

TV and radio: RTÉ confession scene did wander over the border into disrespect

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Thursday, April 22, 2021

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

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'We don't teach hate, Mr President'

Higgins' comments on Catholic schools rejected

Jason Osborne

A number of prominent Catholic voices have rejected a claim by President Michael D. Higgins that the fact that parental choice is central to education policy in the North and many parents choose to send their children to Catholic schools is to abandon them "to parcels of hate and memory".

Mr Higgins' claim that schools in the region are segregated has also been rebuked as an attempt to offer a "superficial analysis" on the debate on education.

Speaking on *The Late Late Show* on Friday, President Higgins said that faith-based schools in the North can no longer be justified.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Baroness Nuala O'Loan said she didn't accept the president's analysis. "I don't know of any Catholic - or indeed any Protestant - who has ever told me that they were taught to hate the other people - the other side if you like - in school," she said.

She described it as a "surprisingly political statement for a president to make".

She said the comments were not respectful "of the rights of the people of Northern Ireland to make their own decisions about the type of education they wish to provide for the children of Northern Ireland".

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Sweet charity for Carlow Poor Clares sisters



Jake (6) and Zack Morrissey (4) from Terenure, Co. Dublin had so many Easter eggs left over from Easter they decided to do a charity sale out the front of their house and raised €70 for the Poor Clare Convent in Carlow.

MICHAEL KELLY

Govt contempt for Mass-goers needs robust response PAGE 2



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MARIA BYRNE

Rejoicing in the Lord's Day PAGE 32



Two-year old Nalukena had suffered from trachoma since birth. It was clear she was in pain and, without help, could have lost her sight forever. Thanks to sight-saving heroes like ophthalmic surgeon, Mr Ndalela (pictured right), Nalukena received the vital treatment needed to stop trachoma in its tracks - a treatment that costs just 17 cent.



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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €165. Airmail €250. Six months €85. ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277. Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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The Government's contempt for Mass-goers shows the need for a more robust approach

The right to religious worship has now been restricted in Ireland in some shape or form for 405 days. Apart from a brief period during the summer and the month of December, public Mass in the Republic has been disallowed for over a year.

Many good people – instinctively trusting that the Government knew what was best – believed that these restrictions have been necessary. This newspaper has been consistent in supporting the public health messaging while insisting that restrictions on the freedom to worship – no small thing – should only extend for as long as absolutely necessary. We have pointed to other examples around the world where public health officials have lifted restrictions on Mass with no consequent spread of Covid-19.

“The Government in the Republic has sought to put a return to Mass at the end of the queue in opening up society”

The Church has shown a willingness – bordering on the enthusiastic in some instances – to forgo public worship in the name of the common good. And what have we

got in return? Contempt heaped upon scorn.

Time and again, the Government in the Republic has sought to put a return to Mass at the end of the queue in opening up society. In the original plan last year, Mass was not due to start until August – alongside museums (which gives some insight as to how policymakers view religious services). In the end after extensive lobbying, better judgement prevailed and Mass began at the end of June.

Banned

This time round, public worship has been banned since Christmas. But, rather than applaud the huge sacrifices people of faith have made alongside others in society the Health Minister went out of his way to criminalise Mass. This is despite the widespread adherence to the rule when it was just a regulation.

In the Irish Republic in 2021 it is now a penal offence (historic resonance much?) for a Catholic to try to attend Mass or a priest to celebrate Mass at which people could attend indoors and outdoors.

This has been described as provocative, and it would be hard to view it

otherwise. Church leaders have decided upon a course of action in dealing with the Government that one bishop described to me recently as ‘diplomatic’. But, diplomacy implies a two-way street and there has been precious little ‘give’ from the Government. Indications now are that amid growing frustration Church leaders are opting to tinge their diplomacy with a more robust approach.

“We now need to reassert the central importance of the Eucharist in the life of our parish communities”

Welcome

This will be welcomed by many Catholics who have wondered at what they perceive as timidity from bishops in the face of prolonged restrictions and now the criminalisation of Mass-going. The bishops will no doubt reject the charge of timidity. They will insist that they have been between a rock and a hard place trying to observe the public health messaging while ensuring the safety of many elderly priests and parishioners. They will also not have expected the evident lack of consideration with which people of faith have been treated by the Government.

One bishop I spoke to this week wondered aloud at the level of contempt from the Government. “I can’t help but think that the enthusiasm with which we embraced the closing of the churches in the first place has not served us well”. He was not rejecting the need to suspend Mass for a period, but rather that there was so little pushback. When Mass ‘went online’ – as the phrase goes – we should have consistently underlined the heaviness of heart around the decision and the fact that it is a very poor substitute.

Reassert

We now need to reassert the central importance of the Eucharist in the life of our parish communities. Either intentionally or otherwise, the Church’s response to the pandemic has given the impression to at least some people that going to Mass doesn’t really matter.

It is alarming to see that some priests have publicly adopted this position in the guise of an excessive caution. If the message becomes that Mass doesn’t matter, don’t be surprised if the market gets the message.

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.

Mea culpa!

In my column last week, I wrote that four of Queen Elizabeth II’s children are divorced. Thanks to my correspondents who wrote to correct my error. The sentence ought to have read: “three of her four children are divorced”. Prince Edward is, of course, happily married to the Countess of Wessex. Ad multos annos.

Higgins’ comments on Catholic schools rejected

Continued from Page 1

Prof. Peter Finn, head of St Mary’s University College in Belfast said he is “somewhat unsettled to learn of resurgent opposition to value-based Christian and Catholic education.

“It is amazing in a society that is ostensibly pluralist and tolerant that an approach to education based on Gospel values of love, peace, forgiveness and service is viewed by some in such a negative way.

“I believe that such opposition is based on ideology which is both expedient and facile,” Prof. Finn told *The Irish Catholic*.

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown – a former headmaster – was also critical of the attempt to “sectarianise”, saying that the implicit linking of education with the violence in the North was a “distraction” from the real sources of conflict.

“Part of the annoyance in the North

was the association of that with the trouble that happened almost exclusively in loyalist areas in the protests,” Bishop McKeown said, continuing, “everyone is quite aware this is a problem for loyalism, this is not a sectarian problem, even if there have been those who have tried to sectarianise it in some places in Belfast”.

The bishop said you’d expect a “prophetic voice to have a deeper insight into the reasons for division,” offering instead a “superficial analysis”.

“Catholic education is very popular among very many parents because of the quality of the product. It’s the most successful sector,” Dr McKeown said.

“If you want to get people out of difficulties and poverty, quality education is a major contribution to that,” Bishop McKeown said.

Prof. Finn has also invited Mr Higgins to visit the university in West Belfast,

where many would-be teachers complete their education.

“St Mary’s University College is located just two miles away from the junction of the Springfield Road and Lanark Way in Belfast where violence recently returned to the streets.

“The nature of the education system in the North has nothing whatsoever to do with the cause of that violence. President Higgins is more than welcome to visit our campus, and to take a walk with me onto Beechmount Avenue at lunchtime to see the remarkable ethnic diversity that in fact comprises the local Catholic school population – it is anything but segregated.

“The education system in the North, and by implication those who work within it, should not be implicated as a cause of the violence. To suggest otherwise is to step carelessly on ‘that political eggshell that is Northern Ireland,’” Prof. Finn insisted.



Photo: Abbie Traylor-Smith / Concern Worldwide

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ENDING EXTREME POVERTY WHATEVER IT TAKES

'Patently unjust' conversion therapy bill 'a ruse' for transgender ideology

Ruadhán Jones

Bills in Ireland and Northern Ireland seeking to ban conversion therapy are too "broad and sweeping", threatening penalties for "honest conversations" about sexual identity, according to Christian organisations.

Courage International, an apostolate of the Catholic Church that counsels men and women with same-sex attractions, as well as evangelical organisations Affinity and the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches (FIEC), all spoke up as a cross-border Anti-Conversion Therapy Coalition (ACTC), pushed for a complete ban on conversion therapies.

Responsibility

Fr Philip Bochanski, executive director of Courage International, acknowledged the Irish State's responsibility to protect people from harm, but added "it seems patently unjust to attempt to do so with such broad, sweeping definitions as those in the current bill".

"The bill defines 'conversion therapy' to include 'any practice ... by any person that seeks to change ... a person's ... gender expression', which itself is defined to include a 'person's manifestation of their gender identity,'" Fr Bochanski said.

"The bill would thus seem to penalise an honest conversation about what it means

to 'acknowledge and accept' one's 'sexual identity' with fines of thousands of euros and months of imprisonment."

Fr Bochanski told *The Irish Catholic* that the 'Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018' had come to their attention previously when it was alleged in the Seanad that Courage practised conversion therapies.

“Some are attempting to make sexuality and gender ‘a no-go area’ which ‘cannot possibly be questioned’”

"Like similar legislation that has been proposed in other States and localities, the bill defines 'conversion therapy' so broadly that it ultimately poses a grave risk to anyone who would speak honestly about the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding chastity, sexual identity, or sexual intimacy," Fr Bochanski said.

Evangelical leaders in Northern Ireland have also warned that if the Government there introduces a blanket ban on conversion therapies then ordinary church practices, such as preaching, prayer and pastoral care, could all be criminalised.

Graham Nicholls, Director of Affinity, told The Christian Institute that while some may be pushing for a ban out of a genuine concern for people being harmed by abusive

practices, others have "a more sinister agenda, which is to close down religious freedom, religious discussion, the application of Bible teaching",

Some are attempting to make sexuality and gender "a no-go area" which "cannot possibly be questioned", he said.

Meanwhile, Prof. Patricia Casey – Professor of Psychiatry at the Department of Adult Psychiatry UCD – told *The Irish Catholic* she has "never seen conversion therapy for gay people in Ireland or Britain, in my whole career".

The Department for Equality in Ireland confirmed to this paper that the prevalence of conversion therapy is not known at this time.

