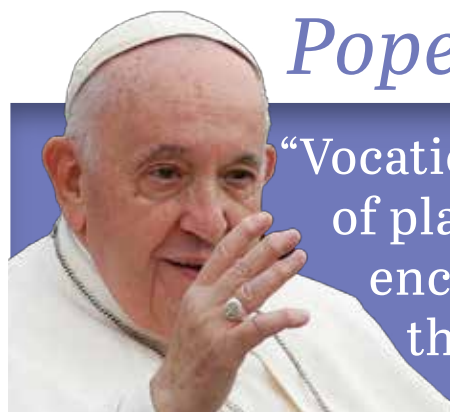
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*Mary Ward*

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*Pope Francis*

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To explore a vocation, please contact Sr Marie on [mariecarr.ibvm@gmail.com](mailto:mariecarr.ibvm@gmail.com).





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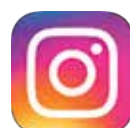
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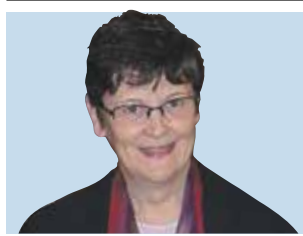


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# Why consecrated life still matters today



Anne Codd PBVM

To the casual observer, it may appear that soon there will be no more religious sisters or brothers in the Church. It can easily enough be assumed that they have already lost their identity because many no longer wear distinctive dress or set up services under their own 'banner'. The fact that the history of religious-run institutions in this country has been forever scarred by scandals will remain, and cannot in any terms be excused. It is not easy to separate the inspiration and vision of religious life from this history.

**“We make sense of a way of living the Christian life by professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and living them in community”**

In the 'Western' world in particular, many of the 'works' of active apostolic religious in education, health and social service have become the responsibility of the State. Does this mean there is no further call for 'consecrated life'? Research, as well as theological reflection, suggests otherwise. According to CARA, (Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate) based in Washington, which documents the rapid drop in numbers of religious in the US, it is likely that a plateau will be reached, and the witness of vowed women and men will endure in the Church though in much smaller numbers. Many congregations will reach 'completion'. Others will reconfigure themselves to express their calling in relevant and effective ways.

## All life is holy

But why 'consecrated life'? All life is holy, destined to attain wholeness. To people of good will, life becomes whole through relationship, reaching beyond itself to the immediate other and also to the 'transcendent'.

In the eyes of Christian believers all life is 'consecrated' – saved, destined to enjoy fullness of divine love for ever. We believe this because we believe in the Incarnation – the entry into the world of God's Word



Sr Mitzy Perez, a member of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Word from San Luis Potosi, Mexico, walks in a poor neighbourhood of Kalookan, Philippines, October, 2022. Photos: OSV

'made flesh'. Because Jesus passed through death to resurrection, we are gifted through his Spirit with the promise of this fullness of life. We are also commissioned to bring our world and all creation with us. The Christian Churches are communities of believers who live this destiny and calling. They serve the dream of God – God's 'mission'. They aspire to embody in time and place the truth, justice, love, and peace that reflect the inner life of God as Trinity. We pray for it constantly when we say "Thy Kingdom come".

It is in this context that we make sense of a way of living the Christian life by professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and living them in community. The primary purpose of religious life in

the Church is to witness in a particular, overt, way to God's mission.

## Evolution of religious life

Throughout the history of Christianity, religious life has taken forms according to its context. In Ireland, 'Celtic' monasteries were at the heart of Christian communities all over the country. This was at least partly due to the fact that in the 5th and 6th Centuries there were no cities in Ireland. A visit to heritage centres in, say, Glendalough or Clonmacnoise can connect us powerfully to this history. Later developments brought the continental 'cloistered' forms of monastic life here. The emergence of 'monastics without wall' from the 13th Century onwards was also reflected with the early

arrival here of the Franciscans and Dominicans. In the late 18th Century several so-called 'active' congregations began to emerge from our own context in response to situations of dire need.

**“Throughout the history of Christianity, religious life has taken forms according to its context”**

Today, to get a fuller picture of what is happening, it is essential to extend our view to the global scene. Sr Pat Murray, an Irish Loreto Sister, is currently the Secretary General of the Inter-

national Union of Superiors General (UISG) whose members serve in some of the most poverty-stricken and war-torn places in the world.

In a recent interview Sr Pat said: "There's a new call to us, it's kind of a prophetic call, to journey with people in the big questions of life... about survival of the planet... the oppression of people, their suffering, the daily struggles of people to live fully and humanly."

## Proof

Sr Pat envisions religious community as proof that we humans are, in truth, able to live in right relationship: "... that's particularly true in this multicultural, diverse world where there's an opportunity for religious life to demonstrate that we who are differ-

ent in so many ways can not only live together but thrive together". She detects a call for religious to be peacebuilders. Peace, she observes is "much more than the absence of violence ... it comes underneath the whole umbrella of care because if you want care, you want *shalom*, fullness of life for people".

Sr Nadia Coppa, UISG president, in proposing a culture of care as a guiding principle for religious, defines "care" as "the reverse of 'abuse' in its multiple forms". UISG calls on its members globally to "promote dialogue and collaboration [synodality], both within the Church and on a broader societal level, and to support training programmes for change leadership".

Sr M.J. Kudiyiruppil, also of UISG, was part of their delegation to the World Economic Forum in Davos. She recounts: "We spoke in a number of events there, and off the stage we were also given opportunities to give interviews or videos about our life and mission among the poor and the marginalised and how we could be also agents and how they can partner with the sisters in human development, in progress, etc. We added a religious and a faith dimension to Davos."

So, does consecrated life still matter? Absolutely.

**i** Anne Codd is a Presentation Sister, currently Leadership Development and Support Coordinator at AMRI



Polish Orionine Sister Renata Jurczak, who runs a home for single mothers in Kharkiv, Ukraine, is seen in December 2022, during a trip Poland to collect supplies and drive them back to Ukraine.

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# Government must listen to voices other than Women's Council on abortion



A pro-life advocate holding up a model of a 12-week-old embryo. Photo: CNS



Politicians are shamefully trying to outsource life and death decisions, writes Eilis Mulroy

As a representative democracy, we elect our TDs to represent our views and interests in the Dáil. There is a considerable degree of trust and confidence placed on the shoulders of our politicians, who are equally responsible to the wishes of their constituents. While we hope our politicians are people of conscience, there has been a rightful cynicism which has arisen in recent decades.

Regrettably, the political response to that cynicism has been to farm out con-

tentious issues to citizens' assemblies and technocratic reviews led by supposed 'experts.'

## Review

With the statutorily required three-year review of the 2018 abortion legislation, we have seen a shameless attempt by the Government to outsource decision-making on the future of Irish abortion policy to a network of NGO activists and partisan academics.

**“The NWC appears to play an overinflated role in shaping public policy in Ireland”**

Perhaps the most influential group today when it comes to setting the parameters of the Irish abortion debate is the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC).

The NWC appears to play an overinflated role in shaping public policy in Ireland. According to replies received to parliamentary questions in 2022, from mid-2019 to early 2022, the National Women's Council had 41 meetings with the Department of Health on a range of issues to give

its input - and prominent among the issues discussed was abortion. This is an incredible level of access for an activist organisation to have. In determining the Government's approach to the three-year review, the NWC was delegated by the Minister for Health to invite groups for a private meeting with the minister. These groups included the Abortion Rights Campaign, the Irish Family Planning Association and START Doctors. Of course, no input was sought from the pro-life side on this matter and letters seeking meetings with the minister from the Pro Life Campaign were ignored.

## Whims

The Government disingenuously treats the whims of the NWC as reflective of the broad opinion of Irish women. For all its talk about diversity and respect, the NWC rejects any diversity of views on abortion. For example, it has consistently ignored the voices of women who regret their abortions.

The policy of the NWC with regards to abortion is very extreme, advocating for stripping away gestational limits on abortion. Not only does the NWC ignore pro-life women, but it espouses abortion policies so radical

that they would alienate the majority of 'yes' voters from the 2018 referendum.

Annually, the NWC receives almost €1 million euro in public funding. Its generous allocation of taxpayers' money is spent on advancing an extreme set of beliefs which are held by only a marginal section of society. There are thousands of more worthy causes crying out for support which are critically underfunded and provide a social good.

**“The policy of the NWC with regards to abortion is very extreme, advocating for stripping away gestational limits on abortion”**

Organisations like the NWC are not interested in reflecting the views of the majority of women. They have displayed no interest in actively helping women in unplanned pregnancies. Nor have they highlighted the impact of coercive abortion or called for measures to prevent it. It's time for the Government to rethink its priorities when it comes to

spending taxpayers' money.

The three-year review is due to be laid on the minister's desk soon. At the review's launch, the Minister for Health immediately set the narrow parameters of the review by posing questions like why women are still travelling to England for abortion. We already know Stephen Donnelly's answer is to expand abortion, instead of addressing the root causes which lead women to feel they have no choice but abortion. These narrow parameters were again seen in the public consultation element of the three year review which centred on addressing how the legislation could better achieve its objectives and provided little scope to criticise the impact of the abortion legislation.

## Research

Most concerningly, many of the people that Minister Donnelly has picked to produce the research which will underpin the review have a demonstrable history of pro-choice activism, including on social media. On February 10, 2022, Government senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee said the independent chair only has to be "independent of Government, not independent of the

issue". Would such a tolerant attitude ever be applied to someone with a pro-life perspective? We already know the answer.

Throughout the three-year review process, the NWC and groups like it have continually pushed the envelope - pressing for a further brutalisation of Irish abortion policy. If the review's report transpires to simply be the NWC's wish-list, then it makes a mockery of the very principle of representative government.

**“Organisations like the NWC are not interested in reflecting the views of the majority of women”**

Irrespective of what the review shows, the Government cannot continue to ignore the voices and experiences of those who are raising legitimate concerns about the workings of the abortion legislation. Taking on board all these perspectives is the least the women of Ireland and their unborn babies deserve.

**1** Eilis Mulroy is a spokesperson for the Pro-Life Campaign.

# Out&About

## Celebrating Christian unity



▲▼**DERRY:** Bishop McKeown and Bishop Forster greet students and staff outside St Eugene's Cathedral, January 22.



**DERRY:** Students carry a crucifix up to the altar in St Eugene's Cathedral, during an ecumenical service held as part of Christian Unity Week. Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown and Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe Andrew Forster led the congregation in prayer for the unity that is Christ's gift to the Church on Sunday, January 22. Photos: Stephen Latimer.

### IN SHORT

#### Archbishop Martin welcomes Pope's Communication's Day message

Archbishop Eamon Martin has welcomed Pope Francis' message for World Communications day, which takes place May 18.

The Primate of All-Ireland welcomed the message, saying the Pope "invites all of us to optimise our emotional intelligence when we deal with others, and in particular when we are undertaking difficult conversations".

Quoting Pope Francis, Archbishop Martin said that "to communicate truth with charity, it is necessary to purify one's heart.

"Only by listening and speaking with a pure heart can we see beyond appearances."

This "call to speak with the heart radically challenges the times in which we are living, which are so inclined towards indifference and indignation, at times even on the basis of disinformation which falsifies and exploits the truth", the

Pope said in his message.

Archbishop Martin finished by calling on "all people of good will" to reflect on the Pope's advice and to apply it to the synodal journey.

The theme for the 57th World Communications day is: Speak with the heart: *Veritatem facientes in caritate* (Doing the truth in charity).

#### Travellers face struggle for equality, Church gathering told

Ethnic minority groups like the Travelling People should not have to struggle for justice and equality, an ecumenical gathering heard.

Geraldine McDonnell of the Parish of the Travelling People said the "promotion and celebration of Traveller culture and heritage is important in showing respect for Traveller identity.

"Ireland is a multicultural society. Ethnic minority groups should not have to struggle for justice and equality.

"We want to live life and not just survive it," Ms McDon-

nell told leaders and representatives of Dublin's main Christian Churches during the inaugural service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023 in Christ Church Cathedral.

Present were Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell and Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson. Fr Paul O'Driscoll of the Parish of the Travelling People gave the homily.

#### Maynooth launch new youth ministry programme

The Centre for Mission and Ministries at St Patrick's Pontifical University (SPPU), Maynooth has launched a new diploma in Youth Ministry and Spirituality in partnership with the Salesians of Don Bosco Ireland.

This one-year diploma allows people to work in professional youth ministry, regardless of whether they have previous theology experience or not, the college said in a release.

The programme commences in September 2023, with registration and recruitment of new students having concluded during the academic year 2022.



**DERRY:** Judith McColgan of Evermore Group presents Ella McCallion of SVP Derry with a generous donation to help with the society's work in the area.



**KILKENNY:** Editor of *The Irish Catholic* Michael Kelly is pictured with 92-year-old Mary Egan, a long-time distributor of the paper, outside St Mary's Cathedral on January 22.



**JORDAN:** Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes greets parishioners after celebrating Mass during the Holy Land Coordination's visit to Jordan earlier this month.



**ITALY:** Fr Bryan Shortall joins Padre Pio group leaders and guests at a gathering in San Giovanni Rotondo ahead of the 2023 pilgrimage season. Mass was celebrated in Chiesa Antica on January 22.



**ROSCOMMON:** Minister for Education Norma Foley is pictured with students from St Coman's Wood junior school in Roscommon Town after opening the school's new extension with Senator Eugene Murphy and Senator Aisling Dolan, January 19.



**WICKLOW:** The Board of Management (BOM) of St Mary's and St Gerard's NS, Enniskerry, make a presentation to Deputy Principal Alison McConnell and Anne Malone, SENCo. to mark their 25 years of service. Pictured are Chair Eugene O'Mara, Ms Malone, Ms McConnell and Principal Deirdre Morgan.



**WICKLOW:** The BOM make a presentation to outgoing treasurer David Gross to mark his long record of service as treasurer on the BOM. Pictured are (from left): Secretary Anne Malone, Chair Eugene O'Mara, Mr Gross, Principal Deirdre Morgan and Fr Bernard Kennedy PP.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**ARMAGH:** Fr Peter McAnenly Adm St Patrick's Cathedral Parish joins students, staff and a number of parish representatives in Mount St Catherine's PS to launch the new cathedral website, designed by Paul McNicholl.



**DUBLIN:** Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell joined Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin Michael Jackson and leaders and members of Dublin's main Christian Churches in Christ Church Cathedral for the inaugural ecumenical service of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023.



