

The Irish Catholic

NUALA O'LOAN

The suppression of critical thought
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MOTHER AND BABY HOMES

A harsh and unforgiving period of our history
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Govt 'see reason' over 'sneaky tax on prayer'

Ruadhán Jones

The Government has "seen reason" and deferred a controversial levy on candles – which had been called "sneaky" and described as "a tax on prayer" – until at least 2022.

The Department of Finance had proposed to withdraw a VAT exemption on the white candles used as votive lamps – a huge source of comfort to the faithful and an important source of donations for parishes.

"It's great that it's been deferred, I'm happy, the churches are happy," Desmond Wisely of Wisely Ecclesiastical Supplies said. He had previously accused the Government of trying to "sneak" the tax in. "We're in outbreak number three of Covid and churches are on their knees with regard to income coming in. Candles are the main source of income now I'd say with the envelopes dropping off," he added.

Fr John Carroll who had criticised the move as being a "tax on prayer" – comparing it to taxing counselling sessions – welcomed the deferral, saying the decision makers should be "commended for their sensitivity to such a matter at this particular time when so many seek hope and comfort and draw it from prayer moments at churches".

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A new chapter as US gets second ever Catholic president



National Guard troops patrol the US capitol in Washington DC as Joe Biden was inaugurated as 46th President of the United States – only the second Catholic in history to assume the office. Despite his pro-choice views, Mr Biden is a regular Massgoer. Photo: CNS/Joshua Roberts

MICHAEL KELLY

Church can't shirk responsibility over homes **PAGE 2**



THE AGE-OLD GAME

Checkmating lockdown with chess **PAGES 31 & 33**



MARY KENNY

This too shall pass... but so shall we **PAGE 5**



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In reflecting on the fault of others, we can't shirk our responsibility as a Church

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



The Stoic philosopher Epictetus observed almost 2,000 years ago that "it is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows". I've thought about it a lot over the last week regarding the reaction to the mother and baby report.

Some newspaper columnists have called on Judge Yvonne Murphy's report to be set aside because – based on the evidence the commission heard – it does not come to the conclusion that was popularly assumed.

One columnist within seconds of the almost 3,000-page document being released said it 'revealed' that Ireland had been controlled by a "Catholic Stasi" – a reference to the ruthless secret police of communist East Germany.

Nuanced

The report, of course, is a much more nuanced and sober reading of the evidence as one would expect from Judge Murphy and her fellow commissioners. What seems to have irked those critical of their work is the fact that blame is shared around between the Church, the State, wider society and families.

Many people seem reluctant to accept that the blame could also lie closer to home. It is easier (and less painful) to think of the past as the one-dimensional story of a wicked Church and a subservient State doing as it was told.

Senator Regina Doherty has gone so far as to call for an 'independent review' of the work of the commission – a 'report on the report' if you like. It appears to have escaped Senator Doherty that the commission was itself an independent review headed in Ms Justice Murphy by a woman who showed steely determination in her investigation of abuse in the Dublin Diocese. Would Mrs Doherty propose hiring

another judge and historians to go through the same evidence and interview the same witnesses in the hope they would come to a different conclusion? What if they didn't? Would we keep having reports until it had a conclusion that accorded with the preconceived views of some newspaper columnists?

At a deeper level, the report of the commission cannot be a moment for Catholics and the institutional Church to cast the net of blame so wide that there is no serious reflection on what went wrong with Catholicism.

“Many people seem reluctant to accept that the blame could also lie closer to home”

Sometimes we protest that people hold the Church to a higher standard than, say, social workers. Good, I say. As Catholics we are custodians of an eternal truth that each and every person is made in God's image and likeness hallowed by the fact that Jesus became flesh. When people acting in the name of the Church mistreat people in their care it is a rejection of their unique dignity as someone created in God's image. It is also a betrayal of the Gospel judgement of Matthew Chapter 25 that "in as much as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me".

"We were all the same," is a pretty pathetic moral standard for people who calibrate their lives by the Gospel to set for themselves. In articulating the high ideals that Christians do, it should be in the knowledge that these ideals are reachable and that we are judged inasmuch as we do not reach them.

Archbishop Eamon Martin in his forthright apology was right to accept unreservedly the Church's failure to stand with and for the most vulnerable when they needed it most. That failure casts a heavy shadow over both the Church and society. In our own reflection as Catholics on these failings, and how we allowed the beauty and truth of the Gospel to be obscured by pettiness and stigmatising, we can help hold a mirror to wider society and help others reflect on their complicity.

But, this will not be achieved by trying to deflect the blame elsewhere. We should not be afraid to confront how the Faith is often inadequately lived.

Holy and Sinful

As Henri Nouwen puts it: "The Church is holy and sinful, spotless and tainted. The Church is the bride of Christ, who washed her in cleansing water and took her to himself 'with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless'" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

"The Church," he goes on, "too is a group of sinful, confused, anguished people constantly tempted by the powers of lust and greed and always entangled in rivalry and competition."

"When we say that the Church is a body, we refer

not only to the holy and faultless body made Christ-like through baptism and Eucharist but also to the broken bodies of all the people who are its members. Only when we keep both these ways of thinking and speaking together can we live in the Church as true followers of Jesus," Fr Nouwen wrote.

“Senator Regina Doherty has gone so far as to call for an 'independent review' of the work of the commission”

In the Church's liturgy when one is instituted as a lector he (or following the Popes recent reform, now she) is presented with the scriptures with the words: "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach". This must be our yardstick.

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.

Govt 'see reason' over 'sneaky tax on prayer'

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Mr Wisely said that it was good the Government have "seen reason" and won't introduce the tax in the midst of the pandemic.

"It's such a small thing, so minuscule, it's not a big tax earner," he said. "If it came in tomorrow, the person who's going to pay for it is the church and the parish, which is something they can't afford and that's the bottom line." Colin O'Carroll, Chairperson of the Irish Candlemakers Association – who had appealed to Government that it be deferred – said they were "very pleased with the concession".

"It's been kicked to touch for 12 months," Mr O'Carroll said. "We had been given no notice. If it hadn't been deferred I don't think there would have been any chance of getting it back to what it was before, but now that it's been deferred for 12 months we have a chance

to get it deferred long term or completely. At least we now have that space."

Mr O'Carroll said that as VAT is an EU-wide tax, they will be keeping a close eye on "any other changes in EU countries and make a case based on that".

Fr Carroll said: "Sacred spaces, or sanctuary moments, play a vital role in the health of the country," he continued. "They provide strength needed in times of trial, gratitude expressed at a time of deliverance – during exams, health tests, times of discernment – our churches facilitate this 'self-help with God' every year."

"The health benefits are enormous – we should make it as easy and as low cost as we can. The State shouldn't exhaust society's possibilities. Lighting a candle reminds us of how much more there is to life – like petition, gratitude and wonder. Let's keep it tax free," he concluded.



Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith / Concern Worldwide

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'Consistent' public opinion means RTÉ Angelus stays

Chai Brady

Despite calls to scrap the Angelus the Head of Religious Content at RTÉ has said the majority of the public want to keep it, with most of complaints coming from "secular quarters".

Renewed criticism of RTÉ's daily Angelus broadcasts surfaced after the findings related to mother and baby homes investigation were published on January 12. A petition to 'Take the Angelus off the RTÉ', published last week, received 4,200 signatures.

RTÉ's Roger Childs cited recent polls regarding the Angelus. A poll conducted by Amárach in 2017 found 62% wanted to keep it and an exit poll taken during the 2018 general elec-

tion put it at 68%.

A poll conducted online of more than 31,000 readers by *The Journal.ie* last week found that 70.3% of people didn't want the Angelus to be scrapped.

"None of that suggests to me or to RTÉ that there's any great public clamour to scrap the Angelus in light of reports," Mr Childs said, "People can distinguish between disillusionment with institutional Churches and with Government and what we put on at 6pm and 12pm on RTÉ."

Muslims

He said he is yet to receive a complaint from a member of another faith community. For that reason he says "it's interesting that the people

who defend the Angelus very often speak as if they're defending it against a tide of onslaught from Muslims".

"I don't know why they think that about Muslims but they say 'we go to their country and we don't mind them having a call to prayer', as if it's Muslims calling to scrap it, actually it's not, the Muslims I have spoken to respect the fact that RTÉ create space for prayer and reflection within its schedules and they value that, nobody is expressing a view that we should be scrapping it from those communities it tends to come from secular elements of the community who remain a minority, albeit a significant one.

"The few complaints, and there are very few complaints, seem to come from secular quar-

ters and insofar as they're ever organised then they're from lobbies like Atheist Ireland and the Humanists Association of Ireland who see it, perceive it, as a Catholic imposition and an anachronism. Sensitive to those complaints I've tried to update the treatment of it on television at least so that it's more visibility all-inclusive, that it's for people of all faiths and none."

He added that the Angelus is not specifically Catholic but that the Angelus prayer is – which RTÉ has never broadcast.

"If you wish to say the Angelus prayer, good luck to you and you are facilitated in doing so, if you choose to have a different form of meditation or none whatsoever, or just turn over, that's all fine as well," said Mr Childs.

Donegal priest asks people not to attend wakes, funerals and burials

Staff reporter

A Donegal priest has called on people to stop attending wakes, funerals and burials as the Covid-19 guidance is "not sinking in".

Tremendous comfort

Fr John Joe Duffy CC of Dunfanaghy/Creelough parish said that although going to wakes, funeral Masses and burials is a "tremendous comfort", it is dangerous.

"Despite public health pleas, the message is not sinking in and it is not getting through that it is dangerous to gather in large numbers and to gather close together," Fr Duffy said. He also

warned of the new Covid-19 variant first identified in Britain which "is many times more infectious than anything we have seen, so we need to be much more careful for the safety of others and ourselves".

"I am urging people to take care to avoid what we are so accustomed to for the next few months and avoid congregating and gathering in large numbers outside churches and in cemeteries/graveyards and leave those spaces for families who cannot enter the Church," he added, saying it "is much safer at this time to send a card, make a phone call, send a message, add your condolences to the death notices on RIP.ie".

MyFaith programme triumphs over trials



Gemma Mulligan and her daughters Juliette and Charlotte enjoying the parish based MyFaith programme of preparation for the sacraments.

Jason Osborne

The MyFaith programme for sacramental preparation has gone from strength to strength despite the lockdown, Dr Dermot Ryan of Ossory Diocese told *The Irish Catholic*.

MyFaith is a programme of sacramental preparation which aims to allow children to work towards the celebration of the sacraments alongside their parents, with the support of their parishes. It's specifically aimed at children preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation for the first

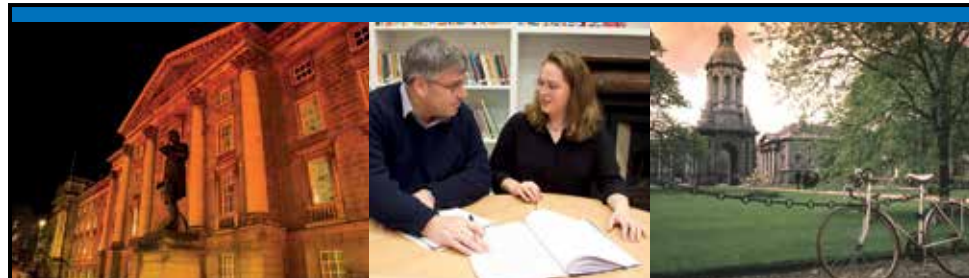
time, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Dr Ryan said that the average number of logins per day is anywhere between five and six hundred, even during the Christmas period.

"It wasn't launched for Covid times, it was launched here in the diocese as a way to reinvigorate sacramental preparation, but large components of it are online and therefore it was perfectly suited, as it turned out, for parishes to use during these restrictive lockdowns," Dr Ryan said. "We're delighted with it."

The feedback has been equally positive, with the best proof of the programme's success being the fact that "the kids are continually coming back to it," Dr Ryan said. "That they're really engaging. That's showing they're enjoying it, and if they're enjoying it, they're learning from it."

The programme's success has been such that the diocese received an email from a parent requesting a separate login for a child who wasn't registered to the course – a sign which can only be a good thing, Dr Ryan says.



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Church must confront its failure to be merciful

Jason Osborne

The Church must look to its own failings in the wake of the report on the investigation into the mother and baby homes, says UCC historian Dr Gabriel Doherty.

Responding to the concern that Catholicism was being used as a scapegoat for what was a wider societal failing, Dr Doherty told *The Irish Catholic* that the Church must look at the “numerous ways” in which it failed to treat those who were entrusted to its care “according to the Gospel values that it championed then, and champions now”.

Acknowledging that the Church’s failure was not the only one at the time, Dr Doherty said that the Church “which aspired to be a

light in and to the world cannot justify its own shortcomings with reference to the State practices and broader social attitudes that it helped to mould”.

“The public rhetoric of the Church of the time stressed the importance of mercy in its dealings with the women and children involved, but the actions behind closed doors of many of its professed members on many occasions was marked by an absence of that virtue, as well as being a betrayal of the wholly admirable precepts on which the orders to which they belonged were founded,” Dr Doherty said.

The fact that widespread failings were known to the leadership of orders and yet went uncorrected and unpunished “and thus

(were) facilitated, and implicitly and explicitly encouraged” demonstrates that problems existed at a systemic level and were not confined to a few “bad apples”, as is often claimed, Dr Doherty asserts.

“The Church faces a difficult task in convincing both the Faithful and the growing number of its critics that it merits sympathetic understanding of the mistakes it made in this sphere (as in so many others) when that quality was conspicuous by its absence when it was most needed,” Dr Doherty said.

He commended the report on its “discerning” approach to criticism, and its measure in applying that criticism, saying that its inquisitive, rather than combative, style added to its credibility.

NEWS IN BRIEF

International bishops cancel annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the bishops of the Holy Land Coordination group have cancelled their annual pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine. Over the last twenty years the pilgrimage usually takes place in January of each year.

For 2021, the Holy Land Coordination will meet online from January 16-21, and a smaller delegation will visit the Holy Land when the pandemic situation eases, possibly during the summer.

Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr Noel Treanor, who is attending the online pilgrimage, said that we should keep Holy Land Christians in our prayers as the pandemic “has had a negative impact on work, income, family life and schooling due to a lack of income from Christian pilgrimages”.

Pandemic sees rise in Christian persecution, report shows

Ruadhán Jones

Governments in Asia and Africa have used an “epidemiological cover” to conceal “a quiet humanitarian catastrophe”, Aid to a Church in Need has said.

“Regimes which are hostile to the presence of Christians within their lands have used Covid-19 as cover for attacks and for using their proxies to either eliminate or exploit Christian communities,” said Dr Michael Kinsella, National Director of ACN Ireland.

His comments come as a report from Evangelical group Open Doors shows Christian persecution rose 19% in 2020, with 340 million Christians facing persecution.

More than 4,700 Christians were killed in

2020 – a 60% rise – with 3,500 of these killed in Nigeria.

The World Watchlist 2021 report shows that authoritarian governments have used the pandemic as cover to increase restrictions on Christians.

“In my view and in the view of ACN, China is the most reprehensible and requires the most urgent intervention,” Dr Kinsella told *The Irish Catholic*. “Hundreds of millions – nearly 300 million – live in lands where it can mean a death sentence to evangelise the Christian, to profess outwardly the Christian faith. What’s provided by these regimes by the way of an epidemiological cover is actually a quiet humanitarian catastrophe.”

Tribute to Loreto Sister who ‘dodged bullets’ in Kenya

Chai Brady

An Irish priest working in Kenya has paid tribute to Sr Colombiere Kelly IBVM, who died last week after spending decades changing culture and educating girls.

Fr Conor Donnelly, who is based in Nairobi, said Sr Kelly went to East Africa and became principal of a Catholic school in 1952 during very challenging times.

“There were Christmases when there was no food, they dodged Mau Mau bullets in the late 50s, mattresses were sacks packed with grass, the first girls, unaccustomed to school, ran away, but little by little with perseverance, things went forward,” he said.

He added that today there are many Loreto schools all over the country which facilitated the education of many prominent Kenyan women. “They became the backbone of educational system. In 2013...Sr Colombiere personally received an award on behalf of all Loreto for their contribution to education. The president himself, son of the founding father, was an alumnus,” Fr Donnelly said.

Two weeks ago a contemporary of hers also died, Sr Breid Cunningham, she had spent 73 years in Africa. Between them they clocked up 146 years of service to education in East Africa.

“Women of stature, caliber, courageous, idealistic, full of feminine genius, they have left their mark,” Fr Donnelly added.

To sing is to pray twice



The Poor Clare Sisters of Arundel are pictured at work recording their album *Light for the World*, which has become the UK’s best-selling classical artist debut of 2020.

Nostrums offered for lockdown depression...

We are now at the stage of the pandemic where the gurus are emerging to bestow advice about depression and the toll that lockdown is taking on our mental health.

A variety of nostrums are being offered to help deal with the stress of continuous lockdown – with little hope of eased restrictions this side of Easter.

Immunologists are warning that while acute stress – the tension that spurs you to win the egg-and-spoon race at school sports' day – can boost your immune system, chronic or ongoing stress can make you more liable to illness. Infections invade the body whose resistance is lowered by chronic stress or depression.

Advice proffered includes getting out into green spaces – although that might be penalised by the authorities if you wander too far from base.

Don't eat for comfort – oops! Oh dear. I've been scoffing the chocolate for a while now, and it shows.

Limit your screen time – but what if the screen is your only contact with what's laughingly called 'the outside world'?

A boffin at the University of Portsmouth, Mike Tipton, suggests taking a regular dip in icy water. Yes, I must try wild-water swimming. But, as St Augustine so suggested, perhaps not quite yet!

Avoid caffeine in the afternoon. What? But a real cup of tea in the afternoon keeps me sane!

If depressed by Covid-19 restrictions, keep a journal. I already do that, and it reads like the memoir of a misery-guts.



Mary Kenny



Marian Keyes, bestselling author who has written about her own tussles with depression and alcohol, advises that you murmur to yourself, repeatedly, 'This too will pass'. When a day seems unbearable, break it down into manageable chunks – an hour at a time, say.

But 'this too will pass' – though advice from the wisdom of the ages and of many holy people – has a downside, Marian. 'It' will pass – but so will we. For older people, there's an acute awareness that any of us could 'pass away', in the current euphemism for dying, before the pandemic passes us by. Some people may be ready for this: others may be plunged into a sense of foreboding grief.

A Stoic website advises: "commit to the hard path". Those ancient Athenians just told people to get resilient and accept that life is tough

Everyone has their own way of dealing with the lockdown melancholy of isolation and confinement. My own method is to pretend that I'm on an extended retreat – a year-long withdrawal into the desert. This time is given to me, I tell myself, to experience life in a different way: to contemplate my past errors and future endeavours of amendment.

That gets me through, just so long as I can have the teeniest, weeniest piece of chocolate!

A brilliant writer with unusual origins

The current focus on adoptive children having the right to trace their birth parents has put me in mind of the late journalist David Leitch, who was a good friend of my husband, Richard West. David later became my friend too.

Mr Leitch was a brilliant writer, mainly associated with *The Sunday Times*, covering a number of terrifying conflicts in Vietnam, the Middle East, and Cyprus, and later becoming a specialist in espionage, co-authoring the first major book about Kim Philby.

His early life had been extraordinary: at eight days old, he had been sold by his birth parents, who put an advert in *The Daily Express* about a baby for sale. A suburban couple from Harrow answered the advert and baby David was duly handed over to his adoptive parents at the Russell Hotel, near the British Museum in London's Bloomsbury.

His adoptive parents were dutiful, if a little narrow: they sent him to a top-class school and he sailed through Cambridge University with flying colours. His talent then brought him early success.

In 1973, he wrote a book about his birth circumstances, *God Stand Up for Bastards* (a quote from Shakespeare) which revealed the sensational conditions of his adoption. He assumed his birth parents were unmarried and he was born 'illegitimate': but discovered subsequently that they were married. His birth mother was a 'serial rejector' of her own children, and had placed two other children also for adoption.

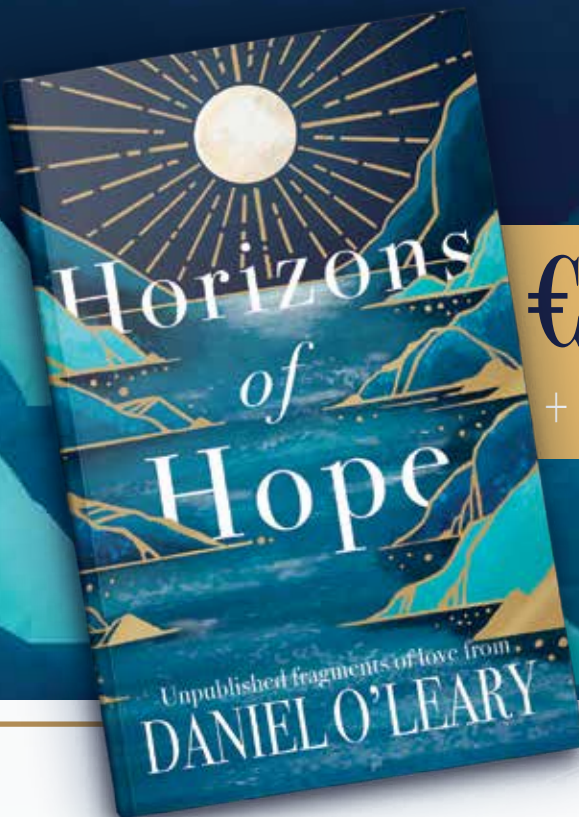
We all drank pretty heavily in those Fleet Street days of the 1960s and 70s, but David succumbed, later, to chronic alcoholism. The trauma of war experience, as well as a 'feeling of dispossession', hadn't helped. Yet, despite his evident anger, David was a lovely man, often cheerful and funny. He was latterly married to another friend of mine, the feminist Rosie Boycott (a descendent of Ireland's famous Captain Boycott).

He died in 2004, from lung cancer, aged 67. David had three kids from two marriages and a relationship and they are all just fine. Life involves suffering, but life renews itself too.

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107-year-old Nancy Stewart and her Mass mission

Jason Osborne

107-year-old Meath woman Nancy Stewart has made it her mission to attend online Masses in each of Ireland's 32 counties.

Attending two or three Masses a day, she's well underway to accomplishing her goal.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, her granddaughter Louise Coghlan had only praise for the service that most churches are providing, describing the standard as "brilliant".

"Whether it's in sermons or like, you know, what's really magical is, yesterday evening we went to Cavan cathedral first, and Granny was like, 'I've never been in this cathedral,' you know? It's just so funny," she says.

Their efforts have attracted international attention with the Pontifical Irish College in Rome getting in contact, inviting her along to one of their online Masses with the promise of a special greeting.

"We were anonymous up to yesterday, but now we'll definitely be getting shout-outs. Between emails and Facebook and everything else, I've never got so many messages" Louise explains.

"We've loads of Masses to visit and they're all going to do a shout-out. We got an email from the Irish College in Rome as well. It looked like the head guy over there. He sent a very nice email to let us know, to invite us to go along to their virtual Mass in the mornings and whenever we're going just to let them know and they'll give a special greeting."

Efforts

Asked whether Nancy's efforts might give people some sense as to how important faith is, Louise answered affirmatively, saying that the online or virtual expressions of faith have often gone unappreciated.

"When you're cocooned and you love your Faith, it really is about reaching out in whatever way we can," Louise says.

"It's the same with Mass – Granny doesn't even question it, that it's not physically Mass, because there's an awful lot of the elderly, who before Covid, might not have been able to get out to Mass...You can look at life in a negative way or you can look at the positives, and the online, virtual world of Mass – I think it's amazing."



Nancy Stewart sits ready to attend Mass in Cavan cathedral from her home in Meath.



Samantha Power

Biden's aid choice a pro-choice Irish Catholic

Jason Osborne

Samantha Power, US President Joe Biden's pick to lead the United States' international aid agency, is a pro-choice Catholic who comes from Ireland.

If confirmed, Ms Power would head up the US Agency for International Development, a position which Mr Biden has announced he's elevating to the National Security Council.

Speaking to the *U.S. Catholic*, Ms Power spoke about her Irish origins, and how her Catholicism took root here as she grew up.