Prof. Casey added that the bill is an "unacceptable intrusion" into her professional sphere and said it seemed to be a "ruse to try and promote a transgender ideology".

"It's doing far more than banning conversion therapy, it's actually dictating how doctors and mental health professionals must interact with people who have gender questions and issues," Prof. Casey said.

"It's talking about transgender children and you can only be affirmative about that. The implication of it is that one can't even apply critical discussion with an adolescent who may be wanting transgender intervention," Prof. Casey concluded.

New law criminalises outdoor confessions

Chai Brady

The law introduced last week on religious gatherings has made it illegal even to hold outdoor confession, according to a law professor.

Professor Oran Doyle, from the law school at Trinity College Dublin, said the new provision, SI 171/2021, applies to both indoor and outdoor events and "that's where it is different from restrictions on other events".

"So for example, if a priest were to do the Sacrament of Confession with one parishioner outside, socially distanced, that would be a criminal offence but if the priest were to meet the parishioner for a chat, that would not be a criminal offence because that's dealt with under one of the other provisions of the regulations."

Statutory

Speaking on RTE's News at One he said that the new statutory instrument signed off by the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly seemingly specifically targets religious gatherings – despite the minister claiming otherwise.

Prof. Doyle said the min-



Fr Paddy McCafferty takes outdoor confession in west Belfast, before restrictions were lifted in the North.

ister's claim "can't be correct because previously in the legislation there was a clear ban on any events in your household and there was also a ban in what they described as relevant events, which in the law has a very clear definition as events for social, recreational purposes".

"So most types of events were already banned, but religious events weren't and they seem to be the most obvious thing that is caught by this change of the law that was made last week."

The Church is seeking legal advice on the issue. Prof. Doyle

was asked whether the law could be effectively challenged on constitutional grounds, he said there's "always a possibility" and courts in other countries have intervened.

He speculated that as similar activities are treated in the same way "it's unlikely that there will be a successful challenge". However, he said "if we see things happening where there's easing of restrictions in other areas going ahead of easing of restrictions in relation to religious services then the possibility for a successful challenge becomes stronger".

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Bishop slams 'senseless antisemitic vandalism' of Belfast Jewish graves

Chai Brady

The vandalism of Jewish graves in Belfast's City Cemetery has been dubbed "distressing" and "anti-Semitic" by Bishop Noel Treanor of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

The police launched a hate crime investigation into the incident which took place last Thursday. Ten grave-stones were damaged.

In 2016, 13 graves in the same plot were damaged in a similar attack.

Bishop Treanor said he was "shocked and disgusted" to hear of the incident and extended his sympathy and support to the Jewish community "who have been affected and deeply hurt by this incident".

"These senseless acts of vandalism violate the sanctuary of the cemetery and they display a total lack of respect for the dead and the families of the deceased who are left distressed by these incidents," he said.

"The targeting of these Jewish graves is particularly distressing for the wider Jewish community in Belfast. Such anti-Semitic and discriminatory actions, motivated by prejudice, have no place in a modern tolerant welcoming society.

"As a diocese, we stand firmly alongside our sisters and brothers in the Belfast Jewish Community as we express our revulsion in the face of this destruction and in calling for greater respect for all within society."

The bishop appealed to everyone entering the City Cemetery, particularly young people, to respect the sanctity of the graveyard.

"Let us afford to these resting places of family relatives and friends the dignity and respect that is theirs by right," he added.

Michael Black, chairman of Belfast Jewish community, described the attack as "appalling" and hopes that the perpetrators will "be brought to justice".

"You just wonder what is in the mindset of people who do that sort of thing," he said.

The attack occurred within St John's parish in Belfast, with Fr Martin Magill PP leading prayers for those who were "deeply upset by the vandalism" during Mass over the weekend.

The PSNI have appealed for support from the local community "to hold those responsible to account for their actions".

Archbishop tells minister of deep concern over the criminalisation of public worship

Staff reporter

The Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin has expressed "deep concern" regarding the criminalising of public worship despite Church cooperation with public health messaging, in a meeting with the Minister for Health this week.

Archbishop Eamon met with Minister Stephen Donnelly and Dr Colette Bonner from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer on Monday.

In the meeting the archbishop emphasised the importance of respecting and sustaining people's spiritual well-being alongside their physical and mental health. For people of faith, he said "this

is deemed essential".

He said that the work of priests and ministers should be "respected and deemed essential, rather than subject to penal sanction".

"Ministers of religion are often on the front line supporting the sick, the bereaved, the isolated and those who are struggling to cope. Pastoral ministry and spiritual support, which are so important for people during the time of pandemic, ought not to be confined to a small number of legally acceptable and 'regulated activities'", he added.

The meeting came after a new Covid-19 statutory instrument, SI 171/2021, was added last Friday which was dubbed "draconian" by Archbishop Eamon. He said it was introduced in a "clandestine manner".

The penalty for breaches of the new law is a fine of €127 or up to six months in jail, upon summary conviction.

Mr Donnelly said the statutory instrument was not intended to single out worship but was designed to regulate indoor and outdoor gatherings that might pose a risk.

He said that religious worship and spiritual well-being were taken very seriously by Government and consideration would be given to early re-opening of public worship in accordance with public health.

The Church has been seeking clarification and legal advice regarding the extent and implications of the statutory instrument.

Apprenticeship focus a positive development – Social Justice Ireland

Jason Osborne

10,000 apprenticeships have been announced this week as part of an Action Plan on Apprenticeships, the move being hailed as a "positive development" by Fr Sean Healy SMA of Social Justice Ireland.

As part of the new plan, 10,000 apprenticeships will be created every year from 2025 onwards, with a target to hire 750 public sector apprentices annually by 2025, while employers who take on apprentices will earn a €3,000 yearly grant from 2022.

"We're very positive about this initiative," he told this paper, "but it has to be delivered on."

"There have been false dawns on apprenticeships in Ireland previously," he warned.

"The longer a person stays in education, the more likely they are to be in employment," he said, continuing that if this initiative is to successfully address the problems it was made for, it must be properly resourced.

"It must also be seen as part of a whole-person, life-cycle approach to learning," Fr Healy said.

A token of thanks to parents



Sacred Heart College, Omagh, pastoral teams display their 600 teatime treat bags, made as thanks for all parents' hard work in supporting pupils with remote learning during lockdown.

NEWS IN BRIEF

St Patrick's Way opens for guided tours

Guided walks on St Patrick's Way are now on offer from the St Patrick Centre in Downpatrick, Co. Down, following an easing of lockdown restrictions.

Pilgrims will be able to walk with guides to sites such as Inch Abbey, Saul Church, and Slieve Patrick from next week, starting in Downpatrick from April 28 and 29 and from Newcastle into the Mourne from May 1.

St Patrick's new coastal route from Ballyhornan to Ardglass which takes in St Patrick's Well, Sheepland and the ancient ruin at Ardtule is available twice a month from May 10.

The Camino and Canoe Adventure on the Quoile commences on Wednesdays from May 12 – a guided 6km water and walking route to Inch Abbey and Saul Church.

To book St Patrick's Way, contact 02844 619000 or go online: www.saintpatrick-centre.com

Keep up the campaign to open our churches

Because most people of faith are law-abiding, there has been Church compliance with the Government's draconian regulations against public worship – even though, as this newspaper has pointed out repeatedly, all across Europe, and Britain, churches are open for prayer and services.

“Most people know it can't be right to deny the Faithful their entitlement to freedom of worship”

Yet, in the light of history, it is utterly shocking that this new 'Penal Law' against religious practice in Ireland is enforced: that it should be described as a 'criminal offence' to attend Mass.

People understand that there has been a pandemic, and at the beginning, emergency measures needed to be taken. But the infection is receding and everywhere, ways are being found to ensure that health and safety measures can be put in place to allow orderly congregation. At our local church in Deal in Kent, there is now no problem



Mary Kenny

whatsoever with Mass attendance, and everybody behaves sensibly and with due care, glad to be able to worship together again.

Displeasure

Surely the time has come, in Ireland, for the Faithful to show their displeasure with the Government's continuing policy of banning worship? As Ray Kinsella has written in *The Irish Times*, it is “an unjust and unjustified assault on religious freedom”, a principle enshrined in the Constitution, while the Government has not offered any scientific evidence to support its position on keeping churches closed.

Two strategies are needed, in addressing this situation: one is to pursue change through the law – Archbishop Eamon Martin is already

taking legal advice about this pathway, and Declan Ganley's legal challenge, currently in abeyance, has given a meaningful lead.

“Yet, in the light of history, it is utterly shocking that this new ‘Penal Law’ against religious practice in Ireland is enforced”

It seems to me, too, it might be possible to take a case to the European Court of Human Rights, since freedom of worship is guaranteed by the European Convention. This, in itself, would attract bad publicity

● Prof. Philip Thomas of Bristol University, the British expert who most successfully predicted the course of BSE (mad cow disease) and its human equivalent in the 1990s, says that there will be no 'third wave' of Covid-19. He has done mathematical modelling for the new variants and predicts that any further outbreaks will be minimal and controlled. “The reality is that we are beating the pandemic.”



Catholics stand outside Sts Anne and Mary Cathedral in Cork on April 4. Photo: Cillian Kelly.

for the enforcement of an inhumane and disproportionate law, (which some legal experts aren't even sure is a properly framed law at all).

Strategy

The second strategy is to support protests and vigils outside churches – as has

been done in Limerick and Cork, and elsewhere – and publicise these as much as possible through every outlet of social media, local newspapers and broadcast media.

A successful revolution, or change, happens by pushing a door that is already ajar. There is a

discernible feeling of sympathy for this cause. Most people know it can't be right to deny the Faithful their entitlement to freedom of worship, a freedom so hard-won through past centuries. Now is the time to push effectively for a change of State policy.

The death of a decent woman

Shirley Williams who died on April 12, aged 90, was expected to be the first woman and the first Catholic at 10 Downing Street. She was clever, nice, reasonable, and had a humane centre-left political view. But fate determined that Margaret Thatcher would beat her to the post.