**KILDARE:** The Centre for Mission and Ministries at St Patrick's Pontifical University (SPPU), Maynooth has launched a new diploma in Youth Ministry and Spirituality in partnership with the Salesians of Don Bosco Ireland. Pictured at the January 18 signing ceremony are Vice Provincial Salesians Ireland Fr Michael Casey with Dean of Theology at SPPU Dr Jessie Rogers, accompanied by Fr Paddy Hennessy and Fr Cyril Odia from Salesians Ireland and Maurice Garde and Dr Aoife McGrath SPPU.



**LOUTH:** Bridie Magee receives the Benemerenti Medal from Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin. She is pictured with Archbishop Martin and her husband Leo on January 20 in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Boher.

**ANTRIM**

Beloved Disciples Programme for over 60s begins Friday, February 10 at 11am at Living Church 120 Cliftonville Road, Belfast and will conclude Friday, March 3. Each session lasts one hour, a chance for listening and learning over a cup of tea.

**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.

**CAVAN**

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

**CORK**

First Saturday devotions take place in the Church of the Ascension, Guranabraher with Fr Marius O'Reilly. Begins at 9.30am. Rosary, Mass, meditation for 15 minutes and Confession.

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**

Evangelium Catholic apologetics conference for young adults takes place Saturday, March 25 from 9am-6pm in DCU All Hallows. Booking now open. Visit evangelium.ie or search Evangelium Ireland on Eventbrite.ie. Cost €38, includes dinner, refreshments and social.

Catechism adult studies begins Tuesday, February 7, at 7pm in St Saviour's Dominican Priory. Places must be pre-booked. Contact Mary Kelly 086-1758019 or Bro. Benedict OP at benedict.mcglinchey@dominicans.ie.

**GALWAY**

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

**KERRY**

Tralee area mission led by the Redemptorists takes place Sunday, February 26, until Friday, March 3. It is a mission for the parishes of St John's, St Brendan's and The Spa. The theme is 'Dream, Hope and Celebrate'.

**LIMERICK**

Glenstal Abbey to host 'Opening to the Divine Light', a conference exploring the Transfiguration, Saturday, February 11 from 10am-5pm. Lunch and refreshments provided. Suggested donation €70. Contact events@glenstal.com.

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

**LOUTH**

Taizé prayer takes place Friday, February 3, in Bethany House, Dundalk, for those aged between 18-40 years. A relaxed time of peace and quiet prayer, in candlelight from 8-9pm followed by tea/coffee. Contact 042 933 1602 or bethanypointroad@gmail.com. Takes place in "Bethany" 34 Point Road, Dundalk A91 WOC9.

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**

The next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form will take place in Our Lady's Shrine Knock on Sunday, February 12 at 5:30pm.

**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.

**MONAGHAN**

Ignatian silent retreat for women takes place February 3-6 in Fatima Cove

Retreat Centre, Carrickmacross, A81FX31. Cost €100. Preacher Fr Stephen Kennedy IVE. Contact Sr Constasy SSVm, 089 215 2307.

**SLIGO**

Retreat for women at Star of the Sea Retreat Centre, Mullaghmore takes place February 10-12. Facilitators are Deacon Frank and Louise McGuinness. Cost for full board €250. Contact staroftheseacentre@gmail.com or 071 917 6722.

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**

Renewal workshop for RE teachers of Waterford and Lismore diocese takes place February 25 in Glencomeragh House, Holy Family Mission, Kilsheelan. Cost is €20.

**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**

Relic of St Charbel will come to Waterford Cathedral on Friday, February 3. Mass at 10:30am followed by blessing with the relic.

St Anthony's Novena and blessing with the Relic of St Anthony held on Tuesdays in Waterford Cathedral after 10.30am Mass. The Franciscans have asked that the cathedral continue the novena. The Mass will conclude with the prayer and hymn to St Anthony followed by blessing with the relic.

**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

### Christian baker loses appeal over transgender cake case

● A Colorado appellate court has ruled against a baker who appeared in court once again for declining to make a cake that contradicts his religious beliefs.

While Jack Phillips' successful US Supreme Court case concerned his refusal to make a same-sex wedding cake, he now faces a civil lawsuit for declining to make a cake celebrating a purported gender transition of a transgender-identifying attorney.

In a January 26 decision, a Colorado Court of Appeals three-judge panel sided with Autumn Scardina, a man who identifies as a transgender woman.

Scardina said Mr Phillips and his Lakewood, Colorado, Masterpiece Cakeshop discriminated when he declined to bake a pink cake with blue frosting to celebrate Scardina's purported gender change.

### Japanese PM vows to take action on declining birthrate

● Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida recently warned that Japan's birthrate — one of the lowest in the world — is not sustainable and that the ongoing population decline in the country poses an urgent risk to Japanese society.

"Japan is standing on the verge of whether we can continue to function as a society," Mr Kishida

said in a speech before the newly opened session of Parliament.

Mr Kishida, a conservative leader who took office in 2021, said he intends to launch a new government agency in April to support children and families. Mr Kishida said he wants the government to double its spending on child-related programs.

### Church in Bolivia denounces 'perverted' gender ideology curriculum

● Fr Pedro Flores, delegate of the Educational Community of the Local Church of the vicariate of Beni in Bolivia, criticised the "perverted curriculum" on comprehensive sexual education presented by the Ministry of Education.

In a January 20 press conference, Fr Flores pointed out that the content, which will be taught in schools beginning in the Initial Level (0-6 years old), "is a perverted curriculum, which will pervert the minds of children".

"Under the umbrella of what sex education is, they want to present gender ideology and show, as if there were a third way, the identity of the human person," Fr Flores criticised.

The priest called on the entire population to express itself in the face of "such a perverse action as this".

### Pakistan tightens its already far-reaching blasphemy laws

● The parliament of Pakistan moved last week to tighten its already far-reaching blasphemy laws, under which numerous Christians and other minorities have been prosecuted and subjected to mob violence, often for dubious charges of blasphemy against beliefs or figures associated with Islam.

Insulting the Prophet Muhammad is already, at least on paper, a capital offense in Pakistan. Under the newest legal changes, those convicted of insulting the Prophet Muhammad's

wives, companions, or close relatives will now face 10 years in prison, a sentence that can be extended to life, along with a fine of 1 million rupees, or roughly \$4,500, reported the *New York Times*. It also makes the charge of blasphemy an offense for which bail is not possible.

Islam is the state religion of Pakistan, and blasphemy laws have been on the books in the country for more than a century, even before it became an independent nation.

## Christian quarter targeted as Jerusalem spirals into weekend of bloody violence

Following a rampage of a radical Jewish gang in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on the evening of January 26, the Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries in the Holy Land called on political and religious authorities to bring civil and religious life in Jerusalem back to "greater serenity".

"This is only the latest in a series of episodes of religious violence that is affecting the symbols of the Christian community and beyond," they said in their January 27 statement.

"We condemn such attacks and express our concern for the escalation of violence in the Holy City."

The incident took place around 10:30pm when a large group of supporters of extremist settler leader Baruch Marzel, who has been banned from running for political office due to incitement, attempted to enter Jerusalem's Old City through the Damascus Gate into the Muslim Quarter.

The police prevented them from entering and they marched instead up to the New Gate, where they encountered the last few diners sitting at tables outside of the popular Armenian Taboun and Wine by Rewind Restaurant.

"We had tourists, Arabs and Jewish Israelis sitting outside dining when the group started chanting 'death to the Arabs,' 'death to Christians,' 'Christians go back to Europe' and insulting Muhammad and Jesus.

## Pope, bishops call for peace as Peru protests turn deadly

Peru's bishops pleaded for peace as violent protests against the country's current president and legislature have claimed the lives of dozens of people.

"We deplore the violence that has been unleashed because violence only begets more violence," the Peruvian bishops' conference said in a message published January 20.

"The death of more than 50 Peruvian brothers and sisters is a deep wound in the heart of our people, as well as the suffering of all the wounded, civilians

and police."

According to *The Associated Press*, the protests and violent clashes between police and protestors have led to the indefinite closure of Machu Picchu, the 15th-Century Incan citadel.

The civil unrest blocked transportation to and from Machu Picchu, resulting in hundreds of visitors left stranded at the ancient site.

In their message, the bishops of Peru said the violent protests are a source of "great pain" and said the senseless



Israeli security personnel work at a scene where a suspected incident of shooting attack took place, a police spokesman said, just outside Jerusalem's Old City January 28, 2023. Photo: OSV News photo/Ammar Awad, Reuters

Our employees told them to leave and then (the group) started throwing chairs," said co-owner Miran Krikorian who was at home nearby when the violence began and called the police as he rushed to the scene.

The incident took place as Jerusalem spiralled into a weekend of violence as seven Israelis were killed on January 27 at a synagogue after prayers and another shooting the next day left two Israelis injured just outside of the Old City in the Palestinian village of Silwan where Jewish settlers have established them-

selves and an archaeological site.

The shootings followed days of violence in the West Bank and Gaza, including the killing of nine Palestinians in an Israel raid on January 25 in the Jenin refugee camp.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said the raid was needed to foil an imminent terrorist attack and all those killed were part of an Islamic Jihad Terror cell. However, Palestinians say civilians were also killed in the attack.

Pope Francis appealed for peace in the Holy Land on Sunday, calling the recent

spike in Israeli-Palestinian violence a "spiral of death" that accomplishes nothing.

In his Sunday Angelus address January 29, the Pope expressed "great sorrow" for the death of Palestinians killed in an Israeli military raid as well as seven Israelis killed in a shooting outside of a synagogue in east Jerusalem.

"The spiral of death that increases day after day does nothing other than close the few glimpses of trust that exist between the two peoples," Pope Francis said.

deaths "must not go unpunished".

"In Peru, we are all needed to build the homeland," the message said. "Let's stop hurting each other! No more confrontations! This situation demands dialogue, listening and resolve."

Citing *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis' encyclical on fraternity and social friendships, the bishops offered to mediate the conflict in order to "build bridges of encounter".

## Slain journalists in Mexico remembered on feast day of patron saint

On the feast of St Francis de Sales, the patron saint of journalists, Bishop Francisco Javier Acero, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Mexico, remembered and asked for prayers for the members of the media who

have been murdered in Mexico and for their families.

According to the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico, between 2000 and 2018, a total of 134 journalists were murdered and 20 have been forcibly disappeared.

The Mexican Bishops' Conference stated in a video calling for a day of prayer for the victims on January 15 that in the last 10 years "at least 80 journalists have been murdered in Mexico for practicing their profession despite pres-

sure from civil society and international organisations".

In a video released by the Archdiocese of Mexico, Bishop Acero said that "in Mexico, defending the truth costs your life".





Edited by Jason Osborne  
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## 'That they may all be one'



Pope Francis visits the tomb of St Paul during an ecumenical evening prayer service marking the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome January 25, 2023. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

# Attacker kills and injures in Spanish church

A sacristan was killed and a priest wounded during a suspected terrorist attack January 25 on two Catholic churches in Spain.

As reported by *Europa Press*, according to police sources, the sacristan of the Church of Our Lady of La Palma was murdered and the pastor of St Isidore Church was wounded.

Both churches are in the city of Algeciras near the far southern end of the Iberian peninsula across the strait of Gibraltar from Morocco.

*Calatunya Press* reported that the deceased sacristan is Diego Valencia, and the priest is Fr Antonio Rodríguez.

The news outlet further reported that in the St Isidore attack, the suspect entered the church and struck at statues with a machete. The priest tried to expel him and once outside, the suspect, dressed in a djellaba (typical Moroccan dress), stabbed the priest in the neck.

Sources from the 112 Andalusia Emergency Service informed *Europa Press* that the attack occurred around 7:30 p.m.

The Diocese of Cádiz-Ceuta where Algeciras is located said in a January 26 statement that the injured priest is hospitalised and is "fortunately already out of danger".

The deceased sacristan was "much loved in the parish and in the city for his dedication and affability with everyone," the diocese related.

The National Court has initiated the investigation as an alleged jihadist terror attack, a process carried out by the Central Investigating Court No. 6.

In wake of the attacks, the mayor of Algeciras, José Ignacio Landaluze, decreed a day of official mourning, with flags at half staff on municipal buildings, and announced that a rally will be held in front of the city's largest church.

Various Spanish bishops

condemned the attack and offered their condolences to the victims and their families.

"It is with pain that I have received the news of the events in Algeciras," Francisco César García, the auxiliary bishop of Toledo and secretary general of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, wrote on Twitter.

"In these sad moments of suffering, we join the grief of the families of the victims and the Diocese of Cádiz and ask the God of life and peace for the speedy recovery of the injured," the prelate said.

## First blind priest in Kenya: Ordination is a 'dream turned reality'

When Fr Michael Mithamo King'ori lost his sight as a deacon, he thought his dream of becoming a priest was lost. But nothing is impossible for God, and on January 15, Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Nyeri ordained Fr Mithamo King'ori as the first-ever blind Kenyan Catholic deacon to become a priest.

Fr Mithamo King'ori could hardly hide his happiness. "This has fulfilled my longstanding hope of being a Catholic

priest," Fr King'ori told OSV News.

Archbishop Muheria helped the newly ordained priest to fulfill his dream and God's plan. "He has journeyed with me tirelessly, encouraging me then and now. He has even sponsored me to the country's Kenya School for the Blind to study the Braille. What a great caring father he is!" Fr King'ori emphasised.

Asked what he feels about being the country's first-ever blind Catholic priest,

Fr King'ori said: "Simply put. God's plan is not our plan. He has proven to me that even in the midst of this human tragedy, all is possible."

Addressing the worshippers gathered at ordination Mass, Archbishop Muheria said the historic priestly ordination in the country "is a moment to also embrace that disabilities are gifts that God gives so that those people can develop other new gifts and enrich our society".

## Vatican roundup

### Ukraine's religious leaders renew invitation to Pope to visit Kyiv

Ukraine's religious leaders asked Pope Francis to visit Kyiv, said Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

In a meeting with the Pope January 25, members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religions once again extended the invitation to him. Archbishop Shevchuk said they did not receive a clear response on the possibility.

"We know that the Holy Father is following the developments in Ukraine and is looking for the right moment to come," he told journalists at the Vatican January 26.

"We wanted to show him that not only Catholics are waiting for him (to come). All Ukrainians are waiting for him."