"Both my parents are from Ireland. I lived in Ireland until I was nine years old and went to a Catholic school. In that structure I was not only grounded in the beginnings of my moral education and Catholic teaching, but I also developed habits of

expressing my faith outside of formal structures that are still with me today and that I practice with my kids," Ms Power said.

Ms Power's interest in international aid was stoked by her Irish upbringing, describing Ireland's humanitarian efforts as a great "export".

"The good that so many of these priests and people of faith were doing to help people in vulnerable circumstances... It was inspiring to know that a small country such as ours was sending into the world people of great generosity and spirit," she said.

The former US Ambassador to the United Nations professed her support for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in a 2018 appearance on *The Irish Times Women's Podcast*, responding "yeah, absolutely", when asked whether she supported the repeal.

Priest's podcast tops chart days after launch

Jason Osborne

Fr Mike Schmitz's podcast, *The Bible in a Year*, which walks listeners through the Bible in 365 days has soared to the top of Apple's chart after its launch on New Year's Day. Nearly three weeks after launch, the podcast remains in the top spot.

It climbed above podcasts in every other category to achieve the number one spot.

Fr Mike Schmitz, a regular with the Youtube channel 'Ascension Presents', told *Fox 5* he believes the success of the podcast can be put down to the fact that the coronavirus has inspired people to make changes to their lives.

"I think it reveals a lot about people's hunger. I think it reveals it's the new year they want to make a change," Fr Schmitz said.

He encouraged people without faith to listen in to the podcast too, as the Bible is a "true story about real life" that they would "get a lot out of".

NEWS IN BRIEF

SVP 'humbled' after €260,000 raised for annual car draw

St Vincent De Paul South West has paid tribute to the "phenomenal" support for its annual 'Car Draw'. The charity revealed that in excess of €260,000 was raised following an urgent appeal for funds from the charity in November which was "significantly more" than the 2019 figure of €188,000. South West Regional President Paddy O'Flynn said: "We've always had extremely generous support for our annual car draw from the people in Cork and surrounding areas. We made no secret of the fact that this was going to be an unprecedentedly dif-

ficult year for us in terms of fundraising as a result of Covid-19 and people came out in their droves to support us - it was a huge success.

This year's car draw was due to take place on January 7 but due to Covid-19 restrictions it was postponed until February 10."

Understanding the past should give moral courage in the present – Archbishop-elect Farrell

Our Christian faith exhorts us to carry the cross without imposing it on others, and what is asked of us is

to support others in "carrying and lightening the burden" that has been imposed by previous generations, Archbishop-elect Dermot Farrell has said.

In a homily delivered last weekend, Dr Farrell again welcomed the publication of the mother and baby homes report, while asking the Faithful to cast an eye to the present to see what injustices are being carried out today.

"The Report is not yesterday's news. Do we now live in a land where every person is protected, where all are safe? Sadly, that is not the case. Migrants are trafficked into Ireland and not a few women are forced into lives of prostitution. Others are housed fifteen to a room by unscrupulous landlords," Dr Farrell said.

Nuala O'Loan

The View



Suppression of critical thought is now a feature of the world in which we live

Have you ever felt that perhaps you should not say what you think to the people you are with? It's a big question. In a land in which we proudly proclaim our rights and our freedoms, we can still be afraid to say what we think, and even what we believe, because of the response it may evoke.

Abortion

As Ireland debated and then introduced extended abortion, as we think about the calls for doctor-assisted dying - assisted suicide - and the arguments which have raged about children being given medication to stop their sexual development because they have decided that they no longer wish to be a little girl or a little boy, have you felt challenged because what you believe does not fit into what appears to be the public view of what is right? It happens, but in a free country in which there is a constitutional, legal right to freedom of speech it should not happen. Our right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion has been hard won.

“In turn we have the right to be heard, so long as we remain within the law in what we say and how we say it”

Of course all rights bring with them responsibilities and we must acknowledge those responsibilities and always act with respect while exercising our rights.

One of the things which every child should learn growing up is how to listen to others, how to hear views with which they do not agree, how to respond and to argue against the case which is being made if they disagree with it. This is part of how we form our views on what is right and wrong.

Traditionally in Ireland we have valued education. Our universities are supposed to be places of education which give the student, in the words of St John Henry Newman, “a clear conscious view of his own opinions and



Prof. Kathleen Stock who has been under pressure for expressing her views.

judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them and a force in urging them.” In order to reach that place in which we know what we think and why we think it, we need to be able to listen to views we do not like, and to search for the truth, knowing that there is such a thing as truth, that everything is not relative, and that truth includes the fact that all life is sacred - no matter how it may seem diminished to some by its particular circumstances whether they are age, or disability or sickness. We need too, as life evolves, to be able to hear the challenges of a secular society which is not based upon a belief that God made each of us for purpose, that he loves each one of us even when we do not know it, and that that purpose is encapsulated by the commands to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds, and to love one another as he has loved us - utterly and without reserve or hesitation because we are all children of God and he lives in each one of us.

Modern secular society

As we contemplate the arguments of the modern secular society in which we live, we need to be ever cognisant of the need to hear what is being said and to be able to process it, respond to it with courtesy and to recognise the validity of truth which challenges us. In turn we have the right to be heard, so long as we remain within the law in what we say and how we say

it. For this reason it has been very shocking over the past months to watch relentless attacks on people who do not proclaim what has become received wisdom. One of those people is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex, Kathleen Stock. She has spoken on issues relating to the importance of biological sex, about the emerging view that gender identity is a matter for self-selection, without considering the consequences - the need for single-sex spaces, especially for women - not allowing those who self-identify as women, having been born as men, to use women's toilet and shower facilities, to be held in women's prisons, to compete against female athletes.

“The number of children presenting seeking treatment had increased by 400% over five years”

She has spoken out with great lucidity on what she calls the “emerging scandal of health care of trans-identified children”. It was reported in December 2019 that 35 psychologists had resigned from the Tavistock Institute in London over three years in protest at the treatment there of children who wanted to transition from one sexual identity to another with puberty blocking drugs and hormones. The number of children presenting seeking treatment had increased by 400% over five

years. Children from Ireland had been travelling to England to get treatment there. The provision of puberty blocking drugs to young children was condemned by the High Court last in Britain month, when it said that these were experimental treatments which can no longer be given to children in most cases without the consent of the court. They said that it was highly unlikely that a child aged 13 or under would ever be competent to give consent to being treated with puberty blockers, that it was very doubtful that children aged 14 and 15 could have sufficient understanding of the long-term risks and consequences of such treatment to give consent and that doctors should involve the courts if there is any doubt as to whether the long-term interests of a 16 or 17 year-old would be served by treatment with puberty blockers and hormones.

Honour

As a consequence of her courage and her services to higher education Prof. Stock was recognised in the new year's honours list. That honour was applauded by many of her peers but some 600 philosophers from universities across the world wrote a public letter condemning her. She is accused by her detractors of “transphobic fear-mongering” of “helping to restrict trans people's access to life saving treatment” and of “encouraging the harassment of non-gender conforming people”. In fact she has publicly stated her support for the “right

of trans people to live free of any violence, harassment or discrimination.” What she argues for is the right to discuss such matters, which relate to “women's safety and autonomy and to children's health and to democracy itself”. She wants to draw attention to the “suppression of critical thought about gender identity ideology and trans activism in UK universities”.

Critical thought

That suppression of critical thought on a range of issues is a feature of life in the world in which we now live. Kathleen Stock is not the only person who has been vilified for expressing opinions which are not consistent with contemporary

views. Other academics and thinkers, journalists like our own Breda O'Brien have been ‘de-platformed,’ ‘cancelled,’ criticised, condemned and attacked for expressing their honest understanding of profound and fundamental facts. We need to be able to contemplate with objectivity the consequences of the decisions made in and by the society in which we live.

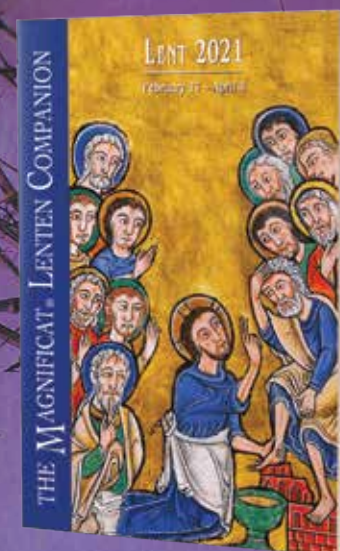
Freedom of thought, belief and religion is critical to the functioning of our democratic society. We must not allow it to be eroded and we must have the courage to stand up and say what we believe and know, and to support and encourage those like Kathleen Stock who have spoken out on critical issues. They must not be silenced.

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The perils of when ‘what will the neighbours think’ becomes our moral standard



Widespread institutionalisation of young people became a feature of a perverse desire for so-called respectability. Photo: CNS



The temptation to put respectability ahead of faith is the death knell for any authentic religion, writes Ruadhán Jones

As a young Irish Catholic, it's impossible not to know of the mother and baby homes, but reading the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was still difficult. Ireland, during the times of the mother and baby homes, was described in the report as being a cold and harsh place. Priests and religious, as well as government and State officials, reinforced and perpetuated a culture which shamed and rejected the most vulnerable members of society – poor women and children. The report highlights that they didn't create this issue and that the homes were an ineffective response to the issue of rejection by families. One twitter user posted an interesting article from *Christus Rex* – an Irish Catholic sociological journal – dated April 1960 which highlights the attitude of the time: “The mother can keep [the baby] but traditionally the family attitude is harsh and unforgiving and the mother can rarely manage to earn

both a living for herself and the child,” the article reads. Ireland was a society which saw the family unit as foundational. While this need not be a bad thing, the reality was that any deviation which threatened the integrity of the family unit was effectively punished, as the report shows. Why did Ireland become such a punitive society? It was in part due to economic circumstances – money was still in farming and land ownership passed down through families, there were no supports for single women from the State and few job opportunities from the market. It was also due to its history as a recently formed independent state, one craving respectability. It was trapped in what Franz Fanon, the Marxist intellectual and critic of colonialism, called the ‘colonised mindset’.

“It became a religion concerned with controlling society and which sees itself as no more or less than the expression of that society”

Having broken free from the material restraints of colonialism, Ireland was – and I would argue still is – desperate to be recognised as respectable and capable of self-government. But the standards it chose were those of its near neighbour and former coloniser, England. It internalised the punitive mindset of Victorian England, with its belief in class determinism and fear of ‘the underclass’ – the poor and ‘degenerate’, those lacking ‘decent middle-class values’. And the Church in Ireland was complicit in reinforcing this culture, whether down to the

influence of Jansenism, as is often suggested, or otherwise. It became what St John Henry Newman calls ‘respectable religion’ or ‘natural religion’. It became a religion concerned with controlling society and which sees itself as no more or less than the expression of that society. In other words, it became a religion that wants to be respectable and, in that way, reinforces what is considered respectable. The fertile soil of concern for appearances was the soil in which the persecutions for violating those appearances was laid. Venial sin became mortal.

“For the most part, all it provided was a halfway-house between the Victorian poorhouse and the more truly Catholic vision of Mr Duff”

The Church in Ireland did not create the homes, nor the degrading attitude towards unmarried mothers, who faced similar and worse hardships in other countries. We were, however, responsible for not giving a counter-cultural example of sufficient force to overthrow this concern. Had the Irish Church preached and practiced, as it would seem Frank Duff and the Legion of Mary did (see pages 17-19), the fullest truth of the Christian message it could at least stand up now and say we did what we should and what we could. But it can't, it would seem, because it didn't. For the most part, all it provided was a halfway-house between the Victorian poorhouse and the more truly Catholic vision of Mr Duff.

The Church is the taskforce of the Kingdom

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Pope Francis, with the assistance of Austen Ivereigh, recently published a book entitled *Let us Dream*. In describing his ideals for the world, he was not the first dreamer. He is following his Master. Jesus began his public mission by proclaiming his dream: he called it the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15-20). He dreamt of life on earth being a mirror of heaven. It's not a million miles away, he said, as this Kingdom is very close... if only we would repent, that is, change our way of thinking and living so as to commit ourselves to his Good News.

“In place of the murky deeds of darkness he wants all of life to be a reflection of the light of heaven”

There is another way of living. Instead of the nightmare of war, he spoke of brothers and sisters in the one family of God. Instead of bitterness and retaliation, he spoke of a love that refuses to be embittered and inspires one to pray for the oppressor. In place of the spectre of famine which will always haunt a greedy, grasping world, he spoke of serving God through feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless.

In place of the murky deeds of darkness he wants all of life to be a reflection of the light of heaven. He prayed that the will of the Father be done on earth as it is in heaven. Wherever God's will holds sway, there God is king. And that is the Kingdom of God on earth, the dream of Jesus.

Taskforce

Every dream needs a taskforce for its implementation. The Church is the taskforce of the Kingdom. Immediately after proclaiming the closeness of God's Kingdom, Jesus called his first followers. The brothers, Peter and Andrew, fishermen, were casting their nets. “Follow me,” he said, “and I will make you catchers of people.” Another pair of brothers, James and John, were in their boat mending their nets. “Follow me and I will make you menders of people.” Casting nets means mission while mending nets means maintenance.

These fishermen were ordinary folk called to an extraordinary task: the first hint of the community of followers, later known as the Church, the taskforce of the kingdom.

Ordinary People

All this happened at Capernaum. Visiting the Holy Land, I was surprised at how small the town had been. Archaeologists tell us that it was once

a busy, bustling place. But it was small by our standards. I should have known better, for has it not always been God's way to choose the weak to confront the strong, and simple, ordinary folk to confront the worldly wise?

Humble Origins

Isn't it a pity when the Church tends to forget its humble origins. When it becomes triumphal and bossy. When it rewards itself by aping the conceits of worldly power in wealthy establishments and the titles and trappings of self-importance. When it promotes careers to the detriment of humble service as the taskforce of the dream of Jesus, a Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace. The Church is to be the taskforce of the Kingdom but it is important to remember the words of Saint Augustine that there are many in the Church who do not belong to the Kingdom while there are many in the Kingdom who are not in the Church.

The Church I Love

While we are shocked when scandals from the past are uncovered, we must remember that there are far more flowers than weeds in the garden of the Church. The Church that I love produces really holy, prayerful people, deeply in love with God. And it has always been the mother of the greatest workers for the Kingdom, implementing the dream of Jesus: caring and educating, peace-making and developing, nursing and protecting, beautifying and protecting, striving for justice and challenging tyranny. One survey estimates that 80% of charitable organisations were founded by practising Catholics. Think of St Vincent de Paul, the Simon Community, Threshold, Mary's Meals, Trócaire, Concern, food centres etc. This is the Church of ordinary people humbly serving God's dream of love for the world.

If you have a book token since Christmas, get your hands on Pope Francis' book, *Let us Dream*. Dreamers see a new way of living, a way of making this world a better place for everybody.

Let us pray

We pray that the Church will always be faithful to its mission of serving the Kingdom of God.

May the teaching of Christ inspire all people to turn away from injustice and violence so that all people can live in peace, according to God's plan.

As the Apostles bravely followed the call of Christ, may our young people today be open to the call of Christ to dedicate their lives in the service of the Kingdom.

We pray for people whose lives are in danger because of their religious beliefs. May their persecution cease.

We pray to the compassionate, healing Lord for protection from the Covid virus and for the speedy return to normal life.

God our Father, graciously hear the prayers which we offer in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, Our Lord. Amen.

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Eight things the mother and baby homes report told us about the nuns



The story is complex, yet the trope of the Catholic bogeyman remains even after the report makes clear that a simple denigrating of the religious is not only misguided but false, writes

Dualta Roughneen

Much of the commentary around the mother and baby homes prior to the publication of the final report last week has been used to create a caricature of evil nuns who set out to torment women and who cared little for the babies born in the institutions. No doubt, just as there were many kind and generous women in the religious orders, there were also some who behaved cruelly. However, this comprehensive report makes the following clear:

1. The mother and baby homes were not a particularly Irish and Catholic phenomenon

Mother and baby homes were common across Europe, in Britain and in the Netherlands in particular. In fact, as the report points out, they appeared in Ireland after other countries. “By 1900 mother and baby homes were found in all English-speaking countries, and similar institutions existed in Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere. They were generally founded by religious communities/charities and the early homes were run by Protestant charities. Catholics appear to have been slow to establish mother and baby homes, perhaps because members of female religious orders were precluded from involvement with childbirth.” It points out that in Ireland there were Catholic homes, there were Protestant homes and there were a lot of homes run, controlled and paid for by the local authorities (the government of Ireland). These were called County Homes. The report notes that the Catholic Church “did not invent Irish attitudes to prudent marriages or family respectability”.

2. The homes run by the nuns were usually better than the county homes run by the government

The report found that religious-run institutions were better maintained and a warmer place than those run and controlled by the local authorities. Conditions were not worse than for most people living in poverty at the time. The report states this in no uncertain terms: “It is important also to distinguish between mother and baby homes and the county homes. The most accurate information about living conditions comes from the inspections carried out by the Department of Health inspectors, but these only begin in the late 1930s, and not all survive. The available evidence suggests that, while living conditions in the mother and baby homes were basic, there is no indication that they were inadequate by the standards of the time, except in Kilrush and Tuam.”

3. Many county homes had no place for children to play or space for the women to sit”

The report further elaborates: “Conditions in the county homes were much worse than in any mother and baby home, with the exceptions of Kilrush and Tuam. In the mid-1920s most had no sanitation, perhaps no running water; heating, where available was by an open fire; food was cooked, badly, often in a different building, so it was cold and even more unpalatable when it reached the women. Many county homes had no place for children to play or space for the women to sit.” Again, the county homes were run by the government.

4. The nuns did not force women into the homes against their will

The assumption that they did is clearly exposed in the report: “There is no evidence that women were forced to enter mother and baby homes by the Church or State authorities. Most women had no alternative. Many pregnant single women contacted the Department of Local Government and Public Health (DLGPH), later the Department of Health, their local health authority, or a Catholic charity seeking assistance because they had nowhere to go and no money. Women were brought to mother and baby homes by their parents or other family members without being consulted as to their destination.”

In fact, it is clear that many women were turned away from the homes

when they arrived seeking a place to stay without the proper paperwork from the local authorities.

5. The nuns did not profit from running the homes

The report upends the malicious stereotype of nuns becoming wealthy and living in luxury while women and children suffered. “The commission has not seen any evidence that the religious orders who ran the mother and baby homes made a profit from so doing. At various times, it is clear that they struggled to make ends meet and their members were not always paid for their work. This was a particular problem when occupancy levels fell and women stayed for shorter periods. Payments by local authorities were not always on time.”

Reading the report from Tuam in Chapter 15, the detailed efforts of the Bon Secours Sisters to get funds for running, repairs, upgrades – which were regularly turned down help explain why it was so hard to maintain safe, sanitary and health conditions, particularly in the period of the Second World War (1939–45).

6. The nuns were not generally abusive

The report highlights that the institutions were harsh places but that Ireland was a harsh environment, particularly for women, in first half of the 20th Century and that the homes were, in general no worse than outside the walls. “The conditions were regimented and institutional especially in the larger institutions and particularly before the 1970s but there is no evidence of the sort of gross abuse that occurred in industrial schools. There are a small number of complaints of physical abuse.”

7. We were never allowed any kind of recreation, no talking was allowed during meal times or when you were in the nursery attending your baby”

In fact, it was often outside the Homes where the women met with greater bitterness: “Letters written in the 1970s to Cherish describe hostile comments made by neighbours to women and their families. Women who were transferred from a mother and baby home to maternity hospitals to give birth, for medical reasons, were subjected to unfriendly comments by fellow-patients and their visitors.”

Individual testimonies in the detailed chapters vary but many



The report said the institutions under investigation provided a refuge - a harsh refuge in some cases - when the families provided no refuge at all.

comment on the kindness and sense of service of the sisters which seems to be the prevailing tone. One resident who described them as “the kindest and dearest nuns I had the privileg (sic) of knowing”.

“I am shocked and appalled at the people who falsely accuse the Bon Secours nuns of abusing the children in their care”. Another said that “Sister Gabriel, Bina Rabbitte and Mary Wade (nurse) showed great concern for sick and dying children”. That said, other testimonies were critical, with another stating: “My time there was very hard as we were treated so badly. We were never allowed any kind of recreation, no talking was allowed during meal times or when you were in the nursery attending your baby”.

8. The nuns did not work women to the bone as has been widely alleged

This is particularly true for the religious-run institutions. The report points out that: “The women worked but they were generally doing the sort of work that they would have done at home”.

The report again highlights the difference between the mother and baby homes and the county homes run by local authorities, where there were generally unaccompanied children: “The workload for the women in county homes was of a different magnitude to the mother and baby homes. Unmarried mothers were far outnumbered by children, including older children, and by elderly and incapacitated adults. Most county homes did not employ domestic staff so unmarried women were assigned onerous duties that were essential to the running of these homes. There are many contemporary statements by local officials or matrons insisting that unmarried mothers could not be removed from the county home, because there would be nobody to carry out this work.”

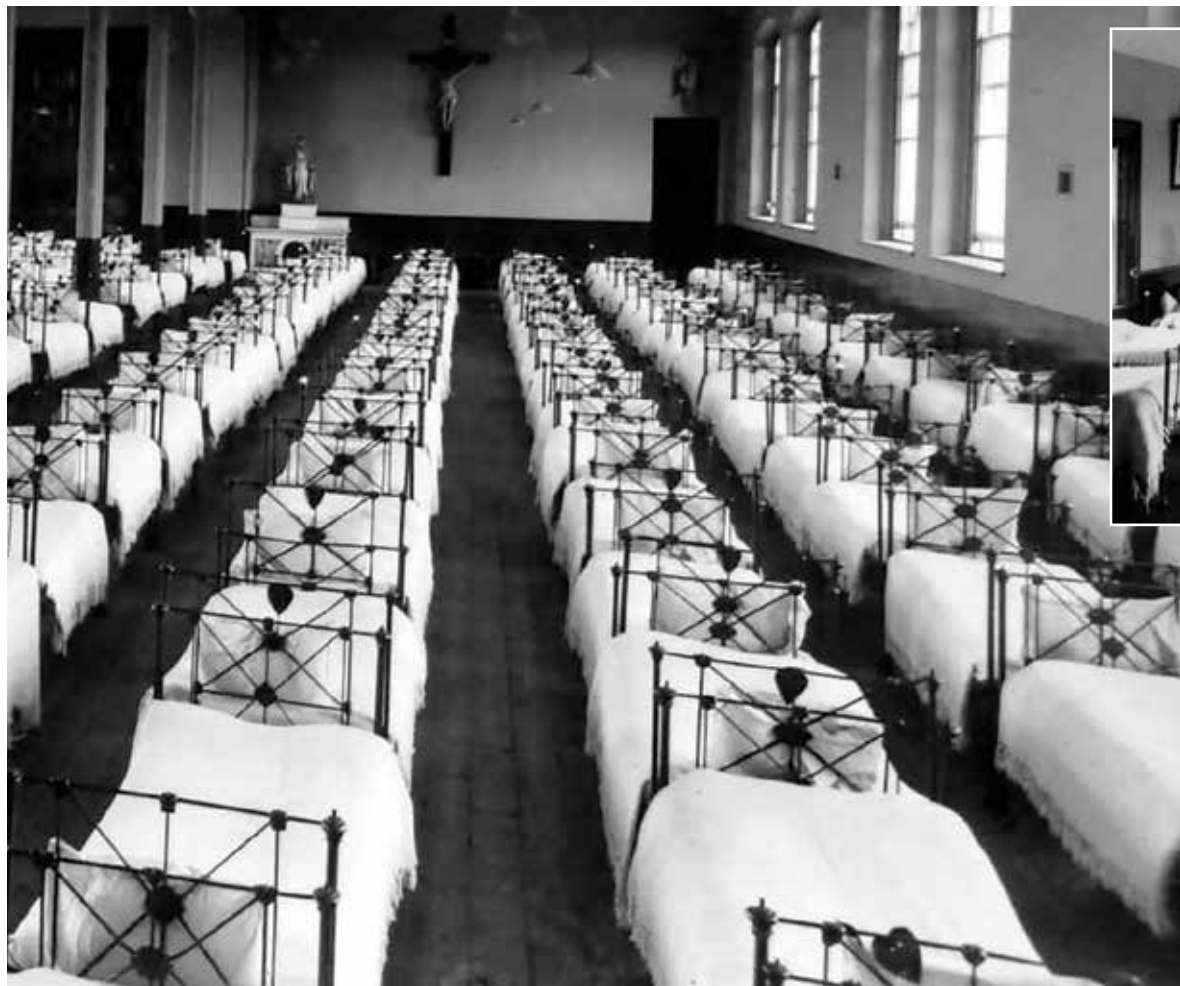
9. Poverty and small mindedness were the reasons that women had to resort to entering the homes

While the social mores may have been influenced by religion to an extent where there was a stigma attached to having children out of wedlock, the report highlights that the predominant reasons, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, for seeking to enter a home, was poverty. “Women were admitted to mother and baby homes and county homes because they failed to secure the support of their family and the father of their child. They were forced to leave home, and seek a place where they could stay without having to pay. Many were destitute. Women who feared the consequences of their pregnancy becoming known to their family and neighbours entered mother and baby homes to protect their privacy.”

