

# The Irish Catholic

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## 'Do they want the Church to run the country for them' – Bro. Kevin

### Homeless campaigners question why State won't build on existing land

Chai Brady

Leading homelessness campaigners have questioned why the Government is turning to the Church asking for land for housing when the State is sitting on vast swathes of available land.

Insisting that the Church and faith-inspired agencies should and will continue to play their part in helping tackle the housing crisis, Capuchin Bro. Kevin Crowley asked: "what do they want us to do? Do they want the Church to run the country for them?" he told *The Irish Catholic*.

It comes as the Government leaked a letter Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien wrote to Archbishop Eamon Martin asking the Church to identify vacant land and buildings that could be used to build housing.

As this newspaper went to press this week, the letter had not yet been received by the Archbishop of Armagh despite the minister's claim that he sent it days before the contents were leaked to the press.

Bro. Kevin, director of the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin, said he feels his own congregation is doing all it can to assist the homeless and people in need.

"The Church is doing a lot. As far as I'm concerned, we as Capuchins, we are doing sufficient for the homeless and the people in need," he said. "What do they want us to do? Do they want the Church to run the country for them?"

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### Driven to love...



Barry O'Brien and Emma Rynhart who celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage in Holy Cross Church, Dundrum, Dublin recently. Thankfully, the rain stopped as Emma arrived and the couple left the church in their 1977 restored Volkswagen camper van.

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**Youth deserve more from sex education**

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**More maths achievers may mean fewer babies** PAGE 5



**FIGHTING LEPROSY**

**Charity aims to abolish deadly disease**

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## THE JOURNEY

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# The Government can't have it both ways on the separation of Church and State

**C**hristianity basically invented the idea of what we now call separation of Church and State. Taking up Christ's words "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's", the idea of an appropriate separation emerged as healthy for both Church and State.

A mature understanding of the separation of Church and State does not prevent tension – nor does it prevent the Church criticising the State or vice versa nor each acting within the legitimate sphere. Take, for example, when the Church appeared unwilling or unable to face the scourge of clerical sexual abuse. The State ordered public inquiries and effectively forced much more stringent oversight of the Church.

Likewise, the Church has a right – and indeed a responsibility – to stand up to the State for the poor and the powerless. This is why Church representatives are constantly (and correctly) speaking up for concrete action on climate change, the right for a family to earn a decent living and have a place to call home, the right of the unborn to be born and the right for people living with a disability not to be euthanised.

### Bipolar

Irish politics has long had an almost bipolar approach to the separation of Church and State. In his speech to Pope Francis three years ago in Dublin Castle, the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar thanked the Pontiff for the Church's huge contribution to building up the Irish State. His subsequent comments could be summed up simply with the phrase: we'll take it from here. Mr Varadkar then proposed the idea of a covenant between Church and State to deal with contentious issues.



## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Pope Francis seated next to then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in Dublin Castle during the Pontiff's 2018 visit. Photo: CNS

One such contentious issues which has caused no end of hyperventilating from politicians in the last couple of years is the issue of the proposed new national maternity hospital and the role, if any, of the Religious Sisters of Charity in owning the land.

**“The Church will, of course, continue to do so and it must also continue speaking out when the State is failing citizens”**

From the Taoiseach Micheál Martin down, politicians have been solemnly proclaiming that the era of Church involvement in healthcare must be at an end. The Church taking responsibility for what should be the State's job, we are constantly told, is of a different era.

Imagine my surprise then, to see that the Republic's Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien has written

to Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin asking if the Church could provide land to build public housing in a bid to alleviate the very housing crisis that the present coalition came to power promising to fix.

So, is the current Government thinking that that the Catholic influence should move from healthcare to housing? I doubt it. It seems more likely that Government advisers are increasingly annoyed that senior Church people are becoming more and more vocal about the housing crisis and the devastating effects on families and individuals.

### Hopeful

Mr O'Brien said he was hopeful the Church would provide land for the State to build homes in the future - thankfully he also acknowledged that it is, in fact, the responsibility of the State to provide housing.

The intervention is all the more curious when one considers that the State is not exactly short of access to taxpayer-owned land. A 2019 investigation found that local authorities were 'sitting' on land that could provide 114,000 dwellings across the State.

There is also the fact that it's not exactly as if the Church and religious congregations are not already doing some serious heavy lifting. Whether it is Focus Ireland founded by Sr Stanislaus Kennedy RSC, the Fr Peter McVerry Trust or Sophia Housing, faith-inspired organisations have been to the fore. Religious congregations have also gifted valuable land to provide housing for members of the travelling community and worked closely with

local authorities to make land available for housing where this will enhance the dignity of vulnerable people.

### Continue

The Church will, of course, continue to do so and it must also continue speaking out when the State is failing citizens. Social housing is only one part of the jigsaw: vast swathes of people earning what would be considered a decent salary are also effectively locked out because there is a lack of affordable or cost-rental property.

**“There is also the fact that it's not exactly as if the Church and religious congregations are not already doing some serious heavy lifting”**

Let's hope the minister's intervention is not a stunt and that officials in his department will now identify lands it wishes to purchase and should then offer the Church the fair market value for those properties.

The State cannot have it both ways. The Church should be open to a collaborative relationship with the State, but the State should not be allowed merely to benefit from this when it suits.

It's also time for a serious discussion about that covenant.

**i** To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

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# Haiti needs urgent attention after ‘devastating’ earthquake, says Concern aid worker

**Ruadhán Jones**

The people of the Caribbean nation are barely hanging on, having suffered “one thing after the next” in the last decade, said a Haiti-based aid worker.

Makayla Palazzo, an aid-worker for Concern US, told *The Irish Catholic* that the people are in “shock and disbelief” after the 7.2 magnitude earthquake, which killed over 2,200 people, left 12,000 injured and over 650,000 people in need of humanitarian aid.

“It has had an absolutely devastating effect,” Ms Palazzo said. “Something that’s been really difficult, is that it’s been one thing after the next for the last decade. You begin to wonder how they are hanging on.”

The country needs aid “urgently”, she continued, saying Haiti was already struggling to recover from previous disasters.

Ms Palazzo listed off a string of disasters which have struck the country, beginning with the 2010 earthquake that killed over 200,000 people.

“People are still living in tents from that,” she continued.

“Then in 2016, there was hurricane Matthew, people are still recovering from that. In 2019, the country was shut down due to gang violence.”

The pandemic had already left the country “reeling” economically, while gang violence is only increasing, Ms Palazzo added.

“A colleague said to me that the people are resilient, but at some point, you know, you’ve got to stop asking us to be resilient,” she said.

She urged people to support international and local aid organisations as they continue to provide humanitarian assistance on the ground.

Ms Palazzo explained that, while the death toll was not as high as in 2010, it is difficult to access the areas affected due to poor infrastructure and gangs.

“Roads on the way down were completely covered at several points, I went down three days after the earthquake, there were still debris and it took twice as long as normal,” she said.

“But we are still responding, providing normal humanitarian aid, giving people things for rebuilding and cash for what’s important.”



Relatives mourn during a funeral Mass for an earthquake victim near Les Cayes, Haiti, August 21. Photo: CNS

## Joy as Irish pilgrims make a triumphant return to Medjugorje

**Staff reporter**

Some 170 Irish pilgrims departed from Cork Airport yesterday (Wednesday) on board a specially-chartered plane organised by Marian Pilgrimages for Medjugorje.

It marks one of the first post-coronavirus organised pilgrimages to the Bosnian town where local children first reported apparitions of the Mother of God in 1981. It has been a popular destination with Irish pilgrims ever since.

Meanwhile, the first flight will depart to Lourdes tomorrow (Friday) with 100 pilgrims on board.

Flights from Cork, Shannon, Knock and Dublin will continue with Marian Pilgrimages to Lourdes and Medjugorje until the end of October.

Marian Pilgrimages – who specialise in Medjugorje, Lourdes and the Holy Land – has organised a series of direct flights to Mostar Medjugorje Airport which is the closest to the shrine. Pilgrims who travel will be able to participate in the full religious experience as well as visit the Hill of Apparitions and Cross Mountain.

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Medjugorje bound.

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# Lack of Irish exorcists causing Faithful to look for help abroad

Chai Brady

A renowned US exorcist has warned that as Christianity declines in the Western world the need for exorcists increases and that he has been receiving calls from people in Ireland who could not find assistance.

Licensed psychologist Msgr Stephen Rossetti, president and founder of the St Michael Centre for Spiritual Renewal in Washington DC, said Irish bishops “need to get together” and train priests in exorcism and deliverance ministry.

“I’ve got some calls from people from Ireland, I’ve prayed with people in Ireland over the phone because they couldn’t find an exorcist there, I think that’s a shame,” Msgr Rossetti told *The Irish Catholic*.

Msgr Rossetti said: “I think the Church needs to pay attention to this, when the Faithful come and they need help – people come from all different walks, whether Catholic, Protestant, Jews, Muslims whatever – if they come for help and we don’t help them then they are going to turn to other sorts of sources.

“They’re going to go to witch doctors, they are going to go to curanderos and people like that who are going to cut up the chickens, charge them 150 dollars and do some sort of magic ritual, making the problem worse so I think we have a pastoral obligation to receive these people in charity and do what we can.”

He adds that there has been an “explosion” in the number of people who have been practicing witchcraft who “don’t realise any form of magic whether you

intend it or not allies you with the dark side and when you’re asking for favours or powers from unknown spiritual sources it’s not God who is answering”.

A study undertaken last year by researchers from GRIS (Research and Socioreligious Information Group), Pontificio Regina Apostolorum and the Department of History, Cultures, Civilisations in the University of Bologna found that Ireland had nine exorcists.

This points to one-third of Ireland’s dioceses having an exorcist despite Vatican protocol stating all dioceses should have one.

Msgr Rossetti released a book ‘Diary of an American Exorcist’ on June 22 in which he gives an inside look at the experiences of working as an exorcist.

See pages 20-21.

# ‘I owe my career to Christian Brothers’ – Irish ambassador to US

Brandon Scott

Ireland’s ambassador to the US has opened up about the role of Catholic education in his formation and his gratitude to the “great men” who taught him in the Christian Brothers’ school in Waterford.

Ambassador Dan Mulhall was speaking at the Milwaukee Irish Festival addressing the question of the role of the Church in Irish society.

Mr Mulhall began by stating that he does not possess a thoroughly cynical view of the role of the Church’s influence in Ireland, “I’m not one of these people that has a negative perspective on the Irish Catholic Church, because I owe my present position to the fact I was educated very well by Christian Brothers in Waterford

back in the 1950s and sixties.

“Of course, it’s also true that some of the great men that taught me were let down by other members of their order because there were obviously some pretty bad pennies who did some terrible things and really brought the order into disrepute”, he added.

He said that Church failings have undermined the Church’s reputation on the island, thus producing subsequent generations of Irish people whom are “still probably religious but the sort of devotion that my parents had, my parents’ generation had, doesn’t seem to really be apparent in today’s Ireland”. He said the challenge for the Church lies in trying to “win back the confidence of the people”.

## Behind the scenes at RTE Mass



Fr Tom McDermott of Cobh Parish, Co. Cork, along with St Coleman’s Cathedral choir are pictured ‘behind the scenes’ at the Kairos Studios in Maynooth, Co. Kildare, before celebrating Mass on RTÉ, August 29.

# US marine chaplain safely leaves Afghanistan amid increased instability

Staff reporter

Fr Daniel Swartz, chaplain to the US Marines, has safely left Afghanistan amid increasing Taliban control in the state following a period in which he provided pastoral services to Catholic Marines deployed in the country.

Fr Swartz’s departure coincides with the US’ formal withdrawal of all troops from the country and the evacuation of Afghanistan’s only priest and nuns to Rome.

Operations to remove clergy from the region have intensified as Taliban-led forces begin to deliberate on the formation of a Sharia-backed government.

Head of the Jesuit Mission in Afghanistan, Fr Jerome Sequeira, previously expressed his concerns surrounding the logistics of evacuating so many from the area as he stated that, “all flights are cancelled and it all depends on the agreement between [the United Nations] bodies and the Taliban”.

# Homeless campaigners question why State won’t build on existing land

» Continued from Page 1

“We made our church available during the lockdown because we weren’t allowed to have people into the centre because of Covid-19. What we are doing is we are giving out takeaway food and dinners and they’re allowed to have these in the church.”

While primarily addressing hunger, the Capuchins also donated €5m in 2019 to housing charity the Peter McVerry Trust to fund the building of 25 homes.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Peter McVerry SJ welcomed the Government reaching out to the Church, saying the “enormous” housing crisis requires an “all hands on deck approach” but the “primary responsibility must lie with the State, and the State must start building”.

“I think the Church should be using everything at its disposal to alleviate the crisis. Having said that, the State has enough land to build more than 100,000 houses,” he said, and that any

Church land that can be disposed of should be used to supplement that.

“The State does have enough land, what it has been doing to date is selling that land to the private sector in return for 10% or 20% social housing. That is a waste of public land, it’s selling the family jewels, public land should be used for public housing and if the State commits to using public land only for public housing, then I think the Church should play its role,” Fr McVerry said.

Sr Stanislaus Kennedy RSC, who founded Focus Ireland, said anyone who has free land should make it available for housing, as Ireland faces “a huge crisis and we need all the land we can get to build on”.

“I would be encouraging the Church, if it has land it doesn’t use, if it has buildings it doesn’t use, make them available. They may not be able to afford to give them for free but I think the State would buy them,” Sr Stan said.

However, she added that “I think it [the State] should do a lot more itself, any land that it has available should be used for housing, it

may have the impression the Church has a lot of land, I don’t think it has...any land that is available - rather than selling it to developers - it should be made available for social and affordable housing”.

Sophia Housing, a charity which provides housing and homeless services, has already been working with a religious congregation who are using the land they own for housing.

CEO Tony O’Riordan welcomed dialogue between Church and State regarding housing, something the charity has already been doing with congregations including the Presentation Sisters, Sisters of Mercy, Franciscan Brothers, Sisters of Charity of St Paul the Apostle, and the Sisters of St John of God.

“From the Sophia side there’s an awful lot of positives to learn from in terms of the number of housing units that we’re bringing on board because of the support of religious congregations,” he said.

“There’s an awful lot to be learned from the imagination and courage of the religious con-

gregations in how they step forward to meet probably one of the most pressing social needs in Irish society,” he said.

A spokesman for Archbishop Martin said that “when received” the archbishop will “consider its content carefully and will, in consultation with his brother bishops, reflect on it during the Autumn General Meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference in October.

“The crisis of housing and homelessness is a key social justice challenge of this generation. Catholic social teaching recognises that housing is a universal human right, with corresponding responsibilities on societies to honour that right.

“Therefore, we must all work towards resolving this crisis in the interest of the common good. In recent years, the faith sector has been particularly vocal in calling for radical action from the State in order to alleviate the housing and homelessness problem,” he said pointing to the number of times the Church has called for action including pre-election statements and a pastoral letter in 2018.

# How more maths achievers may mean fewer babies...



## Mary Kenny

And so Irish fertility figures continue to fall: statistics just announced from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) disclose that there were more deaths than births in the first quarter of 2021.

### Pattern of decline

Births were down by 476, a fall of 3.3% from the first three months of 2020. This is all part of a continuing pattern of decline: in 2020, births had decreased by 3,837 for the whole year compared with the previous year of 2019, and in 2019 births were down on that previous year from 2018.

In 2021, one-third of births were outside of marriage. Last year, there were also 153 infant deaths, which is 2.7 live births. Back in the 1990s, Ireland had reached the enviable standard of zero deaths of new-borns.

In the first quarter of 2021, there were more deaths, overall, than births in Ireland, deaths having risen by ten per cent compared to the same period in 2020. The leading causes of death were cancer and circulatory illness. Covid-19 accounted for 19%.

Everyone has to depart this world, so death is a natural process, although

naturally none of us want to go before our time. But the decline in births is unlikely to be a natural process: it is evidently down to the control of fertility, one way or another. The average age for Irish mothers giving birth for the first time is just over 33, which indicates a planned deferral of parenthood.

This occurs for a number of reasons, including problems of housing - which is why the provision of homes is a family issue. Support for the family must mean support of housing for those hoping to have families.

Yet the American economist and Nobel laureate Gary Becker also suggested - somewhat uncomfortably, perhaps - that one of the reasons for the decline in fertility is an obsession with education.

### Examples

The East Asian nations are examples of this: they have extremely low fertility - Japan with 1.36 births per woman, China with 1.3 and South Korea with 0.84. Dr Becker's theory was that these nations put such a high value on education - extra tutoring for Japanese children means "cram schools" after regular school - that parents often reckon they can't afford more than one child.

The nations with the top



maths scores for youngsters - China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea - all have falling fertility. The European country with the top Maths score is Estonia - whose tiny population is falling, and whose birth rate is 1.07 per woman.

Education is great, but continually falling births means a stagnation from which no maths champion can rescue a nation.

## Bound by faith

Sir David Goodall's memoir *The Making of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985* reveals how Garret Fitzgerald charmed, coaxed and cajoled Margaret Thatcher into signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, although it really went against her own unionist instincts. Sir David, a senior British civil servant, was a huge influence in getting Maggie to the table (along with Lord

Armstrong, private secretary to the PM), a measure which led to a newly positive phase in British-Irish relations, and eventually the Good Friday Agreement.

David Goodall, who died in 2016 aged 84, has been much praised for his consistent dedication to this cause, though it is seldom mentioned that his Catholic Faith was a significant part of his work and the ethos of

integrity he brought to his public service. His paternal grandparents were from Wexford and he had a life-long interest in Irish genealogy. He was educated by the Benedictines at Ampleforth.

Although he retained a civil servant's discretion in politics, he was certainly pro-life: I once heard him speak on the issue with sincere commitment.

● Discussion about face-masks for children continues, but another coronavirus-based theme for the autumn will surely be ventilation. The boffins have been saying for months that fresh air and ventilation are crucial to halting the virus - maybe more vital than hand-washing, and space-observing (the theory that the virus is transmitted on surfaces has fallen out of favour).

So ventilation - which disperses the virus particles - will be the autumnal emphasis. As the winter approaches, we may have to endure open windows in any enclosed space, be it public transport, café, pub or church. This is all to the good, and those of us who attended convent school back in the tough old days will, hopefully, be able to call on those inner resources of facing the bracing draughts bravely and 'offering it up'.

Modern life has probably become too mollycoddling, what with stuffy central heating and unhealthy air conditioning. A blast of cold, fresh air will deter the virus, keep our brains alert - and, as Reverend Mother would remind schoolgirls of old - build character and 'backbone' as well!

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During the lockdown in 2020, the members of the New Springtime Community began to see that there was a silver lining to the dark cloud of difficulty. We discovered that if we used modern means of communication such as Zoom, we could realise our dream of establishing an online school of evangelisation. We felt that we could fulfil our desire of reaching people all over Ireland and even further afield in a way that would not have been possible in the past.

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# One-off houses and village schemes can facilitate each other, says campaigning cleric

**Ruadhán Jones**

As Fine Gael and the Green Party are locked in disagreement over rural housing policy, Fr Harry Bohan said it's important to give people the opportunity to live in villages.

Fine Gael's Junior Housing Minister Peter Burke said recently he expects one-off rural houses to make up 25% of new builds. However, the Green Party wants a focus on revitalising town centres, claiming one-off builds

have a social and environmental cost and have contributed to the hollowing out of rural towns.

Fr Bohan, who in the 1970s helped build almost 2,500 houses across 120 villages in rural Ireland through small building schemes, said he "didn't see anything wrong" with one-off builds.

While in his experience, revitalising rural communities is better done "in numbers" and one-off houses can't revitalise villages on their own, he said "one facilitated the other".

"Once people came back, then other people began to build one-off houses," Fr Bohan said.

"In other words, other young families wanted to stay in the rural areas. One facilitated the other."

The Clare priest stressed that the important thing was to overcome the belief that "people wouldn't live in villages anymore".

"But once given the opportunity people did want to live in the villages and commute a little bit to the bigger towns," Fr Bohan continued. "But it proved to me that we didn't have

to have the centralisation that got us into real trouble, with Dublin overgrowing and a lot of the west of Ireland becoming a prairie.

"The point of it was that it did revitalise villages – and you had to do it in numbers – because in turn school populations grew and shops got business out of it."

Updated Rural Housing Planning Guidelines are currently being prepared, with Fine Gael minister Mr Burke due to receive them in the coming weeks.

## PIH advises 'more than consent' needed prior to sexual activity

**Jason Osborne**

Catholic youth group Pure in Heart has said that more than consent is desirable prior to sexual activity, in response to new research which revealed that many teenagers do not believe it is always necessary to gain consent before engaging in a sexual activity with someone.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, General Manager of Pure in Heart Helen Vysotska said that the present approach to sexual education in Ireland misun-

derstands "human anthropology", and that young people aren't being given the chance to hear "what their bodies are designed for", as well as their body's "inherent dignity".

"The message that our bodies are special isn't being communicated," Ms Vysotska said, continuing that a "deep" bond like sex doesn't make sense between people who don't know each other.

"You obviously need a friendship and you need to know a person before you can ask anything of them.

"Consent is asking something of them, you're asking permission, but how can you ask permission from somebody for something so deep when you don't even know that person," Ms Vysotska asked.

However, Ms Vysotska welcomed the research's finding that 98% of young people understood that it's ok to say 'no' to unwanted sexual activity.

"There's no pressure," Ms Vysotska said, continuing, "That was really encouraging to see".

**i** See page 13

## Bishop McKeown encourages schools to be proud of Catholic worldview

**Staff reporter**

The greatest threat to Catholic education is a "lack of identity from within", the bishop of Derry said in his address to schools for the new school year.

"Unless we have some idea of what we stand for, we have nothing to communicate that justifies us being a separate sector," Bishop Donal McKeown said, August 26.

"The greatest threat to Catholic education in Ireland and around the world comes not from outside opposition but from lack of identity within."

Bishop McKeown continued, saying that handing on faith "is about sharing a rich worldview, laced with imagination, that gives meaning to everything and helps them process the pain of being human".

Catholic schools will flourish when "we can help the whole school community experience a rich way of being human", he said.

The bishop finished by urging teachers and staff to "be proud of what you do because it is of eternal beauty and value".

## Fostering unity in Catholic school



Good Counsel College's team of sixth year Unitas leaders are pictured with Ms Bolger on a training day, when they went coasteering near Slade, Co. Wexford, in preparation for their work with incoming first years, August 25.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### OnlyFans backtracks on policy change after backlash

OnlyFans has announced that it will delay making changes to policy on content creation, following a backlash by its users.

The content subscription service announced plans last week to block sexually explicit photos and videos from October.

Last Wednesday, it revealed that it has "suspended the planned 1 October policy change".

It is currently unclear if the delay will be permanent. OnlyFans wrote on Twitter that it would "continue to provide a home for all creators".

"We have secured assurances necessary to support our diverse creator community and have suspended the planned 1 October policy change.

"OnlyFans stands for inclusion and we will continue to provide a home for all creators," the company wrote on Twitter.

# Parishes braced for further easing of restrictions

## Staff reporter

Parishes in the Republic are expected to be able to have churches up to 50% full from next week. As *The Irish Catholic* went to press this week the Cabinet was poised to announce a further easing of restrictions on religious and other gatherings and permit a phased return to out-of-school activities for children.

## Sacraments

In dioceses in the Republic that did not choose to proceed with the sacraments of initiation last month, the Government is to recommend that First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies can proceed from September 6.

Likewise, the numbers permitted at Mass will be lifted to 50% of the capacity of the church. This will lead

to a significant lift in larger parishes that were contending with only being allowed 50 parishioners present unless the building could be separated into individual pods of 50.

## Ceremonies

When church ceremonies returned north of the border over five months ago, social distancing was reduced to one metre per person meaning that northern parishes could have larger congregations based on their size. The civil authorities in the North also decided in July that masks would no longer be obligatory for the entire duration of the Mass, just when entering and leaving the building. However, in effect many parishes have voluntarily retained that restriction.

As this newspaper went to press, there was no indi-

cator that there would be an immediate easing of the mask policy in places of worship. However, Government sources have indicated that the hope is that from October 22, masks will only be required in healthcare and retail settings.

With live music expected to also be permitted early this month, many choirs are also hopeful that they will be able to get back to regularly accompanying the liturgy with their music.

## Socially-distanced

The removal of the recommendation that First Holy Communion should not proceed will be welcomed by many parents. However, in reality hundreds of parishes across several dioceses have already been proceeding with socially-distanced ceremonies.

# Archbishop Farrell exhorts Faithful to climate action in pastoral letter

## Jason Osborne

The Faithful are called by both faith and science to take the climate crisis seriously, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell has said in a new pastoral letter issued on the climate crisis.

Our lifestyles and economies that support them are contributing to climate change, Archbishop Farrell warned.

"God now calls us, individually and collectively, to work for the good of the planet and the good of all," he said.

