

# The Irish Catholic

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# Hopes young people are rediscovering Confession after Christmas upsurge

Michael Kelly

Priests have expressed the hope that younger Catholics are rediscovering the Sacrament of Reconciliation after reporting a notable upsurge in people availing of Confession this Christmas.

Limerick-based Fr Gerard Moloney CSsR said the much talked about "demise of Confession" is "slightly exaggerated".

"We have heard hundreds here in Limerick over the last few days, of all ages and backgrounds," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Moloney said he had been struck by the number of people who had not been to Confession in a long time.

In Dublin, Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. said he believes that younger people are feeling freer about approaching the sacrament, particularly around Christmas time.

"Maybe there's a rediscovery of Confession with a younger generation not having some of the hang-ups that some older people have had about the sacrament.

"People don't associate it with being judged, but reconciliation which is great," Fr Shortall, parish priest of Priorswood, said.

Fr Fergus O'Connor, parish priest of Merrion Road in Dublin said they had been "extremely busy" with people coming for Confession. He

said that many people told him they had found the parish on the internet and decided to come as a family to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Christmas makes people more aware of their need of the sacrament," Fr O'Connor said, "so it was great to see people from all backgrounds and all age groups coming.

"We also had many people come as families," he said.

### Experience

Fr Moloney said this was also the experience in Limerick where many families brought their children to be part of the sacrament before Christmas.

"We even had to call in extra priests because we were inundated with people and had a real backlog at times," he said.

"I was struck by how there was such a variety of people, and quite a few younger people. The sacrament certainly still speaks to people and there is that felt need – and maybe younger people are re-learning Confession," Fr Moloney told *The Irish Catholic*.

In Belfast, Fr Eugene O'Neill of St Patrick's Parish echoed the sentiment. He took to social media platform Twitter to express his appreciation for the great number of people approaching Confession in the run-up to Christmas.

## Pope in New Year plea for peace



Pope Francis laments in his message for 2020's World Day of Peace that the human community "bears the scars of ever more devastating wars and conflicts," calling on Christians to reject systems of security, such as nuclear deterrence, built on fear of others. "Every war is a form of fratricide that destroys the human family's innate vocation to brotherhood," the Pope said in his message to mark World Day of Peace, January 1. Photo: CNS

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# Come to the Holy Land and see the Fifth Gospel

**H**ave you ever wondered what it was like for Mary and Joseph to make the journey to Bethlehem? Or, for Jesus and his disciples to make the trip from the Galilee to Jerusalem?

From the earliest times, Christians from all over the world have gone to the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. After St Francis visited the Holy Land in the 11th Century he was so inspired that he began creating nativity scenes in towns and villages in Italy so that people of Faith could have some experience of what it was like in the Holy Land that first Christmas.

While towns like Nazareth and Bethlehem are now bustling cities far from anything Jesus would've known, the holy sites associated with his Earthly life are preserved and revered to this day. Crucially, these places that roll off our tongues when we think of the Gospel are also home to a small but vibrant Christian community.

## Regular feature

Through *The Irish Catholic* I have been privileged in recent years to be part of a series of Christian Solidarity Pilgrimages to the Holy Land. What started out as a once-off has now become a regular feature of our calendar due to the popularity of the trips and we are already planning for this autumn.

In recent years, we have walked in the footsteps of Jesus and visited the sites around Galilee where he lived the three years of his



## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

Some of the pilgrims from a previous *The Irish Catholic* pilgrimage to the Holy Land take time out for a photograph.



public ministry.

In Nazareth, we have experienced the place of the Visitation and the hometown of the Holy Family, while in Bethlehem our pilgrims have been able to enter the Church of the Nativity and touch the place where tradition records that Christ was born some 2,000 years ago.

**“The people who live in the Holy Land love to know that they are not alone, and that they have not been forgotten about”**

Perhaps amongst the most moving experience is to arrive to Jerusalem and visit the sites associated with the last week of the life of Jesus: the location of the Palm Sunday procession, the Garden of Gethsemane, walking the way of the Cross to Calvary and ultimately the empty tomb.

Some people call the Holy Land the 'fifth Gospel', for at these places the scriptures really come to life. Standing

at the edge of the Sea of Galilee and remembering all the Gospel passages that speak of the sea instantly brings to mind the ministry of Christ and his encounters with his disciples.

As part of the trips, we have also been blessed to meet with local Christians and hear about their joys and struggles to keep their Faith alive in sometimes challenging circles.

## Unique journey

Next month's trip is already full, but in the autumn we will be going again and I invite you to join us and be part of this unique pilgrim journey. The No. 1 question I get asked when people speak to me about the Holy Land is 'is it safe?'. My answer is always an emphatic 'yes'.

The people who live in the Holy Land – what Pope Benedict XVI called the “living stones” – love to see pilgrims coming. They love to know that they are not alone, and that they have not been forgotten about. Much like during the conflict in the North of our own country, media headlines sometimes frighten people

and distract from the reality of the situation on the ground.

**“In the autumn we will be going again and I invite you to join us and be part of this unique pilgrim journey”**

The Holy Land is a vibrant and unforgettable journey of Faith, fun and friendship. It is also an unforgettable way to bring your Faith to life in a new and refreshing way. I hope you will consider joining us.

*The Irish Catholic* will organise two pilgrimages to the Holy Land in October 2019. The first will depart Dublin on Tuesday, September 29 and return on Thursday October 8. The second will depart Dublin on Sunday, October 4 and return on Tuesday, October 13.

**📌** If you would like more information, please see Pages 6 and 7 or don't hesitate to drop me an email on michael@irishcatholic.ie

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# Ireland skips key meeting on persecuted Christians

## Staff reporter

Irish officials skipped an international meeting highlighting persecuted Christians, Tánaiste Simon Coveney has admitted to the Dáil. He did not give an explanation when questioned by Fianna Fáil's Seán Haughey.

The Second International Conference on Christian Persecution met in Hungary at the end of November and heard from Christians from the Middle East and other hot spots of persecution.

Mr Coveney confirmed that officials from his Foreign Affairs Department did not

attend and said "the EU was represented at the conference".

Despite the fact that Christians are the most persecuted minority in the world, Minister Coveney did not address the issue of Christian persecution but chose to speak about religious persecution in general.

"Ireland strongly condemns all forms of persecution on the basis of religion or belief, irrespective of where they occur or who the victims are.

"We are committed to promoting freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as

well as the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities. This commitment to promoting freedom of religion or belief is reaffirmed in the Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World," he said.

## Reasons

Opening the Budapest conference, Hungarian State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians Tristan Azbej told delegates: "We have 245 million reasons to be here. This is how many people are persecuted daily because of their Christian belief."

At the same gathering,

Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán observed that 80% of religious persecution worldwide targets Christians, while Europe's Christian politicians quietly stand by.

"Four out of five people persecuted for their faith are Christians," said Mr Orbán, "and over and over Europe remains silent."

"A mysterious force shuts the mouths of European politicians and cripples their arms," he added. "Christians are not allowed to be mentioned on their own, only together with other groups that are being persecuted for their faiths."

# Boxing is 'act of worship' for star Katie Taylor

## Chai Brady

Renowned boxing star Katie Taylor has said that every time she steps into the ring it's like an "act of worship" over the weekend, and that she knows her future is in God's hands.

Speaking on RTÉ Radio One Extra, the lightweight world champion said that growing up in a Christian household and going to church every Sunday helped her understand "that if you surrendered your life to the Lord, there's no limits to what God can actually do".

"Every time I step into the ring I'm obviously just focused on the fight itself but I feel like I definitely honour and glorify God every time I step into the ring, it's like an act of worship and even every day in the gym when I'm training so hard, beating my body into submission, that's an act of worship," she said.

"Ultimately I know my career is in God's hands, my destiny is in God's hands, he's makes a way for me and I get great confidence every time I step into the ring knowing that."

Ms Taylor recently had to give up her most recent world title, the WBO light welterweight title, in order to maintain her status as the undisputed lightweight champion of the world. She is expected to return to the US, Connecticut, early in the New Year after an extended break with her family in Bray, Co. Dublin.

There are times you go through difficulties and heartache, she said, and feel that "your prayers are hitting the ceiling" but "when I look back I realise that God was much closer than I thought".

"It's amazing what God can do with an obedient and humble heart. Because of that I have great hope, excitement and expectations for the future."

## What do you think?

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Honoured: The Priests.

# Five Irish priests honoured by Britain's Elizabeth II

## Colm Fitzpatrick

A champion of ecumenism, a prison chaplain and singing trio The Priests are amongst those to be honoured by Britain's Queen Elizabeth in her traditional new year list of awards.

Tyrone-based cleric Fr Kevin Mullan is to be awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for what Buckingham Palace describes as "services to inter-Church collaboration and community relations" in the North.

Fr Mullan has been a long-time champion of better relations between different Christian traditions in Ireland and came to international prominence for his ministry following the 1998 bombing in Omagh which saw 31 people lose their lives, including unborn twins.

Also honoured are members of The Priests Fr Eugene O'Hagan, Fr David Delargy and Fr Martin O'Hagan, who are recognised as Members of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Congratulating the trio, Bishop of Down and Connor Dr Noel Treanor said: "the honour that they have received pays particular tribute to their generous charity work effected and realised through the 'Priests Charitable Trust' as they continue to reach out in support to those in need".

## Statement

In a joint statement, the three clerics said: "We would like to thank all those who have supported us in this journey, not least our families, fellow clergy, religious and lay faithful of the parishes in which

we have served and continue to serve."

Meanwhile, a prison chaplain has paid tribute to his fellow clergy and others in the prison community after being recognised by Elizabeth II.

Fr Stephen McBrearty, who is lead Prison Chaplain for the Catholic Church, was speaking after becoming Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE).

"I am humbled and delighted to be the recipient of this award which recognises the work of the entire prison chaplaincy in Northern Ireland.

"I would like to pay tribute to the extraordinary chaplains from all Christian denominations and other faiths, the men and women who untiringly give their service to the Prison Parish family," he said.



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# Irish priest finds 'tsunami' of cases as he leads Vatican abuse battle

**Michael Kelly**

The Irishman who leads the Vatican office responsible for processing abuse complaints has revealed that if he were a layman with a son abused by a priest, he'd probably stop going to Mass.

Msgr John Kennedy also said that his office has seen a record 1,000 cases from around the world this year, including from countries it had not heard from before.

"We're effectively seeing a tsunami of cases at the moment, particularly from countries where we never heard from (before)," according to Msgr John Kennedy. The Dublin diocesan priest is head of the discipline section in the powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which processes the cases.

## Overwhelmed

He said the department is today overwhelmed, struggling with a skeleton staff that hasn't grown at pace to meet the four-fold increase in the number of cases arriving in 2019 compared to a decade ago.

"I know cloning is against Catholic teaching, but if I could actually clone my officials and have them work three shifts a day or work

seven days a week," they might make the necessary headway, said Msgr Kennedy.

Just before Christmas, Pope Francis took a step toward showing greater transparency with his decision to abolish the so-called 'pontifical secret' that governs the processing of abuse cases to increase cooperation with civil law enforcement.

"I suppose if I weren't a priest and if I had a child who were abused, I'd probably stop going to Mass," said Msgr Kennedy. "I'd probably stop having anything to do with the Church because I'd say, 'Well, if you can't look after children, well, why should I believe you?'"

## Guarantee

But he insisted that the Vatican was committed to fighting abuse and just needed more time to process the cases. "We're going to look at it forensically and guarantee that the just outcome will be given," he said in an interview.

"It's not about winning people back, because Faith is something that is very personal," he added. "But at least we give people the opportunity to say, 'Well, maybe give the Church a second chance to hear the message'."



Lily Greene (7) takes a photograph of the crib after Mass in the Pro Cathedral on Christmas Day. Photo: John McElroy

## Pro cathedral appeals for those unwanted Christmas gifts

**Colm Fitzpatrick**

Dublin's Pro-cathedral is appealing for people not to exchange unwanted Christmas gifts, but instead donate them to those most in need, families, young people living

on the margins of life in Dublin and the homeless.

Throughout 2019, unwanted gifts that were donated this time last year were distributed to families who spent time in Crosscare's Family Hub in Drumcondra

when they were moving on to new accommodation.

It meant that families had some extra luxury items to help decorate their new homes.

Unwanted gifts were also given out throughout the year

to men and women in homeless services run by Crosscare who may not receive a birthday gift or treat during the year.

Gifts can be received until January 6 – feast of the Epiphany.

## Archbishop urges Catholics to let Christ's light shine

**Chai Brady**

Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin has urged Catholics not to forget the suffering that is taking place in different parts of the world, particularly as a result of war and conflict.

Speaking at Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh over Christmas, Archbishop Martin said "there is such a need for the light of Christ to enter into the darkness of our troubled world.

"Sadly, war and violence rage on in many parts of the world – from Afghanistan to the Yemen, from Mexico to Syria and Somalia.

"Millions of families, including many of our Christian brothers and sisters, are being displaced because of

persecution and oppression.

"Human trafficking and other forms of exploitation remind us that evil continues to profit from the misfortune and misery of our fellow human beings.

## Darkness

"In all this darkness – where can the light of Christ be found?" he asked.

"It shines out when kindness and generosity refuse to be mastered by darkness and despair; it inspires good people to continue working for lasting peace and reconciliation here in Ireland; it motivates children and young people to raise awareness of the climate crisis by challenging themselves and others to avoid waste and the 'throwaway culture'," he said.

## Iconic pilgrimage leader dies

**Staff reporter**

The founder of a pioneering pilgrimage to Lourdes for people living with disabilities has died.

Bro. Michael Strode died on December 27. He was 96. Dr Michael Strode, or Bro. Michael as he was called after he became a Cistercian monk in later life, was born in Surrey in 1923 and trained to be a doctor qualifying in 1946. A year earlier, he had been received into the Catholic Church.

He made his first pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1951, and in 1954 he and his friend Peter Keevney took a group of disabled children to Lourdes.

## Community

In 1956 the Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust (HCPT) was founded and the first trust pilgrimage took place in 1957.

Expansion continued in England, and in 1971 the first Irish group joined the Pilgrimage's Trust.

In October 1991 Michael entered a Cistercian community as an Oblate.

So far, thousands of children and their families have benefited from the work of the trust in Ireland.



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# Poor Christmas fare brought home the horror of Chernobyl



**Mary Kenny**

**R**eally, I was only ever superficially aware of the disaster of Chernobyl. Yes, I remember when it happened in April 1986, and that it was awful, and indicative that the Soviet Union was hopelessly badly organised – something I had seen in visits to Russia and the USSR anyway.

And I admired the work that Adi Roche had done for the children of Chernobyl, and the way in which her charitable gesture had touched so many Irish hearts.

But my awareness was quite shallow until, over the Christmas and New Year break, the boring mainstream TV fare drove me to watch a DVD set that I had acquired, almost as backup entertainment, during 2019. This was the drama *Chernobyl*, starring Jared Harris, Emily Watson and Stellan Skarsgard. There are two discs and five episodes, and once I started viewing, I was utterly gripped. Small wonder it was covered in awards after it was launched in May last year.

## Background

There is no sex, no romantic angle, no acts of human violence and even the characters portrayed aren't given much of a contextual back story. Jared Harris (son of Limerick actor Richard Harris and his wife

Elizabeth Mostyn-Owen), who plays the scientist trying to uncover the truth, Valery Legasov, reveals almost nothing about the character's background – we don't know whether he has children, siblings or even friends.

Similarly with Stellan Skarsgard's Boris Shecherbina, the Soviet big cheese who initially claims the nuclear explosion can be managed, and kept secret, by Soviet power.

Emily Watson's character is a semi-fictional composite, but even there you expect perhaps a romance to develop between this attractive nuclear physicist and either Harris or Skarsgard: but the relationships are austere and focused on their mission.

**“It is also a heroic story: the picture of a man, Legasov, who was willing to put his career on the line to seek out the truth”**

So *Chernobyl* has none of the usual ingredients which are traditionally supposed to feature in a great movie. It is just a compellingly important story, told by the director and writer Craig Mazin, with undimmed commitment. It illuminates



A scene from HBO's *Chernobyl*.

the terrible disaster that Chernobyl was, and what untrammelled powers we are dealing with in matters like nuclear energy.

But it is also a heroic story: the picture of a man, Legasov, who was willing to put his career on the line – and that meant becoming an unperson in the USSR – to seek out the truth. It is also a story of the heroism, not of the big cheeses in power, but of the ordinary men and women who acted so

bravely to try and halt the disaster – especially the coalminers, who willingly risked their lives to get into the core of the reactor and clear the poisonous graphite.

## Radiation

I said there was no romantic storyline, but there was a love episode involving Lyudmilla Ignatenko, who somehow wangled her way into the hospital where her husband, Vasily, was dying in the most appalling agony

from radiation sickness.

Forbidden to touch him, she nevertheless kissed and embraced him and tended to his suppurating wounds, and comforting him with the news of her pregnancy. She suffered as a consequence, but she came through, and lived to be a mother, defying medical predictions.

Definitely the best screen experience of 2019 for me. And now I understand *Chernobyl*.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New Maynooth podcast offers catechism insights

A Lecturer in Systematic Theology at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare is starting a new podcast: *Catechism with Fr Neil*.

Every day Fr Neil Xavier O'Donoghue will post a 5-10 minute audio podcast for the 366 days of 2020. In each episode he will read a few paragraphs of the Catechism of the Church and give a short reflection on the passage. In this way the whole catechism can be listened to over the course of the year.

*Catechism with Fr Neil Podcast* is already available on SoundCloud and Spotify and will soon be in the Apple podcast store.

Details can be found on Fr. Neil's webpage: [www.fatherneil.com](http://www.fatherneil.com)

### Politicians asked to grasp talks opportunity

Ireland's most senior Christian leaders have called on political leaders in the North to set aside difference to break a stalemate that has seen the cross-community power-sharing government suspended for almost three years.

The Four Church Leaders said in a statement "like many across our community, we are disappointed that it has not been possible to restore the devolved institutions before Christmas.

"As leaders of Ireland's main Churches, we want to encourage all those taking part and we pray that, together, they fully grasp this opportunity when they return to the negotiating table in January," it said.

### Sligo family retreat reflects on Gospel of Matthew

A Family Retreat Day will take place in Sligo this weekend, organised by Living Family.

The day retreat is themed on Matthew 1:20 'Take Mary into your home' and runs from 10am to 6pm on January 4 at Summerhill College.

The suggested donation per family is €80 or £70, which includes lunch.

To book your family call Therese on 086 8228174.

## We should celebrate Nollaig na mBan, but isn't it really more about the Feast of the Epiphany?

It seems that January 6 is now more feted as Nollaig na mBan than as the Feast of the Epiphany, or as it's often called, the Feast of the Three Kings.

I have nothing against the 'Women's Christmas', which was observed in Irish tradition going back centuries. In the devotional literature of the 1930s and 40s, menfolk were urged to spare the women of the house all those household chores on that day, and urged to give women a rest and a treat. However, the Epiphany was also observed as a religious holiday, and sometimes called 'Little Christmas'.

It's a strange paradox that while Ireland – especially in the face of Brexit – claims to be so much more European than Britain, it has progressively dropped the Faith observances which are linked

to Continental Europe.

The Epiphany is a major feast in France, Spain and Italy. Children in France eat a special almond pie – it's delicious, actually – and crowns are bestowed on the youngsters to represent the Three Kings who visited Bethlehem.

'Little Christmas', as January 6 was known in my Dublin childhood, also links Western Christianity with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, for whom the Epiphany is also a major feast, and sometimes coincides with their actual Christmas.

Thus it was a link with the greater world of Europe, West and East, as well as being a special Church holiday.

Nollaig na mBan is grand, but it is, strictly speaking, more insular than the Feast of the Epiphany.



# MAKE 2020 A YEAR TO GO TO THE HOLY LAND

**N**ext September and October will see two groups of pilgrims depart on an unforgettable trip to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. In recent years, these trips have become an integral part of The Irish Catholic year with hundreds of pilgrims making the journey from every corner of Ireland to take part in a unique opportunity to visit the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ. The pilgrimage also helps the Bible come alive for people as they visit Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Here are some highlights of this year's itinerary:



The Sea of Galilee.

## Day One: Ireland to the Holy Land

Depart Dublin Airport in the evening for an overnight flight direct to Tel Aviv on El Al.

## Day Two: Nazareth

Upon arrival in Ben-Gurion Airport, pilgrims will be met by a Marian Pilgrimages representative and guide before boarding our tour coach to Nazareth. En route we will see stunning views of the sun rising over the Galilee region – site of much of the ministry of Jesus. After breakfast, check-in to the four-star Legacy Hotel for five nights with dinner and breakfast.

After time to rest and freshen up, we will walk the short distance to the nearby Basilica of the Annunciation to celebrate Mass. On the lower level of the basilica we see the remains of Mary's house and where the Archangel Gabriel visited her.

Adjacent to the basilica is St Joseph's Church, where we will visit the site of Joseph's workshop and the house of the Holy Family. A short walk from the basilica is Mary's Well here you have the opportunity to draw water from the same well as the Virgin Mary followed by free time in Nazareth before dinner at the hotel.