However, it is also important to note that despite the grinding poverty of the people in the first half of the century, most births outside marriage – described at the time using the ugly phrase ‘illegitimate’ – did not take place in mother and baby homes.

10. Infant mortality was shocking mostly because of poverty and overcrowding, not deliberate neglect by the nuns

Another question the report is unable to answer clearly is the high levels of mortality in the institutions but direction is given on close reading of the report. Infant mortality for the institutions was high, and the report comments that it was most disquieting that it was well known to local authorities. Infant mortality for ‘ille-



Judge Yvonne Murphy said that the women in the institutions should not have been there in the first place.

and their own immediate families. It was supported by, contributed to, and condoned by, the institutions of the State and the Churches. However, it must be acknowledged that the institutions under investigation provided a refuge – a harsh refuge in some cases – when the families provided no refuge at all.”

“They are overcrowded, the facilities are poor; often they get no state support but are dependent on assistance from overseas or from former residents”

Ireland was a poor country, conditions were harsh – and the harshness certainly contributed to the social mores that evolved with economic improvements. All one has to do is translate the past to current situation in many developing countries. Girls that become pregnant in Sierra Leone (and other countries) in today’s world are not allowed to continue in school, for example. Residential institutions – mainly run by the religious – are commonplace because the many women and children have nowhere else to go. Many well-meaning volunteers from Ireland spend summers in these places helping out. They are overcrowded, the facilities are poor; often they get no state support but are dependent on assistance from overseas or from former residents. They could be better but making things better is not an easy thing to do. Social and political change takes time. What are those women and children to do while they wait for advocacy groups to change the political will? Will those that feel they are giving their lives to provide some relief to those in these difficult situations be vilified in future as their country develops and looks back in time? It feels like that would be an injustice.

It all sounds very familiar – but for all the imperfections, no one would describe the places or those running them as we now describe the mother and baby homes and the religious who felt they were dedicating their lives to a vocation in early 20th Century Ireland. The social, financial, governance situation in these countries cannot be fixed with a magic wand; the institutions offer the best of limited options for many of the women and children. The societies are not necessarily cold

or uncaring but a product of a complex intermingling of circumstances primarily underpinned by the state of the economy – there is no welfare state, there is no functioning tax system, there is not a lot of wealth to be drawn down and governance is poor beyond the administrative level. Many people live subsistence lives and often the choice is a very hard one for the mothers and children (and also for their families) if it is a case of them finding somewhere they will get food and shelter – with the institutions having better conditions than they would likely find in their homestead. Many rural families face the same pressure of unproductive land and ever-decreasing smallholdings that affected Ireland in the early 20th Century.

The story is a complex one as it was in Ireland, yet the trope of the Catholic bogeyman remains, even after a rigorous independent report makes clear that such a simple denigrating of the religious is not only misguided but downright false. For many that are talking about the report, the information within it seems to be of no concern. Labour leader Alan Kelly who demands the religious institutions are held responsible for redress seems to want to hold today’s religious accountable while ignoring the responsibilities of local government. Is the county manager in Galway today vilified for holding a post that in the past had responsibility for these institutions? Do we now say all local authorities are evil and cruel as is repeatedly claimed about the religious orders? Richard Boyd Barrett calls the report a whitewash.

“The solid reality should be found in this report”

As George Orwell observed, “we are all capable of believing things which we know to be untrue, and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually, it is possible to carry on this process for an indefinite time: the only check on it is that sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality.”

The solid reality should be found in this report. For most, their assumptions and prejudices remain unchecked.

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A protest against the national maternity hospital being sited on land owned by the Sister of Charity became a focal point for anger against religious.

gitimate’ children in the homes was twice as high as for those outside and which was higher again than the national average – though there were pockets and periods of very high infant mortality in places such as inner-city Dublin in the first half of the 20th Century. Infant mortality peaked in the 1940s in the homes in parallel with spikes in infant mortality and infectious diseases in Dublin city during those years. Infant mortality in the homes reduced considerably after the 1940s and by the 1960s it was lower than the national mortality rate for ‘illegitimate’ children. The report notes explicitly that: “there is little evidence that politicians or the public were concerned about these children. No publicity was given to the fact that in some years during the 1930s and 1940s, over 40% of ‘illegitimate’ children were dying before their first birthday in mother and baby homes.”

Concerns

It should be noted that doctors, nurses and social workers raised concerns and often tried very hard to have these concerns heard. Women coming to the institutions were generally from the poorest demographics, suffering from poorer nutrition and education to take care of their children.

Reflective of Covid-19 today, communicable diseases were a concern and efforts were made to reduce the impact of illnesses such as measles and gastroenteritis, but in overcrowded and underfunded facilities this was difficult to do – with religious order struggling to elicit funds from the local authorities tasked with maintaining and running them. Also, of note from Tuam was, similar to the county homes, there were many unaccompanied children, often from the poorest families or

with disabilities and already in a difficult situation. These children did not have their mothers with them and were much more vulnerable. The accusations of callous neglect are not substantiated by the report in any manner but rather it points to carers trying to do their best where no one else cared. Could things have been better? Undoubtedly. How? It is not so simple.

The preface to the report outlines where the commission sees blame for the whole situation to lie: “Ireland was a cold harsh environment for many, probably the majority, of its residents during the earlier half of the period under remit. It was especially cold and harsh for women. All women suffered serious discrimination. Women who gave birth outside marriage were subject to particularly harsh treatment. Responsibility for that harsh treatment rests mainly with the fathers of their children

Yet another report that upsets the media narrative



Future historians will find a more nuanced and balanced account of the past than most members of the public have been led to believe, writes **David Quinn**

There have now been three official reports in a row that upset the accepted media narrative about the culpability of the Church concerning their subject matters.

The first, published in 2013, dealt with the Magdalen laundries and what took place in them. The second, from 2016, was about symphysiotomy, a procedure sometimes used as an alternative to caesarean section, and about which the Church was fiercely attacked.

The third and latest is, of course, the 2,800-page report on the mother and baby and county homes.

In each case, the media narrative is that the Church was almost wholly responsible for what took place and that were it not for the Catholic Church, we would not have had Magdalen laundries, symphysiotomy would not have existed, and there would have been no mother and baby homes.

At a minimum, we'd have had a lot less of all three.

With regard to the Magdalen homes, the average person probably takes their view from the movie, which seems to be on constant repeat on RTÉ, *The Magdalene Sisters* in which the young women in the laundry are brutally treated and physically abused.

In fact, the Magdalen laundries report, which was overseen by Martin McAleese, spoke to former residents. It says: "The vast majority... told the Committee that the ill-treatment, physical punishment and abuse that was prevalent in the industrial school system was not something they experienced in the Magdalen Laundries."



A scene from the film *The Magdalene Sisters* that has informed much of the commentary around these institutions

What they did report was emotional cruelty by some of the nuns.

The report was at pains to point out that Magdalen homes were neither uniquely Irish nor uniquely Catholic. Britain had hundreds of them in the first part of the last century, for instance, and the last of them did not close until the 1970s, by which time they had been rebranded 'training schools'.

“Senator Regina Doherty has described the tone of the report as ‘cold’ and ‘callous’. She believes the Government should not accept it”

They were established in the first instance to rehabilitate prostitutes and other 'fallen women', when nothing else was on offer, but became a dumping ground for too many of society's problems.

The symphysiotomy report was overseen by Judge Maureen Harding Clark. It was set up on the strength of allegations that this procedure, which involves widening the pelvis to make it easier for a

woman to give birth, was a product of Catholic theology because if it became easier for a woman to give birth, she might not resort to artificial birth control in the future.

It found scant evidence of a theological justification for the procedure, although it was used somewhat more frequently, and later, in Ireland than in most other European countries. To this day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends its use where caesarean sections are unsafe due to the danger of blood poisoning developing.

A remarkable finding was that a third of women who reported having undergone a symphysiotomy underwent no such thing.

Women made such statements as: "I will never forget the sound of the saw cutting into me", or "a nurse told me that they had to cut/break my pelvis". But they never had the procedure.

In her report, the judge is critical of much of the media coverage of the issue.

She refers to an earlier, balanced history of the matter by Prof. Oonagh Walsh, stating: "To a great extent, her scholarly report has been ignored by sections of the media who appear to prefer the more lurid and unfounded accounts projected by some activists and bloggers. I am therefore not sanguine that there will

be any change in the manner of reporting of the subject."

She might well have written the same thing about the mother and baby homes report.

In fact, the new report warns that its conclusions "may not always accord with the prevailing narrative".

“These reports, while they might find disfavour with the media, are nonetheless now on the public record”

This is exactly right, and therefore the report has been roundly attacked by large sections of the media since its release.

Senator Regina Doherty has described the tone of the report as "cold" and "callous". She believes the Government should not accept it.

But the tone is little different from that found in the Magdalen laundries report or the symphysiotomy report, that is to say, it is objective and fact-based.

They are substantially different from the tone of earlier reports, since as the Ryan Report on industrial schools because the scale of physical and sexual abuse in

Senator Regina Doherty has said the Government should not accept the report on the mother and baby homes



those places was so bad in many instances.

The reason the most recent reports do not accord with the media narrative, and the authors anticipated the reaction, is because that narrative wants to accept all the most lurid stories as being both true and representative of all that happened, and to lay almost all the blame at the feet of the nuns.

Therefore, there is anger when the mother and baby homes report does not find evidence of illegal adoptions, or widespread physical abuse, or that the nuns were made a profit out of the homes, or that 800 babies were buried in a septic tank (although they were buried 'inappropriately' to use the word chosen by the commission itself).

The report also blames physical and sexual abuse in

out that harsh attitudes to unmarried mothers existed in many other countries and that mother and baby homes were by no means exclusively Catholic or Irish, although the commission believes we placed more unmarried mothers in the homes than any other country. But then, we placed a very high percentage in mental hospitals as well. We were far too quick to institutionalise people, in general.

These reports, while they might find disfavour with the media, are nonetheless now on the public record. They are published, and cannot be unpublished, even if they can be ignored or attacked. Future historians will use them, and will find in them a much more nuanced and balanced account of their subject matters than most members of the public have been led to believe.

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We 'apologise unreservedly' for the Church's role

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, Northern Ireland, head of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, is pictured in a file photo outside St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry. Photo: CNS.

The silence had long needed to be shattered – Archbishop-elect Farrell

Archbishop-elect of Dublin, Dermot Farrell echoed the other bishops of Ireland by welcoming the report, describing it as making for “extremely disturbing reading”.

“They reveal deep wounds, and bring to light the profound injustices perpetrated against the vulnerable in our society over a long period of time – against women and children whose lives were regarded as less important than the lives of others,” Dr Farrell continued, “the silence which surrounded this shameful time in the history of our land had long needed to be shattered. The pain of those who were hidden away must be heard; those once largely without a voice now can speak

clearly to our world, and we need to listen, even when what we hear pierces to the heart.”

Response

He welcomed the actions of the Government and the commission which made this listening possible, while saying that hearing on its own isn't enough. A “genuine response” is required: “ours – as a Church and a society – can only be a full apology, without any reservation. There should never have been a time for avoidance and facile solutions. This country, the Church, our communities and families are better places when the light of truth and healing are welcomed.”

Bishop Fintan Gavin commends ‘courageous’ testimonies

The testimonies of the women and their now adult children inspired a sense of shame and embarrassment for how the Church and society failed to respond compassionately to their needs, the Bishop of Cork and Ross said in his statement.

Second-class citizens

“As Bishop I want to acknowledge the part played by the Church in contributing to this culture of judgement and secrecy which at times showed so little compassion or respect for the women and their babies. They were treated as second-class citizens,” Bishop Gavin said in the statement.

Bishop Gavin acknowledged that only in facing up to the truth of this reality, and the hurt and pain experienced, can the “journey of healing” begin. He thanked Judge Yvonne Murphy and the commission staff

for making this possible with their “clear and comprehensive” report.

“They have done a great service to society and to the Church in helping us to know the truth about our past,” Dr Gavin said, before quoting Pope Francis' words delivered during his 2018 visit to Ireland:

“We ask forgiveness for the children who were taken away from their moms and for all those times when many single mothers were told that to seek their children who had been separated from them – and the same was told to their daughters and sons who were looking for their mothers – that this was a mortal sin. This is not a mortal sin but the Fourth Commandment! We ask forgiveness. May the Lord, sustain and increase this state of shame and repentance and give us the strength to commit ourselves so that these things never happen again and justice may be done. Amen.”

Archbishop Eamon Martin apologises and calls for reflection

The Primate of All Ireland released a statement in which he apologised unreservedly for the role the Church played in “that culture in which people were frequently stigmatised, judged and rejected”. He said he believes the Church must continue to acknowledge before God and others its part “in sustaining what the report describes as a ‘harsh ... cold and uncaring atmosphere’”.

Reflect

“I ask all those who are in positions of leadership in the Church to study this lengthy report carefully and especially to spend time reflecting on the courageous testimonies of the witnesses to the commission. Together we must ask ‘How could this happen?’ We must identify, accept and respond to the broader issues which the report raises about our past, present and future,” Archbishop Eamon said in the statement.

The archbishop emphasised the importance of continuing to find ways to reach out to those whose testimonies are central to the report, and urged full respect for survivors' rights to access personal information about themselves, saying, “I again urge the State to ensure that any remaining obstacles to information and tracing should be overcome”. He also made an appeal for those with information about burial places to come forward, so that the deceased and their families be recognised and never forgotten.

“This report will hopefully speak not just to our past but will also have lessons for today and for future generations. As Church, State and wider society we must ensure together that, in the Ireland of today, all children and their mothers feel wanted, welcomed and loved. We must also continue to ask ourselves where people today might feel similarly rejected, abandoned, forgotten or pushed to the margins.”

Daughters of Charity regret they couldn't have done more

The Daughters of Charity, who provided the staffing for St Patrick's /Pelletstown in Dublin, said in a statement that they “so wish and deeply regret that we could not have done more to ease the burden and suffering carried by these women, mostly alone, as they dealt with both a major crisis in their lives and totally unjustifiable rejection”.

They complimented Judge Murphy and her staff on the report, which gives a clearer picture of the attitude and reactions of society at the time towards women who became pregnant out of wedlock. “These women were isolated

and shamed, without justification, and we hope that the publication of this report today will give a clearer and more complete picture of the entirety of the mother and baby homes issue in this country,” the statement reads.

Tribute

However, the sisters also paid tribute to the work many of their colleagues did in dedicating “their lives to supporting these women, who arrived at the service in which the sisters were employed to have their babies in secret, with little or no support from family and wider society”.

The Church failed in its mission of compassion, says Archbishop Neary

Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam noted “the scandalous way in which vulnerable women and children in our society were deprived of care and dignity and subjected to humiliation”.

Disillusionment

Archbishop Neary said that the Church was intended to bring “hope and healing”, and yet it brought harm, hurt and disillusionment to the women and their children. This disillusionment extends to the image of the Church, which the revelations “seriously tarnished”.

Archbishop Neary in his statement drew attention to the question of the whereabouts of the fathers, saying “Had the Church been more forthright in acknowledging the responsibility of the men who fathered these children, the outcome for many young mothers and their children would have been very different indeed”.

“The delight and joy which we associate with the birth of a new baby instead became clouded with darkness and gloom. This was a time when single pregnant women and their children were labelled as “unmarried mothers” and “illegitimate”, and then judged, stigmatised, and ostracised by their own families, by their communities, and the

Church,” Dr Neary said in the statement.

He continued, “These attitudes were wrong and very sad. The Church failed in its responsibility to love and cherish those who were thus diminished. What this report makes clear to me is that when the Church is not serving with compassion, it is failing. For that I am genuinely sorry. As a Church leader I apologise unreservedly.”

Tuam

Archbishop Neary acknowledged that while the Tuam Children’s Home was owned by Galway County Council and operated by the Bon Secours Sisters, the diocese had a pastoral role in that the priests of Tuam parish served as chaplains to the home.

He also spoke of the discovery of human remains at the Tuam site and the “the disparity which continues to exist between the Register of Deaths, and the absence of burial location records,” which he described as a “critical aspect of this sad story”, which remains unreconciled. He paid tribute to those working to bring justice to the situation, including Catherine Corless, Judge Murphy and her team.

A necessary light cast into a painful episode – Bishop Deenihan

The Bishop of Meath acknowledged the role his diocese had to play in the events of the past, mentioning two institutions in the diocese, one in Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath and one in Dunboyne, Co Meath.

Brave testimonies

“In too many cases, the experience of those who resided in institutions, which were managed by religious congregations and State funded, is a cause of shock and shame. The brave testimonies of those who entered seeking care but who subsequently endured emotional suffering are bleak and shameful. Like others, I found the details of the high infant mortality very distressing,” Bishop Deenihan said in his statement.

A lack of resources and widespread social poverty contextualise the period of the report, he said, but that the lack of kindness and compassion is also clear.

“When Church, state and society lose respect for the individual and forget that we are made in the image and likeness of God, dignity is forgotten and human life is not valued. Like many others, I am saddened and shamed by this report.”

Dr Deenihan condemned the “unwarranted but enduring sense of shame” that many of the individuals either resident or born into these institutions are burdened with, adding that “there is also a tendency to forget that every child who was born in these homes had a father and that many of the women who gave birth there conceived in tragic or violent circumstances”, commending the report for addressing that fact clearly.

In line with the other bishops, Dr Deenihan welcomed “the proposal by Government to establish a mechanism to assist those who are trying to establish contact” with family, saying it’s a “welcome and practical step which will enable information to be shared, while also acknowledging that many who gave birth in these institutions want to leave the past behind them”.

Value of the person

“Let us not repeat the errors, failings and sins of the past which have been highlighted and, above all, let us remember and value the dignity of each human person,” Bishop Deenihan’s statement concluded.

‘Great sorrow’ babies died in our care – Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary responded to the report in their statement by acknowledging they “were invited by the local authorities to open a Mother and Baby Home in Cork in the early 1920’s, and later at Roscrea and Castlepollard”.

“As today, we respond to the urgent and unmet societal needs in our mission throughout the world, so we responded at that time and established the three homes in Ireland,” the statement reads.

“Our thoughts today are mainly with the thousands of women who were taken, sent or driven by societal and family pressure to have their babies in secret in mother and baby homes,” they said, continuing “the report shows these homes were established so that pregnant unmarried mothers could have their babies at a remove from society and family, and at facilities other than the County Homes.

Irish society

“Irish society demanded that many unmarried women would have their babies in secret. Some religious communities provided a service in response to these societal norms and demands, driven by the secrecy and shame which surrounded pregnancy out of wedlock.”

“For our part, we want to sincerely apologise to those who did not get the care and support they needed and deserved,” the statement reads.

The sisters drew attention to the sorrow and regret they feel “that babies died while under our care,” particularly in regard to Bessborough in Cork in the 1940’s, saying they did everything possible to assist in their dealings with the commission on this matter.

They concluded their statement by recognising the work many of their sisters did over the decades, with limited State support, which has seen women who spent time in the homes remain in contact with the order for decades.



Pope Francis is seen in a file photo praying in front of a candle in memory of victims of sexual abuse as he visits St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral in Dublin. Photo: CNS.

Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd welcome report

The Good Shepherd Sisters offered thoughts for the women around the country who were pressurised to have their babies in mother and baby homes and to all who were impacted by the secrecy and injustice which then prevailed.

The Good Shepherd Sisters were responsible for Mother and Baby Home in Dunboyne, Co Meath from 1955 to 1991, in a property owned by the council, which was opened at the request of Meath County Council.

Exonerated

They welcomed the fact that the report exonerated the institution, with a comment in the report stating “all the evidence seen by the

commission and the evidence of the majority of former residents who spoke to the commission suggests that Dunboyne provided comfortable warm accommodation and the residents were well looked after physically”.

Further to this, the sisters welcomed the commission’s acceptance that the Good Shepherd Sisters “were not directly involved in arrangements for adoption” and its finding that “the commission has seen no evidence of any abuse in Dunboyne.” They acknowledged that despite this, for many women, their time in Dunboyne “will represent the most difficult and sad time of their lives”.

Bon Secours Sisters – ‘We did not live up to our Christianity’

Sister Eileen O’Connor, the Area Leader for the Sisters, offered their “profound apologies” to the women and children of St Mary’s Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, which the order ran from 1925 to 1961.

The statement offered by Sister Eileen acknowledged that “we (Sisters of Bon Secours) failed to respect the inherent dignity of the women and children who came to the Home. We failed to offer them the compassion that they so badly needed.

We were part of the system in which they suffered hardship, loneliness and terrible hurt. We acknowledge in particular that infants and children who died at the Home were buried in a disrespectful and unacceptable way”.

She concluded by saying that healing is not possible until what happened is acknowledged, and that they are hoping and praying for healing to come to those who were affected, both living and dead.

‘Demonising nuns’ not the mark of an adult society



Seamus Mulconry, born in a Mother and Baby Home, tells **Ruadhán Jones** that we need to acknowledge our own societal failings

Seamus Mulconry is the general secretary of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association and remains a staunch defender of Catholic schools. He is also one of the thousands of children that passed through the mother and baby homes. His experience of the homes was, in the end, a fruitful one and hasn't altered his view of the Church or his faith.

“You see, you have to remember that my adoption was arranged through the Church,” Mr Mulconry says. “So I have always been thankful to the Church for the fact that I had such a wonderful family. My father and mother always were quite open about it. But they were absolutely quite wonderful parents, and my dominant memory of my childhood is of complete security and being totally loved. And not only had I wonderful parents but the extended family there were lots of uncles and aunts and a number of people, I'm not sure how we're related to, who were also equally nice to me.”

Local

Initially, Mr Mulconry's parents were approached by the local curate, who “had come across a girl who was in trouble, as they said at the time”, Mr Mulconry explains.

“He came in and asked my father who was a shopkeeper, would you like a son,” Mr Mulconry continues. “My father said, yes, but I better check with the wife before I agree. So he went in and asked my mother and she said yes. Now somehow I think that adoption fell through it didn't work out and my adoption was arranged by a local nun.

“The mark of an adult society is that we stand up and take responsibility for our actions as a society”

“As far as I was concerned, I owed the fact that I had a wonderful family to Church, so I never had any negative feelings towards the Church because of that. When people talk about victims or survivors, I can't claim to be either. If there was a Euro lottery for getting your family, I won it, so I have no complaints at all.”

But Mr Mulconry is well aware of the hardships others went

through. He read through the executive summary of the recent Mother and Baby Homes Report, calling the story it tells “heart breaking”.

“I'd be very slow for this generation who have access to far greater wealth than our ancestors ever did to be sitting in judgement over them”

“But when I do read what happened to other people, and I read the Executive summary which is about 100 pages,” he says. “It really is heart breaking that so many children didn't have a childhood or didn't have the simple pleasures of a childhood that we all remember years later. There are some really sad stories out there and when you think of the numbers involved, the statistics are huge, but behind each of those statistics there is a human being and, in many cases, a human being who was robbed of a safe secure family life when they were young. It is no matter what way you look at it a tragic story.”

Radio

Shortly after the release of the report, Mr Mulconry went on radio to defend the Catholic Church's involvement in local schools. While he doesn't find these encounters frustrating, he suggests that “demonising the nuns” isn't the mark of an adult society.