"Healthy" faith takes on board what crea-

tion tells us through the sciences, Archbishop Farrell said, continuing that faith and science go "hand-in-hand".

"God reveals himself through the world," Archbishop Farrell wrote, and so when "scientists have issued a 'code red'", it's not just for the environment, but for humanity itself.

He encouraged the Faithful to sign the *Healthy Planet—Healthy People* petition, endorsed by the Holy See, and to engage with the *Laudato Si' Prize*, an initiative of the Archdiocese of Dublin, as potential ways to act on climate change.

# Maynooth president who hosted John Paul II dies

## Brandon Scott

The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore is mourning the loss of one of its foremost priests, Msgr Michael Olden, who died on Monday.

The 86-year-old cleric had recently celebrated the sixty-first anniversary of his ordination from St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Appointed to the staff of the national seminary in 1966 just after Vatican II, Msgr

Olden also held other prominent positions throughout his ministry. He was president of Maynooth from 1977 to 1985, during which he welcomed Pope St John Paul II to the college during his historic 1979 visit to the campus.

A devoted historian, Msgr Olden was also a prolific contributor to academic publications such as *Archivium Hibernicum*, an annual publication produced by the Catholic History Society of Ireland.

After completing his tenure in St Patrick's College, Msgr Olden took up residence as PP of Clonmel until finally returning to his native county to undertake a role as PP of Tramore, before retiring from full-time ministry in 2009.

In his retirement Msgr Olden continued to lend his name to historical discussions concerning Waterford and the Church and remained actively involved in historical societies in the locality.

## 103 years young



Kathleen Finucane of North Circular Road, Limerick, celebrated her 103rd birthday August 29, and is pictured with Fr Des McAuliffe and her family at Holy Rosary Church. Pictured (from left) are Marian Finucane, Kathleen Finucane, Fr McAuliffe and Loretto Finucane. Photo: James Dormer

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The last year has been a challenging time, but through the struggle many have found an opportunity for spiritual growth. Amid these contributions, one thing becomes clear – peace and tranquillity in daily life needs to be sustained, especially in times of crisis.

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## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# I miss those who used to join us and we need to invite them back

I feel a sadness when I enter the chapel to go to Mass. There are so many empty seats. People simply are not coming back to Mass in the way they once did. Dr Gladys Ganiel wrote last week in this newspaper about the results of a survey by the Iona Institute which showed that 54% of those who were regular Massgoers had not yet returned to church. It moved me to wonder what lay behind such a change. Of course reasons were given, but only 6% said that their faith was not as strong as it had been before Covid-19.

I think of the people I used to see every week, whom I rarely see now. They were and are part of our community. I miss them.

Coming together in church is not just a physical gathering, the Church is not just any building - our forefathers laboured mightily to gather together the money to build our churches. After the penal times, when it became possible to celebrate faith together again, there must have been such rejoicing that they could safely and freely come together in God's house to worship as community. They achieved quite amazing things if we

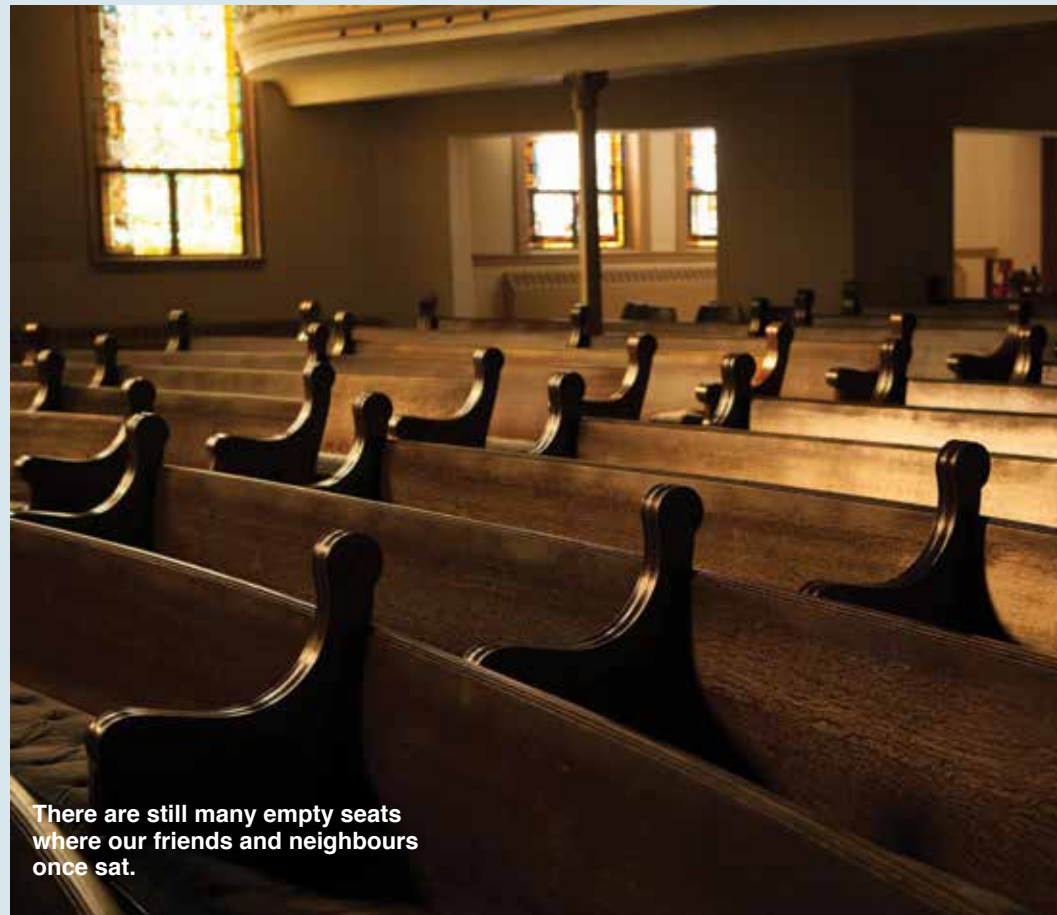
contemplate the number of churches which were built across Ireland during the 19th Century, in those years after the famine.

#### Gather

We all know that when we gather together in church or elsewhere to pray, it is different from going to a party or shopping or coffee or a drink with friends. We participate in a spiritual and sacred event, part of our life's journey in faith. We are joined together in prayer, to worship God, to reflect on, acknowledge and be sorry for those occasions in our lives when we have failed, to thank him for all that is good in our lives and to ask him for his help.

“Now our churches are open again and we can arise and go again to the altar, yet so many are not doing so”

For some, on occasion, even though they are present, prayer is not possible. Whatever is happening or has happened in their life - serious illness, bereavement, loss, unemployment, depression for example - has affected them to such an extent that prayer has become maybe almost too difficult or too distant. On those occasions, and we will all at some time suffer such moments of darkness, those for whom life is easier and those who are happy can carry those who are struggling in their prayer. I have known those moments when I could not pray, but the prayers of those around me have comforted me and carried me through until the light dawned again in the darkness. Have you ever known such a moment?



There are still many empty seats where our friends and neighbours once sat.

So the ability to go to church and to be the community God asks us to be, is a great blessing. In liturgy when we can be present all our senses are engaged - there is music, eventually we hope that we will be able to sing again, we see and feel the beauty and serenity of our churches, we feel the people around us, we smell the unique smell of church and we may even “taste and see that the Lord is good”, being nurtured for our onward journey. We are centred again in the Lord.

#### Ability

It was very hard for so many people to lose that ability, and all that it involved, because of the coronavirus. Our people and priests worked very hard in many areas to utilise the internet

and broadcast Mass, benediction, adoration, novenas and prayer services. It was quite amazing to see what was achieved. Yet it was not the same, for we could not gather together as we are called to do.

“I have known those moments when I could not pray, but the prayers of those around me have comforted me and carried me through”

Now our churches are open again and we can arise and go again to the altar, yet so many are not doing so.

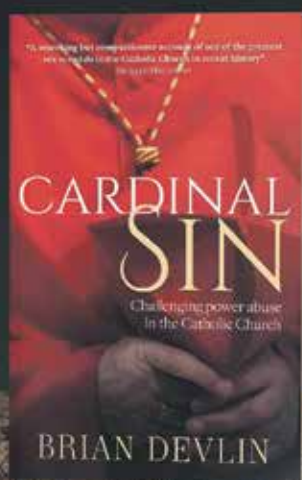
Is it time to have a national initiative to call the people back, rather than just letting them go without trying to bring them back?

#### Loss of faith

The Iona Institute survey showed that it was not a matter of loss of faith for most people: 62% had concerns about Covid-19 and being in public places, 33% about limitations on numbers and the wearing of masks. It is right to be concerned about Covid-19 and it is right to take sensible precautions, but the reality is that there have been very few cases of coronavirus being contracted in churches: our volunteers really have led the way in cleaning, sanitising and maintaining records of those who attended. Can we reas-

“Those who are vaccinated are now protected, they are being encouraged to become active again”

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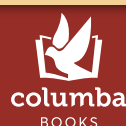
In this previously untold story, former priest Brian Devlin relates what it took to reveal the sexual hypocrisy of Cardinal Keith O'Brien. Making the effort to write not from a place of anger and hurt, he presents *Cardinal Sin* as an opportunity for the global Church to learn and change.

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# for Mass,



whom they do not live but that is better than the original two metre rule. So more people can come and in many cases there are empty seats in which they could be sitting. Here in the North, we are only required to wear masks when entering and leaving the church. So that is much easier. Can we help those who find the limitations on numbers and the masks a problem, by telling them that there are places for them, that we don't have to wear masks all the time now, and that we wish they would come back because we are journeying together and in our community of faith lies our strength, our mutual support, our joy?

## Radio

One in five say that they prefer to watch Mass on TV or listen on the radio. For those who cannot leave their homes, for whatever reason, the ability to attend remotely is a huge blessing.

**“It was very hard for so many people to lose that ability, and all that it involved, because of the coronavirus”**

However, attendance at Mass is not a solitary matter - it is the time when we celebrate together as a community, when the opportunity to speak to fellow parishioners is a precious opportunity, especially for those who live alone and don't get out often, but most of all it is the time when, gathered together as a parish family, we are nurtured in our reception of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our saviour and redeemer.

If we care for those who are walking the same journey as us back to the Lord, surely we should try, at least, to help them to have courage to come back to pray with us in person?

## Explain

So perhaps we could explain this, and explain that churches are as safe or safer than other places in which we gather such as shops, pubs and cafes.

The second reason which people gave for not attending related to the restriction in numbers and the need to wear masks. The need to restrict numbers is less now - people need to be a metre apart from those with

# Irish archbishop in South Africa pays tribute to Sr Ethel Normoyle's huge impact

Jason Osborne

The late Sr Ethel Normoyle was a “life and death figure” for the thousands of people she helped during her ministry in South Africa, according to Irish missionary Archbishop Liam Slattery OFM.

The archbishop's words come in the wake of Sr Normoyle's recent death August 16, which has seen tributes pour in from both Ireland and South Africa for her work helping the “poorest of the poor”.

Clare-native Sr Ethel Normoyle was a member of the Little Company of Mary, and established the Missionvale Care Centre in 1988, a non-profit organisation that provides care and support for the people of the region and beyond.

It was established after Sr Normoyle set up a school and clinic under

a tree, and has since evolved into an integrated community centre for the purpose of combating poverty, HIV and AIDS.

Archbishop Slattery said she was “out here over fifty years in South Africa. The Little Company of Mary is her congregation, known as the Blue nuns by many - they are nursing sisters primarily, nursing and social work.

## South Africa

“She came out here and has spent her life out here in South Africa. She worked first in Praetoria, and then they also have a convent just outside Port Elizabeth, and there she has lived for a long, long time.”

Archbishop Slattery mentioned the work she has done has been with “very, very poor people”, which included “social caring for orphans and poor

people, hungry people, unemployed people, in an area that's famous for unemployment, Port Elizabeth”.

“She has been a life and death figure for thousands of people over the last 50 years,” Archbishop Slattery said.

He recalled Queen Elizabeth II's commendation of Sr Ethel's work in one of her Christmas messages, following a trip she took to South Africa.

“Sr Ethel had a huge impact. Queen Elizabeth in her Christmas message one year mentioned Sr Ethel by name and the work she was doing in Port Elizabeth.

“She visited the centre and met Sr Ethel when she was on a visit to South Africa and she picked her out by name in her Christmas message as a person who was a modern example of caring and concern and community building and caring for the poor.”

# Cork's 'unofficial patron saint' honoured by local artist



Local artist John Doolan, with his artwork on display at the Church of the Way of The Cross in Togher along with Fr Ben Hodnett. Photo: David Keane, *Echo News*

Chai Brady

An art display in Togher honouring Cork's “unofficial patron saint” Little Nellie of Holy God serves to “remind us of our baptismal calling”, parishioners were told at the unveiling.

Fr Ben Hodnett of Togher parish asked artist John Doolan to create 11 pictures of Little Nellie to celebrate the anniversary of her 118th birthday.

He praised Mr Doolan, who is deaf and autistic, saying he has talents nobody else in the world has and that he created the artwork with a few pencils based on old photographs.

Speaking about Little Nellie, Fr Hodnett said she “calls us to remember our baptismal calling. At Baptism Jesus calls us to love and serve him in our own capacity be that as a priest,

a parent, a grandparent, a sibling, or in Nellie's case, as a little child who joyfully shared her knowledge of Jesus in Holy Communion with others”.

There is significant devotion to Little Nellie in Cork, who's story is said to have moved Pope Pius X to lower the age of First Communion to seven. She suffered from several medical afflictions throughout her life, including curvature of the spine and died aged four.

After her mother died and her father could not look after her, Little Nellie was taken in by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Cork City.

Little Nellie expressed a great faith and understanding of the Eucharist according to historical records, and received her First Communion just two months before she died on February 2, 1908. She was born on August 24, 1903.

# Speculation grows about new Archbishop of Tuam

**Chai Brady**

Three names are to the fore in clerical circles to take up one of the most senior positions in the Church in Ireland.

Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam turned 75 in April and therefore under Church rules was obliged to tender his resignation to Pope Francis. The papal nuncio Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo is now responsible for recommending successors to the Vatican.

Clerical circles have identified the current Bishop of Elphin Dr Kevin Doran as one of the likely

successors. Bishop Doran (68) is a veteran of the various agencies of the bishops' conference and was appointed to Elphin in 2014 just two years after leading the International Eucharistic Congress, which was largely viewed as successful in difficult circumstances.

## Succession

Another bishop who is considered a likely candidate for succession is Dr Brendan Leahy of Limerick. Bishop Leahy (61) has led the mid-west diocese since 2013 and pioneered a synodal process which could prove appealing to Pope

Francis given that the Church in Ireland has embarked on that pathway.

The third name consistently spoken about in clerical circles is Killaloe's Bishop Fintan Monahan. Fifty-four-year-old Dr Monahan was a priest of the Tuam Archdiocese and as a long-serving diocesan secretary he was a close confidant of Archbishop Neary's. He is well-known amongst the priests and has a keen sense of the challenges facing the diocese. He has served as the Bishop of Killaloe since 2016.

Archbishop Neary is currently the longest-serving member of

the Irish hierarchy having been appointed as an auxiliary bishop to Tuam Archdiocese in 1992 by Pope St John Paul II. He succeeded as archbishop just three years later.

As one of the four metropolitan archbishops in Ireland, he exercises a certain limited supervisory role in the neighbouring dioceses of Achonry, Clonfert, Elphin, Killala as well as Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora.

The Archbishop of Tuam is also traditionally conferred with the pallium by the Pope as a sign of his unity with the Holy See and his local authority.

## SVP warn of mounting back-to-school financial pressure

**Ruadhán Jones**

Calls for help with school costs are up 10% compared to previous years, the charity reported, as they are receiving almost 300 calls a day from worried parents.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul called on the Government to "to prioritise investment in measures to address educational disadvantage" in a statement August 26.

Marcella Stakem, SVP Research and Policy Officer said; "We are keenly aware that the inequalities that existed before the pandemic in the education system remain and, in many cases, have worsened.

"In this year's pre-budget submission, we are asking Government to prioritise investment in measures to address educational disadvantage and rising school costs."

Many of the calls relate to requests for financial help with parental contributions, schoolbooks, digital equipment, and help with the cost of school uniforms.

The SVP are particularly concerned about the number of calls they are receiving from worried parents in relation to the cost of iPads and tablets.

# Cardinal Burke expresses gratitude for Covid prayers as he leaves ICU

**Jason Osborne**

Irish-American Cardinal Raymond Burke has taken to social media to express his thanks to God, the healthcare professionals, and all those who cared for him spiritually during his time in ICU following a serious bout of Covid-19.

The cardinal posted an open letter on his Twitter page, in which he thanked God, the doctors and nurses who "provided vigilant, superb, and

steadfast medical care," as well as to the priests who ministered to him sacramentally as he struggled against the illness.

He also thanked those who offered "innumerable rosaries and prayers, lighted candles, and requested the offering of the Holy Mass," for his recovery.

An update posted online August 21 shared that the cardinal had been moved off the ventilator and out of ICU, and that he was now resting in a

hospital room in the care of "dedicated" doctors and nurses.

"This generous outpouring of grace unites me to you in a special way, as I am also particularly united to all victims suffering from the effects of the Covid-19 virus," Cardinal Burke wrote in his open letter, released August 29.

"United with Jesus Christ, priest and victim, I offer all that I suffer for the Church and for the world," he wrote.

## Historic day for Catholic education



Tony Lee (right), head of leadership and governance for the Le Chéille Schools Trust, meets with Principal Nicola Barrett (centre right) and her staff, August 26. They will be running Le Chéille's new school in Ballincollig, the Catholic trust's second school.

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# Touch our ears and tongues, Lord

**L**ast Saturday I had the great privilege of baptising my beautiful grand-niece, Juliet. Actually, I prefer to refer to the sacrament as a Christening. Baptism means having a bath, being washed and cleansed. Christening, or Christ-ening, expresses the new life received, a living relationship with Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. After naming the child and reminding the parents and godparents of their responsibilities, the celebrant then welcomes the child to the Christian community and claims the child as belonging to Christ, "I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead, and invite your parents to do the same."

## The oil of Christ-ening

After the Baptism with water, the newly baptised is anointed on the head with the oil of chrism. Christ's name means the Anointed One. "As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life." As a member of the body of Christ on earth, a Christian is called to the mission of bringing the light of Christ to the world.

This Christian calling is beautifully expressed in St Teresa of Avila's reflection.

"Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.

"Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world.

"Yours are the feet with which he walks

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



**“The words of a true Christian bring love, peace, happiness, affirmation, consolation, good advice and laughter”**

to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.

"Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

"Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours." Christ is counting on you.

## Touching the ears and mouth

The Gospel this Sunday (Mark 7:31-37) is the story of Jesus healing the deaf man who had an impediment in his speech. Touching the ears and mouth may be included in the baptismal ceremony as the celebrant prays: "The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father."

Are my ears open to God's word, reading it, listening to it, pondering it in the heart?

Do I listen to what others say? Do I make an effort to hear what they find it hard to say?

Do I hear the pleas of those in need?

Do I heed the opinions or advice of others?

## Is my mouth sanctified?

A poisoned tongue spits out cynicism, anger, deceit, hurt, character assassination, destructiveness, etc. Does the same tongue which receives the Lord in the Eucharist attack other members of his mystical body?

The words of a true Christian bring love, peace, happiness, affirmation, consolation, good advice and laughter.

**“In human vengeance hatred is stronger than love but in God's vengeance, love triumphs over vindictiveness”**

The gift of speech is misused in blasphemy, profanity or obscenity. Or the tongue can be the instrument of thanks, praise and prayer.

One word which should have no place in the life of a faithful follower of Christ is vengeance. It is mentioned in today's First Reading, from Isaiah. "Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you." What a turnabout! God's vengeance is



The oil of chrism used at Baptism.

the total opposite of human vengeance. In human vengeance hatred is stronger than love but in God's vengeance, love triumphs over vindictiveness. God's idea of vengeance is to destroy the sin while converting the sinner. Jesus asks us to pray for those who persecute us.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, you first touched our ears and tongues on the day of our Baptism. May we live each day faithful to what you have begun in us.

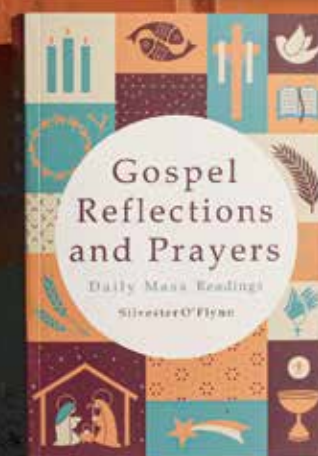
Open our ears, Lord, to hear your word in the Scriptures, to heed your guidance in the commandments, and to listen with you in quiet reflection. Clear away the deafness of our selfish preoccupation so that we might hear what others need to say, draw out what is locked away in their darkness, and respect each person's unique history.

Open up the doors of our hearts in sensitivity to pain, in concern for justice, and in compassion for all who are suffering.

Release our tongues of their impediments so that we might gladly sing your praises, gratefully proclaim your kindness and confidently witness to your presence. Remove all traces of envy and vengeance from our speech, so that we might be quick to affirm but slow to blame, ready to thank and slow to begrudge, willing to forgive and loathe to condemn. Release our tongues from scandal and free them for goodness. Cleanse them of obscenity and brighten them with joy. Rid them of vulgarity and prepare them to bless. Lord Jesus, you do all things well. You make the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

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# Our young people deserve so much more from sex education



Is consent alone, however defined, ever enough to make a sexual encounter moral, asks **David Quinn**

**A** sexual consent programme has been launched that is aimed at second level schools. It has been developed by the 'Active Consent' unit at NUI Galway and will include workshops for students and parents. The programme is aimed at 15-17 year olds. Its lack of a proper vision of the human person should worry us.

The launch of the programme coincides with the publication of a new report by the Active Consent unit which surveyed the attitudes of more than 600 teenagers in fifth year and transition year towards the issue of sexual consent.

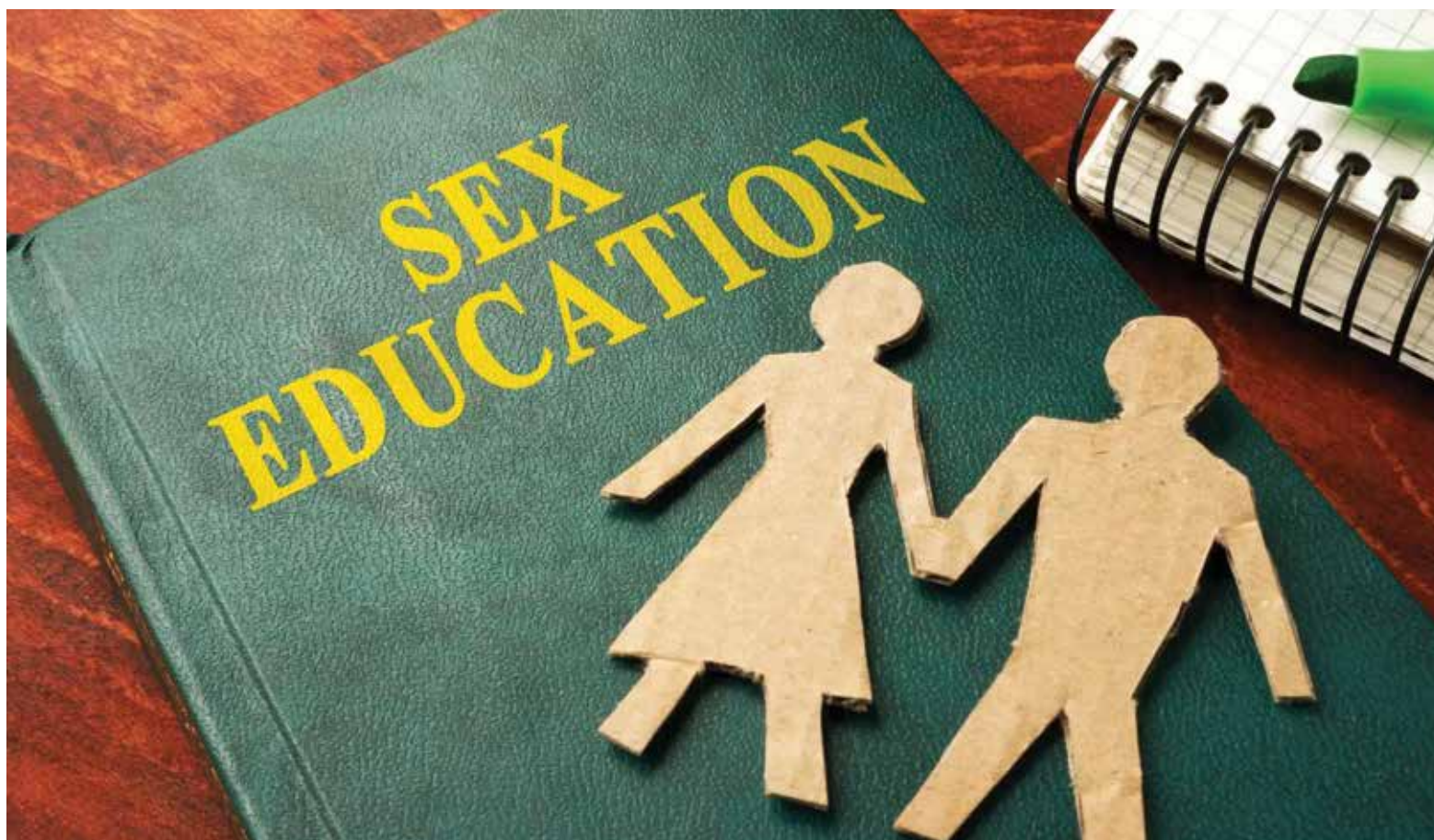
The finding which grabbed the headlines is that one in five teenage boys don't believe consent is needed before sexual activity with another person is initiated. Less than one in ten girls believe the same thing.