At a separate meeting with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, the representatives said they discussed the necessary conditions for beginning peace negotiations with Russia: "the liberation of Ukrainian territory as recognised by international law," and a commitment by Russia to pay for damages caused by the war, said Archbishop Shevchuk.

He also advocated for international tribunals to address war crimes.

### Pope Francis decries German Synodal Way as 'neither helpful nor serious'

In a recent interview, Pope Francis decried the German Synodal Way as elitist, unhelpful, and running the risk of bringing ideological harm to Church processes.

"The German experience does not help," the pontiff told *Associated Press* when asked about the controversial process, explaining that dialogue should involve "all the people of God".

The 86-year-old Pontiff contrasted the German event, which is not a synod, with the universal Church's recently extended Synod on Synodality.

Francis said January 24 that the global synod's aim was to "help this more

elitist (German) path so that it does not end badly in some way, but so is also integrated into the Church".

While Pope Francis did not delve into details of the demands made in Germany, he plainly described the Synodal Way as perilous.

"Here the danger is that something very, very ideological trickles in. When ideology gets involved in Church processes, the Holy Spirit goes home, because ideology overcomes the Holy Spirit," he said in the wide-ranging interview that also included remarks about the Church's stance on homosexuality, the loss of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI — and his health.

### Knights of Malta encouraged to strengthen unity

Conflict and division hurt the mission of the Knights of Malta, and craving for power creates distance from Christ, Pope Francis told members of the religious, charitable and chivalric order.

"Firmly strengthen your unity, otherwise you will not be credible in your work," he said in a message to members taking part in an extraordinary chapter general of the sovereign order January 25.

"Conflicts and opposition harm your mission. Lust for power and other worldly attachments create distance from Christ; they are temptations to be rejected," he said in the text.

The Pope had called for the extraordinary gathering to be held January 25, feast of the conversion of St Paul, as part of a process of renewal for the Sovereign Order of Malta.

He called for the gathering the same day he appointed a provisional sovereign council and promulgated a new constitution and code "to safeguard the unity and greater good" of the Sovereign Order of Malta, he said in the decree September 3.

The order has been involved in a process to revise its constitution and to promote its spiritual renewal since 2017.

# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

While news agencies and Catholic social media denizens these days gorge themselves on the Vatican's mounting "Battle of the Books," seeing who can craft the most sensational headlines or tweets about several controversial new volumes making the rounds, other outfits are, thankfully, still concerned with things that actually matter.

Such is the case, for instance, with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, which, since 1964, has been committed to crunching the numbers about global religion, especially Catholicism.

A January 23 post on a CARA-affiliated blog titled "1964," edited by Mark Gray, presents data on Mass attendance rates in 36 countries with large Catholic populations. It's based on the results from the latest cycle of the World Values Survey (WVS), which has studied trends in values in almost 100 countries since 1981.

Unsurprisingly, the central finding is that Mass attendance is much higher in the developing world, especially in Africa.

**“Nigeria alone has roughly the same number of regularly practicing Catholics as all of western Europe”**

In Nigeria, a reported 94% of Catholics say they attend Mass at least weekly, followed by Kenya at 73%. Lebanon clocks in at a robust 69% and the Philippines at 56. By way of contrast, the highest percentage anywhere in Europe is in Poland, at 52%, and in western Europe, the best performer is Italy at 34%.

## Consider

The WVS study also asks people to say whether they consider themselves "religious," independent of how often they attend religious services, and the CARA blog note the two things do not always correlate – large percentages of Lebanese say they go to Mass, for example, but the share of Catholics considering themselves "religious" is no more than in the UK.

A better correlation, according to the CARA analysis, is between both Mass attendance and religiosity on the one hand, and per capita GDP on the other. With a couple of striking exceptions, the poorer a country is, the more vibrantly

## Running the numbers, Africa isn't the Catholic future – it's the present



A woman prays during morning Mass at St Charles Church in Kinshasa, Congo, January 22. Photo: OSV News/Justin Makangara, Reuters

**“The central finding is that Mass attendance is much higher in the developing world, especially in Africa”**

religious it's likely to be.

(Those exceptions include Brazil, where Mass attendance is lower than what one would expect given per capita GDP, and in Italy, where it's higher.)

“The precise mechanisms associated with economic development and wealth that are impacting Catholics' participation in the Faith and identification as religious are unclear,” the report states. “Whatever they are, they matter significantly.”

## Demonstrate

Just to demonstrate how much this stuff matters, let's play with the numbers a bit.

First of all, a fun factoid: Based on the WVS data, the prize for the nation with the highest number of regularly practicing Catholics goes to the Philippines, with 47 million, narrowly edging out Mexico with 45.6.

Where things really get interesting, however, is in Africa.

Let's start with Nigeria. Getting accurate religious headcounts there is notoriously difficult, given how religious affiliation is heavily politicised in the world's largest

mixed Muslim/Christian nation.

Estimates of the Catholic population range from 20 million all the way to 45 million or higher, but for our purposes, let's use the Vatican number of 32.5 million.

If 94 percent of those folks attend Mass once a week, that translates to 30.5 million Catholics.

By way of contrast, the five largest Catholic countries in western Europe are Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Portugal. Using the percentages in the WVS data, collectively they have about 30.4 million Catholics who show up every Sunday.

In other words, Nigeria alone has roughly the same number of regularly practicing Catholics as all of western Europe.

## Disparity

In reality, the global disparity is much greater than the WVS data suggests, because of the relative dearth of sub-Saharan African nations included. For instance, the country with the largest Catholic population in Africa is the Democratic Republic of Congo at 45 million, yet it's not part of the WVS data set.

If we average Nigeria's Mass attendance rate and Kenya's, taking it as a sort of African baseline, it works out to 83.5%. Applying that average to Congo, it would imply that 37.5 million Catholics show up at Mass every Sunday.

(A good share of those 37.5 million folks, by the way, are likely to be in the streets of Kinshasa next week, when Pope Francis is in the country for a January 31-February 3 visit.)

**“The two largest Catholic countries in the world are Brazil and Mexico”**

Nigeria, Kenya and Congo together would represent a vast pool of 80 million weekly Mass-goers, which would be about one-quarter larger than the total for all of Europe and North America combined.

Here's another interesting term of comparison.

The two largest Catholic countries in the world are Brazil and Mexico, with Catholic populations of 123 million and 97 million respectively. Yet Mexico has a

Mass attendance rate of 47% and Brazil just eight, which means that together, they see about 55.4 million Catholics showing up for church every Sunday.

## Mass-goers

Nigeria and Congo together, meanwhile, generate 68 million weekly Mass-goers. In other words, Africa's two largest Catholic nations outperform the two biggest in Latin America by about 20%.

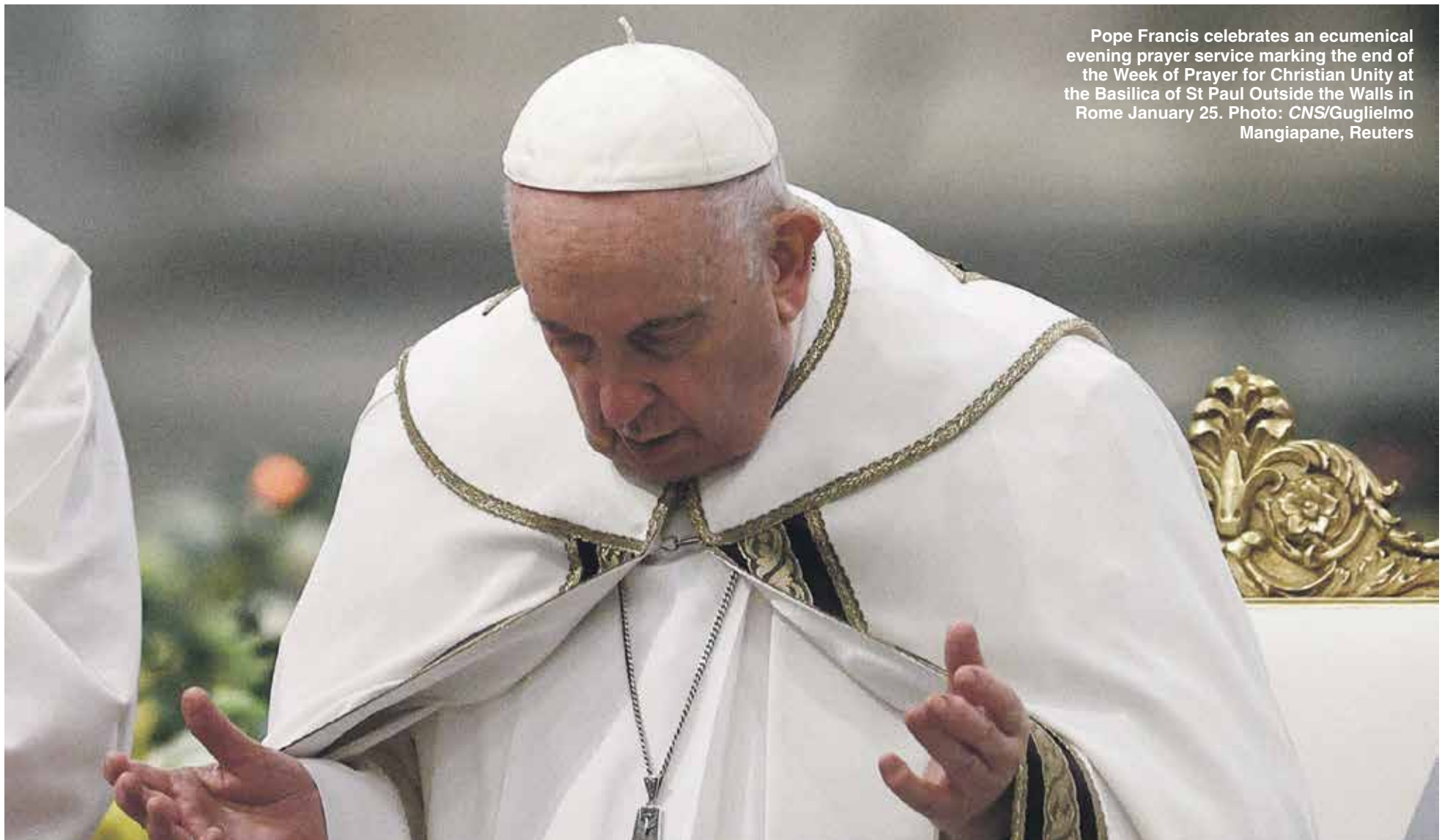
Drilling down, the gap would only grow. Colombia, with Latin America's highest Mass attendance rate at 54%, has 36 million Catholics, meaning 19.4 million are regularly practicing. Uganda, with a similar Catholic population of 34 million, would produce 28.4 million weekly Mass-goers, or 38% more.

While Catholicism officially numbers around 1.3 billion adherents worldwide, a good share of that total is fairly nominal. In terms of setting the tone within the church, those who are more active generally punch far above their weight – generating a greater share of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, for instance, as well as various lay roles.

In much Catholic parlance, it's long been said that Africa is the future of the Church. Looking at the numbers in terms of who actually shows up, however, Africa isn't the future. It's the present, and it has been for a while.

John L. Allen Jr. is editor of *Crux*.

# A wide-ranging interview with Pope Francis



Pope Francis celebrates an ecumenical evening prayer service marking the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome January 25. Photo: CNS/Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters



Cindy Wooden

Public criticism by cardinals and bishops is annoying – “like a rash that bothers you a bit,” Pope Francis said – but differences need to be aired and criticism can be helpful, he told the *Associated Press*.

“You prefer that they don’t criticise, for the sake of tranquility,” he said in the interview conducted January 24 and published the next day. “But I prefer that they do it because that means there’s freedom to speak.”

The papacy is not a dictatorship, he said, and, besides, “criticism helps you to grow and improve things”.

## Topics

The *AP* interview with the Pope also covered topics ranging from his health to the ongoing clerical sexual abuse crisis and from homosexuality to potential policies for regulating the retirement of a pope who renounces his office.

Pope Francis said he had no role in lifting the excom-

munication in 2020 of Jesuit Father Marko Rupnik, a Slovenian priest and artist, who continues to have restrictions on his ministry after additional accusations of sexually, psychologically and spiritually abusing women in a religious order he helped begin.

**“Pope Francis objected to the idea that criticism has increased since Pope Benedict died”**

And while he said he always orders the lifting of the statute of limitations when a case involves someone who was a child at the time of the abuse, he does not when survivors were adults because justice demands respect for the idea that a person is innocent until proven guilty and that crimes must be prosecuted within a certain time limit.

In the discussion about homosexuality, Pope Francis said that “being homosex-

ual is not a crime. It is not a crime”. And he defined as “unjust” laws that criminalise homosexuality or homosexual activity.

## Teaching

According to Church teaching, homosexual activity is sinful, the Pope said, but, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, gay people must be respected and welcomed and not marginalised or discriminated against.

“We are all children of God, and God loves us as we are and for the strength that each of us fights for our dignity,” the Pope said.

Being gay “is not a crime,” he said. One could say, “Yes, but it’s a sin.’ Fine, but first let’s distinguish between a sin and a crime.”

“It’s also a sin to lack charity with one another,” he added.

In the days following the death of Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the late pope’s secretary, published a book that included criticisms of Pope Francis, including because

of the way he treated Archbishop Gänswein, but also because of his decision to limit celebrations of the Mass using the pre-Vatican II liturgy.

Then, shortly after Australian Cardinal George Pell died January 10, two texts attributed to him and critical of the Pope – one calling his papacy a “catastrophe” – came to light.

“Even though they say he criticised me, fine, he has the right,” the Pope said when asked about Cardinal Pell. “Criticism is a human right.”

## Great guy

At the same time, he said, the cardinal “was a great guy. Great,” and he did much to begin the process of reforming Vatican finances.

Pope Francis objected to the idea that criticism has increased since Pope Benedict died and that somehow it is related to the late pope no longer being around to quiet the critics.

Instead, he said, it seems to be a natural part of “the wear-and-tear” of his papacy, which is nearing

its 10th anniversary. In the early years, he said, everything was new and exciting, but the criticism began “when they started to see my flaws and didn’t like them”.

**“He said, if he were ever to resign, he would insist on being referred to as the emeritus bishop of Rome”**

As he had done shortly before Pope Benedict’s death, Pope Francis also told *AP* that he had no plans to issue norms for how a retired pope should live and dress and what he should be called.

But, he said, if he were ever to resign, he would insist on being referred to as the emeritus bishop of Rome and he would live in a Rome diocesan residence for retired priests.