In politics, luck, timing and choices all play a part in destiny. In 1976, Shirley Williams was urged to stand for the Labour Party leadership, but she chose not to. Perhaps she wasn't quite ambitious enough – unlike Maggie. Michael Foot became Labour leader instead and that led to a lurch to the extreme left which was never going to be endorsed by the electorate. Mr Foot was also a decent

person, with a love of literature, and a strong sympathy for Ireland. But his policies broke up his party.

Claim

Some sources claim that Shirley was weakened, professionally, when her husband, the philosopher Bernard Williams, walked out on her. It left her feeling unsupported as a single mother. She wasn't the most organised – famous for being late, mislaying railway tickets, or even forgetting to turn up – she also needed a factotum to run her working life. Yet she was unfailingly considerate and courteous – I had some dealings with her as a reporter – and a good person.

In retrospect, she was blamed for abolishing gram-

mar schools – although she wasn't solely responsible for that policy – which had the unexpected outcome of enhancing private education for the affluent, while often depriving poorer, academically gifted kids. Education policies driven by political ideology rather than by the best interests of the pupils is often disastrous: the political attack on faith schools in Northern Ireland would also have worse outcomes for the children now benefiting from high educational standards.

Baroness Williams' funeral will be at the end of April in a small, ancient Catholic church in a small village in Hertfordshire, Furneux Pelham.



VATICAN I after 150 years (1870-2020) *Dei Filius* and Theology Today

Session 1: 22 April 2021 (Thurs.) (2-4pm)

Patrick Gorevan: Context of *Dei Filius*
Rudi te Velde: Ch. 1 on God, Creation, and Providence

Session 2: 23 April 2021 (Fri.) (2-5pm, with break)

Simon Francis Gaine: Ch. 2 On Knowledge of God
Gaven Kerr: Ch. 3 On Faith
Cajetan Cuddy: Ch. 4.1 On Faith and Reason

Session 3: 24 April 2021 (Sat.) (2-4pm)

Conor McDonough: Ch. 4.2 On the Nexus Mysteriorum
Andrew Meszaros: Ch. 4.3 On Doctrinal Development

*All times are in Irish Standard Time:

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Online quiz to raise funds for Ethiopia

An online quiz is being held on the last Friday of each month to raise money for Mary's Meals' work in Ethiopia. Just under €5,500 has been raised so far.

To take part the charity asks that you donate a €5 entry fee (or more) and provide your name and email address when signing

up online. In doing so participants are giving Mary's Meals permission to pass on their details to Martin Colfer (only) who will send out the link to the quiz.

The next quiz takes place on Friday April 30 at 8pm. Entries must be in before 5pm on the night. Those who are interested can enter by following this link: <https://www.marysmeals.ie/fundraising/project/online-quiz/online-quiz-for-marys-meals> or can contact: 0872596159

A need for speed... and the Eucharist

Chai Brady

A race car driving prince has opened up about how he always tries to go to Mass before his races, even asking a priest to celebrate a private Mass in his hotel room when there was none available.

Prince Ferdinand von Habsburg, who competes in the Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters (DTM) but has also raced in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship, spoke about the importance of Mass in a recent interview.

Before a race in Germany he asked a young priest he knew, who he described as a distant cousin and a “very, very great guy” to come to the race.

“I try not to miss a Sunday without going to church and that includes race weekends so normally when I go to a racetrack I would find out where is the closest church and if there is a Mass that I can go to on a race day. There was none in the area,” he said.

He said he asked Fr Wolfgang if “he would mind having a private Mass for me in my hotel room because there is no other place, and he said absolutely”.

Speaking about the priest, the prince said: “He’s just a really nice guy to have around as well. Someone who I speak to a lot when it comes to questions about spirituality. I have been very blessed and fortunate when it comes to people around me.

“Fr Wolfgang is a young priest, a very, very great guy...when you’re speaking with somebody and you know whatever they’re trying to say is 100% for you to become the best version of yourself, those are people you need to hang on to, those are unique people and I have been very blessed with that,” he said.

A prince of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine, Ferdinand is a grandson of Otto von Habsburg, the last crown prince of Austria-Hungary. His great-grandfather Emperor Charles I was beatified in 2004.



NI peace architect advises calm amid fresh clashes

Jason Osborne

The recent street violence in Northern Ireland has dashed illusions that there are no circumstances in which “lethal, politically-motivated violence” could recur, former adviser to Taoisigh Martin Mansergh has said.

A key architect in the Northern Ireland peace process, Mr Mansergh wrote in *The Irish Catholic* this week that the causes of tension need to be reduced and that the “rhetoric and fear-mongering” must be toned down.

This comes after loyalist protests resumed in Belfast following a brief lull.

Addressing the increasing recent speculation concerning a united Ireland, Mr Mansergh said that the condition set out in the Good Friday Agreement for holding a border poll, which is a judgment by the secretary of state that the people of the North would vote for constitutional change to join a united Ireland, “is nowhere near satisfied”.

He said that pressing for a “premature” border poll “would not fail to ratchet up

potentially explosive tensions”.

Rather than focusing on “the mirage of imminent constitutional change”, the focus should currently be on health and the economy, according to Mr Mansergh.

“For everyone’s sake across the island, we should concentrate on trying cooperatively to develop the best of what we have, not pull it apart,” he wrote.

“Rebuilding after Covid-19 and Brexit will be no easy task.”

📖 See page 8.

Former Convent of Mercy purchased by new religious order for €925,000

Ruadhán Jones

The former Convent of Mercy in Ardee Co. Louth has been bought by the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest (ICKSP), who hope to use it for the female branch of their order, for €925,000.

Canon Leboq, Pro-Provincial of the Institute in Ireland,

said the community is now “on its knees” having taken out a €600,000 loan to secure the property.

“Our community is now on its knees, not only in prayer in the chapel, but also financially with over €230,000 to reimburse by 15th August this year,” Canon Wulfran Leboq said in a statement. “Prayers and donations are welcome!”

The convent was built in the 1850s and comprises a three-storey block, with an attached chapel and gate lodge set in 10 acres of land.

Founded in 1990, the ICKSP celebrates the classical Roman Liturgy – the Latin Mass – in its Extraordinary Form according to the liturgical books promulgated by Saint Pope John XXIII in 1962.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Senators call for boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics

Independent senators have come out saying that the 2022 Winter Olympics should not take place in Beijing, and that if the venue isn’t changed, the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) should boycott the event.

Senator Rónán Mullen criticised the “deteriorating human rights situation in China, especially the mass incarceration and coercion of China’s Uighur minority”

which the US Congress and Canada’s House of Commons have characterised as “genocide”.

In a letter to the President of the Olympic Federation of Ireland, the senators said “the gravity of the conduct of the Chinese government means it is not tenable that no clear protest be made on behalf of Irish sport and the Irish people”.

AMRI oppose euthanasia bill, say every stage of life ‘special’ to God

“In Christ every stage of life, including that of terminal illness, has special meaning to God,” said the Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland (AMRI) in their statement on the Dying with Dignity Bill.

In opposing the bill, AMRI said they were drawing on insight from Catholic teaching,

but also personal experience “of suffering and of accompanying and caring for others who are suffering, in Ireland and overseas, including some of the most vulnerable in the Global South”.

Suffering and illness cannot detract from the “inherent worth” of human life, they said.

US politicians urged to scrutinise census process

Historian Tim Pat Coogan has called for Irish American politicians to scrutinise Northern Ireland’s census process – claiming “bogus statistics” have seen Catholic numbers under-reported for decades.

Writing in *The Irish News*, Mr Coogan said: “I would earnestly advocate that the Friends of Ireland grouping of Congressmen,

on Capitol Hill Washington, scrutinise the handling of the census taking of 2021, with a very keen eye.”

Mr Coogan said in 2001 “a cabinet member who would later become taoiseach” told him he believed Catholic numbers “were at least 48% and possibly more” – below the census figures when they were published.

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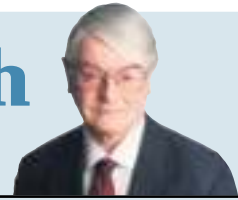
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The View



The condition set for a poll on a united Ireland is nowhere near satisfied

Many interesting books are being published around the centenary of partition and the border. The Irish civil war of 1922-23 - however painful at the time and long after - is now history. In his detailed, critical but also sympathetic book, *A Difficult Birth: The Early Years of Northern Ireland 1920-25*, Alan Parkinson concludes sadly: "Northern Ireland, on the eve of its centenary, is arguably as divided today as it was back at its conception", a point underlined by recent street violence.

Thankfully, living conditions have vastly improved in the interim, politicians in different communities are managing to work together much of the time, and lethal politically-motivated violence is both rare and unwanted, though it is a mistake to think that there are no circumstances in which it could recur.

“A united Ireland also requires concurrent support from the electorate of the Republic under the Good Friday Agreement”

The causes of tension need to be reduced, and the rhetoric and fear-mongering toned down. The condition set out in the Good Friday Agreement for holding a border poll, *viz.* a judgment by the secretary of state that the people of the North would vote for constitutional change to join a united Ireland, is nowhere near satisfied. There is no basis for believing that if the vote is lost by a significant margin this will nonetheless advance the case for a united Ireland, or that a second vote would necessarily be held any time soon thereafter. Given the sometimes-erratic nature of opinion polls and their openness to manipulation, they should not be the only deciding factor on when a border poll should be held. The clearest indication of a desire for constitutional change would be a majority vote in the assembly.