## Day Three: Mount Tabor and Cana in Galilee

After breakfast, we have a short drive to Mount Tabor to ascend by taxi for Mass at the Church of the Transfiguration where Jesus is transfigured and speaks to Moses and Elijah. There is time to enjoy the view of the Valley of Armageddon and the Jezreel Valley – bread basket of the Holy Land.

After time for lunch we take the short coach journey to Cana in Galilee. Here we visit the Wedding Church, the site of the first miracle of Jesus. Couples on the pilgrimage can take part in the special ceremony to renew their wedding vows and there is also prayers and blessings for spouses at home and deceased husbands and wives. In the lower level of the church, we will see artifacts from the site before having an opportunity to taste and purchase some of the famous wine from this sacred site before returning to Nazareth for dinner in the hotel.

Optional Eucharistic Adoration at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

## Day Four: The Sea of Galilee

This morning we make our way to the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, Capernaum and Tabgha. Visit the site of the multiplication of the Loaves and Fish at Tabgha, and the Church of the Primacy of St Peter.

After lunch on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, continue to Capernaum and see the old synagogue and the excavations of St Peter's house before taking a boat trip on the lake, with relevant Bible readings. Before returning to the hotel we visit Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene, a prosperous fishing village at the time of Jesus.

Optional rosary at the Irish icon at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

## Day Five: Acre – the Crusader capital

We take the short coach ride to the coastal city of Akko, famed throughout history as the Crusader capital of the Holy Land. After Mass, we return to Nazareth for free time in the town of the Holy Family before dinner at the hotel.

Optional candlelit procession at the Basilica of the Annunciation at 8.30pm.

## Day Six: Jericho and Bethany

We leave Nazareth and drive south along the Jordan Valley into Jericho. Here we can see the Mount of Temptation and the Sycamore tree of Zachaeus. Continue to the Dead Sea and enjoy a 'dip' near Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Drive by the Inn of the Good Samaritan, to Bethany to celebrate Mass at 16.00 and visit the Tomb of Lazarus. Continue to Qasr el Yahud, the baptismal site of Jesus on the River Jordan, here we can renew our baptismal vows.

After we drive to Bethlehem and check-in to the four-star Manger Square Hotel, located just a stone's throw from the Church of the Nativity for four nights, with breakfast and dinner.

## Day Seven: Jerusalem

We drive to Jerusalem and enter the Old City to the Church of St Anne and nearby, see the Pool of Bethesda. Close by we begin the Via Dolorosa and follow the stations of the cross through the markets and narrow streets of the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site of

Calvary where Jesus was crucified and His tomb. Here we will celebrate Mass at 11.00 and take some time to reflect at this sacred site. Enjoy some free time in Jerusalem for lunch before visiting the Western Wall.

We will then drive to Taybeh – a town where Jesus stayed before going to Jerusalem to endure the Passion. It is the last all-Christian town in the West Bank and here we will hear about efforts to keep the local Christian community vibrant, including local wine-making before returning to the hotel in Bethlehem for dinner.

## Day Eight: Mount of Olives

Drive to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where we take our group photo and enjoy the view of the Old City below. We make our way to the highest point on the Mount of Olives to the Ascension Dome. Continue to visit the Pater Noster Church, Dominus Flevit, the Church of the Assumption and grotto and the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the afternoon we celebrate Mass at 15.00 in the Church of St Peter in Gallicantu or 'cock's crow', where St Peter denied Jesus

three times and see the dungeon where Jesus was held the night of Holy Thursday. We walk around Mount Zion and visit the church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Tomb of King David and the Room of the Last Supper. Return to the hotel for dinner.

## Day Nine: Bethlehem

After breakfast we take the short walk to the Church of the Nativity and celebrate Mass at 10.00. Here you can visit the birthplace of Jesus, and the Holy Manger as well as the chapels of St Joseph, St Jerome, the Holy Innocents and the Church of St Catherine.

Visit the Milk Grotto before lunch and meeting with members of the local Christian community in Bethlehem. Afterwards, we take the short drive to the Shepherds' Field and Ein Karem to the Church of the Visitation before returning to the hotel for dinner.

## Day Ten: Emmaus

After breakfast at the hotel, we have some free time in Bethlehem before boarding the coach for the journey to Emmaus where we will have Mass and lunch before proceeding to the airport for the direct flight back to Dublin.

## PRICING NOTES FOR THE PILGRIMAGE

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- Flight from Tel Aviv to Dublin;
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- English-speaking guides throughout the pilgrimage;
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- Return taxi transfers to Mount Tabor.

### Entrance fees included

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- Muhrakha;
- Qumran.

### Optional

- Travel insurance €25 for passengers up to 85 years. Please note that an additional insurance premium of €25 is charged for persons aged 86 to 94 years;

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- Price per person sharing twin/double/treble rooms with private facilities. Passengers are entitled to check in one standard piece of luggage subject to airline's conditions. Single rooms are subject to availability at a supplement.
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## Maria Steen

### The View



# God takes what is small and insignificant by human standards and raises it up

**O**n Monday, the Church celebrates the great moment of the first revelation of the Messiah to all nations and peoples: the Epiphany. Traditionally considered even more theologically significant than the Nativity, this was the moment in time when Christ was revealed as not only a Messiah for God's chosen people, but for all peoples.

Whereas angels were the messengers that brought the news of Christ's birth to the Jewish people – as represented by the shepherds – the star heralded the great news to the Magi, or wise men, representing the Gentiles. These three wise men were astronomers who noted and understood the significance of the appearance of the star and were not deterred from following it.

Their journey in seeking the Christ-child, and what we can only imagine of their perseverance in their arduous trek, calls to mind St Augustine's reflection: "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."

Leaving behind their homes, their commitments, dropping everything in their quest to follow Christ, they did not rest till they found the place where the child lay.

#### Tradition

The three wise men – by tradition representing all the three known continents at the time, Europe, Asia and Africa – remind us that though the Jewish people were chosen by God, and specially loved for that reason, all, whether Jew or Gentile, are made in God's image and formed by God for himself.

This sign of the extension of God's salvation to people of all nations bears great significance in our times of religious and racial persecution.

It was the early Christian Church – through God's revelation to St Peter that no man was to be considered unclean or unworthy to associate with – that broke the taboo of Jew sitting down to eat with Gentile.

In the Council of Jerusalem, Peter established that the Gentiles were not bound by the Old Law and that the Gospel message was also for them. The Church then, governed in an unbroken line from the first Pope, Peter, still stands as a sign of the universality



of God's offering of faith and salvation: it is for all peoples, regardless of origins or race. Each is treasured as a child of God and member of His Church.

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI tells us that in addition to representing peoples of all origins, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar also by tradition represent the different phases in human life: youth, maturity and old age. As the former Pope says, the various stages of human life find their true meaning and inner unity in companionship with Jesus.

This too is reflected in the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, which also has a special significance in our times and now, sadly, in our own country.

While the persecution of people on racial or religious grounds is often visible, the persecution of people on the grounds of age – whether immaturity or old age – is hidden in our modern culture. Abortion and euthanasia are grievous offences against the most vulnerable in our society.

The image of the Magi bowing before a tiny infant stands in stark contrast to the offence of attacking the most vulnerable through the means of abortion and euthanasia. In the great paintings showing the

visit of the Wise Men, the central focus is usually on the Christ-child in Mary's arms and the oldest of the Magi, who is depicted as kneeling reverently before the infant, offering his gift. In the image we see each end of the age spectrum gazing respectfully – and lovingly – at the other. If only our society would mirror this image.

As if the significance and importance of this event were not already emphasised enough, we also have the gifts born by the Magi to further enlighten us that the child they sought was King, God, and Saviour.

Gold signifies Christ's royalty, also reinforced by the town in which he was born: Bethlehem. This was prophesied by Micah, about 700 years before the birth of Christ: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel."

This also shows what Pope emeritus Benedict XVI calls the paradox in God's actions: that he takes what is small and insignificant by human standards and raises it up.

Bethlehem, as a small town, became a royal city. David, whom the city recalls as king, was the youngest of Jesse's sons and least

likely to be king material, but was raised up by God to rule. A child born into a carpenter's family was really the Saviour of the world.

So, too, God promises to do great things for us. In Matthew 17:20 Christ says to his disciples: "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. All these seeming paradoxes remind us that God's ways are not our ways."

**“Before Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce Mary's own soul too, the gift of myrrh pointed to Christ's suffering and death”**

The significance of Christ's place of birth was also prophesied by a non-Jew and worshipper of other gods. Balaam was used by God to point towards Christ's coming: "a star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Num 24:17). The pagan, intending to curse the Jewish people at Balak's behest, ended up confessing that Christ was King.

The gift of Frankincense signifies the recognition of Jesus as God.

Frankincense, an aromatic resin derived from the sap of the *Boswellia* tree species, was used in religious rites from earliest times. In presenting it to Jesus, the Magi were recognising Jesus's divinity as well as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that "they shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord."

Before Christ's baptism in the River Jordan when a voice from heaven proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased", before his first miracle worked at Cana, this was the first moment the world recognised Christ as Lord and bowed humbly before him.

Finally myrrh is perhaps the most intriguing of the gifts. Believed to have been worth more than gold in biblical times, it is a resin derived from trees belonging to the *Commiphora* genus.

#### Analysis

A recent analysis of the inorganic and organic constituents of myrrh published in the *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal* points to its medicinal properties and use as such in traditional ancient medicines of India, China, Rome, Greece and Babylon. It was used for traumatic pain and inflammation, having anti-inflammatory as well as analgesic properties.

The presentation of myrrh in the stable in Bethlehem spoke of Christ as Saviour as well as pointing towards his passion – the means by which he would save the world.

In St Mark's account of the crucifixion, we are told that while hanging on the cross, Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh, which he refused. He suffered the full agony of his crucifixion without any sedation or dulling of the pain.

Again at his burial, Nicodemus brings myrrh and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus. Before Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce Mary's own soul too, the gift of myrrh pointed to Christ's suffering and death – and our salvation.

Finally, in meditating on the three figures of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar and the significance of their gifts, I was taken by the description in Butler's *The Lives of the Saints*. In it, he recognises the theological significance of the Magi's gifts, but states that their "far more acceptable presents were the holy sentiments and affections of their souls; their fervent charity, signified by gold; their devotion, figured by frankincense; and the unreserved sacrifice of themselves by mortification, represented by myrrh" – gifts that we too can offer the Christ-child during these last few days of Christmas.

**“The three wise men – by tradition representing all the three known continents at the time, Europe, Asia and Africa – remind us that though the Jewish people were chosen by God, and specially loved for that reason, all, whether Jew or Gentile, are made in God's image and formed by God for himself”**



# In two minds about the green agenda



We need to have an honest and open-minded debate about climate change, writes **David Quinn**

**I** confess to being in two minds about the green agenda for reasons I'll try and explain.

Green issues have pushed to the forefront of public debate in the past year. Here in Ireland, the Green party did quite well in the local and European elections and large parts of the media were happy to talk about a 'green wave', enough though the size of it was exaggerated.

We have seen schools going on 'strike' to protest about climate change. The school protests have been inspired by the Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg. She demands that we become carbon neutral by 2030 or face certain catastrophe.

She has now travelled around the world to spread her message. She has addressed parliaments. She has met the Pope. She addressed a UN summit on climate change recently and admonished adults for their inaction, saying "how dare you" endanger the planet and rob children of their childhoods.

RTÉ ran a week of programmes on climate change and even managed to have the Dáil chamber handed over for a day to school children aged 10-17 so they could recommend action to combat global warming.

## Footprints

Pope Francis has often spoken about the need to care for the environment and so do priests in many parts of the country. Some parishes have committees established specially to work out ways to reduce their carbon footprints.

Given the obvious need to care for the only planet we've got, why would anyone be in two minds about the green agenda? Surely everyone should simply climb on board and



Greta Thunberg.

do everything possible to reduce the damage we are doing to the planet?

This isn't a question of reducing only carbon emissions so as to try and ensure temperatures and sea levels don't rise to catastrophic levels. We must also try to reduce pollution. We heard very recently that the country's rivers are more polluted than they used to be.

**“If we did what the likes of Greta Thunberg want, our economies would immediately be driven into a massive and sustained recession”**

We produce untold amounts of waste that need to be recycled. This often happens in very dubious ways. For example, we simply ship it off to countries in the developing world.

We are reducing the habitats of lots of different species and driving many to extinction. So, again, how can anyone be in two minds about the need to clean up our act, both literally and metaphorically?

To be clear, we absolutely do need to clean up our act. Who doesn't want to clean up our rivers, reduce waste, reduce our carbon emissions, ensure no species becomes extinct? No-one in their

**“We must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels gradually, instead of drastically, and convert to renewal energy more and more as that technology improves”**

right mind.

The trouble is, whatever we do will involve hard choices. In the last few decades carbon emissions released from burning fossil fuels like oil and gas and coal has increased enormously. But poverty has also declined enormously. The two are very closely linked. Literally hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in countries like China and India since the 1980s.

Unfortunately, we have not yet found a way to uncouple economic growth from the burning of fossil fuels. There is lots of talk about renewable energy sources like solar power and wind. But these are nowhere near good enough yet to replace fossil fuels as the way to grow our economies, or even sustain our economies.

If we did what the likes of Greta Thunberg want, our economies would immediately be driven into a massive and sustained recession and poverty would soar again. Vast numbers of people in the developing world would be pushed below the poverty line again.

She might say we have no choice but to do this if we want to save the planet. However, the economic recession would be so great it would create a huge political pushback. Governments would be either voted out of office or violently overthrown.

In addition, Greta tends

to always quote the very worst predictions of climate change, as does RTÉ incidentally. The UN itself in its reports actually makes a number of predictions about what might happen by the end of this century based on

different assumptions. The prediction that sea levels could rise by over a metre on average by 2100 is based on the worst assumptions. Other, less drastic predictions are also scientific.

You don't have to be a 'climate change denier' to point out that different predictions are made by the UN itself (more precisely the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)). Far from it.

In fact, if you only make the worst predictions then you might be the opposite of a denier, you could be a climate alarmist.

The reason I am in two minds is that, while the necessity to reduce the harmful effects we are having on the planet is as plain as the nose on your face, if we go about this in the wrong way the effect on the poor above all will be catastrophic. The Church must care about both the poor and the environment.

There is absolutely no way to drastically reduce carbon emissions in only 10 years and stop a massive global recession. One will cause the other as surely as day follows night.

What do we do, then? I think we must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels gradually, instead of drastically, and convert to renewable energy more and more as that technology improves. We also need to come up with ways to offset the effects of global warming. The Netherlands, for example, is mostly below sea level, and the Dutch build dikes to combat this centuries ago.

We also need to have an honest, not a one-sided debate about climate change and realise that anything we do to combat it can have negative as well as positive consequences. It is denialism to pretend otherwise.

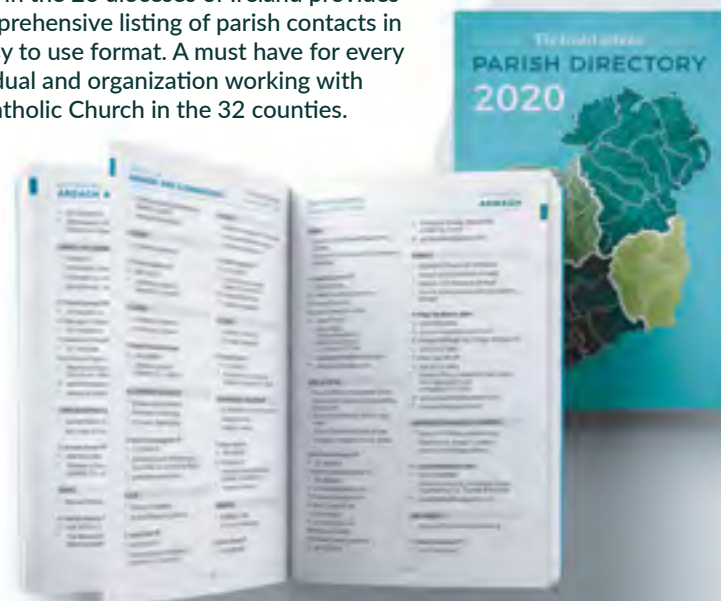
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# Life as a Faith-filled film star



Unplanned star Ashley Bratcher talks to **Chai Brady** about Christmas, Faith, the film and 'intimidating' workplaces

**U**S pro-life film star turned producer Ashley Bratcher, who made waves after starring in a contentious film about abortion, opened up about her devout Faith that shapes every part of her life and how the Christmas season for her is about family and remembering the "reason for the season".

Being a Christian, she says, her identity is routed in Christ, which helps her not to lose sight of what's important regardless of trying circumstances.

Recently transitioning from actress to producer, her Faith plays a pivotal role in surviving in a workplace that can be particularly tough on women, Ashley tells this paper during a visit to Ireland.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* before addressing a crowd at the Pro-Life Campaign's conference in the RDS in Dublin, Mrs Bratcher said that her Christian beliefs helps her stay strong in a sometimes difficult and "intimidating" male dominated work environment.

## Identity

Born in North Carolina but now living in Georgia with her husband David and nine-year-old-son, Ashley has appeared in several Christian films but is best known for her role in pro-life film *Unplanned* which premiered in Ireland in September.

Ashley says: "I am a Christian, my Faith plays a huge part in my daily life and I find my identity in Jesus Christ in what the Word says about me in the Bible and that helps me stay routed in an industry that can be very hard on people. There's a lot of rejection and I think a lot of people get caught up in confusing their identity in something else and that's never really fulfilling I think for anyone."

It's particularly tough for women, Ashley continues, saying:

"I have just become a producer, an early development on a project that I'm acquiring the rights to tell. I have found that there are not many female producers in the industry, it's a very male dominated field, and there are not a lot of female directors.

"There still is this kind of gender bias that people don't actually acknowledge much, but I think it's being exposed more and more with a lot of the scandals that have been revealed in Hollywood."

Confidence is extremely important, she explains, as she is sometimes the only woman in the room.

"We do have to come into a room with a sense of confidence, we have to be willing to stand our ground, because there is this sense of the 'old boys club' sometimes and you can find yourself being the only women sitting at a table with 10 men and it's a little intimidating, it can be, but I think that is shifting a little bit in the States now," she says.

"I am learning, I will say it has been somewhat intimidating because most of the people I work with are males but I have found a wonderful female mentor who works for a studio and knowing her story and her taking time to invest in me and help me and guide me has been so wonderful.

"It's nice to have someone who can relate to you and guide you and someone that you admire who's in a position that someday you might like to be in."

\* \* \* \* \*

The film *Unplanned* caused a ruckus, even outrage, when it came to Ireland – receiving a frosty reception from the majority of media outlets. There were many claims that it was inaccurate or a propaganda piece for the pro-life movement.

The film *Unplanned* has been viewed by millions of people according to producers and

has been screened in over a dozen countries including Canada and the US.

Ashley plays Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director. The film documents her decision to join the pro-life movement.

Ms Johnson was one of the youngest Planned Parenthood directors in the US, working in Texas she was involved in tens of thousands of abortions. She even won the Planned Parenthood Employee of the Year Award.

It was on September 26, 2009, that she was asked to assist with an ultrasound-guided abortion. Her involvement in the process changed her life and values and she decided to embrace the pro-life movement.

**“I think that if we really wanted to go there we could have but we didn't make a movie for shock and awe”**

In the US, the directors of the movie criticised a decision by the Motion Picture Association of America to rate the film as 'R', meaning restricted.

Ashley came to Ireland in Autumn and addressed an 800-strong crowd at the Pro-Life Campaign conference in the RDS, saying that learning about Abby's story really hit home with her at a very personal level. She said that her mother had always been very open with her about the fact that she'd had an abortion in the

past but after Ashley told her the news that she'd landed a part in the *Unplanned* movie her mother became very emotional and said: "You don't know this but I was there in the clinic, they had called my name and I was in the room to abort you and I got up and walked out."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ashley thanked everyone present for the success of *Unplanned* in Ireland to date and encouraged them to promote the DVD of the movie when it is released in Ireland. She challenged everyone to reach out to pro-choice friends and encourage them to watch the movie and perhaps start a conversation on the issue.

Some of those attending the conference were open about the fact that they were in favour of abortion until they watched the movie at one of the recent cinema screenings. Some of those who changed their mind met with Ashley at the conference and thanked her for the role she played in the movie and in changing their position on abortion.

While it's known that the film doesn't show abortion through rose-tinted glasses, Ashley argues that everything people see in the film is unequivocally true and they could have made it much more



graphic, but decided it may take away from the end piece.

"Whether you're pro-life or pro-choice I think you should challenge your beliefs and know why you believe what you believe, and that's a very important reason to see the movie," she says.

"It's hard to watch. I think that we held back a lot, I think that if we really wanted to go there we could have but we didn't make a movie for shock and awe. We made a movie to tell someone's very personal transformation, someone who worked on the inside, someone who experienced it every single day.

"To have an insider's voice is a very interesting perspective, again that's another important reason to see it, to look behind the scenes."