Pope Francis insisted he is “in good health,” at least “normal” for his age, which is 86. His knee has healed, he said,

but he told *AP* that he again is suffering from diverticulosis, or bulges in his intestinal wall, a condition for which he underwent surgery in 2021.

## Critiques

The day after the publication of a letter from top Vatican officials criticising the plan of the German Catholic “Synodal Path” to set up a “Synodal Council” of bishops and laypeople to deal with national issues facing the Church, *AP* asked the Pope about his view of Germany’s synodal process, which began in 2019. The process has focused on four areas a major study identified as containing the “systemic causes” of sexual abuse and its cover-up: the exercise of power in the Church; sexual morality; priestly existence; and the role of women in the Church.

But Pope Francis told *AP* the German process seemed to be “elitist” because it involved mainly bishops, theologians and laity invited to participate by the bishops’ conference and the country’s Central Committee of German Catholics. And, he said, it could become “ideological,” which is dangerous because “when ideology gets involved in Church processes, the Holy Spirit goes home”.

**1** Cindy Wooden is Rome Bureau Chief for the Catholic News Service.

**“The papacy is not a dictatorship, he said, and, besides, ‘criticism helps you to grow and improve things’”**

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Pronouncing our Faith despite fear of ridicule

**Dear Editor,** I appreciated the article entitled 'The positive side to fear of God' by Maria C. Morrow [*The Irish Catholic* – January 19, 2023]. I felt it would have been better had she referred to Pope Francis who explained that the fear of the Lord is a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit, which doesn't mean being afraid of God since we know that God is our Father who always loves and forgives us. He said the fear of the Lord is not a servile fear but is rather a joyful awareness of God's grandeur and a grateful realisation that only in him do our hearts find true peace.

This explains why the angel said to Mary at the Annunciation: "Fear not for

you have found favour in God." (Luke 1:30)

Her fear was her sense of not being worthy just as the great saints like Ignatius of Loyola were very aware of their unworthiness.

When Zechariah spoke his famous Benedictus he said that God "swore to our father Abraham that he would grant us, free from fear, to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, to serve him in holiness and virtue in his presence, all our days". This does not mean we will be without fear but that we will not be controlled by it because it is in God alone we find true peace.

We do God's work and pronounce our Faith despite the fear of being rejected or ridiculed. This tells us it is time to stand up and be counted. It is time for parents who want their children to be educated in a Catholic school to make their voices heard and not allow secular media or populist policies to intimidate them. The Christian ethos which is still the predominant ethos of our country needs to be upheld and defended and everyone is called on to assert and defend this.

*Yours etc.,  
Brendan Kennedy  
Belfast, Co. Antrim*

## Listen to your own flock, not liberal media

**Dear Editor,** Before the liberal Catholic commentators argue for hyper-feminist and neo-reformist changes to the Church, they should look at the result of too much of a 'free-for-all' agenda in the Church of England. As can be seen this has resulted in people leaving the Church in droves, which has left it as a minority belief system in the UK.

People should not have to think that they have to please the liberal media; instead they should listen to their own flock.

*Yours etc.,  
Brid Fitzpatrick,  
Terenure, Dublin 6*



## Deal charitably with pastoral needs of divorced

**Dear Editor,** Cardinal Kasper suggested that the Church could tolerate some second marriages for divorced Catholics. Take the case of the failure of a marriage due to the adultery of one of the spouses. There is a case to be made to allow the innocent spouse to divorce and remarry and be a full partici-

pant in the Eucharist.

This would be in accordance with the Gospel, "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except on grounds of unchastity makes her an adulteress" (Matthew 5:32).

In his history, *The Early Church* Professor Henry Chadwick wrote that when a

marriage broke down, there was a difference of opinion whether unfaithfulness in a spouse required or only permitted divorce. It was agreed that Matthew (quoted above) was a ground for dissolution of marriage. St Augustine judged remarriage a venial sin and later some bishops agreed that it was possible

for the Church to give it a blessing.

Surely, it is time for the Catholic Church to deal charitably with the pastoral needs of the innocent and welcome them to receive the Eucharist.

*Yours etc.,  
Daithi O'Muirneachain,  
Dublin 10*

## When people attack a local church it's an attack on the universal Church

**Dear Editor,** The persecution of vulnerable Christians in Nigeria has been continuous and bloody, it has lasting effects on small faith communities who are being specifically targeted. We see there was a Nigerian priest in Cavan "heartbroken" by the killing of a priest he knew in northern Nigeria, Fr Isaac Achi who was burned to death [*The Irish Catholic* – January 19, 2023].

There are calls for Irish bishops to reach out to the growing Church in Africa and Asia to help alleviate our

dearth in vocations to the priesthood – which is a wonderful thing when it happens. But we must also remember there are some Faith communities, many of which were started by Irish missionaries, currently living in fear due to events similar to what has been happening in northern Nigeria. Our priority should be supporting these persecuted churches and continuing the legacy of our brave Irish missionaries. Ireland must face up to and respond to the reality of there being

fewer priests.

Living on this island, we may feel safe in our bubble, but an attack on a local church is an attack on the universal Church. It's an attack on those who follow Christ's teaching. Our Government must be lobbied to be a stronger voice for those being kidnapped and slaughtered because of their Christian faith.

*Yours etc.,  
Liam O'Brien  
Drogheda, Co. Louth*

## facebook community

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

### Shock to Sacred Heart church community after vandalism

I know that church well my relations are buried in an attached cemetery. So sad, hope, they catch the vandals if there are any cameras near the church. – **Jacinta Newell**

So sorry for you all. Sad people roaming around trying to destroy all that is good and beautiful. – **Deirdre Quinn**

So sorry to read about this. – **Declan McSweeney**

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

## Insightful article condemning anti-Catholic bias

**Dear Editor,** I would like to congratulate your columnist Breda O'Brien, in relation to her brilliant insightful article condemning anti-Catholic bias in sections of the media late last year.

Journalists and reporters, who indulge in bashing Catholicism because of child abuse, should be continually reminded that down through the year's priests did not become paedophiles. The awful sad truth is, paedophiles became priests in order to gain trustful access to children.

*Yours etc.,  
Seamus Fogarty  
Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary*

## Embracing eugenics and turning a blind eye

**Dear Editor,** Fair play to David Quinn for pointing out Ireland is embracing eugenics [*The Irish Catholic* – January 19, 2023]. How have we come to a place in which aborting Down syndrome babies before they are born is acceptable? The answer is simple: People turn a blind eye. This is what people love to do when faced with 'inconvenient' truths.

A friend of mine was once speaking to a young person about abortion, when asked about the fact Down syndrome babies are basically not being born in certain countries – such as Denmark – due to abortion, they flew into a rage. It's difficult to dialogue with people who do not want to hear the truth about what they actively support, and what they voted for in 2018.

Now it seems basically all children who have Down syndrome are being aborted in Ireland. As Mr Quinn says in his article, eugenics basically means "well born", what we are deciding is which humans deserve life and which don't. It is reprehensible.

*Yours etc.,  
Pat O'Mahony  
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10*

## 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, February 2, 2023

## Faith in Film

Learning to be merciful on the Camino

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# Six ways to make your parish better



**T**oday, parishioners are expected to feel a true sense of ownership in their parish. That means looking at your parish as more than just a place where you go to Mass. A parish can be a sacred place where the human and the divine meet, where people of all ages grow in the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It can be a place where people receive spiritual nourishment, guidance, inspiration and strength – not just from the priests but from other members of the parish as well. It can be a spiritual home where people share in each other's joys, support each other in times of sorrow, offer encouragement to those who are struggling, and



**God gave all of us gifts that can be put to use in service of our parishes, writes Lorene Hanley Duquin**

help to heal anyone who feels battered or broken by life's trials and tragedies. Or it can be a social place where people make new friends, reach out to those less fortunate, and invite others to become part of a community of believers who try their best to live the Gospel message.

### Grow and prosper

Maybe your parish is already all of this and more, but even the

best parishes can become even better when parishioners take an active interest in making the parish grow and prosper. Here are six ways to do just that.

1. Think of yourself as part of a parish family. Family members share a common heritage and history. They are grounded in the same beliefs, values, and traditions. They embrace new members of the family with a spirit of love and acceptance.

Family members don't always agree, but they do feel a strong commitment to one another and to the family as a whole.

2. Be welcoming. When you come together on the weekend for Mass, think of it as a large family reunion – with people you know well, know slightly, and don't know at all. Introduce yourself to people you don't know, especially if they are sitting alone in church or standing by themselves at the coffee-and-donut hour. If they're new to the parish, offer to give them a tour, introduce them to other parishioners, or simply tell them why you love the parish. Enthusiasm is catching! Watch your nonverbal communication, too. If you're sitting on the end of a pew, for example, don't make

others crawl over you to get to middle seats. Remember to smile; take the time to compliment the people sitting around you on everything from their singing ability to the cuteness of their kids.

3. Use your gifts and talents for the good of the parish. God has given each person unique gifts and talents that are intended to be shared. Like public speaking? You might get involved as a lector. If you're friendly and outgoing, you could be an usher or a greeter. You can share your deep devotion to the Eucharist by becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or an adult altar server. If you play an instrument or sing, the music ministry might be the place for you.



Maybe you're a teacher and could help in religious education; if you love children, you could assist in the babysitting room. Any expertise – business, finance, public relations, photography, grant writing, engineering, carpentry, building maintenance, or even such skills as cooking, baking, cleaning, or gardening – can find a place in the parish.

**“You might even have an idea for a new ministry, support group, organisation or event, and your enthusiasm and energy can help other people get excited and involved”**

Maybe your greatest gift is time; if you're already an extraordinary minister or instituted acolyte, you can take Communion to the sick and homebound. Or you can help with your parish outreach ministry to the poor. You might even have an idea for a new ministry, support group, organisation

or event, and your enthusiasm and energy can help other people get excited and involved.

4. Attend parish events. Although Mass is our central focus, other parish ministries, activities, and events help to increase spirituality and build community as well. Whether it's a mission, a lecture, a lawn fête or a spaghetti dinner, take advantage of opportunities to meet new people, feel more connected, and affirm your fellow parishioners who work hard to plan and execute these events. Invite family members, friends, neighbours, and co-workers to join you – especially those who are not Catholic or may have stopped practicing their faith. These folks may not be ready to attend Mass, but they might enjoy coming to a parish event, meeting other parishioners, and seeing some of the good things that the Catholic Church has to offer.

5. Support your parish financially. You know how expensive it is to run your own home. Parishes face even higher costs – and depend on parishioners to help meet them. Take a serious look at the money you give to your parish each week. Do you increase your contributions each year as the

cost of living rises? Giving to the Church is more than just a financial obligation. Once you recognise that everything you have is a gift from God, you see that giving generously to continue God's work in the parish is an essential part of your spirituality.

6. Pray for your parish. Keep your pastor, parish staff and fellow parishioners in your daily prayers. Praying a rosary, spending time in Eucharistic adoration, fasting or offering up any suffering, annoyance or inconvenience you experience for the well-being of your parish will bring rewards not just for the parish but for you personally. You will begin to see yourself as spiritual support for all the good work being done in and through your parish. Pray also for the return of Catholics who have strayed from the practice of the Faith, people raised with no faith, and people searching for meaning and purpose in life.

#### Imagine

No parish is perfect, and even the best parishes can improve. Imagine what would happen if every person in your parish did one little thing to make the parish better!



#### Four things that hurt parishes

- Negativity. Negativity usually starts with a few disgruntled people who complain about virtually everything, then can spread like wildfire. The best way to deal with negativity is to address it head-on by asking some key questions. Is what this person is saying true? If yes, what needs to be done to address the problem? If no, the person must be confronted and the negativity exposed.

- Gossip. Gossip is negativity directed at a person or a group of people in the parish. Every parish has gossip-mongers whose own insecurity drives them to put others down as a way of feeling better about themselves. The best way to deal with them is directly: ask why others really need to know the things they share, or how others can help the person whose reputation is at stake.

- Cliques. Sadly, people involved in a clique usually don't think of themselves as "cliquish." They've just been running things for so long that they automatically rely on the same people over and over to help. Sometimes they just need a friendly reminder to invite others. Newcomers also often benefit – and help the parish – by starting their own new ministries, organisations and events.

- Refusal to change. Tradition is good, but when parishioners become rigid about the way things have "always been done," a parish can quickly begin to decline. Change is never easy, but talking about it will help. Try to find a balance that will maintain some time-honoured traditions, while incorporating new ways of doing things and involving new people in doing them.

**“Although Mass is our central focus, other parish ministries, activities, and events help to increase spirituality and build community as well”**

# Learning to be merciful on the Camino

## Faith in film



### Ruadhán Jones

**Y**ou might think, reading this column over the last few months, that religion is a common subject in movies. However, it isn't very frequently, at least as a positive subject. There are plenty of films that attack it or misunderstand it; in the past there were films that made it into a kind of spectacle, a blockbuster.

**“He drops out of his Ivy League college and the promise of a good job to go out into the world and find himself”**

Now, it's mostly relegated to indie and arthouse films or even to horror films, where holy water and the sign of the cross are still used to ward off strange and unworldly happenings.

But that's not the end of the world, as some independent films are made of better stuff than the mainstream. One such film that has proved a cult hit is *The Way*, starring Martin Sheen – star of the popular TV series *West Wing* among other things – and written, directed and produced by Sheen's son, Emilio Estevez.

Sheen plays Dr Thomas Avery, a well-to-do, middle-class ophthalmologist whose son Daniel – played by Estevez – springs a surprise on him. He drops out of his Ivy League college and the



Martin Sheen and his son Emilio Estevez star in *The Way*, about the Camino de Santiago.

promise of a good job to go out into the world and find himself.

But Daniel is killed on the Camino de Santiago, the famous way of St James that Christians have travelled for centuries. As a result, Dr Avery must go out and pick up his body, having it cremated to make it easier to bring home. But while there, he determines to complete the Santiago, taking his son's ashes with him.

Along the way, he picks up a few strays – a loquacious Dutchman called Jost, a cantankerous Canadian woman called Sarah and a hyperactive Irish writer, Jack. The four travellers have their own public and private reasons for travelling the Camino, hidden hurts and pains that become apparent in their journey. It all reaches a crescendo when they finally reach the impressive St James' Cathedral.