Turmoil

There is a degree of turmoil about constitutional relations elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In Northern Ireland, it has always been emphasised



Recent violence in Belfast has underlined the fragility of the peace process. Photo: Jason Cairduff.

that both the status quo and any change to it rest on the principle of consent. Scotland's place in the union, on the other hand, is becoming potentially independent of the principle of consent, and the British government may be entirely unmoved even by clear evidence from elections in May that an independence referendum could be passed. It may well be a protracted period of time before a second referendum in Scotland is agreed with Westminster. There is no certainty as to the outcome. There is no assurance that even in the event of an independent Scottish dominion emerging this would sway unionists in Northern Ireland to detach themselves from a UK state remaining with 60 million people or that it would create some irresistible momentum for them to do so.

Support

A united Ireland also requires concurrent support from the electorate of the Republic

under the Good Friday Agreement. This also cannot be taken for granted, irrespective of conditions. The Republic sees itself today as a successful independent small state that is politically stable. It is not divided in the way that Northern Ireland is. Most parties, including the Government parties, will not want to repeat the failed strategy of anti-partition campaigns by pressing for a premature border poll that would not fail to ratchet up potentially explosive tensions. Even should a government after the next election be formed on the basis that a top priority would be pressing the British for a border poll and mobilising Irish-American led US congressional support for this, the British would be quite entitled to refuse, as long as the condition of likely majority support in Northern Ireland for constitutional change is not satisfied.

There is still far too much of an assumption that unionists can be bullied, harassed, cajoled and derided into a

united Ireland. The growing chorus of nationalist voices who claim that unity is now inevitable should examine critically why that often confident expectation was never realised in the past, and what is so fundamentally different now.

“In Northern Ireland, it has always been emphasised that both the status quo and any change to it rest on the principle of consent”

In the 19th Century, the Irish Catholic bishops in the main supported an evolutionary, reform-based approach, avoiding mass bloodshed, so that when the political revolution happened it was accompanied by relatively limited violence, whether compared with 1798 or the scale of what was happening elsewhere, post-World War I,

in Central and Eastern Europe. The Good Friday Agreement removed many grievances of the nationalist community with wide-ranging reforms, albeit not the fundamental grievance of being prevented from joining an independent Irish state. In tandem with the EU single market it removed the physical border and allowed people to interact freely across the island. In particular, the North remains *de facto* part of the EU single market and customs union, while preserving full access to the UK single market.

Pragmatism

Similar pragmatism is required of unionists and loyalists, the same pragmatism that they showed when they supported the Good Friday Agreement and its follow-up arrangements. Will unionist leaders demand that rigorous policing apply to illegal and environmentally noxious bonfires with offensive slogans around July 12? If the union is to survive, Northern

Ireland has to be shared, and can never again exclusively belong to one tradition.

Negotiated

Those who negotiated the Good Friday Agreement on the unionist side recognised in the immortal words of Giuseppe di Lampedusa in *The Leopard*, the novel about mid-19th Century Sicily: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." Extravagant claims were made in 1985 about the fatal consequences for the union of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which did not come to pass. Similar claims about the protocol are just as wide of the mark. Unionism is unwise to rely on what elsewhere would be described as identity politics. Orchestrated rioting and attacks on the police do not attract much British sympathy. They also hold back the Northern Ireland economy, which longer term will undermine the union, while doing nothing to cure deprivation.

For everyone's sake across the island, we should concentrate on trying cooperatively to develop the best of what we have, not pull it apart. Rebuilding after Covid-19 and Brexit will be no easy task. The focus should be on health and the economy, not on the mirage of imminent constitutional change.

“There is still far too much of an assumption that unionists can be bullied, harassed, cajoled and derided into a united Ireland”

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'Morally incumbent' on Govt to speak up about Christian persecution – ACN

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish Government must speak up about persecution of Christians in the Middle East, international charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) said, as recent videos showed ISIS executing a Christian in Egypt.

A 62-year-old Egyptian Christian, Nabil El-Habashy, was killed by ISIS in the Sinai Province of Egypt, which has witnessed several deadly terrorist attacks and army raids on terror hotbeds in the region.

ISIS published a video of the killing in which they said the man's execution was for his cooperation

with the Egyptian army.

ACN Ireland's director Dr Michael Kinsella said that Mr El-Habashy's "horrible" death is representative of "what the wider Christian community is going through in the Middle East itself".

"There are millions of Coptic Christians in Egypt, a huge population, the largest in the Middle East," he told *The Irish Catholic*. "If it can happen in a country in which Christians are the most populous, you can imagine what it's like where they are a smaller component of the society itself."

Dr Kinsella added that Egypt is "effectively the America of the Arab World" and tends "to set the precedents" for the Middle East.

In light of this attack, it is "morally incumbent" on the Irish Government to speak up about the plight of Christians in the Middle East.

"Cases like these are set aside in the interest of trade relations, political stability, political manoeuvring," Dr Kinsella said. "It is morally incumbent on Ireland to speak about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East because they are the most persecuted peoples on the planet."

"One would think the script would almost write itself. Christians are the most persecuted peoples on the planet, and yet they're the least talked about, they're the least defended," Dr Kinsella concluded.

Parental alienation is 'form of domestic abuse'

Staff Reporter

The auxiliary bishop of Armagh has warned parents not to alienate their children from the other parent when relationships end, saying it's "a particular form of domestic abuse".

In a homily over the weekend, Bishop Michael Router pointed to International Parental Alienation Awareness day, which takes place on Sunday, April 25.

"This day highlights a particular form of domestic abuse that manifests itself in more subtle ways than physical or sexual violence. Parental alienation is a problem that has garnered increasing coverage by the media in recent times," Bishop Router said.

"Parental alienation often takes place when one parent tries to distance his or her children from the other parent when a marriage or relationship ends."

Although it is justified for a child to be separated from a parent because of "threatening behaviour", he said, in the case of parental alienation "there is no such reason".

He added that when the courts have recognised that the parent should have access to their children, yet the other parent refuses to allow it, "such a denial of the rights of children to have a loving relationship with both parents has long-lasting and damaging consequences for a child".

Tipp priest queries Govt on cash for online Mass move

Chai Brady

A Tipperary priest has queried whether the Government will be financially supporting clergy who have invested in webcams in order to move their services online.

Fr Michael Toomey PP of Ardfinnan and Newcastle told *The Irish Catholic* he spent €5,000 setting up a webcam to broadcast Masses to his parishioners. He also pays €180 a month to maintain the service.

The Government is telling churches that 'services move online' due to Covid-19 restrictions, with Fr Toomey saying they have not received any support despite businesses receiving grants.

"I'm just wondering, we have received absolutely no financial support to keep our churches open, to keep our priests available to go to crashes or emergencies or hospitals, to provide funerals and pastoral care, I know there will be a huge backlash from certain people – saying the Church

don't deserve any money – but when we are told to go online, they haven't actually sorted who pays for that," he said.

"I'm not looking for money at all, in fact it's been the last thing on my mind," he stressed, "but I think this is a matter of principle. We've been told by Government to go online and I've done that."

The priest has written to his local TD and other ministers and the Department of Health for clarification on the issue.

Preparing Queen's for faith and friendship



Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain at Queen's University Belfast, and pastoral manager Shannon Campbell prepare for the reopening of QUB's Catholic Chaplaincy, April 19.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prison university project to bring education to prisoners

The Mountjoy and Maynooth University (MJMU) project aims to help prisoners go to university, and "bring third-level education to those furthest away from it".

Dr Rose Ryan of Maynooth University said that while the university was already engaged in educational projects in the prison, the MJMU project was a "formal partnership".

This partnership will allow many people to "completely transform not only their own lives but also the lives of their families" in an attempt to support reintegration into society.

Proposed 'hate' law poses big questions for the Church



The chilling effect on free speech of moves to push legislation should be obvious, writes David Quinn

The Government is aiming to pass a new law against so-called 'hate crimes'. It looks certain to be passed because few voices have been raised in opposition to it. On the contrary, it seems to have general assent in the Dáil. When Scotland passed similar legislation recently, groups as diverse as the Church and the National Secular Society expressed serious concerns about the implications for free speech, but here so far, barely a dissenting voice has been heard. That seems to be how we do things in Ireland.

“The Scottish legislation created an offence of possessing inflammatory material”

In a statement issued last summer, Scotland's bishops said they were worried that passages from the Bible or parts of the Catechism could breach the planned law there.

As an example, the statement pointed out, “The Catholic Church's understanding of the human person, including the belief that sex and gender are not fluid and changeable, could fall foul of the new law.”

The Scottish legislation created an offence of possessing inflammatory material. Would the recent document from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which said same-sex unions cannot be blessed



Laws that set out to target hate can have unintended consequences for free speech.

because the Church cannot bless sin, count as 'inflammatory material'?

In Ireland, there already is a law against incitement to hatred, but the Government believes it does not go far enough. The proposed new *Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill*, will go much further.

It proposes two categories of offence. One is where a crime such as assault is motivated by hate against a particular group, say an ethnic minority. In that case, the crime would be judged to be more serious and could carry a tougher sentence.

Second category

The second category targets speech and written material. This second category is more worrying because of the free speech implications.

Overall, the law will create a number of 'protected characteristics'. These are race; skin colour; nationality; religion, ethnic or national origin; sexual orientation; gender; or disability.

The bill will make it an offence to communicate anything to the public that could incite hatred of one of these groups.

The offending person does not actually have to set out to cause hatred. It's enough that they be aware that there is a risk this might happen.

'Hatred' for the purposes of the law, is defined as “detestation, significant ill will or hostility, of a magnitude likely to lead to harm or unlawful discrimination against a person or group of people due to their association with a protected characteristic”.

It is proposed that a defence against a charge of hatred will be that the material under investigation “consisted solely of a reasonable and genuine contribution to

literary, artistic, political, scientific or academic discourse”.

In a recent article for this newspaper, I said that the day might come when Catholic teaching across a whole range of issues, but especially regarding human sexuality, might fall foul of Irish law.

“We cannot tell in advance how such a case would progress, but it seems fair to say right now that such a scenario could easily unfold when this new law passes”

The teaching that marriage can only be between a man and a woman is one example. Another is the teaching that to be a man or a woman, you must be biologically male or female, and that it is not simply a matter of how you see yourself.