\* \* \* \* \*

Tackling claims of inaccuracy, Ashley said they had expert



Ashley Bratcher poses with her husband David (above left) before addressing the Pro Life Campaign's conference in the RDS, Dublin and, above, with Spirit FM's Wendy Grace. Left, Bratcher at a photocall and, below right, during the Grace interview in Ireland.

medical advice from people who had been at the frontline in the abortion industry, with one of the actors in the film being a doctor who performed abortions.

Ashley says: "There are people in the film, one in particular who was a former abortion doctor, we had medical advice on the film, it's not like we made anything up it was all medically accurate.

"This abortionist performed late-term abortions, he was the one who did these procedures, he more than anyone would know for a fact if we were doing something inaccurate. So he was consulting with us, and there were nurses in the film that were former abortion nurses."

\* \* \* \* \*

The actor and still practicing doctor, Dr Anthony Levatino is a gynaecologist who performed over 1,000 abortions before deciding

to become an outspoken pro-life advocate.

"It's just baffling to me that someone could say it's medically inaccurate when we have a doctor who performed them in the movie," she says.

The film is particularly important for people in Ireland to see, she says, considering abortion was made legal after the Eighth Amendment was repealed last year.

"I don't think the general public knows what happens during an abortion procedure, which was definitely my perception in the states, a lot of people who were in the middle of the road were deeply affected," she says.

"It seems to me there's a lot of people here in Ireland that are in the middle of the road, from my understanding the majority of the media is very liberal, and a lot of pro-life and conservative voices are censored, so I think that having

a movie that's controversial will stir up some interest, I encourage everyone to challenge their beliefs."

When there were protests, notably about a dozen people who stood outside a cinema in Galway when the film was being screened, it was something to which the film producers and actors were accustomed. Ever since the film's debut it has been plagued with bad press and protests from critics and pro-choice advocates.

When asked whether she was surprised about the reaction in Ireland among some sections of society, Ashley said: "Not really. Especially given what happened in the last year in Ireland, but the protests have always been much smaller than they seem and it always backfires. It gives us more publicity and it raises curiosity for the film, I wasn't shocked at all."

The reaction to the film screening around Ireland was positive, she continued, and it has

created positive discussion and dialogue among friends, colleagues and families who may have been on the fence or vehemently opposed to each other's beliefs regarding abortion, many preferring not to broach the subject.

Many quiet pro-life supporters may have been afraid to voice their views, with Ashley saying: "Everything that I've seen from people, even who were middle in the road, has been so incredible, a lot of people seem to have reignited their spark. It's given people something to cling to and a sense of hope. Because I feel like you can feel defeated right now by what's going on in Ireland and this is something that I think around the world is pushing for the pro-life movement, it's giving them something tangible to go out and use," she says.

With the Christmas season coming to a close, it's always been an important part of Ashley's life.

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Christ and spend quality time with family, "it's so important", she says.

"Christmas in particular is such a celebration because we're celebrating the birth of Christ and everything that he did for us and the freedom and the washing clean that we have because of what he did for us, that's what I really focus on," she says.

Laughing, she adds that one of their traditions is that her husband David makes 'Christmas juice', which is a blend of fruit juices he adds together and then freezes, "it's just silly", she says, but is part of her family's celebration.

**“The protests have always been much smaller than they seem and it always backfires”**

"We always make different kinds of cookies with our son, he's nine going on 10. We do the 12 days of Christmas as well," Ashley says.

"It's the one time of the year that we really slow down and really focus on family and what Christmas means.

The commercialisation of Christmas has been a hot topic, with many of the Faithful believing the true spirit of the season is lost with the pressure to get expensive presents.

Ashley says: "My favourite gifts to give and to receive are experiences, so a lot of times instead of doing material things we plan experiences because you can't beat that, you're spending quality time with the people you love. I like the idea of that more so than a material thing that can be used and thrown away."

The Christmas season for many, while being viewed as an important time to reconnect with family, is also stressful, with the true meaning often being blurred or even lost altogether. When asked what her Christmas message for Ireland was, now and in the future, Ashley said: "I think it's the same that any Christian might say, remember the reason for the season, whether you believe or don't believe it's still a beautiful story, it's a really beautiful story for anyone to read. So I think: know the reason that we celebrate Christmas."



## Secrets of the powers that be

### Official footprints carefully covered in 2019 files

**Peter Costello reports from the National Archives of Ireland on the release under the 30-year rule of confidential state files from 1989**

**O**n Tuesday (December 31) the National Archive made available to the public under the 30-year-rule State files from various government departments from 1989 and earlier.

The most interesting feature of this year's releases are files dealing with aliens, emigration, and naturalisation in the Free State and Republic running from 1922 up to the 1960s. They contain the material for many new investigations into Ireland's treatment of emigrants and refugees over that long period, including, for instance, Jewish refugees from Russia, Eastern Europe and Germany.

**“The observer is struck by the narrow range of departments releasing files. Once again there is nothing from Health, Social Welfare and Agriculture”**

Ireland's policy towards Jews fleeing the Nazi regime has long been a matter of contention, feeding as it does into the anti-Semitism that was so common in public and private life in the interwar years and after.

They will also cast light on the Germans, Bretons, Belgians and others who sought refuge in Ireland for various reasons after 1945 – many of these would have been supporters of Fascist regimes.

The files present a very large idea of the

problems facing the Irish Free State as it tried to cope with the presence of potential communist and even anarchist elements.

For the most part the general run of other files were, however, of restricted interest in many cases. Many files relating to Northern Ireland from the office of the Taoiseach have had documents removed from them.

These are not for immediate release because they might cause “distress or danger” to living individuals. So a large cloud of secrecy still hangs over the Northern Troubles, as perhaps is only to be expected.

But once again the observer is struck by the narrow range of departments releasing files. Once again there is nothing from Health, Social Welfare and Agriculture, large departments that affect very widely and intimately the lives of most people.

#### Titbits

The revelations of confidential titbits about some leading figures cannot disguise the fact that as an exercise in truly “open government”, and despite the excellent work of the staff of the National Archives, the politicians and civil servants have once again largely managed to cover their tracks.

The National Archives asks those writing about these releases to quote the file reference number, a request which nearly all the media ignore. These are the numbers at the foot of each article.

● **The National Archives is located in Bishop Street, Dublin D08 DF85, beside the Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street. The opening hours are 9.15am-5pm Monday to Friday. The records from 1989 and earlier are available to the public from 9.15am on Monday, January 6. For further information telephone: + 353 (0)1 407 2300; or email: mail@nationalarchives.ie**

# Eamon De Valera and the of the ‘Russian Crown

**I**n 1989, Mrs Eileen Barrington, the wife of the eminent lawyer Donal Barrington, who was the niece of Harry Boland, the associate of de Valera executed during the Civil War, wrote to Brian Lenihan, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, seeking his help with a family mystery.

She and her sister, she said, were planning to visit Russia, and on this trip they were hoping to see and learn more about the jewels that the Boland family had carefully guarded through more than 30 years after Boland's death, and which were she felt such an important part of their family's tradition.

These were the so called ‘Russian Crown Jewels’ of political legend. Their special interest was natural enough, as the affair was one of the lingering enigmas of the Irish revolutionary period, the full dimensions of which have, even now, not been fully teased out.

The jewels were a pledge against a loan of \$20,000 which had been extended by the Irish Republic, an unrecognised state, to the Soviet Russian State, which was then in 1919-1920, under an international embargo.

Confidentially Irish diplomats were asked to look into the matter at Mr Lenihan's request. They had little hope of getting any information. One noted that Russian officials, in what were to be the last years of the Communist regime, were reluctant to help private individuals unless “there was something in it for them”.

Nothing of interest was revealed from Russia according to a released file, but the files as whole, which contain related notes and cuttings, brings into focus what was the truth about these notorious baubles.

#### Continuation

Irish interest had long been focussed on the Irish end of the legend, on de Valera and the Boland family retaining the jewels as a continuation of the Civil War by other means.

When Harry Boland on his return from the US tried to pass them over to Michael Collins, who as Minister of Finance would have been the man with over responsibility for the money side of the Republican movement, Collins said he didn't want to have anything to do with them.

“There is blood on those things,” he shouted, as he threw the package back at Boland to take away with him



Pictured at the Mansion House in 1919 are (l-r) the Republican politicians Michael Collins, Harry Boland and Eamon de Valera; inset, Ludwig Martens.

unopened. But the heart of the matter lay not in Ireland at all, but in New York during de Valera's great tour of the US in 1919-1920. And at the centre of it lies the mysterious ‘Ambassador of Soviet Russia’, Ludwig Martens, on whom little attention has been focused, and whose relations with Harry Boland and other radical figures in the Irish-American community are opaque.

**“For historians this was yet another example of how the ivy of legend had grown up to conceal the grotesque nature of the truth”**

Martens arrived in New York in March 1919. At this date there were still American military in Siberia as part of the Allied invasion of Russia in support of the White Russians and others fighting the Bolsheviks. But nothing was done by the authorities to prevent the establishment of the office. Some saw Martens as having an unnamed ‘friend at court’ in the US government.

Martens claimed that he had large funds at his call to make orders for many industrial and commercial items and other goods – the sum

of \$2.5 million was widely reported.

Manufacturers and bankers of all kinds flocked to take advantage of a new trading opportunity, despite the hostile conditions in which the Soviets worked. Sales of consignments were reported in the papers, but it is by no means clear that these were filled and paid for.

Martens had wide contacts among American communists and radicals, and with the more left-wing elements in Irish-American politics, such as those who were supporting the cause of James Larkin, after his conviction as a ‘criminal anarchist’ in November 1919. Martens engaged an Irish-American lawyer to assist him during one investigation into his activities by a New York City Commission.

At the beginning of July 1919 there was published in some US papers a dispatch from Berne in Switzerland suggesting that “an understanding among Irish republicans, Russians and Germans had been come to”. De Valera just back from a trip to Massachusetts denied this. His organisation, he said, had not received “a mark or a rouble”. This was not to deny, of course, that his organisation was lending some of the \$20,000 to the Soviets.

That they had done so

was not revealed at the time. If it had been it would have severely damaged the credit of the Irish Republic in the minds of many Americans, and the more conservative and clerical sections of his own support.

**“Martens returned to Russia where he renewed his career as a talented engineer. He remained close to the Communist leadership”**

The sum advanced to the Russians, \$20,000, was of little real use to embargoed Russia – which in any case had been said by Martens to have laid over two millions dollars at his disposal. But it would have been of use to Ludwig Martens to support his New York office and large staff, and that is where it must have gone.

De Valera and Boland had no assets on that scale. The loan to the Russians would have been taken out of the money raised by the pair on their tour. The donations from American supporter, de Valera later reported to the Dáil, amount to \$5.5 million. The Dáil was told nothing about the Russian loan.

## Echoes of the past from the archives



Peter Costello

enigma  
Jewels'

De Valera, or rather Harry Boland, accepted the 'crown jewels' as a pledge without having them appraised. However before they were returned to the Russian Embassy in London and the loan repaid, according to information in the file they were appraised by professional jewellers in both Dublin and London.

The Irish government was told they would be lucky to get £2,000 for them on the open market. There is no evidence in the file that these cheap gewgaws were even Russian, let alone Imperial. The old saying about wool and eyes comes to mind.

The jewels were accepted by Harry Boland as a pledge of the Russians goodwill. But like so many pledges of Russian goodwill throughout history, they were fact a mere token.

**“The sum advanced to the Russians, \$20,000, was of little use to embargoed Russia”**

The whole saga of the Irish adventures has long been a good tale for Irish use. But the reality of the political situation in New York during de Valera's great crusade should not be overlooked. De Valera at the time of the repayment in later years made light of the whole matter. But for historians it is yet another example of how the ivy of legend had grown up to conceal the grotesque nature of the underlying truth.

In 1922 a deportation order was estuary issued for Martens, but he left the country of his own accord before it could be served. He returned to Russia where he renewed his career as a talented engineer. He remained close to the Communist leadership, and was a trusted judge in the Stalin-era show trial of the British Metro-Vickers engineers in the 1930s. He died in 1948.

Yet in all those years no-one from Ireland thought to ask Ludwig Martens about the inner story of the Romanoff jewels. Perhaps no-one really wanted to know.

● *NA file 2019/101/302; US newspapers 1919-1920; Eileen Barrington and her husband Judge Donal Barrington recount their understanding of the affair on track 4 of their contribution to the Irish Life and Lore oral history archive.*

The ironic  
moral  
career of  
Cardinal  
Law

**T**he annual release of files often reveal historical ironies in the private papers of the state that how perspectives on events and individuals in public life change constantly.

In the summer of 1989 Cardinal Bernard Law made a pilgrimage to Ireland to visit the shrines at Knock with a party of 100 from Boston. Though that was their main objective, the Cardinal also took the opportunity to visit the North with Dr Cathal Daly, then still Bishop of Down and Connor to guide him and to gain his own impressions of what was happening there from a nationalist point of view.

Bishop Daly had famously declared in the context of Irish affairs that “evil must be rejected totally and unequivocally. There must be no ambivalence, no double standards, no selective indignation.”

Cardinal Law, however, was photographed against a wall painting of three Provos with the legend ‘Our day will come’. This would have pleased many in Boston.

**Influences**

The Cardinal's relationship with the Irish community in and around Boston was a shadowed one, as profiled by a diplomat's note in a private memo. Boston Catholicism had been shaped and influenced by the long term of Cardinal Cushing. The appointment of Law and his Portuguese predecessor had been intended by Rome to break this Irish stranglehold on a prime American

arch-diocese.

Law was appointed in 1984, but turned out (perhaps inevitably) to be favourable on the whole to the Irish-American community. This visit was therefore a significant one for him. He had, according to the diplomatic report “demonstrated a keen interest in Irish affairs and issues”.

**“In 2003 a further report by the Massachusetts attorney general said that over 1,000 children may have been molested”**

He also took a strong line,” the diplomat continued, “and was conservative on many issues.” These were both foreign and domestic. Both homosexuality and freemasonry dismayed him.

Cardinal Law was entertained to a private dinner in Iveagh House with a roster of carefully selected guests by the Department. This, though private affair, was still a lavish example of State entertainment, as the items in the file indicates.

During his visit the Cardinal also gave an interview to the *Irish Press*. “Cardinal Law said that while he would not stress the proselytising [in Boston] it was a part of the picture and was causing concern. The vulnerability of Irish emigrants was often affected by the lack of a legal status of numbers of people entering

the U.S. and these people could be very susceptible to a response which grew from another agenda.”

This concern for the moral and religious welfare of simple emigrants from Ireland had about it in the eyes of some an air of the 1920s, and did not reflect the real nature of the migrants from modern Ireland, who were better educated under a system that the Catholic Church itself had strongly influenced.

**Split**

He named in particular the Boston Church of Christ. This group, ‘the Boston Movement’, was a rapidly expanding entity that eventually split with the other worldwide Churches of Christ.

The group traced itself back to the ideas of religious reform of Alexander Campbell of Ballymena, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1809 and started there the “non-denomination church Movement”.

These concerns suggested that the Cardinal set for himself a high pastoral concern for his Catholic community.

Twenty years later, that perspective on the Cardinal's moral concerns shifted completely.

On December 13, 2002 Cardinal Law offered resigned from his Boston see as the reverberations of the scope of the clerical abuse in Boston rang around his head. He moved to Rome, where he remained a figure of influence in some circles. But his downfall made others reflect on the warm welcome he received in

Ireland in 1986.

In 2003 a further report by the Massachusetts attorney general said that over 1,000 children may have been molested by more than 250 priests and church workers from 1940 to 2000.

Yet another report said that some 6% of ordained priests, some 6,500, since 1950, had been accused of sexual abuses.

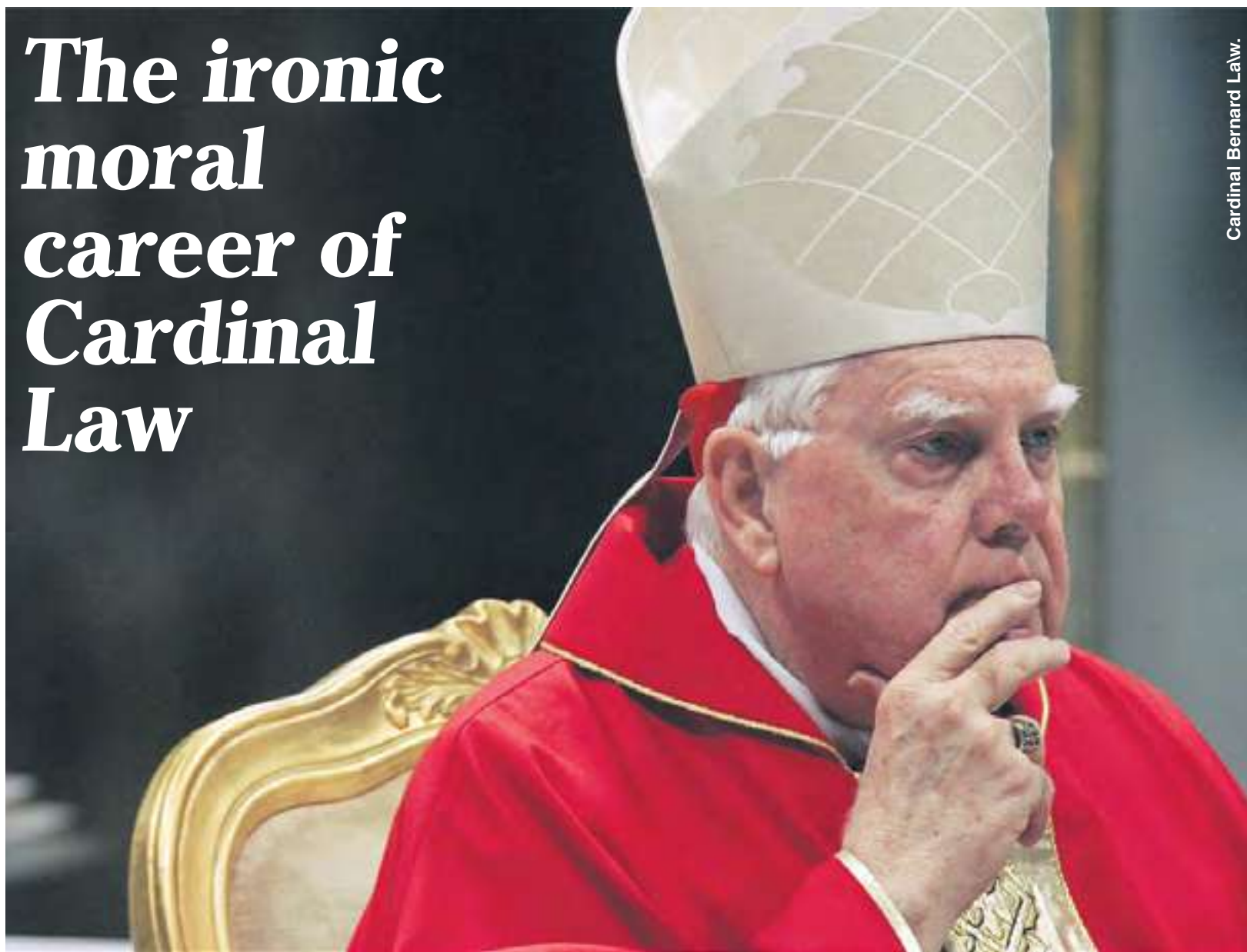
**“Cardinal Law said that while he would not stress the proselytising [in Boston] it was a part of the picture and was causing concern”**

“I only wish that the knowledge that we have today had been available to us earlier,” Law wrote in 2001 in the Boston diocesan paper as the reports of abuse began to gain momentum.

That was far from the actual case. Back in 1985, the year after he had been feted in Ireland, a long expert authored report on sexually abusive priests was given to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Law had urged that this independent study by experts should be undertaken.

The Church of Christ in Boston continues to grow. It is now established in Ireland.

● *NA file 2019/101/2245.*



Cardinal Bernard Law.

## Secrets of the powers that be



The Rent Table of Silken Thomas as it was in the 1980s.

# 'The Rent Table of Silken Thomas' – the hazards of Irish heritage

In 1961 the Eighth Duke of Leinster, Gerald FitzGerald, then living in England, presented the Royal Dublin Society with a 16th-Century relic of his family in the form of the Geraldine Rent Table that had once stood at Carton, and later at Kilkea Castle.

It came there from an even earlier home of the family, for it had once been part of the Old Council House at Maynooth Castle, the ruins of which are now to be at the entrance to Maynooth College. Kilkea Castle was being sold and the Duke wished to find an appropriate new home for the Rent Table, a large piece with five legs.

It was across this table that the tenant of the family estates every quarter day would have their rents, which would have been recorded by the Duke's solicitor in his ledger also rested on the table. Though slightly damaged it was a remarkable fine example of stone carving in the Ireland of Elizabeth I. It was inscribed with the name of the 9th Earl of Kildare who died in 1534, the father of the famous Silken Thomas.

### Exclusion

The RDS accepted the table, but was unable (or perhaps reluctant) to find a place for it at Ballsbridge, so the table was never moved. When Kilkea Castle (where the

table had remained) was sold it was excluded from The G.F. Mitchell of TCD for the RDS.