This is what the finding appeared to say at any rate, but when you examine the report more closely it is hard to know what the teenagers believed they were being asked, precisely because the idea of 'consent' can be ambiguous. For example, does it have to be verbal, or can it also be non-verbal?

**“They were asked if they agreed that, ‘There should be verbal consent for any of those sexual activities’”**

Respondents to the survey were asked whether they agreed with the following statement: “You always need to get consent before the start of a sexual activity” (ranging from touching a breast to full sexual intercourse).

So, 79% of boys and 93% of girls agreed with the statement. On the face of it, therefore, coverage of the report appeared to be accurate. But in their own minds, how did they define 'consent'? Did they believe they were being asked about verbal consent only? Maybe the boys and girls who disagreed with the state-



ment believe non-verbal consent is also alright?

Respondents were then asked to respond to two more statements that did distinguish between verbal and non-verbal consent.

They were asked if they agreed that, “There should be verbal consent for any of those sexual activities”.

Fifty eight percent of boys and 67% of girls said 'yes'.

## Non-verbal

A third statement was then put to them which said: “Non-verbal consent for any of those sexual activities is sometimes okay.” This time, 59% of boys and 61% of girls agreed.

As mentioned, when the first statement was put to the teenagers, perhaps some of the boys believed they were being asked about verbal consent only? If it had been made clear to them that consent could be verbal or non-verbal, then hopefully far more boys than 79% would have agreed with it. In fact, hopefully there would have been 100% agreement on the part of both sexes with the statement, otherwise a significant percentage of boys and girls think sexual assault is okay, which would be appalling.

Perhaps confusion over what exactly 'consent' means is a good enough reason for a programme in

schools to discuss the matter?

How does the new report, called *Active Consent for School Communities* define consent? It says it “works from the definition of consent given by Hickman and Muehlenhard (1999, p. 259), that it is ‘the freely given verbal or non-verbal communication of a feeling of willingness to engage in sexual activity’”.

In other words, consent does not have to be verbal.

But then the report seems to contradict itself by leaning in favour of consent as being verbal only because it describes the ways in which non-verbal consent can be confusing. It concludes: “Accordingly, the Active Consent programme supports the achievement of direct, verbal consent”.

However, this sentence then continues in a way that only adds to the confusion when it concludes that “young people [must be] comfortable integrating it [verbal consent] with their gender and sexual identity, personal experience, and preferences as individuals and sexual partner”.

## Comfortable

This seems to be mean consent doesn't need to be verbal after all. It only has to be verbal if you are comfortable with that.

But as big a question as the proper definition of consent, is whether consent alone, however defined, is

enough to make a sexual encounter moral.

That word 'moral', is now considered extremely problematic in this context because it is considered judgemental.

Liberal sexual morality thinks consent alone is enough before two (or more) people who might have met only seconds ago move on to full sexual intercourse.

**“Perhaps confusion over what exactly ‘consent’ means is a good enough reason for a programme in schools to discuss the matter?”**

Traditional sexual morality believes there should be much more than consent alone. Most of the major religions believe the couple should be married first, but a modified version of traditional sexual morality says they should get to know, like and trust one another as a minimum first.

The Active Consent programme believes consent alone is enough, and this is what teenagers will be taught by it from my reading of the new report.

For example, the new report out-

lines a number of scenarios for students to consider.

One involves 'Jim and Claire'. In this case, they are not in a relationship and sexual intercourse is initiated by Claire, but Jim is reluctant.

Another involves a 'hook-up' between two teenagers (described as 'cisgendered', meaning they identify with the sex they were born as), who have simply met for the night and have oral sex.

Teenagers are asked about what consent means in these cases but are implicitly led to believe that consent alone is enough.

## Philosophy

The philosophy behind the Active Consent programme does not rule out in principle an individual having endless numbers of sexual partners in their lifetime and multiple 'one-night stands'. It appears to believe that detaching your body from any real relational setting can be successfully achieved without harm to your sense of self-worth, or your partner's sense of self-worth (who might be looking for more than an emotionless, one-night stand), and without too much danger of anyone feeling undervalued or used.

Obviously, this approach is totally incompatible with Christian teaching about sex. Even the most liberal Christians think couples should be in a loving relationship before moving on to full sexual intercourse.

Christian sex education has to include a full understanding of the meaning of consent, but to be properly humanistic, in the proper sense of that word, it must involve so much more than that as well.

**“The launch of the programme coincides with the publication of a new report by the Active Consent unit which surveyed the attitudes of more than 600 teenagers”**

# Towards a synodal Church...

In a new series, we share the reflections of some readers of *The Irish Catholic* as the Church in Ireland continues the synodal journey

Fast and Pray: this is the traditional way to prepare and we should be encouraged to fast as much as we can. Abstinence on Fridays is not hard or we could even follow the old Irish custom of Céadaoin, the first fast, on Wednesdays as well. Anyone, you would think, could do the fast of the prophet Daniel who just abstained from tasty food.

It is obvious that we need to pray for good fruits of the synod.

I think we the Church need to aim for holiness. Successful busy parishes have to be careful that they are not all work and no prayer, even though good works are very important too of course.

Vatican II in emphasising the liturgy seemed, perhaps, to belittle private devotions and it is - I think - a form of clericalism that many priests take no part in the various devotions in their parishes, such as the rosary and adoration of the Blessed Eucharist.

I took part, through the internet, in many Masses throughout these islands and was deeply impressed by the goodness, kindness and sincerity of all the priests.

The Church needs to be a teaching Church again. In spite of the issue of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, way back in 1997, and the wonderful easier versions produced by *Aid to the Church in Need*, children and young people have only a watered-down Catholicism taught. Surely in a proper division between Church and State the teaching of religious doctrine is the Church's prerogative.

**Bríd Ní Rinn**



## Have your say SYNOD SOAPBOX

The Church in Ireland is moving towards holding a national synod in the next five years. It is part of the vision of Pope Francis of laypeople, religious, priests and bishops working together to discern where God is leading the Church and charting a future vision for Irish Catholicism.

As part of the process, *The Irish Catholic* wants to give a space for readers to share hopes and dreams for the future of the Church and what they would like to see as part of the synod process. The 'synod soapbox' will appear regularly in the paper as a space for dialogue and discernment.

If you would like to be part of the conversation, please send a submission of no more than 300 words to [editor@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:editor@irishcatholic.ie)

**The Irish Catholic**

1. Catechesis: that constant call to conversion is entirely absent. In 1979, Pope John Paul II pleaded with the men of violence to lay down their arms; they did. A month later he begged pastors (*Catechesi Tradendae* S64) to give catechesis; nothing happened.

2. Mercy is central: we should not allow the media define who we are. We ought to assert that the Church has no power, purpose, or programme, other than the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; I Timothy 1:15). This is our Unique Selling Point! Any other concern, competence, or characteristic, ascribed to her, comes from outside.

3. Conversation: a tactic in war is to destroy the communications of the enemy, thus throwing them into confusion. We need a forum (broadcast, written, local Q&A-club, etc.) so that we can talk amongst ourselves, encounter Christ at work in others, be ourselves, and so exist as God's community on earth, putting on the mind of Christ. We have allowed our minds to be colonised; our daily reality filtered and distorted by a hostile, unbelieving media. Indiscriminate television, destroys faith. A screen-tech break would greatly assist in keeping the Lord's Day holy.

4. Perspective: we need to recover the integrity of our self-talk and to abandon agenda-laden media-speak, e.g., 'reproductive health'; nobody considers themselves a reproduction of anyone. (We go to the shop in an art gallery to get a 'reproduction'.) Transmission of life would be more correct. 'Feminist ideology' is internalised misogyny; including fertility suppression, pathologising pregnancy, and devaluing maternal-care.

5. Gratitude: Joy is not complete until we celebrate what God has done for us and in us. 'Pride ideology' drives the consumerisation of relationships. (substituting consent for commitment) and has placed our society on an unsustainable trajectory of self-annihilation; currently no generation in the global north is replacing itself.

**Gearóid Duffy**

The hopes and dreams I have for the future of the Catholic Church in Ireland can't wait for a synod in the next five years. Going on what I witnessed this morning, I fear we must act now to address the issue of how we continue to administer the sacraments to non-practicing families. I know it is not popular to 'get tough', but has the 'softly, softly' approach worked? Is the Church facilitating a traditional sentimental rite of passage, or, in the words of Prof. Eamonn Conway, celebrating the sacraments "fruitfully"?

This morning half of a First Communion class, and half of a Confirmation class were invited to attend two Masses in a Dublin parish, as part of their preparation for the sacraments, whenever they are allowed to happen. Three out of nine came from the junior class, and only two out of nine from the sixth class. (Note, this is following the prolonged prohibition on public worship, so it's not as if the families have been pressurised to attend weekly Mass). Because there were so few of them, one little fellow looked very disgruntled throughout the Mass, which was noted by the celebrant afterwards.

These children attend a Catholic school, which does its best to promote a Catholic ethos, but despite the efforts of the teachers to teach Christian values, there is very little commitment from the parents.

I believe it is the right of Catholics to have their children taught in the Faith if they so wish, but it simply doesn't work if the children are not brought up in the Faith. Parents are the first teachers of the Faith. Teachers can only do so much. The third member of this triangle, the parish, is helpless if the families stay away, and they are staying away in droves. And yet, the chorus at the school gates continues to be "Any news of a date yet for the First Communion"? Why? To organise the party or invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit?

**Margie Kennedy**

We welcome the announcement of a new synodal pathway for the Catholic Church in Ireland - the process of synodality is the starting point.

The synodal path is a journey of engagement, listening, dialogue and inclusive of all the People of God, especially those who have been hurt, disillusioned or rejected by the Church.

Enabling people to articulate a new and radical vision of Church will be important to sustain people for the five year journey: "without a vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

A key question for leaders is: what do we need to let go of to allow the new to emerge? What are the attitudes, beliefs, values and ways of doing things that may have served us well in the past but are now becoming barriers to a renewed Church?

A special concern is about listening to the voices of young people and women - all of whom need help to find and express their voice and exercise leadership.

Through the use of creative arts - poetry, music, artwork, dance, digital media and more; we can glimpse the kingdom of God among us.

**Therese Mullen IBVM**

**“Today the visibility of faith has for all intents and purposes vanished” – Archbishop Dermot Farrell**

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**The Irish Catholic**

# An unexpected fruit of Covid-19



Our parishes must be converted to make them fit for purpose by becoming missionary in orientation writes **Fr Pat Collins CM**

**I**t could be argued that the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) initiated a sort of theological and pastoral revolution in the Catholic Church. While the subject of evangelisation had not been mentioned at Vatican I (1869-1870), it was referred to on many occasions at Vatican II. St John Paul II said that the gathering of the bishops in Rome between “had a fundamental importance for evangelisation, for the new evangelisation which originated precisely at the Second Vatican Council.”

**“Within this general ecclesial context, the Church believes that parishes will be the focal point of the new evangelisation”**

Since then the Popes have drawn out the implications of this profound change in perspective. In paragraph 14 of his apostolic exhortation *Evangelisation in the Modern World*, St Paul VI stated: “The task of evangelising all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church...She exists in order to evangelise.” Subsequently, a number of Popes, notably John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have emphasised the importance of the so-called new evangelisation. It focuses its efforts on the unchurched whose numbers are growing fast. Speaking about this kind of evangelisation to Latin American bishops, St John Paul II said that it would be, “New in

its ardour, methods and forms of expression.”

Within this general ecclesial context, the Church believes that parishes will be the focal point of the new evangelisation. They are more prepared by the past to be ‘shepherds’ than to be ‘fishers’ of people, i.e., they are better prepared to nourish those who still come to church than to bring new people into the Church. In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis spoke in paragraphs 25-33 about the need for structural conversion in parishes in order to make them fit for purpose by becoming missionary in orientation. In 2020 the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy, issued a document which intended to spell out some of the revolutionary implications of the Pope’s thinking to do with why and how this could be done. Speaking in the magazine *Síolta*, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell echoed what Francis has said: “The current model of the Church is unsustainable,” he observed. In Dublin, there was need “for an effective programme of catechetics throughout the diocese to add to and, eventually, replace the current teaching of faith to the young. With the gradual decline of family socialisation in religion, the role of the qualified catechist will be essential. In my opinion, the handing on of the Faith to the young is one of the most serious challenges facing our Church today.”

## New lay communities

In response to these developments a number of new lay communities in Ireland, such as The Irish School of Evangelisation, The Ceili Community, The Community of Naza-



Pope St John XXIII leads the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in St Peter’s Basilica on October 11, 1962. The council sought to put fresh focus on the Church’s mission to evangelise.

areth, Living Water, NET Ministries Ireland and the New Springtime Community have emerged in recent years and focused, among other things, on the need to train evangelisers. Speaking about the requirement for this kind of formation St John Paul II said in paragraph 46 of *The Church in Europe*, “evangelisers must be properly trained...All the baptised, since they are witnesses of Christ, should receive a training appropriate to their circumstances.” In like manner, Pope Francis said in paragraph 121 of *The Joy of the Gospel*, “All of us are called to mature in our work as evangelisers. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel.”

**“Thousands of people, from all over Ireland, Britain, and further afield attended the talks, webinars, and teaching courses which were on offer”**

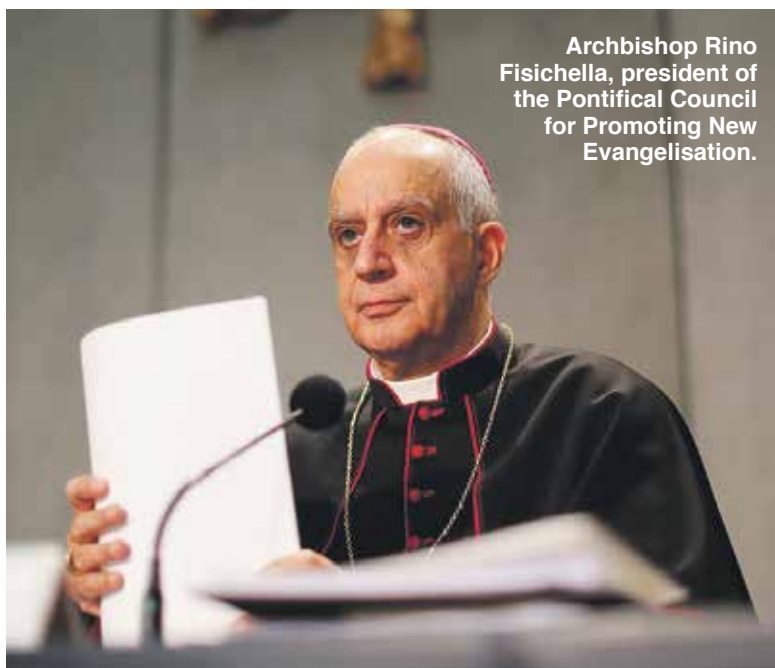
Proposition 46 of the 2012 synodal document, *The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* said: “This synod considers that it is necessary to establish formation centres for the new evangelisation, where laypeo-

ple learn how to speak of the person of Christ in a persuasive manner adapted to our time and to specific groups of people, e.g., young adults, agnostics, the elderly and so forth.” There were lots of logistical difficulties involved in establishing such centres for the new evangelisation. However, when we experienced the lockdown associated with Covid-19, the members of the New Springtime Community in Dublin realised that it provided a providential opportunity to run an online school of evangelisation which would offer training, via Zoom, in a number of relevant topics. In Autumn 2020 it began to do so. It was a surprising success. Thousands of people, from all over

Ireland, Britain, and further afield attended the talks, webinars, and teaching courses which were on offer.

## Seven courses

This coming year, 2021-22, the community is putting on seven courses on a variety of topics such as prayer, apologetics, the creed, deliverance, God’s kingdom, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and building missionary parishes. The speakers are Irish, English, Canadian and American. Anyone who is interested in participating in this initiative will find the relevant information on the New Springtime Community website [springtime.ie/events/](http://springtime.ie/events/)

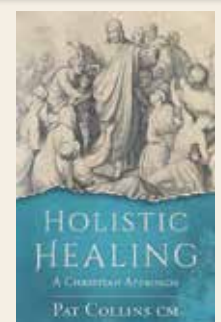


Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation.

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# New initiative facilitates respectful Catholic cremation

Catholic business Eternum Columbarium wants to provide a dedicated space for cremated remains, **Ruadhán Jones** hears

**T**he number of people opting for cremation instead of burials has risen steadily in Ireland and Northern Ireland over the last 20 years. In 2019, the figure sat at just under a quarter (22%) of deaths ending with cremation for both regions. Given that 79% of people in the UK now opt for cremation, it is only likely that this will increase, with Catholics proving no exception.

Historically, the Church has had a tense relationship with the practice due to the importance it places on a bodily resurrection. Up until 60 years ago, cremation was prohibited. Today, the Church recognises no doctrinal opposition to the practice, while maintaining a preference for bodily burial.

However, on one thing it is insistent – that the ashes be placed in a sacred place so the deceased is not excluded from prayers. This is a tricky proposition at present, with limited availability of spaces in Catholic institutions.

**“Dr Murray points out that cremation is relatively recent in the Catholic Church”**

With this in mind, an enterprising young Catholic has set up a business to fill the gap. Eternum Columbarium, founded by Joseph O’Neill, works in partnership with parishes and churches to establish a columbarium – a room for storing funeral urns – for their local community.

“The idea came years ago in 2009,” Mr O’Neill begins. “First off, there was a church in Belfast, St Malachy’s, and the parish priest was having it renovated. He found space under floor and sold it off for urns. Then a Down and Connor priest installed columbarium in his church.”

“I thought it was a good idea and something I could do as a business. He said absolutely, we’re going to need more and more of these, given the lack of burial space and more and more people choosing cremation, and Catholic attitudes to cremation changing.”

“In 1964, the Church made its position clear, saying it has no doctrinal objections to cremation as it doesn’t change anything for the person after death. But the ashes must be kept whole, they can’t be



An urn containing cremated remains is seen in a niche in the Holy Rood Cemetery mausoleum in Westbury, New York, in 2010. Photo: CNS.

scattered or kept home, and so they have to be kept in a columbarium.”

## Interested

Mr O’Neill found that a number of churches were interested in setting up a columbarium for their parishioners. However, the parishes found them expensive to set up and manage, he explains: “They don’t have the resources to set up a columbarium, so I work in partnership with them. It doesn’t cost the parish anything, I cover the costs, but we split any profits then.”

Eternum Columbarium’s first venture is set to launch September 11, when a new columbarium will open in Ennis Cathedral.

“I’m excited for the launch, we’re hoping to open September 11, and it’ll be installed that week,” Mr O’Neill tells me. “Already, even though I haven’t advertised it except in parish bulletin, 100 niches have been reserved. It’s in the old mortuary chapel, which can fit 240 niches, each of which holds one urn. That means almost half have been sold already.”

Setting up the columbarium is a process covered under Canon Law, and there are specific requirements for where it can be placed. “There are various rules – for instance, it can’t be in the main isle of a church,” Mr O’Neill continues. “It has to be in a side-chapel or a basement or, say a porch area. Not all churches will be able to install them.”

That being said, Mr O’Neill is hopeful for the future, and already has plans for a second collaboration in Donegal. A number of religious congregations have expressed interest as well.

“The options are limited for columbarium now, and they all look fairly similar,” Mr O’Neill says. “The ones that I install are made in

Ireland, out of bronze face-plates, they’re made by local artists, and are well thought out. The one in Ennis is based on the cross of St Seanal, found on a local island. The mortuary chapel also has a nice mosaic of Our Lady in blue and gold, so we have sought to integrate that. I do have hope for the future.”

**“That the ashes be placed in a sacred place so the deceased is not excluded from prayers”**

A prominent Irish theologian shares Mr O’Neill’s hope, though on a different line. Dr John Murray, a lecturer in moral theology at Dublin City University, says that it is important that the communal aspect of Catholic funeral traditions is not lost.

More than this, he believes positive action should be taken to promote this communal aspect.

“I do think it’s important for the Church in a positive way to emphasise the value of a church as a place, like the one in St Malachy’s for example, where the link with the Church as a community is strong,” Dr Murray says. “Where there’s a strong sense of tradition and a link back to the past and to the tradition that we have around funerals and burials and remembering the dead, and praying for the dead.”

## Special place

“I think it’s a good idea to have a special place set aside in a church or as part of a Catholic graveyard for Catholics to make use of in dealing with the remains in the form of the ashes after a loved one has been cremated. Rather than the purely private matter of scattering them in the coun-

tryside or in the sea or keep them at home or do something else with them than what’s purely private.”

Dr Murray points out that cremation is relatively recent in the Catholic Church, and believes efforts should be made to integrate the practice into the traditions of the Church.

“I think the Church could emphasise the positive aspects of why we would encourage Catholics to have a deep love and respect for the tradition and traditional ways, adapting them for modern needs as well. Doing something positive, not even speaking about it, but doing it, giving people options that will help them to know what to do and to be comfortable and happy doing it in a way that is traditional, but in a new way.”

**“Historically, the Church has had a tense relationship with the practice due to the importance it places on a bodily resurrection”**

Looking at the example of Ennis cathedral, Dr Murray adds that he thinks linking with the cathedrals is good too, as it provides a connection between the community and the diocese.

“There’s something special about a cathedral as a central church of a diocese. There’s a sense of importance in a cathedral. But it could be any church, a lot in the past would have had graveyards beside them and the link would be quite strong visually, a sign and symbol for people. The link with cathedrals would be good in that way too, linking the community and the diocese,” he finishes.



Joseph O’Neill, founder of Eternum Columbarium

# The end is in sight in fight



Catholic charity St Francis Leprosy Guild is striving to see leprosy eradicated within 25 to 30 years, writes **Jason Osborne**

**L**eprosy, or Hansen's disease, has stalked the world since biblical times, and God has often used it to show that his healing power is at work in the world. He transformed the appearance of Moses' hand to a "snowy" white, before healing it moments later, and Jesus healed many of the affliction during his time wandering the earth.

**“St Francis Leprosy Guild is an organisation well suited to carrying out the task of eradicating leprosy, with a Catholic heritage, as well as one of scientific expertise”**

More recently, God continues to minister to those who suffer from the disease, although now he does so through the goodness of those who give up their lives to fighting it. Such saints as St Damien De Veuster (better known as St Damien of Molokai) and St Marianne Cope (also of Molokai) dedicated their lives to those living with leprosy, with St Damien himself succumbing to the disease.

Today, Catholic charities like St Francis Leprosy Guild continue their work, and it's a work that's truly bearing fruit, with leprosy on the cusp of defeat.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, CEO of St Francis Leprosy Guild, Clare McIntosh explained that while the charity is small, it's making waves in the fight against leprosy, changing its strategy to meet the needs of an often-ailing world.

“So our direction has been a little bit different since 2017... People with leprosy were the poorest and the most excluded people in society, so once you showed signs



A woman suffering from leprosy waits for treatment inside a clinic in Siliguri, India. Photo: CNS

of leprosy, you were completely pushed out,” Ms McIntosh explains.

“And so, there wasn't a cure until the 1980s, so the money at that time went to helping people, treating their condition as best as possible, helping with poverty, helping to integrate them. But in the 1980s, a cure was found to leprosy and as of 2017, we decided that our strategy should really be about ending leprosy, so not just helping people that have it, but actually ending leprosy altogether.”

## Catholic heritage

St Francis Leprosy Guild is an organisation well suited to carrying out the task of eradicating leprosy, with a Catholic heritage, as well as one of scientific expertise.

“We have a trustee board of 12 people, all of whom are Catholics. Among our trustees, we have some very credible people, such as Professor Noel Gill, who is an epidemiologist, and he was responsible for the HIV strategy in the UK. Interestingly, relating back to that time,

in the 1980s, HIV wasn't very well understood, and one of the things he did, and he published a paper, was whether HIV could be transmitted through the Communion cup. It's interesting, but he went on from that to lead the HIV strategy in the UK, and he's also part of the Covid team in the UK, so we have him.