*The Way* is a very personal film, being a father-son story directed and starring a father-son team. Sheen and his son Emilio are both Catholics and quite publicly so. They had gone on the Camino some years back and wanted to make a film to raise awareness about it – Sheen was thinking a low-key documentary, but Estevez had greater ambitions.

#### Fiction film

He wanted to do a fiction film, and to draw on the significance of the Camino to his own family. It was on the Camino that his son met his future wife after all! So there is some chemistry that they take good advantage of. The story is also partly based on selected stories from Jack Hitt's book *Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain*.

Now, as one of the trivia pieces

on fan review site IMDb points out, the scattering of ashes from a cremated body is illicit in the Church and does happen in the film. But in the end, *The Way* is more about lapsed Catholics or even atheists returning to the Faith than about the specific rigours of it.

So let that slide you by, because on the whole it is a deliberately Catholic film. The whole point of the characters making the pilgrimage is that they need healing, of a psychological kind yes but also of something deeper. They have to come to terms with death and loss, with personal failings and the vicissitudes of life.

Interestingly, one of those characters is an Irish man played by Northerner James Nesbitt. While initially hostile to the Faith due to the legacy of abuse, he is ultimately won over by the beauty of the Camino.

To a degree, the film explores the agnostic's paradox; he wishes God existed so he could be angry with him! The characters need a direction for their anger and for their hurt, Dr Avery in particular. Before he died, Avery's son recognised that his dad had become disenchanted and warned him. Avery had lost the enchantment of Faith and he has to regain it – that's the central thrust of the film.

As well as that, *The Way* is a film about acceptance and mercy. The characters have to learn to be merciful to themselves as much as to others and that is particularly the case for Dr Avery. As one drunken monologue highlights, he has become embittered without even realising it by a life he now sees to be empty.

**“The Way is a very personal film, being a father-son story directed and starring a father-son team. Sheen and his son Emilio are both Catholics and quite publicly so”**

The film's structure, around a quest or pilgrimage, obviously has its roots deep in Christian history and mastermind Estevez plays this up well. *The Way* is not a subtle film, but that's not a bad thing. It's not an overly dramatic film, but that's not a bad thing either.

It's an earnest, humorous, drama, which has broad appeal on a subject that often proves divisive. I think that's giving a lot, and it deserves extra credit for popularising the Way of St James for the modern age. As a word of warning, some of the characters' personal struggles are quite adult and I would suggest only showing this film to children aged 15 or over.

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Brigid of Kildare.  
Photo: CNS/Cillian Kelly

## St Brigid: Carrying the flame of faith in ancient Ireland

**S**aint Brigid is, perhaps unexpectedly, at the forefront of the public's mind, what with her feast day becoming the occasion of a public holiday this year. However, many have chosen to focus instead on the pre-Christian goddess of the same name – some going so far as to say that there was no historical St Brigid. Rather, that she's an imagined, Christianised version of the that same goddess.

While the solid historical information on Brigid is scarce, there is record of her, all of which agrees that she was part of the Fothairt dynasty. They were a middling power centred around Offaly and Kildare, which historians have taken as a sign of her origin's credibility.

Born around the middle of the fifth Century, she belonged to the earliest generation of Christians in Ireland, and she clearly played a key role in establishing the Faith further still here. She founded a monastery – a double monastery, for both monks and nuns – in Kildare,

which is recorded by the historian Cogitosus, who explained that she worked closely with the first bishop of Kildare, Conláed (St Conleth, as many of us know him) in this work.

That same historian, Cogitosus, describes the tombs of Ss Brigid and Conleth beside the altar in the Kildare church, which became a major pilgrimage attraction – making her one of the most well-esteemed women in early Christendom.

Just 100 years after her death, the monastery she founded commissioned a biography to be written of her – taken up by the aforementioned Cogitosus – which is mainly a collection of miracles she was believed to have performed. This commissioning is indicative of the important – indeed, the founding – role Brigid played in the life of the Kildare monastery and in the lives of those who lived, worked and prayed there.

The miracles attributed to her give us some insight into the holy reputation Brigid had

garnered. Not least among these is when she reportedly transformed water into beer for a thirsty person with leprosy who had shown up at her door in search of relief.

With a reputation like this accrued so soon after her death, it's little wonder then that her name began to pop up abroad, and relics of hers began to be venerated in (then) far-distant lands – such as in the abbey of Saint-Maurice in Switzerland. Wells in Galway, West Meath and London bear her name, while her feast was already being celebrated in Luxembourg by the 8th Century.

While sparse, there are a number of tangible threads leading us back through time to the historical person of St Brigid of Kildare, who's rightly being recognised this year for the grace-filled impact she had on our island.

# How to live out Ordinary Time



**Woodeene  
Koenig-Bricker**

**A**dvent has its wreath, its candles, its hymns – all of which culminate in Christmas. Lent has ashes, fasting, Stations of the Cross – and the Resurrection. It's easy to be energised and excited about the Faith during the High Holy Days. But Ordinary Time in the Catholic Church? It's just so, well, ordinary.

**“What we long for is an infusion of ideas that are both a little different and yet still deeply rooted in our traditions”**

How do you stay involved and engaged when Sundays seem to run together and the next liturgical high point is weeks or months away?

There are, of course, the standard suggestions: attend daily Mass, say the rosary, make more frequent confessions. They are good ideas and can certainly help with a lagging faith, but many of us either already do these things or have

done so in the past. What we long for is an infusion of ideas that are both a little different and yet still deeply rooted in our traditions.

So here are five suggestions to help make Ordinary Time a little less ordinary.

## 1. Pray a novena

A novena, nine days of private or public prayer intended to obtain a special grace, favour or blessing has long been a part of the Church's devotions. You can find novenas for everything from world peace to healing, most of which are directed to end on a particular feast day of Mary, Jesus or a prominent saint. Sometimes non-Catholics, and even a few Catholics, may ask, “Why should we pray novenas?” The short answer is simply that Jesus Christ calls us to pray. In fact, he tells us to “pray always without becoming weary” (Lk 18:1), to pray with persistence. We'll never go wrong when we obey Christ. He promises that prayer works, and he often responds with electrifying results. Make your Ordinary Time extraordinary by praying one (or more!) novenas.

## 2. Keep a gratitude journal

Some scientific studies have shown that people who regularly “count their blessings” are happier than those who don't. Often we are so focused on the negatives in our lives we overlook the positives. So, during Ordinary Time, take a small notebook and, once a day, write at least five things you are thankful for. They don't have to be earth-shattering; “a cup of coffee” will suffice. Then, on Sunday, read aloud your list, saying before each item: “God, I thank you for...” It

seems like a simple activity, but it can literally be life-changing as a concrete, permanent record of the blessings of your life that is hard to overlook even when you are feeling down.

## 3. Act out

One reason our faith can become stale is when it becomes too cerebral. Instead of “doing,” we spend most of our time “thinking.” So put your faith in action. No, that doesn't mean you have to start vigils at abortion centres or volunteer at soup kitchens – although those things are good and may be just what some people need. You can act out your faith in smaller, more homey ways as well. For instance, Jesus told us if we had two coats, we should share with those who had none. Most of us probably have at least two coats in our closets, so paring down our clothes could be a great place to begin. During Ordinary Time, simplifying, eliminating and giving away those things that we no longer use can become a great act of faith ... and a great faith-builder.

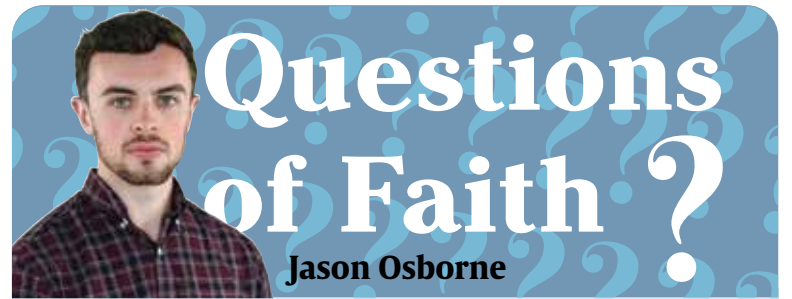
## 4. Read something with moral value

Have you ever read *Confessions* by St Augustine of Hippo? *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales? *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky? Or for more modern tastes: *Mr Blue* by Myles Connolly, *In This House of Brede* by Rumer Godden or even *The Shack* by William P. Young? In the weeks when the Church is not preparing for something special, we have the time to read what others have written about God, faith and the meaning of life. We don't have to agree with everything we read, but reading morally engaging literature is one of the best ways to keep our faith vital and vibrant.

## 5. Keep the Sabbath

The weeks of Ordinary Time are ideally suited to creating family rituals that keep the Sabbath as a special day. Without the pressure of holidays and holy days, we can design our own personal practices that make Sunday a day to anticipate. As with most things, these don't have to be elaborate. Perhaps stopping at the doughnut shop on the way home from Mass and letting everyone pick their favourite could become a “tradition”. Or reinstitute a sit-down family dinner Sunday evening, even if you are sitting down to eat take-out. Or read aloud or listen to an audiobook. Just find something you and your family can enjoy and save that activity for the Sabbath.

Ordinary Time is only ordinary if we think of it that way. If we consider these weeks, not as the long boring stretches between the good stuff, but as a time to try new things and refocus our energies on our spiritual growth, Ordinary Time can become one of our favourite – and most rewarding – times of year.



**Jason Osborne**



## Why confess your sins to a priest?

**S**ometimes when chatting with those of different denominations, or even with those of no faith at all, Catholics are asked why they confess their sins to a priest. Confessing sins directly to God is usually understood easily enough, but something about sharing our sins with another person in order to receive forgiveness is puzzling to many of us.

I confess (no pun intended), that it confused me too when I came back into the Faith a few years ago. I had come to know and love God personally, and didn't understand why the Church insisted on putting a man in between his forgiveness and I.

This was the wrong way of thinking about it. It is absolutely true that only God forgives sins – only God has the authority to say to us, “Your sins are forgiven, go in peace”. God, however, understands that people operate on more levels than the purely spiritual – and so, too, does the Church. We are spiritual beings, yes, but we're also physical, with all that that entails, such as emotions and psychology.

The sacraments make visible the invisible grace of God – the superabundant love and mercy that at all times and everywhere is poured out upon us, but especially for us fleshy, messy humans in the sacraments. It is deeply important that God comes to us as food in the Eucharist, and that that we have cleansing water poured on us at Baptism. These are no mere symbols – they are exactly as we believe them to be, not because we've said so, but because God has said so and instituted his will for us by means of the Church.

How does this relate to Confession? Well, priests are the ministers of Christ here on Earth, and so when we go to them for forgiveness, it's not their forgiveness that we're receiving but his, through his priest. To refer back to that point made above, it's important for us as physical beings, as creatures, to kneel for forgiveness, and to receive it tangibly through words and interaction with another.

While reconciling with God personally, privately is incredibly

important, and a necessary part of every person's faith-life, God in his wisdom has set out that it's good for us to physically go and confess our sins in person to one of his ministers. And whatever we may feel about that, it's an arrangement that works just as you'd imagine it should. The sense of relief that comes as you walk out of Confession is something impossible to replicate by yourself alone. It is born out of saying aloud, owning, your mistakes and wrongs, and out of hearing an authoritative pronouncement that you are forgiven these burdens you've been carrying around.

But not just any authoritative pronouncement would do it – an authority that only God can bestow is the key. We understand in the Church that God gave the apostles the power to forgive sins, just as throughout the New Testament, Jesus gave the apostles authority over “unclean spirits”, the authority to heal people of disabilities and illness and the authority to raise people from the dead.

That same authority has passed down from Christ, through the apostles, to the Church today. As St Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18). The apostles and their successors, ordained men, are Christ's extension of his merciful, forgiving power here on earth today.

It is true that while we're constrained by the sacraments, God isn't. A person who doesn't confess their sins in this life but whose heart was truly seeking God, even if they didn't know it was Christ they sought, and who was trying to pursue the good as they understood it, is surely pleasing to him, even if they have to grow in their knowledge and love of him as he is. But if we're aware of the gift God has given us in Confession and capable of sharing it with others, why wouldn't we? It was known to the saints as the “medicine box” for a reason – as the tried and true way to receive God's forgiveness here on earth.





# To fall in love



**T**o fall in love! We use the expression to cover many things. You can fall in love with a baby, a sports team, a city, a job, or another person. However, we reserve the prime analogate for this expression for one thing, emotional infatuation, that intoxicating feeling we first get when we meet someone who we sense as a soulmate.

**“Are we really in love with that person or are we more in love with being in love and the feelings this brings us?”**

Iris Murdoch once wrote that the world can change in 15 seconds because that's how quickly you can fall in love with someone. She's right, and falling in love emotionally can literally paralyse us with a grip so strong that even death seems preferable to losing the one with whom we have fallen in love. Countless heartaches, broken hearts, depressions, clinical breakdowns, suicides, murders, and murder-suicides testify to this. Emotional infatuation can be a deadly addiction, the most powerful cocaine on the planet. Where does it come from? Heaven or hell? And, what's its meaning?

Ultimately, God and nature are its author and that tells us that it is a good thing. We are built for this to happen to us. Moreover, it is a healthy thing,



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

if properly understood, both in its intoxicating power and in its innate failure to be a sustaining power in love.

What happens when we fall in love so powerfully with someone? Are we really in love with that person or are we more in love with being in love and the feelings this brings us? As well, are we really in love with that person or are we in love with an image of him or her we have created for ourselves, one that projects a certain godliness on to that other?

Let me risk some answers. Imagine a man falling deeply in love with a woman. Initially, the feelings can be overpowering and literally paralyse him emotionally. However, inside of all this, a certain question begs to be asked: with whom or with what is he really in love? His feelings? The archetype of femininity the

woman is carrying? His image of her? She herself?

In reality, he is in love with all of these: his feelings, his image of her, she herself, and the divine feminine she is carrying. All of that is of one piece inside of his experience. As well, all of this can be healthy at this stage of love.

### Emotional infatuation

God invented emotional infatuation, just as God invented honeymoons. We are not meant to be drawn to each other by cold analytics alone. But, this kind of falling in love is an initiatory stage in love (albeit a delightful one) that needs to be understood exactly for what it is, an initiatory stage, nothing more, one that invites us into something deeper. Emotional infatuation is not yet a mature stage in love. Unless one dies in its grip, as did Romeo and Juliet, it will one day lose its hold on us

and leave us disillusioned. When Iris Murdoch said that we can fall in love in 15 seconds, she might also have added that, sadly, we can also fall out of love in 15 seconds. Emotional infatuation can be that ephemeral, both in its birth and in its dying.