But when the castle, by now in use as a hotel, was later sold on there arose a legal and emotional imbroglio which involved the Duke, the RDS, Kildare County Council, the government, the OPW, and several bodies charged with the care of Ireland ancient monuments and archaeological items

**“An attempt was made to remove the table ‘for restoration’ by the previous owner of the hotel...”**

In the course of this an attempt was made to remove the table 'for restoration' by the previous owner of the hotel. This was prevented by concerted action of some local people.

The file reveals the extraordinary tangle that erupted, the table eventually being (so to speak) arrested by the gardaí and being locked up in a police station.

This file closed with the matter unresolved as of 1989.

But this was a fine example of just how imperilled items of Irish heritage are when there is no clear legal framework, proper legislation,

and appropriate bodies to care for them.

With the rapidly increasing transformation of Ireland over the last 30 years, many more sites, relics and objects are now in danger, some disappearing mysteriously, perhaps to be sold here or abroad, with often little enough being done in time to preserve them.

Kilkea Castle continued to be run as a hotel for decades, but the business entered examinership in 2009, as a result of the disastrous financial state of the country. It was closed and put up for sale. It was bought by an American entrepreneur, Jay Cashman and has now re-opened as a resort, popular for weddings.

But there is a happy end to the tale: the Rent Table, after a high court action, was returned to the ownership of Kildare County Council. On the advice of the National Museum, a conservation assessment was undertaken. In the light of this repairs and conservation will be put in hand. The County Council says the project is out to tender.

It is now stored in the National Museum, as no final for its location has yet been settled on for the Table to be displayed to the public. But it is unlikely ever again to stand in the open air.

● NA file 2019/30/523.

# Des Egan –

This year interesting files were in very short supply. One file, in a delivery remarkable short of literary items, was certain to catch the attention of a books editor. A file on Anthony Cronin was devoid of interest so few were the items in it. But expecting the same to be true of one with the name of the poet Des Egan on it, it was a surprise when there arrival at my seat a very fat file indeed.

This opened back in 1982 with the young poet application to the Department of Foreign Affairs, for a grant from the Cultural Relations Committee to fund the cost in part of his visit to the US for a series of poetry readings.

At this date Des Egan was an established, but hardly well known writer and small press publisher – aside from his own work, his Goldsmith Press in association with the redoubtable Dr Peter Kavanagh, published some of the late Patrick Kavanagh's later work.

### Annual prize

However, on this trip Egan learned through Prof. Carroll F. Terrell (an eminent expert on Ezra Pound) that he had been awarded the annual prize of the National Poetry Foundation run from the University of Maine. At a stroke his position in North America, and among the international poetry elite was transformed.

Later items deals with other applications he made for always small grants – we are talking here about the likes of £360. But these enabled him to travel to places as far apart and as different as Sicily and Japan.

Today, as the director of the Gerald Manley Hopkins Literary festival every summer, he is able in his turn to invite many foreign poets and critics to Ireland. This is one of the few

such festivals devoted to a religious and philosophical poet, certainly the only one in Ireland.

But this files contains within much material that will be of inter-



## Echoes of the past from the archives

## a poet at large in the world



est to a future biography of the poet, for it contained stuff the likes of which are often hard to find elsewhere – the role of hard cash in the literary life of modern times.

However, at the front of the files is one of those little notices relating to potentially defamatory or otherwise personal items, seemingly from a meeting of the Cultural Relations

Committee, have been removed by the archivist dealing with the files. A revelation that the bitter little feuds of Irish literary life still rage.

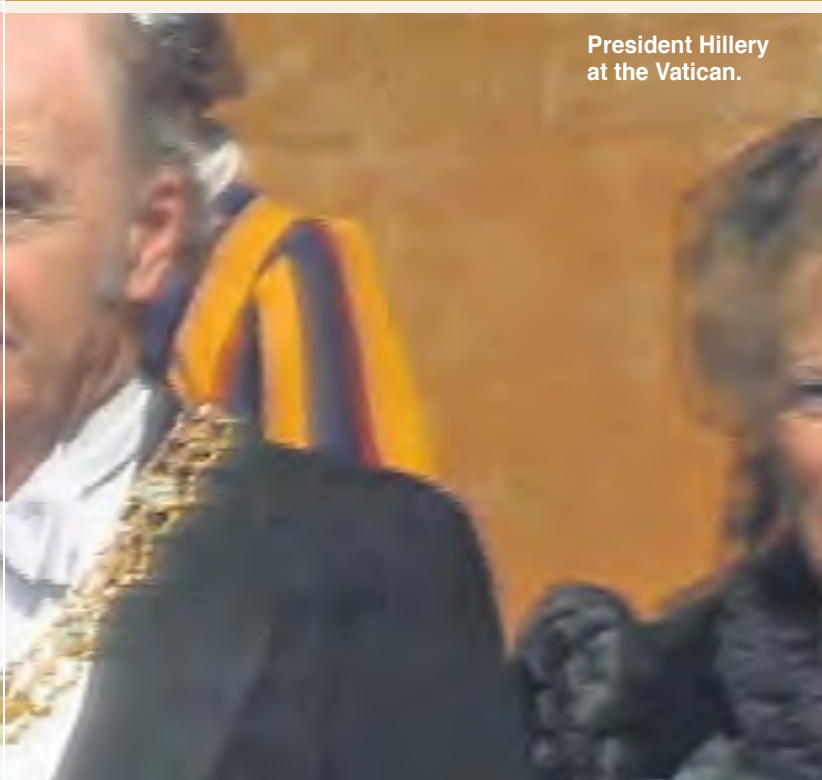
The Department of Foreign Affairs

searched for a critical appreciation of Des Egan but were able to find nothing better than the acidulous item on him from Robert Hogan's *Dictionary of Irish Writers*. This was

a pity for there were many other critics who had written warmly of Egan's work, critics both here and abroad.

(I suppose as an associate editor of this work I should deny all responsibility for the entry. My pieces are all signed.)

● NA file 2019 /101/ 764.



President Hillary at the Vatican.

## How the Vatican see a state visit

Over April 19-23, 1989 President Hillery and his wife made a state visit to the Holy See. This went off very well, as is the usual case with state visits. But in the papers dealing with the invitation, an official in the department of Foreign affairs notes that there was a difficulty in the background.

Pope John Paul II had made an historic visit to Ireland in October 1979, an event which stirred the nation but perhaps marked not the beginning of accord but an end to it. There was much discussion about the possibility of another papal visit. However, it seems that at a diplomatic level there was a problem.

Though the previous visit had been seen as a 'pastoral visit', it was made to mark the centenary of the apparition at Knock, the Pope having a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was

seen by the Vatican as a state visit. There could not be, in their eyes, another papal visit, however it was designated, until the President of Ireland made a reciprocal state visit.

**“It was not until August 2018 that Pope Francis made a much lower key visit to a greatly different and even indifferent Ireland”**

This was what lay behind the event in October 1989. But no further Papal visit from John Paul II resulted. Though he travelled widely, his later years were dogged by clearly declining health, that caused increased anxiety to those who saw him.

It was not until August 2018 that Pope Francis made a much lower key visit to a greatly different and even indifferent Ireland. In the seven years of his Pontificate Pope Benedict never visited Ireland, by then increasingly troubled by Church scandals.

The idea that a pastoral visit to a country with a Catholic head of state was different was marked by the presentation to Hillery by the Pope of a decoration traditionally awarded only to Catholic heads of state. A confusion between the two ideas may still linger in the minds of the diplomats in the Vatican.

But the response to the visit of the admired Pope Francis suggests that some clarification in the mind of the Vatican authorities of the actual status of a visit – is it a 'state visit' or a 'pastoral visit' will be needed in future.

● NA file 2019 /30/ 0533.

## Secrets of the powers that be

# ‘Sport for all or wealth for an elite?’: the stark choice facing 80s Irish society

During the late 1980s there was great concern about the role of sport in society and the creation of a National Sports Centre. The government commissioned a special report on the possibilities of developing sport in one of the released files, dealing with the role of sport in the development not of Irish society, but of tourist numbers – a matter which is still very topical. These days the value of anything is measured in its possibility for attracting visitor numbers.

This report from Ernst & Whinney is an interesting document, supported by revealing departmental documents. Though it deals with sport in a national context nowhere is the GAA mentioned or alluded to.

### Aristocracy

The GAA it will be recalled had been founded almost exactly a century before, as the GAA itself claims, “to make athletics more accessible to the masses and to revive and nurture traditional, indigenous sports and pastimes. At that time, it was largely only the gentry and aristocracy who were allowed to participate in athletics.”

Based on the parishes of Ireland it proved a vital ingredient in many aspects of the national revival around the

turn of the 19th Century. All that is well-known.

Less emphasised is the fact that the GAA was an aspect of an international movement to foster amateur sport in many other countries, culminating eventually in the revival of the Olympic games.

But this was not the sort of ‘sport’ the authors had in mind.

Round Ireland yacht races, Emerald Isle Irish classic of American football, Budweiser Irish Derby – these are the sort of sports they wished to revive.

All of these are either professional sports or the hobbies of the very wealthy.

The report and indeed much government activity in this area since has been to actually discourage local and amateur sport in favour of activities that foster the development of future generations of ‘professional sports stars’, big prize winners, world champions *en blé*.

The intervention of worldwide television, which through subscription TV rather than public service broadcasting, aims at creating a vast professional industry, especially in soccer.

Nowhere in the report or the attached papers is there any discussion of local sport, sport for fun and pleasure, sport for health and

happiness. Everything is seen as part of a drive to increased professionalism by players, managers and clubs moving towards the creation of wealth for an elite few.

The present crisis at the FAI grows directly, some would think, from this sort of thinking a generation ago.

In the meantime there has been an appalling increase in obesity and worsening health issues both in children and adults from a failure to take even a minimum of exercise.

### Parish level

It has been pointed out in the past that the Gaelic Athletic Association hardly lives up to its name, as it has nothing to do with, say, running, pole vaulting or throwing the javelin (surely and ancient Irish sport if ever there was one). Having once revived the Nation, perhaps it’s now time for the Nation to revive the GAA by insisting it does more for all sport at a parish level.

But the current notion of splitting the FAI into professional and local levels of sport is merely to hive of the wealth generating professionalism, and almost abandon to perpetual poverty the underfunded parish sports – in other words a repetition of earlier errors.



## Female murderers released on licence into care of nuns

Capital punishment in Ireland passed into history in 1990 – having already been largely made redundant.

However, in tidying up the related files in the Department of the Taoiseach two files were revealed, which are now released and which cast an interesting perspective, not only on murder in Ireland and capital punishment, but on the state relationship with religious institutions.

They deal with two cases and contain material in the form of letters to the Department of Justice by the judge the esteemed George Gavan Duffy, which have been private until now.

The first was the matter of Kate O—, whom a jury convicted of infanticide in November 1943. (The names are given in full in the actual files, but are not relevant here.)

She was sentenced to death, though this sentence was commuted by the President the following year. It has to be understood that infanticide was then one of the commonest homicides in Ireland. Aside from the child she had smothered at birth in

April that year, a still-born infant and four others from earlier years were also buried in the garden of the family home.

Newspapers only briefly reported such cases in those days, often only the outcomes of such trials, and not the rather grim evidence, so that the public were not in a position to judge for themselves the justice of the case, and the validity of the conviction

### Good behaviour

However, her good behaviour, especially her attention to her work and her religious duties, led to Kate O— being released on licence in April 1949, on condition that she went to work for the Sisters of Charity in their convent in Gardiner Street, Dublin. While she had been in prison the nuns from the convent had taken a special interest in her.

Here was a case where the release of the convicted woman certainly seemed justifiable; but the State, though it agreed to this, had no place of its own to send her to; there was nowhere except the religious insti-

tutions. Far from being exploited such a victim of social circumstance found no other refuge but the care of the nuns. This is a real circumstance of history that many critics of such institutions nowadays seem to overlook.

**“It has to be emphasised that such a shattered life – her brother refused to let her return home – could be given purpose by a new beginning with the nuns”**

The second case was, in a sense, even more tragic. This was the matter of Agnes Mc—, from one of the Border counties. She had been convicted of poisoning a local famer in his own home with strychnine by means of a jam filled sandwich cake which she had donated to the neighbour’s social evening for two missionary priests.

The jury, it was reported, made a

strong recommendation to leniency but Mr Justice Gavan Duffy had no choice to pass a death sentence. This was later commuted by the President.

The judge in fact wrote to the government about the case. He had not been able to convict her of manslaughter because her counsel claimed on her behalf that she had added nothing to the cake. She was not guilty.

But afterwards in jail she admitted she had poisoned the cake, but only with the intention of making people sick.

This, the judge surmised, was done out of spite in some local quarrel among neighbours. But he had no choice in sentencing her to death because of the presentation of the defence – thus maintaining the opinion of many that a faulty conviction often results, not from a triumph by the prosecution, but a failure by the defence.

(If she had, for instance, mixed arsenic into the cake, she would have indeed made people vomit, as arsenic is an irritant poison. But she used

strychnine – used on many farms to eliminate rats – which acts on the nervous system. An adult was often killed by a half grain of the drug.)

Agnes Mc— was it seems a simple person. Her sentence too was eventually commuted by the President and she was released on licence, but on the condition that she entered an order of nuns in the south of Ireland.

Again it has to be emphasised that such a shattered life – her brother refused to let her return home – could be given purpose by a new beginning with the nuns, for as emphasised above, the state made no provision for the care of such persons (outside of a country mental home or Dundrum Asylum perhaps.)

The nuns were as often as not a last hope of refuge for many of those outcast by the pious but often uncharitable Irish society of 70 years ago.

● NA files 2019/30/0046, and 2019/30/ 49; William A. Brend, A Handbook of Medical Jurisprudence and Toxicology (London, 1924 ed.).



## Echoes of the past from the archives

# The peril of Dublin's heritage – an archaeologist's advice to the government

As a consequence of the Wood Quay affair in 1970s and the social, political and environmental damage it did, the preservation of Ireland's complicated heritage was on the minds of many in the late 1980s.

There was then an idea promoted by a group which included Dr Patrick Wallace, the director of the National Museum's Viking digs, that the small urban enclave just behind the church of St Michael and St John, then being made redundant by the Catholic Church, which has now reverted to being the Smock Alley Theatre once again, the identity from which the Church had converted – though no allusion seems to be made in the modernised building to this past.

Their idea was for a 'living medieval village', a mixture of apartments and a museum, analogous to the Kirk Museum in the city of York – another city with rich Viking and medieval heritage. The Kirk Museum is an indoor affair. In Dublin the idea was for a form of 'open air' museum, in which actors in costume representing the

ancient inhabitants would move around in a mock medieval streetscape, under the eyes of inhabited apartment blocks. Thus the life of the past would be made to mingle with the life of today.

The bustle of Temple Bar – controversial though that is today – would have been carried further west towards Cook Street and Thomas Street.

**“Dr Ryan's idea would have prevented many of the eyesores that disfigure the city, and also prevent many of the numerous planning rows that prevent the orderly re-use of the cityscape”**

It was a novel idea, but eventually, as with so many of Dublin's ideal schemes over the centuries, it failed – the history of “unbuilt Dublin” is a rich one. The area they



planned for has only been partly rebuilt today; the junction of Essex gate and Lower Exchange street is still barred by a site with a crude and poster plastered hoarding around it.

In the files dealing with

this matter there is also a personal communication to the Taoiseach's Department outlining Dr Michael Ryan's ideas as Director of the Nation Museum of the approach in general that need to be taken.

His idea would have pre-

vented many of the eyesores that disfigure the city, and also prevent many of the numerous planning rows that prevent the orderly re-use of the cityscape.

He suggested that any vacant site which had been

cleared ought to be automatically excavated by archaeologists, even before architects were called in and plans drawn up to secure planning permission. “Pre-vision”, he was suggesting, was going to be far more efficient than partial remedies later.

**“The Department of Finance is loath to spend money”**

He was proposing the setting up of a standing City of Dublin archaeological unit that, under his proposed legislation, could be seen to go into action when it saw such derelict sites.

This, too, was an excellent idea. But it also fell on stony ground among the civil servants, or perhaps the mandarins of the Department of Finance, who really have the last say over everything that the government wants to do. The Department of Finance is instinctively loath to spend money. And it is really at their door the blame should be laid for much what we all too often see in Dublin, and other Irish cities.

● NA file 2019/30/0598.

## The Blasket Islands heritage – a mistaken perspective

Throughout the late 1980s the future of the Baskets off the Kerry coast was of great concern. This interest was focused on the Great Blasket, which was where the village was, and on the homes of Tomás Ó Criomhthain, Peig Sayers and Maurice O'Sullivan – the classic writers who produced what has come to be called the 'Blasket Library'.

There is an interpretive centre on the mainland in Dunquin. On the island itself Tomás Ó Criomhthain's cottage, for a long time gutted and roofless, has at last been completely renovated and was reopened to the public by the OPW, but only in June of this year. The interpretive centre has 50,000 visitors a year and the hope is it will boost tourist numbers even more for Kerry as part of the 'Wild Atlantic Way'.

But is this the answer to a heritage problem?

Though the Blasket books were, as originally written, found to be too racy, too close to the speech of the soil for polite city-dwelling Gaelgoirs in the interwar decades – a problem solved by more recent editions which restore the original expression. The same sort of problem famously afflicted efforts to publish Bryan Merriman's *Cúirt An Mheán Oíche*.

The people of the Great Blasket had been evacuated in 1953, though



since the end of the war the islanders themselves had been pleading to be relocated on the mainland as life on the island had become (in modern circumstances) unsupportable.

### Untenable

Like the other islands strung out along the western coast of Ireland, the Great Blasket had been populated from the mainland, mainly at the end of the 18th Century when the rise of the population of Ireland to eight million meant that land of any kind on the mainland had become untenable.

Though the islanders lived on the Great Blasket they made effective use of all the islands in the archipelago

for small scale farming, fishing and bird harvesting; and of course for play when they could.

The Great Blasket had been bought by an American millionaire Mr Taylor Collings who bought some 17 of the 25 parcels of property and commonage. The houses of the authors were in themselves now national monuments in the care of the Office of Public Works.

Thomas Collings bought his holding in the early 1970s. His idea was to ranch, which would seem a strange idea, given the difficulty of getting the beasts off the island. Without proper care they would have caused ecological damage.

In 1974 Charles Haughey, while

he languished in opposition, bought Inishvickillane, the smaller island just to the west of the Great Blasket. Here he built a holiday home and installed a helipad.

Mr Haughey introduced deer from the Kilkenny National Park – again an ill-advised idea, as deer are forest animals and do not flourish in island conditions such as on the Inishvickillane.

**“A culture such as that on the Baskets thrives only as part of a total environment”**

He retained this for the rest of his life, and it is still used by his family today. The bleak home of the benighted islanders of the past was made into a playground for the wealthy.

But despite the expressed desire on all sides to preserve the home of the Blasket writers, this was no answer to what should be approached in a very different way. The released files suggest that little deep thought was given to the matter.

In all of this, no-one, not the politicians, the civil servants, members of the Dáil or journalists questioned any of these developments. Later the Blasket Island Act, passed in 1989 to

resolve at least part of the problem, was later declared unconstitutional at the end of a decade long legal wrangle with a local business group to retain their interest in the Great Blasket.

No-one suggested that the appropriate solution was that all 15 islands of the archipelago off Dunquin should be converted into a national park (in the US way as state property, rather than the half-hearted British notion of a red line drawn around private property).

### Scheme

Such an overall scheme would respect not only the former human occupants, but fauna, the sea birds, sea beasts such as whales and other marine life. These human and animals belonged to the same ecosystem, and the whole system should be preserved. A culture such as that on the Baskets thrives only as part of a total environment.

Their imaginations of the Blasket writers sprang from their surroundings, and separated from those surrounding they are much reduced. However, there were few advanced ecological ideas in 1980s Ireland. The released file (which must be only part of the holdings in the government departments) reveals only a lost opportunity.

● NA file 2019/30/410.



**Chai Brady** speaks to Malachi Cush about recovery, prayer and New Year hopes

**G**aining consciousness and looking up at the sky after his body had been dragged and torn in a horrific event, a renowned Irish musician and broadcaster thought his time was up, but the prayers of the Faithful were on his side.

Malachi Cush from Donaghmore in Co. Tyrone started playing trad music as a child, and the creative spark never left him. He has gone on to release albums and has done work as a presenter for the BBC and other media for many years.

It was the summer of this year and working in the entertainment industry Malachi Cush generally has the day off on a Monday, and he wanted to do some work in the garden as it was a bright day and the weather was good.

It was a broken strimmer that made him decide to go to the hardware shop in Dungannon, run by a man called Andrew.

"I took the strimmer out, it wasn't working and there was a few other things that I needed, so I went to the hardware shop, to get the strimmer licked up – see if I could give it a fix – and pick up some supplies," Malachi told *The Irish Catholic*.

### Investigation

After arriving at the shop and getting what he needed, shopkeeper Andrew was helping him to load some things into his car, there was no indication that something bad was about to happen. Although there is an ongoing police investigation, it's believed a car that didn't have its handbrake on silently built up speed, heading straight towards them.