“The mark of an adult human being is that they take responsibility for their own actions,” Mr Mulconry says. “The mark of an adult society is that we stand up and take responsibility for our actions as a society. People have demonised the nuns and I'm sure that there were cruel and vindictive and all kind of things. But the nuns were cleaning up somebody else's messes.

“There were fathers who abandoned women and left them

“I owed the fact that I had a wonderful family to Church, so I never had any negative feelings towards the Church because of that”



Seamus Mulconry

to their own devices. There were families who didn't stand by their children. Now, that was all of us. If you were to quietly go through and talk to people, you'll find very few families who didn't have an unwanted child somewhere in their history or some connection with that whole practice. We as a society, we as a people did that and not to push all of the blame onto either the Church or the state.

“Now the Church and state were culpable. If you look at the treatment meted out to some

people... I've been reading the Gospel recently and I cannot understand the gap between what is said in the Gospel and what was done to some people. The gap is so extraordinary. You never see Christ being judgemental with sinners and yet we had so much judgementalism in the Church in Ireland.”

Generation

Mr Mulconry is wary of judging the generation that went before, believing that in our own times there is plenty which may be a

cause of shame in the future.

“I'd be very slow for this generation who have access to far greater wealth than our ancestors ever did to be sitting in judgement over them,” he says. “But I often wonder in 20- or 30-years' time, will people be looking back at us and asking, how could you let such a thing happen? I was in a deprived area of a city recently in a school where I was trying to do something for them, and I was asking about local leaders in that community. I was told there are no local leaders other than the drug dealers. How can we as a society let that happen? Look the world isn't perfect and I'm not so sure that when people will look at us in the future that they'll think we're perfect either.”



Despite healthcare failings, the Dublin hostel run by the Legion of Mary was more compassionate than many at the time, writes **Chai Brady**

One of the institutions in the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes published last week stands out as somewhat of an anomaly among the 18 investigated, in that it was the only one in Ireland prior to the 1970s that supported unmarried mothers who wished to raise their child or children. The founder Frank Duff was also strongly opposed to children being committed to industrial schools.

Another difference was the Regina Coeli hostel also catered for homeless women, separated women, alcoholics, women with mental health problems and other destitute women.

The hostel is described as “not a conventional mother and baby home”. It was run by the Legion of Mary, a lay Catholic organisation, founded in 1921 by Mr Duff who was a senior civil servant in the Department of Finance.

Regina Coeli provided both short-term and long-term accommodation for many pregnant single women and for mothers and children. A total of 5,631 women and 5,434 children who came within the commission’s terms of reference were in Regina Coeli between 1930 and 1998.

“In the 1932 report Regina Coeli claimed that the hostel assisted women who were in grave difficulties ‘for whom no alternative existed’”

The commission, in its focus on Regina Coeli, stated that the hostel “offers insights into an alternative to the other mother and baby homes”. Unlike the other institutions they examined, it never received direct State support for maintaining mothers and children.

The hostel opened in North Great Brunswick Street, in part of the former North Dublin Union, next door to the Morning Star hostel for homeless men, also run by the Legion of Mary, that opened in 1927.

Planning for a women’s hostel began in 1929 and the commission states that there is no indication that Regina Coeli was originally planned as a mother and baby home. In a memorandum written in 1950, Frank

A place where women were encouraged to keep their children

The Regina Coeli home on Morningstar Avenue off North Brunswick Street in Dublin. Photo: Dara Mac Donail.

Duff stated: “Primarily it was the derelict type of woman that was in view, but from the very first moment the unmarried mother presented herself for admission and was accepted in her capacity of destitute.”

They did not admit ‘girls possessing means’ because it was believed that they could make other arrangements.

The Legion of Mary and their religious mission was central to its operation. In the 1932 report on Regina Coeli, Frank Duff emphasised: “Every entrant is made the subject of a special and individual attention directed in the first place to the creation of moral fibre through the frequentation of the sacraments.”

Faith played an important role

in the life of Regina Coeli, according to the report, which also found that in the first 18 months two retreats were held in the hostel and there was a chapel for the women to pray in.

Oratory

A member of the Legion of Mary who worked in Regina Coeli, the commission discovered, said: “When our oratory opened then there would have been weekly Mass, and occasionally Mass during the week. But very few of our residents would attend it, they would always be welcome but no one was ever forced to attend.” Daily prayers were part of the routine, but she claimed that no one was obliged to take part.

The individual records of women in the hostel indicate that much emphasis was placed on confession, including a note of when a resident was last ‘at the sacraments’. Some cards record whether the woman had made a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ confession. “All the children were baptised and subsequently consecrated to Our Lady and all the mothers were churched,” the report states.

In the 1932 report Regina Coeli claimed that the hostel assisted women who were in grave difficulties “for whom no alternative existed”. The only facilities for unmarried mothers in Dublin were the Dublin Union or Protestant homes. It was alleged that some

women were reluctant “to face the union”; furthermore, the union would only admit “Dublin girls”, which meant that for the “the large number of those flying from the country,” the Protestant homes were the only option.

Between October 1930 and May 1932, 101 women were admitted to Regina Coeli; 26 were described as ‘waiting mothers’ - pregnant; 45 gave birth after admission and 30 arrived with their baby. The outcomes for these mothers were: two went back to previous employment; 19 settled in indoor situations (live-in service); six settled in outdoor situations; 12 married; 23 returned home; 39 were in Regina Coeli or in the Coombe Hospital.

Referred

Women were referred to the hostel by their employer, from hospital, by members of the Legion of Mary, by priests and many were referred to the hostel by the Department of

“It was the only one in Ireland prior to the 1970s that supported unmarried mothers who wished to raise their child or children”

Local Government and Public Health/ Department of Health seeking assistance in the 1940s and 1950s. Many women also heard about the hostel through word of mouth.

In the years 1944-48, 73 of the 680 women who contacted the department were sent to Regina Coeli and large numbers were referred to the hostel during World War II, though it was often full and they had to be sent elsewhere. The department used Regina Coeli as short-term emergency accommodation while inspectors tried to secure the agreement of a local authority to pay for the woman's maintenance in a mother and baby home and a place was being sought for her in one of those homes. Many of the 999 women who were in the hostel and left before giving birth went to mother and baby homes.

Harrowing

A harrowing entry about one woman from 1933 states that "a TD is responsible for her trouble. She had been going to Leinster House and creating scenes there, trying to see him". She had been sent to Regina Coeli "by the porter from Leinster House".

The cards often record cases where a pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, though these words are generally not used; rather reference is made to the putative father being a family member or the woman having been 'assaulted'. Whether or not the father of the child was supportive and whether he acknowledged the pregnancy or child was also recorded, if known.

There was overlap at times, with some women coming from another mother and baby home or staying just a few nights in the hostel before going on to another institution.

“ Regina Coeli was unusual in that it admitted women who had been, or were currently, involved in crime”

A unique feature of Regina Coeli was the fact that many women entered the hostel on multiple occasions and others stayed, sometimes intermittently, over the course of many years. Some of these long-stay women gave birth to a number of children during their years in the hostel. Many women kept in contact with the staff in the hostel after they had left and sometimes returned for a further stay (not pregnant).

The commission found that there were many other examples of woman staying for multiple years, with some coming and going intermittently. Another distinct feature of the Regina Coeli hostel was the fact that many residents maintained contact following their departure.

Regina Coeli was unusual in that it admitted women who had been, or were currently, involved in crime. There are references in the records to residents who had some contact with the Gardaí in relation to theft or violence.

Women who were engaged in prostitution were generally sent to the Legion's Sancta Maria Hostel. The two hostels were in close communication, and regularly cross-referred. However some 'street cases' were admitted to Regina Coeli, particularly those who were seeking to give up soliciting.



Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, at Dublin Airport in 1965. Photo: Jimmy McCormack

Children

A total of 5,434 children were admitted to Regina Coeli and there is information about the date of admission for over 99% of the children. Children came to Regina Coeli with their mother, and remained with their mother; in a small number of cases a child might remain in Regina Coeli, while their mother was in hospital, prison or otherwise temporarily absent.

Admissions peaked in the 1940s when over 30% of the children were admitted; 225 children were admitted in 1942 and 233 in 1943 – statistics that mirror the peaks experienced by other mother and baby homes during these years. The numbers admitted in the 1950s were just over half the figure for the 1940s; in the 1960s less than one-fifth of the 1940s number were admitted. (The small number may reflect the need to rebuild the hostel). The number admitted rose sharply in the 1980s, reflecting the increase in the number of mothers who were keeping their child.

Before the 1970s, Regina Coeli was the only institution that assisted unmarried mothers to keep their infant. The following are the percentages of mothers who are known to have kept their babies within Regina Coeli. It is possible that other mothers left with their babies and raised them outside the hostel. Although the mothers who kept their babies were a minority until the 1970s, the proportion was undoubtedly much higher than for any other institution catering for unmarried mothers.

In the early years, it appears that the outcomes for children from Regina Coeli were not very different to other mother and baby homes.

1930s: 29.71%
1940s: 30.60%
1950s: 43.10%
1960s: 39.20%
1970s: 72.50%
1980s: 87.30%
1990s: 79.40%

In a lengthy memorandum written in 1950 and submitted to the Department of Health, Frank Duff stated: "From a very early moment it became a principal idea of the hostel that mothers should be encouraged to keep their children permanently...The best that could be aimed at was that they would retain them for a period of a year, so as to give the child its chance of life. After that everything operated to bring about separation. A job was found for the mother and the child went off to fosterage or into an industrial school. But in the case of the Regina Coeli there was no date at which the mother had to make up her mind. Each new day brought growth of affection for the child and the natural mother to keep it and be responsible for it. From first to last the hostel has urged this latter consideration on the girls. The cry too commonly heard is that these girls

should be 'given their chance' as if no responsibility whatever lay on the mother in respect of the child." Mr Duff believed that as the fathers had failed in their duty to the children, there was a greater responsibility on the mother.

He claimed that: "As a result of the interaction of proper natural affection and the encouragement and facilities provided...a great proportion of the girls are not only prepared but determined to keep their child."

“ In the hostel's records that women would sometimes leave their children for long periods in the hostel and were contacted several times to return”

Due to this, the hostel expanded rapidly particularly on the "unmarried mothers" side as it was necessary to provide care and food throughout the day.

One of the core principles behind all Legion of Mary hostels was that no services should be provided free of charge. The basic charge in Regina Coeli was 6d a day (approximately €1 in today's money), including supper. There was no charge for babies under six months; older babies were charged at one shilling a week (around €2 today). Mothers were expected to find outside work, or undertake work in the hostel to earn

this money. However, most work in the hostel was carried out by members of the Legion of Mary.

Frank Duff was opposed to children being committed to industrial schools, saying in a memorandum: "The result of this breaking up the little family unit is not for the good either of mother or child. A formidable proportion of the women thus relieved of their children get into trouble again...Based upon [the] Regina Coeli experience of such cases, it can be confidently asserted that over sixty per cent of such girls thus come to disaster, and it is at least likely that the proportion is very much higher. Then what happened to the children who are thus taken away? The number of children who emerge from industrial schools at the age of sixteen and then come to grief is so considerable that a number of years ago the government set up a commission of enquiry to investigate the question."

Evidence

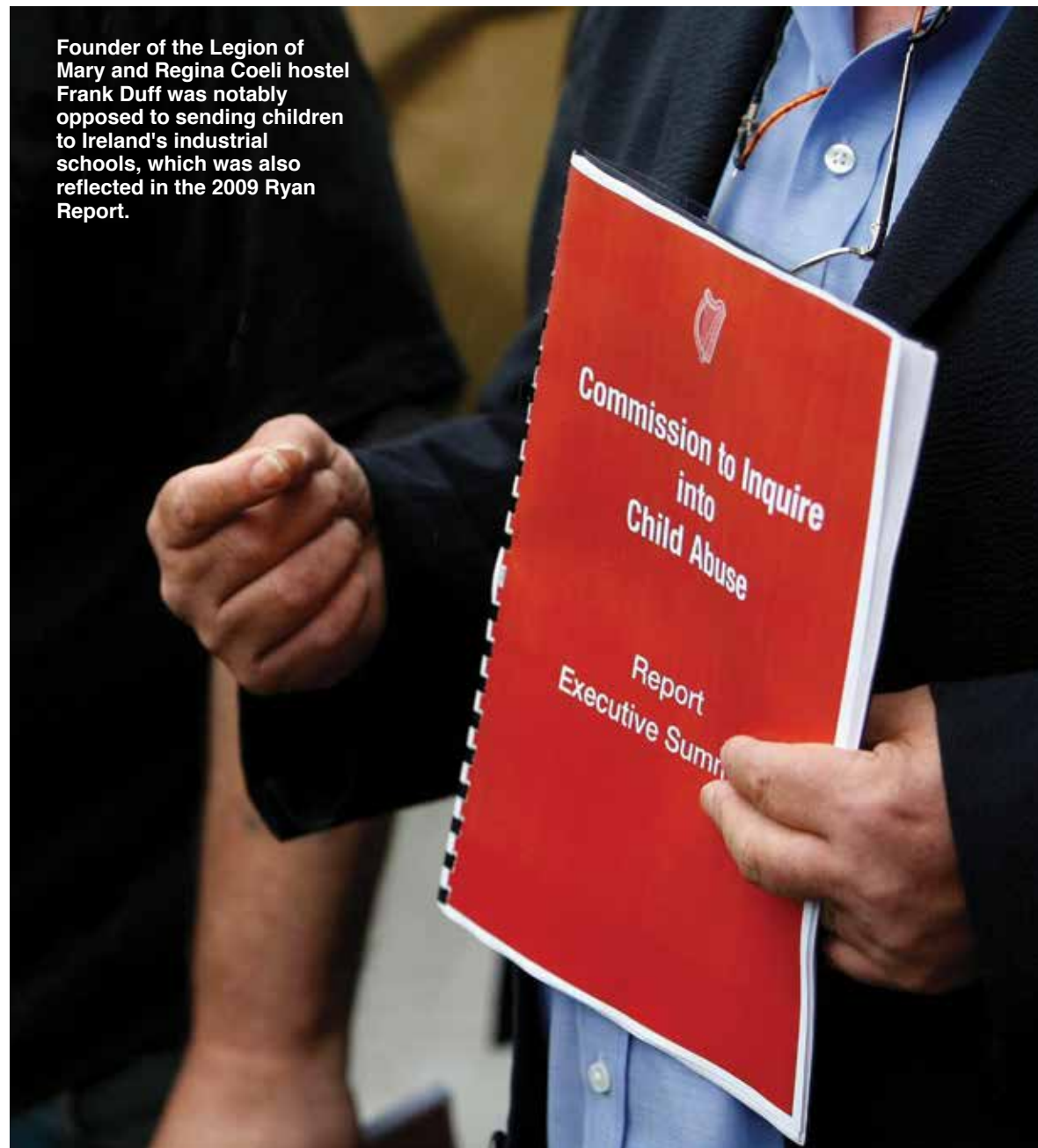
There is evidence that Regina Coeli encouraged mothers to reclaim their children from industrial schools.

It was discovered in the hostel's records that women would sometimes leave their children for long periods in the hostel and were contacted several times to return. Some of these children died when they were absent. There were also cases in which a mother clearly wanted to remain with her children but wasn't allowed into Regina Coeli, in one case it was because her eldest child was too old and she "would barely make payments".

There are frequent references to children being placed in industrial schools by court orders. Some mothers sought a court order because they were unable, too poor, or unwilling to care for their child. In a number of cases it appears that Regina Coeli petitioned the courts to make an

“ The commission found that there were many other examples of woman staying for multiple years, with some coming and going intermittently”

Founder of the Legion of Mary and Regina Coeli hostel Frank Duff was notably opposed to sending children to Ireland's industrial schools, which was also reflected in the 2009 Ryan Report.



order in respect of the child. In some cases, Regina Coeli would not allow a woman to remain with her children if she could not afford to pay. It would appear from the records that many mothers were unable to pay for their upkeep, but while some remained there long-term, others were not permitted to do so.

Regina Coeli was located in a disused former workhouse which was a 19th Century building with primitive sanitary and washing facilities. The commission states that for that reason "it is not surprising that there were numerous outbreaks of infectious disease".

“Regina Coeli experienced outbreaks of infectious diseases almost from the beginning”

The hostel was staffed by volunteers, who were members of the legion. It did not employ a nurse, midwives or a visiting medical officer. Mr Duff was committed to the principle that care should be provided by volunteers, not paid professionals. This is one of the reasons, it seems from the report, the hostel was badly provided for medically for many, many years.

It was never envisaged that women would give birth in Regina Coeli and the hostel never had a designated resident or visiting midwife on its staff or a visiting obstetrician.

Unmarried mothers

The report states: "A DLGPH (Department of Local Government and Public Health) file in 1943 that examined provisions for ante-natal care for unmarried mothers in various institutions noted that expectant mothers in Regina Coeli were sent to the Rotunda [Hospital] for a medical examination on the first suitable day following their admission. It claimed that women attended ante-natal clinics regularly until the birth of their child. Expectant mothers received a special diet in the hostel, which consisted of an additional pint of milk daily in addition to 'a good midday meal of meat, vegetables and milk pudding'."

At the time, infant mortality in Dublin was substantially worse than in comparable cities in Britain and it proved difficult to reduce it. Mortality in the city's tenements and city centre cottages was extremely high, yet the mortality among illegitimate children was a multiple of that figure, the commission found.

Overcrowding, which facilitated the spread of infectious diseases, was a major factor; likewise the relatively low rate of breastfeeding (which was a reflection of poverty and poor nourishment of mothers). The poor quality of milk used to feed infants, which was often watered down, from tubercular cows, or riddled with infection was another contributory cause. The city of Dublin implemented a variety of schemes to reduce infant mortality, including the feeding of malnourished moth-

ers, and providing depots to supply clean milk.

Regina Coeli experienced outbreaks of infectious diseases almost from the beginning. Appointments of temporary nurses for periods lasting weeks, and sometimes one to two months to tackle epidemics in Regina Coeli, were a regular feature throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

The 1939 report on public health in Dublin city stated that unmarried mothers were visited "in the ordinary way" by district health visitors; their records were kept in a similar manner to married women and they were addressed as married women in the clinics. A later note on a Department of Health file indicates that the local dispensary doctor was responsible for medical care at Regina Coeli, but he found it difficult to visit the hostel "except occasionally".

“The report also states that: ‘Some babies died in the hostel because they were refused admission to hospital’”

The commission found that there was no indication of any response by the DLGPH to frequent requests by Dublin Corporation to approve the appointment of temporary nurses in Regina Coeli. However, there are frequent allegations that children in Regina Coeli were not transferred to hospital in time in the 1940s.

“The high proportion of deaths in hospitals that treated infectious diseases shows that they were a major cause of child deaths in Regina Coeli”

The report also states that: "Some babies died in the hostel because they were refused admission to hospital. A mother 'says she took the child to Temple St on 19/6/1941, doctor admitted child, nun refused it when it arrived in ward because it came from Regina Coeli. She took it to St Ultan's Hospital but they had no bed'."

Epidemic

A report on Dr Russell's (Dublin medical officer of health) handling of the Regina Coeli epidemic was compiled by Dr Lysaght a medical inspector in the DLGPH. At the conclusion he commented: "My own personal view is that the retention of unmarried mothers and children in this hostel is altogether wrong. St Patrick's Home, Pelletstown appears to me the proper place for all such cases where they are under the care of nurses; better [sic] are available', though he acknowledged that Pelletstown was overcrowded.

In 1944 after a measles outbreak a doctor was appointed to the hostel by Dublin Corporation for six weeks, it was noted by a government official "the death rate amongst infants in this institution is excessive".

In his memoirs, Dr James Deeny, the chief medical officer of the DLGPH, records "at some medical meeting or other, possibly in the Royal Academy of Medicine', Bob Collis said that the Regina Coeli Hostel was in a terrible state, that babies were dying there and that conditions were abominable".

Dr Deeny stated that he went to visit Regina Coeli to see whether these allegations were correct, and he determined that enteritis was prevalent in the hostel. He commented that "Frank Duff resented any interference from anybody, was bound by the rules and regulations of the legion which he had written himself, was a living saint, having devoted his life to this extraordinary mission.

"He turned off his hearing aid at meetings if he did not wish to agree to something...It was very difficult to come to any conclusion on what he was doing, but he did have babies with enteritis there. After my shouting at him, he agreed to allow me to help," he said.

A sub-committee of the consultative health council that focused on infant and child health in Dublin was chaired by the paediatrician, Dr Robert Collis in the mid-40s. They described Regina Coeli as unsatisfactory; infant mortality was three times the rate in Pelletstown. The hostel was "lack(ing) almost every proper facility in regard to both nursing and structure"; it was utterly unsuitable for new-born infants. They claimed that infants in Regina Coeli were "not being properly cared for or adequately nourished at present".

The records show the majority of deaths of women occurred before 1950. The cause of death is not

recorded in most of these instances however most do not seem to be related to the pregnancy or birth.

There was 734 children who were associated with Regina Coeli died, with 68% of the deaths occurring in the 1940s; 335 children died in the years 1941-45. The number of deaths fell sharply in the late 1940s, in line with national trends and trends in other mother and baby homes. 1949 was the last year when the number of child deaths was greater than ten. The last child death was recorded in 1983.

The high proportion of deaths in hospitals that treated infectious diseases shows that they were a major cause of child deaths in Regina Coeli.

“Regina Coeli continued to house significant numbers of mothers and children although the quality of accommodation was poor”

The report stated: "The fact that children lived in this hostel for long periods, in a large building that was never designed to reduce the risks of accidents, and the large numbers of active children in the hostel undoubtedly led to an increased risk of accidental injury. There are also reports of children having been abused or neglected. Some reports refer to the mental health of the mother when the incident occurred. There are also allegations that Regina Coeli neglected children who were in the hostel's care, particularly with respect to infant feeding."

Domestic violence

From the 1960s onwards the circumstances of the women entering the hostel changed and some women sought entry because of domestic violence, homelessness or drug addiction.

"Regina Coeli continued to house significant numbers of mothers and children although the quality of accommodation was poor. There was a second spike in the numbers of children in the hostel in the early 1980s. By this time many single mothers and their children went to Regina Coeli in the belief that this would help them to secure local authority housing," the commission found of the hostel in later years.

The healthcare provisions for those in the hostel were horrendous by modern standards and from the commission's investigations they were still severely poor by the standards of the past. However, Regina Coeli was one of the few institutions that actively endeavoured to encourage mothers to keep their babies and for them to find housing. Frank Duff also emerges as a man ahead of his time in his opposition to the incarceration of children in industrial schools.



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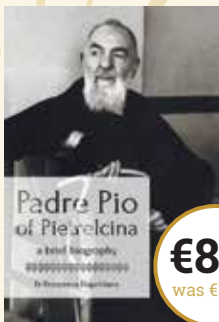


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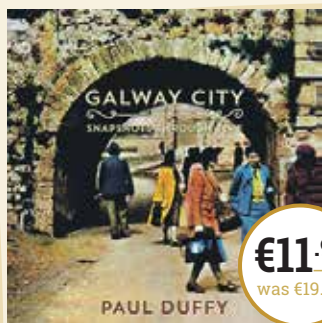


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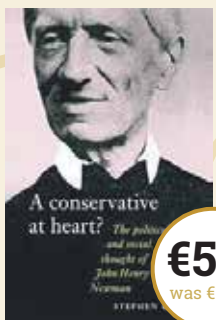


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We teach first and foremost by how we treat others



The Church and society often took it upon themselves to humiliate and exclude rather than show the love of Christ, writes **Brian McCormick**

There is very little difference between the word teacher and preacher. I would always see John the Baptist as a preacher. Jesus is frequently referred to in the Gospels as teacher.

I would suggest that a preacher who does not direct people to Jesus has the potential to be more akin to a dictator. We can see very clearly that John the Baptist was not in any way bound by the potential of losing his disciples, his followers, to Jesus. He was not empowered by his disciples; he got his reward by directing everyone to God.

I'm so aware of the connection today between preacher and teacher and the potential of dictator within these roles.

“As parents it is really important to have the freedom that John the Baptist had when his disciples left him to follow Jesus”

Unlike John the Baptist, we are called to be more than preachers. Because of Jesus we are also called to be teachers. Many people are already called teachers and I think it is very important to consider their role as preachers as well. However, for those of us who are not formally called teachers we also must be aware that because we have been baptised we also are teachers. We were baptised into the Body of Christ therefore we are to be the presence Christ in the world. Christ is a teacher, a teacher of the ways and desires of God. This is what Jesus spent his entire public life doing, more than preach, he taught.