**“The ‘R’ in TRACE stands for ‘research’, and sees the charity partnering with the Leprosy Research Institute (LRI) which is a global organisation seeking to end leprosy”**

“We also have Professor Robin Graham-Brown, who is a professor dermatologist. So, even though we're a small charity, we are very well informed by that level of

scientific expertise. We've had a long relationship with the FMM's (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary) nurses and also the Medical Missionaries of Mary, and that relationship goes back right to the very beginning.

“We have a sister that sits on our trustees, also. Then the remainder of the trustees are a mixture of foreign office background diplomats and so on who've actually served in different countries, and we have an accountant and so on.”

## Strategy

Armed with faith and scientific expertise, the charity has its eyes raised to the heavenly ideal of eliminating leprosy, while keeping its feet on the ground through concrete strategy and work. TRACE is the watchword by which they tackle the disease, embodying a strategy which is proving most effective in the total reduction of leprosy from the global community.

“We currently have five parts to our strategy which we call TRACE.

So, ‘T’ is about training, and effectively, from a global perspective, leprosy is considered eliminated if less than 1 in 10,000 people in the population have it. That means that globally it's eliminated, and it's eliminated in lots of countries, but in reality, even if you're less than 1 in 10,000, there can still be a lot of people with leprosy,” Ms McIntosh says.

“So for example, in India last year, there were 160,000 people diagnosed with leprosy, but when elimination was declared, a lot of countries stopped investing in leprosy, which means that a lot of the skills to diagnose leprosy have gone away, so the ‘T’ in our training is all about how do we help these countries train enough people that leprosy might be cured.”

The ‘R’ in TRACE stands for ‘research’, and sees the charity partnering with the Leprosy Research Institute (LRI) which is a global organisation seeking to end leprosy. Technology is often put to its best use in the area of medicine,

# against leprosy

and that's precisely the avenue down which St Francis Leprosy Guild is looking to travel, taking a lead from all of the technological input during the pandemic.

"A current project that we are sponsoring is having smartphone technology they can take into the field, where they can record any development of symptoms, they can look at any symptoms to see what's happening and record the contact data. Because leprosy is contagious, but it can take three to five years to develop, you need to keep a contact history of people – when were they last seen, what was observed, and so on. A smartphone application will help to record that."

**“All of this work is incredibly valuable, but the Church has always understood that the work takes on another dimension altogether when done with God in the heart”**

Of course, to combat leprosy, you have to find those suffering from it, people often found on the margins of whichever society they find themselves in.

"A' is 'active case finding', and that's, of all the things in TRACE, that's the biggest one that we're focused on. So that's, rather than waiting for people with leprosy symptoms to come to us, we're

actually trying to go out into the remote villages and diagnose it early," she says.

"There's some fascinating stories there. One of the projects we fund is a doctor, Dr Tony, it's on our website, and she has a hospital boat in Brazil that she takes up the Amazon, going to all these villages which are extremely remote and then diagnosing and treating leprosy as she finds it up there.

"C' the is 'care', and so that's continuing the things that we did do in the past, so having all these centres where we look after people with leprosy. Then 'E' is emergencies. Last year we sent food parcels to India because of the Covid crisis, and then at the moment we're very much thinking about, 'How do we respond right now to have the greatest impact?'"

## God in the heart

All of this work is incredibly valuable, but the Church has always understood that the work takes on another dimension altogether when done with God in the heart. The organisation takes great "pride" in its Catholic ethos, looking to continue to work that countless nameless and faceless religious and lay people have done throughout the millennia since Christ left the struggle against evil in our hands, albeit with his guidance.

"The ethos is very much just helping people with leprosy as we find them. So, we're governed by Catholics, and it's a charisma that we are executing to try and help people globally, but we don't show any distinction based on race, religion, any other criteria," Ms McIntosh says.

"We try to take a pride in our Catholicism, because historically the Catholic Church has sent so many missionaries out into these countries who've committed their lives to doing good work, and I personally feel that we don't talk about that enough as a Catholic Church.

**“On a more practical level, however, the emphasis on hygiene bodes well for the limiting of leprosy”**

"I think we get far too much coverage of the negatives that go on, but actually the commitment that these people show is just amazing. We are proud of our Catholic background, but then we help anybody that needs to be helped. As we say, our focus is very much on the actions we can take to end leprosy for good. We want to manoeuvre on from managing the symptoms to actually doing the research and training so that we can actually end this for good."

Earlier in the year, Ms McIntosh told this paper about the way Covid-19 was weighing in on the battle to reach and help those struggling with leprosy, and she continues to acknowledge some of the good the pandemic has done while fully aware of the ways in which its made their job more difficult.

An ability to mobilise a wealth of resources in a single direction, such as has been done by the governments and organisations of the world during the pandemic, has given hope to all of



St Damien de Veuster is pictured in bed shortly before he died in 1889 at the Kalawao settlement on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. Photo: CNS

those fighting seemingly 'perennial' diseases. On a more practical level, however, the emphasis on hygiene bodes well for the limiting of leprosy.

"The big focus on hygiene has been helpful. Obviously, a big thing with Covid is being able to wash your hands, but if you're in a village which has no running water, how do you do that? I think there's a growing recognition there's underlying hygiene measures that help against all diseases," Ms McIntosh says.

**“Many diseases that have plagued humanity for thousands of years will unfortunately likely still be around for a long time yet, but the elimination of leprosy is ‘tantalisingly close’, in the organisation’s words”**

However, one of the greatest areas of ignorance in many communities around the world today is on the societal level, of the societal effects leprosy has on those who suffer from it.

"I think a key thing with leprosy is the stigma, and it's hard, particularly in this current environment of things like Black Lives Matter and so on, where we look at unconscious bias and things like that – it's hard for people to relate to societies where it's institutionalised. In some countries you can divorce somebody because they have leprosy or fire someone or exclude them from school, and so that's not just badly thought through behaviours – that's actually how their society exists," she says.

"It's interesting; I read a story recently in the press about a father of a boy with autism who had gone out without a mask, and he'd gone into a shop and the shop said they have to leave. He was trying to explain that his

son with autism wasn't able to wear a mask, and in the interview, he said, 'It's not as if he's a leper'.

"Again, that amazed me, that even in our language, even though we don't come across leprosy so often, the fact that he said that implied that had he had leprosy, that would have been an acceptable treatment. The stigma around leprosy is just very, very ingrained. We're trying to increase awareness of that, in the next few months particularly.

"There are cases where people have been literally left by their wives, abandoned entirely by their families, their families will never have contact with them again. They're completely isolated. It's more than a disease, if that makes sense."

## Normal life

"If you have cancer you're obviously very sick, and if you recover from cancer, you can regain a normal life, but what's different about leprosy is that even when we can cure the medical side, we can almost never completely reintegrate someone into society – that stigma lives on. That's why it's so critical that we do our programmes because the stigma lasts for life, so if we have a chance of avoiding that when someone's 17, the difference is they go on to live a full and valuable life verses being in a colony completely extricated from everybody."

For now, the struggle goes on, but as so rarely happens in this world, the golden end is in sight. Many diseases that have plagued humanity for thousands of years will unfortunately likely still be around for a long time yet, but the elimination of leprosy is "tantalisingly close", in the organisation's words.

"Our chair talks about it being 'tantalisingly close', so we really believe if we can work comprehensively we genuinely can end leprosy soon, and if the focus disappears, that end point goes further back. We hope to end leprosy in 25-30 years, but if we lose focus, it could be 150 years, so we just want to make sure that we don't lose that and keep the passion and the focus."



A religious sister dresses the foot sores of a patient at the Tai Kam leprosarium, located on a tiny island in China. Photo: CNS



Ireland is unprepared in battle against the demonic as Christianity declines, a renowned US exorcist tells **Chai Brady**

**T**he number of people who believe they are being oppressed or even possessed by demonic forces has continued to rise as Christianity declines in the Western world, according to a well-known American exorcist who warns that practicing the Faith “is your primary defence”.

Licensed psychologist Msgr Stephen Rossetti, president and founder of the St Michael Centre for Spiritual Renewal in Washington DC, believes that every priest should have some form of training in exorcism and what is known as ‘deliverance ministry’ – which aims to cleanse people of evil spirits.

He estimates that in the US about half of their dioceses have an exorcist, which he believes is due to the US being more assertive when it comes to assigning priests to the role.

A recent project undertaken by researchers from GRIS (Research and Socioreligious Information Group), Pontificio Regina Apostolorum and the Department of History, Cultures, Civilisations in the University of Bologna looked at the number of exorcists in Ireland, England and Wales, Scotland and Italy. They found that Ireland had nine exorcists.

#### Vatican protocol

This points to only one-third of Ireland’s dioceses having an exorcist despite Vatican protocol stating all dioceses should have one. Asked about the researchers’ finding, Msgr Rossetti said he was not surprised. “In fact, I’ve got some calls from people from Ireland, I’ve prayed with people in Ireland over the phone because they couldn’t find an exorcist there, I think that’s a shame,” he says.

Ireland’s bishops need to “get together and do this”, he stresses, adding that if Ireland’s bishops asked him to go to Ireland and speak to the priests, he would be glad to.

St Michael’s Centre have online training for priests in deliverance ministry, with the next training starting in October. Msgr Rossetti says “we’re trying to do what we can to train the guys because right now they really get nothing. Almost every seminary that I know of except for one has no training whatsoever in this deliverance ministry”.

He continues: “I think every priest should have some training because here’s what happens, someone comes to them and says ‘father I’ve got demons’, so what do you do with that? Well, first of all you have to have a rudimentary understanding



of when something is psychological and when something is more preternatural, so the priest first needs some discernment skills.

**“People fundamentally have a spiritual side to them whether they admit it or not”**

“The second thing that comes is what to do? Most cases are not full possession cases, even if they do have a demonic spirit, they are what we call ‘oppression’ which is a lesser form and any parish priest can pray over someone who has that. Most of the cases are oppression. It’s a wonderful ministry because people get healed fairly quickly with these cases and they are the people sitting in your front pews because they understand the power of Christ and God’s grace to cast out evil.”

When a person feels they may need an exorcist or deliverance ministry and doesn’t find the support they are looking for there can be disastrous consequences, Msgr Rossetti says, “I think the Church needs to pay attention to this, when the Faithful come and they need help – people come from all different walks,

whether Catholic, Protestant, Jews, Muslims whatever – if they come for help and we don’t help them then they are going to turn to other sorts of sources, they’re going to go to witch doctors, they are going to go to curanderos and people like that who are going to cut up the chickens, charge them 150 dollars and do some sort of magic ritual, making the problem worse so I think we have a pastoral obligation to receive these people in charity and do what we can.”

#### Witchcraft

Msgr Rossetti says he finds there’s been an “explosion” in the number of people practicing witchcraft, and like any occult practice, leaves people vulnerable to the demonic.

“People fundamentally have a spiritual side to them whether they admit it or not, you can’t really squash that, if you don’t practice some sort mainstream religion then you’re more vulnerable to doing some of these new age occult practices,” he explains.

“So what we’re finding for example is that there has been an explosion in people practicing witchcraft. People think, ‘what’s wrong with that?’ they say ‘I’m a good witch and I’m doing good’. But what they don’t



A statue of St Michael the Archangel is displayed at the church of St Michael in New York City. Photo: CNS.

**“Every priest should have some form of training in exorcism and what is known as ‘deliverance ministry’ – which aims to cleanse people of evil spirits”**

realise is any form of magic whether you intend it or not allies you with the dark side and when you’re asking for favours or powers from unknown spiritual sources it’s not God who is answering.

“We have a number of people come to us from different continents frankly who have been involved in occult practices including some of these ‘good witches’ who are suffering terribly now, so I think that as witchcraft increases so will the number of people who will need help.”

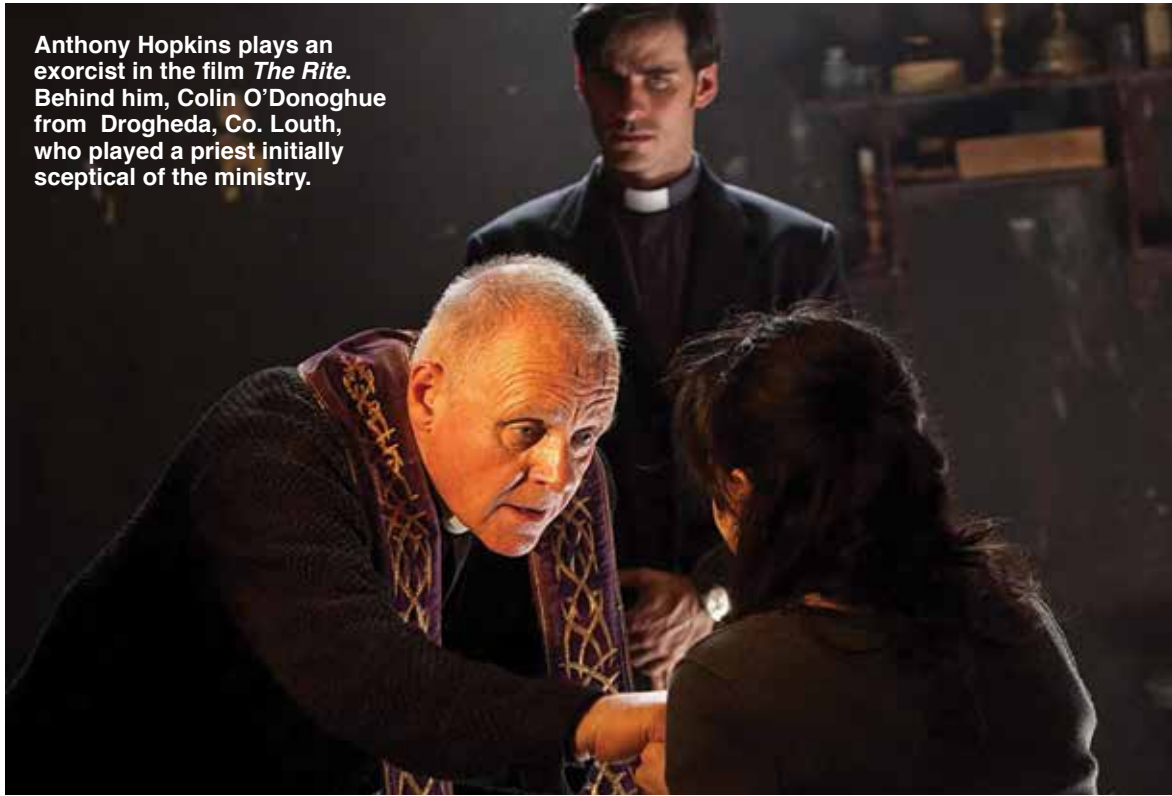
The process of someone getting into trouble and being oppressed or possessed by the demonic is varied, according to Msgr Rossetti, with some people following a well-beaten track to the demonic while others seem to have done nothing.

Msgr Rossetti explains: “Let me give the two basic avenues. Step one, it’s your own fault, that’s avenue one.” He says there are three steps down this road. The first is that a person stops practicing the Faith, which he describes as “your primary defence”. The second is to start committing serious sins “which creates a vulnerability”. The third is to start practicing the occult.

“Magic, witchcraft, ouija boards, divination, summoning spirit, reiki, all that kind of stuff, that’s a direct invitation to Satan,” he says.

“So if you drop your shield, you don’t practice the Faith, commit serious sin which creates a vulnerabil-

Anthony Hopkins plays an exorcist in the film *The Rite*. Behind him, Colin O'Donoghue from Drogheda, Co. Louth, who played a priest initially sceptical of the ministry.



ity and give Satan an invitation by practicing some sort of occult magic and keep doing it and I guarantee you, you're going to have a demonic problem."

Speaking about the second avenue of demonic oppression/possession, he says that "sadly some people get possessed through what seems to be little or no fault of their own".

"I've had young people come to me in their 20s, their parents were practicing the occult, like santería or voodoo when they were little kids, they were dedicated to a demon. It's very sad because parents have real authority over their children and so if they are dedicated to the dark side, they are going to have a problem. Or they could have been really radically abused and there's a real vulnerability there and there's some connection with some dark power, so those are very sad cases. It does happen more than a little bit, we have many people come to us whose parents involved them in these dark practices when they were kids."

As an exorcist, Msgr Rossetti has many stories of his cases and has taken part in hundreds of exorcisms. Asked if he can give an example of some of his experiences, he recalls being contacted by a man from the Midwest of the US.

### Believers

Msgr Rossetti says: "He's not Catholic he's a fallen away evangelical, his wife and two children are not real believers. They move into this house in August, in April the guy who was in the house had died. He was a child molester and practiced the occult, so sadly did some horrible, evil stuff."

"The family move into the house and literally all hell breaks loose. They are in this house and the lights are flashing and the dogs howling, there's noises and thumping and banging, whistling, they see these dark figures, they feel oppressed, just everything, it's a bad demonic movie."

"And so I called the local priest up and said father you know there's a family down the street that needs some help, he said 'I'm going on vacation tomorrow', I said 'this is an emergency', so God bless him he goes to the house that evening."

"I told him how to exorcise the house, so he does the exorcism of the

house, he goes off on his vacation. I talked to the family about a week later, they said 'well, about 80% better but we're still having problems'. So the priest comes back after two weeks' vacation and I said 'father please go again', he did, a wonderful guy, so he goes in and exorcises the house a second time, it's been fine ever since."

**“He has seen a woman’s eyes turn completely black during an exorcism, while another man looked as if his eyes had become those of a snake”**

He said he has spoken to the family very recently, and a year and a half on the house is still quiet. "They're in the front pews of their church because they learned the hard way about the reality of Christ casting out the demons but sometimes some of those Hollywood things actually are true," Msgr Rossetti said.

In another case a priest came to Msgr Rossetti who was concerned about a woman who had unexplained scratches and bruises. He did not feel this was enough evidence and he sent her home.

"So then she starts seeing these dark shadow figures, shadow men they call them, in the distance, and they looked demonic. But then what happens is she starts having this occult knowledge. She knows things about the priests around her that she shouldn't know, there's no way she could know these private things about them and so now everyone is concerned," he recalls.

"So they bring her in, I start praying over her she starts twitching, I throw some holy water on her and her eyes roll back, all you see are the whites of her eyes, she flops on the floor starts screaming and this really evil presence comes forward and just look at me and says, 'you stupid priest, I hate you' and so off we go and sadly she was really possessed so it took about a year and a half. She's doing fine now, she's married and has some family and it's terrific. She was very sane, she was like a girl next door, I did a psychological evaluation on her and said she's saner than I am, a solid person."

### Psychology

Having practiced psychology for 25 years, Msgr Rossetti says he is well-versed at differentiating a psychological disorder from someone struggling against a sinister spirit. In St Michael's Centre he and two other priests facilitate about 20 sessions a week, which he describes as "a very active caseload".

"A not insignificant number who have come to us saying they have demons are really suffering from a psychotic disorder and there are basic symptoms of a psychosis, for example when they send me these emails which start looking fairly sane but by the end of the email, they are all over the place."

### Associations

"We call those loose associations, they start going on this paranoid rant. It doesn't mean we can't treat them with compassion, we should perhaps pray a healing prayer with them but we're not going to do an exorcism. When I see this psychotic, loose associations I say 'I don't think so'."

**“A priest came to Msgr Rossetti who was concerned about a woman who had unexplained scratches and bruises. He did not feel this was enough evidence and he sent her home”**

"There are certain symptoms and signs of actually a demonic presence which are not psychological and most laity don't know what those are and we don't tell them but when I see them, I say oops, that's typically demonic. On the other hand, if something is typically psychotic, for example if someone says that the politicians are out to get me, they are reading my mind and they are placing demons inside my head."

"Some people really are possessed of course but some people, they want to be possessed, they want people thinking they are possessed, they want to engage an exorcist. They do their best imitation of a possessed person and usually we can figure that out fairly quickly. So there's lots of different reasons why people look like they are possessed but they are not," he said.

Aversion to holy water, sacred objects and places, unexplained scratches and bruising Msgr Rossetti says are all some of the potential signs of possession.

Most people's knowledge of a solemn exorcism is based on what they would see in Hollywood films. They can be accurate at times according to Msgr Rossetti, but exaggerated.

Asked which film he thinks is one of the most accurate portrayals

of exorcism, he mentioned *The Rite* (2011). The film is loosely based on a book focused on events recounted by an American exorcist Fr Gary Thomas and his experience working in Rome with exorcists.

However, Msgr Rossetti didn't think the film's ending was credible, adding "even that movie, Hollywood did their whole thing. I think we need some more accurate films because you don't really need to jazz it up really, when you tell the truth, it's stunning and striking".

He said he has seen a woman's eyes turn completely black during an exorcism, while another man looked as if his eyes had become those of a snake.

Msgr Rossetti hastened to add that in films "the big mistake they make is they give you the impression that somehow Satan and God are on equal footing. That somehow there's some dualistic universe and that's just nonsense".

"There is only one God, Satan is a chained beast and he is just instantly cast out by anything holy, by Christ. Jesus is Lord, and people get all upset and frightened by Satan, we shouldn't be, I tell them to trust in Jesus and Satan is a dust bunny he is nothing compared."

"I just throw a little bit of holy water on the person and the demon starts screaming, you say the prayers of the Church, oh my gosh they are being scalded by the power of Christ so that's their big error, that they don't realise that Satan is completely vanquished by Christ and that would be my concern."

### Exorcist

Msgr Rossetti released a book *Diary of an American Exorcist* on June 22 in which he gives an inside look at the experiences of working as an exorcist. One of the reasons he decided to write the book was he feels there is a rediscovering of the exorcism ministry as it has been "on mothballs" for the last 50 years since Vatican II.

He added their website, catholicexorcism.org, which is just a year and a half old, has been visited by 200,000 people. They have 10,000 subscribers and about 20,000 people visit the site each week.

"We have touched a need and people are flooding in with questions, requests and concerns and some are really heart wrenching and they really are desperate for help," he said, adding there is also an app called Catholic Exorcism which can be used to help educate people on the issue. There are also deliverance prayers and other resources.

"What has happened is that more and more people are asking for help and so in response to that need we're trying to recover the ministry and we've got some general books on the subject but in terms of how to do it day to day and what you really need to know, that's been lost. This book is one attempt to say 'here's what happens day to day, if you want to get your hands dirty in this ministry this is what you're going to encounter, this is what you need to know, so it's filling in some of the gaps'."

"Right now we're training new exorcists and there is not a lot out there to help these guys who call me up with questions, 'what do I do in this case?', 'what does this mean, what does that mean?' so we're trying to pass on the knowledge."



Alice Braga, who plays a woman who becomes possessed, is pictured during a scene in the 2011 film *The Rite*.

# Out&About

## A sense of faith



**WESTMEATH:** Bishop of Elphin Dr Kevin Doran visits the Sensory Garden in Kiltoom Parish August 24, where he met Fr Michael McManus PP Kiltoom-Cam (left) and Fr Ray Milton PP Knockcroghery.



**DUBLIN:** Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell launched the diocese's 'Families Walking Together in Hope' campaign in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, August 25.



**DUBLIN:** Mark Brady, Margaret Ó Dálaigh, Ailbhe and Amy Costello, who helped launch the archdiocese's 'Walking Together in Hope', August 25.

### IN SHORT

#### Bishop of Clogher announces clerical appointments

Bishop Larry Duffy wished "God's blessings" on the priests who will be taking on new roles when the appointments take effect on September 1.

The appointments include a new Diocesan director for the Synodal Pathway, Fr Pat McHugh, which Bishop Duffy called the "first step" on the pathway for the diocese.

Due to a shortage in priests, the parishes of

Aughnamullen East, Ballybay, Clontibret and Muckno will now be served by a team of four priests.

The appointments are as follows:

Clontibret: Fr Paudge McDonnell Parish Priest of Clontibret to be Pastor Emeritus Clontibret, while Fr Adrian Walshe PP Castleblayney (Muckno) and PP Aughnamullen East is appointed PP Clontibret.

Fintona: Fr Seán Mulligan CC, Carrickmacross, is appointed as CC to Fintona (Donacavey) parish.

Carrickmacross: Fr Kevin Connolly CC Fintona (Donacavey) is appointed CC Carrickmacross.

Fr Pat McHugh is appointed Diocesan Director of the Synodal Pathway

#### Kerry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes goes virtual

Kerry Diocese's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes will be held virtually from September 2-7.

In a statement, the organisers said the pilgrimage's theme will be "Bringing Lourdes Home". It will take place in different places in the diocese over five days, while being streamed as well.

"We will use these few days to prayerfully

bring Lourdes into our hearts and into our homes," the organisers said.

"For the second time in half a century there will be no Kerry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes this year, however, it is great to be able to bring people together online for Lourdes 2021.

"Every member of the organising team and the wider Lourdes Pilgrimage community are hoping and praying they will be boarding flights at Farranfore airport once again this time next year."

The Pilgrimage Programme can be accessed on the diocesan webpage, <https://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/>.