The teaching that it is immoral to live together outside marriage, or that using artificial contraception is wrong, might also be seen as types of 'hatred'.

Could someone say that these teachings run the risk of stirring up 'hatred' against cohabiting couples or those who use contraception?

Could a judge decide that these teachings do not make a “reasonable and genuine contribution” to public debate?

What will happen to many Muslim or Jewish teachings?

Outside of the religious

sphere, what might happen to strong statements against religion? Prof. Richard Dawkins, the world-famous atheist, has previously said that teaching children religion is a form of child abuse.

He has called Islam “the

greatest force for evil in the world today”. He was accused of 'Islamophobia' in response.

Hate

I asked the Department of Justice whether Prof. Dawkins' statement about Islam might be considered a form of 'hate' under the proposed legislation, they said, “reasonable and genuine contribution to political discourse, art or science will be protected”. But what might a judge deem 'reasonable' or 'genuine'?

We can easily imagine a situation whereby someone like Richard Dawkins might make a statement such as the one about Islam, and another person, perhaps a Muslim, perhaps not, would try to have him charged with a hate crime.

We cannot tell in advance how such a case would progress, but it seems fair to say right now that such a scenario

could easily unfold when this new law passes.

The chilling effect on free speech should be obvious.

It would be far better if instead we passed something like Britain's Malicious Communications Act which protects individuals from being targeted by campaigns of vilification such as what happened to Katie Ascough when she was hounded out of her post as head of the students' union at UCD because of her pro-life stance.

But when you are protecting whole groups, and not simply individuals from perceived 'hate', then it inevitably weakens free speech.

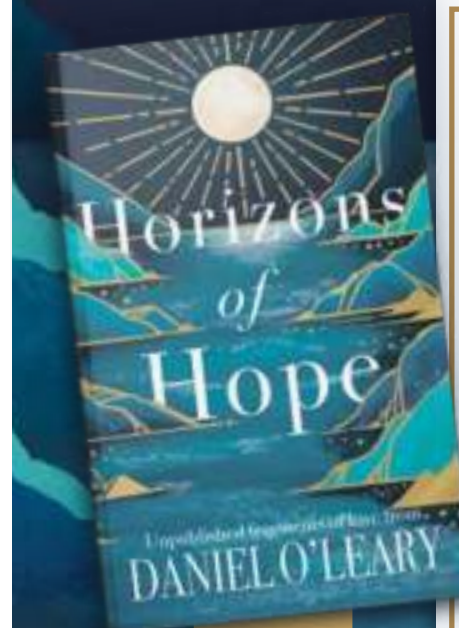
Debate

At a minimum, we need to have a broad-ranging debate about this proposed new law. The bishops ought to seek a legal opinion about its implications. They should consult with their counterparts in Scotland.

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Out&About

Blessed are the peacemakers



ARMAGH: Church leaders gather in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh, April 12, calling for an end to violence in the North. From left: Archbishop John McDowell; Revd Tom McKnight; Rt Revd Dr David Bruce; Very Revd Dr Ivan Patterson; and Archbishop Eamon Martin.



CORK: Catholics stand outside Sts Anne and Mary Cathedral in Cork, April 4, praying that Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross would open the doors for Easter Mass during the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo: CNS.



SOUTH SUDAN: Sr Orla Treacy IBVM celebrates with staff and pupils on the 13th anniversary of the founding of Loreto Secondary School, Mumbek, in South Sudan, April 13.

IN SHORT

Bishop criticises delay in resettling 28 children from Greek refugee camp

The Bishop of Ferns has strongly criticised the latest delay in resettling unaccompanied refugee children from the Moria camp in Greece to Ireland as "appalling".

On April 14, Bishop Denis Brennan, chair of the Irish Bishops' Council for Immigrants, called on the Government to act as "quickly and decisively as possible" to bring the children it pledged to relocate to "safety and shelter".

He said he was "deeply saddened" to learn that plans made originally in September 2020 to resettle 28 children had been further delayed after gardaí were unable to travel to Greece because of Covid safety concerns.

Referring to the fire which engulfed the

refugee camp on the island of Lesbos on September 8, leaving as many as 13,000 people without shelter, Dr Brennan said the disaster had exacerbated the already cramped, unhygienic, and inhumane conditions in the camp.

The Government pledged to relocate 28 children in Ireland in the wake of the devastation.

Describing that commitment as "the bare minimum support and refuge that we should be offering, particularly to unaccompanied children who have suffered so much trauma in even their earliest years", the Bishop of Ferns said: "Those forced to migrate have already experienced immense hardship to reach camps like the one in Moria."

"On such an issue we cannot act swiftly enough," he said. "The fact that seven months on this has not yet happened is appalling," the bishop said.

SVP calls for charity shops to be classed as 'essential service'

The ongoing closure of charity shops and cheaper retailers like Penneys is causing "huge hardship" among poorer households, St Vincent de Paul are warning.

The SVP is "appealing" to Government to designate charity shops an "essential service" under Level 5 restrictions, saying many of the poorest households cannot afford the clothing and household items available in supermarkets or online.

On April 7, the charity announced an almost 20% increase in calls for help in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period in 2020.

National president Rose McGowan said

among the costs households were struggling to meet during lockdown were children's and babies' clothes; laptops, tablets and Wi-Fi for children to participate in remote-learning, and basic homeware such as bed linen, towels and tableware.

The society had 45,000 calls for help in the first three months of 2021 – "the highest number during any first quarter in the past decade," said Ms McGowan.

"We have written to the Taoiseach's office, the Tánaiste, everyone, asking for a meeting," Ms McGowan said. "I feel we are classed as frontline doing as much as we can for people but our shops aren't open."

"The Government is not thinking of those in the most need. We are continuing to appeal to Government to consider charity shops as an essential service and to even allow some open on a click- or call-and-go basis."

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



ANTRIM: Fr Brian D’Arcy, Bro. Ryan Holovlosky, Brendan Dineen and Caren Collins are pictured with Jim Deeds (centre) for the launch of his new book, *A Look of Love*, at Clonard Church, Belfast.



CAVAN: May and Mickey Farrelly of Lisnagrew, Kingscourt are pictured on the occasion of their Diamond Jubilee – 60th anniversary – of marriage.



◀ DERRY: Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown blesses a Divine Mercy image on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 11, at St Mary’s parish, Creggan.

▼ KILKENNY: Stephanie Dunne of Presentation Secondary School Kilkenny is pictured with her award for winning the Professional Development for Teachers Senior Cycle Poetry Competition.



GALWAY: The first wedding of 2021 in St Mary’s Church, Mountbellew, as Bronwen Fisher and Daniel Deegan were married by Fr Karl Burns, April 10.



Events

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

World Report

IN BRIEF

Sponsor a gargoyles: Fundraiser launched for Notre Dame

● A novel fundraising approach to restore one of the most iconic monuments in the world, the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, enables donors to have a piece of history.

On April 15, Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris unveiled an interactive website – restorennotredame.org – that allows people to donate by adopting or sponsoring pieces of precious art and artifacts that were damaged in a 2019 fire.

Donors can engage with the objects of their choosing and select which they'd like to invest in restoring, whether it is a painting or statue.

Funds can also go toward the cathedral's restoration as a whole if the person prefers. On April 15, 2019, a fire broke out in the attic and completely consumed the timber roof and spire.

Cardinal Bo: 'We need the light of God's mercy in Myanmar'

● Cardinal Charles Maung Bo has urged Catholics in Burma to share God's mercy amid the suffering caused by the military coup in their country by visiting the mourning, sharing food with the starving, and praying unceasingly for peace.

"Today, more than ever, our community stands in need of mercy. Millions are starving. Before they could come out of that disaster,

the coup came. Most of our people are starving. We need to share our resources. However poor we are, we could share something. That is the sign of Divine Mercy," Cardinal Bo said in his homily on April 11.

"Hunger is not only the problem our people face: they are afraid, they are traumatised, their spirit is broken by street violence," he said.

Filipino Catholics mark country's first-ever baptism

● Cebu Archdiocese celebrated the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines by re-enacting the Spanish's baptism of local chieftains.

The April 14 re-enactment took place at the Basilica del Santo Nino in Cebu City, which is believed to be the spot where Spanish missionaries gave an image of the Child Jesus (Santo Nino) to the wife of the island's local chieftain.

On April 14, 1521, Cebu chieftain Datu Humabon and Queen Juana were baptised together with 800 locals by Spanish missionary Father Pedro Valderama.

"Cebu, our island, is considered the cradle of Christianity in the entire Philippines. Spanish missionaries gave the local population the icon of the Santo Nino or the Child Jesus as a gift," Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu said in a speech at the event.

Archbishop calls for peace after Minneapolis fatal police shooting

● After a night of protests and vandalism April 11 in Brooklyn Centre, Minnesota, following the police shooting of Daunte Wright, Archbishop Bernard Hebda of St Paul and Minneapolis urged prayers for justice and peace.

"I hope that as a community, we might be able to pause and pray, particularly during this time of already heightened tension due to the Chauvin trial," the archbishop said in an April 12 statement referring to the current trial in Minneapolis of former Police Officer Derek Chauvin.

At a news conference April 12, Brooklyn Centre Police Chief Tim Gannon, who later resigned, said it appeared from police body camera video the officer accidentally fired her gun while intending to use her Taser. The officer was later identified as Kim Potter.

Refugee resettlement 'effectively halted': Catholics implore Biden to accept more refugees

Catholic organisations expressed dismay that the United States this year could admit the lowest number of refugees in decades.

According to the International Rescue Committee, a non-profit that assists refugees, only 2,050 refugees have been admitted to the United States in the current fiscal year. Although President Biden promised to raise the limit on the number of refugees accepted by the United States, he has yet to issue the final orders to implement that.

In February, Biden pledged to raise the refugee cap to 62,500 – nearly four times the current cap of 15,000.