Teachers

As teachers and preachers, we are all accountable to God for what we do. This brings me to the dictator, this is the dangerous area. As



Young pilgrims re-enact their baptism at the site at Qasr el-Yahud in the holy Land where Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Photo: CNS/Debbie Hill

teachers and preachers we all have the potential to become dictators. When we become dictators we will be held accountable to God. Being a dictator has more potential for losing souls than bad preaching or teaching. I think this is true particularly within family environments. I think parents can preach to their children and they can teach their children and as long as everything points the child towards Jesus and living a Christian life then a parent has done what God has asked of them. Now you can never be finished with this role, as you have the opportunity to teach and preach right up until your very last breath. You can actually give your greatest teaching by the manner in which you approach death, how you die. Many parents' faith in the last days and hours of their lives direct their children to Jesus.

However, the truth is that it can be very easy to move from a

preacher and teacher in your home to becoming a dictator. I think becoming a dictator is when you lose sight of the fact that God is ultimately in charge. This not only applies in our homes with our families; it applies everywhere in life. It applies at work, it especially applies in politics and indeed the absence of God creates a space that can only be filled by individuals who think they are God. The report on the mother and baby homes reveals a devastation that dictatorship caused. Church, government, society and in some cases families didn't teach and preach, they didn't point to Jesus. They took it upon themselves to humiliate, to shame, to exclude and to create hostile and hateful environments into which children were born. There was no teaching or preaching in the name of Jesus here. This was cruel dictatorship.

We have seen the consequences of this many times in history and we continue to see this today. As

a Church, government and society is vital that we don't operate as dictators. As parents too, I think it's really important not to slip into the dictator role. It can happen easily but it is necessary to be alert to it. It can appear easier to be a dictator because a dictator is not accountable for their own actions. A dictator does not need to explain.

“I would suggest that a preacher who does not direct people to Jesus has the potential to be more akin to a dictator”

As Christians we are accountable and we must explain. We cannot be teachers without explaining. What we are called to explain is that putting God in the centre of our lives is what life is about. Getting to know Jesus is what gives meaning to

everything. It gives meaning to our living and dying, it gives meaning to our families, our work, our communities, our celebrations and our disappointments.

Parents

As parents it is really important to have the freedom that John the Baptist had when his disciples left him to follow Jesus. Parents also need to be free to allow their children to follow the plan of life that God has for them. They need to be careful that they don't put their own personal desires in front of what God has planned for their children. They need to be careful that they don't move from preacher and teacher to dictator. There is no greater joy in life than to witness young people getting to live the lives God has planned for them.

Our prayer could be, 'Lord guide us all this week as preachers and teachers. If we have become dictators help us to recognise this and to do something about it. I am yours do with me as you will'.

Brian McCormick is from Derry. He is a father and works in the construction industry. This is a reflection written on the mother and baby homes in the context of last Sunday's Gospel (John 1:35-42).

“I'm so aware of the connection today between preacher and teacher and the potential of dictator within these roles”

Tributes paid to 'outstanding' HIV pioneer Fr Michael Kelly



The Irish Jesuit is remembered as a missionary who contributed to the health and wellbeing of the African people, writes **Chai Brady**

Tributes have been paid to Irish priest Prof. Michael J. Kelly SJ who died in Zambia on Friday. He was 91 years old, and was a world-renowned authority in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Fr Kelly has been described by his confrères as a leading scientist whose humility was as deep as his intellect.

Fr Leonard Moloney SJ, Irish Jesuit Provincial, spoke fondly of Fr Kelly following his death mentioning in particular two relatively recent meetings he had with him in Zambia.

The first was in 2004 when Fr Moloney was on sabbatical and spent a few weeks with Fr Kelly in Luwisha House, the Jesuit house in Lusaka. "I remember him bringing me to a care home for people with HIV/AIDS. It was a very moving experience. And

I also remember his garden full of all sorts of fruits and vegetables, he was passionate about gardening and was a great gardener himself," Fr Moloney said.

The second time he met Fr Kelly was on a recent visit to the Zambia/Malawi province with Fr John Guiney SJ, Director of IMI (Irish Missions International). "I had a good chat with him in his room, which was full of his books and papers," he recalled. "And I really had the sense that this was his home - I was right about that for he soon told me that he was not going back to Ireland and that he would like to die in Zambia. So I am glad at least that his wish was fulfilled today," Fr Moloney said.

Exceptional

The provincial described Fr Kelly as an "exceptional person who contributed so much globally through his work and research on HIV/AIDS.

"And he contributed to the health and wellbeing of the African people, particularly those in Zambia whom he loved. And as an Irish Jesuit, I have to say, he was simply an outstanding Jesuit brother," Fr Moloney said.

“The provincial described Fr Kelly as an ‘exceptional person who contributed so much globally through his work and research on HIV/AIDS’”

Last year, Fr Kelly featured in 'The Irish Abroad' series of stamps from An Post. Reflecting on the honour at the time, he wrote: "Through my image on a postage stamp, for the next year or so I will be looking out on all sorts of places in this beautiful world of ours

“I think that it would be so wonderful if only I could make my paper image hear what the people are saying, voice my support for them in their trials and difficulties”

and thereby sharing the private lives of so many people in the intimacy of their homes and personal moments.

"And I think that it would be so wonderful if only I could make my paper image hear what the people are saying, voice my support for them in their trials and difficulties, encourage them, lift their spirits, and share the good news of the Lord with all who stick that image on to an envelope or see it on the letters they receive," he wrote.

Tribute

President Michael D. Higgins also paid tribute to the Jesuit. "It is with deep sadness that I learned of the death of Fr Michael Kelly in his adopted home of Zambia," Mr Higgins said.

"As an academic, writer and educator, Fr Michael made an immense contribution to improved health outcomes for many people in Sub-Saharan Africa. Through his work with Irish Aid and several multilateral organisations, he was an inspirational figure to health workers, aid workers, humanitarians and diplomats from Ireland, Zambia and beyond."

The President said Fr Kelly "epitomised the great work of Irish missionaries in the education and health spheres in so many parts of the world. His humanity shone through in his work and in his encounters with all who were fortunate enough to have met him".

Fr Kelly moved to Zambia in the 1970s and was also an active human rights campaigner, researcher and author. He wrote 15 books and worked as a consultant for organisations such as the World Bank and Unesco.

“Fr Michael made an immense contribution to improved health outcomes for many people in Sub-Saharan Africa”

Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney said he was very sorry to hear for Fr Kelly's death, whose work, he said, was "inspirational".

"He leaves a legacy of achievement, driving policy changes not just

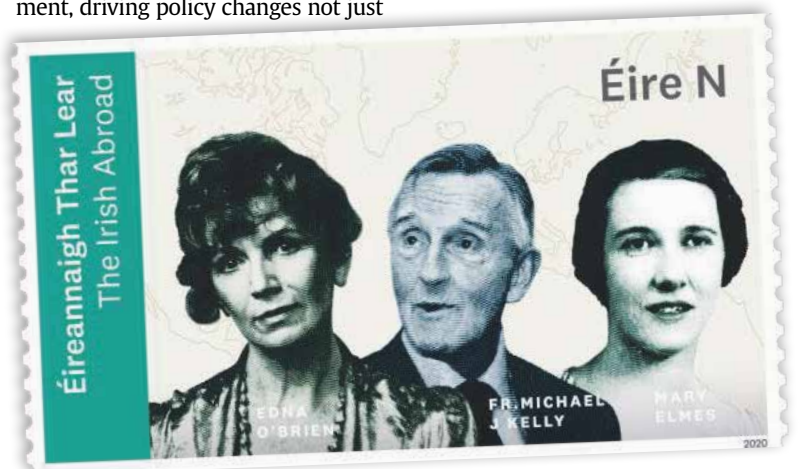
in Zambia but on the international stage," the minister said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs hosts an annual Fr Michael Kelly lecture to mark World Aids Day.

"This event will serve as a reminder of the outstanding work and rich legacy of Fr Michael Kelly. I offer my condolences to his family and many friends. Ireland and Zambia mourn the loss of a true hero," President Higgins said in his remarks.

Fr Kelly, who was a frequent visitor to his native Ireland, was born in Tullamore, Co. Offaly

A statement from the Irish Jesuit Province said: "He will be sadly missed by his family, friends, and Jesuit brothers. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís".





World Report

IN BRIEF

Bishops urge French Catholics to pray and fast as bioethics bill returns to Senate

● French bishops asked Catholics on Wednesday January 13 to pray and fast for the next four Fridays for respect for human life from conception in response to new legislation.

The bishops of France called on “all Catholics, as well as men and women of goodwill, to turn to God by praying and fasting to ask Him for the grace to open our eyes to all and to be artisans of respect for all human beings from their conception”.

A controversial bioethics bill returns to the French Senate for a second round of debate this month, would fund medically assisted procreation for lesbian couples and single women. Currently in France, IVF is restricted to married or cohabiting men and women with a diagnosis of infertility.

German missionary pioneered Asian Church communications dies age 89

● Divine Word Father Franz-Josef Eilers, a pioneering German missionary who worked to develop media and communication systems in the Asian Church, died in the Philippines on January 13. He was 89.

“We have lost a great friend, motivator, teacher and leader who spent most of his years as a priest in developing a strong Church media,” said Divine Word Bishop Chacko Thottumarical of Indore in

the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

Father Eilers was the founder-director of the Catholic Media Council (Cameco) in Aachen, Germany, a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication and led Radio Veritas Asia for years.

He also authored several books and scholarly articles and served as director of the Asian Research Centre for Religion and Social Communication.

South Korean Christians back criticism of North Korea

● Catholics and Protestants in South Korea have voiced support for a movement that seeks to amend legislation that is seen as a benchmark for peace and reconciliation with North Korea but bars any criticism of the communist regime.

The North Korean diaspora, including refugee groups in South Korea and North Korean rights activists in the United States, has been pressing for amendment of the Development of Inter-Korean Relations Act 2005, also known as the Act on the Prohibition of Spreading Warfare Against North Korea.

The movement wants South Korea to amend the law to allow criticism of human rights violations by the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-un.

During an online public hearing on January 11, Catholic and Protestant leaders voiced support for the move.

Ethiopian cardinal calls for solidarity with displaced people

● The President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Ethiopia and Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Berhaneyesus Demerew Cardinal Souraphiel, has urged the government and its people to show solidarity with those affected by conflicts in the country.

“Let us, in a special way, support those who are refugees, displaced brothers and sisters. Through the love of our Lord, I encourage you to spend Christmas by doing charity,” Cardinal Souraphiel said in his message for Christmas which in Ethiopia was celebrated on January 7.

The cardinal was referring to the war in Tigray region between government forces and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) which has caused the displacement of at least 950,000 civilians and forced about 60,000 Ethiopians to flee to neighbouring Sudan.

Australian agency admits €1.2 billion error in reporting Vatican bank transfers

Australia’s financial crime watchdog agency said it overestimated by the equivalent of more than €1.24 billion the amount of money transferred from the Vatican to Australia between 2014 and 2020.

According to *The Australian*, a daily newspaper, “A computer coding error is believed to be the source of the miscalculation”, with financial transfers involving Italy included in transfers involving the Vatican.

In a statement January 13, the Vatican said discovery of the “considerable discrepancy” was the result of collaboration between the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) and the Vatican Supervisory and Financial Information Authority, the financial crimes watchdog agencies of Australia and the Vatican, respectively.

In December, AUSTRAC had reported that \$2.3 billion Australian dollars (€1.5 billion) in Vatican funds had been transferred to Australia from the Vatican between 2014 and 2020.

Catholic officials in Australia and at the Vatican had said the sum was implausible, mainly because the Vatican does not have that kind of money.

AUSTRAC’s December report came in response to a request from Australian Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells seeking information about possible money laundering and allegations that funds were transferred from the Vatican to Australia to adversely affect the trial of Cardinal



Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane, president of the Australian bishops conference, who had previously expressed his surprise at the size of the original figure.

George Pell on charges of sexual abuse; he later was cleared by a unanimous decision of the High Court.

The Australian reported that AUSTRAC initially believed the AU\$2.3 billion was transferred in more than 40,000 transactions between 2014 and 2020, but its amended January report said there were only 362 transfers from the Vatican to Australia during that time, with a total value of AU\$9.5 million.

“The original AUSTRAC figures also showed \$117.4 million was sent from Australia to the Vatican, likely part of an annual fund for charities, during the same period,” the newspaper reported. “The revised figures show that between 2014 and

2020, there were 237 transfers from Australia to the Vatican totalling \$26.6 million.”

In its statement January 13, the Vatican said the AU\$9.5 million figure “is attributable, among other things, to contractual obligations and the ordinary management of its resources”, presumably including the running and staffing of the Vatican nunciature.

However, *The Australian* reported, AUSTRAC is continuing to work with the Vatican Supervisory and Financial Information Authority to investigate some of the transfers for possible connections to fraud or money laundering.

“The focus for the Australian Federal Police and the Vat-

ican’s financial unit are four transfers to Australia from the Vatican”, including two allegedly from Cardinal Angelo Becciu between 2017 and 2018, “totaling AU\$2 million to a company in Melbourne”, the newspaper reported.

In September, Pope Francis asked Cardinal Becciu to resign. The cardinal was a key figure in the Vatican Secretariat of State’s 2018 purchase of a majority stake in the Sloane Avenue property in London’s Chelsea district, a property deal that incurred significant debts for the Vatican. The Vatican’s investigation into the deal is ongoing.

North Dakota bill would force priests to violate confession seal in abuse cases

Three North Dakota state legislators introduced a bill this week that would oblige Catholic priests to violate the seal of Confession in cases of confirmed or suspected child abuse, on penalty of imprisonment or heavy fines.

The bill was introduced January 12 by a number of Republican and Democrat state senators and state representatives.

The current mandatory reporting law in North Dakota states that clergy are considered mandatory reporters of known or suspected child abuse, except in cases when “the knowledge

or suspicion is derived from information received in the capacity of spiritual adviser”, such as in the confessional.

The bill, SB 2180, would amend that law to abolish this exception. If passed, priests who would fail to report known or suspected child abuse, even if revealed in the confessional, would be considered guilty of a Class B misdemeanour and face 30 days in jail or fines up to \$1,500 or both.

Priests are bound by Canon Law to keep the contents of a confession confidential.

Christopher Dodson, the executive director and general counsel for the North Dakota Catholic Conference, told *CNA* that he was “surprised and greatly concerned about the bill, because it would infringe upon a person’s privacy and religious counselling and confession, not just for Catholics, but for everyone”.

“In the United States, we expect to exercise our religion, including going to Confession and having spiritual counselling, without the government invading our privacy,” he said.

English bishop amid court challenges: Giving food and water is basic care

An English bishop expressed solidarity with the family of a man on feeding tubes who appealed to a court for him to be kept alive.

Bishop Mark O’Toole of Plymouth said in a statement sent to *Catholic News Service* that the English

court’s decision “to allow for the withdrawal of hydration and nutrition is very worrying”. Bishop O’Toole said that “providing food and water to very sick patients – even if by artificial means – is a basic level of care”.

The Polish citizen suffered

a heart attack in November, and in mid-December, the Court of Protection gave permission to withdraw artificial hydration and nutrition January 7. The removal of the tube was delayed until January 13 while the birth family applied to the

UK Court of Appeal. Court documentation made public January 14 reveals that the Court of Appeal had rejected the application, with withdrawal of feeding tubes permitted again from 6 pm that same day.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Unveiling Our Lady of Angels



A new Marian tapestry was unveiled inside the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in Los Angeles during a Mass with Archbishop Jose Gomez celebrating the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on January 1, 2020. Credit: Victor Alemán courtesy of *Angelus News*.

Brazilian cardinal and Glasgow archbishop die of Covid-19 on same day

In one day, the Catholic Church on two continents lost two leaders to Covid-19. Both men were outspoken defenders of the church.

Brazilian Cardinal Eusebio Scheid, 88, died in the interior of São Paulo state January 13, after only a few days in the hospital with Covid-19.

Scotland

Across the Atlantic, in Scotland, Archbishop Philip Tartaglia of Glasgow, 70, died at his home, where he was self-isolating after testing positive for Covid-19 shortly after Christmas, though the archdiocese is yet to confirm the official cause of death.

Cardinal Scheid, born in Santa Catarina state in 1932, was ordained in July 1960 and served in the archdioceses of Florianópolis and Rio de Janeiro before retiring in 2009. St John Paul II elevated him to cardinal in 2003.

"To remember this brother of ours is to speak of his dedication and concern for the formation of the clergy, as well as his encouragement for evangelisation and the organisation of pastoral care," read the note issued by the Brazilian bishops' conference.

Known for his candor, Cardinal Scheid will be remembered for the contro-

versy with then-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI.

After Pope John Paul II's death, Lula da Silva organised a delegation to fly to the Vatican and expressed his desire that the new Pope be Brazilian. At the time, Cardinal Cláudio Hummes was seen as one of the favorites for the papacy.

Chaotic

Cardinal Scheid accused Lula of wanting to exploit the episode politically and said that Lula "was not Catholic, he was chaotic" and that "he (Lula) and the Holy Spirit did not get along well".

Archbishop Tartaglia, ordained a priest in 1975, had served as leader of Scotland's largest Catholic community since 2012.

Sorrow

"It is with the greatest sorrow that we announce the death of our archbishop," read the statement released by the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

"He was a leading opponent of proposals to legalise same-sex marriage in Scotland and also criticised ministers over anti-bigotry legislation," the statement said.

On January 14, retired Bishop Vincent Logan of Dunkeld, Scotland, also died of Covid-19.

'We need the Lord to cast out demon of division in our nation,' US cardinal says

Celebrating a livestreamed Mass for the community of Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington January 13, Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory noted how sometimes the readings of the day "fit our lives so perfectly". They "somehow almost mystically describe where we are at this moment", he said.

Washington's archbishop then pointed out how that day's Gospel reading, Mark 1: 29-39, which

described Jesus curing Peter's mother-in-law of a fever and later casting out evil spirits, could be connected to the Covid-19 pandemic and to the January 6 insurrection when a mob of rioters stormed the US Capitol.

Cardinal Gregory noted how in that day's Gospel reading, "the Lord casts out evil spirits, and we often, as we look at the world around us, in particular during these past several

days here in our nation, we need the Lord to cast out the spirit of evil, hatred, division, bigotry, racism (and) inequity. We have lots of evil spirits that somehow are destroying the harmony of the nation, making people of different races and cultures and languages and religions afraid of one another. We need the Lord to cast out the demon of division in our nation."



Vatican modifies distribution of ashes for Ash Wednesday

● The Congregation for Divine Worship announced that the ashes will be "sprinkled" rather than applied as a paste and the priest will "say nothing" while doing so.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published the note ahead of the beginning of Lent, on Wednesday, 17 February, as the health situation caused by Covid-19 continues to force changes on daily life, which are also reflected in the Church's sphere.

After blessing the ashes and sprinkling them with holy water in silence, the priest addresses those present, reciting once the formula found in the Roman Missal: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return".

At that point, the note continues, the priest "cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask, and distributes ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places".

He then sprinkles the ashes on each person's head "without saying anything".

Iraq: Papal visit logo unveiled, uncertainty over Pope Francis' March trip

● More information has been released about the Papal visit to Iraq, as Pope Francis expressed doubt this week about whether the trip would take place as planned in March.

In a television interview on Sunday, the Pope said that he had cancelled two international trips in 2020, "because in conscience I cannot cause gatherings, can I? Now I don't know if the next trip to Iraq will take place," he told the news programme *Tg5*.

Meanwhile, local organisers of the visit released on Monday the logo and motto of the visit.

The logo for the trip depicts Pope Francis in front of an outline of

Iraq, with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and a palm tree. There is also a dove carrying an olive branch flying over the Vatican and Iraqi flags.

The motto – "You are all brothers," taken from Matthew 23:8 – is written above in Arabic, Chaldean, and Kurdish.

The Vatican announced in December that the Pope's March 5-8 trip would include stops in Baghdad, Erbil, and Mosul.

If the voyage takes place as planned, Francis will be the first Pope to visit Iraq, which is still recovering from the devastation inflicted by the Islamic State.

False narrative of papal division 'harmful,' former doctrinal chief says

● The constant comparison as well as false reports of division between Pope Francis and retired Pope Benedict XVI by both secular and Catholic media outlets threaten the dignity of the papacy and the faith of many, a former top Vatican official said.

In an op-ed piece published January 10 in the Italian daily *La Bussola Quotidiana*, Cardinal Gerhard Muller, former prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said that with the "visual image of 'two Popes' side by side, the subtle problem of comparing the pontificates of two living people has arisen".

He also said that in today's age of "secularized thinking and mass media, political and ideological viewpoints end up contaminating theological judgment" to the point that, for some people, "the tenets of Catholic theology are suspected of 'conservative' or 'liberal' ideology, depending on their point of view".

In addition, "positive evaluations of either pontificate are exchanged at the expense of the opposing side," Cardinal Muller wrote. "Evidence of this harmful antagonism of the pontificates of two living actors in current history is numerous."

Letter from Rome

As Callista Gingrich departs, she's the new 'COAT' in US/Vatican ties



John L. Allen Jr

In sports, people argue about who's the GOAT, meaning "Greatest of All Time". In basketball, is LeBron James the GOAT or is it Michael Jordan? In baseball, are we talking Babe Ruth or Ty Cobb? In college football, did Alabama Coach Nick Saban just become the GOAT by winning a seventh national title, surpassing the legendary Bear Bryant?

When it comes to the role of a US Ambassador to the Vatican, it may still be a little early for the GOAT conversation – after all, the US and the Vatican have had full diplomatic relations only since 1984. But no matter how long we wait, I doubt we'll ever get a better candidate for what I'll call the COAT, meaning the envoy who faced the most vexing "Challenge of All Time".

It's gotta be outgoing Ambassador Callista Gingrich, who made her farewell visit to Pope Francis yesterday and who's set to depart Rome on January 20, Inauguration Day.

Contenders

Before Ms Gingrich, there were two contenders for the COAT title: Ray Flynn, who represented US President Bill Clinton at a time when Washington and Rome were engaged in titanic battles over UN conferences on population and women and the idea of enshrining abortion as a universal human right; and Jim Nicholson, who had to represent the Bush administration when Pope John Paul II was emerging as the global champion of moral opposition to the US-led war in Iraq.

No one, however, ever inherited quite the headache that awaited Gingrich, because no Pope and no president arguably were ever as ill-suited for one another as President Donald Trump and Pope Francis.

The tension began even before Mr Trump took office, with Francis defining then-candidate Trump as "not a Christian" in February 2016 for his vow to build a wall between the US and Mexico to keep out illegal immigrants – and, as it turns out, that was actually something of a high-water mark in their relationship.

A little over a year later, two of the Pope's closest friends and allies published an article denouncing an "ecu-



US Ambassador to the Holy See Callista Gingrich, accompanied by her husband Newt, attends an audience for the traditional exchange of new year's greetings with Pope Francis in the Sala Regia at the Vatican January 9, 2020. (CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters pool)

menism of hate" in the US between Protestant Evangelicals and conservative Catholics – which, of course, was precisely the electoral coalition that helped propel Mr Trump to office.

Even though all that happened before Ms Gingrich got here, she had to carry it around every time she met someone in the Vatican, every time she hosted an event, and every time she appeared in public. Everyone knew her boss and the Pope didn't see eye to eye, which meant that quite often, she had to deal with the uncomfortable fact that conversations would stop when she walked into a room, and that whatever she said or did would be seen through the filter of larger political narratives.

“For more than three years, she carried herself on the Rome scene with grace and aplomb”

Moreover, unlike her rivals for the COAT title, Ms Gingrich arrived in Rome as a relative nobody. Ray Flynn was a successful two-term mayor of Boston, while Jim Nicholson had been the chair of the Republican National Committee. Ms Gingrich, however, was simply known as the wife of a former Speaker of the House.

Despite all of that, and, measured solely on her performance as ambassador – not on the president she represented, or the man to whom

she's married – Ms Gingrich was a surprising success story.