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Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**KILKENNY:** Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty takes part in the third annual Tom Dillon Memorial Walk in aid of Carlow-Kilkenny Homecare Team. They climbed Brandon Hill, the highest mountain in Kilkenny, August 21.



**SLIGO:** Fr Vincent Sherlock was inducted as parish priest in the Parish of Tubbercurry & Cloonacool by the Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey, August 22.



**◀ TIPPERARY:**

Minister for Higher and Further Education Simon Harris (front left) speaks with Dr Finn Ó Murchú (front right), Head of School at Mary Immaculate College Thurles, on a tour of the campus, August 23. Photo: Brian Arthur.

**▶ TIPPERARY:**

Minister Harris speaks with representatives from the Mary Immaculate Students' Union (MISU), (from left) John White, Aoife Gleeson and Róisín Burke. Photo: Brian Arthur.



**CLARE:** Fr Ger Jones blows out the candles of a cake to mark 10 years since his ordination to the priesthood, August 22.



**DOWN:** Kristin Neeson and Paschal McCullagh from the Parish of Drumbo and Carryduff Environment Group make a video for Down and Connor Diocese's Season of Creation, which will be shared each Sunday on the diocesan social media, August 24.

**Events**

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



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### German bishop says he's sceptical about exempting priests from celibacy

● A German bishop who co-chairs the Synodal Path's forum on priests said he is "sceptical" about exempting Catholic priests from celibacy.

Bishop Felix Genn of Münster said he accepted that people were deciding not to become priests because they did not feel called to celibacy, adding: "Perhaps they will then choose another profession in the Church."

The bishop spoke in an interview with the Bistumspress publishing group in Osnabrück.

"As a bishop, I also see my responsibility to the universal Church," Bishop Genn said in the interview. He also expressed doubts about whether the forum would come to a clear position on celibacy.

### Tensions rise over Covid vaccines as bishops organise Pope Francis' visit to Slovakia

● As a visit from Pope Francis approaches, Slovakia is seeing rising political tensions and growing opposition to the Covid vaccine.

Last month, Slovakia's bishops announced that only people who had been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 could attend events organised for Pope Francis' Sept. 13-15 visit. Meanwhile,

more than half of people in the central European country are unvaccinated, and a growing number say they do not want to receive the Covid vaccine at all.

"We knew there would be some problems with this," Fr Martin Kramara, the spokesman for the Slovakian bishops' conference, told CNA, in reference to the obligation to be vaccinated.

### 40 days of fasting and penitence to heal spiritual damage in Philippines

● A Philippines bishop has announced 40 days of fasting and penitence as a way to share in the sufferings of others and heal from the spiritual damage of the coronavirus pandemic.

Such penitence and self-reflection, he said, will help the Faithful "encounter Christ in the fullness of his generosity and love especially amid this ongoing pandemic crisis".

"The pandemic has revealed that we are

not only vulnerable to this biological threat of Covid-19, but also to the contagion of hopelessness, depression, selfishness, the abuse of power, the lack of transparency and accountability, and the preoccupation with personal privileges to the detriment of those who continuously suffer," Auxiliary Bishop Moises Cuevas of Zamboanga said in an August 24 pastoral letter, *Not by Bread Alone*.

### Colombian Supreme Court rules minors can marry or cohabit with an adult without parental consent

● The Supreme Court of Colombia ruled last week that minors between 14 and older can choose, without parental consent, legally to marry or cohabit with an adult if they have the "responsible intention" to form a family.

The August 18 ruling deals with an inheritance lawsuit regarding whether there was a de facto marriage between a 14-year-old boy and an adult woman who later died.

For the court, "those over fourteen and under eighteen years of age" can, "according to their age and maturity", decide "about their own lives and assume responsibilities".

"No one else could be the master of their destinies. So they should be considered free and autonomous persons and with full rights," the text states.

## UK university refuses to recognise Catholic priest as chaplain over social media posts

A university in England has refused to recognise a Catholic priest as a chaplain over comments that he posted on social media.

The University of Nottingham, in central England, confirmed August 25 that it had declined to give official recognition to Fr David Palmer, a priest of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham.

"Our concern was not in relation to Fr David's views themselves, but the manner in which these views have been expressed in the context of our diverse community of people of many faiths," a spokesperson for the university told CNA.

Fr Palmer, who serves in the Diocese of Nottingham, was named as chaplain to the Catholic community at the University of Nottingham by local Bishop Patrick McKinney.

The bishop also asked him to serve as Catholic chaplain to Nottingham Trent University.

While Nottingham Trent University accepted the appointment, the University of Nottingham invited Palmer for an interview on June 17.

Following the interview, the university wrote to Bishop McKinney expressing concerns about the appointment.

At a further meeting July 1, the university specified that the concerns related to Fr Palmer's posts on social media, highlighting one on assisted suicide and another on abortion.

"They referenced a tweet where I had referred to the proposed 'assisted dying'



Fr Palmer. Photo CNA.

bill [introduced in Britain's Parliament in May] as a bill to allow the NHS 'to kill the vulnerable,'" Fr Palmer told CNA via email August 26.

"I was told it was fine for me to have this opinion, but they were concerned with how I expressed it. When I asked how they would suggest I express it, quite remarkably, they suggested I should call it 'end of life care,' which is a completely unacceptable policing of

religious belief."

The priest wrote on Twitter August 24 that the university also objected to a second post in which he described abortion as the "slaughter of babies," in the context of the debate over US President Joe Biden's reception of Holy Communion despite backing legal abortion.

Fr Palmer said that he defended both posts as reflecting Catholic belief.

Fr Palmer told CNA that

after the meeting where his social media posts were discussed, the university authorities contacted the bishop to say that they still had concerns, asking him to provide an alternative priest.

The priest said that the bishop declined to nominate another priest and that following further discussions, the university agreed that Fr Palmer could offer Mass on campus on Sundays as a "guest priest".

## Former Australian PM says fight state euthanasia proposal

Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott urged Catholics to write to their local state legislators because proposed euthanasia laws in New South Wales would fundamentally undermine the relationship between doctors and patients by legitimising doctor-assisted suicide in the state.

"It would turn doctors from healers into killers, and that would be a tragedy for the medical profession and a diminution of our society," he said.

Alex Greenwich, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, plans to introduce a Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, which would allow for two doctors to approve a euthanasia procedure with no mandatory psychological assessment.

Under the proposed bill, the two doctors do not need to be independent of each other, and they do not need to meet and examine the patient in person.

Speaking to an online forum of more

than 100 mainly university students August 20, Mr Abbott said the bill is fundamentally flawed and directly contradicts sound ethical principles in health care.

"It legitimises suicide. We should remember that state and federal governments spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on mental health programs, essentially to stop us from getting to the point where we feel our lives are worthless and pointless," he said.

## US bishop responds to deluge of abuse lawsuits

After nearly 1,000 abuse claims were filed against the Diocese of Buffalo in the last two years, the diocese's Bishop Michael Fisher called it a "tragedy of epic proportions".

The time window to file

civil lawsuits in old cases of child sex abuse in New York expired on August 14. A total of 924 claims were filed against the Diocese of Buffalo, more than any other diocese in the state. Nearly 11,000 total claims were filed

in New York under the act.

"It is of paramount importance to deal with the Church's obligations to survivors forthrightly and to work to repair the enormous damage that has been done not only to the reputation of the

Church here in Western New York, but most importantly to the lives of those affected," Bishop Fisher stated in a letter dated August 21. Dr Fisher was installed as bishop of Buffalo in January 2021.





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## Super development for Salesian sister



Pope Francis has named Salesian Sister Alessandra Smerilli as secretary *ad interim* of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Photo: CNS.

## Missionaries of Charity and 14 disabled children from Kabul arrive at Rome airport

Religious sisters from the Missionaries of Charity and 14 disabled children from an orphanage in Afghanistan arrived safely last Wednesday at Rome's international airport.

A Catholic priest and five sisters from the order founded by Mother Teresa arrived on one of two evacuation flights from Kabul that landed in Rome on August 25 carrying a total of 277 people.

Fr Giovanni Scalese, the ecclesiastical superior of the Catholic mission in Afghanistan, also arrived on the flight. He spent eight years in Kabul, offering daily Mass for foreign residents in the city at

the only Catholic church in Afghanistan, located inside of the Italian embassy.

"I would never have returned to Italy without these children," Fr Scalese told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*.

"We could not leave them there."

The children, aged between six to 20 years old, were residents of an orphanage founded in 2006 by the Missionaries of Charity in Kabul, which has now been forced to close due to the Taliban's takeover of the city.

Sr Bhatti Shahnaz, another Catholic religious sister who arrived in Rome on the evacu-

ation flight, also worked with disabled children in Afghanistan with her community, the Sisters of Charity of St Jeanne Antide.

"The 50 intellectually disabled children we looked after are still there," she said with tears in her eyes.

Fr Matteo Sanavio, the president of the NGO For the Children of Kabul, was at the airport to welcome the Catholic arrivals from Afghanistan.

"The first moments we shared were smiles under our masks," Fr Sanavio told *Vatican News*.

"We were able to embrace, and the first words we said to each other were: 'We praise

the Lord because he has done great things.'"

Italy has welcomed 2,659 evacuated Afghans, about a third of them children, according to the Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini.

Fr Sanavio said: "We really must thank the Italian forces for their work and dedication, for everything ... They managed to bring the nuns to safety, these little seeds of Christian charity present in Afghanistan, and above all, we must thank them for having brought our children, those of the Missionaries of Charity, who have severe disabilities."

## Vatican suppresses Italian community founded by married couple

With the approval of Pope Francis, the Vatican has ordered the dissolution of an Italy-based community, which had its headquarters in Verona and communities in Medjugorje and Brazil.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life determined the Regina Pacis Community was to be "suppressed", citing problems with a lack of "maturity" in its charism and institutional structure, which would have been necessary for "a healthy development in the

future", according to the decree, quoted by Bishop Giuseppe Zenti of Verona.

Visitations and oversight of the community showed there had been "institutional weaknesses, especially in governance" as well as difficulties in relations between members, the bishop said in a written communique sent August 17 to members of the diocese.

Verona's daily newspaper, *L'Arena*, published news of the suppression and passages from the bishop's note August 24. The Vatican decree, dated July 24, said

the community's foundational charism lacked authenticity and "trustworthiness," and there was a "lack of substance" in the community's texts, especially concerning ecclesiology and formation, according to the bishop's note.

The Regina Pacis Community was founded in 1986 by a married couple, Alessandro and Luisa Nottegar, to be a community based on prayer, evangelisation and service to the poor. It was made up of families, laypeople, nuns, priests and friars.

## Pope Francis names religious sister to no. 2 position in Vatican's social development office

● Pope Francis last Thursday named Italian economist and Catholic religious sister Alessandra Smerilli as secretary of the Vatican's social development office on an interim basis.

Sr Smerilli was appointed *ad interim* secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development following the departure of secretary Msgr Bruno Marie Duffé and deputy secretary Fr Augusto Zampini, who have returned to their home dioceses, the Vatican announced August 26.

The 46-year-old Salesian sister is an economist and professor. She has been an undersecretary at the human development dicastery since March 24 and was one of the principal organisers of the 2020 Economy of Francesco event.

Since 2019, Sr Smerilli has also served as a councillor of the Vatican City State and a consultant to the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. In spring 2020, she was asked to coordinate the economic taskforce of the Vatican Covid-19 Commission.

Sr Smerilli is one of two women to hold a second-ranking position in an important Vatican office, after the nomination of Sr Nathalie Becquart to the Synod of Bishops in February.

## Pope Francis appoints Vatican Master of Ceremonies Msgr Guido Marini to Italian diocese

● Pope Francis on Sunday appointed the Vatican's papal master of ceremonies, Msgr Guido Marini, bishop of a northern Italian diocese.

Bishop-elect Marini, who has been in charge of papal liturgies since his appointment by Benedict XVI in 2007, was August 29 named Bishop of Tortona, a diocese of around 280,000 people.

Msgr Marini, 56, grew up near Tortona in the city of Genoa, where he served as chief liturgist for four years. The bishop-elect has degrees in canon and civil law. Prior to his

appointment to the Vatican he was chancellor of the Archdiocese of Genoa and a spiritual director in the seminary.

There are eight papal masters of ceremonies, of which Msgr Marini was the head. They are responsible for organizing and overseeing all liturgical celebrations of the Pope. Since 2007, with few exceptions, Msgr Marini could be seen at the side of Pope Benedict XVI and then Pope Francis during papal Masses and other liturgies both at the Vatican and abroad.

## Pope Francis sends €196,000 for Haiti earthquake victims

● Pope Francis will send over €196,000 in aid for victims of the Haiti earthquake which struck August 14.

The amount is "an initial contribution" to help the people of Haiti "in this emergency phase", according to the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development.

In an August 24 press release, the dicastery said the money will be distributed to the Catholic dioceses most in need, with collaboration from the Vatican's embassy in Haiti, the apostolic nunciature.

The funds "will be used to assist the earthquake victims and is intended to be an immediate expression of the feeling of spiritual closeness and paternal encouragement towards the people and territories affected, demonstrated by the Holy Father," it said.

A 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Haiti on the night of August 14. The death toll from the devastating quake had risen to over 2,200 people by August 22, according to Haiti's Civil Protection Agency.

More than 340 people are still missing and 12,268 are injured. The protection agency said nearly 53,000 homes were destroyed in what is the largest natural disaster to hit Haiti since the 2010 earthquake.



# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

**H**ad you or I been among the almost 30 million Americans who tuned in to hear Walter Cronkite bring us the news of the evening of October 29, 1969, we would have heard a great deal about an underground Soviet nuclear test that day, one of 19 throughout the year that exacerbated fears of an all-out nuclear war.

We also would have heard about the Alexander v. Holmes case decided that day, in which the US Supreme Court decreed that segregation in public schools must end “immediately”.

What Uncle Walter wouldn't have told us about is that on the same day, a brief one-word message was passed between two of the four computers then hooked up to the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network, a project commissioned by the Department of Defence as part of its strategy for survival of government in the event of that nuclear exchange.

## Message

The message was passed from one computer at UCLA to another in Stanford – well, part of it, anyway, because transmitting the simple word “login” caused the receiving computer at Stanford to crash after just two letters.

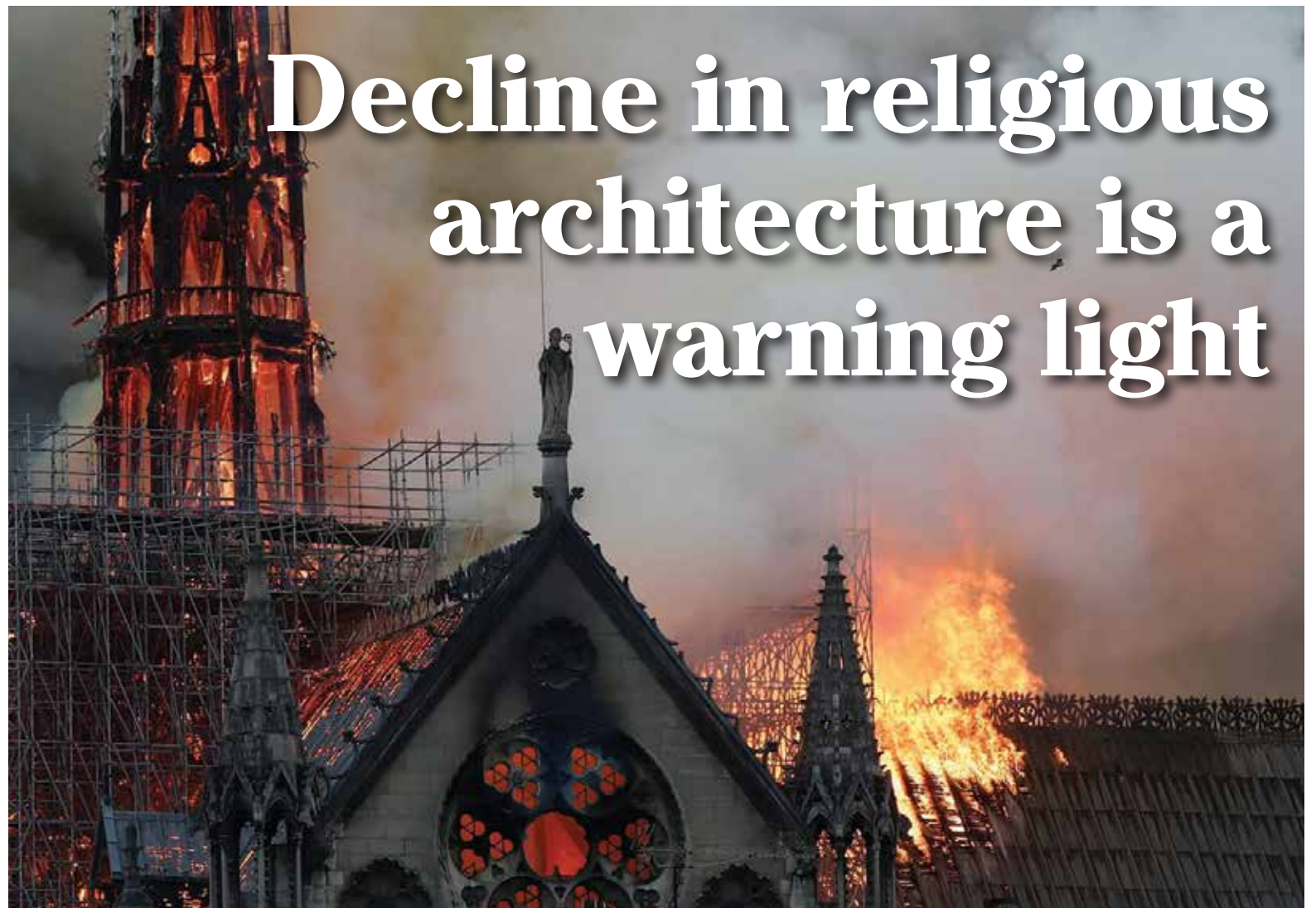
In that inglorious fashion, the internet was born.

The moral of the story is that much of what we talk about in the press, things that seem so important in the moment, turn out to be historically meaningless. The nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union feared that October night never transpired, and it turned out that segregation couldn't be ended by fiat, even from the Supreme Court. Yet the Internet today is, well, a fairly big deal.

**“Like a warning light on the dashboard, surely that contrast should be alerting us to something about the declining capacity of religious faith to create culture”**

In other words, what looms most important with the passing of time often goes unnoticed as it transpires. Journalism is sometimes called the first draft of history, but that's not quite right. It's more akin to the surging river in which the nuggets of history one day will be mined, carrying all manner of flotsam and jetsam along with the occasional piece of gold.

All this comes to mind in light of a recent feature in, of all places, the *New*



## Decline in religious architecture is a warning light

**“Across time more than half of the greatest architectural achievements of humanity, as designated by AD, have been inspired by religious faith”**

*York Times* ‘Style’ supplement featuring a rundown of what its contributors consider the 25 most important pieces of post-war architecture. What's of interest here is that of the 25 structures, only two have any connection to religious faith – the Bait Ur Rouf Mosque in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the Dominican Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette in Évieux, France.

## Striking

That striking fact has passed largely without comment in the arena of Catholic media right now, consumed by whether the President of the United States should be denied communion, which senior Church official will be the next to be outed for private use of a gay hook-up app, and who's stabbing whom in the back in the Vatican's blockbuster trial over a \$400 million (€340 million) property deal in London gone bad.

Yet arguably, we'd all do well to pay a bit more attention to the *Times* piece and what it has to say about the creative power of religious faith in our era.

For a term of comparison, consider a 2017 rundown from *Architectural Digest* of the 50 most iconic buildings around the world everyone should see before they die. They date from all

periods of history, virtually all of them before the 20th century, and religion is by far the most important creative force underlying the achievements. A robust 23 are explicitly religiously-inspired structures, ranging from Sacré-Coeur in Paris to Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Another five are arguably also religious in origin, such as the Potala Palace in Tibet, built as a fortress and seat of government for the Dalai Lama – but, of course, Tibetans also regard the Dalai Lama as divine and he's the centre of their faith.

**“What looms most important with the passing of time often goes unnoticed as it transpires”**

In other words, across time more than half of the greatest architectural achievements of humanity, as designated by AD, have been inspired by religious faith. Over the last 70 years, according to the panel assembled by the ‘Style’ section, that percentage has dropped to just eight.

Granted, that's just two highly subjective samples, and others might be very different. Italian professor

of the history of architecture Maria Antonietta Crippa did such a rundown for the magazine *Décor* in 2019 covering the most important buildings of the last 40 years, and there's almost no overlap with the ‘Style’ list – except in one particular. Of the 40 buildings she lists, only four are religious in character, meaning 10%.

## Warning light

Like a warning light on the dashboard, surely that contrast should be alerting us to something about the declining capacity of religious faith to create culture. Moreover, it's not a problem confined to the West or to Christianity, but something that seems to be affecting all religious traditions.

Arguably beginning with the Iranian Revolution in 1978, global religion seemingly entered a largely reactionary period. The thousand and one jihadist movements that drew inspiration from the Khomeini uprising are destructive forces bent on recapturing an imagined version of pure Islam, and the dictionary definition of non-creative. Nationalist and fundamentalist currents in Hinduism currently backed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi like-

wise are mostly defensive in nature, premised on protecting Indian tradition and national identity.

Parallel currents in Christianity are well-known and don't really require comment, except to say the current contretemps in Catholicism over the Latin Mass is a classic symptom of a religious community relitigating its past rather than engaging its present.

**“A robust 23 are explicitly religiously-inspired structures, ranging from Sacré-Coeur in Paris to Angkor Wat in Cambodia”**

Perhaps this reactionary posture was necessary to stop the bleeding after centuries of erosion of religious faith and practice under onslaught of a rationalist, empiricist and secular tide, which is a matter for historians of religion to assess. Yet it's also possible to hypothesise that such an extended period of defensiveness has taken a toll in terms of religion's capacity to be bold, to take risks, to express itself with confidence and to imagine new forms, not only in architecture but all realms of culture.

In any event, that's an example of the kind of long-term conversation people interested in religious affairs probably ought to try to have more often – if, that is, we can tear ourselves away for a few moments from whatever the frenzy of the day happens to be.

# 'Shame on the West' for abandoning Afghani refugees - top European prelate



Elise Ann Allen

One of Europe's leading cardinals has criticised the continent's political leaders, and those throughout the west, for abandoning Afghani refugees, focusing more on numbers than on how best to help those fleeing violence.

Speaking to *SIR*, the news outlet of the Italian bishops, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, archbishop of Luxemburg and president of the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), said the images coming out of Afghanistan over the past week "hurt my heart. It hurts my heart to see how people are treated".

"We had given hope to this people and now we have left them in Dante's hell," he said, adding, "I feel ashamed. Shame on Europe and the West. We talk a lot about values, but where are our values in Afghanistan now?"

**“The only thing we are discussing is what to do in order not to have a large number of refugees from Afghanistan rather than go to the aid of these people”**

Under the control of the Taliban until the United States' invasion in 2001, after nearly 3,000 people died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on US soil – coordinated by al-Qaida's Osama bin Laden, who received protection from the Taliban – Afghanistan is back in the hands of the militant Islamist group after its takeover of the capital city of Kabul just over a week ago.

The country is in chaos, with thousands camped at the Kabul airport in the hopes of being evacuated while the Taliban consolidates control of the country.

US President Joe Biden has announced a complete withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan by August 31, just before the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, ending a decades-long presence of American military in the country.

According to Cardinal Hollerich, the West has "conducted the wrong policy" on Afghanistan.

"The only thing we are discussing is what to do in order not to have a large number of refugees from Afghanistan rather than go to the aid of these people. And this attitude causes me shame," he said.

Noting that Greece recently completed an extension on its border wall



A woman in Los Angeles displays a photograph of a young Afghan girl at a rally against the Taliban August 21, 2021. Photo: CNS

with Turkey as a means of deterring potential Afghan refugees from entering, Cardinal Hollerich said this "hurts me and makes me ashamed because we talk so much about European values but don't put them into practice".

He also lamented what he called an increasingly anti-migrant language in European politics, saying, "there is no longer any talk of refugees or asylum seekers under the Geneva agreements. There is talk of illegal migrants and this is scary".

## New walls

Greece's border wall, "is the expression of this mentality", he said, adding, "I had hoped that the collapse of the Berlin Wall would signal the end of the time of walls, but it is not so. New walls have been built. It is not the communist world of our past history that does this, but the European society of today; Western, liberal, permissive. We have lost consciousness."

Cardinal Hollerich insisted that one lesson to be learned going forward is that "the West is not the only world power".

"We must accept this and act more prudently," Cardinal Hollerich said, accusing western nations of acting "only in the name of economic value" and not in people's interests.

The cardinal said there has been "a lack of political responsibility" when it comes to Afghanistan, and now it's time "to fill this void".