**“St Augustine coined this timeless dictum: You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”**

So falling in love (in this emotional way) comes fraught with certain dangers. First, there is the adolescent proclivity to identify this with deep love itself. Consequently, when the powerful emotional and psychosexual feelings let go, the person easily concludes that he or she is no longer in love and moves on. Next, more subtly, there is this danger. When we are in this initial gripping stage of love, our image of the other carries with it a certain godliness. What's meant by that?

St Augustine coined this timeless dictum: You have made us

for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Hence, nothing in life can ever really be enough for us. We are always restless, always yearning for something more. However, in this initial phase of love, when we have fallen into the grip of emotional infatuation, for a time the other is enough for us. That's why Romeo and Juliet could die happy. At this stage of love, they were enough for each other.

However, the hard truth is that infatuation does not last. The other person, no matter how wonderful he or she might actually be, is not God and can never be enough (and we are unfair to him or her when we unconsciously expect them to be enough).

### Godliness

For a while, they are able to carry that godliness for us, but that illusion of godliness will eventually break and we will realise that this is just a person, one person, wonderful perhaps, but finite, limited, and not divine. That realisation (which is ultimately meant to be the ground for mature love) can, if not understood, jeopardise or sour a relationship.

God invented falling in love! In it, we get a little foretaste of heaven, though, as experience tells us, that is not without its dangers.

**“However, we reserve the prime analogate for this expression for one thing, emotional infatuation, that intoxicating feeling we first get when we meet someone who we sense as a soulmate”**

# Salt of the Earth and light of the world

**M**atthew's Gospel is our source of light for most of this year. Where has he led us so far? When the voice of John the Baptist was silenced, it was time for Jesus to leave his workshop and home, and to proclaim his mission. He announced it in one short sentence. "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand." The evils of injustice, war, inequality, bitterness and so on would be overcome by returning to a new set of values. Jesus travelled from village to town proclaiming the Good News. He backed up his words with actions of healing and casting out evil spirits. Ideals are not effective without a taskforce to implement them. Immediately after announcing the closeness of the Kingdom, he called four fishermen to follow him. Two were casting their nets, two were mending nets, representing mission and maintenance: missionaries would travel with the message, while others were called to maintenance of Christian teaching and witness in the workplace and especially in the family.

**“A true Christian has the vocation and responsibility to preserve moral goodness and to conserve the valuable truths of revelation for society”**

Matthew's Gospel is built around five great sermons, the first being the Sermon on the Mount, which may be called the great charter of the Kingdom. Let us recall the words of Pope Francis: "Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are like a Christian's identity card. So, if anyone asks: 'what must one do to be a good Christian?', the answer is clear. We have to do, each in his own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount" (*Rejoice and be Glad*, 63).

In today's Gospel (Matthew 5:13-16), Jesus tells his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world."

He did not say "You shall become the salt of the earth...the light of the world." No, the true Christian is someone who already is having the effects of salt and

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



light.

Before modern refrigeration, salt was the principal way of preserving the goodness of food. A true Christian has the vocation and responsibility to preserve moral goodness and to conserve the valuable truths of revelation for society.

In cooking, salt is used not only in adding to the taste but also in drawing out the natural juices of the food. It is a Christian responsibility to draw out the possibilities of goodness in people rather than disheartening them through criticism.

Salt heals the septic wound and the follower of Christ heals the putrid areas of society. And salt stings while it heals, so one must not be afraid of opposition when confronting, challenging and correcting.

One major difference between salt and light is that the tiny grains of salt are effective when absorbed in the mix, whereas light must not be hidden but needs a distance to cast its rays. Salt is a part of the mix while light stands apart like a city on a hill-top. Christians must take the high moral ground to critique the populist opinion. The one opinion poll in the Gospel resulted in the release of Barabbas, a notorious brigand, while Jesus was condemned to death. Morality is far too important to be governed by a whipped-up populist vote. The Church is called to be *Lumen Christi*, the Light of Christi.

### Effectiveness

An important part of the call of Jesus is the warning that if the salt loses its taste and effectiveness, it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Sadly, in recent times the light of Christ has shown up shocking scandals in the Church: clerical abuse, financial scandals, a sense of clerical triumphalism which lacked the humility to admit these problems. Little wonder that for many people the salt should be dumped and trampled upon. Can the Church ever return to the service of the Gospel? Of course it can. The vast majority of Christians are good people but they get very little publicity. As Pope Francis told newly ordained priests, they would be like aeroplanes, making



The chapel of the Church of the Beatitudes is pictured on Israel's Mount of Beatitudes March 24, 2021. Photo: CNS

the headlines only if they crashed.

The tide has to go out fully before it comes back. When people face up to the number of murders every day, the instability of family life, addictions, suicides, and the sickness of society perhaps they will recognise there is something missing. As various writers have said, "There is a God-shaped emptiness in the human heart." In the jigsaw of life, nothing but faith in God will fill that gap. History shows us that nothing can stop the surge of an idea which has reached its time. History also shows that the lowest times in Church history have produced the greatest reforming saints. Of course, that is all the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis has asked us to participate in a synod, which is the Greek word for walking together. Together with whom? Sharing ideas and hopes with other people, but walking with Christ as known from the

Gospel, and discerning where the Holy Spirit is leading us in the reform of a sinful Church.

Here is a message that is given to participants at a Cursillo weekend:

God alone can give faith, but you can offer witness.

God alone can give hope, but you can give confidence to others.

God alone can give love, but you can pass it on to others.

God alone can give peace, but you can work for unity.

God alone can give power, but you can sustain someone who is cast down.

God alone is the way, but you can show it to others.

God alone is the light, but you can make it shine for others.

God alone is life, but you can give others a taste for living.

God alone can do the impossible, but through you it becomes possible.

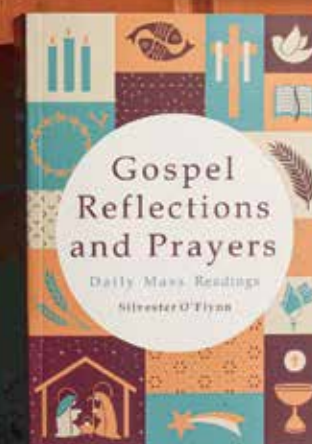
God alone is self-sufficient, but he prefers to count on you.

### Prayer

May we walk together with one another, seeing with the light of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Come, O Holy Spirit, renew the heart of the Church, renew the face of the earth. Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

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# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## It is essential we frequently recall the Holocaust

Last Friday was Holocaust Remembrance Day, and there were several related programmes of interest during the week.

**How The Holocaust Began** (BBC Two, Monday) was one of the most chilling. So many documentaries have been made that it must be hard to find some fresh angle. Even so, it is essential that we are frequently reminded of the cruelty into which we can descend if we are not careful. Holocaust researcher James Bulgin concentrated on a lesser aspect of the Holocaust – how the mass killing began. Initially much of it was chaotic and spontaneous – Nazi commanders down the line taking it upon themselves to engage in murdering Jews assuming they were carrying out Hitler's implicit desires to rid the Reich of Jews and communists.

According to Mr Bulgin it all started in 1941 when the German army invaded the Soviet Union – in the very first villages they invaded in Latvia and Lithuania the local Jewish population was rounded up and shot – including men, women and even children. Often the evidence showed this was with the implicit and sometimes explicit collaboration of locals. Many understandably saw the Nazis as liberating them from communism, and



A Russian military doctor examines Holocaust survivors after the liberation of the Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945 in Oswiecim, Poland. Photo: CNS

thanks to Nazi propaganda linked communism to a Jewish conspiracy. Anti-Semitism grew with pure greed as locals took over property left behind by the Jews who were massacred. Much of the programme concentrated on recent efforts to uncover the mass graves by using thermal ground imaging combined with old aerial photos from war time and very disturbing footage from the time. This detective work produced very upsetting results at several loca-

tions in the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Poland.

As the Nazis realised, they could solve Hitler's 'Jewish problem' by mass murder and they wanted to develop more 'efficient' ways of doing it, ways that wouldn't compromise the mental health of their soldiers! They concluded that gas was the way forward and adapted a killing method used in the infamous T4 programme for killing the disabled – "life unworthy of life", as they saw it.

There was a related interview with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, on **Henry Bonsu** (Times Radio, Friday). We heard troubling statistics about the numbers of young people, especially in Eastern Europe, who were not familiar with even the best-known details of the Holocaust. Mrs Hotovely was keen that, while a few were still alive, we should hear the first-hand evidence of Holocaust survivors. Presenter Henry Bonsu was certainly sympathetic, but did press her on last week's Israeli incursion into a Palestinian refugee camp, suggesting that a heavy hand would only recruit terrorists.

Listening to the ambassador and watching that programme I can well understand why Jewish people are not too happy when people compare other atrocities with the Holocaust. On **Midnight News** (BBC Radio 4, Friday) we were reminded that Andrew Brigend MP was suspended recently from the Conservative Party for comparing the effects of the Covid-19 vaccines to the Holocaust – surely an incredibly foolish thing to do. Pro-life people sometimes make the same comparison – probably not a good idea, though the parallels are very obvious. Even that 'life unworthy of life' quote has resonance in that context, as has the T4 programme against the

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**POPE FRANCIS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND SOUTH SUDAN**  
EWTN Saturday February 4, 7am

In Juba, South Sudan, Pope Francis takes time to meet with the bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated persons and seminarians who are critical to the Catholic Faith in South Sudan.

**SUNDAY**

**BBC Radio 4 Sunday February 5, 7am**

In depth exploration of topical religious issues.

**POVERTY CHASTITY AND (DIS) OBEDIENCE**  
RTE One Monday (night) February 6, 2.05am

Documentary on the Irish nuns who defied the apartheid laws in South Africa and continued to teach and minister to the black communities in the townships at great risk to themselves.

disabled. The early chapters of the book **Silent Holocaust** by John Powell make the similarities painfully clear.

It is not at all in the same league, but making fun of other people's religion is disrespectful and can contribute to something more sinister. **Everyone Else Burns** (Channel 4, Mondays) makes fun of an ultra-religious family that is expecting the Apocalypse any day now. The series starts with a middle of the night dry run organised by the vain overbearing father. The young son is disappointed that Armageddon hasn't really arrived, that sinners aren't burning in tarry pits, but the daughter is less enthusiastic. She does well in a school test, but the parents

are worried about how much valuable preaching time has been wasted. She's attracted to an ex-member of their sect, but, as we discovered in last Monday's episode, in this vaguely Christian religion dating is reserved for marriage! Admittedly it's funny, even touching at times as genuine humanity vies with excessive religious zeal. This is especially so when the father tries to rekindle romance with his frustrated wife.

However, three episodes in, it's mostly pot shots at easy targets and little if any insight into what religion is really about.



Pat O'Kelly

# Music

## Please RTÉ, bring back programmes

Following the ever-versatile RTÉ Concert Orchestra to the National Concert Hall under Japanese conductor Kensho Watanabe, I was surprised to see a notice in the foyer indicating that programmes for the concert could only be obtained by placing one's mobile phone against it and taking a snapshot.

I never bring my mobile to the NCH as one is admonished to "please turn off your mobile phone in the auditorium". So where does this leave the unfortunate concertgoer wishing to consult the programme notes during the performance?

While familiar with the music on offer, I sympathised with the lady near me



A QR code doesn't really cut it for a programme.

who began her enthusiastic applause immediately after the first of the six separated chords that conclude Sibelius' Fifth Symphony. Realising her error she ceased but, no

doubt, felt embarrassed. So RTÉ, please return to printed notes, which can considerably add to the overall enjoyment of your concerts.

The event in question, built around Gershwin's Piano Concerto and the aforementioned Sibelius Symphony, was highly agreeable while Berlioz' *Roman Carnival Overture* found the orchestra's cor anglais player exceptionally expressive in his important solo.

The Gershwin had soloist Michael McHale capturing the music's lyrical tenderness as well as its rhythmical panache with the swinging 1920s Charleston bubbling jazzily beneath the surface.

In the Sibelius maestro

Watanabe revealed the icy landscapes suggested in the opening movement, brought a wealth of momentum to the central Andante mosso theme and variations and encouraged an emboldened Allegro molto to bring this terrific symphony to its conclusion.

Also at the NCH, two recent NSO concerts had visiting conductors - Uruguayan Carlos Kalmar in one and Australian Jessica Cottis in the other.

In his Viennese programme, maestro Kalmar balanced the Adagio from Mahler's 10th Symphony against Schubert's two-movement Eight. Both performances found a sense of anguish in each work, particularly in the yearning of

the Mahler and the subdued ecstasy of the Schubert. The orchestra responded to Carlos Kalmar with compelling tenacity.

John Finucane, the NSO's former principal clarinetist, returned as the exemplary soloist in Weber's First Concerto. His fluid phrasing was interrupted by occasional twists of dramatic emphasis with Finucane's breath control never in contention.

Jessica Cottis made Beethoven's Seven Symphony stand alone in the second half of her concert. The work dismisses a slow movement in favour of a moderate Allegretto. Maybe Ms Cottis' approach to the Scherzo was a little too hasty but

Wagner's assessment of the piece as being "the apotheosis of the dance" could not be refuted.

The concert opened with a short piece - ...nature calls... - by UCC based Karen Power. In this NSO commission she skilfully incorporated pre-recorded black bird song into the orchestral ensemble. In her introduction Ms Power said the piece "offers a small sample of what can happen if we embrace and listen to the world around us". Nothing wrong in that.

In the melodic profusion of Dvorák's Violin Concerto, Spanish artist Leticia Moreno elicited rather smallish tone from her 1762 Nicola Gagliano instrument that often disappeared into the surrounding accompaniment. For me, her performance failed to grip the imagination.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Recent books in brief

### His Homeward Journey: The Life and Works of Pope Benedict XVI

by Bishop Fintan Monahan  
(Veritas, €9.99 / £8.99)

This short life of the Pope Emeritus was well advanced at the time of his recent death. It is exactly the sort of book which many people would have liked to have at hand then, for it is succinct, balanced and nuanced.

Benedict was a controversial figure, and as efforts are already in hand by more ponderous biographers to summarise and pass judgement on his life and career, the controversies are likely to become even more controversial, especially as efforts are also underway in some quarters to quickly elevate him to sainthood. Though it is likely that the Vatican itself will proceed with all due care until all the facts have been fully investigated and arranged.