For more than three years, she carried herself on the Rome scene with grace and aplomb. She was unrelentingly positive, refusing to allow herself or her embassy to be drawn into any of the larger drama surrounding the Vatican/US relationship in the era of Trump and Francis. In effect, she acted as if mature people can do positive things together despite their differences, which is a welcome nod to maturity despite the madness that sometimes surrounded her.

She hosted dozens of events dedicated to issues upon which Washington and Rome are in lockstep, including not only religious freedom but, perhaps most consistently, the fight against human trafficking and modern-day slavery. On her watch the Vatican embassy nominated two "Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes", both of whom were invited to Washington to hobnob with senior administration officials and later reported the attention bolstered their work.

Ms Gingrich also cast a spotlight on the role of nuns around the world, including hosting annual "Women on the Frontlines" symposia to recognise the contributions of women religious on the frontlines of conflict zones and destabilised regions. She made two nominations for the US International Women of Courage (IWOC) Award, both nuns

involved in conflict resolution and social justice efforts in the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Behind the scenes, Ms Gingrich encouraged the State Department and other government leaders to take women religious seriously as sources of insight on areas that are often difficult, if not impossible, for US officials to access.

“The tension began even before Trump took office, with Francis defining then-candidate Trump as “not a Christian” in February 2016”

She also responded to needs as they presented themselves. At the early peak of the coronavirus in Italy, Ms Gingrich worked with the Office of Vice President Mike Pence to help Samaritan's Purse, a US faith-based organisation, fly in a 68-bed emergency field hospital in northern Italy that included 60 American doctors, nurses, and technicians to care for the critically ill. The Minister of Health for the hard-hit Italian region of Lombardy called it "the first bright light in our dark sky".

In ways large and small, Ms Gingrich sought to show respect for the institution to which she was accredited. For example, the embassy worked with the US Department

of Homeland Security and the Vatican's own police to return a stolen letter to the Vatican Library in 2018 written by Christopher Columbus in 1493. The esteem was mutual; Pope Francis bestowed the title of "Dame Grand Cross of the Order of Pope Pius IX", the Vatican's highest distinction conferred upon laypersons, upon Ms Gingrich on June 18, 2020.

Cohort

Moreover, Ms Gingrich was also part of a cohort of strong female ambassadors to the Vatican during her term, including Sally Axworthy of the UK, Emma Madigan of Ireland, Caroline Weijers of the Netherlands, Tamara Grdzeldze of Georgia, Chiara Porro of Australia, and others. Though they didn't always represent administrations with similar agenda, they did all show that women don't necessarily need a Roman collar to matter in Catholicism.

Given the hyper-polarised atmosphere in the US, it may be impossible for anyone to look upon Ms Gingrich without refracting perceptions through their opinions about the president she served, or the husband she supports. But seen from here in Rome, I suspect she'll be remembered fairly fondly – and, given the circumstances, that alone can't help but seem a fairly impressive résumé credit.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of CruXNow.com

Iraq's catholics pray Covid doesn't delay papal trip



Volunteers clean the Syrian Catholic Church of St Thomas in Mosul. News reports said the effort “seeks to sweep away the horrors” of three years of rule by Islamic State militants and welcome back members of minority faiths who fled IS. (CNS photo/Abdullah Rashid, Reuters)



Inés San Martín

Catholics in Iraq are not giving up on a papal visit despite Pope Francis recently saying the pandemic might stop him from going: at the request of Cardinal Patriarch Raphael Sako, they're reciting a prayer specifically for the trip scheduled for March 5-8 to take place.

“Lord our God, grant Pope Francis health and safety to carry out successfully this eagerly awaited visit,” says the prayer, being said at the end of every Mass throughout Iraq.

The prayer also mentions the pontiff's efforts for dialogue, enhance fraternal reconciliation, building confidence and consolidating peace and human dignity, “especially for us Iraqis who have been through painful ‘events’ that affected our lives”.

Communion

The prayer also entrusts Francis' visit to the Virgin Mary, and asks for “the grace of living in a complete national communion,” and cooperating fraternally in

building “a better future for our country and our citizens”.

During an interview with an Italian journalist that aired January 10, Pope Francis cast doubt over the trip, announced last December, arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic had changed many aspects of life, including traveling.

“The Holy See is finding it difficult to find a relevant figure of Shiite Islam willing to dialogue with the Pope who is also acceptable to the Iraqi government”

“Yes, I had to cancel trips ... because in good conscience, I can't be the cause of gatherings of people, right? Now I don't know if the trip to Iraq can take place. Life has changed,” he said.

In 2020 the only officially announced trip had been a day-trip to Malta scheduled for May 31, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic.

“Pope Francis cast doubt over the trip, announced last December, arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic had changed many aspects of life, including traveling”

Last month the Holy See Press Office announced that the Pope had accepted the invitation of Iraqi President Barham Salih and the country's Catholic Church. If the trip goes forward, Francis will be the first Pope to set foot in this country.

Mr Salih tweeted about the visit, saying that it will “be a message of peace to Iraqis of all religions and serve to affirm our common values of justice and dignity”.

Joy

Cardinal Sako also welcomed the news of the visit expressing “joy and satisfaction” at the announcement which confirmed the importance of “the Christian presence” in Iraq. There are an estimated 150,000 Christians left in the nation of the two rivers.

Francis is expected to visit both Ur, the homeland of the patriarch Abraham, and several towns in the Nineveh plain, but the full schedule is yet to be announced.

Sources have told *Crux* the Pope and his team are still working on a moment of dialogue with a representative of Shiite Islam.

A source with knowledge of the situation said that there's remote possibility of the pontiff going to Najaf, widely considered as the

third holiest city of Shia Islam, after Mecca and Medina. It is considered the centre of political Shiite power in Iraq.

The Holy See is finding it difficult to find a relevant figure of Shiite Islam willing to dialogue with the Pope who is also acceptable to the Iraqi government. The source said there's even a possibility that the person tapped might be from Iran, which could “open a geopolitical can of worms,” although the Vatican and Iran have long had diplomatic relations, with the Holy See having an embassy in Tehran.

Another sticking point is the desire of local Church leaders for the Pope to use the visit to declare as martyrs several groups of Catholics murdered in Iraq in the past two decades.

Paperwork

However, despite the causes being ready, the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints hasn't finished the paperwork.

One of the martyrdom causes is for the 48 people killed October 31, 2010 in the Syriac Catholic Church of Our Lady of Deliverance. The attack was perpetrated by five terrorists from Iraq, Syria and Egypt,

who killed two priests and 45 lay Catholic Faithful, one of whom was pregnant, during an evening Mass.

The list of those killed includes Frs Thaer Saadulla Abdal, 32, and Waseem Sabih Kas Boutros, 27, who had been ordained in 2006 and 2007 respectively, in the same cathedral where they died.

“Francis is expected to visit both Ur, the homeland of the patriarch Abraham, and several towns in the Nineveh plain”

Similarly, either on his way to Erbil – the capital of Kurdistan where thousands of Christians fleeing ISIS found refuge between 2014 and 2017 – or as he heads to Qarakosh in the Nineveh plains, Francis could stop in Karamlesh, a town where Father Rasheed Aziz Gianni and his three companions were murdered in 2007. The remains the men have been prepared for a hopeful beatification and will be in Qaraqosh by March, in case the Pope is able to make the trip.

The source noted that Francis “could wave the final paperwork, or speedy it up, and declare these people martyrs, which would give a much-needed boost to Iraq's Christians, the motive for the trip, beyond ... other collateral benefits.”

Letters

Letter of the week

Love of neighbour is core Gospel value needed during pandemic

Dear Editor, The Irish Catholic [IC 07/01/2020] carried criticism, by David Quinn and others, of the Irish Government and of our bishops for the suspension of public Masses. The point made was that Ireland was amongst few European countries in taking this step. In light of decisions taken in Northern Ireland and Britain since then, the criticism would seem to have been misplaced and somewhat unfair.

The scientific data shows that, following our Government's lifting of restrictions in early December, a significant number of Covid-19 infections has taken place around weddings and funerals. The event taking place in the church may have been safe enough but the virus transmits in the interac-

tion between people that can happen before and after. This also applies to Sunday and weekday Masses. The consensus is, quite simply, that encouraging people to leave their homes, even to go to Mass, is not at present a safe thing to do.

This is a painful time for all of us as we find ourselves unable to be together in our churches at Mass. However, the pain is part of the Christian witness we are being asked to give by sacrificing, in the interest in the common good of all, something that means a great deal to us.

In his teaching, Jesus made love of neighbour equal in status to love of God. During this public health emergency, acting out of love for our neighbour is the core Gospel value that needs to be

at the heart of our behaviour. Early in the book of Genesis (Chapter 4), God challenges Cain by asking, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain replies by putting a question of his own before God: "Am I my brother's keeper?" At that point, neither God nor the Biblical writer gives a clear answer. The answer becomes obvious throughout the rest of the Bible. The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown up circumstances in which a light is being shone upon the only appropriate answer to Cain's question. Even in the matter of public worship, each one of us is, indeed, our sister's and our brother's keeper.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Peter Cullen
Cahir, Co. Tipperary*

Our most vulnerable are being devalued

Dear Editor, we are witnesses to a period in time where the value of life is stripped away, the unborn deprived of their right to life, hastily followed by assisted suicide, setting a dangerous pathway toward euthanasia. Both new life coming into the world and life nearing the end has become devalued. Those without a voice remain most vulnerable. A renewed Church led focus on the sanctity of human life through a hope-filled 'Sanctity of Life Sunday' message could provide this voice and reaffirm the dignity of each human life.

*Yours etc.,
Judith Doherty
Dalkey, Co. Dublin*



Do not underestimate seriousness of RTÉ God sketch

Dear Editor, We should not dismiss or underestimate the seriousness of RTÉ's New Year's Eve programme. It was a defamation of character of our God and an incitement to animosity and ridicule towards Christian beliefs.

Anyone would be hurt if their father was portrayed as a rapist. The only prayer Jesus taught was the Our Father and all Christians are united in calling God our Father. Being children of God is central to our Christian Faith so this was a

public defamation of all Christians. Not only that, it portrays the Christian Faith as endorsing the subjection and brutal assault of women.

The Christian Faith is under attack in many countries around the world and each year a growing number of Christians are martyred. Despite many requests for Ireland to speak out against these attacks our Government has remained silent. Programmes such as this not only undermine respect for the Christian Faith

but spreads lies and increase hostility and violence towards Christians everywhere. With RTÉ's delay in taking down this clip, there is every possibility that it is now being passed around in countries intent on spreading violence against Christians.

We must continue to press RTÉ to acknowledge the full extent of the serious implications of this broadcast.

*Yours etc.,
Maureen Sherlock
Thomastown, Co Kilkenny*

Moving Mass online again 'just and proportionate'

Dear Editor, Further to David Quinn's thought-provoking article on [IC 07/01/2021], it is worth remembering that the only foundation for any worthwhile act by a Christian is conformity to the will of God. In his seminal tract of that title, St Alphonsus de Ligouri goes so far as to write: "It is true, of course, that mortification, meditation, communions, and works of charity toward our neighbour are pleasing to God, but in what circumstances? When they are performed in accordance with his will. When they are not in accordance with his will, not only is he not pleased with them, but he considers them unacceptable and rejects them".

Considering my own vulnerabilities, the risk to others if I caught the virus, the strain that would put on the health service, my settled conscience dictates that it is the will of God that I should view Mass on the web cam for the foreseeable future. I find the Government regulations in this regard just and proportionate, although clearly not impeccable.

The theologian Karl Barth, labelled by Pope Pius X as the most important Christian theologian of the 20th Century, warned that Catholics need to be on their guard against a kind of magical thinking in connection with the sacraments. This type of thinking might lead one to believe that if one gets the rubrics and the formula of words in the Sacrament exact, God is compelled to give the grace; but outside of this, God has no way to give the grace.

This pandemic offers the Catholic church the opportunity to distinguish itself from the myriad of other affinity groups all clamouring for special dispensation from the lockdown regulations, and to make the sacrifice of accepting the imposition of restrictions for the common good. The word 'martyr' does, after all, mean witness.

*Yours etc.,
Colm Fitzpatrick
Castleknock, Dublin*

Congratulate Church leaders for taking strong stance on RTÉ God sketch

Dear Editor, congratulations to our Church leaders for demanding an apology from RTÉ for their grossly offensive sketch on New Year's Eve. Helped by their strong stance we took to our laptops and phones in our thousands to protest.

In addition, thousands signed an online petition with Peadar Toibin's political party Aontú. We have proven we can turn the tide and defend our God, our Faith and our Church.

*Yours etc.,
Anne McGrath
Rathfarnham, Dublin*

facebook community

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

Report lifts lid on harsh and unforgiving attitudes towards unmarried mothers

A horrifying and shameful period in our history, where women and children from poor, working class areas were far too often treated as 'less than'. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

The hypocrisy has merely passed the baton to the modern progressive unborn child abusers... – **Mícheál Lyons**

And goodness is all I ever experienced from Church in Dublin as a youngster in the 50s but that is not to deny the dreadful things that happened then and that in due course will be discovered to happen in these days in terms of homelessness, neglected drug abuse, child neglect and abortion to name but four. – **Alan Whelan**

Republic remains almost alone in banning public Masses

Thank you David Quinn and Maria Steen, for drawing attention to what is going on here, we need good leaders now! – **Mary Margaret McManus**

Courage and leadership should go together, they should be inseparable. – **Gary Murphy**

Lots of Mass opportunities online all over the country, Knock shrine, Lourdes etc. – **Margaret Mc Greevy**

Stop complaining about no public Mass. You can now get Mass from any church anywhere in the world without leaving your own home. Prayers can be said anywhere and anytime. If the priest gets sick there will be nobody to say Mass anyway. – **Kathleen Smith**

High Court case over ban on Masses likely in early February

State will seek numerous adjournments to delay. If it goes to court the party-political judges we have will use "subject to public order" to do whatever Government wants. – **Christopher Mc Camley**

Bringing the most vulnerable group of people together indoors when the numbers are huge is irresponsible. – **Lizzie Harrison**

I am not vulnerable. Neither is my husband, my children, my nieces, my nephews, my mum's other grandchildren, my cousins, their children. Most of our churches are very large. Larger than classrooms and are well capable of holding 50 at social distance. Next excuse? – **Ismise Máire**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



▲ **INDIA:** Homeless men warm themselves around a small fire on a foggy morning in Delhi. Photos: CNS

▼ **INDONESIA:** Rescuers evacuate a man from a hospital that collapsed following a magnitude 6.2 earthquake in Mamuju, January 15. More than 40 people were killed and more than 600 injured.



BRAZIL: A man carries a cylinder as relatives of patients hospitalised or receiving health care at home gather to buy oxygen at a private company in Manaus.



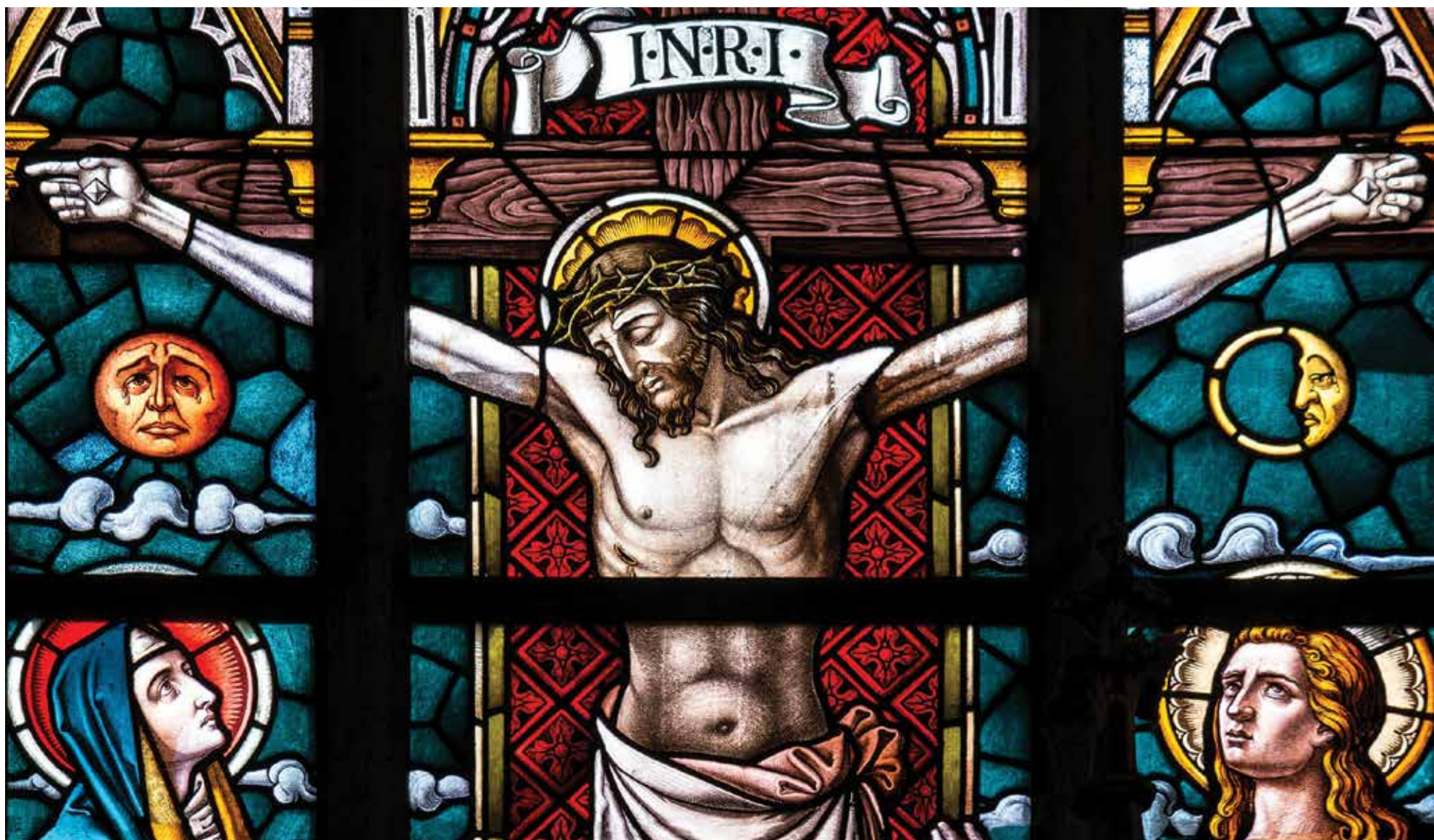
ALBANIA: Children use a boat in the flooded village of Obot.



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Migrants eat rice in an abandoned building where they are taking shelter in Bihac.



SPAIN: A person wearing a protective mask walks through a snow-covered path during sunset in Madrid.



Grieving a wonderful life passing

Most of us are familiar with the story of Zorba, the Greek, either through Nikos Kazantzakis' famous book or through the movie. Well, Zorba was not a fictional character. He was a real person, Alexis Zorba, who had such a larger-than-life personality and energy that when he died, Kazantzakis found his death very difficult to accept, incredulous that such energy, verve, and colour were mortal.

Kazantzakis

On learning of Zorba's death, this was Kazantzakis' reaction: "I closed my eyes and felt tears rolling slowly, warmly down my cheeks. He's dead, dead, dead. Zorba is gone, gone forever. The laughter is dead, the song cut off, the santir broken, the dance on the seaside pebbles has halted, the insatiable mouth that questioned with such incurable thirst is filled now with clay... Such souls should not die. Will earth, water, fire, and chance ever be able to fashion a Zorba again? ...It was as though I believed him to be immortal."

Sometimes it's hard to believe that a certain person can die because of the life and energy that he or she incarnated. We simply cannot imagine that life-pulse dead, stilled, forever gone from this planet. Certain people seem exempt from death because we cannot imagine such energy, colour, generosity, and goodness dying.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

How can such wonderful energy just die?

I have felt that many times in my life; most recently this past week when two former colleagues, both specially spirited, colourful, witty, and generous men, died. Kazantzakis came to mind, and his struggle to accept Zorba's death, along with the way he tried to deal with that death. He decided he would try to "resurrect" Zorba, bring him back to life, by taking his story to the world in such a way so as to transform his life into a myth, a dance, and a religion.

Kazantzakis believed this is what Mary Magdala did in the wake of Jesus' death, when she left his tomb and went back to the world. She resurrected Jesus by telling his story, creating a myth, a dance, and a religion. So, in the

wake of Zorba's death, Kazantzakis said to himself: "Let us give him our blood so that he can be brought back to life, let us do what we can to make this extraordinary eater, drinker, workhorse, woman-chaser, and vagabond live a little longer – this dancer and warrior, the broadest soul, surest body, freest cry I ever knew in my life."

Great story

Bless his effort! It made for a great story, a gripping myth, but it never made for a religion or an eternal dance because that's not what Mary Magdala did with Jesus. Nonetheless, there's still something to be learned here about how to deal with a death that seemingly takes some oxygen out of the planet. We must not let that wonderful energy disappear, but keep it

“He was a real person, Alexis Zorba, who had such a larger-than-life personality and energy that when he died, Kazantzakis found his death very difficult to accept, incredulous that such energy, verve, and colour were mortal”

alive. However, as Christians, we do this in a different way.

“Whenever we go to those places where their spirits breathed out God's life, we breathe in again their oxygen, their dance, their life”

We read the Mary Magdala story quite differently. Mary went to Jesus' tomb, found it empty, and went away crying; but... but, before she got to tell anyone any story, she met a resurrected Jesus who shared with her how his energy, colour, love, person would now be found, namely, in a radically new modality, inside his spirit. That contains the secret of how we are to give life to our loved ones after they have died.

How do we keep our loved ones and the wonderful energy they brought to the planet alive after they have died? First, by recognizing that their energy doesn't die with their bodies, that it doesn't depart the planet. Their energy remains, alive, still with us, but now inside us, through the spirit they leave behind (just as Jesus left his spirit behind). Further still,

their energy infuses us whenever we enter into their 'Galilee', namely, into those places where their spirits thrived and breathed out generative oxygen.

What's meant by that? What's someone's 'Galilee'? A person's Galilee is that special energy, that special oxygen, which he or she breathes out. For Zorba, it was his fearlessness and zest for life; for my dad, it was his moral stubbornness; for my mom, it was her generosity. In that energy, they breathed out something of God. Whenever we go to those places where their spirits breathed out God's life, we breathe in again their oxygen, their dance, their life.

Death

Like all of you, I have sometimes been stunned, saddened, and incredulous at the death of a certain person. How could that special energy just die? Sometimes that special energy was manifest in physical beauty, human grace, fearlessness, zest, colour, moral steadiness, compassion, graciousness, warmth, wit, or humour. It can be hard to accept that beauty and live-giving oxygen can seemingly leave the planet.

In the end, nothing is lost. Sometime, in God's time, at the right time, the stone will roll back and like Mary Magdala walking away from the grave, we will know that we can breathe in that wonderful energy again in 'Galilee'.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 21, 2021

Personal Profile
Theologian for
a post-secular
world

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Checkmating lockdown with chess



As has been commented on endlessly, the most recent lockdown has left many of us sitting at home, twiddling our thumbs. The first lockdown was greeted with some measure of determination and grit, and people made the best of things by picking up new hobbies and skills, trying their hands at cooking, gardening, a musical instrument or a new language.

The second lockdown was disheartening, particularly with the good weather of the first left receding into the distance and a wet winter to look forward to. However, people again dug in their heels and tried to make the most of the situation by resorting back to the things they'd picked up the



**An old game that offers
the modern world much,
writes Jason Osborne**

first time around, then dropped as restrictions eased and summer beckoned.

This third lockdown has hit both myself and those around me much harder than the others, if for no other reason than that life is thoroughly boring at this stage. The depths of the streaming services have been plumbed, outdoor pursuits, while not impossible, are far less appealing

in January than in, say, May or June. Webcammed socials aren't novel as they were last April.

One activity that hasn't lost its appeal since I picked it up last April for the first time, however, is chess. Having never learned to play before then, I'd always been put off by what I perceived as its impenetrable complexity and its lofty following. As I had little else going on at the time, though, I

created a profile on *chess.com* and haven't looked back since, my fears allayed.