Malachi says: "Obviously there was nobody in the car, it went off on its own, so we didn't hear it or see it before it made the impact on my vehicle and obviously crushed the two of us.

"We were both thrown down the road. It was a perfectly beautiful day and everything seemed right in the world and then the next thing I ended up in the Royal Victoria hospital with many severe injuries."

Andrew's elbow was crushed. Malachi only woke up when he was being lifted into an ambulance. "I was pulled under the car and then thrown down the road so I

# Prayer power saves renowned artist after horrific car crash



Malachi Cush and his wife Claire.

ended up with multiple ligament breakages in the knee, they said it was almost like everything had ruptured inside the knee capsule, a broken bone now that would have been an easy fix but the knee is so complicated," he says.

"I was also opened up across my chin and had 14 stitches around that area and a couple of teeth knocked out. I was torn down the back, and down the neck was completely torn where I was dragged. I was unconscious after the accident for a while, it was a pretty nasty injury and the recovery has been tough enough, the first surgery was pretty severe, I was in surgery between five and

six hours."

His wife Claire, who is a teacher, arrived at the scene and what she saw made her think of the worst, according to Malachi.

"Obviously at that point I was unconscious," says Malachi, "and whenever I did come round I was being brought into the ambulance and I felt at that time when I was lying on the road on whatever sort of stretcher they had me on, all I could see was – and it's so vivid – the blue sky coming towards me and the white clouds, it was a perfect day and I think at this stage 'I'm in trouble here', that I was really in a serious situation."

It was then he felt he needed to

speaking to his wife, considering this may be a life or death moment.

"It struck me that I had to say something, and I had to say some things that I had to get out of my chest to my wife about what she meant to me, what my family meant to me, some of the things I don't remember: but they were all good.

"I knew I wasn't myself, I knew I was pretty banged up," he adds.

Claire was praying in his ear. Malachi says that she has a devotion to St Thérèse of Lisieux, praying close to him: "little flower, at this hour, show your power." This was not all the prayers he received, the community response to the incident was phenomenal, within an hour of the wording getting out about what happened to Malachi and Andrew there were many more prayers.

"You know, in our community I found out that afterwards there was Mass offered up within that hour, the schoolchildren in the school where she works, and I teach some music lessons, prayed for me. Even an art class paused for prayer for Andrew and myself, so there was a wave of prayer that started almost immediately in the community," says Malachi.

### Prayers

The prayers were instrumental in pulling him through the tragedy, he says: "I did feel there was some intervention of some description, the power of prayer, and then even into my recovery and through surgery the Mass cards that I received, the prayer intentions they just continued. I'm in no doubt I was given an extra chance to do whatever it is in this world, that I do know what that is but I'm convinced of it and so is my wife.

"She was there and witnessed how bad I was and Claire says for sure, because she was prepared for the worst."

Claire was with him through thick and thin, and is an example of the power of the Sacrament of Marriage, Malachi says.

"I can't thank her enough for what she did, she did everything for me, here support for me was next to none. It really was a test of our marriage vows – through sickness and health. Claire did everything for me, she was there when I was in theatre and when I woke up, she took care of my hygiene, something you wouldn't expect to have to do at our age, but she did."

After his surgery Malachi's leg swelled from his hip to his toe, and



Malachi performs in church.

was extremely painful, he was in fear that it may have to be removed completely, saying: "It was a scary time, there was some fear. In your head your thinking, 'you could lose your leg'."

**“I attend the Royal hospital once a week and I go back in January to complete the reconstruction of the leg”**

The doctors recommended the areas to be massaged to help with the swelling and healing, which his family dutifully did when he was recovering at home. Malachi said the support he received from both his and Claire's family was exceptional.

"I'm in the midst of recovery," says Malachi, "I have another surgery in January. I attend the Royal hospital once a week and I go back in January to complete the reconstruction of the leg, so it's an ongoing process."

At the moment, he's not looking too far past his surgery this month, but after that there may be some broadcasting and music writing on the cards. "I think I'm going to do another album when I get back to full health, that's an important one



On the road to recovery.



Malachi Cush.



Police at the scene as cars are recovered from the crash in Dungannon.

for me," he says.

On Christmas day Malachi always sings in church, and this year is no exception, saying that it's something that he's always done. Christmas for Malachi is unsurprisingly a musical one, considering his upbringing and trade.

He says: "The main tradition is to get to Mass, I love singing in the chapel on a Christmas morning. That's the important business done and then I can relax and enjoy the

festivities of the day."

**“For me there’s an end point, thank God there is, I can see next Christmas I should be almost back to myself”**

Malachi and his wife settled in the village of Donaghmore, where he was born and raised, and they built a house on family land.

"Although I travelled a lot in my career – my career has taken me all over the place – but I'm still an Irish boy, still a home boy, I still like the comforts of my family and friends and the community where I come from," says Malachi.

"When you're married you have different in-laws and what have you, and people have to go to different areas, but on a Saturday after Christmas day we'll get together and we'll have a gathering

in the house and raise a glass to a year that has passed, and we have some songs around the piano, we have a little parcel of simple gifts that my wife and I gather and people can get a little gift each they can bring home."

Despite enjoying Christmas and a New Year, it probably won't be until next Christmas that he'll recover to his full health.

"I walk with the aid of a brace on my leg, obviously with the ligament damage in the nucleus of the knee. The knee isn't stable so that's what the next surgery is, to stabilise it," Malachi explains.

"So I get about with the aid of a brace, sometimes I use just a crutch to give me support. You get the pair of jeans or the pair of trousers just a size bigger just so you can pull them over the brace. But I'm very grateful to have my other leg."

**Respect**

Attending a rehab centre for his injury, Malachi has seen people in tough situations, giving him a newfound respect for those with disabilities and the struggles they go through in daily life – activities that many people wouldn't spare a thought about are veritable mountains for others.

"When I was in the rehab centre in Belfast, you'd be looking at other

people, and there was a lady there learning to walk with the aid of a prosthetic leg and it gives you a new perspective on people who are living with a disability.

"I got a whole new perception on accessibility, of how challenging it can be and I have a newfound respect for those in our society who struggle through with their own challenges.

**“I love singing in the chapel on a Christmas morning. That’s the important business done”**

"I know that I will mend eventually, I'm looking at this surgery in January, a few months in crutches again after that – get back into rehab.

"But for me there's an end point, thank God there is, I can see next Christmas I should be almost back to myself and I'm grateful."

Although Malachi has suffered a storm, through the prayers of a community, the actions of a wife who stood by him, loving family, he was able to weather it, saying that next Christmas: "I'll be singing that bit harder on Christmas day!"

AS THE NEW YEAR COMES IN,

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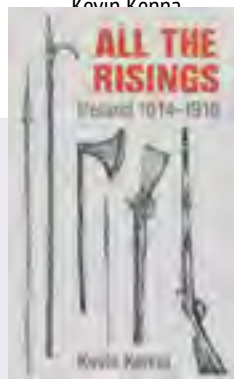
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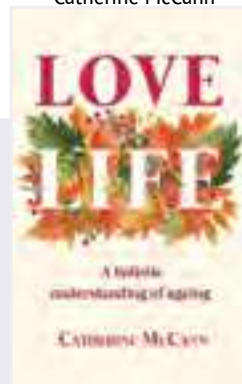
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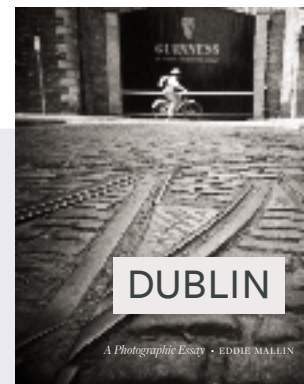
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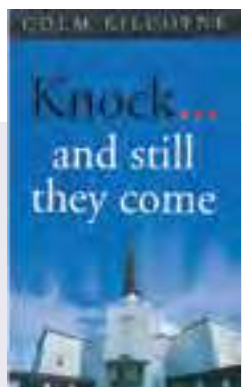


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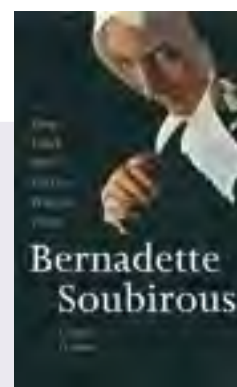
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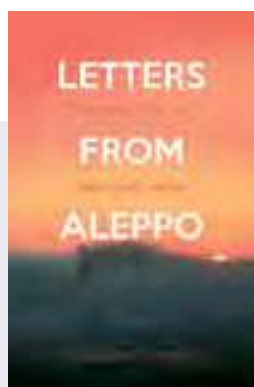
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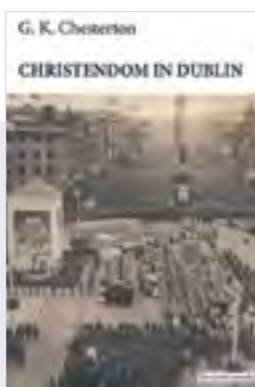
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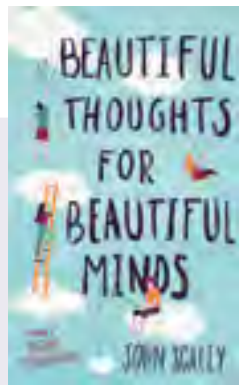
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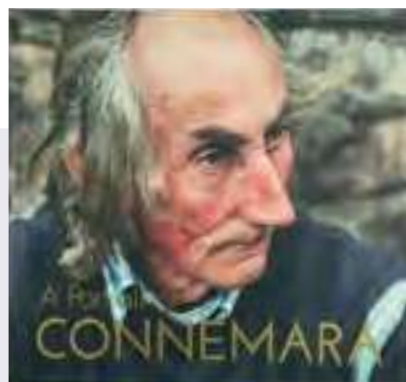
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# Out&About

## Servers enjoy their day



**DUBLIN:** 30 altars servers from Dublin archdiocese gather for the annual Altar Server Day to enjoy music, catechesis and prayer.



**CLARE:** Bishop Fintan Monahan at the launch of the Ennis Cathedral Junior Choir.



**DUBLIN:** At his 90th birthday celebrations in St Teresa's Church, Clarendon St., Nenagh native Fr Nicholas Madden ODC is joined by his first cousin, Bridie Hayes. Photo: Pádraig Ó Flannabhra



**MEATH:** Bishop Tom Deenihan offers Mass at the reopening of Longwood Church with Fr Michael Kilmartin, religious and altar servers.

Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick  
colm@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LIMERICK:** Fr Seamus Enright CSsR with the Mayor of Limerick City and County Michael Sheahan on O'Connell Street with the boys choir from St Clement's School as part of the Redemptorist's Sleep Out against Hunger initiative. Photo: Keith Wiseman



**TIPPERARY:** Fr Liam Everard PP and Canon Tom Breen present Ann Kenny with the Benemerenti Medal on the occasion of her stepping down as Sacristan of the Sacred Heart Church, Killusty, after 33 years of unbroken service.

**KILDARE:** Bishop Denis Nulty with Maureen Tobin from Cobh, Co. Cork, on Gaudete Sunday as he launches the 2019 Reach Out message and gift.



**IN SHORT**

**Dundalk church launches 24-hour streaming service**

In a bid to involve emigrants and the sick in local liturgical services, St Joseph's Redemptorist Monastery, Dundalk, has launched a new live streaming service. The webcam will allow family and friends around the world to be part of Ireland's worshipping community.

"Many people from Dundalk have emigrated or moved to other parts of Ireland or the UK and still feel a connection with the Redemptorist Church," Rector and Parish Administrator Fr Noel Kehoe CSsR said. "This allows them to bring the local Faith community into their homes

wherever they are, via a computer, smart phone or tablet. As a parish, this means that family abroad can connect for important family occasions such as weddings or funerals, times when distance can be a painful experience."

Fr Kehoe said that this is also an important development for people who find themselves housebound due to age or infirmity.

"We hope that it will be an important resource for individuals as well as nursing and hospitals. We want to be a Faith community that includes everyone and too often, those who can no longer come to church can feel cut off from their local community. The Mass, devotions, prayers, petitions, music and singing that create that community can now be continued even at home."

Other Redemptorist Churches in

Ireland have had a streaming service for some time. Clonard Monastery, where Fr Kehoe was previously Rector, was one of the first in the country and together these churches include around 15,000 viewers each month.

"No digital technology can replace the experience of being physically present to a person or a group of people. We are social by nature and our Faith calls us into community. But we must embrace the digital world and harness its many advantages to include rather exclude," Fr Kehoe said.

The streaming service was launched at church's annual Carol Service in late December.

The streaming service is provided by churchservices.tv and people can access the stream by logging into the website [www.redemptoristsdundalk.ie](http://www.redemptoristsdundalk.ie) or [churchservices.tv/dundalk](http://churchservices.tv/dundalk)

**FERMANAGH**

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly, at 7.30pm: [www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly](http://www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly). There is also a St Peregrine Novena Mass in Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea on Tuesday nights at 7pm. [www.churchservices.tv/lisnaskea](http://www.churchservices.tv/lisnaskea)

**CLARE**

Cloughleigh Oratory will continue to pray the Novena Prayer to St Anthony every Tuesday morning at the 9.30am Mass.

**CORK**

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay, Cork. Prayers for healing first Wednesday of every month.

A Pro-Life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month (except December) at the Poor Clares Monastery, College Road, Cork at 7.30pm.

**DERRY**

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8-12pm and 3-9pm.

St Maria Goretti Prayer Movement: Prayer for healing for victims of abuse and reparation for the Church. First Holy Hour of prayer in the Immaculate Conception Church, Trench Road Derry at 8.15pm led by Fr Seán O'Donnell, on the third Tuesday of every month.

**DUBLIN**

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8-9pm.

Ewe Thina: We Walk God's Way. Join other young adults (20's & 30's) for reflective hikes around Dublin Area. Monthly event. Contact [st.pauls@dublindiocese.ie](mailto:st.pauls@dublindiocese.ie)

**GALWAY**

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

**KERRY**

Weekly Monday prayer meetings led by Ben Perkins, from 8-9.30pm in the Ardfert Retreat Centre.

'Faith in the face of life's challenges' conversation in The Gleneagle Ballroom, Muckross Road, Killarney on Wednesday, January 8, at 8pm. Ian O'Connell, Elma Walsh, Anne Alcock and Fr Donal O'Connor, will share how Faith has enabled them to face what life has thrown at them and Deirdre Walsh, Radio Kerry, will chair the conversation.

**KILDARE**

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See [www.resurrexit.ie](http://www.resurrexit.ie) for details, or ring 087-6825407.

**KILKENNY**

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Pat-

rick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the Assumption, Urlingford, every first and third Friday, from 2.30-5.30pm.

**LIMERICK**

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10-12pm.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Adult Formation Course Level 1 Part 1 offered at St Saviour's Dominican Church from February 28 - March 3, 2020. For more information email: [limerick@op-tn.org](mailto:limerick@op-tn.org).

**LOUTH**

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

**MAYO**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Church of St Joseph and the Immaculate Conception Bohola every Wednesday from 10am until 10pm.

The next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form (Tridentine) will take place in the Parish Church, Knock, on Sunday, January 12, at 5.30pm.

**MEATH**

Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Stamullen, after 10am Mass every Thursday until 5pm, and in St Mary's Church, Julianstown, on Wednesdays from 9am and after 10am Mass.

**ROSCOMMON**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Drumboylan Church on the first Friday of every month from 9am-11pm.

**WEXFORD**

Taizé prayer services every first and third Friday at 8pm in Good Counsel College Chapel, New Ross.

**WICKLOW**

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

St Patrick's Prayer Group, Wicklow town, meet on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Care Centre.



# The youth of Ireland are filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit

 The Catholic Faith is anything but in decline in Ireland, writes **Amy McCann**

The annual Youth 2000 Christmas retreat is, for many of its veterans, the highlight of a year filled with prayer groups, regional retreats and a vibrant summer festival. This was my first Christmas retreat, and it was not hard to see why it is so beloved by the growing Youth 2000 family.

Here, young people aged 16-35 from all across Ireland, and at various stages in their Faith journey, come together to participate in and fulfil the mission of the organisation: that is, 'youth leading youth to the heart of the Church'. The itinerary was full, with Mass, Confession, the Rosary, talks, workshops, testimonies, praise and worship music, and fun. It was a weekend of spiritual growth and community.

We were particularly blessed to have Perpetual Adoration for the duration of the retreat.

### Redeeming

Reader, make no mistake, the youth of Ireland is filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and through Youth 2000's ministry, God is renewing and redeeming this country.

The Saturday night was the apex of the weekend for many of us: a powerful talk on Reconciliation, followed by 23 priests offering Confession to approximately 500 young people.



When all Confessions were heard, the congregation knelt around the candlelit monstrance on top of the 'burning bush', singing in full chorus Matt Maher's 'Lord I Need You'. The song of surrender was proclaimed, and the atmosphere was overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

This is something that will stay with me always. As the praise and worship came to a close in the main hall, the monstrance was removed in a reverential, candlelit procession in which the Blessed Sacrament was taken into St Dominic's Church in the grounds of Newbridge College. Youth 2000's ministry has

doctrinal integrity, evident in the strong support and guidance of the clergy and religiosity that attend the retreats.

Their vibrant Faith is a witness to Ireland's youth that a life dedicated to Jesus, however counter-cultural, is one which can be full of joy.

What was impressed on me was the diversity of our Faith: as I looked around that Saturday evening, I saw everyone joined together in prayer and praise.

It struck me that Youth 2000, like Jesus, throws its arms open wide, making room for everyone in God's family.

This most certainly appeals to those coming to these

Photos: Seán Blackwell







events for the first time, and it is one which keeps many, like me, coming back again for more.

Youth 2000 events are free, no charge is in place as these young people don't want any barrier to get in the way of other young people expe-

riencing the love they have found in Jesus Christ and his Church.

**i** To be part of this mission, to give and keep these events free contact us on (01) 675 3690 or email [development@youth2000.ie](mailto:development@youth2000.ie)

# World Report



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick  
colm@irishcatholic.ie

## IN BRIEF

### Pope Francis prays for Philippine typhoon victims

● Reciting the Angelus with thousands of people in St Peter's Square the day after Christmas, Pope Francis asked them to join him in reciting the Hail Mary for the victims of Typhoon Phanfone in the Philippines.

The Pope told the crowd that he shared the suffering of the Filipino people, "whom I love very much".

"I pray for the numerous victims, for the injured and for their families," he said.

The *Associated Press* said the typhoon, which made landfall on December 24, caused at least 20 deaths. Many people were still missing by December 26 and tens of thousands of people were forced to evacuate their homes.

### Catholic group sings carols for George Pell at Christmas

● A group of local Catholics gathered outside Melbourne prison on Christmas Eve to sing carols for Cardinal George Pell, currently incarcerated in the facility, and to pray for him, as well as the other inmates and prison staff.

At 8pm on December 24, about two dozen local Catholics gathered outside Melbourne Assessment Prison on the west side of the city centre to sing Christmas carols and to pray for the cardinal and others in the jail.

After the caroling, Melbourne's Vietnamese Catholic Youth Group led a Rosary procession around the perimeter of the prison, which houses more than 300 inmates.

### Russian Orthodox church breaks with Alexandria patriarch

● The Russian Orthodox church has cut ties with the head of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria following his decision to recognise Ukraine's new independent Orthodox church.

The Russian church's Holy Synod ruled late Thursday to rupture all links with Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa.

It noted, however, that it

will remain in communion with those clerics of his church who didn't support the decision.

The Holy Synod also decided that its parishes in Africa will be removed from the Patriarchate of Alexandria's jurisdiction and made directly subordinate to the Russian Orthodox church's head, Patriarch Kirill.

### Cardinal Tagle expresses shock at upsurge in suicide rates

● In the wake of rising suicide rates in the Philippines, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle has issued a Christmas statement expressing his shock at the trend and calling for cultural renewal. "The mystery of Christmas is contrary to the drive, the desire and the impulse to destroy people, lives, families, societies and creation," said Cardinal Tagle in a statement.

The cardinal is serving his final weeks as Archbishop of Manila. Earlier this month he was appointed by Pope Francis as the new Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

The cardinal also alluded to rising trends in bullying, including via social media, as contributing factors in rising suicide rates.

### German prelate supports blessing homosexual couples

● Cardinal Reinhard Marx has expressed the view that homosexual couples can receive a Church blessing "in the sense of a pastoral accompaniment" in the Catholic Church, but not in a manner that resembles marriage.

In an interview with the German magazine *Stern*, the Archbishop of Munich and Freising was asked: "What do you do when a homosexual couple asks you for an episcopal blessing?"

Marx responded: "I can bless them both in the sense of pastoral accompaniment, we can pray together. But theirs cannot be a marriage-like relationship."

While there is room for differing interpretations of Marx's comments, the website *katholisch.de*, funded by the German bishops, has reported on the matter using the headline 'Marx: Homosexual couples can receive a blessing'.