"Sainthood now" is a cry which the Church will be cautious of. These days the press has to take on the role of *advocatus diaboli*, seeing that that ancient office, instituted during the reforms of Urban VIII, was rashly abolished by Rome itself.

Bishop Monahan, however, in this short book gives sufficient information for readers themselves to proceed further. He also manages to present the former Pope with human warmth, revealing him as more human than many other writers do. But he was essentially a scholar, a reserved, solitary man rather than a socially warm individual. He and Pope Francis are complete contrasts in this respect.

### Finding Hope compiled by Sister Stan (Columba Books, €16.99 / £14.99)

Every year the resolute and ever active Sister Stan brings out a book of contributions on a set theme to aid in raising funds for her charity Focus Ireland and the Sanctuary in Stanhope Street.

Last year's contribution was about "finding peace". The theme of this year's book is "hope", which is very much in keeping with these dark days. A remarkable range of people, mostly well known, have been gathered together, and their insights are many and varied. The books have over the years become quite an institution, in this respect making them an ideal bedside book for a brief nightly read.

Sister Stan, like those she has rounded up to write for her, will have had in mind the passage from the ancient Greek poet Aeschylus whom she quotes in her preface:

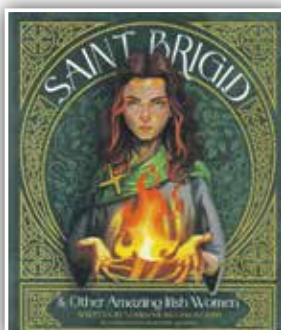
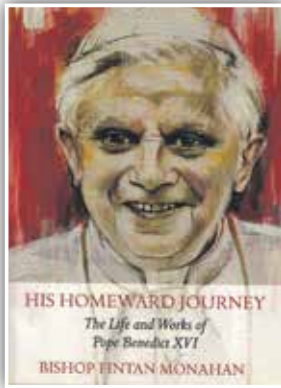
"He who learns must suffer.  
And even in our sleep  
Pain that cannot forget  
falls drop by drop upon the heart,  
and in our own despair,  
against our will,  
comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."

### Saint Brigid and Other Amazing Irish Women

by Lorraine Mullholland,  
illustrations by Matthew  
Jackson  
(Columba Books, €19.99 /  
£17.99)

In 24 short chapters author Lorraine Mullholland creates a series of "bite-sized" biographies of inspiring women from Irish history that will serve as models for younger readers.

The author is herself a teacher, so this book is styled to provide extra information of all kinds, and even quizzes on the text, which will make it very suitable for family and school use. But it is far from being a schoolbook for it is written with vivacity and charm, and a conviction that women are the real people to get things done.



## Joyce's true place in Europe's

### Joyce, Aristotle and Aquinas

by Fran O'Rourke  
(A volume in the Florida  
James Joyce Series, edited  
by Sebastian DG. Knowles;  
University of Florida Press,  
US\$90hb/US\$35pb/£38.95pb  
/€44.50pb)

Peter Costello

Today marks the anniversary of James Joyce's birth in 1882, the first indeed in what can be seen as the second century of *Ulysses*. That book is now so well established that it can be seen, not as a "modern" book, but as a European classic.

But what exactly is Joyce's place in European cultural history. This is one of the questions which Fran O'Rourke, emeritus professor of Philosophy at University College Dublin attempts to answer in this very full and impressive book which can be seen as crowning his professional output. It is certainly the most important book on Joyce that has been written by an Irish scholar in recent times.

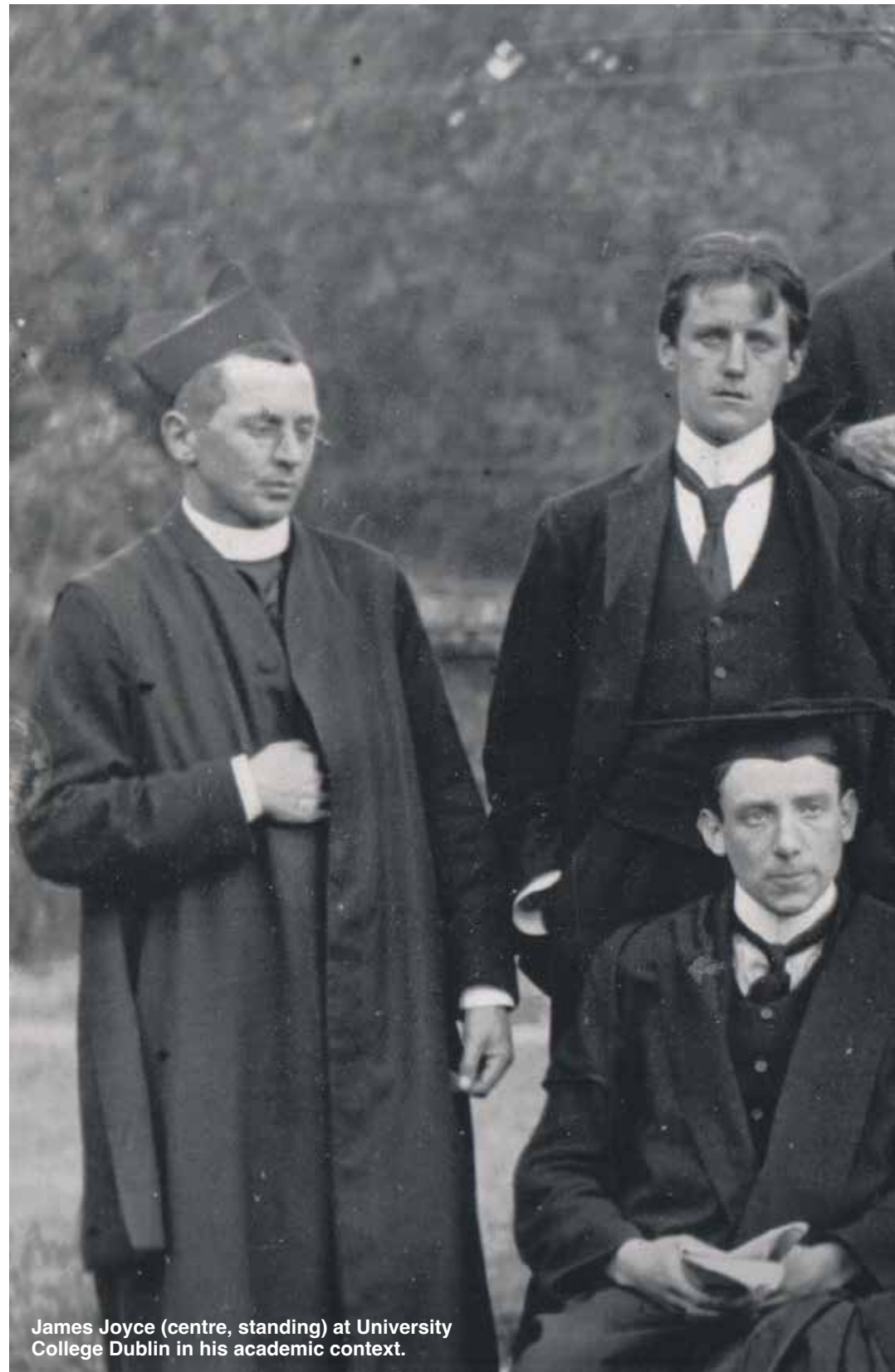
### Status

When *Ulysses* appeared in February 1922 there was great debate about its status. Why this should have been so is a little mysterious, for his early work in *Dubliners* (1914) had established his generous endowments in literary skills. But *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) went further. Significant passages in that book discussed in lengthy dialogues questions of the nature of literature and the aesthetics of creation.

“So Greek  
for Joyce was  
a language  
dependent on  
translation”

The names that O'Rourke invokes in his title were sounded by Joyce the aesthete as bringing important elements from European philosophy to the outlook of Joyce the writer.

Now, however, Europe's heritage of ancient classical thought and medieval scholastic culture is far less well known generally than it once was, as today it can be safely said that schools and some universities (at least in Ireland) have abandoned Greek and Latin. When elements of it appear in writers such as Umberto Eco and JB. Borges, they come as a surprise even to the most literate.



James Joyce (centre, standing) at University College Dublin in his academic context.

My own training at school and college was in literature, not in philosophy, so much of what O'Rourke says will pose I think a challenge to many readers.

We have to bear in mind that though Joyce had studied Latin from an early age under the Jesuits at Belvedere and Clongowes, he never did Greek; and at college he took Modern Languages ("The girl's course" as it was known to those ambitious young men studying for clinic and Church).

When Joyce died a copy of Oliver St John Gogarty's still

recent book on St Patrick was found on his desk along with a Greek dictionary by means of which he was said to have been checking the Greek quotations; but as there are none, one has to doubt this pleasant little anecdote, typical of the legends that still surround the writer.

### Surprised

I suspect, however, that Joyce must have been happily surprised to find that according to the marginal note on the surviving manuscript of the *Confession* by an Irish copyist (quoted by Gogarty, p237)

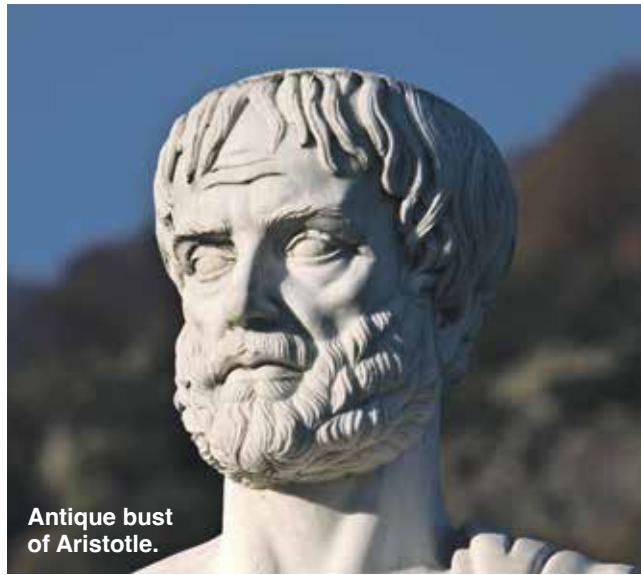
St Patrick's grandfather was named Odysseus - that is just the sort of allusional literary link that Joyce delighted in. It was these allusions he relished, not the integrity of the true philosopher.

So Greek for Joyce was a language dependent on translation. In Latin he was fluent, as his Trieste library indicates with its numerous Latin books on sexual matters written for the Catholic clergy. St Thomas then was a writer working in a living allusional language for him.

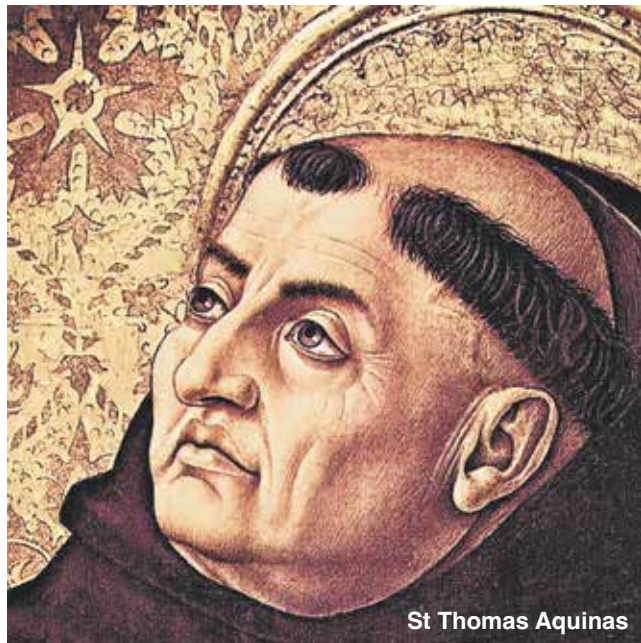
Prof. O'Rourke opens then with an account of this rela-

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.

## long curve of culture



Antique bust of Aristotle.



St Thomas Aquinas

**“It is certainly the most important book on Joyce that has been written by an Irish scholar in recent times”**

relationship. But we have always to remember too that Joyce was not a philosopher; he was an artist. Aristotle and Aquinas were used by him for structural and allusional purposes. He uses them in ways philosophers would not do. However, Fran O'Rourke is intent on exploring the whole wider context, and succeeds in doing so in a remarkable way.

### Solid base

From this solid base Prof. O'Rourke moves on to examine questions of knowledge and performance. The heart of this book, however, lies in

the sixth chapter dealing with the nature of beauty, a question that had absorbed Joyce, who was partially sighted since childhood. True beauty for Joyce was a matter for very close observation.

But in making use of Aristotle and Aquinas and the philosophical matters to which they gave entry, Joyce revealed himself not as a “modern” writer at all, but as an artist working in the central tendency of European culture as a whole from the Lyceum to the medieval schools of Paris.

Far from being, as so many rather foolish critics,

especially in the popular press, claimed a destructive madman, he was a major figure in the mainstream, a culture bearer in ways that even many of his most fervent admirers have little comprehension of.

Fran O'Rourke's pages will, I suspect, open up new realms to them which will be fruitfully explored in the century on which we are now embarked, and for as long as literary culture as understood by Aristotle, Aquinas and Joyce continues to exist. And long may that be.

## The guardian of the nation's purse strings at work



T K-Whitaker looks forward to a brighter future.

**The Irish Department of Finance 1959-99** by Ciarán Casey (Institute of Public Administration, €35.00/£30.99).

**J. Anthony Gaughan**

**T**he Irish Department of Finance traces its beginning to the establishment of the Irish Free State in December 1922. It retained the work-practices and most of the personnel of its previous existence as an ancillary branch of the British Treasury.

In the *Irish Department of Finance 1922-55* (Dublin, 1978), Ronan Fanning recorded the evolution, indeed convolutions of its early history. In this study Ciarán Casey continues the narrative up to 1999. These were years of significant social, political and structural change. So this book follows Fanning's in being an essential study for anyone wishing to understand the emergence of our modern European-focused Ireland

Dr Casey begins with a description of Irish civil servants in general. Three-quarters of them were educated in the schools of the Irish Christian Brothers. The competition to join the civil service was such that it secured many of the best performing school-leavers in the country. Some of the most gifted civil servants found their way into the Department of Finance. In addition, the Department of Finance and External Affairs recruited university graduates.

### Seniority

However, promotion based on seniority sometimes blocked the best and the brightest from having much impact on the system, causing them to become disillusioned and to leave the service. Irish businesses were the beneficiaries of this.