In terms of the refugee problem, Cardinal Hollerich pointed to the humanitarian corridors project overseen by the Italian Community of Sant'Egidio, which allows migrants and refugees safe passage out of crisis zones.

**“Those countries include Albania, Qatar, Costa Rica, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia, as well as Uganda, which already hosts roughly 1.5 million refugees from South Sudan”**

Noting that there are already hundreds of thousands of refugees from Africa living in camps in Libya, Cardinal Hollerich said that sending Afghans to the same fate is like "condemning them to despair".

"I would therefore like to launch an appeal to the European Union, to the men and women involved in politics: Act according to your conscience," he said.

With some European countries, such as Germany and France, set to hold elections, Cardinal Hollerich warned that "A man and a woman who make political decisions only to be re-elected are destined to

become a generation of very weak politicians".

Despite the hesitancy of some western nations to welcome Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban, several countries have pledged to take in a small portion of Afghans being evacuated after the Taliban's takeover.

Those countries include Albania, Qatar, Costa Rica, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia, as well as Uganda, which already hosts roughly 1.5 million refugees from South Sudan.

## Afghan refugees

Italy has also taken in fleeing Afghans, with the latest plane landing August 22, with some 211 people on board. Italian foreign minister Luigi Di Maio said Sunday August 22 that so far, 1,600 Afghans have been airlifted to Italy over the last week.

Italian Bishop Calogero Marino of Savona sent a letter out in his diocese over the weekend in which he pledged support and welcome for incoming Afghan refugees.

"Afghanistan is truly dramatic: the images of people crowded at the airport and of women handing their own children to soldiers still present in the area are the most eloquent signs of this," he said.

Pointing to the international reaction to the crisis, Bishop Marino said that, "If on one hand a response of international solidarity is being activated, on the other we are once

again raising walls and barriers on the national borders of some European countries".

Bishop Marino announced that the Diocese of Savona, with the help of its local Caritas office, the Red Cross, and other volunteer organisations in the area, will make available its "energy and resources" to welcome a small number of refugees.

Speaking to *SIR*, Italian Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, said the country's bishops "will do everything possible" to help the Afghan refugees that have been evacuated to Italy.

He lamented the fact that numerous military weapons were left behind when troops evacuated, saying, "It's like putting a gun in a child's hand".

"Sometimes gestures are made that are not sufficiently reflected and thought about," he said, insisting that no matter what happens, "the Italian Church, through Caritas, will take action".

"This is a problem that can only be faced together," he said, insisting on the importance going forward of laying a solid foundation so that "such tragedies not to repeat themselves".

**i** Elise Ann Allen, senior correspondent for Cruxnow.com

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Future of Afghanistan 'bleak' and 'uncertain'

**Dear Editor,** The events in Afghanistan are tragic to say the least, the future of the population, especially women and girls is shrouded in doubt. Their future under the Taliban, whether that be access to education, the workforce and other basic freedoms is under threat. It is not only women, but all those seen to have been 'colluding' with the west over the past two decades, I believe, face severe retribution, hence the desperate scenes witnessed over the past weeks as people try to flee the country en masse.

If this had happened under Trump's administration there would be justified outrage and condemnation but for some reason Joe Biden, Ireland's golden boy who was unasham-

edly supported here by mainstream media, seems to be getting off the hook despite abandoning the people of Afghanistan. While I am no fan of Trump, he has received extreme criticism in the media for far less than abandoning a country to extremists.

The US exit of the country will be criticised for years to come. We must pray for the future of religious minorities, the poor and marginalised, women, children and all those living in fear in Afghanistan as the new regime takes hold. While the Taliban have said they will honour women's rights within the norms of Islamic law, that could really mean anything as the interpretation of Islamic law varies

hugely across the Middle East.

In addition, can the Taliban really be believed when they say they have offered an amnesty to Afghans who worked with the US and the western-backed government? I have my doubts. Who knows if the Taliban's promises will be upheld in the future, especially when they say private media will remain independent but "should not work against national values"? I hope there are journalists brave enough to keep us abreast of the situation in Afghanistan as the situation seems bleak.

*Yours etc.,  
Anna Dempsey  
Tallaght, Dublin 24*

### Who was behind the Big Bang?

**Dear Editor,** Back in the early 20th Century, scientists, recognising that the universe was expanding, came up with the 'Big Bang theory'. But one question was; who or what caused the huge explosion?

One of the scientists was a Soviet citizen so it was a matter of some difficulty when the "who or what" was identified as God, or Deus, or Theos or Jehovah.

The Gospels are then available to name Jesus as God etc. And among other things both Jesus and his mother are Jews.

So the RTÉ New Year production, (for which they have robustly apologised) was not only anti-Christian but was anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic. RTÉ may also have cast doubt on the fact of the expansion of the universe.

*Yours etc.,  
Gerald Murphy  
Rathfarnham, Dublin*



### Church handled with 'contempt' by Govt during Covid

**Dear Editor,** I was disappointed to read Fr Martin Delaney's article on the cancelling of the sacraments [IC 12/08/2021], and particularly, his reference that 'there was no expiry date on the Sacraments'. How can he state this when what was involved was the postponing of the graces available through these sacraments? How is it all right when it

involved delaying encounters with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and the receiving of the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation?

I agree that there is a great need to examine the preparation for reception of the sacraments but that is a separate issue although one which needs to be addressed urgently. I do not agree that this issue was

not handled with contempt by the Government when the basis for the cancellation was an off-the-cuff remark from the Tanaiste and when efforts by Church leaders to meet with Government representatives were rebuffed.

Restrictions were necessary at the start of Covid-19, especially because of the state of the HSE. However, it is hard to accept many of

these restrictions continuing when disproportionate harm has been done to so many people through delayed diagnosis, etc. With so many people vaccinated, we have to begin to live again, not just exist, and to ensure care is now given to so very many on waiting lists for health care.

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Stewart  
Ardeskin, Co. Donegal*

### We must never allow euthanasia in Ireland

**Dear Editor,** Niamh Uí Bhriain raises excellent points about the failed 'Dying with Dignity Bill' [IC 19/08/2021] which was cast aside for being so flawed. She asked why so many TDs were quick to support the bill despite it being opposed, very publicly, by palliative care experts and many others who highlighted the plethora of issues? It seems in a world of virtue signalling and the dire need to appear progressive in the eyes of the public – many of whom seem unable to

critically assess the moral complexities of euthanasia and instead reductively say "no one should have to live with pain" – that many politicians are more interested in popularity.

It must be acknowledged that although this particular bill has been spiked, there will certainly be another to come which won't be as easy to dismiss.

When this happens, people must speak out and make their voices heard to stop efforts to introduce euthanasia

to this country. As Pope Francis says, abortion is an example of a throwaway culture, while this abomination has already been introduced to Ireland, we must never allow euthanasia.

As Mrs Uí Bhriain says: "Deliberately ending the lives of those who need our help the most should have no place in a civilised society."

*Yours etc.,  
Joe Murphy  
Cork City, Cork*

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

#### Bishop McKeown criticises 'fairy-tale reporting' of Derry sectarian bonfire

Thank goodness Bishop McKeown addressed this as I'm sure I wasn't the only one shouting at the TV when that erroneous assertion was made! How that passed editorial standards is beyond me. – **Caren Collins**

#### Taste and see that the Lord is good

I think it will take time. Mass-goers need the feeling of total freedom to attend Mass at their choice, I am tired and it's really off putting to see our church pews draped in red tape which of course is obliged to protect us. Mentally it's a barrier to our freedom to Worship and it's difficult to accept. Parishioners are still nervous. – **Deirdre Quinn**

All our Mass-goers are back. Never heard of anyone being turned away either. – **Chris Curley**

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

### Commending the voices and actions of the Faithful

**Dear Editor,** Just a short note to commend Sr Susan Evangelist's letter. It was very well written in terms of reflection on what this pandemic has done to our Church and in particular to receiving the sacraments. There are so many mixed messages and I'm delighted to see the Irish bishops giving a green light to administering the sacraments to young people. As Sr Susan said the meaning of the sacraments are much more important than the frills and spills and I hope people with children have read and reflected on this letter.

I also commend Fr John Joe Duffy CC Creeslough who went ahead with his Communion last Sunday with the support of his PP Fr Martin Doohan and his bishop and despite the adverse publicity it brought in terms of breaking rules etc, he went ahead adhering to all the Covid guidelines and facilitated the children receiving this precious Sacrament without any cause for concern. We need so many more voices like Sr Susan and Fr John Joe. Thank you.

*Yours etc.,  
Carmel Boyce  
Castlederg, Co. Tyrone*

### Prayer and fasting before media appearance

**Dear Editor,** If any one of us has to go on a media platform to speak about the Church or defend the Faith, it seems advisable to me, to prepare with prayer and fasting.

*Yours etc.,  
Judith Leonard  
Raheny, Dublin*

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

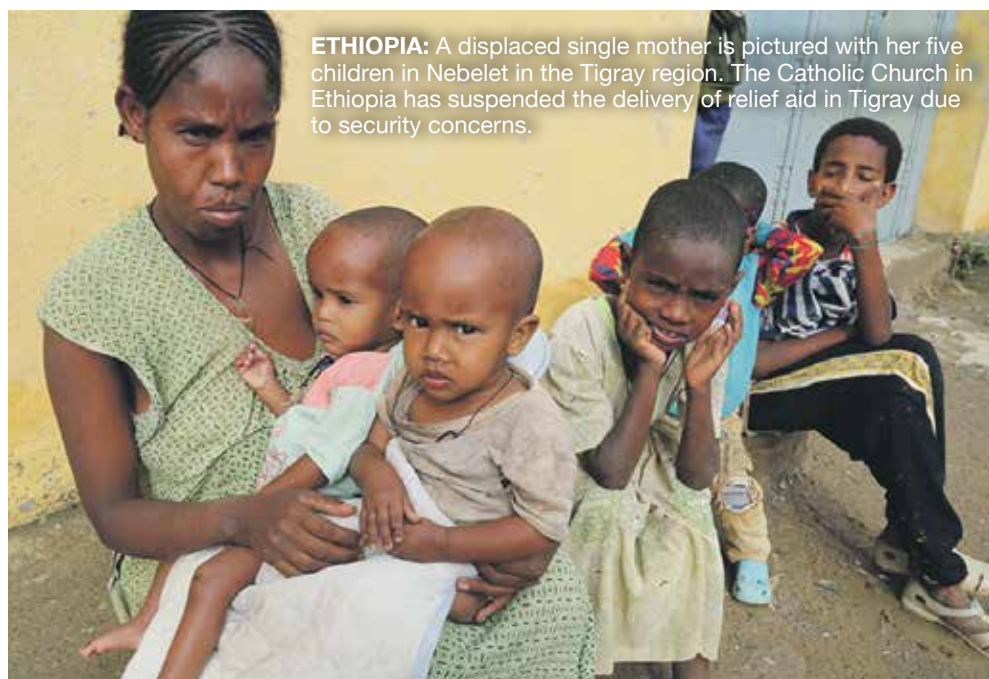
merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications.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

# 📷 Around the world



▲ **INDIA:** Members of the Missionaries of Charity prepare to offer tea and snacks to the poor in Kolkata, to mark the birthday of the founder of the order, St Teresa of Kolkata. Photos: CNS

◀ **USA:** Philadelphia Archbishop Nelson Pérez visits a classroom at St Bernadette School in Drexel Hill.



**ETHIOPIA:** A displaced single mother is pictured with her five children in Nebelet in the Tigray region. The Catholic Church in Ethiopia has suspended the delivery of relief aid in Tigray due to security concerns.



**VATICAN:** Pope Francis meets with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad, during a private meeting at the Vatican on August 26. Murad was kidnapped by Islamic State militants in Iraq in 2014 during a genocidal campaign against the Yazidi people.



**HAITI:** Bro. John Skrodinsky is pictured with school children at the Missionary Servants' mission on the island.



**HONDURAS:** Missionary Servant Fr César Muñoz provides food to a hungry child in Comayagüelas.

# Different ways of being spiritual but not religious



Nothing so much approximates the language of God as does silence. Meister Eckhart said that.

Among other things, he is affirming that there is some deep inner work that can only be done in silence, alone, in private.

**“In the end, the other is heaven, the salvation for which we are ultimately destined. Utter aloneness is hell”**

He's right of course, but there's another side to this. While there is some deep inner work that can only be done in silence, there is also some deep, critical, soul work that can only be done with others, in relationship, in family, in church, and in society. Silence can be a privileged avenue to depth of soul. It can also be dangerous. Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, lived in silence, alone, as have many other deeply disturbed individuals. Mental health professionals tell us that we need interaction with other people to keep us sane. Social interaction grounds us, balances us, and anchors our sanity. I look at some of our young people today who are interacting with others (in person and through social media) every hour of their waking lives and



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

worry for their depth, though not for their sanity.

We need each other. Jean-Paul Sartre once famously stated, “hell is the other person”. He couldn't be more misguided. In the end, the other is heaven, the salvation for which we are ultimately destined. Utter aloneness is hell. Moreover, this malevolent aloneness can sneak up on you wearing the best altruistic and religious disguises.

## Close-knit family

Here's an example: I grew up in a very close-knit family in a small rural community where family, neighbour, parish, and being with others meant everything, where everything was shared and you were rarely alone. I feared being alone, avoided it, and was only comfortable when I was with others.

Immediately after high school, I joined a religious order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and for the

next eight years lived in a large community where, again, most everything was shared and one was seldom alone. As I approached final vows and permanent commitment to religious life and priesthood, what I feared most was the vow of celibacy, the loneliness it would bring. No wife, no children, no family, the isolation of a celibate life.

Things turned out very differently. Celibacy has had its cost, admittedly; and admittedly it is not the normal life God intended for everyone. However, the loneliness I feared (but for brief moments) seldom ensued – the opposite. I found my life overly full of relationships, interaction with others, flat-out busyness, daily pressures, and commitments that took up virtually every waking hour. Rather than feeling lonely, I found myself almost habitually longing for solitude, for quiet, to be alone, and I grew quite comfortable with being alone. Too

**“However, when I became president of a School of Theology, I was assigned to live in a house designated for the president and for a period of time lived alone”**

comfortable in fact.

For most of the years of my priesthood, I have lived in large religious communities and they, like any family, have their demands. However, when I became president of a school of theology, I was assigned to live in a house designated for the president and for a period of time lived alone. At first, I found it a bit disorienting, never having lived alone before; but after a while it grew on me. I really liked it. No responsibilities at home to anyone but myself.

**“Busyness is an example. You sacrifice being with your family in order to support them by your work and that keeps you from many of its activities”**

Soon enough though, I perceived its dangers. After one year I ended the arrangement. One of the dangers of living alone and one of the dangers of celibacy, even if you are living faithfully, is that you don't have others to call you out daily and put every kind of demand on you. You get to call your own shots and can avoid much of what Dorothy Day called “the asceticism of living inside

a family”. When you live alone, you can too easily plan and live life on your own terms, cherry-picking those parts of family and community that benefit you and avoiding the difficult parts.

There are certain things that begin as virtues then easily turn into a vice. Busyness is an example. You sacrifice being with your family in order to support them by your work and that keeps you from many of its activities. Initially, this is a sacrifice – eventually, it's an escape, an inbuilt dispensation from having to deal with certain issues inside family life. Vowed celibacy and priesthood court that same danger.

## Spiritual

We all know the expression, ‘I am spiritual but not religious’ (which we apply to people who are open to dealing with God but not open to dealing with church). However, we struggle with this in more ways than we might think. At least I do. As a vowed, celibate priest, I can be spiritual but not religious in that, for the highest of reasons, I can avoid much of the daily asceticism demanded of someone living in a family. However this is a danger for all of us, celibate or married. When, for every kind of good reason we can cherry-pick those parts of family and community we like and avoid those parts we find difficult, we are spiritual but not religious.

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, September 2, 2021

## Personal Profile

Following the Lord wherever he leads

Page 34



# Back to school during the pandemic



**I** doubt many would have expected such an altered start to the school year for a second year in a row, but here we are. Students heading back to school this September are entering uncharted waters yet again because, despite Covid still being present, the country is in a much different situation to the one it found itself in this time last year, when not a single vaccine had been administered.

Regardless, the present circumstances are surely causing much concern among teachers, parents and students, if for no other reason than all of the extra boxes that have to be ticked as school approaches, such as mask-wearing and the potential for testing throughout the year if a case springs up in the school.

It's worth going through the features that will make this



**A second school year begins under the shadow of the pandemic, but knowing what to expect eases anxieties, writes Jason Osborne**

another unorthodox year for schoolchildren and their parents, before considering what steps can be taken at any time to make the transition back easier.

### Covid-19 measures

As with last year, teachers and students in secondary schools are required to wear face masks throughout the school day.

In primary schools, however, children won't be required to wear them. Health officials have decided that a mask mandate for young children is too tricky and

would likely cause the children unnecessary stress.

In terms of other measures, the school year will look much the same as last. Hand sanitising, social distancing and regular classroom cleanings are all here to stay, while in primary schools, "pod" grouping of children together is set to continue.

A new feature of the year will be the presence of carbon dioxide monitors, with Minister Norma Foley saying they're an "additional tool" to aid schools in their efforts to ensure adequate ventilation.

The intention is to have portable Co2 monitors that will be shared between classrooms, moving between rooms at set times throughout the day, to ensure the level of Co2 remains below a suitable level, indicating suitable ventilation in the room.

Teachers and other school staff won't be required to receive the vaccination, as a decision was made against making it mandatory. However, they have been strongly advised to receive it, regardless.

In terms of students, the vaccination of students at secondary school age has been underway for a number of weeks, with those aged 16-17 able to avail of a vaccine at the end of July, while vaccinations for those in the 12-15 age cohort began in mid-August.

With their parents' consent, around 135,000 young people

between 12 and 15 have registered for the vaccine, with around 78,000 of them having received their first dose.

The completion of vaccination for young people in these categories is expected to take another couple of weeks which will eat into the early part of the school year, but the earlier-than-expected rollout of vaccines to this cohort is going to surely limit the impact Covid-19 has on schools around the country.

So if that's the state of the Covid restrictions you're likely to encounter in schools this September upon returning, what can you do to ensure the experience is as normal as possible for your children both in and outside of school?

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## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### STUDY SUGGESTS VACCINE PROTECTION WANES AFTER 6 MONTHS

- The protection provided by two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccines starts to wane within six months, new research suggests.
- A reasonable worst-case scenario could see protection fall to below 50% for the elderly and healthcare workers by winter, an expert has said.
- The Pfizer jab was 88% effective at preventing Covid-19 infection a month after the second dose.
- But after five to six months the protection decreased to 74%, suggesting protection fell 14 percentage points in four months, latest analysis from the Zoe Covid study indicates.
- With the AstraZeneca vaccine, there was a protection against infection of 77% one month after the second dose.
- After four to five months protection decreased to 67%, suggesting protection fell by 10 percentage points over three months.
- The study drew on more than 1.2 million test results and participants.

#### AL CAPONE'S GUNS AMONG ITEMS TO BE AUCTIONED BY GRANDDAUGHTERS

- Guns once owned by Al Capone, one of the most notorious gangsters in US history, are to go under the hammer at a California auction.
- The mobster's favoured .45 automatic pistol is among the haul, which also includes vintage photos, a letter to his son written from Alcatraz, and the bed he shared with his wife at their luxury Florida mansion.
- The 174 items on sale in October are a collection entitled "A Century of Notoriety: the Estate of Al Capone," in what auctioneers say "will no doubt go down as one of the most important celebrity auctions in history".
- Capone was one of the most feared figures in organised crime during the Prohibition Era, when the sale or production of alcohol was banned in the US.
- He was the boss of the Chicago Outfit, a 1920s gang that overpowered rivals in bootlegging and racketeering with increasingly brutal methods.
- Capone was never convicted of any violent crime, but jailed for tax evasion, ultimately ending up at Alcatraz, an island fortress off San Francisco.

#### NI SCIENTIST AWARDED ROYAL SOCIETY'S HIGHEST PRIZE

- A leading astrophysicist from Northern Ireland has been awarded the world's oldest scientific prize for her work on the discovery of pulsars, the BBC reports.
- Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell is only the second woman to be awarded the Royal Society's highest prize, the Copley Medal.
- The medal is awarded for outstanding achievements in scientific research.
- In 1967, when she was a 24-year-old student, she was part of a team that discovered the new type of star.
- Pulsars are rapidly spinning neutron stars, so named because they appear to pulsate when viewed from Earth.
- At the time she was overlooked for a Nobel prize in favour of her male collaborators, although she has argued the prize was awarded appropriately at the time due to her student status.



**T**here's a standard bit of ethical terminology that gets thrown around a lot in Catholic circles: the difference between moral questions that involve 'intrinsic evils' and moral questions that involve 'matters of prudential judgment'.

This comes up a lot in politics: support for certain things like abortion and euthanasia are supposed to be deal-breakers for Catholics when considering what candidate to support, whereas war, immigration, and economic justice aren't supposed to be as important. The reason given for this is that abortion and euthanasia are 'intrinsic evils', whereas issues like the other ones I've mentioned are merely matters of 'prudential judgment'.

**“An action that is unambiguously condemned by the Church can be less bad than an action that the Church leaves up to individual conscience to decide”**

I am not here to argue about the relative importance of different political issues: I am very sympathetic to the idea that abortion, for instance, has a near-unique moral gravity. But cashing this difference out as a matter of intrinsic evils vs matters of prudential judgment can't be right. There are a variety of ways in which the intrinsic/prudential distinction is misleadingly deployed: today I will deal with just one of them.

In a fascinating long read in *Church Life Journal* which inspired this column, Prof.



### Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

Therese Cory of the University of Notre Dame points out that there is a distinction in Catholic ethics between actions that the Church specifically condemns and matters that are left up to individual conscience. But as Cory points out, this is a juridical distinction. What this means is that it's about what the Church will and won't use its authority to give us the right answer to. This doesn't necessarily have anything to do with how bad an action is. An action that is unambiguously condemned by the Church can be less bad than an action that the Church leaves up to individual conscience to decide.

The Church, for example, tells us that stealing is always wrong. But any one act of theft may not be that bad. Forget for a moment about starving people taking food (which the Church doesn't consider stealing at all) and consider a case of petty theft. While visiting my friend's house to play some trading card games, I take a fancy to one of his rare Yu-Gi-Oh cards (this example may date me). I slip it out of his binder and head home.

Now this is a rotten thing to do. What's more, as 'stealing' it's specifically forbidden by the teachings of the Church – the Church leaves no room to discern whether an act of stealing is ever permissible. But compare it to a situation in which the President of the United States is contemplating whether to launch a war. The Church doesn't

entirely forbid war in the way it does stealing. It provides clear criteria for what does and does not count as a just war, but it generally doesn't say whether individual wars meet those criteria, leaving that up to the consciences of politicians. But there is still a fact of the matter about whether any given war is just or



unjust. It's not a matter of opinion or a question of taste. The claims 'this war would be just to launch' and 'this war would be unjust to launch' cannot both be true. To say otherwise is plain moral relativism.

Now say that the president decides to launch a war that is, in fact, unjust. That war then claims tens of thousands of lives, leads to the collapse of whole states and societies, and obliterates hundreds of Christian churches and communi-

ties – all without achieving the aims which it was supposed to. The Church might not use its authority to say that this specific action of launching the war was forbidden. But the action would in fact be much, much more seriously evil than my theft of the Yu-Gi-Oh card would be, even though it is 'theft' and not 'launching war' that is specifically forbidden by the Church. The distinction between things that the Church leaves up to individual conscience to decide and things that it uses its authority to forbid is emphatically not a distinction between more and less serious evils.

**“Catholicism has no room for moral relativism, even under the guise of prudential judgment”**

The Church's teaching about the role of conscience is that it is meant to track the truth. The Church leaving something up to individual conscience is not a licence for saying 'well, reasonable people can disagree' and diminishing the importance of the question. Catholics are meant to argue and deliberate about questions like the justness of a given war, the right number of refugees to admit, or the appropriate level of support for the poor. But if they disagree some will be right and others wrong (on the last two issues I've mentioned the correct positions will of course be ranges rather than exact figures). The ones who are wrong may be supporting serious evils. Catholicism has no room for moral relativism, even under the guise of prudential judgment.



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**Routine**

Routine is an enormous part of ordering our days, no matter what time we find ourselves in. Whether you're a child in school or an adult in bustling full-time employment, routine will serve to give you a healthy grounding as you go about your day. How might this look for schoolchildren and parents, then?

**“It isn't possible to overestimate sleep's importance in terms of establishing a good, healthy routine”**

As soon as possible, try to move your child's bedtime a little earlier to ready them for the early school starts, or encourage them to do so if they're a little older. Once a time is set, institute a relaxing, age-appropriate wind-down routine for the hour before sleep, such as a bath or shower, reading, drawing, colouring or prayer (always a good idea).

It is important to manage screen time these days, particularly before bed. If at all possible, work towards having little to no screen time for the hour before bed, to ensure the best quality of sleep possible. It isn't possible to overestimate sleep's importance in terms of establishing a good, healthy routine.