Five people were stabbed in a rabbi's house on Saturday night in Monsey when a knife-wielding intruder entered the home during Hanukkah celebrations. The suspect was later arrested by New York police.

Ramapo Police Chief Brad Weidel said the suspected attacker entered the residence around 10pm armed with a knife. It is understood those in the house were lighting candles to observe the seventh night of Hanukkah.

The attacker was arrested approximately two hours after the incident in Harlem, New York – about 30 miles from the incident.

Michael Specht, supervisor of the town of Ramapo, which provides government services to Monsey, said the attack took place during at the home of Rabbi Chaim L Rottenberg, next to a synagogue.

At least one of the victims was "seriously hurt", he said.

### Attacker

The Hasidic organisation Chabad – which says it's the "website of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement" – citing sources in the community and witnesses at the scene, said someone in the home threw a table at the attacker, chasing him off. He then apparently tried to enter the synagogue next door, but the occupants barricaded themselves inside. The assailant then fled.

"I was praying for my life," witness Aron Kohn, 65, told the *New York Times*,

## Five people stabbed in rabbi's house during Hanukkah celebrations



Police cordon off the area around a rabbi's house in Monsey, New York, after a knife-wielding attacker stabbed five people there. Photo: CNS

describing the knife used by the attacker as "the size of a broomstick".

The Orthodox Jewish Public Affairs Council said the five victims, all Hasidic, were transported to local hospitals with stab wounds.

Governor Andrew Cuomo said state police were assisting with the investigation.

"I am directing the State Police hate crimes task force to immediately investigate and to use every tool available to hold the attacker accountable to the fullest extent of the

law," he said in a statement.

The violent attack comes in the wake of a string of high-profile anti-Semitic incidents in recent times. In October 2018, a man opened fire at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, killing 11 people. And only last month, a couple opened fire at a kosher market in Jersey City, killing a police officer and three people.

In response to the upsurge of anti-Semitic violence, Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation league

called for "increased protection for Jewish people".

### Violation

"After the hateful assaults we saw this past week in Brooklyn and Manhattan, it is heart-wrenching to see the holiday of Hanukkah violated yet again," he tweeted.

"We need authorities to provide increased protection NOW and ensure that the full force of the law is brought down on those who perpetrate such horrific crimes."

## Calls for 'prayer and solidarity' after Chilean fires destroy homes

Chilean Church leaders have called for Catholics to respond with prayer and solidarity to aid about 1,000 people who lost their homes in fires that swept through hillside neighbourhoods around the southern port city of Valparaiso on Christmas Eve and Christmas.

Bishop Pedro Ossandon Buljevic, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Valparaiso, urged Catholics to "join in prayer to transform ourselves into a single great manger of solidarity, that welcomes and accompanies in this

initial moment of pain and in the large process of recovery".

Although the final tally is not complete, Valparaiso church workers estimated that at least 250 houses were destroyed on the hillsides, where the steep terrain made it difficult for firefighters to combat the blazes.

By December 27, the fires were under control, with just a few hot spots remaining.

Chilean government officials said they suspected the fires, which were exacerbated by high temperatures,

strong winds and prolonged drought, were set deliberately.

Caritas, the Church's social ministry office, is providing emergency assistance to families and will aid with reconstruction of homes and small businesses lost in the fires.

Fires occur almost every year in southern Chile, where large plantations of pine and eucalyptus trees are common. A fire in November in Curauma, near Valparaiso, burned an area of nearly eight square miles. Two men were arrested in that case.

## Religion is not basis for citizenship, cardinal says

As India continues to experience violent protests against a controversial citizenship law, Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai has said citizenship should never be based on a person's religion.

"The ongoing controversy and demonstrations and counterdemonstrations

concerning the Citizenship Amendment Act (are) a cause of great anxiety for all citizens and could harm the country," Cardinal Gracias, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said in a statement.

At least 24 people have died throughout India since

December 4 in protests against the act, which has since been signed into law.

The law permits Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities who are in the country illegally to become citizens if they can show they were persecuted because of their religion in Muslim-

majority Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It does not apply to Muslims.

The law had been pushed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has espoused staunch nationalist views, and the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, which runs the government.

JULY 22 - 29

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# Letters

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

## Letter of the week

### We can truly appreciate what we've lost

**Dear Editor,** After reading Bairbre Cahill's piece on 'It's time to end the sacramental production line' (IC 12/12/19) I can only give you my own experience. Could I suggest that we bring the preparation into the schools rather than taking it out?

I was one of those parents who just brought their children for sacraments without any thought or teaching and even after my conversion I was someone who agreed with Bairbre, but I realise now what is needed is love and mercy in abundance.

There's a huge temptation for all of us practising Catholics to hunker down and put up barriers and 'rules' to being part of our 'club' but a wise man

once told me: "Jesus can take care of himself!"

I was 40 years old before I realised I knew nothing about being a Catholic. I went through years of not attending Mass and I thank God my husband kept bringing our children even though his faith had little foundations too.

When parents themselves haven't been taught the true joy of our faith, the 'what' we believe and 'why' we believe it, how can we expect them to deposit the Faith in their children? I thank God that he led me to study the *Catechism* which has changed all our lives as a family.

It is only through my own Faith

journey that I could really deposit the Faith in our children.

We must always remember Faith is a gift from God. I wonder is it only converts who can truly appreciate this? If you've never lost something you'll never really appreciate its value to you.

If parents and children can be brought into contact with people who love Jesus and practice their Faith within our schools this will serve us all better than separating us and minimising still more the chances of everyone having an encounter with Our Lord.

*Yours etc.,  
Fiona Kiely.*

### In schools and elsewhere we have to talk of Faith

**Dear Editor,** When I saw the provocative headline, 'It's time to end the sacramental production line' over Bairbre Cahill's article (IC 12/12/19), I was, naturally, curious to see what arguments she would put forward in relation to this very topical issue.

While Bairbre introduced her article by stating very clearly where she stood on the subject, about which she was writing – "I would take sacramental preparation out of Catholic schools" – I felt the thrust of her article was that the time has well

and truly come to face up to the reality, that the system is broken. Bairbre describes the present system of sacramental preparation as "a production line system that tries to deal with sacramental preparation disconnected from a life of Faith".

She goes on to say that "moving sacramental preparation into our parishes would encourage, indeed demand, a re-animation of our parishes as communities of Faith and places of evangelisation".

The topic that Bairbre Cahill deals with in her article had of course been a front page headline in *The Irish Catholic* the previous week, following the announcement by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin that plans were being made in Dublin diocese to take sacramental preparation out of schools.

Bairbre Cahill is in no doubt that "no parish can do this alone" and she concludes her article as follows: "For the sake of the integrity of our sacramental

preparation, the ethos of our Catholic schools, the vitality of our parishes as communities of Faith and the respect we owe the Faith journey of our children, we need the courage, wisdom and right judgement to forge a new path."

The least that might be done by bishops, priests and people, without delay, is to talk about this very relevant 'Faith issue'.

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Denis O'Mahony,  
Abbeydorney,  
Co. Kerry.*

### Lets resolve to talk about our Faith!

**Dear Editor,** I thought it would be a nice reminder to people reading this paper that if your spiritual life has stagnated or has reduced in importance, the New Year is the perfect time to renew your Faith and make real strides to rectify or deepen your relationship with God. A resolution to simply attend Mass or to have Faith conversations with your friends this year could make all the difference.

*Yours etc.,  
Jennifer Hogan,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.*



### Sorry Mary, we won't agree on overview of SDLP

**Dear Editor,** I have to take issue with the rose-tinted reflection of Mary Kenny's overview of the SDLP and constitutional nationalism (IC 19/12/19). That the electors have returned two stalwart supporters of abortion and marriage re-definement says a lot.

The SDLP together with Sinn Féin did nothing to restrain the odious Westminster abortion plan, but quietly

welcomed it! Eastwood and Hanna are on record for their delight with the effective ending of the unborn right to exist.

That is not all, since the *Irish News* has itself, over the past 18 months posted adverts for humanist weddings to IVF and yet still lauds the motto of their title page 'pro Fidel at patria'. This shows that Irish nationalism as a

grouping has a loathing for pro-life and pro-Faith and that especially with the SDLP, they would sell their souls if it would gain them power.

The only light seems to be Aontú that shows more in keeping with the vision of John Hume, than the present cabal!

*Yours etc.,  
Fr John McCallion,  
Coalisland, Co. Tyrone.*

## facebook community

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

### There is a place in Heaven for dogs

Ignoring Aquinas' distinction between an immortal soul and an animal soul here. There's more than just scriptural references to consider here. Sure, there'll probably be animals in heaven, but they won't be the animals that we have now as they do not have immortal souls. The idea that our pets will be in Heaven is fanciful, as it has no real theological support. Church teaching on the soul makes it impossible. – **Adam Conroy**

Pope Francis has said that dogs can go to Heaven. Matthew 16 makes it clear that the will of the Holy Father will be granted in Heaven. Catholics believe that Sacred Scripture and the words of the Pope reign supreme over the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas. – **Pamela Ryan**

I've been told by a most holy Catholic lady that through her glimpse of Heaven, we can continue what made us happy on Earth, and if it takes our departed dogs to be there to make us happy, then it will be so. To be clear, this is not to imagine that they have souls on a par with ours, nor are they made in the image and likeness of God. – **Conall O Coisneachain**

### The face of the 'Francis effect' on Irish Catholicism

The administrative Church in Ireland has been a disaster. The effect of the Church on people's lives has evaporated from 1983 to 2018. The attendance at Francis' visit in 2018 was 1/10th that of JP II's visit in 1979. Archbishops, bishops and priests betrayed the Faithful laity over their fellows in black abusing the children of the laity. The flock has bolted the stable. – **Micheál Lyons**

### Assisting displaced is 'heart of Christmas message' archbishop says

Bishops love a good opportunity to virtue signal. – **Tom Jones**

Hate thy neighbour? Christ was an asylum seeker. Joseph was a migrant worker. You're really missing the point of Christ's example if you are not capable of compassion, love and understanding. – **Dara O Cogaidhin**

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

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

# 📷 Around the world



▲ **USA:** Members of the Knights of Columbus distribute supplies in Matamoros, Mexico. The Knights have spent nearly \$300,000 (€270,000) since last August to help meet the humanitarian needs of migrants at the border.  
 ◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis delivers his blessing during his annual audience to give Christmas greetings to members of the Roman Curia. Photos: CNS



**ENGLAND:** Christmas shoppers make their way under an illuminated angel along Regent Street in London.



**KENYA:** People stand in floodwaters near the Nairobi River in Nairobi. Kenya's Catholic bishops have prayed for the more than 100 people who have died in flooding, landslides and mudslides since last October.



**JERUSALEM:** An ultra-Orthodox Jewish man looks at Issa Kassissieh in a Santa Claus costume as he rides a camel during the annual Christmas tree distribution organised by the Jerusalem municipality.



**NICARAGUA:** Nuns take pictures in front of the old cathedral in Revolution Square in Managua.



There's a Latin axiom which argues that there's no accounting for taste, *de gustibus non est disputandum*. I reference it as a preamble to my annual list of the 10 books I most enjoyed this past year because, admittedly, taste is somewhat subjective.

I chose these particular books because they're the ones that spoke most deeply to me. Perhaps they won't speak to you in the same way. Fair enough. There's no accounting for taste.

So here are the authors and the books that spoke to me most deeply during this past year...

**1. Bernardo Olivera, *How Far to Follow? The Martyrs of Atlas*.** This book helps tell the inside story of the Trappist monks who were martyred by Islamic extremists in Algeria in 1996. Similar to the movie, *Of Gods and Men*, it focuses on the deep struggles these men underwent in making the decision not to leave their monastery and, instead, face martyrdom.

**2. Donald Senior, *Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic Biblical Renewal*.** Well-researched and well-written, this is a biography of the renowned scripture scholar, Raymond E. Brown, who stood out both for his scholarship and for his exemplary discipleship and priesthood.

The book is more of an intellectual history of Brown than a chronicle of his life. It's interesting too because, by sharing Brown's intellectual history, Senior also highlights the particular theological and ecclesial struggles of Brown's generation. For many of us this will be hauntingly familiar.

**3. Rachel Held Evans.** This

## The best 10 books that found me in 2019



Fr Rolheiser

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

past year, scanning book reviews, I discovered the writings of Rachel Held Evans. I cite three of her works here that spoke to me very deeply: *Searching for Sunday, Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church; Inspired, Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again, and A Year of Biblical Womanhood*.

Rachel grew up a cradle Evangelical with a deep and solid Faith, but adulthood brought its own challenges, particularly for someone of her courage and honesty.

These books chronicle Rachel's struggle with her religious mother-tongue, her falling out of her faith story, and her particular way of finding her way back in. Her story articulates the struggle of millions. It's an invaluable read, irrespective of one's religious mother-tongue. She's also an exceptionally gifted writer.

**“In this book, Mary Jo submits that every country has its ‘original sin’, some primal fault in its origins that now taints its present”**

Sadly, she died in May at the age of 37. We lost a needed religious voice, but what she left us can help many a person sort through

his or her religious struggles

**4. Jean Bosco Rutagengwa, *Love Prevails, One Couple's Story of Faith and Survival in the Rwandan Genocide*.** Someone once said that if you want to understand the tragedy of the World War II you can read 1,000 books about it and watch 1,000 hours of film – or you can read the *Diary of Anne Frank*. This is such a ‘diary’, written inside the horrors of the Rwandan Genocide

**5. Robert Ellsberg, *A Living Gospel, Reading God's Story in Holy Lives*.** The lives of the saints are our living gospel and Robert Ellsberg is the foremost hagiographer in the English language today. This, wonderfully readable, book teaches us both what hagiography is and why it's important.

**6. Margaret Renkl, *Late Migrations, A Natural History of Love and Loss*.** This is a unique kind of book, a poetics of sorts on love, nature, adoration, family life, death, dying and human resiliency. This is a piece of art.

**7. Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*.** This book will challenge you and will, with a sound scriptural theology, challenge mainline theology in its popular conception of both the intent and the scope of the incarnation. An important read.

**8. Ruth Burrows, *Before the Living God*.** This is Ruth Burrows' autobiography. I first read it 32 years ago. It moved me then and it moved me even more 32 years later. In her story, you will better understand your own story and the movement of God in your life.

**9. David Brooks, *The Second Mountain, The Quest for a Moral Life*.** Brooks' *Second Mountain* very much corresponds to what spiritual writers like Richard Rohr call the Second-Half of Life. Drawing upon his own story and creatively mixing secular and religious perspectives, Brooks lays out a challenging vision of what it means to mature, to move from being the hungry child to becoming the blessing adult. An excellent read.

**10. Mary Jo Leddy, *Why Are We Here, A Meditation on Canada*.** Not least, a book from a Canadian. Mary Jo Leddy, the Founder and Director of Romero House for refugees in Toronto has always been a prophetic voice.

In this book, she submits that every country has its ‘original sin’, some primal fault in its origins that now taints its present. For Canada, she argues, it was how it treated its indigenous peoples as it formed itself into a nation. Canada is not unique in having such an ‘original sin’. Every country has it. Everyone should read this book.

I apologise that this year's list, again, does not include any novels.

## QUESTIONS of faith

Each week Colm Fitzpatrick looks at interesting and sometimes controversial questions people have about Catholicism...



## Making meaningful new year resolutions

The phrase goes: “New year, new me.” The mentality of recognising your weaknesses and setting new goals aimed at improvement is ubiquitous across the western world.

Some people decide to hit the gym, others try to jump on the diet train and many of us will attempt to stave off alcohol. On the surface, this cultural phenomenon might seem tacky, but in reality there's something noble about acknowledging your flaws and taking the right steps to better yourself.

One aspect of our lives that is often neglected is our spiritual development. The busyness of life can sometimes get in the way of our responsibility to keep God at the centre of what we say and do. In this vein, it might be worth trying to develop healthy practices aimed at helping your spiritual life as part of your new year's resolutions. Below is a list of suggestions to get you thinking:

● **Read the Bible.** Let's be honest, Catholics have a reputation for not being as biblically literate as other Christian denominations. You don't have to do it in one sitting (that would take much too long) but by trying reading a chapter every day. Listening to an audio book is also a great alternative and it means you can hear the Word of God anywhere, anytime.

**“The busyness of life can sometimes get in the way of our responsibility to keep God at the centre of what we say and do”**

● **Join a parish group.** Church community is essential to the flourishing

of a healthy, Christian life. If you're not involved in a local parish group, consider joining one. Jesus reminds us that when one or two gather in his name, he is present (Mt 18:20). Your Faith will develop significantly when you join with others in prayer and fellowship.

**“Instead of exuding negativity, try to be more grateful for the things that you do have”**

● **Pray more.** For many Catholics, their prayer life can be summed up as a few mumbled words before they drift off to sleep. Try to get into the habit of praying when you wake up and before you go to bed. It doesn't have to be a long session, but make sure it's thoughtful and focused.

You can also pray during the day, perhaps on your work commute or while making dinner. It can simply be a conversation with God about whatever is on your mind.

● **Be thankful.** The world can seem like a horrid place sometimes, and this prompts us to complain and moan. Instead of exuding negativity, try to be more grateful for the things that you do have.

You'll be surprised by how lucky you feel when you can recite a long list with ease.

● **Give more.** Christmas is traditionally the time for giving, but just because the festive season is over does not mean we should stop considering those in need. Make a concerted effort this year to volunteer or donate what you can financially.

Got a question or comment?  
Email [colm@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:colm@irishcatholic.ie)

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 2, 2019

**Youth Space**  
The truth, goodness  
and beauty of Faith

Page 34



## New Year...New Me



**A**ll of us are guilty now and again of putting something on the long finger; we'll start that daunting diet next week, clean the car at the end of the month, or look for a new and fulfilling job next year. This propensity to procrastinate is usually based on fear of failure or lack of motivation. Perhaps you want to hit the gym but your inexperience is deterring you from taking that extra step or maybe you have a desire to start a bakery business, but worries about how successful it will be dissuades you from pursuing the project.

Humans are excellent at making excuses to avoid activities that take us out of our comfort zone. However, this mindset briefly changes in the New



**It can be tough sticking to your New Year Resolutions but they are achievable, writes Colm Fitzpatrick**

Year when millions promise themselves to finally get a move on with their goals. The most popular resolutions are to exercise more, eat healthier and save money. While this desire to better ourselves should be praised, the majority of people fall short of their resolutions – and very quickly.

Numerous studies show that by the second week of January, the motivation to keep up with

resolutions begin to falter and that by February, 80% of hopefuls abandon them. This is why gym membership spikes in the New Year only for it to wane significantly after a month.

This mass exodus doesn't mean that making resolutions is futile, but it does show us that the way we go about trying to achieve them isn't working. Instead of falling into old habits this year, try out these helpful

tips to make your New Year resolutions stick.

### **Establish the why**

Before you even attempt a New Year's resolution, you need to understand the motivation behind your goal. If your ambition is to write a book, then it's important to introspect and examine why you have this desire. It might be because you love writing or have a life-changing idea you want the world to know. Whatever your goal is, make sure to have your resolution in written form where you'll encounter it everyday, like on the wallpaper of your phone. It will act as a constant reminder when you're having a tough day to stick to it.

### **Only choose one goal**

There are probably 100 different things we want to work on when it comes to bettering ourselves, but it's vital to just pick one resolution. If you try to achieve a number of objectives over a year, there's a high chance you'll end up accomplishing nothing. Tackling everything at one time will leave you overwhelmed and confused. By focusing your efforts on one goal, you can give it your all and make it more achievable.

### **Be realistic**

There's no point aiming at a target that is impossible to hit. You won't, for example, be able to lose 100 pounds of fat in a month nor will you learn how to

» Continued on Page 33

## Family News



### AND EVENTS

## A TRIBUTE TO FOLK-ROCK DUO

It's been over 50 years since Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel joined forces to create one of the most well-known folk-rock groups. Their songs are recognised around the world and although the duo are no longer together, you can still get a chance to hear some of their most famous tunes in a live platform. 'Simon & Garfunkel: Through The Years' tribute show has toured the globe, selling out theatres and receiving standing ovations wherever they go. Fronted by Dan Haynes and Pete Richards collectively known as Bookends, the show is a "masterpiece" (BBC Radio) which perfectly recreates the unmistakable sound of Simon & Garfunkel. You can hear many of the hits such as "The Sound of Silence", "Mrs Robinson", "The Boxer" and the smash hit "Bridge Over Troubled Water". The live concert takes place in The Everyman Theatre, Cork, on January 16.

## REEL IN THE MEALS

Generally, those who suffer from diabetes are advised to eat six small meals spread throughout the day, but a new study suggests that this guidance may be harmful. The research carried by Prof. Jakubowicz and the team from Tel Aviv University has confirmed that a three day meal approach could be more helpful for those with Type 2 diabetes.

In the three meals a day approach, participants had to follow a diet plan that requires eating a breakfast of bread, fruit, and sweets early in the morning, having a sizeable lunch, and a small meal at dinnertime, which must not feature any starchy foods, sweets or fruit.

The team observed that the participants with diabetes who followed the typical six meal diet did not lose any weight and did not see better blood sugar control. However, those who ate three meals a day saw the opposite effect: they lost weight and had much improved blood sugar levels.