The Trump administration progressively lowered the ceiling for refugee acceptance to the record-low of 15,000 for the 2021 fiscal year, and reportedly admitted fewer than 12,000 refugees in 2020.

While Biden included that number in a proposed Presidential Determination – part of the administrative process for allowing refugees to come to the United States – he has yet to issue a final version of the determination. Catholic groups told CNA that they want Biden to issue a final determination.

Bill Canny, executive director of the US bishops' conference (USCCB) migration committee, told CNA last Wednesday that he is "absolutely" disappointed with the Biden administration on refugee admissions.



Migrants seeking asylum in the US are detained in Calexico, California, by Customs and Border Patrol agents April 8, 2021. Photo:CNS

"We are very disturbed that without a presidential determination, refugee resettlement has effectively been halted," Mr Canny said.

"We know that there were hundreds of refugees prepared to come to the United States," he added, but with no determination issued yet, "those refugees are not moving".

Mr Canny said that he is "certainly disturbed" by the slow pace of refugee resettlement. He said it is "not clear" why Biden has not made refugee resettlement a priority.

Mr Canny told CNA that he believes the United States can easily welcome additional refugees – and that it is the duty of a Catholic to do so.

"We believe as the Catholic Church that we need to do our part to welcome these people to our country," Mr Canny said. "And we are prepared certainly as a Church in the United States to assist and support refugees that the government allows into the country."

Catholic Relief Services has also pushed for Biden to increase the United States' refugee intake.

"We urge the administration to issue a formal Presidential Determination meeting its stated objective of increasing the number of refugee admissions this fiscal year," Bill O'Keefe, Catholic Relief Services' executive

vice president for mission, mobilisation and advocacy, told CNA last Wednesday.

Mr O'Keefe noted that refugees are "fleeing war, persecution and extreme violence," and "often lack access to adequate healthcare, housing, food and water" – conditions which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The US handpicks refugees who resettle here, and they go through multiple layers of interviews and security checks," said Mr O'Keefe. "As the world's most prosperous nation, we should be doing as much as possible to help refugees, including resettling our share of the most vulnerable."

Christian leaders in Nigeria allege Islamisation attempt

Christian leaders in Nigeria claimed April 11 that Muhammadu Buhari's government is keen on Islamising the West African nation, following the recent appointments of Court of Appeal judges.

In their statement, the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria called for "serious adjustments" on already executed appointments, and a "paradigm shift" in future appointments.

"Under the watch of President Buhari, especially throughout his first term, the Judiciary was literally an appendage of Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) because its members

were in charge of its affairs," CAN's officials said.

Making reference to the country's former Chief Justice being banned from holding public office for ten years, they added, "We all know how they removed Justice Walter Onnoghen from office without following due process".

"The grand plan of subtle Islamisation is to make a Muslim the head of every key board, committee, parastatal and put Christians under without much influence in the decision-making process in the establishment (irrespective of their number)," the Christian leaders said.

The claims of Islamisation were stirred by the March 19 recommendation of Nigeria's National Judicial Council for the appointment of Court of Appeal judges.

Following the appointments the president of CAN, Supo Ayokunle accused the country's leadership of side-lining Christians and cautioned, "If you don't take the religious, ethnic diversities into consideration, then it will be to your tents, oh Israel".

He went on to ask, "How come that all the 13 judges from the North are all Muslims"?

German legislators consider ending state payments to churches

Germany's lower house of Parliament is considering replacing state payments to the nation's two largest churches.

The Catholic and Protestant churches received combined state benefits of more than \$542 million in 2020.

At a hearing in the interior affairs committee of the Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, they welcomed in principle the intention of legislation by the opposition liberal Free Democratic Party, the Greens and the Left Party and pointed out that it was in line with a constitutional

mandate to abolish the payments, which date back to a 19th-century provision.

By contrast, a number of legal experts said an alternative bill by the Alternative for Germany party to simply phase out the benefits was unconstitutional, reported

the German Catholic news agency KNA.

The bill by the three parties aims to create the necessary framework for agreements between the federal states, which currently make the payments, and the Catholic dioceses and Protestant regional churches.



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Restoring Notre Dame de Paris



French President Emmanuel Macron, right, speaks with a worker and Gen. Jean-Louis Georgelin during a visit at the reconstruction site of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, April 15, 2021. Photo: CNS

At Vatican abuse trial, priests cast doubt on testimony of witness

Three priests associated with a minor seminary located in the Vatican testified that they neither witnessed nor were informed of suspected cases of sexual abuse occurring at the school.

Taking the stand at the Vatican City State criminal court April 14, the three priests affiliated with the St Pius X Pre-Seminary also cast doubt on the testimony of Kamil Jarzembowski, a former student who said he witnessed “dozens” of instances of abuse at the minor seminary.

Mr Jarzembowski, the first former student to speak publicly of abuse

at the seminary, told the court March 26 he saw Fr Gabriele Martinelli, who at the time was a student at the seminary, enter the dormitory room he shared with LG, the student Fr Martinelli is accused of abusing.

The abuse was said to have occurred between 2007 and 2012. Although both were under the age of 18 when the abuse was said to have begun, the court accused the priest of continuing to abuse the younger student when Martinelli, not yet a priest, was already 20.

Msgr Enrico Radice,

the former rector of the seminary, also is standing trial and is accused of hindering the investigation into the abuse allegations. The seminary and the Opera Don Folci, the religious institution that runs the minor seminary, are accused of failing to protect the young students.

Fr Angelo Magistrelli, the current rector and superior of the Opera Don Folci, testified that he was made aware of the suspected abuse only through news reports.

“No one, no one, not bishops, priests, pre-seminarians, or the women” who cook and clean at the

school “ever mentioned sexual problems” during the time the abuse was said to have occurred, Fr Magistrelli said.

The rector also described Mr Jarzembowski as a “complex character,” whose public accusations of abuse were an act “of fierce revenge”.

“Kamil was offended at having been dismissed in an undignified manner and said he had the right to finish his studies. We explained to him that due to his behaviour, he could not be readmitted. He held a grudge and promised vengeance,” Fr Magistrelli said.

Christian anthropology can renew the West, Vatican foreign minister says

It is a difficult and uncertain moment in the West, when the vision of who man is and what he is for is being questioned, and the answers proposed by society are “short-sighted,” the Vatican’s foreign minister has said.

In an interview with *Le Sfide* magazine, Archbishop Paul Gallagher said he is “cautiously optimistic” about the future of the West, and it has the best chance if based on a Christian view of humanity.

“I do not believe that the anthropological vision that wants to be affirmed in Europe will be a source of man’s spiritual renewal,” the secretary for relations with states said.

“I do not see it as a vital inspiration, rather a pragmatic option that allows people to tell themselves that they have a vision, that they have found a path,” he continued.

According to the English bishop,

the vision of man being proposed “can offer answers to certain needs of the individual but it does not make us more human. It collects in the moment an ephemeral success which cannot last over time”.

“The Christian anthropological vision, on the other hand, is much more dynamic and in conformity with reality,” he argued.

Vatican roundup

Major Vatican conference on priesthood slated for 2022

● Increasing vocations to the priesthood, improving the way laypeople and priests work together and ensuring that service, not power, motivates the request for ordination are all possible outcomes of a major symposium being planned by the Vatican in February 2022.

“A theological symposium does not claim to offer practical solutions to all the pastoral and missionary problems of the Church, but it can help us deepen the foundation of the Church’s mission,” said Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and the chief organiser of the symposium planned for February 17-19, 2022.

The symposium, “Toward a Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood”, seeks to encourage an understanding of ministerial priesthood that is rooted in the priesthood of all believers conferred at baptism, getting away from the idea of ordained ministry as belonging to “ecclesiastical power”, the cardinal said at a news conference April 12.

The three-day gathering, the cardinal said, is aimed specifically at bishops and delegations of theologians and vocations personnel from every country, although it will be open to other theologians and people interested in the topic.

Vatican’s saints office says it didn’t ask for money for beatification

● The Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of the Saints has denied an accusation that an official asked for money to advance the beatification cause of an Italian statesman.

“What was said is not true,” Fr Bogusław Turek, undersecretary of the saints congregation, wrote in an April 9 letter to the journalists of an Italian investigative news program which aired April 12.

In the episode, a postulator, whose work is to guide a diocese through the canonisation process in Rome, accused the undersecretary of asking him for a bribe in June 2018 to advance the beatification

cause of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro.

“I have never been concerned with, nor dealt with, Aldo Moro’s cause because it has not yet been presented in the Dicastery,” Fr Turek said in the letter shared by the Vatican’s press office April 13.

The Congregation said it had received notice in April 2018 that the promoters of Moro’s cause had revoked the mandate of postulator Nicola Giampaolo.

“The alleged financial request could not have been made to Mr Giampaolo in June 2018... as he was no longer a postulator,” the saints office stated.

Faith is bolstered by prayer, not power, Pope says

● Without prayer, everything crumbles and any initiatives for Church reform will just be proposals by some group and not the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis said.

“Everything in the Church originates in prayer and everything grows thanks to prayer,” the Pope said April 14 during his weekly general audience.

If there is no prayer, the Church becomes “like an empty shell” that has lost its bearings and “no longer possesses its source of warmth and love”, he said, and it ends up being made up of groups of “entrepreneurs of faith” that are well organised and busy with charitable activities but lack faith.

Continuing his series of talks on prayer, the Pope reflected on the role of the Church as a school of faith and prayer.

“The breath of faith is prayer,” the Pope said. “We grow in faith inasmuch as we learn to pray,” and over time, especially after crises or difficult periods in life, “we become aware that without faith, we could not have made it through and that our strength was prayer”.

Vocation of all Christians



The 18th-century painting entitled *Christ on the Road to Emmaus* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Christ formed a sort of synod with the two disciples on the road.