Another staple of the day is the meal time routine. It's advisable to

establish healthy sleep and meal routines hand-in-hand, as they're two big elements in a child's day that have become secure and stable, allowing more focus to be paid to the rest of school life. Also, start adjusting mealtimes to match up with school time routines.

Talk to your child or teenager about the importance of eating well, and involve them in the planning, shopping and preparation of the meals. Not only is it good discipline now – it's good preparation for the future. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of quick-fixes and fast foods once the school year gets rolling, so preemptively cut that out.

Separating the day into morning routine, school, evening routine and night routine is a useful way to



ensure your children get the most from their days. An orderly morning leads to an easier day at school, while an orderly evening means a relaxing night and morning.

**Safeguarding downtime**

Young people are gifted an abundance of energy, and so it's important that leisure and downtime are incorporated into their days as eagerly as anything else.

A child or teenager who enjoys sufficient time playing, training or engaging in whatever other activities they most enjoy is more likely to engage well with school and its often-stuffy environment.

**“They're the base upon which these pandemic school days can be dealt with”**

Studies have linked play to building literacy skills in younger children, as well as a greater ability to cope with upheaval and stress (such as has been provided for in abundance by the pandemic and its concomitant restrictions).

Next week will see healthy lunches for school days discussed, but for now, focus on getting sustainable routines in place. They're the base upon which these pandemic school days can be dealt with.

**Faith**  
— IN THE —  
**family**



Christina Malone

**“B**ut mummy it is only 8 o'clock. I am not tired yet.”

“Tired or not we are back to school soon and you need your sleep.”

Many households are the same, trying to return to their old routine after the summer. For many including myself it is a new stepping stone as my youngest is going to start primary school for the first time. I have no idea where the time has gone. It feels like yesterday that he was born. For many the first day back is a step into the unknown. Familiar and unfamiliar faces, new friends and old friends, learning, discovering, exploring and experiencing. For parents a new chapter of letting go of their little child starts at that school gate. Remember yourself starting the new school year. What will the teacher be like? Will I be liked by others? Will I be able to get through it? We all have been there in one way or another. Like every new school year, it brings new challenges and new possibilities.



One difference this year might be that many children, now in third class maybe even fourth class, will not have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation or First Holy Communion. Many, now in first year, second year or third year will not have been confirmed. The pandemic forced us to put a hold on the celebration of those sacraments.

On the one hand I have been looking at this pandemic as an opportunity to evangelise in a new way. On the other hand, it has been just head wrecking when it comes to planning anything especially the sacraments. Trying to schedule, reschedule, postpone and at this stage I just want it to happen. In the parish I work in we have set dates for nearly 50 confirmation ceremonies over the next six weeks. Evangelisation is a huge word nowadays everyone talks about it but what does that mean when it comes to the sacraments? Fifty Confirmation ceremonies, about 500 young Catholics becoming full members of the Church community. Even typing it gives me goosebumps. Five-hundred

candidates, 500 families, 500 sponsors, it sounds amazing, but then my head kicks in and I wonder how many of those candidates understand that they are the present and future of the Church? How many of those families are connected with the parish community? How many of those sponsors

will pray for the candidate? I don't know the answers, but I have hope. I trust that nothing is impossible for God. That he works in mysterious ways. We are not alone in all of this. We don't need all the answers but we need to have hope and trust in the Holy Trinity. Those sacraments are moments of the grace of God. That God is at work through those candidates, their families, their sponsors. For some it is about the dates, for others it is life changing and for me, as a mother and a pastoral worker it is a reason to be joyful for the future. Those who “missed” out are now that little bit older, maybe they ask bigger questions, maybe they are more reflective, maybe they wonder what “it” is (faith/Church) all about? Pope Francis has big hopes and dreams for this generation. He encouraged and challenged them by saying “to change the world you have to get off the couch” (World Youth Day in Krakow, 2016). It is not only them who have to get off the couch, we, the parish teams, the community of the baptised too have to make an effort. Archbishop Farrell recently talked about “grim faces” – we should be beaming with the hope in our hearts. We should be shouting and singing the alleluia songs and be a light of Christ through our words and action.

We have a choice here. Do we want them to just get the Sacrament over and done with or do we want those 500 candidates, 500 families, 500 sponsor experience a church, a community that is alive because Christ is alive? Like Pope Francis wrote in *Christus Vivit*: “Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!”

# Following the Lord wherever he leads

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

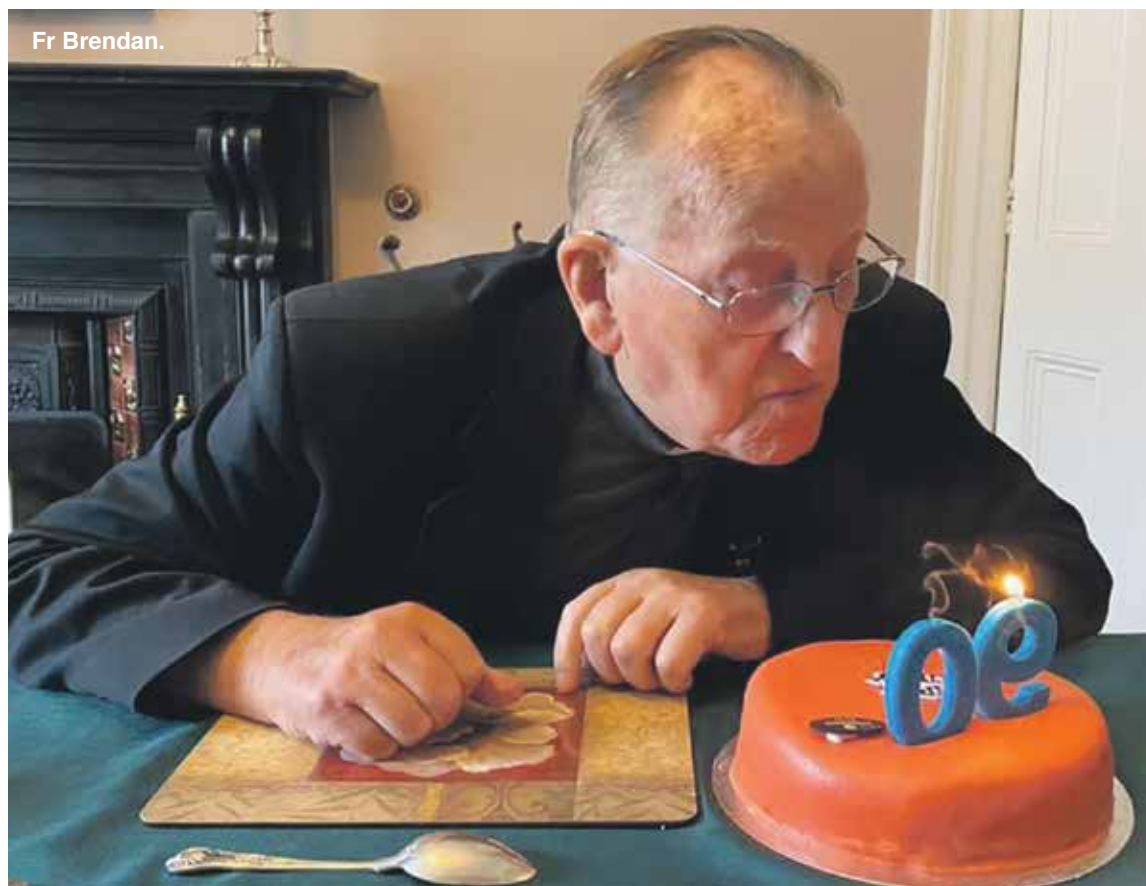
**F**r Brendan O'Donoghue celebrated 65 years of priesthood this year, and though officially retired, he continues to work in the parish of Shannon, Co. Clare. Looking back on his ministry, especially his involvement in the social work of the Church, he recalls the ways the Lord led him on paths he didn't expect.

"After finishing secondary school in St Flannan's college, I got the opportunity to be represented to the bishop for interview, with the possibility of being selected for the diocese," he tells me. "Once I got the ok on that, I went ahead with it – it was as simple as that."

**“The only way they could get Mass or the sacraments was to set up a little chapel on the side, that's what they did”**

He felt the pull of the priesthood before that, putting it down in part to the immersive quality of the Catholic culture around him: "I was I suppose we were surrounded by it, especially in secondary school. So many of the Leaving Cert students every year went on to study for the priesthood. We had ordinations and that all over the country at the time."

After his ordination in 1956, Fr O'Donoghue spent some time working in Galway, before seizing his chance to head on mission, in this case to the Irish emigrant community



Fr Brendan.

in England.

"I spent two terms on the emigrant mission to England," he begins. "At that time, there were an awful lot of Irish workers and that. One of the places that I worked was a labour camp, because there was no accommodation in the local towns.

"When the building of a power station was set up, they had to provide the accommodation and they did it all over for a couple of hundred men, most of them Irish. The only way they could get Mass or the sacraments was to set up a little chapel on the side, that's what they did."

Even before his ordination, Fr O'Donoghue wanted to go on mission – not to England, but to Africa.

"I was on my way to Africa with the Kiltegan fathers, just before ordination. What happened then was the bishop of Galway got onto my own

bishop, Bishop Rogers of Killaloe, to ask for his help as he was shorthanded himself. I wound up being a curate in Salthill for a year and half. The African effort died the death, there and then."

What emerged, however, was what he calls an "accidental" interest in the social work of the Church. He was involved in establishing Clare Social Care (now Clarecare), Ennis Old Folks Club and the Clare Special Schools Project, among others.

"I came back to Ennis and that's where that [involvement in social work] took off, when I came to Ennis in 1966, back from my second missionary journey, as St Paul would say," Fr O'Donoghue explains. "It was something accidental to be quite honest. I happened to be on the spot when a lot of things were developing, especially for youth and old age, for the likes of meals and that kind of

thing for people.

"These things were beginning to raise their heads in different parts of Ireland. And I didn't spearhead it, people came to me and asked me if I'd join them. That's kind of what happened you know."

Fr O'Donoghue's ministry spanned both sides of Vatican II and he witnessed first-hand the changes it wrought in the Church.

"The big change of course was the Mass and the sacraments in the language of the people, that was the very big thing," he says. "One of the things that struck me as – not strange, but inbuilt in the people – that when we started appointing lay ministers of the Eucharist, that we had so many sidesteppers at Mass who wanted to get Communion from the priest and avoided the lay people."

In 1988, after 22 years in Ennis Par-

ish, Fr O'Donoghue moved to Shannon parish, Co. Clare. He found the move "strange" initially, he says, having spent so long in one place.

"Now I'm 33 years in Shannon and... it's an extraordinary community," Fr O'Donoghue continues. "The thing I would say about Shannon is this, if you start anything worthwhile in the Shannon community, it will be well supported by the people. That has happened right through the history of Shannon.

**“On the Lourdes thing, we had so many repeat pilgrims every year, who loved to come and made that their holiday”**

"I remember my first weekend in Shannon, it was the August bank holiday weekend. I thought it was a ghost town, there was nobody there, they were all gone home and home was somewhere else, any other part of Ireland. That happened until they began to get married within the community and found their own homes and that's the community we have now."

As well as being parish priest in Shannon, Fr O'Donoghue continued to devote his time to social works and other elements. He was the director of Killaloe diocese's Lourdes pilgrimage for 18 years, which he enjoyed very much.

"I'm still involved in that, but I handed over to my friend, Fr Tom Ryan, the management of it some years ago, but I'm still involved," he says. "The Holy Land also, we did about four or five trips there. I enjoyed it very much, and so did the people. On the Lourdes thing, we had so many repeat pilgrims every year, who loved to come and made that their holiday."

Although officially retired since 2002, and having celebrated his 90th birthday this year, Fr O'Donoghue continues to minister in the parish, doing weekend and daily Masses.

## Addressing the impacts of alcohol on a marriage

**We are married three years and in the last year or so my husband has been going out with his friends or work colleagues much more than before. He goes out every Saturday night and usually comes home drunk, really affecting our Sundays as a family because he is hungover and in a bad mood.**

**T**he first thing you need to do is talk: remember do not go on the attack. As this is a recent enough development you have to ask why he is suddenly going out and getting drunk – are there stresses or pressures he is under that you might not be aware of? Perhaps he is just trying to be 'one of the lads' but life is different now he has a family and a wife and not just himself to consider.

This isn't about cossetting your husband but about discussing getting the balance right. Going out is one thing, but is coming home drunk, slurring words and being hungover ever acceptable to you? If you keep grinning and

bearing it, then I suspect nothing will change. However, try not to play the blame game,

that will only make him defensive and most likely he will shut down the conversation. It would be good to talk about expectations and see if you can compromise, he might think he should be going out every week whereas perhaps every two weeks would be better.

### Impact

He needs to understand fully the impact it is having on you. He could be totally unaware of this. Again it needs to come from a place of love, you want to spend time together and make the most of your weekends together. I can imagine you're finding it difficult at this stage as you have come to expect it. But as you haven't talked about it that frustration and anger will fester.

Don't use language that says 'he makes you feel' a certain way, a guilt trip won't work here. Instead you need to ask him how he feels about missing out on family time on Saturdays. It

would be good to suggest an alternative for Friday evenings, can he do something else with friends, dinner or the cinema. Probably more importantly can you do something together, make every other Friday your time and your date night.

From a health perspective binge drinking has a huge impact, it would be good to come at a point of concern for his health. The discussion certainly needs to focus on the why – why is he suddenly feeling the need to drink so much and does it bother him that it takes away from quality time together as a family?

In this discussion it would be also healthy to talk about you getting out with your friends and getting time to yourself as well.

You need to remind one another that you are a team, you are partners. Lots of things change when you are married, in a way it's probably difficult as you might have expected the mourning of his single life to have happened in the very beginning. That is why it is likely there is something triggering this behaviour and if you can get to the bottom of that then that could be a starting point for getting back on track.



Wendy Grace



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Some inspiring food for the soul on the box

**W**ith so much grim stuff in the media you'd need a few uplifting programmes every week to keep the spirits high.

This past week the best of these for me was **Nation-wide** (RTÉ One, Wednesday) a repeat of a special documentary presented by Colm Flynn on the work of Sr Ethel Normoyle from Lissycasey, Co. Clare, among the poor of South Africa. Unfortunately, the repeat of the show from 2013 was occasioned by the recent death of Sr Ethel. But what a life! Initially reluctant to be posted to Africa, she took to the assignment with full commitment but her engagement with the poorest of all began only when her initial posting was due to end. She was taken aback by the extreme poverty of the people in the townships (she thought their huts were cowsheds) and proceeded to do something constructive about it. It started with a school under a tree and grew into the thriving Missionvale Care Centre – Sr Ethel realised that education and healthcare were vital if conditions were to improve.

Stories from the early days were quite jarring as these were apartheid times – how simple, banal and shocking was the sight of a sign 'Native Only Bus Stop'. And Sr Ethel faced a lot of opposition in those days, being pressur-



Andrew Garfield stars as Fr Sebastian Rodrigues in a scene from the movie *Silence* which was on BBC Four. Photo: Paramount

ised to stop her classes for poor black children and even being spat on.

Like a lot of energetic reformers, she persuaded a local businessman (Roger Matlock), to support the venture financially, and she was also helped by Irish volunteers, mostly builders. As they worked to change the lives of others it looked like their own lives were changed too. Sr Ethel said her mission was 'to bring Christ's compassion to the people, through practical means' and surely she did just that. Her work was recognised widely – we saw pictures of visits from St Teresa of Kolkata and Queen Elizabeth II who paid her a glowing tribute – she

was impressed by how "the inspiration and energy of one person can benefit thousands of others".

Towards the end of the programme she spoke of her desire to hand on the torch and of her longing to get home to Ireland – in a poignant update we were told that she did indeed get to return before she died last month. Check it out on the RTE Player and also learn more at [www.missionvaleireland.org/](http://www.missionvaleireland.org/)

Also inspirational, but tinged with sadness was the special **Concert4Cancer** (Virgin Media One, Friday) – organised to raise funds for the Marie Keating Foundation. The musical performances were inter-

persed with some moving interviews featuring cancer survivors, those who were bereaved and those who were still undergoing treatment. You couldn't but be inspired by the resilience, love and strength of character, all the more so when Covid-19 challenges were added to the mix. These 'impact stories' were filmed by The Reelists and you can catch up on some of them on their social media outlets, as well as catching the whole show on the Virgin Media Player.

The quality of the musical items varied. I'm not particularly a fan of Johnny Logan but he did do a pretty good version, a mellow solo

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC One Sunday September 5, 1.15pm**

Aled Jones is in London to investigate why the act of forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian faith.

#### EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND

**Channel 4 Tuesday September 7, 7.40am**

Debra's hippy sister shows up unexpectedly and announces that she's decided to become a nun.

#### THE INQUISITION

**EWTN Thursday September 9, 3am**

This new EWTN docudrama uncovers the truth behind the Spanish Inquisition. Was it a mix of cruelty, terror and religious fanaticism? Or the result of a propaganda campaign against the Church?

just with guitar, of the Shay Healy Eurovision hit *What's Another Year*. In a world riddled with ego, tech, surface and glamour it's good to see someone making it with just voice and guitar and so I also enjoyed Ed Sheerin's contribution, *Bad Habits* as well. Some songs were a tad dour, but The Riptide Movement raised spirits with *I'll Be There*. My favourite however was Mick Flannery's duet with Susan O'Neill *Chain Reaction* was soulful with gorgeous harmonies.

And finally, just one programme that wasn't inspiring – **Silence** (BBC Four Thursday) is a Martin Scorsese film about Portuguese missionaries in Japan in the 17th Century. Starring Liam Neeson, Adam Driver and Andrew Garfield, it is as expected very well made

and it certainly takes religious faith seriously. There's a striking contrast between those willing to die for their faith (the martyrdoms are particularly gruesome) and those whose faith or commitment collapses under pressure. Perhaps Mr Scorsese leaves it up to each viewer to decide where they stand or fall, but I'm inclined to think the film's viewpoint is that it's not worth dying for the faith, but that making this compromising choice leaves one empty and without purpose.

Whatever the case, however intriguing and absorbing, it ultimately left me cold.

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# Music

## The incomparable genius of Stravinsky

Looking at a BBC Prom, devoted to Stravinsky, on TV recently reminded me that this year commemorates the 50th anniversary of the composer's death in New York in 1971.

Igor Stravinsky was born into a musical family in Oranienbaum near St Petersburg in 1882. While his parents hoped he would become a lawyer Igor persuaded them to allow him follow a musical path.

Becoming a friend of Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov, son of composer and brilliant orchestrator Nikolay, Igor was invited to their home. Impressed by Stravinsky as both pianist and composer, Nikolay suggested the lad study with him, which



Igor Stravinsky in the 1920s.

he did from 1905 until Rimsky-Korsakov's death three years later.

In 1906 Igor married his cousin Katya Nosenko, who

came from Ustilug – then part of the Russian Empire, but now in Western Ukraine. Living in St Petersburg they, with their increasing family, spent the summers in Ustilug. Stravinsky called it his 'heavenly place', writing many of his early works there. Hearing his orchestral *Scherzo Fantastique*, impresario Sergey Diaghilev invited the composer to become involved with his acclaimed Ballets Russes.

Stravinsky's first major work for the company was the Russian fairytale, *The Firebird*, which had its Paris première in June 1910. A brilliant theatrical success, its music established Stravinsky among the most gifted young composers of

the day.

Another Russian folktale – *Petrushka* – followed in June 1911. Equally appreciated, it led to Stravinsky's most challenging work – *Le Sacre du Printemps* – that opened at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 20 1913.

The première of this 'solemn pagan ritual' was sensational. Stravinsky's barbaric music with its complex rhythms and dissonances coupled with Vaclav Nijinsky's provocative choreography caused uproar in the theatre.

Stravinsky's next major work, *The Nightingale* (1914), brought him into the realm of opera. Its relative delicacy, after *Le Sacre's*

extravagance, meant it was not what the public expected, or maybe wanted, but Ravel and Bartók praised it.

*Renard*, again based on Russian folk idioms and amusingly called a 'farmyard burlesque', followed. However, *A Soldier's Tale* (1918) moved away from Russia towards something more Western. Using speech, mime and dance, ragtime and tango are incorporated into its infectious instrumental sections.

Experiencing a renewal of his Orthodox faith, strong religious strains imbue his marvellous opera/oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927) and his *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), which possess elements of Russian Orthodox chant despite their Latin texts.

There is also a religious feeling to his ballets *Apollon musagète* (1928) and *Perse-*

*phone* (1934). Between these two, Stravinsky's homage to Tchaikovsky – *Le Baiser de la fée* – shows he had not altogether neglected his Russian ancestry.

A number of other ballets followed including *Jeu de cartes* (1936), *Danses concertantes* (1942), *Scènes de ballet* (1944) and *Orpheus* (1947). In the meantime Stravinsky had composed his *Symphony in C*. Dedicated to the Chicago Symphony, it had its first performance on November 7 1940.

Following the death of his first wife Katya in 1939, Stravinsky moved to the US where he married Vera Sudeykina whose long relationship with him beforehand was borne by Katya with 'magnanimity, bitterness and compassion'. More anon.

Pat O'Kelly



# BookReviews

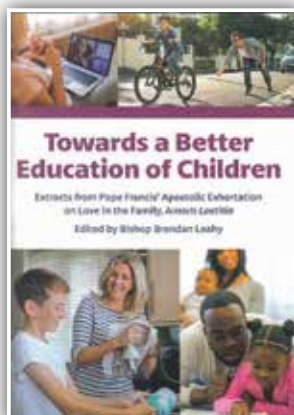
Peter Costello



## Recent books in brief

**Towards a Better Education of Children: Extracts from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family, 'Amoris Laetitia',** edited by Bishop Brendan Leahy (Veritas, €2.99/£2.56)

With back to school days already here, the minds of families all across Ireland are focused on the education of their children. Education for Catholic families is not merely a matter of STEM subjects, but, one might almost say, a root and branch matter, vital for the whole shape of life. Vatican documents do not always make for the easiest kind of reading: they are shaped by centuries of theological discourse, and written in an often unfamiliar manner. Hence this abridgement of the key points of Pope Francis' important document *Amoris Laetitia* will be welcomed by many who feel they should prime themselves with the current views of the Church. It is recast in the form of a 'conversation' with Pope Francis. The Pope urges his readers to realise that perfection is not what is aimed at, what is sought is the development of mind, soul and society. This means 'education for life' in the deepest sense. This is the sort of booklet every family should have, but it is also a short text which other Christians will read with benefit.



**Catholic Education: a Lifelong Journey** edited by Gareth Byrne and Sean Whittle (Veritas, €17.99/£15.39)

This book also deals with education as a lifelong experience. But the text is aimed more at those professionally engaged in education. Parents, in this context, delegate education to teachers, teachers they can trust.

But these teachers are crucially aware that society in general is the real context in which this education takes place. The contributions by a very varied range of writers, experienced and new to the field, attempt to outline what is to be sought and how it might be achieved.

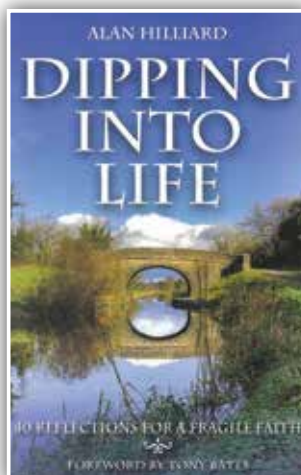
The cover of the book is deeply symbolic: it is a small family group of seven walking across what seems to be the strand of Dublin Bay. The question facing Catholic education is related to this. Does this image show the tide going out (perhaps never to return), or is the tide starting to come in again to refresh and continue the course of life?

The enthusiasm and insights of this book suggests that indeed the tide is coming in again. But society may well have to live eventually with the fact that the tide of faith no longer flows as it did. Echoes here of Mathew Arnold looking out over Dover beach: sobering thoughts for all.

**Dipping into Life: 40 Reflections for a fragile faith**

by Alan Hilliard with a foreword by Tony Bates (Messenger Publications, €12.95)

Here is a booklet in a more traditional mould. Fr Alan Hilliard has great experience of pastoral care in difficult situations. He brings to these pages a sense of realism, but also of hope and these 40 epiphanies will be found relevant for everyday reading by a great many people, and a source of encouragement for both individuals and the groups.



## A profound change: the emergence of modern urban Ireland



The Custom House Dublin by Thomas Malton

**The First Irish Cities: an Eighteenth-Century Transformation** by David Dickson (Yale University Press, £25.00/€32.00)

J. Anthony Gaughan

In this study Prof. Dickson selects ten Irish cities and towns, subjects them to a forensic historical analysis and illustrates in meticulous detail their evolution throughout the 18th Century. The urban centres he selects are: Belfast, Cork, Derry, Drogheda, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford.