## A SLEEPY SONG

Most of us only feel comfortable sleeping in our own beds and find it very difficult to rest in unfamiliar environments like aeroplanes or buses. Even in our homes, outside noise or too much light creeping through the curtains can leave us having a sleepless night. A Bluetooth sleep mask is ideal for a quick snooze at home and in places that are not really suited for it, like when travelling. When you need time out, the mask is there for you. It connects wirelessly to your smartphone so you can slumber to your favourite tracks. The mask has an adjustable fastener at the back and an extra covering of fabric that sits tightly over the bridge of the nose. It is also filled with mouldable foam that adapts to your face to make it extra comfy. You'll be able to drift off in no time!



# We must talk about children's spirituality



My parents watched the Late Late Show every Friday night and that show vied with the Riordans for top place in everyday conversation the following week. Both shows explored in their own way a changing Irish society. The whole culture of Irish society has changed in the intervening years, including the authority and influence of the Catholic Church. While there is much to be grateful for in many of those changes, one of the consequences has been a decline in regard for the spiritual nature of the human person.

There is an urgent need in society today for practices that awaken the person to their true nature.

Meditation is a universal practice that does just that, it awakens the person to an appreciation of who they are at the deepest level of their being. Thomas Merton spoke of the true-self as distinct from the egoist self and Richard Rohr describes the true self as "who we are in God and who God is in us". John Main suggested that meditation opens the human heart as naturally as sunlight generates the opening of a flower. What is wonderful to behold, is the spread of meditation as a practice for children.

Since November 2012, Christian Meditation Ireland has been encouraging schools to adopt the practice on a whole-school level. Since then, 210 primary schools have introduced meditation to over 50,000 children. While meditation has become very popular because of the spread of mindfulness, the focus of the mindfulness movement is on its practical benefits. Our project goes deeper and stresses the deep spiritual fruits that flow from it. Our programme teaches

## Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



the difference between secular mindfulness and Christian meditation without in any way denigrating the former.

Children love to meditate; they take to meditation like ducks to water. My doctoral research confirms that children experience such heart-awareness as they sit in the stillness and silence of meditation. My book, *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*, (Veritas, 2016), describes in the words of the children themselves how they experience the fruits of meditation. It demonstrates the incredible capacity of children to give metaphorical expression to its fruits in their lives. I summarise the fruits as expressed by the children under four headings: 'Meditation helps you to be yourself'; 'Meditation helps you to feel the goodness inside'; 'Meditation brings you closer to God'; and 'Meditation makes you a kinder person'.

In this short article it is possible to give just a flavour of what children say they experienced as a result of their meditation. For example, Pamela (11) said, "I think meditation brings out the real me, and I don't have to pretend to be someone else ... When I meditate, I can be myself."

Very many children spoke of becoming intensely aware in meditation of their own inherent goodness.

Lucy (10) described it, saying "When you're not doing meditation, you sort of... have a snap inside you. As if you are always getting ready to snap. But when you do meditation, the goodness comes out."

Derek (9) offered: "When I meditate, I go on a journey down to God." Another child, Alex said: "When I hear the chimes at the start of meditation, I imagine it is God ringing my doorbell and I open my heart to let Him in." Many children felt their sense of being connected to God in meditation was strengthened by the fact



that the whole school meditated together. Adrian (11), captured this well saying: "It feels like everyone is one. We're all together and still it feels ... as if everyone is where you are now. And God is in the presence."

Many experienced meditation as a form of guidance, nudging them in the direction of acting responsibly and doing the right thing. Sophie (8) found meditation made her a kinder person: "When I let go of the things that are bothering me, it's like I've become a kinder person."

Meditation seemed to give the children access to an inner wisdom by which they allow themselves to be guided.

As well as making them aware of the goodness within themselves, meditation also helped children to become more keenly aware of the innate goodness in others and to relate better with those around them. The children seem to recognise that the goodness in themselves and others is who they really are, their deepest essence, and their true-self. Jason (12) used a very rich metaphor to describe his understanding, saying: "Meditation is like a map and the destination is who you really are." I was stunned by his capacity to express so succinctly the deep spiritual fruit of meditation.

I am convinced that meditation helps children to have direct, personal spiritual experience and that this is vital for their overall development. Every school is legally obliged to promote the spiritual development of all the children in their care. Christian meditation can be taught in an inclusive way to children from all religious backgrounds and none, without in any way diminishing the Christian understanding of the practice.

After 40 years in the education sector Noel Keating was awarded a PhD for his research into the child's experience of meditation and its spiritual fruits. Noel now leads, in a voluntary capacity, a project which offers free in-service to primary schools who may wish to consider introducing meditation as a whole-school practice. Noel is author of *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*.



» Continued from Page 31



be proficient at public speaking in a week. Creating an unrealistic goal in an extremely short time frame is doomed for failure and will leave you feeling discouraged. Be honest with yourself and try to discern what you're capable of and what you're willing to do to achieve your goal.

### Take baby steps

If your goal is to hit the gym five days a week when the only exercise you've ever successfully completed is walking up the stairs, then it's likely your resolution will grind to a halt early. This momentous ambition is possible but you have to take it one step at a time. Write out a list of how to best achieve it and do some research to seek out the advice of other people who were in your position. You might begin by exercising three days a week at home before finally making the financial commitment to join a gym. By having a plan of action rather than vague notion in your head of what you want to achieve, there'll be a much higher chance of success.

### Seek support

It's never easy taking on a new challenge alone so enlist the help of a family member or friend who can support you. If you want to start jogging more, then there might be a close companion who would be willing to join you. On days where you're feeling apathetic or discouraged, your partner will be able to pick you up and point you in the right direction. Of course, there are also plenty of social groups you can join that will allow you pursue your resolutions in a communal environment, like a running or knitting group. Being able to speak to

someone about the struggles you're encountering and the subsequent reassurance you will receive will keep you inspired and committed.

### Make a connection

Sometimes it's easier to pick a new habit by connecting it to one you already do. If your goal this year is to start flossing daily then associate it with your brushing your teeth. You already do this everyday so it will be effortless to integrate this resolution into your normal routine. Brushing your teeth will always be a reminder that you must floss afterwards.

### Use reward system tactics

Resolutions shouldn't be a punishment; they're all about improving yourself. Particularly for those ones that can be more



difficult, it's important to remember to reward yourself for your efforts. At every small milestone in your journey, mark it with a celebration. For example, if you manage to stave off cigarettes for a fortnight, treat yourself to a night at the cinema or your favourite meal. A reward system is a simple but effective way to ensure that when resolutions become difficult there's something in the near future to look forward to.

### Go easy on yourself

Making significant changes to your life and breaking old habits isn't easy so there will be times when you fall off the ladder. This blip isn't an excuse to give up on your overall goal nor should you beat yourself up about it. Rather, get back up, dust yourself off and don't lose momentum. You're only human and it's inevitable that at some stage on your journey you'll hit a speed ramp but it's how you recover that will determine what effect this has on your goal. If you have a smoke, make sure it doesn't turn into a whole packet. Instead, remind yourself that glitches happen and consider it a lesson learned. It might be helpful to write down what triggered the lapse in judgement so you're more cognisant of how to avoid this pitfall.

The New Year is a moment in a time where we reflect on the 12 months that have just passed and look forward to the future. There is always opportunity to better ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. By perceiving ourselves not as 'human beings' but as 'human becomings', we can instill the principle that there is always work to be done.

# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I pulled in to the airport drop-off zone with some trepidation. My wife was travelling overseas for an important course. This meant that our breastfed baby had to travel with her too. For nine whole days, I would be alone at home with the three bigger kids. The oldest two would be fine. They would miss their mum and baby sister, of course, but they are old enough to know that days pass by quickly and people return.

The real worry was our 5-year-old. She has always been prone to separation anxiety when it comes to her parents. Recently, when I was abroad on a four-day business trip, she cried inconsolably each day, missing me. This time, the absent parent would be her mother, the one she has always clung to most tightly.

My wife was running slightly late for her flight. Thankfully, this meant that farewell hugs and kisses were administered efficiently, and with a minimum of ceremony. My wife hurried off towards departures with our baby strapped to her chest, pushing a trolley laden with car seat and bags. We had not driven out the airport gates before the wailing began. Plaintive cries were issued to the skies: "Mama, come back, I miss you. I need you, mama."

By the time we were half way home, she was pleading: "I want to go back in time, to when Mama was still here."

Fortunately, I knew the power of confectionary to salve even the most gaping emotional wounds in small children. The usual concerns about sugar, e-numbers and teeth would be hastily shelved, due to the pressing need to cure acute emotional distress. I stopped in town, and brought a still sobbing child by the hand into the sweet shop. Her tear-filled eyes widened as I told her she could have whatever she wanted. She chose a pack of sherbet straws. The sobbing stopped abruptly as she took them in her hand. Then, I told her she could also have a balloon. I placed it in her other hand as we waited to pay. As we queued, I heard a small voice say: "My smile is on my face again because you gave

me a balloon." I looked down, and saw that it was true.

It's not easy being 5. You feel utterly vulnerable out in the world, especially without your parents. Yet you must bravely go to school, and adjust to its disciplines,



and the new and complex social interactions of the schoolyard. You are almost a big kid, going out into the world alone with a school uniform and a bag each morning. Yet when you come home, there are still all those monsters under the bed to worry about.

As the days went by, she became increasingly calm about her mother's absence. There were skype conversations each evening. The lack of her mother's embrace at bedtime was eased by the methadone of hot chocolate with two marshmallows. I gave her extra time and attention too. Now that I was her only go-to person, the bond between us deepened by the day. Her older brother and sister were under instructions to be extra nice, which they were – for the most part.

We all missed the baby, and her slapstick antics, her bright smiles and her almost-words. Yet those nights of uninterrupted sleep were profoundly welcomed by my tired body. Each day, my five year old daughter seemed less upset, but she daily came to me to solemnly say, "I miss my mum".

I would hug her and say: "Of course you do, we all do. She'll be home soon." Yet for me, when my closest loved ones are hundreds of miles across the Irish Sea, somewhere deep down, I still feel that they are nearby. For I still feel that warm connection of the heart, which neither time nor distance can dim.

# The truth, goodness and beauty of Faith

## Youth Space



Friendship and fellowship in university can change your life, writes Sandra Parda

**M**y name is Sandra Parda, I'm the auditor of the Life Society and in my final year of studies in NUI Galway. In February I converted back into Catholicism and received so many graces along the way. It's been truly an incredible journey.

Seven years ago, after my brother died, I was left with a shattered heart and lost my Faith in God. Throughout the years, I was searching for the meaning of life, not only trying to deal with the grief that was so heavy on my heart but also trying to dull the loneliness and emptiness that I was left with upon losing my Faith. Now, I have realised that I was trying to fill the void and that aching of my heart which only God can heal.

I had a very beautiful conversion upon my arrival in America, where I went to study for a semester. It was clear that God had a very distinctive plan for me as I was sent to a Catholic University- Carroll College in the state of Montana, where the faith of the people was very strong and was flourishing on a daily basis.

Upon my conversion I was flooded with so many graces over the months and grew massively

in my faith in America. I took the plunge and began praying the Rosary every day, going to daily Mass and within each day that has passed, I was blooming in my Faith journey. I was blessed to make friends with the most incredible people who were strongly rooted in their Faith and lifted me up each day that I spent there. They not only brought me closer to God but were able to answer any of my questions and concerns related to the ultimate truth and explanation of the Church and her teachings.

When it was time for me to leave America and go back to Ireland for my final year of college. I was devastated, scared and I felt alone. I didn't want to experience once more the godless and leftist agenda that dominates college

grounds and be without a strong, Catholic community and people who would support me upon my faith journey.

But of course, my return has been quite the opposite of what I have thought it would be. I'm in my fourth and final year of college and I had no idea what beautiful friends and community I could make here in NUI Galway. I was greeted with open arms and understanding. Each of the people that I have met and shared my story with have rejoiced upon my conversion and welcomed me back home- back to my Faith.

I became a part of an amazing community where I can continue to grow in my faith on daily basis, with people who understand, listen and are rooted strongly in

their Faith. I can see the Catholic society here in NUI Galway flourishing with every event, nourishing each of our souls, bringing us closer to God.

We have been so blessed to eat, cook and share a meal together each Wednesday and afterwards attend a Youth 2000 prayer meeting which is lead with beautiful music, prayers and adoration. Wednesday evenings are the moments where time stops, and we become a supportive community to one another with God being at the centre of our friendships.

We are filled with graces during philosophy talks with one of the very charismatic priests, Fr Brendan Kilkoynne. His extensive knowledge seems to be limitless,

strongly appealing to the youth with more people coming in with every talk. The talks broaden our knowledge on God and the Church, sparking up beautiful debates and conversations.

We also have 'YouCat' meetings every week (personally, my favourite), where we learn about the catechism and deepen our knowledge. They have made a massive impact on my understanding but also made me fall in love with my Faith and realising the true goodness and beauty of it.

The events organised by the Catholic Society not only aspire to broaden our knowledge but also encourage very fruitful debates. Being able to freely express yourself has been truly liberating. I do not feel I have to be on guard with my political views and it's a place where I can extend my knowledge and ask questions without judgement. Those events bring us closer to God and deepen our Faith within a very caring, supportive and understanding community.

The classes organised by the Catholic society and the community that it created grows each week, have been an incredible blessing in my life. On a campus that has been so heavily indoctrinated and where we cannot even hang pro-life posters without the fear of them being torn down, I truly feel that this community has given me the strength and the courage to walk and pray with a Rosary in my hand on college campus, every day. Even though the times in Ireland seem to be dark, the genuine love for God in young people's hearts has given me hope and with Our Lord by our side, nothing seems impossible.



## Children's Corner

Colm Fitzpatrick

## Avoid the cold weather and make your own DIY snow

**S**now is like marmite; you either love it or hate it. However, most kids probably fall into the former category.

The opportunity to throw snowballs, make a snowman and sledge down a hill is one that few children would voluntarily miss. Playing in the snow is a wonderful chance for family bonding and is an activity that everyone can get involved in. However, there are downsides to it:

- It doesn't always snow and so children can get disappointed that Santa hasn't brought his North Pole weather.
- Icy weather is very dangerous and

children can easily fall and hurt themselves. A contentious parent might fear this happening.

- Some children hate cold weather. No matter how well they're wrapped in gloves and hats, freezing temperatures can be hard to bear. Given that there are some cons to snow, it might be much easier and practical for families to make their own version at home. All you need is baking soda and shaving foam. Pour the box of baking soda into a large bowl and then knead the shaving foam into it. Continue mixing while adding more until the consistency feels right. It shouldn't take very long to do and you can even get



your kids to help to make the activity more fun.

Try not to get tempted into spraying the shaving foam on each other; otherwise you'll soon have a very messy house!

The snow should feel light and powdery and should leave very little residue on your hands. If it's not working, try adding a few drops of water.

The snow should feel cold, although not quite as low a temperature as the real stuff that falls outside. This means your kids will be able to handle it freely without their fingers going numb.

Playing with the powder is very therapeutic and children will be mesmerised by the texture. If they have figurines or dolls, they can create a fantasy story in an icy land, and you can encourage them to tell the tale out loud. The ideas are limited only by your imagination.

The cool powder is cheap, fun to play with and once you're finished with it, it's easy to clean up. There's no need to face the freezing temperatures with this clever alternative, and you'll feel more at ease knowing that there's no danger for your tiny ones.

# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Christmas specials expose the human heart

At Christmas there's usually great stuff on TV and radio, much of it repeats, but with seasonal and family activities it can be hard to make time for more than a select few.

Last Sunday morning's **Life and Soul** (RTÉ1) was the fourth episode in this occasional series and it continues to be an excellent show.

It's a mix of different items and this time there were strong themes of gratitude and hope with a sporting flavour as well – first up was Áine O'Neill's interview with world champion boxer Katie Taylor who was more forthcoming about her Christian faith than I've heard before.

I have reservations about boxing, but Taylor believes this path is the one God intends for her. She was impressed by "what God can do with obedient and humble heart" and thought it was important to have "a grateful heart".

She became quite emotional when speaking of family difficulties, though with God's help the worst of this is past – she said they were in "a good spot now". She was grateful to have grown up in a Christian household and felt her faith kept her grounded.

Also sporting and also a woman of Faith was Elena Tice of the Olympic-bound Irish hockey team. She also had grown up in a Christian



Katie Taylor featured in RTÉ1's *Life and Soul* over the Christmas period.

family, went through a time when she wasn't fully committed, but now didn't want to live her life without her Christian Faith. She found support among others in the team, which was important to her.

### Declaration

Hotelier and media presenter Francis Brennan gave the most upfront declaration of Catholic Faith I've heard in a long time, on or off the media.

He had grown up in a standard Catholic family, but had kept the faith, loves going to Mass, prays every day and

regards it as important to be a good employer. He advised young people to consider going to Mass and saying "the odd prayer".

I agreed with his idea that it was important to keep the Faith "alive and interesting" and his segment ended with him reciting a prayer.

Most touching of all was the item on the L'Arche Community in Cork. The Catholic beginnings of L'Arche led by the late Jean Vanier were outlined, as was the commitment of the community to the dignity of people, especially those with intellectual dis-

abilities. There was wonderful warmth with the residents and presenter Dermot Flynn seemed at ease and at home with them.

The music was fine as usual, with contemporary Christian music from Jason Upton and Benjamin Hastings with the seasonal 'A Night Full of Promise' from a choir of young people at St Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork.

**Carols from Kilkenny Castle** (RTÉ1, Christmas Eve) was a laid-back and cosy musical event presented by Mary Kennedy. It wasn't particularly fresh or innovative, but I did like Róisín O's rendition of Joni Mitchell's 'River', and Claudia Boyle's wonderful 'O Holy Night'. I wasn't so sure about Jack L's 'Silent Night' but Hudson Taylor's 'How I Know it's Christmas' had a certain quirky charm.

### The Leap of Faith on



Guy Pearce was Ebenezer Scrooge in BBC1's *A Christmas Carol*.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### LIFE & SOUL CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

RTÉ1, Saturday, January 4, 1.20pm

Repeat of the show featured in this week's review, including Francis Brennan, Katie Taylor, Elena Tice and L'Arche in Cork.

#### SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

EWTN, Monday, January 6, 9am

Mass of the Epiphany with Pope Francis from St. Peter's Basilica.

#### ARENA: AMERICAN EPIC, BLOOD AND SOIL

BBC4, Thursday (night), January 9, 1.20am

Exploring gospel music, the songs of the coal mines and the Mississippi Delta blues.

Christmas morning (RTÉ Radio 1) was another genial and relaxed affair. I liked the way they made Dickens' *Christmas Carol* a recurring thread as the guests reflected on Christmases past present and future.

Fr Bryan Shortall remembered when he was growing up and money wasn't plentiful. Scott Evans, Church of Ireland chaplain at UCD talked about the stresses of modern day students and how homelessness was a greater problem than before among the student community.

Author Christine Dwyer Hickey thought we went over the top with Christmas excess and remembered a more low key approach when she was in Italy. Dr Aileen Murtagh, child and adolescent psychiatrist was on hand to comment of wellness and mental health issues that could surround the seasonal pressures while

Blanaid Murphy introduced the Continuum Choir – a new venture for graduates from the Palestrina Choir and St Mary's Girls' Choir based in the Pro-Cathedral. They contributed some traditional choral carols.

### Dickens

As regards Dickens, I tried out a new three-part adaption of **A Christmas Carol** (BBC1) broadcast in the days leading up to Christmas. When Scrooge started using the 'f'-word I knew I was in the wrong shop – time to bail out. Pardon the mixed metaphor. Anyway, life and Christmas are too short and valuable to waste on travesties like this. Is nothing sacred?

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Pat O'Kelly

# Music

## Music world will long remember Mawby and Cleobury

A happy and celebratory New Year as we remember Beethoven's 250th anniversary. Born in Bonn in December 1770, he was the second son of court musician Johann and his wife Maria Magdalena.

Somewhat harsh and severe, Johann was Ludwig's first teacher. The composer's mother was a quiet and serious person and Beethoven was very fond of her. He spoke affectionately about her: "She was a good mother to me and indeed my best friend."

I hope to return to Beethoven as the year progresses but now I want to mention two highly-respected choral conductors who died within a few days of each other in November. Colin Mawby and Stephen Cleobury were Eng-



The late Colin Mawby.

lish and while the latter spent his life in his native country, Colin Mawby worked and lived in Ireland for nearly 40 years. His funeral Mass took

place in Dublin's Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church on November 30.

Born in Portsmouth in 1936, Colin Mawby was educated at Westminster Cathedral's choir school. From the age of 12 he acted as assistant to the master of music, George Malcolm. In 1961, Mawby assumed the master's role having also studied at London's Royal College of Music. While still holding his cathedral position, Mawby conducted the Belgian Radio Choir and BBC Singers.

Leaving Westminster in 1978, Mawby came to RTÉ being appointed its choral director in 1983. Under the guidance of head of music John Kinsella, he revitalised the music department's cho-

ral section, establishing its Philharmonic Choir, Chamber Choir and Cór na nÓg.