The Fourth Sunday of Easter each year is known as Vocations Sunday. The Gospel is about Jesus - the Good Shepherd - calling his flock, leading them to pasture and protecting them. We are encouraged to pray for vocations this Sunday. I have to admit that in more than 50 years preaching on this Sunday, my focus was predominantly on vocation to the priesthood, to a lesser extent on the consecrated life and in third place, on the vocation of the lay Christian.

Most of us grew up in a Church dominated by the clergy. It came as a great pain to admit that this clerical Church was not as holy as we thought. When abuses by Church personnel came to light, many treated it as an anti-Church conspiracy on television, radio and press. There was a reluctance by many Church authorities to cooperate with complainants. It took ages to admit that clericalism was at the root of covering up abuse. We were the untouchables.

A new way of being the Church

The Church of tomorrow will not be the same as the Church of the past. Whether we like it or not there will have to be a new way of being the Church. Change can be very hard to face but refusal to face reality is to die. Clerical power

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



will be greatly reduced by the serious reduction in the number of priests, at least here in Europe. The majority of priests would have to retire because of age if we were in any other profession. Even with a sudden flood of aspirants to the priesthood, it would take several years to train them for ordination. People will have to get used to clustering of parishes and a reduction in the number of Masses.

We continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life but very few new faces arrive. Is it that God is no longer calling young men and women? Or is it that people are being called but are not responding? We do not know. But it does seem clear that God is calling the Church to recognise the vocation of all baptised Christians to be missionary. More than 30 years ago, St John Paul II issued a document on the vocation and mission of the laity. His stated purpose was to stir and promote a deeper awareness among all the Faithful of the gift and responsibility they share, both as a group and

as individuals, in the communion and mission of the Church.

Issues to be faced

There are many serious issues to be discussed. Must it be obligatory for a priest to be celibate? Is it possible to have part-time priests available for Mass at weekends? These are a few of the divisive issues which might easily fester into a deep split or schism in the Church. Today's Gospel tells us that the Good Shepherd desires one flock and one shepherd. These particular issues are important, but the overriding questions ask what do we mean by Church and how do we utilise the baptismal charisms of the laity.

A synod means walking together

The method favoured by Pope Francis is to gather people in a synod, a method going back to the days of the apostles. A synod literally means walking together. He says that a synod it is not so much to forge agreement as to recognise, honour and reconcile differences on a higher plane where the best of each can be retained. The key is in mutual, respectful listening. Every journey begins in small steps and there will have to be little gatherings of people expanding into ever larger groups, parochial, diocesan and national. The reaction of many people is that this way is fraught

with danger. I would like to suggest two ideas from today's Mass readings to guide us:

The rejected stone became the keystone

The first inspiration is the identification of Jesus as the stone rejected by the builders but later recognised as the perfect fit as the keystone to hold all of life together.

“These are a few of the divisive issues which might easily fester into a deep split or schism in the Church”

When the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were walking in the wrong direction, the Risen Lord formed a little synod with them, walking, listening and sharing the light of scripture with them. He did not change the fact that Jesus was crucified on Calvary. What he did change was their way of understanding his death. For many people today the Church is irrelevant so they have walked away in another direction. My hope is that a renewed Church, closer to the ideals of the Gospel, will attract people to see in Jesus the keystone of life. There is an emptiness in the jigsaw of the heart that only God can fill. I

once read that GK Chesterton said that there were five times when the Church went to the dogs...but it was the dogs who died!

Trust in the Holy Spirit

The second inspiration is to trust in the Holy Spirit who has been poured into us through the Sacrament of Baptism. “Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children. We are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed” (1 John 3:1). Trust in the Holy Spirit who transformed the confused apostles into zealous missionaries. I repeat this little prayer many times every day: “Come, Holy Spirit, renew the heart of the Church, renew the face of the earth.”

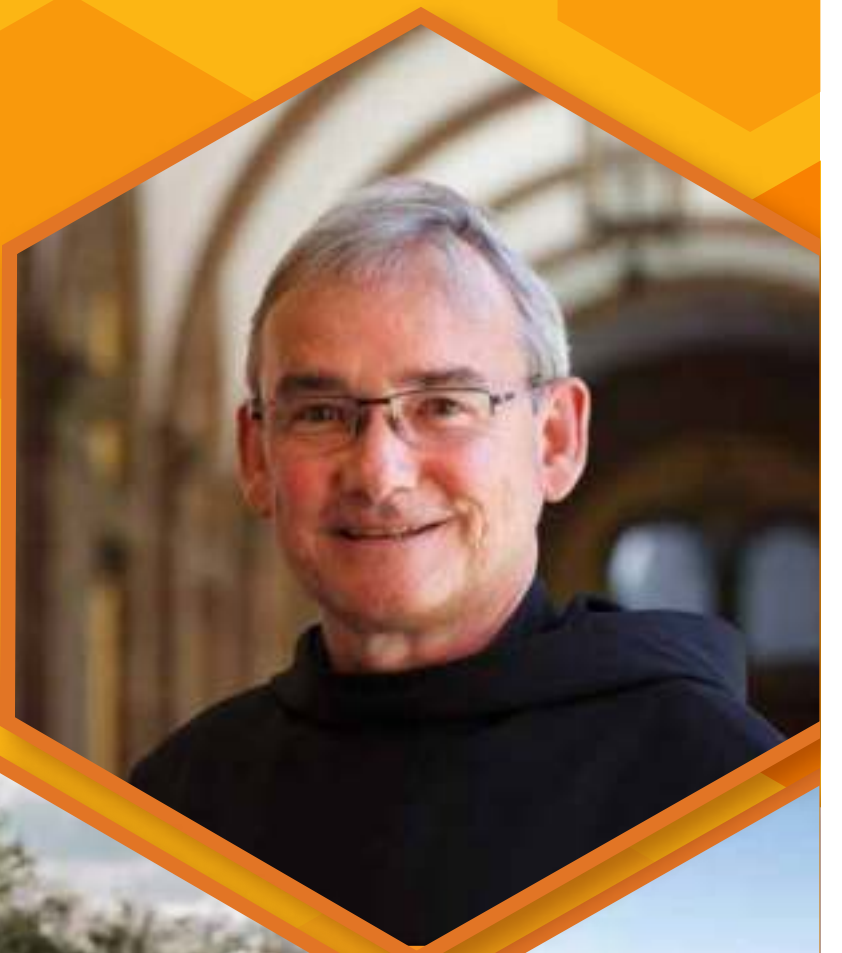
Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd, leading us, feeding us and protecting us. At the restful waters of prayer, you revive our drooping spirits. You guide us along the right path. At the banquet of the Eucharist, you restore our energy. When we walk through the valley of darkness you are there beside us. Our vocation is to hear you and follow you, Good Shepherd. Then surely, goodness and kindness will surround us all the days of our life.

The Irish Catholic

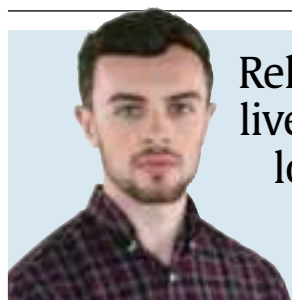
VOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT 2021

Dreams Lived Out through Service



Living the dream alongside St Joseph

Pope Francis has entrusted both this year and vocations to St Joseph, describing him as the “protector of vocations”.



Religious orders continue to live out St Joseph’s dream of love and service in Ireland and around the world, writes **Jason Osborne**

All eyes are on St Joseph this year – Pope Francis dedicated the year to him, and the topic of his message for Vocations Sunday is ‘Saint Joseph: The Dream of Vocation’. And quite the dream it is; of ordinary men and women living quiet lives of service and self-giving love, just as Jesus’ adoptive father did during his time on Earth and continues to do in Heaven.

While remaining a dream, it is being instantiated every day by religious orders in Ireland and across the world, as they carry out God’s work in the hidden places of both the world and the human heart. The pandemic has done nothing to slow the pace of this salvific work, and in some instances, has sped it up.

“Everybody has a calling in life. To realise their potential. To realise themselves in relationship with God, with other people, significant people in their lives, even relationship with the Earth.

“Then within that, some people would consider – traditionally, we’ve been calling it a religious vocation, and it is. But everybody has it is my point,” Sr Fionnuala Quinn OP, voca-

tions director of the Cabra Dominicans, tells *The Irish Catholic*.

This paper’s last vocations supplement was produced as the world adapted to pandemic conditions, everyone assuming they were in for a short ride. While it has been a difficult and entirely unexpected year of lockdown, the slower pace of life has given people opportunity to tune in to the deeper call Sr Quinn spoke of.

Inquiries

“Since the pandemic, inquiries have increased. I think it’s because people have had time to pause. Time to pause and allow the deeper questions to arise within themselves and are ready now to look at the possibility of a vocation, even though they are probably not the traditional age.

“Vocations are from older inquirers, maybe in their mid-40s, 50s,” Sr Quinn says.

“In times marked by fragility but also by the sufferings due to the pandemic, which has spawned uncertainties and fears about the future and the very meaning of life”

“Maybe they have been in the way of productive lives and establishing their identity and their careers and they have done that successfully. Then they’re looking around the corner to see, well, does this really enrich my life and does this give meaning to my life?”

Pope Francis comments that “in times marked by fragility but also by the sufferings due to the pandemic, which has spawned uncertainties and fears about the future and the very meaning of life,” the example of St Joseph “comes to meet us in his gentle way” as one of the “saints next door”.

“Everybody has a calling in life. To realise their potential. To realise themselves in relationship with God”

This accompaniment that St Joseph embodies is a virtue that Sr Quinn extols – the Dominican Sisters and female religious orders in general try to journey with women as they seek to discover the “three key words” of vocation that Pope Francis links to St Joseph: dream, service and fidelity.

“The approach that we have taken is that we are there to listen and to

discern with this person inquiring as to what God might be calling them to,” Sr Quinn explains.

Technology

Technology has played a key role in facilitating this encounter throughout the past year, Sr Quinn explains, with phone, email and Zoom in particular allowing connection at a distance.