Prof. Dickson begins with an account of the 'walls coming down'. The ten urban communities experienced at least one siege or blockade since 1641 and eight had endured multiple sieges over that time. However, at the beginning of the 18th Century walls and stone-work defences had become redundant and by the middle of the century five of the urban centres had demolished substantial proportions of their gates, bastions and defensive walls. Other legacies of the past had also disappeared, such as medieval market crosses and the medieval cathedrals in Cork and Waterford.

### Attention

Prof. Dickson next turns his attention to the residents in these cities and towns. By

comparing the estimated civilian populations for those cities and towns in 1660 and 1821 he indicates the rapid rise in the number of their residents over that period. He considers the mortality rate in those centres and how it was affected by plagues of infectious diseases and periodic food shortages. However, although life expectancy for people, especially the young, was unfavourable for most of the century, it improved in

the final decades. The guilds, who were descended from the medieval guilds of craftsmen, continued to exercise considerable influence at the work place and the community at large. Their role was analogous to present-day trade unions and staff associations. A table comparing the religious composition of citizens in the ten centres in 1660 and 1836 shows the rapid and significant rise in the Catholic proportion of their respective populations.

Catholic merchant families were to the fore in the sea ports of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford. Bishop Berkeley in the *Querist* (1735) expressed concern about this situation. He worried that thereby they could control the wholesale trade of the country. Prof. Dickson has little difficulty in dismissing such fears as groundless. He compares the commercial and industrial milieus in Belfast and Dublin and concludes that it was not until the second half of the century that the entrepreneurs in Belfast became as progressive as those in Dublin.

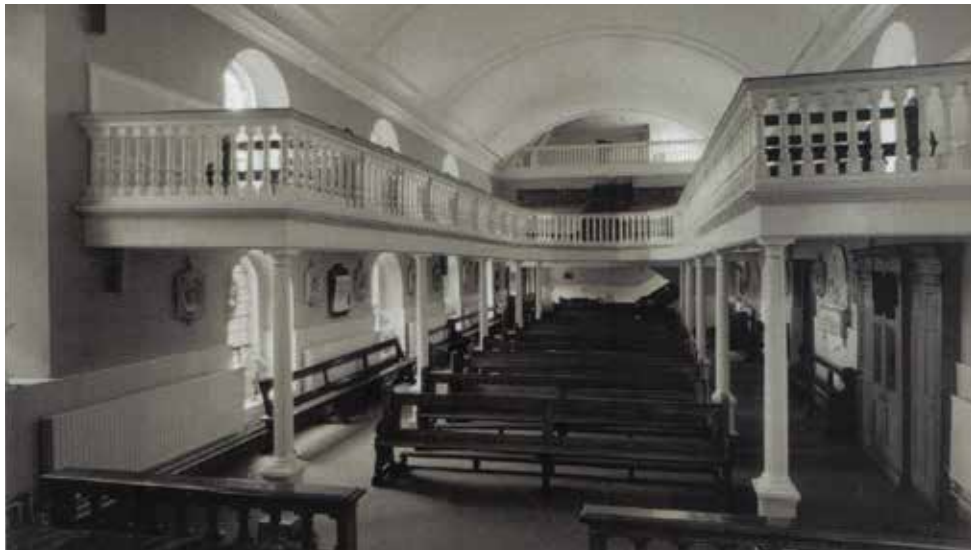
**“The ten urban communities experienced at least one siege or blockade since 1641 and eight had endured multiple sieges over that time”**

Prof. Dickson describes the parallel worlds in which Catholics and Protestants co-existed. He outlines the education provided under the auspices of the Church of Ireland and the other Protestant denominations. The separate worlds were structured by the notorious penal laws. As these were eased towards the end of the century, Teresa Mulally in Dublin and



Author Prof. David Dickson

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.



Nano Nagle (later foundress of the Presentation Sisters) in Cork began their respective crusades to make education available to the 'Catholic poor'.

St Patrick Catholic church Waterford, built inside the city walls in 1746, evidence of local tolerance and Catholic wealth.

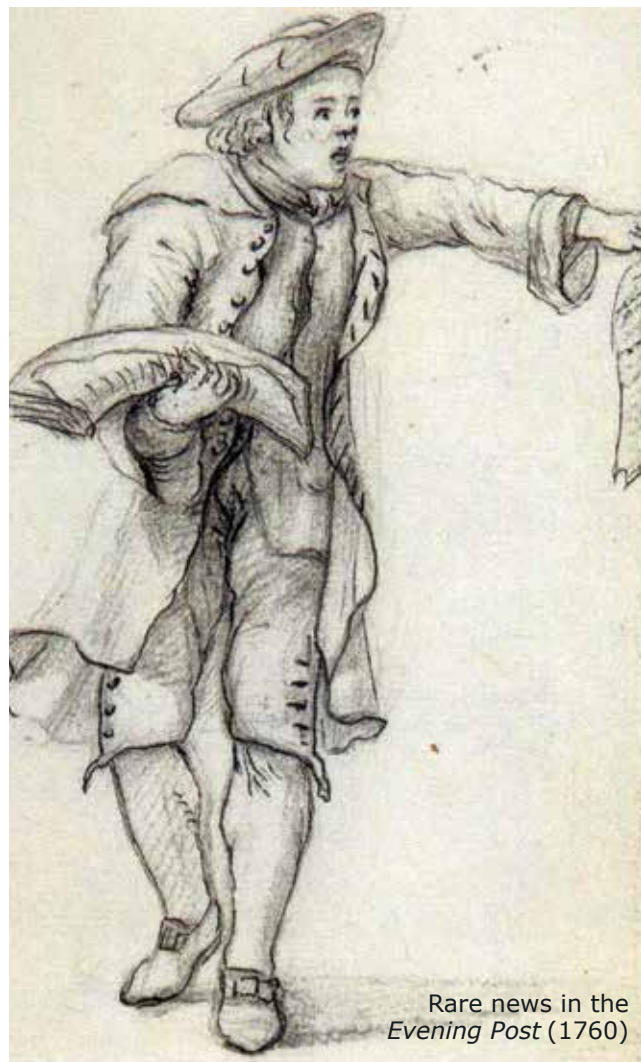
**“Prof. Dickson describes the parallel worlds in which Catholics and Protestants co-existed”**

Law and order were a top priority for the all-Protestant parliament in Dublin. They successfully brokered an agreement with the authorities in London that the bulk of the English standing army be housed and maintained on Irish soil during peacetime. Hence, the huge Royal Barracks built outside Dublin at the beginning of the century. At one time it housed over 4,000 men. Soldiers were also stationed in the other cities and towns across the country. Regulated Police first patrolled Irish streets in 1786.

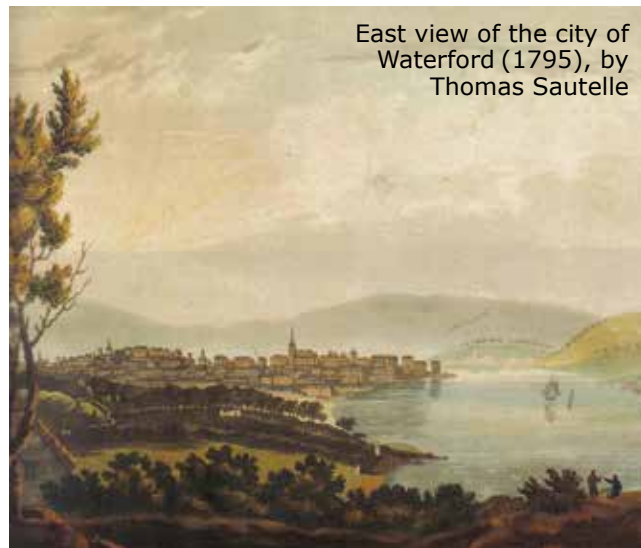
### Riots

Apart from periods of food shortages – 1765-66, 1783-84, early 1790s – serious riots were unusual. However, there was much riotous misconduct. This was generally associated with traditional carnivals, fairs, patterns and faction-fights. In this regard Donnybrook Fair was notorious. An ancient horse and livestock fair, it became a vast site for carnival and sport, drinking, pimping and brawling. On one Sunday in 1790 it was claimed that some 50,000 people were in attendance at the fair, returning to the city 'like intoxicated savages'.

This book would have been worth publishing for the quality of the illustrations alone. It is the first comprehensive overview of the great age of Irish urban development, in all its complexity, and variety and it will remain the benchmark for those involved in Irish urban history for many years to come.



Rare news in the *Evening Post* (1760)



East view of the city of Waterford (1795), by Thomas Sautelle

# A forgotten patriot

## A Life of Sir Horace Plunkett

by Maurice Colbert  
(Copies can be purchased directly from the author at: 086 821 9584, or email mcolbert@live.ie  
Price: €20+postage)

### Peter Costello

This book brings to mind that passage in *Gulliver's Travels*, where that hardy sea man is in dialogue with the king of Brobdingnag about the virtues of their respective nations.

"And he gave it for his opinion, 'that whoever could make two ears of wheat, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together'."

This is a passage that has always given heart to reformers of all kinds.

In this decade of commemoration we have had pass in review all kind of patriots of the right, left and centre, but mainly those in the revolutionary strand. Less has been made of mere 'reformers'.

Sir Horace Plunkett was in a different mould. The subtitle to this book suggests his range: 'visionary and pioneer, social reformer and humanitarian'. A special point the author makes is his text includes revealing extracts and important extracts from Sir Horace's own private diaries, almost the only records saved from his past.

### Love

For Maurice Colbert this book is very much a labour of love. He is a Waterford man who hails from Ardmore, but now retired, lives in Kildare. Previously he has written an account of his rural upbringing and his own recollections of the years he worked in the co-operative movement from 1966 to 2002.

This book, however, is the outcome of an admiration for Sir Horace that began in his student days and which he fed with books and encounters over the decades since.

The book brims with enthusiasm and with a still strong devotion to the ideas and institutions which Sir Horace devoted his life to building up, and which brought so much beneficial change to rural Ireland in those decades before globalisation.

The burning of his Foxrock home by Republicans in their campaign against the homes and lives of members of the first Senate during the Civil War – an attempt was even



Sir Horace Plunkett at the wheel of his De Dion Bouton, the first motorcar imported into Ireland.

made on the life of Nobel Prize winner W.B. Yeats – is still an act that cannot be justified.

### Independence

Having celebrated the struggle for independence, Irish people now have to face the appropriate commemoration of the Civil War. That may be a matter of real consequence for the country's future.

Sir Horace was truly one of those who did indeed make two blades of grass grow where only one (or none) grew before. Yet the theme of this book, as regards Ireland at least, is summed up by a tribute from John Roche, towards the close of the book: "Horace Plunkett - Messiah ignored".

The co-operative movement found favour in North America, in Scandinavia and elsewhere, including England. It made a great impact on rural life in ways that still affect many societies down to today.

Mr Colbert is not a trained historian and his book lacks

in places the professional polish that some might expect. But he provides his readers with a swiftly moving account of Sir Horace's life, which touches on all the high points of his involvements in England, Ireland, North America and elsewhere.

### Passion

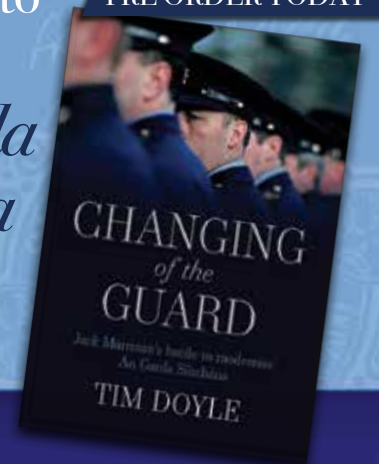
Maurice Colbert's passion for the co-operative movement and deep admiration for Horace Plunkett make this the ideal brief introduction to a great man, but to a fully understanding of his opinions and the impact of his ideas Mr Colbert's readers will have to read much further. But these pages briskly preserve a great man's career and carries forward his reputation into future years.

(An historical foot note: Sir Horace was indeed a herald of change: he imported the first motor car into Ireland, an invention that transformed 20th Century Ireland and rules all our lives today, for better or worse!)

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Dear Heart of Jesus,  
In the past I have asked for many favours.  
This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)  
Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.  
Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.  
Say this prayer for three days.  
S.D.

*Please pray for the beatification of*

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– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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# Leisure time

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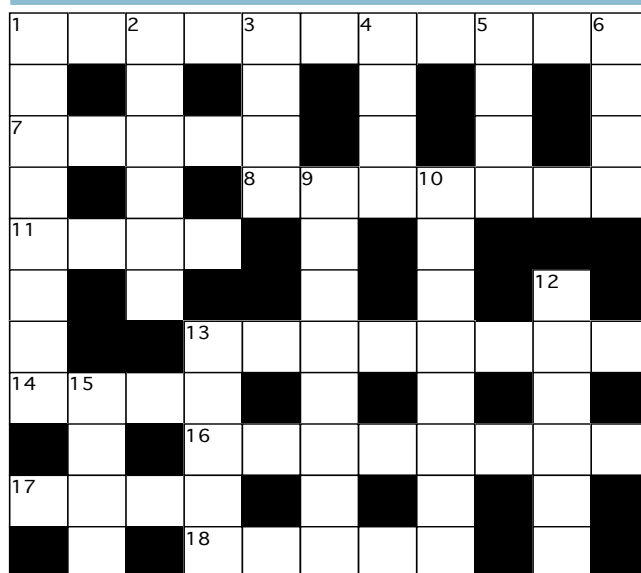
**One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives.**

**Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.**

**Trócaire**

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 398



### Across

- 1 Riders guide their horses over fences in an arena in this sport (11)
- 7 Athletes run on it (5)
- 8 The world's highest mountain (7)
- 11 Torn clothing (4)
- 13 Bratislava is the capital of this European country (8)
- 14 The yellow part of an egg (4)
- 16 The first letters of your first name and your surname (8)
- 17 Notice a sound (4)
- 18 Make fun of someone (5)

### Down

- 1 One day during the weekend (8)
- 2 Citrus fruit (6)
- 3 Tell it to make someone laugh (4)
- 4 Small creatures that like cheese (4)
- 5 Doing nothing (4)
- 6 Present (4)
- 9 Girl's name, also the name of a plant (8)
- 10 Your grandfather or cousin, perhaps (8)
- 12 This tree can be 'weeping' (6)
- 13 Girls' garment (5)
- 15 Unlock (4)

## SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 26

### GORDIUS NO. 552

**Across** – 1 Saved by the bell 6 Stye 10 Pooka 11 Kidnapped 12 Wizards 15 Accra 17 Abel 18 Neil 19 Lasso 21 Granary 23 Alter 24 Bier 25 Ails 26 Lemon 28 Statute 33 Base metal 34 Brute 35 Easy 36 Cast a spell

**Down** – 1 Sips 2 Violinist 3 Diana 4 Yoked 5 Hide 7 Topic 8 Endeavours 9 Fatally 13 Roar 14 Sadness 16 Infallible 20 Saint Jude 21 Grandma Moses 22 Rota 29 To let 30 Tubas 31 Etna

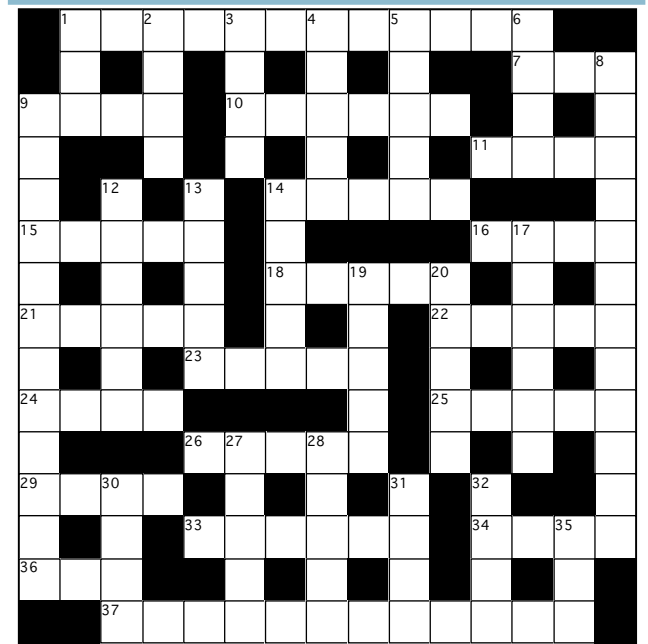
### CHILDREN'S No. 397

**Across** – 1 Flying fox 7 Knot 8 Return 10 Foal 12 Spider 13 Nil 15 Dimples 19 Odd 20 Cinema 21 Nettle 22 Skates

**Down** – 2 London 3 Intelligent 4 Germs 5 Outside 6 Man 9 Reef 11 Aid 14 Ducks 16 Plans 17 South 18 Added

## Crossword

Gordius 523



### Across

- 1 Brazilian city overlooked by the statue of Christ the Redeemer (3,2,7)
- 7 Feathery scarf, named for a constrictor (3)
- 9 Printers' blue ink (4)
- 10 Stringed instrument (6)
- 11 Tumbled (4)
- 14 Annoyed with part of the convex edging (5)
- 15 Run away to get married (5)
- 16 Talon (4)
- 18 Large water birds (5)
- 21 & 14d It happens when the pontiff comes to call (5,5)
- 22 Relating to the ebb and flow of the sea (5)
- 23 A sum for baby Capone (5)
- 24 Cessation, respite (4)
- 25 Inactive form of nitre (5)
- 26 Cuddly young canine (5)
- 29 Curved structure (4)
- 33 Purloined from the turbulent Solent (6)
- 34 Prepare some writing for publication (4)
- 36 Take the waters here (3)
- 37 French term of address corresponding to the English 'Miss' (12)

### Down

- 1 Sunbeam (3)
- 2 Possesses (4)
- 3 Ova (4)
- 4 Similar (5)
- 5 Rub out (5)
- 6 Woodwind instrument (4)
- 8, 31d & 32d This Shakespeare play title asserts that problems are forgotten if the conclusion is good (4,4,4,4,4)
- 9 Young butterflies or moths (12)
- 12 It was written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (6)
- 13 Gave out cards (5)
- 14 See 21 across
- 17 Accounts book (6)
- 19 A mixture of metals (5)
- 20 Discoloration spoils satin (5)
- 27 Undo a knot (5)
- 28 Infantile paralysis (5)
- 30 Pack in a hundred sheep (4)
- 31 See 8 down
- 32 See 8 down
- 35 Frozen water (3)

## Sudoku Corner

398

### Easy

4	9	5		6				8
			5	8				4
		8	4	3		1		5
						4	8	
5	7	3				6	1	9
	4	1						
1		4		2	5	3		
2				9	4			
9				1		5	4	2

### Hard

		5	4		3		9	
				8				1
6				4				2
					4		1	2
8				2		5		7
	2	1			8			
9						8		4
4						6		
		3			2		8	5

### Last week's Easy 397

9	7	3	2	6	4	5	1	8
4	2	6	5	1	8	9	3	7
8	1	5	3	9	7	4	6	2
2	9	8	6	4	3	1	7	5
6	3	4	1	7	5	2	8	9
7	5	1	8	2	9	6	4	3
1	6	9	7	8	2	3	5	4
3	4	7	9	5	6	8	2	1
5	8	2	4	3	1	7	9	6

### Last week's Hard 397

9	1	8	5	7	4	2	6	3
3	2	6	1	9	8	7	4	5
5	7	4	2	6	3	9	1	8
2	8	7	3	4	6	5	9	1
1	4	5	7	2	9	3	8	6
6	9	3	8	5	1	4	2	7
4	5	9	6	1	7	8	3	2
7	3	1	9	8	2	6	5	4
8	6	2	4	3	5	1	7	9

Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP



# No educated person in the Middle Ages thought the earth was flat

**IRISH PEOPLE** of all stripes are aware, at least vaguely, of the achievements of the learned monks of early Christian Ireland. Comparatively few details of the monastery schools and scholars on the island of Ireland at this period are known, however, and we know a good deal more about the Irish intellectuals who rose to prominence on the continent, under the patronage of Charlemagne and his successors.

One of these in particular deserves to be better known: a scholar by the name of Dicuil. He turns up in the historical record as a teacher of grammar at the Ninth Century court of Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son. We don't know exactly where he was trained but he almost certainly spent some time at the great Irish monastery of Iona, and he specifically mentions voyaging around the islands off the north of Britain. Writing about these islands he says, "I have lived in some of them and I have visited others; some I have only glimpsed, while others I have only read about".

Why was Dicuil, a teacher of grammar, writing about islands? Because he was also a pioneering geographer. He was skilled in astronomy, and wrote a very important treatise on the subject which is currently being translated by schol-



St Martin's Cross, Iona from the Ninth Century.

ars at TCD, but he's best known for a geographical work entitled, *On the Measurement of the Sphere of the Earth*. (Note that he, like every educated person in the Middle Ages, knew perfectly well that the earth is a sphere, not flat; the idea that medieval people all thought the earth was flat is an invention of the Nineteenth Century).

In his geographical work, Dicuil mostly gathers together classical sources, texts by ancient authors like Pliny the Elder and Solinus describing regions of the

world to which Europeans at the time had little access: India, Africa, and so on.

Apart from transmitting ancient geographical authorities, Dicuil also adds contemporary geographical observations. He includes some fascinating detail about the geography of Egypt, told to him, probably on Iona, by a monk called Fidelis who had actually travelled to Egypt. Fidelis' account includes accurate descriptions of the pyramids and other features of the landscape, and even the description of a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, a precursor to the Suez Canal. This might seem fanciful, but we now know, from

contemporary Arabic sources, that this ancient canal was in fact open and functioning for about a century in the early Middle Ages, so Dicuil's source is once again accurate.

Dicuil has sources that went north too. He himself had travelled in the islands north of Britain, but he knows that some adventurous Irish monks sailed due north for several days until they reached uninhabited islands and built hermitages there. These islands are almost certainly the Faroe Islands, and the Irish monks were the first to visit and describe them, before abandoning the islands – and their sheep, Dicuil notes – when the Vikings attacked.

Iceland too was settled for the first time by Irish wanderers, and Dicuil hears from them about the phenomenon of the Midnight Sun around the summer solstice. Based on their descriptions he corrects some of what ancient writers had written, and he speculates – correctly of course – that at the winter solstice Iceland must be in perpetual twilight.

Dicuil doesn't just correct ancient authorities, though, he also notes, with considerable humility, that many of the details in his work are uncertain, and he invites later readers to correct his text based on their own observations. It might be an exaggeration to call him a scientist, but he certainly had a keen scientific instinct, sharpened at the heart of a community of prayer and study somewhere on our island.

### The early Irish Church and the life of the mind...

Another Irish monk on the continent – possibly even Dicuil himself – left behind a poem designed to encourage his pupils to spend their youth in study. It reveals beautifully the appreciation in the early Irish Church for the life of the mind:

*Learn now, boys! The age for learning passes swiftly,  
time goes by, as the heavens revolve the days follow.  
Just as the swift charger gallops eagerly over the fields,  
so youth flies by without lingering as it passes.  
The pliant tip of the twig curves beneath an easy pressure  
but no one can bend the stiff boughs.  
While your minds happen to be receptive, my friends,  
waste no time and learn the divine commands of God.  
Do not squander the period generously granted to you,  
for without learning the life of man perishes.*



The Pope with a Lebanese flag at his 4 August audience, at which he appealed for the people of Lebanon.

## The Little Way Association MILLIONS STARVING IN MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

### Your help is urgently needed

Economic and social problems are afflicting Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Political problems have been exacerbated by covid, such that many are poverty-stricken. In his audience of 4 August, the Pope said: "Today I would also appeal to the international community to offer Lebanon concrete assistance, not only with words but with concrete actions in undertaking a journey of resurrection." More than 80% of Syria's population live in poverty. Four fifths of Yemeni people need humanitarian aid. Cardinal Bechara Rai of Lebanon says his country is host to two million refugees in addition to the four million population. Brother Hailegabriel Meleku, OFM Cap, writes: "The Capuchin brothers and students of Kobbo mission, Ethiopia, evacuated the mission to save their lives. Many people are displaced, some killed. There is no telephone line, no water, no electricity, no transport in the town. There is a shortage of food and everything. The war is causing many bad consequences in the country. Kindly keep our mission in your prayers."



"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

### HAITI EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY APPEAL

Thousands of injured and homeless people urgently need help

Your donation, large or small, to The Little Way Association's appeal for the earthquake victims in Haiti will be sent direct, without deduction, to provide emergency kits, food, shelter, water, sanitation and medical supplies for the thousands of injured and homeless people.

### THE NEEDS NOW ARE IMMENSE.

Please be as generous as you can and remember the suffering people of Haiti in your prayers.

### Please will you help?

The Little Way Association is in touch with the hierarchy and missionaries in these afflicted countries. Every penny or cent of your donation will go **WITHOUT DEDUCTION** to the church working to help the destitute in this region. Please send whatever you can today.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **STARVING IN MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA**

€..... **HAITI EARTHQUAKE APPEAL**

€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
(Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**