Following his retirement from RTÉ, Colin Mawby became artistic director of the National Chamber Choir (now Chamber Choir Ireland) and vacating that position was appointed the ensemble's artistic director emeritus.

### Services

A prolific composer with worldwide performances, Mawby wrote over 50 Masses, five song cycles and a plethora of other religious and secular choral settings. In recognition of his services to church music, Pope Benedict XVI awarded him a Knighthood of St Gregory in 2004.

Commenting on Mawby's

work, Evonne Ferguson of the Contemporary Music Centre said: "His beautifully crafted music for the human voice never ceased to inspire through the many decades of his career as a successful composer and conductor. Colin will be sadly missed by the music community in Ireland."

Twelve years Mawby's junior, Stephen Cleobury received most of his music education at Worcester Cathedral under the eminent Douglas Guest. He later became organ scholar at St John's College, Cambridge.

In 1974, Cleobury was appointed sub-organist at Westminster Abbey later becoming, like Colin Mawby, master of music at West-

minster Cathedral – the first Anglican to hold that position. He remained at the Cathedral until 1979 and three years later returned to Cambridge but to King's College and its internationally famous choir.

### Globe

Renowned for the standard of its music making, King's annual Christmas celebration of Nine Lessons and Carols is broadcast and televised across the globe.

Cleobury extended the choir's repertoire to include a broad spectrum of contemporary works. Diagnosed with cancer, he directed his last *Evensong* in July 2019. May the souls of Stephen Cleobury and Colin Mawby rest in peace.



## Exploring Kierkegaard's faith and feelings



Søren Kierkegaard.

### Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard

by Clare Carlisle  
(Allen Lane, £25.00)

Patrick Claffey

**T**his exploration of the tortured mind and faith of Kierkegaard is a challenging title with which to begin a fresh year of reading.

Clare Carlisle opens her preface to this book on the philosopher with a reference to what was surely one of the three most important relationships of Kierkegaard's life, with his fiancée Regine Olsen. The others having been with his father and with God.

Following the painful breakup of what was to be his only love affair, Søren wrote: 'A love affair is always an instructive theme regarding what it means to exist.' The chill distance of this remark belies the fact that he remained obsessed with Regine, whom he had loved from her childhood, but abandoned less than a year after their engagement, for the rest of his life.

**“She tells us that Kierkegaard ‘always found Christianity disturbing as well as inviting’, and he certainly despised any attempts to soft-peddle it in any way, particularly in the established Lutheran Church”**

The focus of Kierkegaard's thought was 'what it means to exist'. He would argue that he broke with Regine to devote his life fully to God and to the pursuit his 'authorship'. To a less sympathetic reader, it might appear that there was not enough place in his life for Regine and his own 'greatness'.

Søren came from a humble and devout family rooted in Moravian pietism. While close to his mother, a sim-

ple and illiterate housewife, his father was certainly the dominant influence in his life. Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard escaped the poverty of remote Jutland to amass a significant fortune and social standing in Copenhagen, which eventually allowed his son to give himself full time to his 'authorship', while he lived in modest but secure Lutheran comfort.

In the pietist tradition, Michael Pedersen aspired "to a holy life that follows the example of Christ [seeking] to imitate Jesus deep, inward faith in God, and his pure-hearted obedience, humility and poverty".

He passed this on to his family. There was, however, a deep shadow from the past which profoundly marked his relationship with Søren,

although we never find out what it was, and Carlisle does not engage in psychological speculation.

### Disturbing

She tells us that Kierkegaard 'always found Christianity disturbing as well as inviting', and he certainly despised any attempts to soft-peddle it in any way, particularly in the established Lutheran Church.

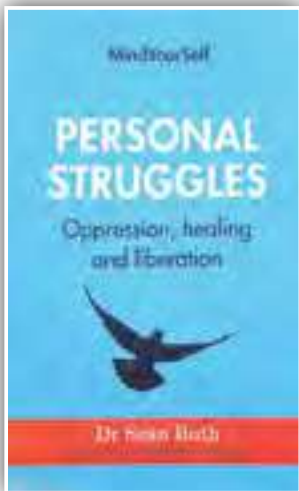
He is, rather, "drawn to a truth that lies at two opposite extremes at once, – and the truth of human experience is often like this".

As his biographer puts it, "he sees in the example of Jesus the dual extremities of human existence that [...] constitute his own deepest truth".

While Carlisle admits to being sometimes irritated by



'Wanderer Above the Clouds' by Caspar Friedrich David.



## Make yourself a free person

**Personal Struggle: Oppression, healing and liberation**  
by Dr Seán Ruth  
(Atrium / Cork University Press, €14.95)

Peter Costello

The title may, for some, carry echoes of the 1970s. But in a sense the problems indentified then by theologians and social activists have not gone away.

They have got worse in many respects (especially in Latin American). Worse the symptoms of oppression have moved to the more advanced economies where the homeless, the low paid, women, young people, and migrants continue to suffer.

They have entered also in the wider fabric of society, witness the treatment of many people in employment and dependent situations.

Here, however, Dr Seán Ruth suggests that a way forward can be found in leadership strategies applied not to society as whole, but to one's self. The idea is to lead yourself to true freedom.

### Destiny

Though aspects of this book imply a professional readership, it is in fact written for an independent general readership. The advice to take control of one's own destiny is always timely – not always easy to do, of course, when aspects of society, even in a Christian setting aim at control and the exercise of power over individuals.

Lead yourself to freedom: that could be good intention for the New Year for nearly all of us.

This book appears in the 'Mind Your Self' series, edited for Atrium by Dr Marie Murray.

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.



Regine Olsen.

Kierkegaard, mostly, I imagine, his somewhat adolescent self-absorption, she tells us that his 'romantic crisis yielded insights into human freedom and identity that earned him an enduring reputation as "the father of existentialism".'

### Focus

His focus ever remained 'rooted in the inward drama of being human' and in this, she argues, he was inspirational in his willingness to bear witness to the human condition.'

The stuff of his philosophy was love, suffering, humour and anxiety, despair and courage.

It is therefore hardly surprising that his persona, if not perhaps so much his work, continues to fascinate readers.

Carlisle sets out to write what her editor described as "a Kierkegaardian biography of Kierkegaard", and this no doubt explains some of the peculiarities of the book.

She eschews a chronological approach in favour of chapters that are thematic.

Much of the text is written in the present tense. These are challenges for the reader, but not insurmountable ones, in what is a very fine book.

**“The stuff of his philosophy was love, suffering, humour and anxiety, despair and courage. It is therefore hardly surprising that his persona, if not perhaps so much his work, continues to fascinate readers”**

## Mainly About Books

By the books editor

# Frederick II: Emperor, scientist and truly great visionary



Recently we reviewed Elizabeth Mac Donald's novel *A Matter of Interpretation* about Michael Scot and his lifelong interaction with the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1195-1250), the Norman who ruled Sicily and Southern Italy, and was one of the leading figures in the political and cultural power struggles between the Papacy and the rising nation states of Europe.

At the launch in Dublin I discussed with the author her presentation of the Emperor who was very effective in his role as a man and a leader, especially in his conflicts with the Pope. Yet this it seemed to me was only a partial image of a great man.

Nor indeed does David Abulafia in his recent biography give a fully rounded picture of the Emperor. He plays down and makes light of the importance of Arab culture at the Emperor's court in Sicily. This too was not my view of the man.

What both the novelist and the historian in their strong treatments of the Emperor neglected to make clear was that Frederick was also a true man of science, his investigations being centuries ahead of his time.

### Modern sense

In his spare time – though what spare time a medieval ruler could have had in the modern sense is

hard to imagine – he loved hunting, particularly falconry. Over many years he carefully studied the birds that were maintained in his mews. Eventually he wrote and had illustrated an epochal work, *The Art of Hunting with Birds*.

**“Whatever about a research expedition to Ireland, this is a good example of the detailed investigating work from his own observation or those of his agents that went into Frederick's great book”**

This book was first written in Latin about 1241, and was first published in two volumes by his son Manfred. The illustrated original is in the Vatican. Next it was published in French in 1300 in six volumes.

This six-volume version was translated into English and combined into one book in 1931 by Dr Casey Albert Wood and F. Marjorie Fyfe. Dr Wood's interest arose from his researches as an ophthalmologist specializing in the eyes of birds.

The Emperor, however, was a part of the Norman diaspora across Europe, from Ireland to the shores of the Ottoman Empire. *The Art*

*of Hunting with Birds* reveals an interesting Irish connection.

One of the topics discussed by Frederick is the legend of the origins of the Barnacle Goose. In the 1180s, Gerald de Barri's account of Ireland (which he wrote from the observations he made while living at the time of the Norman invasion) introduced to the world the idea that some kinds of geese were not hatched from eggs, but were generated from a plant found along the western shores. Some species of geese never nested in Ireland, and the legend arose that they actually developed from the feathery integuments of the creature found inside barnacles shells.

I have given an account of this legend in my book *The Magic Zoo* (1979), on the natural history of imaginary animals.

Gerald read his account of Ireland at Oxford in 1187 and in a few years manuscripts of it were circulating all over Europe, especially in Norman kingdoms.

Frederick discusses the legend, but was sceptical about it. He tells us that he sent his own agents to the north to investigate on the spot. I once imagined that this meant that some of Sicilians were dispatched to the wild and distant shores of Mayo. But, 'on more mature consideration', I suspect that Gerald saw the phenomena he describes in the slob

lands of Wexford, a well-known haunt of myriads of geese to this day.

Whatever about a research expedition to Ireland, this is a good example of the detailed investigating work from his own observation or those of his agents that went into Frederick's great book.

**“I discussed with the author her presentation of the Emperor who was very effective in his role as a man and a leader, especially in his conflicts with the Pope”**

But this way of proceeding was quite contrary to medieval academic minds which, influenced by the idea of classical and scriptural authority, sought to support their views from ancient texts. This was not for Frederick.

He observed and thought for himself. In this he is one of the earliest examples of a revival of the sort of thing we find almost uniquely in the biological writings of Aristotle, which didn't revive again until the 17th Century and the emergence of the modern scientist.

# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)



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**Come for Tea and a Tour**, in private while Riverbank is closed for a couple of hours. See confidentially how Merchants Quay Ireland uses donations and legacies to bring relief and hope. All welcome, bring a guest if you wish.

Ring Emma Murphy at 01-5240965 to be included on the guest list for the January 9th Tour.

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## Classified ads

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# Leisure time

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



Everything Family & Life does to save babies and strengthen the family relies on you and our other generous friends. This work has never been more needed.

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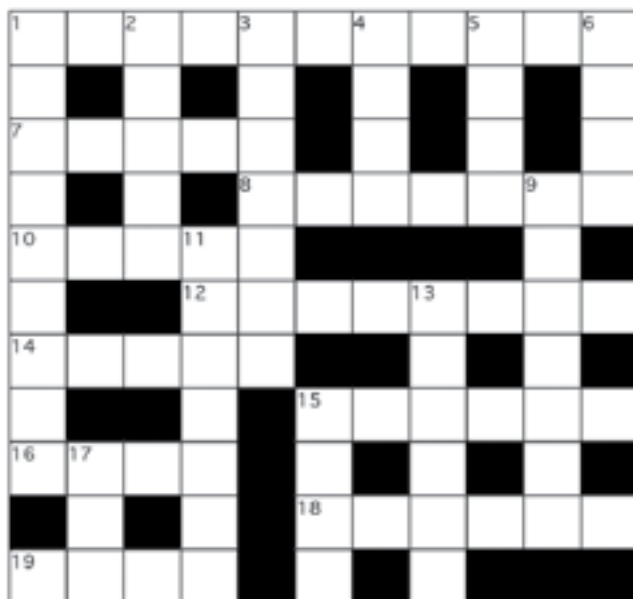
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It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

### Crossword Junior

Gordius 313



#### ACROSS

- Someone who is very, very rich. (11)
- Controlled a car. (5)
- Mind a child for someone. (7)
- The bride walks up this part of the church. (5)
- Part of the airport where you meet people who have just flown in. (8)
- An object. (5)
- A farmer uses it to break up the soil in a field. (6)
- Competition of speed. (4)
- Quite cold. (6)
- Your blood flows through this. (4)

#### DOWN

- He had a tea party in Wonderland. (3,6)
- These big cats live in a pride. (5)
- The Titanic sank when it hit one. (7)
- Unable to feel. (4)
- Little devils. (4)
- Sign over the way out. (4)
- Against the law. (7)
- Old lamp. (7)
- This musical instrument is sometimes called a fiddle. (6)
- Put clothes into a suitcase. (4)
- A gorilla, perhaps. (3)

### SOLUTIONS, DECEMBER 12

#### GORDIUS No. 433

Across – 1 Saw 3 Solway Firth 8 French fries 9 Losing My Religion 10 Rates 11 Sheet 13 Adam's rib 15 Garland 16 Medical 20 Stork 21 Depot 23 Lotto 25 Carrot 26 Bookshelves 27 Duo

Down – 1 So far, so good 2 Wrestler 3 Socks 4 Wolfram 6 Regret 7 Hay 12 Table for two 13 Aunts 14 Steak 17 Cantered 18 Colonel 19 Apollo 22 Tagus 23 Leaps

#### CHILDREN'S No. 312

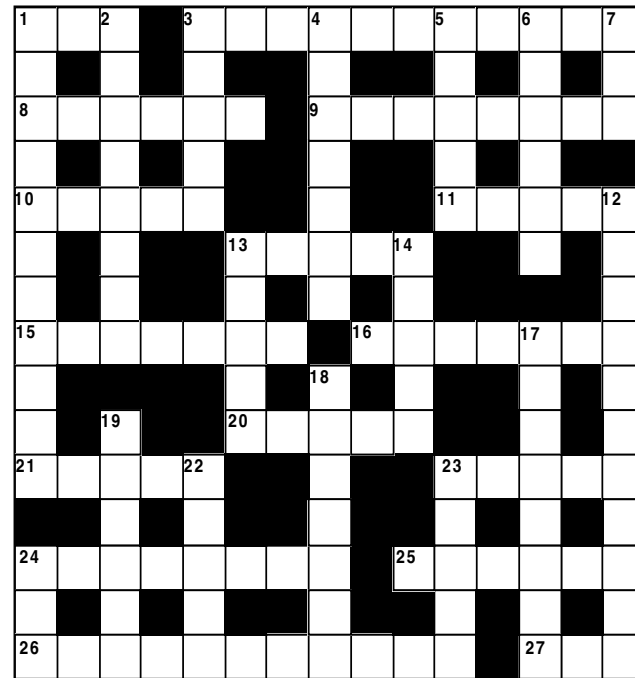
Across – 1. Soother 7. Ocean 8. Ovens 9. Keeps 11. Alone 12. Hat 13. Total 15. Ivy 16. Two 18. Bag 20. Natural 22. Ass 23. Hospital

Down – 1. Snow White 2. Operations 3. History 4. Rockets 5. Here 6. Ends 10. Pea 14. Tablet 17. Cubs 19. Girl 21. Ash

These solutions were first published in The Irish Catholic edition of December 19, 2019 and are repeated here for your convenience.

### Crossword

Gordius 436



#### ACROSS

- Adult males (3)
- Make an error in needlework, on seeing the hit postcard being circulated (4,1,6)
- How the vocalist evaded becoming a crucial witness in the process of canonisation (6,8)
- I murder a Hebridean island (5)
- Musical composition for nine players (5)
- Sag (5)
- 15 & 16 Minor injuries - such as contusions caused by incised beach material? (4,3,7)
- A period of time in Beaumont Hospital (5)
- Soil (5)
- One's pal has no right to be such an infernal character (5)
- Unwanted post - for a Chinese ship? (4,4)
- Japan's largest island (6)
- An environmentally-conscious goalie is a must at the golf club (11)
- Rank in Judo (3)

#### DOWN

- In the arcade, I make up a tasty treat (7,4)
- Writer of fiction (8)
- Hold-up, time-lag (5)
- Ghost - of the opera? (7)
- Pointed part of certain plants (5)
- Coaches? Locomotives? (6)
- Garden implement (3)
- Spin a coin and veer into sleepless movement (4,3,4)
- Material used in making jeans (5)
- Whether in Scotland or Australia, this city is both saucy and hot! (5)
- Emphasised (8)
- Eluding the potential to treat oneself (7)
- Canter about in a mindless state (6)
- A person, not an animal (5)
- Storey (5)
- Run to keep fit (3)

## Sudoku Corner

313

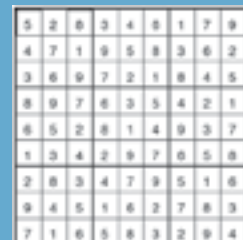
Easy



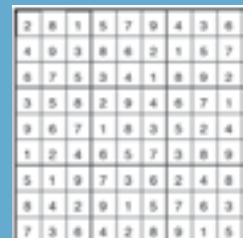
Hard

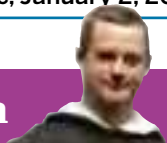


### Last week's Easy 312



### Last week's Hard 312





Fr. Conor McDonough

Notebook

# Committing once again to their own personal adventure

**THE NEW YEAR** brings with it a barrage of holiday offers. Travel agents and airlines know that the depths of winter create in us a desire for the delights of summer, and they know how to capitalise on that desire: leave behind the clouds, the rain, the gloom and head for the sunshine!

For me, the idea of a sun holiday holds no excitement but there's something universally appealing, I think, in the idea of exploring a new place, new tastes, a new perspective. It's not always a matter of mere escapism. We've all experienced the spiritual difference that a holiday can make. Someone might be in a bit of a rut at home, head away for a few days, and come back ready to face their challenges with renewed energy.

T.S. Eliot put it well in his stunning long poem, 'Little Gidding': "We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time".

### Bookshops

As a booklover, reading travel literature has almost the very same effect. And there must be lots like me, because the travel writing



sections of our local bookshops are overflowing with new publications, as well as reprints of classics of the genre. To read Patrick Leigh Fermor is to be with him, on the same road, wandering through 1930s Europe, ready for adventure.

To read William Dalrymple is to be in old Delhi with eyes wide open. To read a compilation like *The Oxford Book of Exploration*, as I am doing now, is to be at frontiers everywhere, from Arctic wastes to African jungles. I open these books out of curiosity, but by the time I'm finished them, I'm

usually readier to live out my own adventures as a Dominican friar in Dublin 1.

It seems earlier generations of friars understood this secret too, because they played a key role in the production of early travelogues.

The 14th-Century Italian Franciscan, Oderic of Pordenone, accompanied by James of Ireland, travelled as far as China. The account he wrote of his travels, including detailed descriptions of Sumatra, became wildly popular.

### Prison

Around the same time, a Dominican friar, Jordan of Severac, was writing a description of the people, customs, and landscapes of India, where he had been made bishop. And we have, too, the travel diary of two Irish Franciscans – Simon and Hugh – whose journey in 1323 from Clonmel to the Holy Land included an unwelcome delay in a Cairo prison.

Even the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, according to recent research, seems to have worked closely with Dominican friars in compiling and publishing the story of his travels in the East.

Friars didn't just produce these works, they copied them, translated them, and used them in their preaching. We can see this in medieval Ireland: the Limerick Dominicans had in their library an account of travels among the Mongols; the Franciscans in Timoleague, Co. Cork had an Irish translation of Marco Polo's travels; and the Franciscans in Kilcrea, Co. Cork had an Irish version of the semi-fictional travels of Sir John Mandeville.

We could put all this down to mere curiosity, but I think there's a spiritual point to it too. Preaching friars had one major task: to help all their listeners on the personal journey to heaven. Think of a friar preaching in, say, Sligo in the Middle Ages. His hearers might never have left their parish, but if he could tell them a good story about adventures in Mongolia or India, it might spark in them the desire to commit once again to their own personal adventure, to step out bravely on the road to the heavenly kingdom, whose wonders "eye has not seen nor ear heard" (1 Cor 2:9).

At the start of a New Year, the same road stretches out before us too. Ar aghaidh linn!

### This Boots was made for walking

How did friars get about in the Middle Ages? Well, unless they had special permission to ride horses, they were meant to walk, just like Jesus did, just like the apostles did.

The great 13th-Century Dominican scientist and theologian, Albert the Great, was so dedicated to this aspect of evangelical poverty he was given the nickname 'Bishop Boots'.

At one gathering of friars, he waited on the road to surprise the brothers arriving on horses and carriages...if you've got a step counter for Christmas and need a bit of courage to stick to your New Year's resolution to get walking, ask for the intercession of Bishop Boots!



## Could you help to save a poor helpless child?

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

### Your New Year's gift will mean a chance of health and happiness for a deprived child

As 2020 begins, please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children. You can use the coupon below or give online at [tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations) quoting "children" in the message field.

**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.**



"Jesus wills that we give alms to Him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

- St Therese

**We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year.**

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain many graces for all our benefactors during 2020

In our modern age of materialism and selfishness when so many are searching for an authentic spirituality, Therese's little way of simple love for God and others has a powerful appeal. Perhaps we too can join her on the 'little way'.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

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