The history of chess

Where did this world-conquering game come from? Its origins remain shrouded in mystery, with little evidence that chess existed in a form resembling the modern game before the 6th Century AD. Game pieces found in Russia, China, India, Central Asia, Pakistan and elsewhere that have been determined to be older have since been regarded as coming from distantly related board games.

One of those earlier games which came closest to modern chess was a war game called *chaturanga*, a Sanskrit name for

a battle formation mentioned in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. The game was popular in north-western India by the 7th Century and is considered the closest precursor to modern chess because of two key features found in the game today – different pieces had different abilities, and victory was based on one piece, much as it's based on the king in today's game.

There were differences between this game and today's but it paved the way, with the game spreading to the east, north and west, taking on different rules and characteristics along the way. A form of the game found its way to Europe, by way of Persia,

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Family News



AND EVENTS

US EMISSIONS IN 2020 IN BIGGEST FALL SINCE WORLD WAR II

The BBC has reported that US greenhouse gas emissions have dropped below their 1990 level for this first time as a result of the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Research group Rhodium said that overall emissions are down over 10%, which is the largest fall since World War II. Transport saw the biggest decline, with 2020 recording a 15% drop over 2019. This is believed to be due to the widespread reaction to the coronavirus pandemic, with travel and much economic activity grinding to a halt. In transport, the restrictions on travelling, both internationally and domestically, saw the demand for fuel fall drastically. At the peak of restrictions demand for jet fuel was down 68% on 2019, with petrol down 40%. Overall, the demand for electricity was down just 2% but emissions fell by over 10%. "This was driven almost exclusively from the continued rapid decline of coal-fired power generation," the report says.

ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN CAVE PAINTINGS FOUND IN INDONESIA

Scientists have found one of the oldest known artistic depictions of a real-world object or living thing in a cave on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. It's a painting of a warty pig, an animal still found on Sulawesi, that was put on the cave's back wall at least 45,500 years ago. Researchers reported the discovery January 13 in *Science Advances*. The study's author, Adam Brumm, an archaeologist at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia said that the discovery adds to the evidence that "the first modern human cave art traditions did not emerge in Ice Age Europe, as long supposed, but perhaps earlier in Asia or even in Africa, where our species evolved". *Sciencenews* reports that the team considers it likely that *Homo sapiens*, rather than a closely related species such as *Homo floresiensis* painted on the Sulawesi cave walls.

REGULAR COFFEE CONSUMPTION COULD KEEP PROSTATE CANCER AT BAY

According to a study published in the journal *BMJ Open*, "increased" coffee consumption may be linked to a reduction in risk of prostate cancer. Researchers found that higher coffee consumption was associated with a reduced risk of prostate cancer. The research saw a team examine findings from 16 different studies. The team from the Shengjing Hospital of China Medical University found that men who drink several cups of coffee a day had a lower risk of developing prostate cancer than those with the "lowest" consumption levels. Each additional daily cup was associated with a reduction in risk of 1%, the findings suggest. The analysis examined the data of over a million men across North America, Europe and Japan, and included information on around 58,000 men who had prostate cancer. Caution was advised in the interpretation of the results, however, as participants' recall was relied upon, and their recall may have been incorrect.

Road to distorted reality occurs when we knowingly lie



Much philosophical discussion about lying has tended to focus on the most extreme of extreme cases. "Is it acceptable to lie to a murderer about whether or not his would-be victim is in your house?" As is often the case in philosophy, the extreme case is a very bad place to start. Starting to think about the ethics of lying in the context of a case like this is likely to muddy, not clarify our thinking: we should figure out what sort of action lying is and only then turn to difficult cases.

Lying

My view is that lying is a bad sort of action, because it frustrates the purpose of human speech, and because it distorts the people's ability to perceive the truth about the world.

“People’s ability to accurately perceive the world can be distorted to such an extent that they start to lose touch with it entirely”

What do I mean when I say that lying frustrates the purpose of speech? It's a standard part of Catholic ethics (and Aristotelian ethics more broadly) that living things, types of actions, and kinds of processes have things that they are for, or directed towards. What human speech is first and foremost ordered to, the purpose at which it aims, is the transmission of truth. It's perfectly fine to use the human voice for other things (singing, music etc.), but to deliberately undermine the central purpose of speech is to misuse it.

This view is not taken by many people to be particularly credible. This is partially



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

because so many lies seem harmless.

Now, some 'white lies' are arguably not lies at all. Saying something false is not enough to make something a lie: jokes and fictional stories are not lies. What makes them not so? The question is more complicated than it appears, but one part of it is that the listener is not expecting to be told the truth in this situation. Everyone involved is aware something false is being said, and no one is lying. In the case of a joke or a story, the aim of the type of conversation that both people are involved in is not the reporting of facts. There's much more to be said, but this rough distinction helps with a lot of cases.

It suggests, for instance, that saying "grand" when asked by an acquaintance how you are is not a lie, even if you're miserable. Here the "how are you?" functions as a bit of manners or a pleasantries, not a sincere question, and is understood by both parties to be so. But if your significant other sincerely asks you for your opinion on an outfit, to say something you don't believe about it would be lying.

Harmless

These sorts of lies still seem pretty harmless. Many of them, indeed, are not that bad. But lies still make the world that bit more difficult to perceive truly for the person lied to: they distort creation in the

eyes of the deceived. And lying for convenience is habit-forming: as with small acts of cruelties, small lies make it easier to tell bigger ones.

This distorting effect can eventually have disastrous consequences: people's ability to accurately perceive the world can be distorted to such an extent that they start to lose touch with it entirely.

Winner

Consider the claim that the 2020 US election was stolen: that the real winner was Donald Trump and that widespread electoral fraud brought about Joe Biden's apparent victory. Leave aside the question of whether Donald Trump is



Donald Trump.

fully aware of himself as lying when he says that the election was stolen, or whether, unable to live in a universe in which he was defeated, he has

convinced himself that the claim is true. What's certain is many of those surrounding Trump are lying: his lawyers from Rudy Giuliani on down have alleged elaborate schemes and conspiracies in public broadcasts but then refused to bring those same allegations to court, settling instead for small-bore procedural complaints (which have themselves largely been thrown out).

“Lying is a bad sort of action, because it frustrates the purpose of human speech, and because it distorts people’s ability to perceive the truth about the world”

Those lies have helped to disconnect vast numbers of people from reality. According to a Fox News poll taken in December 36% of US voters believe that the election was stolen, and 77% of Trump voters do. That disconnection ultimately gave rise to the attack on the US capitol in January in which rioters protesting the allegedly stolen election killed a policeman. According to YouGov polling 30% of Americans still believe that attack was orchestrated by the far left. It's easy to place grand lies like this in a completely different category from our own small ones. Indeed, they are. But Donald Trump did not become comfortable with falsehoods in one fell swoop. Nor was the deception of his supporters an overnight process. The road to a completely distorted vision of reality can be long. But we begin to walk it whenever we knowingly lie.

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the Byzantine empire and the Arabian empire – with Muslims, Slavs and Vikings responsible for propagating the game beyond these bounds.

Modern form

The modern form of chess, with standardised rules and pieces, evolved slowly, with many variations depending on region. However, by the late 19th century, the rules had more or less settled to what they are today. While it was once a game limited to the upper echelons of society in most places, modern competitions have done a lot to stoke up interest in the game, while in very recent times, chess websites, such as the aforementioned chess.com, have made the game easily accessible to millions around the world – more than ever before.

The structure of the game

While chess may appear daunting, it's really as complicated as you make it. Those playing at the highest level, such as the world champion, Grandmaster Magnus Carlsen, may have hundreds of possibilities running through their head as they stare at the board, but for those of us with humbler capabilities (such as myself), it need not be so complicated.

“This third lockdown has hit both myself and those around me much harder than the others”

Once you understand that the goal of the game is to checkmate, or trap, the king, and once you understand how the pieces move, it's a matter of starting off and learning more as you go.

The Pawn can only move one square forward, with the exception of moving an extra square forward on its first move; the Knight moves in an 'L-shape', and is the only piece that can jump over other pieces, be they friend or foe; the Bishop can move any number of squares along diagonals; the Rook (also known as the 'Castle') can move any number of squares in a straight line, be it horizontally or

vertically; the most powerful piece in the game, the Queen, can move any number of squares in any direction, while the most 'valuable' piece in the game, the King, can only move one square in any direction.

Once the basics are understood and remembered, there are just one or two more rules to be imbibed, such as castling and the *En passant* rule, and then you have all that's required to start your journey.

Deepening your experience

While the game and its basics are incredibly easy to learn, dip into and enjoy, what I've found most valuable and what keeps me coming back is the endless depth to the game. After the first few moves the potential number of ways the game could go is already up into the millions. With so many options, strategy upon strategy has been developed, each tailored to the different stages of the game: the opening, the middlegame and the endgame.

The greatest players in the world spend their entire lives studying these strategies and developing their own, which means that the game will never be exhausted as we'll never run out of areas of our game to develop.

A good option

As I mentioned in the beginning, boredom is a real threat to our sense of contentment – particularly during this present lockdown. Rather than flee into distractions which leave



us feeling as though we've wasted our time, now is the time to invest in things that have the potential to blossom into lifelong loves.

“Its origins remain shrouded in mystery, with little evidence that chess existed in a form resembling the modern game before the 6th century AD”

Not only is chess enjoyable, there are a number of benefits that come with developing an interest in the game. These include:

- **Increased focus:** As the American master Bobby Fischer once said, “Chess demands total concentration”. He wasn't wrong. It doesn't matter your skill level or how perfect a game you've played, one mistake is all it takes to go from winning a game to losing badly. This focus translates well into the other areas of life, be it school, work, and leisure.
- **Develops problem solving skills:** Every time you sit down to a game of chess, what you're really sitting down to is a problem to be solved. Good players are those who consider the situation they have before them and weigh up the pros and cons of each move. As with the focus chess demands and develops in its players, this ability to solve problems comes with you long after you've stood up from the board.
- **Exercises the entire brain:** Chess has long been understood to exercise both our logical and creative capacities, which fits nicely into the modern understanding of the brain as having two hemispheres which correlate to those to aspects of ourselves. A game which develops both carries obvious benefits.

At the time of writing this, there have been over 10 million games played on chess.com today, with over 400,000 playing as I write. It's quite likely a lot of these picked up the habit over the past year as they struggled to entertain themselves or grew tired of watching new shows and series. How about joining them and seeing if it's for you?

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

We would all like to live in a simple and straight-forward world, wouldn't we? I was listening to my daughter earlier today. She has been home since just before Christmas and is now getting ready to go back to university. In contrast to other years, she has barely seen her friends. There was talk of going for a walk but given the Covid restrictions they were aware that five of them meeting up, even outside, just wasn't a good idea and didn't give a good example. I have been so impressed with Méabh and her friends who like many other young people have been responsible and selfless, caring for others by drastically limiting their own contacts. For a while there was a narrative that young people were to blame for the spread of Covid and it created a negative energy where people vented their frustration by blaming young people – irrespective of whether that was justified.

We can all fall into the trap of labelling other people, deciding a particular group is the cause of our problems, seeing only the negative and effectively painting them all with the same brush. Something like that is happening in the first reading for this Sunday. Jonah has been sent by God to preach to the people of Ninevah and tell them that their behaviour is unacceptable. Jonah is so reluctant to do what God asks that he escapes on a boat, only to find himself thrown overboard and swallowed by a whale when the crew decide that he, Jonah, is the reason for their misfortune at sea. Jonah is spat up on dry land by the whale and God repeats his call, that Jonah should go to Ninevah. There seems little point refusing this time. So Jonah preaches and indeed must be quite the preacher because the people of Ninevah all repent and God listens, relents and decides not to inflict any punishment upon them. And Jonah is furious! It is actually quite comical just how much of a huff Jonah gets himself into. Why is he so annoyed? God is challenging Jonah's simplistic view of the world. We can imagine Jonah shouting at God, “The Ninevites are bad! What are you at?” God however looks at the people of Ninevah, sees all that they have done wrong but recog-

nises the good in them too and in his love for them he wipes away their sin and restores his friendship with them.

When we divide the world up into goodies and baddies we resist seeing anything that would complicate our perspective. We try to push reality into a simple, controllable framework.



C.S. Lewis statue. Photo: Genvessel

In reality that just creates harm. I was impressed recently listening to the writer David Baddiel talking about allegations that CS Lewis was anti-Semitic. Baddiel himself is Jewish and is currently writing a book about anti-Semitism. As a child CS Lewis was his favourite author, inspiring him and firing his imagination. What now then if his childhood hero is shown to have feet of clay? Baddiel rejected the idea that CS Lewis' work should be removed from libraries and taken out of the hands of young readers. He did not dispute the fact that CS Lewis expressed some deeply offensive, anti-Semitic opinions but 'cancelling' CS Lewis was not the answer. Instead Baddiel suggested, we need to be able to live with 'cognitive dissonance'. By this he meant we need to be able to live with the complicated reality that someone can do wonderful things – such as write fabulous books – and also do something terrible – like be anti-Semitic. Those two realities can create a tension within us. We are robbed of the simplistic notion that CS Lewis has to be either a hero or a villain but living with such tension and complexity is the most honest and mature approach.

Jonah wanted life to be simple. If he had to go to Ninevah then he wanted those bad Ninevites well and truly punished. It was all a learning curve for Jonah as much as it was for the people of Ninevah. Living with that complexity is a learning curve we probably all need.

A theologian for a post-secular world

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

A generation of philosophers, sociologists, and public intellectuals wrote off religion, declaring that we were moving into a secular age where faith would be redundant. But as Dr Michael Kirwan SJ, new director of the Loyola Institute in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), points out, this hasn't happened. In fact, Dr Kirwan explains, many philosophers now think that we are moving into a "post-secular age".

"Even people who are not particularly religious are finding that they need to know about religious and religious traditions," Dr Kirwan tells *The Irish Catholic*. "We had a very interesting event on religious literacy at the beginning of last year. If society is to survive, to flourish, then it needs to know its religious traditions and it's not helpful if people are ignorant about religion."

1980, Dr Kirwan joined the novitiate and spent the next few years studying to become a Jesuit priest

"Even among secular philosophers, there's a huge turn towards an interest in religion because people are saying that societies over time cannot survive without something like religion – for example, truth," he continues. "The last Irish census said that 78% of people in Ireland self-identify as Roman Catholic. That's an astonishing figure when you think of what's going on in the last 20 years."



Dr Michael Kirwan, professor of systematic and pastoral theology, who was recently appointed director of the Loyola Institute.

"Now, that figure is declining and it's up to us to understand what these people mean by being Catholic. But given the chance, they're saying, 'I consider myself a Catholic'. So tell me it is a secular society when 78% are saying that somehow they relate to a religious tradition."

Experience

Dr Kirwan has extensive experience in this area having taught pastoral and systematic theology for more than 20 years. He taught first in Heythrop college, a specialist Jesuit college in the University of London, and now in TCD. Coming to Ireland in 2020 brings Dr Kirwan a full circle, in a certain sense. Both his parents were devout Catholics from the West of Ireland. Partly as a result

of their influence, faith has always been important to Dr Kirwan.

"My mum – she's still around, she's 92 – and she's a very devoted committed Catholic," Dr Kirwan explains. "It was a believing household. I probably went through a little spell of agnosticism around mid-teens, but otherwise I've been pretty much committed."

Dr Kirwan went to school at a Jesuit school in Leeds, a fact which was to have a great bearing on his future. Though there weren't many Jesuits present, just two chaplains, their example later convinced him to join the Jesuits. However, though a committed Catholic right through his teens, Dr Kirwan says his vocation to the priesthood took him completely by surprise.

"I was doing my final exams at university when this thing suddenly

sprung on me," he says. "It was a time of anxiety, uncertainty – a kind of, what am I going to do with my life? But this wasn't at the forefront of my thinking at all. It happened very, very quickly from the end of my studies to entering the Jesuit novitiate. It was about a six month period, it was very, very great – it was just extraordinary."

In 1980, Dr Kirwan joined the novitiate and spent the next few years studying to become a Jesuit priest. From 1990-1993, he was assistant parish priest in Corpus Christi parish, Brixton Hill, South London. He enjoyed the experience immensely.

"I wasn't thinking at that stage of doing further studies," Dr Kirwan explains. "I knew that when I was ordained, I'd have to spend time in a parish. I really enjoyed it, it's great

parish in South London there. It had a little bit of everything – it was socially mixed, racially mixed, it's a very interesting part of London."

Following his three years in the parish, Dr Kirwan was informed by his superiors that they would like him to do further studies. He spent the next four years working on a PhD, before taking up a full-time position in Heythrop College. He never forgot his years working as a priest and believes the experience was invaluable in shaping his approach to studying theology.

“There's a huge turn towards an interest in religion because people are saying that societies over time cannot survive”

"Obviously my giving a lecture I'm doing something of what Christ was doing, helping people to know God better," Dr Kirwan says. "To help people get that, whether you do that on a Sunday morning or in a lecture hall. You're trying to set up first this God thing, what does it mean there being God. In a lecture you've got two hours to do that. But on a Sunday morning you've got 7-10 minutes. But I think there's a link there."

Dr Kirwan's latest role is that of Director of the Loyola Institute, a mission that he's looking forward to enormously and has high hopes for.

"It's got enormous potential," he says. "There's a lot of reorganisation going on about the school of religion. That's been reorganised the last couple of years and how the Loyola Institute fits into that is under discussion. There's still a lot of things to be decided around all that. It's a very interesting place to be and of course it's a class university and I think it's very good, very important to be there."



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

Mentos and Coke: an explosive combination

A very popular experiment which always delivers quite spectacular results is the Diet Coke and Mentos geyser. It's a lot of fun and sure to amaze your friends and family (assuming you do it outside rather than inside your house).

Apparatus

- Large bottle of Diet Coke
- About half a pack of Mentos
- Geyser tube (optional but makes things much easier)

Method:

Make sure you are doing this experiment in a place where you won't get in trouble for getting Diet Coke everywhere. Outside on some grass is perfect, please don't try this in your living room!

Stand the Diet Coke upright and unscrew the lid. Put some sort of funnel or tube on top of it so you can drop the Mentos in at the same time (about half the pack is a good amount).

Time for the fun part, drop the Mentos into the Diet Coke and run! If you've done it properly

a huge geyser of Diet Coke should come flying out of the bottle, it's a very impressive sight. The record is about nine metres (29 feet) high.

What's happening?

The thing that makes Coke fizzy is the carbon dioxide that is pumped in when they bottle the drink at the factory. It doesn't start leaving the liquid until you open the lid (more if you shake it up beforehand). This means that there is a lot of carbon dioxide gas just waiting to escape the liquid in the form of bubbles.

In the Diet Coke bottle the Mentos provide a rough surface that allows the bonds between the carbon dioxide gas and water to break more easily, helping to create carbon dioxide bubbles. As the Mentos sink

in the bottle, it causes the production of more and more carbon dioxide bubbles, and the rising bubbles react with carbon dioxide that is still dissolved in the soda to cause more carbon dioxide to be freed and create even more bubbles, resulting in the eruption. Because Mentos are rather dense, they sink rapidly through the liquid, causing a fast, large eruption.

The experiment works better with Diet Coke than other carbonated drinks due to its slightly different ingredients and the fact that it isn't so sticky. Diet Coke that has been bottled more recently works better than older bottles that might have lost some of their carbon dioxide sitting on shop shelves for too long, just check the bottle for the date.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



It's hard to take politicians lamenting the abuses of the past as they create the abuses of the present

Last week Covid-19 had to share the media limelight with the report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission – grim stories from past and present.

In the blanket coverage first and foremost there were the heart-breaking stories of mothers and their babies, the personal stories of residual hurt and anger made all the more raw by being dragged into the light again. **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio 1) proved the ideal vehicle for these stories, though pretty much every news and current affairs did likewise. Some stories were high profile, while others were new – both featured in **Prime Time** (RTÉ One, Tuesday) when we heard of the experience of former Minister Joan Burton, adopted from one of the homes and from Terri Harrison who was in the Bessborough home in the 1970s.

The political reaction was the hardest to take. Apologies were welcome but much of it sounded hollow, even hypocritical, agenda-driven and too slickly crafted. Watching Dáil coverage live on **RTÉ News Now** (Wednesday) it was galling to hear the Tánaiste Leo Varadkar speaking of a “stolen generation”, when his own government so recently created another stolen



Tánaiste Leo Varadkar spoke of ‘a stolen generation’.

generation – the thousands of babies whose lives are deliberately ended through abortion. It was telling that as he listed what he regarded as the “social progress” of the last 30 years, he did not include repeal of the Eighth Amendment. I heard the Taoiseach Micheál Martin (**Sky News**, Tuesday) speaking of how we “treated children exceedingly badly”, though he also helped facilitate the law that deprived children of their very right to be born, despite the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requiring the State to respect children’s rights “before and after birth”. I find it hard to take politicians

lamenting the abuses of the past even as they create the abuses of the present – are we doomed to endless cycles of cruelty and injustice?

The Church and religious congregations were mercilessly bashed through the week. No doubt there were cruel nuns and cranky nuns, but I feel for those who dedicated their lives to the compassionate service of others. Now they’re all being tarred with the same brush. Some of the criticism was deserved – some elements in the Church provided the sticks that the Church was beaten with. Archbishop Eamon Martin was quick to issue an apology and did

a more detailed interview on last Sunday’s **This Week** programme (RTÉ Radio 1). He spoke of a “deep sadness” at the “harrowing stories” and expressed admiration for the “courageous women” that had come forward – they were shamed, excluded and ostracised by a society that ignored their rights. Without dodging responsibility, he felt that absent fathers, county councils and the broader state shared the moral responsibility.

Where the report didn’t fit the expected and common narrative it was harshly criticised – again on that **RTÉ News Now** coverage we saw the strong attacks by TDs like Catherine Connelly who was again passionate in her criticism on last Monday’s **Breakfast Show** (Newstalk). Commentators found fault with the processing of testimonies and the findings that women weren’t forced into these homes by Church or State, that most adoptions were done with some level of consent, that there wasn’t proof the orders benefited financially from the adoptions.

Some were unhappy with broad society being blamed, though obviously societal attitudes were part of the problem. Nevertheless, religious orders and the Church in general should practice

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One, Sunday January 24, 1.15pm

Marking the year Songs of Praise turns 60, Aled Jones celebrates at St George’s Chapel in Windsor with Christian stories that exemplify the spirit of the series.

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

BBC 4, Sunday January 24, 7pm

Episode I: June 1942. Amsterdam is under Nazi occupation during World War II. Anne Frank, a teenage Jewish girl, and her parents, Otto and Edith, decide to hasten their plan to go into hiding.

40

EWTN Monday January 25, 9pm

Forty years after the Roe v. Wade decision, this provocative pro-life film chronicles the impact on women, children and society.

a higher standard, should always be counter cultural if the culture is unforgiving, cruel or lacking in compassion. The report does acknowledge instances where high standards were practiced but tellingly it wasn’t in mainstream media that I learned this.

Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) was interviewed with sensitivity by Shane Coleman on **Newstalk Breakfast** last Friday when he spoke of his own adoption story – a happy one from the more recent tail end of the system in the 1960s (see page 16). While finding the stories “genuinely shocking”,

he thought it was too easy to demonise and assume moral superiority. He wasn’t sure that if we were back there in the same circumstances that we’d behave any better.

Finally, after the ‘God skit’ apology, I didn’t think RTÉ would transgress so soon afterwards, but there was a scene in the comedy show **Seriously Sinead** (RTÉ 2, Thursday) where a priest fires communion hosts around a church as if they were confetti.

Time for a learning curve?

📧 boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Music

Pat O’Kelly



The greatest of Beethoven’s last five

While I wrote about Beethoven’s String Quartets at various times during his 250th anniversary last year, other topics diverted me along the way only allowing me to reach his 13th – Op 130.

Beethoven’s C sharp minor 14th Quartet was written in the first half of 1826. Arguably the greatest of his last five, it is a natural culmination of ideas already germinating in the two quartets preceding it and with them may be regarded as a triptych as really everything points to their artistic unity.

The piece is said to have been Beethoven’s favourite quartet. He rather flippantly wrote to his publisher that it was “put together by pilfer-



The statue of Ludwig van Beethoven in Bonn. This statue in bronze is the work of Ernst Julius Hähnel.

ing from this and that” and it took him some time to convince the concerned printer he was joking.