Dr Casey also notes that one of the generally recognised imperatives in the civil service is that senior officials

in the Department of Finance remain politically impartial in order to assist the ministers of different governments and different political parties with equal diligence.

Nationwide, civil servants remain unpopular. Popular budgets are attributed to Ministers of Finance. Unpopular budgets to the civil servants. They are ever the subject of much criticism in the press and the favourite butt of jokes and humorous exchanges – cue the satiric pens of *Dublin Opinion*.

**“Civil servants treasure anonymity and tend to be self-effacing”**

To cap it all those in the Department of Finance could also find themselves to be unpopular with colleagues in other departments, whose spending ambitions they had blocked or severely restricted.

Civil servants treasure anonymity and tend to be self-effacing. Thus, it is no surprise that Casey adopts a thematic approach in his study of the Department of Finance. However, the average reader would find a history of the Department through the lens of its leading figures much more interesting.

In the period under review the Secretaries leading the Department were: T. Kenneth Whitaker (1956-69), Charles H. Murray (1969-76), M.N. Ó Murchú (1976-7), Tomás F. Ó Cofaigh (1976-81), Maurice Doyle (1981-87), Seán P. Cromien (1987-94), and Patrick Mullarkey (1994-97). All were outstanding public servants; some were remarkable, not least T.K. Whitaker. (He arranged to have a biography written, thus safely pushing back the advent of a more critical work.)

When Whitaker was appointed secretary in 1956 the Irish economy was in a deep depression. Whitaker

believed that free trade with increased competition and the end of protectionism would become inevitable and that jobs would have to be created by a shift from agriculture to industry and services.

He and a team in the department produced a study of the economy and a detailed plan of recovery policies to improve it. The government published it as a White Paper which became known as the *First Programme for Economic Expansion*. The program brought in foreign investment which transformed the Irish economy. Whitaker's crucial intervention and his other positive contributions to public life were acclaimed even in his own lifetime.

### Honesty

Concluding his description of Irish civil servants, the author writes: “The competence and honesty of Ireland's public service has been cited as one of the factors in its recent economic transformation. This integrity should not be taken for granted given both the experiences of other new States and the behaviour in Irish political circles in the latter half of the 20th Century.

“For years on end officials in the Department of Finance doggedly opposed unsustainable public service pay increases for which they themselves would have been eligible. Giving precedence to the public good was something they did reflexively in a quiet act of genuine patriotism.”

Here, Dr Casey could also have given “a shout out” to the Irish Christian Brothers, their schools and the other colleges, which sowed the seeds of integrity and patriotism in the minds and hearts of those of their students who one day would have a crucial role in ensuring the economic and financial viability of the nation as it entered not only a new century, but a new millennium.



# Leisure time

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at [anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie) or call 01 679 3188



[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)

### Hoping...

to be in a relationship?

### Seeking...

someone who shares your faith?

### Finding...

it difficult to meet the right person?

Then call heavenlypartners on

**01 568 6558**

Ireland's Foremost Introduction Agency for Catholics

[www.heavenlypartners.ie](http://www.heavenlypartners.ie)

Please pray for the beatification of

## Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

## Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.  
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: [info@mscmissions.ie](mailto:info@mscmissions.ie)

[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

**Trócaire**

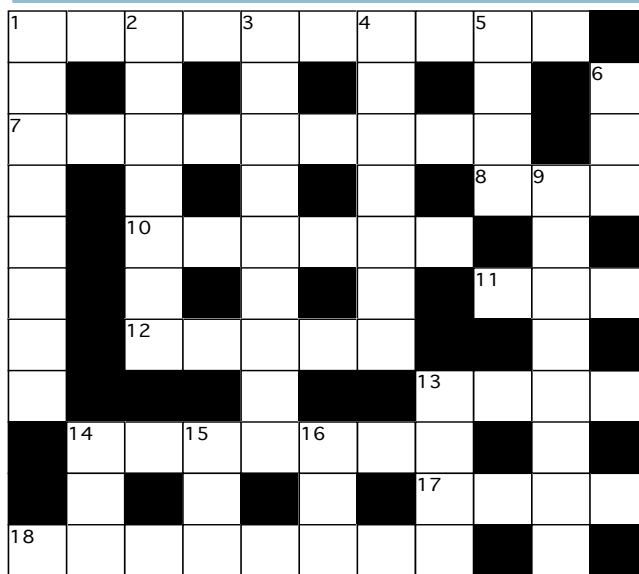
It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on 01 629 3333, email [grace.kelly@trocaire.org](mailto:grace.kelly@trocaire.org) or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Classifieds: 01 687 4094

### Crossword Junior

Gordius 468



#### Across

- College where students may get a degree. (10)
- She might dance in 'Swan Lake'. (9)
- Crazy. (3)
- Machine or motor. (6)
- A gorilla, perhaps. (3)
- It's short for Stephen. (5)
- A bird's mouth. (4)
- The Sleeping Beauty pricked her finger on this part of the spinning-wheel. (7)
- It's usually the last word of a prayer. (4)
- The days of the year are set out in this. (8)

#### Down

- Open it above you to keep

#### you dry. (8)

- Sickness. (7)
- This kind of tree does not shed leaves in autumn. (9)
- Chemistry or Physics, maybe. (7)
- A side in sport. (4)
- Crimson. (3)
- Turned up. (8)
- A Grizzly or Polar, perhaps. (4)
- Ocean. (3)
- You might go skating on it. (3)
- You might use this word when speaking to your father. (3)

### SOLUTIONS, JANUARY 26

GORDIUS NO. 595

**Across** – 1 Gym 3 Blood vessel 8 Solved 9 Exhausts 10 Roomy 11 Leeds 13 Vetch 15 Orderly 16 Iron Man 20 Toque 21 Clasp 23 Leech 24 Heptagon 25 Bantam 26 Penalty spot

**Down** – 1 Gastronomic 2 Mellowed 3 Beefy 4 Operate 5 E-mail 6 Sister 7 Les Mis 12 Saint Thomas Aquinas 13 Valet 14 Horde 17 Momentum 19 Dampen 22 Pearl 23 Least 24 Hip

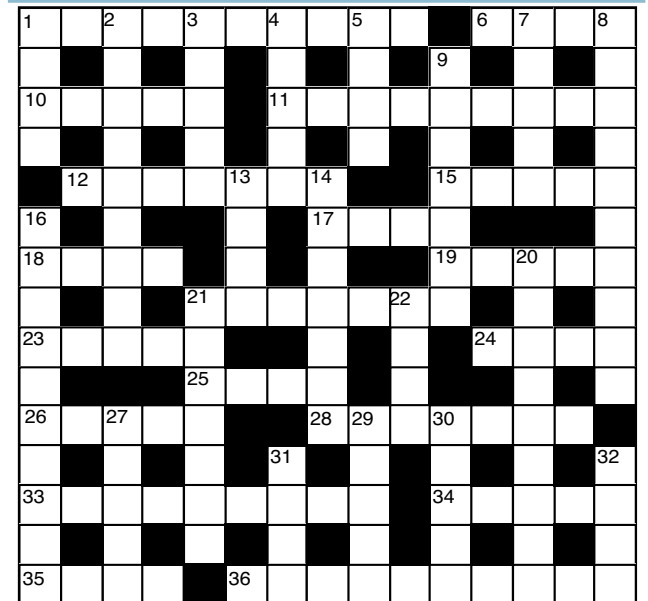
CHILDREN'S No. 467

**Across** – 1 November 6 Abel 7 Accident 8 Toss 9 Little 11 Escaped 13 Cow 15 Mane 16 Amazon 18 Food 19 Yelled

**Down** – 1 Neatly 2 Vacation 3 Middle 4 Rat-trap 5 Closed 10 Estuary 12 Encore 13 Canoe 14 Weeds 17 All

### Crossword

Gordius 596



#### Across

- Traditional board game for two players (10)
- Animal doctors (4)
- Triangular river estuary (5)
- Abounding in hues (9)
- The patella (7)
- Major gathering of church leaders (5)
- Roster (4)
- Fever (4)
- Tears erupt when you are stunned by this weapon (5)
- Prohibited (7)
- Dodge (5)
- Half a quart (4)
- Support or assist someone in wrongdoing (4)
- Concentrate; alter the setting of a lens (5)
- Important in human terms (7)
- Not one of the clergy? No players around, so (9)
- Japanese form of energy healing (5)
- Arctic vehicle (4)
- Gold-miner, for example (10)

#### Down

- Cadaver (4)
- Flower also known as the pot marigold (9)
- Feed on grass (5)
- One of the holy cities of Islam (5)
- Nocturnal birds of prey (4)
- Pixie-like (5)
- English name of the Polish trade union once led by Lech Walesa (10)
- Throb (7)
- Roman orator with a torn coat (4)
- The authentication of a will (7)
- Cataracts, cascades (10)
- A chemist or physicist, perhaps (9)
- Banqueted (7)
- Salvador, surrealist Spanish painter (4)
- This river flows through Glasgow (5)
- Breath-freshening sweets (5)
- Healthcare employee (5)
- Imperial ruler of Russia (4)
- Fibber (4)

## Sudoku Corner

468

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 467

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

### Last week's Hard 467

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

Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



# Respect and the use of gender pronouns

**THE ENOCH BURKE** case has been in the public eye for some time now. He was a teacher at Wilson's Hospital Secondary School in Westmeath when controversy arose last year over his refusal to call a pupil by their preferred pronoun of 'they'. He has been vilified by secular media for daring to refuse to go along with a gender ideology that asks and even demands that others refer to people with the pronouns that they choose for themselves. In recent days, I have asked myself: Would I call a person 'they' if they asked me to? Would you?



**Uncomfortable**

I suspect that many people would be very uncomfortable using the pronoun 'they' for a single person. The reason is not just because it is grammatically incorrect or because they are being unkind to the person in front of them. Nor is it because of a lack of respect. In fact, for many, it is because of a deep respect that they would refuse to call someone 'they'. This is because of who they understand the human person to be.

For the Christian, Scripture affirms what we observe in

human nature what is universal. We are made up of many parts including our minds, our wills, our passions, our emotions and our sexuality. We observe how the energy contained in each of these faculties doesn't always pull or unite in the same direction. So, for example, our passions might urge us to "do this" while our conscience might be telling us: "don't do that". St Paul describes the dilemma in his letter to the Romans in a way that all of us can recognise in ourselves: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (7:19). For Paul, his faith in Christ's saving love is the only way to solve this dilemma within

himself whereby his passions, his will, his emotions and conscience are reconciled and unite in a single gift of himself to God and the service of his kingdom.

In Scripture, the great drama of redemption of the human condition effected by Christ

involves the reconciliation of all the dimensions of who we are that unite under the aegis of the 'I' or the united self. Therefore, in our encounters with others, we encounter a single self, a single person with a name. For a Christian to call another person 'they' would be complicit in the fragmentation of their being and not to recognise their unity as a single person who is loved, not in parts, but as a single self.

In the gospels, when Jesus met the young man who was disturbed by a spirit and asked him who he was, the man responded by saying: "My name is Legion for there are many of us" (Mark 5:9). Here is the fragmentation of the person that Christ came to heal and save.

**Gone but never forgotten**

Recently, I had a sad request from a young man who wants to formally leave the Church. I explained to him that his written request would be noted in his baptismal entry. He was not satisfied. He wants the Church to cancel him and obliterate all his details. He was not happy when I explained that this was not possible. When he asked why we won't do this, I first responded by saying that his Baptism was a historic event – it happened and can never be undone. But the thought struck me that this is not the only reason. The Church does not cancel people or forget people like this young man despite him asking us to do so. For the Church to do this would be like giving his birth right to someone else or giving up his room in the house that belongs to him. Just like the merciful Father, the Church never gives up the hope of the return of a beloved child. The door is never shut on our side.

**St Francis de Sales and addiction**

I recently celebrated the funeral of a man who died before his time because of an addiction to alcohol. His daughter spoke at the end and said: "Some say Dad had a weakness for the drink. I would say he had a passion for it."

Everyone giggled but perhaps there is truth in what she said. Is the reason we can't break free from our addictions because we love what we are addicted to? According to St Francis de Sales, recognising this truth is the first step to a recovery and the first step to freedom. We must learn to hate what we are addicted to. "For you must not only forsake sin but you must also cleanse your heart from all the affections which are connected with sin" (See *Introduction to the Devout Life*, first part of the introduction, Chapter 7).



## YOUR GIFT COULD SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE

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.

The Little Way Association is receiving requests from missionary priests and Sisters who urgently need funds to purchase sacks of wheat flour, sorghum, maize and beans for their people and for medical needs of their clinics such as intravenous feeding of children and babies. For a helpless child, prolonged hunger is a devastating, bewildering, intensely painful experience.

**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.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
 Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
 (Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:  
 €..... **FOOD FOR A HUNGRY CHILD**  
 €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**  
 €..... **WELLS AND WATER**  
 €..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
 €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

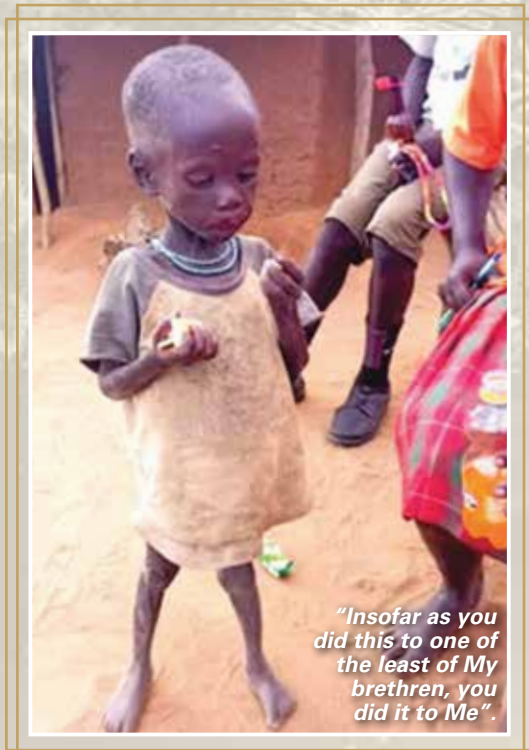
Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)  
 Address

To donate online go to [tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

IC/02/02



"Insofar as you did this to one of the least of My brethren, you did it to Me".

**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.**



"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**

Our benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions.

**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?**