The work was not heard in public until 1835, quite

some time after Beethoven’s death on March 26, 1827 – but there were some private performances in Vienna in the interim. According to Karl Holz – a member of Bee-

thoven’s favourite Schuppanzigh string quartet ensemble – when Schubert heard the piece shortly before his death in 1828 he “fell into a state of such excitement and enthusiasm that we were all frightened for him”. Schubert’s own comment was, “after this what is left for us to write?”

Played without a break and lasting about 45 minutes, the seven-movement Op 131 requires an element of effort on the listeners’ part to take it all in. The central Andante variations hold the design together while the first and last movements balance each other by being in the same key and by having a greater emotional intensity. The second and third also balance

the fifth and sixth, each pair consisting of a quick cheerful movement and a short introductory one.

The innovative Beethoven discards first movement form by opening with a fugue, which is one of his finest. The subject has two phrases, the first rising and the second falling.

The following *allegro molto vivace* finds Beethoven looking back in time with a dance-like movement similar to one found in a Baroque suite. The theme makes four appearances in all while the flow of the music is interrupted momentarily eight times. Eventually this leads into a short *allegro moderato* and then on to the central *andante ma non troppo*. Its simple theme has six variations embroidered with delightful instrumental col-

ouring and rhythmic subtlety.

The last three movements begin with a furiously headstrong, yet humorous, *presto* followed by a short *adagio quasi un poco andante*. The *allegro finale* itself is the only movement in traditional sonata form. Despite its breathless galloping rhythm, there are also hints of despair.

Richard Wagner described it as follows – “This is the fury of the world’s dance – fierce pleasure, agony, ecstasy of love, joy, anger, passion and suffering; lightning flashes and thunder rolls; and above the tumult the indomitable fiddler whirls us on to the abyss. Amid the clamour he smiles, for to him it is nothing but a mocking fantasy; at the end, the darkness beckons him away, and his task is done”.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



A witness to the ways of the modern world

The Powerful and the Damned: Private Diaries in Turbulent Times

by Lionel Barber

(W. H. Allen, £25.00 / €20.25)

John Bruton

Over Christmas, I read the book with the above arresting title. It is by Lionel Barber, editor of the *Financial Times* for the past 15 years, who has just retired.

It is a gallop through the last decade and a half of economic and political history in the form of a diary.

Mr Barber did not actually keep a daily diary but he did make notes on important events and meetings at the time, and these provide the content of this book. Where his opinion has changed since, he includes a note in a different script, beside the original.

He gets to the heart of the economic crisis of 2008 quite early in the book. He blames it on competition between banks, who used new and obscure forms of credit to increase their revenues unsustainably, because they feared that, if they failed to do so, the private equity firms, who wanted revenue growth for their clients, would desert them.

I am unsure that this structural problem in capitalism has since been solved, and we are now living through another rapid expansion of credit on artificially favourable terms. Let's see what happens...

As editor, Lionel Barber inherited a Blairite newspaper. The *FT* had backed Labour in the 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections. He switched to support the Tories in the 2010 General election. Under Lionel Barber, the *FT* even supported David Cameron in the fateful general election of 2015.

As Mr Barber put it at the time: "We are holding our noses over Cameron's Europe policy and his planned referendum (on Brexit). On balance, the case for continu-

ity rests on the economic record of the coalition government."

Given the *FT*'s strong support for EU membership, the *FT* got that call spectacularly wrong in 2015.

Ed Miliband, as the alternative prime minister, would not have led Britain to exit from the EU. Jeremy Corbyn would never have led the Labour Party.

Mr Barber is right when he says that no British government had ever made a serious political argument for EU membership, but if you vote for politicians, like Mr Cameron, who have a superficial understanding of the EU, that should not be a surprise.

“Mr Barber did not actually keep a daily diary but he did make notes on important events and meetings at the time, and these provide the content of this book”

Under Lionel Barber's editorship, the *FT* enjoyed commercial success, and adapted well to the digital media world. It hosted some spectacularly good columnists. Martin Wolf and Philip Stephens spring to mind, but there are many others.

Looking forward, Lionel Barber sees unregulated competition between the United States and China as the number one threat to the world. I agree. The risk of military conflict between them remains real.

He also sees risks to democratic representative governance, if democratic states are perceived to fail in managing problems like Covid-19.

There are lots of anecdotes, and indiscreet word pictures of global figures in this book. But the author remains the star in his own show.

Going About His

What is your Business? Memories of life, especially from my 23 years missionary work in Sierra Leone, West Africa

by Fr Willie Kingston, CSSp, (CRM Publications/Spiritan Heritage and Archives, Kimmage Manor, Dublin, €20.00/€30.00 postage paid)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Daniel Murphy in his magisterial *A History of Irish Emigrant & Missionary Education*, published in 2001, describes the significant contribution made by Irish missionaries to the provision of education in 'Third-World countries', not least in the continent of Africa.

In this interesting and valuable autobiography Fr Willie Kingston provides a meticulous account of how the establishment, staffing and administration of schools was at the heart of their evangelising.

“Fr Willie Kingston provides a meticulous account of how the establishment, staffing and administration of schools was at the heart of their evangelising”

Fr Kingston was born at Maulnageragh, near Clonakilty, Co. Cork, on August 24, 1941. After attending the local national school he was a boarder in the college conducted by the Cistercian monks in Mount Melleray, Co. Waterford. He entered the Congregation of the Holy Ghost in September 1960 and was ordained in July 1968.

Missionary

Following his ordination, Fr Kingston was appointed to be a missionary in Sierra Leone. In 1969 with two col-



leagues he arrived at Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, after a sea journey of more than a week. There he learned that his mission station was the furthest from the capital in the most remote part of the country and was located near the border with Liberia.

He also learned that the area had become notorious because of widespread illegal diamond mining and smuggling. He was the new parish priest of Koidu in the district of Kono. He discovered that there were few roads in the area and that the physical conditions were most challenging. It was not without reason that such areas in Sierra Leone had become

known as 'the white man's grave' in early colonial days.

Parishes

Between 1969 and 1992 Fr Kingston served in six different parishes in eastern Sierra Leone. Like his colleagues, apart from providing Mass and the sacraments, he busied himself establishing schools for the children in the villages, which had been entrusted to his pastoral care. He and his confrères also dedicated themselves to improving the lot of the people in areas other than in education. The support of the tribal chiefs was essential to the successful establishment of the parish



Bishop John O'Riordan and a group of parishioners at Kissi Bendon parish.



Lionel Barber interviewing Putin: a "most cold-blooded person, who is expert in destabilising people".

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.

Father's Business



The hard road to Manjama parish: what the Irish missionaries faced everyday.

schools. Fr Kingston describes the formal steps which had to be taken to that end. Each interaction would begin with the chief enquiring: "What is your business?"

The challenges of missionary life were further compounded for Fr Kingston and his fellow missionaries by a civil war between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the government forces from 1991–1994. The eastern part of Sierra Leone was overrun from time to time by the rebels. The missionaries and thousands of people had to repeatedly flee from the area. In so doing, Fr Felix McAllister,

CSSp, was ambushed and killed by the rebels in March 1994. In the same incident a doctor from Holland, who had volunteered his services to Fr McAllister's mission, was also killed along with his wife and child. Fr Kingston records that when the government soldiers recovered control of areas they tended to be as destructive and murderous as the rebels.

Re-assigned

Fr Kingston was re-assigned to Ireland in December 1992. In a gracious vale to Sierra Leone he writes: "I have beautiful memo-

ries of its people and the country. I thank all who helped me in my missionary work, especially catechists, teachers, confrères, superiors and bishops."

He concludes his inspiring memoir with a description of his continuing ministry during his 'retirement years' at the congregation's colleges at Templeogue and Rockwell.

This book is lavishly illustrated with pictures from every period of the author's life-story. One of the most-evocative is that of Kissi Road Cemetery in Freetown, where not a few Irish missionaries lie buried.



1992: Fr Kingston with Fr Curran CSSp at Mangama Mission, Kono (photo: Fr P. Quelly CSSp).

Thomas Merton's insights, an Irish perspective

Peace Smiles: Rediscovering Thomas Merton,

by Bishop Fintan Monahan
(Veritas Publications, €9.99/£9.12)

Anthony Redmond

It is very clear that Bishop Fintan Monahan is an ardent admirer and devotee of Thomas Merton and his writings. Dr Monahan, of course, is Bishop of Killaloe, based in Ennis, Co. Clare, and could be said to speak from the heart of Ireland.

Merton was not alone one of the truly great spiritual guides of the 20th century but he was also an amazing letter writer, poet, monk and contemplative. He also loved jazz. His extraordinary autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (also known as *Elected Silence*) enjoyed huge success in the US. Graham Green wrote: "It is a rare pleasure to read an autobiography with a pattern and meaning valid for all of us. It is a book one reads with a pencil so as to make it one's own." Merton died in 1968 at the age of 53.

Cambridge

Merton lived a somewhat wayward life as a young student in Cambridge University. He entered fully into the dissolute atmosphere of the student life he encountered there. Indeed, at the age of 18 he fathered a child, a boy, with a girlfriend and this resulted in him being removed from Cambridge and his godfather sent him back to America. Little is known about the woman and the child and it is believed that both died during the London Blitz.

As time went by Merton changed his ways and, like St Augustine, he turned to God. He entered the Trappist monastery of Gethsemane in Kentucky. Through his writing he became internationally famous. He was a superb letter writer. He wrote letters to Pope John XXIII, Coretta Scott King (after the murder of her husband) to James Baldwin, Boris Pasternak, Jacqueline Kennedy and to all who wrote to him whom he didn't know. There is something completely modern and contemporary about Merton and he comes across in his letters as very human and in touch with people and their problems.

Bishop Monahan Writes: "The appeal of Merton's work to our modern world is that there is a common thread throughout. Starting with *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and throughout his vast literary output, he relates in a down-to-earth manner to the spiritual and existential

struggles of the modern woman and man. I believe that modern day readers will be assisted to discern the will of God for them on an individual basis. Merton speaks to the very ordinariness of all our lives. It is said often that Merton's genius lies in the 'extraordinary ordinariness' of the way he relates to us."

Thomas Merton was deeply interested in various forms of mysticism and it was while on a retreat in Bangkok that he was accidentally electrocuted in his room. Bishop Monahan writes: "The closing line of *The Seven Storey Mountain* ends by admonishing the reader to 'learn to know the Christ of the burnt men'. It is ironic that Merton's death in 1968 was caused by accidental electrocution."

He adds, "Despite its flaws, I have no hesitation in recommending *The Seven Storey Mountain* if one were to read just one Merton book. I still remember being enthused and enthralled by it as a young seminarian. It is a book of a lifetime, and yet Merton went on to write even better works."

I find Bishop Monahan's enthusiasm for Merton contagious and encouraging. I have watched recordings of a few of Thomas Merton's talks to his students and he has a relaxed down-to-earth and modern manner of speaking. One characteristic or particular mannerism of his that struck me was his use of the word "See" almost after every few sentences.

Quizzical

Bishop Monahan also comments on this. He writes: "Every now and then he would punctuate his speech in a quizzical tone with the word 'see'. There I think lies the key to understanding Merton. That speech mannerism was gently provocative and persistently spoken with an eager hope that the listeners would be able to understand what he was imparting to them. I think it also answers my two questions about his past influence and his relevance today: Merton was a 'seer'. I use the word 'seer' not in any wizardly sense but rather in the sense of his being one who took time to see into the depths of his own being and in the sense that his thinking and written work were visionary and continue to remain so to this day."

I like the fact that Thomas Merton, a bit like Henri Nouwen, was very human and easy to identify with. There was nothing of the plaster saint about him and that's what makes him very real to me.

Leisure time

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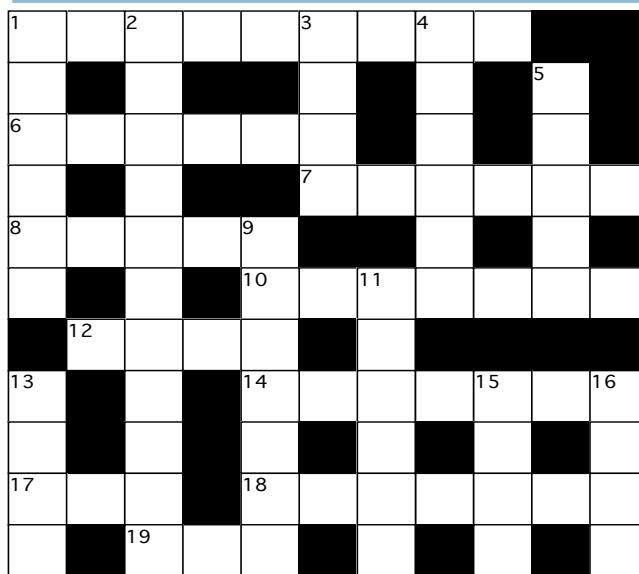


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Crossword Junior

Gordius 366



Across

- 1 Bottled water may be still or _____ (9)
- 6 This planet is between Saturn and Neptune (6)
- 7 A pair of long stockings joined together (6)
- 8 In legend, Romulus and _____ founded Rome (5)
- 10 Cowboy film (7)
- 12 The colour of the sky on a nice day (4)
- 14 It happens when the sun is blocked by the moon (7)
- 17 Dip your pen in this when you want to write (3)
- 18 This piece of jewellery is often part of a pair (7)
- 19 It shines from the sky on a nice day (3)

Down

- 1 A shape with four equal sides (6)
- 2 People set them to help them wake up (5,6)
- 3 In a position behind everyone else (4)
- 4 Zero (6)
- 5 Special table in a church (5)
- 9 Add sugar to do this (7)
- 11 Wage, the money you earn in your job (6)
- 13 Tiny branch (4)
- 15 Bucket (4)
- 16 You cook them in an omelet (4)

SOLUTIONS, JANUARY 14

GORDIUS NO. 490

Across – 1 Lop 3 Pre-recorded 8 Church service 9 Moisture 10 Raked 11 Solar power 13 Valid 16 Stadium 20 Louth 21 Repel 24 Steerage 25 Nuclei 26 Yellowstone 27 Sue

Down – 1 Le Corbusier 2 Pluckier 3 Paced 4 Remould 5 Oases 6 Double Dutch 7 Die 12 Room service 13. Vocal 17 Inkwells 18 Pungent 19 Appeal 22 Largo 23 Pause 24 Say

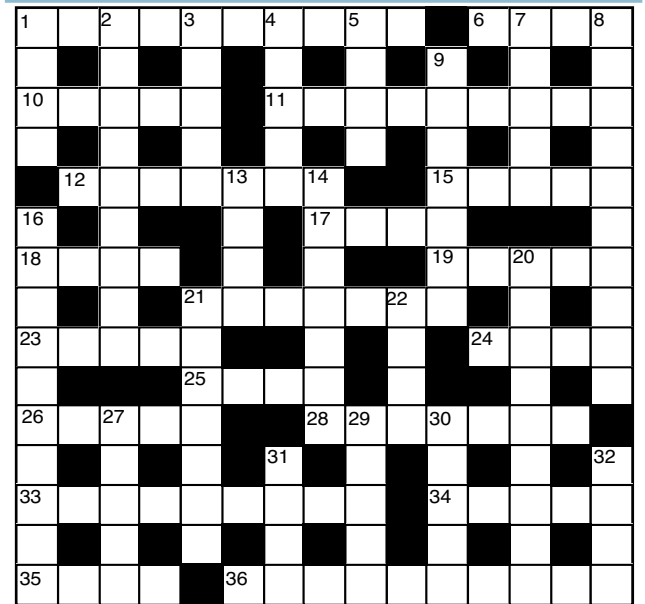
CHILDREN'S No. 365

Across – 1 Pillowcase 6 Softer 8 Purr 9 Nut 11 English 12 Odd 13 Leg 14 Eight 17 Deliver 19 Chase 20 Bakes 21 Absent

Down – 1 Password 2 Lifted 3 Oven gloves 4 South 5 Brag 7 Rule 10 Tiger cub 15 Grape 16 Treat 18 Luke

Crossword

Gordius 491



Across

- 1 Repurpose a plumper pot as a distributor of fuel (6,4)
- 6 & 25a Decelerate - the cardinal has all the latest (4,4)
- 10 Give out, scold (5)
- 11 Is this drink container what American Footballers would call a World Title boxing match? (5-4)
- 12 An Old Testament greeting from Desdemona's husband (7)
- 15 Stick with this when you get as far as F (5)
- 17 Look over and back (4)
- 18 See 4 down
- 19 The Christian name of 'Buzz' Aldrin (5)
- 21 This is hotting up before tomorrow morning (7)
- 23 Location suitable for certain events (5)
- 24 Fail to hit a single lady (4)
- 25 See 6 across
- 26 This deer is the hero of a Disney classic (5)
- 28 Goalscorer on the picket-line? (7)
- 33 Wealth (9)
- 34 Inclined to identify the French worker (5)
- 35 Haul, Doctor Silver! (4)
- 36 How could the schemer bid to have sullied here? (10)

Down

- 1 Under the piano, one may find a deed of agreement (4)

- 2 Endurance event involving swimming, cycling and running (9)
- 3 Being overweight, one is found in robes every day (5)
- 4 & 18a Does this pronunciation concern a beef with the Pope? (5,4)
- 5 Dig in there, it belongs to me! (4)
- 7 Midlands county (5)
- 8 A more savage Scottish loch, where the Israelites wandered (10)
- 9 Flog a domesticated animal (a dog) (7)
- 13 Company symbol found in the ship's diary, love (4)
- 14 One's choices could change with spin, too (7)
- 16 As patently honest as the managing director's position may be (5,5)
- 20 Paint often used on walls (9)
- 21 Edward has promises of payment - how boring! (7)
- 22 Pick up sound (4)
- 27 Criminal organization responsible for part of a Parma fiasco (5)
- 29 The Resident Magistrate provides an amount of heat (5)
- 30 One who perpetually lazes about (5)
- 31 Part of the banner depicts Our Lady's mother (4)
- 32 Here, horses kick up dust (4)

Sudoku Corner

366

Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 5 | 4 | | 9 | 3 | 2 | | |
| 9 | 3 | 7 | 2 | | | 8 | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | 9 | |
| | | | | 7 | 8 | 9 | 4 | |
| 5 | 8 | 6 | 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | 7 |
| | 5 | | | 7 | 2 | 1 | | 8 |
| 1 | | 7 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | | 6 |

Hard

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 8 | | | | 7 | | | 2 | |
| 6 | | | | 2 | | 9 | | |
| 1 | | | | | | 5 | | |
| | 7 | | 6 | 8 | | | 1 | |
| | 3 | | | | | | 6 | |
| | 6 | | 4 | 2 | | | 3 | |
| | | 5 | | | | | | 4 |
| | | 2 | | 8 | | | | 7 |
| | 1 | | | 9 | | | | 3 |

Last week's Easy 365

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| 2 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 9 |
| 8 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| 5 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| 7 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 1 |
| 1 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 3 |

Last week's Hard 365

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 9 |
| 4 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| 5 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 |
| 3 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 2 |
| 9 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| 2 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 |

Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough



Legionaries of Mary responded to unwed mothers with compassion

OF ALL THE STORIES I've read about the mother and baby homes, one in particular has haunted me, that of a young woman who kept her pregnancy secret to the end, and, when labour began, went quietly to a local mother and baby home, gave birth, left her child with the nuns, and went back to her family within hours, her secret kept, their respectability intact.



I can't stop thinking about the hidden, lonely pain of that girl. Nor can I stop thinking about the sheer cowardice that prevented people from questioning the injustice of a society which left vulnerable women so alone, so unsupported, so unloved.

As followers of Christ, we should rejoice that the stories of these women and their children are being heard. Throughout the Bible the Lord speaks consistently of his concern for the most vulnerable, and Israel is repeatedly reminded of the special care that should be given to women raising children on their own (Ex 22:22, Deut 10:18, Is 1:17, Zech 7:9).

Concern

This constant divine concern for women and children on the margins becomes vibrantly visible in Jesus Christ, who defends and embraces

them on multiple occasions in the Gospels (Jn 4:1-42, Jn 7:53-8:11, Mk 14:3-9, Mt 18:1-7). It is a good and godly thing, then, that the women and children abandoned by 20th-century Irish society are now being listened to, and that their mistreatment is being lamented. "God casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly" (Lk 2:52).

Nevertheless, we're rightly sensitive to the ways in which these stories are used to discredit the Faith. "This is what a Catholic society looks like", many critics claim,

"and all this cruelty is simply a consequence of Catholic teaching". We rightly respond that such cruelty arises from a distortion of Catholic morality, and is not its consequence, but such claims still get under our skin and shake our confidence in the truth and beauty of the Catholic worldview.

In thinking all this through we could remind ourselves, of course, that similar institutions were a feature of many non-Catholic societies, and that Ireland was learning, in this case, from the "foundling hospitals" of Victorian Britain. We could recall that "post-Catholic" Ireland has its own dark stories too in relation to the vulnerable, from family homelessness and direct provision, to the clinical injustice of abortion.

Doubts

But it seems to me that the best way to deal with our doubts is to examine carefully the example of the Regina Coeli hostel, founded by Frank Duff and run by the Legion of Mary since 1930. There, as the commission's report makes clear, and as Dr Finola Kennedy has laid out elsewhere in great detail, women with crisis pregnancies were treated in a way that was faithful to the example of Jesus. The general atmos-

phere of the hostel was evidently vastly different from that of the mother and baby homes, and Frank Duff was clear from the start that everything should be done to keep mother and child together.

The Regina Coeli hostel is, of course, just one residence among the many covered by the commission's report, but it is an important minority. It is important because it shows that the mother and baby homes, with all their attendant indignity, were not simply "the" Catholic answer to crisis pregnancies in modern Ireland. There was, in fact, another way.

Right at the heart of the Church, members of the Legion of Mary, utterly committed to the truth of the Catholic Faith, discerned a path that was compassionate, courageous, and Christlike. This path was taken by few of their contemporaries, and that is tragic testimony to the blindness of humanity, but that fact need not rob us of confidence in the truth and beauty of our Faith.

With that confidence intact, it is for us then in our time to do what Frank Duff and his colleagues did in his: to see clearly the problems of contemporary society, and to respond to them with the unbounded compassion of the heart of Jesus.

Consider supporting Regina Coeli's works of mercy

The Regina Coeli hostel is different from the mother and baby homes in another respect too: it has outlasted them. It continues to this day to be a haven for women who find themselves without accommodation. I've been blessed to be involved in the hostel in recent years, providing spiritual support to volunteers there, and I've been consistently amazed at the love and dedication that keeps the hostel running, above all during this pandemic. The Regina Coeli is always looking for volunteers, and gladly accepts donations. Why not consider supporting this work of mercy in 2021?



One of the Sisters of Charity and grateful patients at St Vincent Health Centre, north-eastern India.



YOUR GIFT CAN HELP BRING MEDICINE TO SOME OF INDIA'S POOREST PEOPLE

Children under the age of five are dying from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency

The pandemic is stretching the already-limited resources of missionaries working with the poor. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul write to The Little Way Association from north-eastern India: "Covid means that people are completely depending on the St Vincent Health Centre which we established in 2015 in Darenchigre. Patients are suffering from anaemia, jaundice, typhoid, diarrhoea, malnutrition, calcium and iron deficiency, and many children below the age of five are dying. We are unable to provide better medical care and treatment due to the lack of finance and the other issues like lack of medical equipment and oxygen supply monitors in emergency situations."

"Please can you help us?"

The sisters work in one of India's poorest regions, where the people scrape a living from subsistence-agriculture. The health centre was intended just to provide first aid but people from 20 villages have come to use it as their principal medical facility. The sisters urgently ask for funds for vitamins, diagnostic equipment and treatment for those suffering from various dietary deficiencies. The sisters conclude their letter: "We earnestly ask you to participate in this humble effort to offer our medical support to the people in need. With a prayer that God will bless all your endeavours and bring to fruition all your charitable works."

Your donation to the Little Way Association's fund for the sick, hungry and deprived will go, without deduction, to help hard-pressed establishments such as the St Vincent Health Centre.



"Do not fear. If you are faithful in pleasing Jesus in little things, He will be obliged to help you in the greater things."
- St Therese

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends for the missions can benefit priests and people, and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €5 or more for each Mass

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