“Because we, since the Pandemic, have gone into the Zoom era, we have found it to be very effective. It is an opportunity to meet the person face-to-face and particularly when we are about six on a Zoom call, there is an energy in that. It’s not the same as having persons into your house, but I do think it’s a very, very good means of connection.

“This past year, with the inquirers that have come, and using technology and Zoom in particular, we have been able to establish relationships of trust with inquirers. We have been able to move along the spectrum of giving them hope about what it will be like and could be like after Covid,” she says.

Just as St Joseph had to adapt to changing circumstances throughout his life alongside Jesus and Mary, so too do those following in his footsteps of service. The religious sisters have taken up the task of answering those who are calling by

whatever means they can, and as Sr Quinn says, more people seem to be asking the deeper questions than ever before.

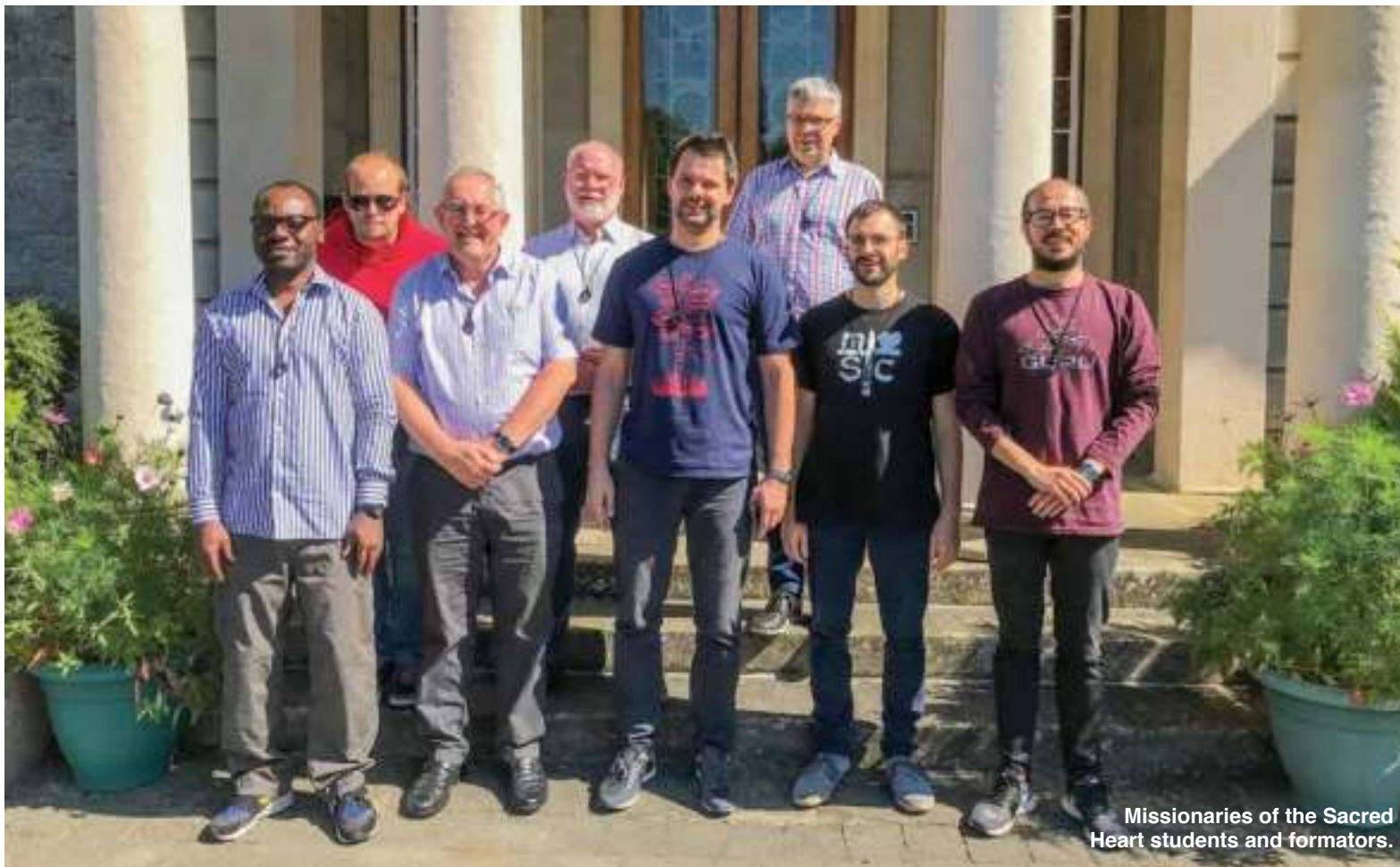
“I would encourage anybody who has a sense that there is a calling for them, that they take time to pray about it, that they research the order that they are interested in. That they name what their gifts are and see how the order matches their gifts, and how they can be of service to the Gospel,” she advises, saying that a large part of the attraction of religious life for people these days is the “balance” it offers.

“We are there to listen and to discern with this person inquiring as to what God might be calling them to”

“I think for any of us, we are looking for a balance. The balance would be looking at our relationship with God. Looking at our relationships with our families and looking at relationship with the Earth. It’s getting the balance of all of those, I think, is an attraction for people.”

Balance

Living the good life, striking the balance between human effort and God’s grace, and serving both God and man is something the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart understand well, Fr Con O’Connell, vocations director of their Irish operations tells me.



Missionaries of the Sacred Heart students and formators.



Sr Fionnuala Quinn OP

"Sometimes I think when people are thinking about vocation, they think they're not good enough or they're not big enough, or that the dream is too big. When in fact, everyone who lives a religious vocation is really just an ordinary person that God asked maybe to do some extraordinary things. But it's God who does that, it's not really us who do it," he says.

With this understanding of religious life fixed firmly in mind, it's no wonder St Joseph has always had an esteemed position in their spiritual lives.

"I know for our particular order, we've always prayed to St Joseph as the patron of all those who love the Sacred Heart. We tend to say that prayer at least once a day. We would see him very much as 'the quiet man,'" Fr O'Connell says.

And their prayers are being answered, with people inquiring about vocations in Ireland, even in the midst of the pandemic. Not as many as they would like, admittedly, but Fr O'Connell takes heart from the nine men they're discerning with, saying that their ages surprised him.

"What has surprised me, because in our own internal talking and thinking, we were saying, we're

probably going to be dealing with people who are older, who maybe are hitting middle life or who have lived a bit and are asking themselves deeper questions, but actually, I would say three of that nine would be 25 or under. And then maybe two of them would be over the 40 mark, and the others in between.

"I know for our particular order, we've always prayed to St Joseph as the patron of all those who love the Sacred Heart"

"I was surprised at the younger people because at that age, people would be more involved in living life and wouldn't be thinking. Now having said that, we would have a policy of trying to engage with people over a decent amount of time, to give them a chance to ask themselves honestly, is this really what they're looking for. There's still people asking those questions," Fr O'Connell says.

As with Sr Quinn, Fr O'Connell believes religious life, life in community, has the answers people are looking for.

"I think for ourselves, our basic answer is that the most important things in life are love and compassion and relationships"

"I think for ourselves, our basic answer is that the most important things in life are love and compassion and relationships," Fr O'Connell says.

"That people are trying to fill their lives with, say, money, power, achievement, likes on Facebook and whatever else. They still feel that there's something missing. Our response is basically a life of love, a life of service, a life of community, a life of real human relationships – that's what really satisfies the human heart. In some ways, I think most Christian groups would be saying the same thing, maybe in slightly different ways, but the heart of Christianity is love and compassion."

Model of vocation

Pope Francis chose St Joseph as the model of vocation, and so male and female religious are in the world today, taking after the great saint. The talk about love and service is not detached from reality, but rooted firmly in it, with Fr O'Connell telling of the concrete works the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart do abroad in both Venezuela and South Sudan.

"Well, even before Covid hit, I mean Venezuela was in an awful situation. The leader there is really not looking after the general populace. So even before Covid hit, you were already having massive inflation. The price of a loaf of bread was what an ordinary person would earn in a month. That was this time last year, and then Covid hits.

"In our supplement we had a few pictures, and one of them is one of our guys in Venezuela. He's handing out food to some of the neighbours. This is a man of nearly 80, who's been out there since he was 25. Some of

us think, 'You're not well, you should come home', but he's just – they're his neighbours and his friends and he's been there so long he just can't abandon them.

"We're not inclined to go in for great big general things. Our founder called us the 'Little Society' and we're much more about relating to people at a small, human level...we do our best to connect and just let them know that they're not forgotten," Fr O'Connell says, concluding, "that's all we can offer at the minute".

As in Venezuela, so in South Sudan – religious living out lives of love and service. As Fr O'Connell says, it's not about big, lavish gestures of charity, but more so about putting down roots in a place and staying there, in an effort to assure people "they're not forgotten". It's the embodiment of the "accompanying" model of ministry that Sr Quinn mentions.

"Our congregations were founded at a time when there were needs in society. And when the Dominicans were founded in 1221, the need was for good preaching. Because at that time, only bishops had the authority to preach. But if you take that down through to our time today, say Catherine McAuley, who founded the Mercy Sisters, the need in Ireland was because of extreme poverty. To take children who were orphans in and

probably children who were on the street. So, congregations have grown up according to what was happening in society and to respond to a need," Sr Quinn says, explaining the motivation that drives all religious life, including her religious brothers in the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

And motivate and drive them it does, compelling their action in South Sudan. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have a solitary man out there, but he works in communion with a Loreto sister and a wider network of religious congregations around Rumbek, educating their young people to a Leaving Certificate standard, and funding college for them, should they decide to continue their studies.

"I was surprised at the younger people because at that age, people would be more involved in living life and wouldn't be thinking"

Even in our ultra-connected world, it requires a three-day journey to get out to this isolated area, but it is all done with the aim of "just supporting and encouraging and just letting people know they're not forgotten".

Needed

This is critically needed in parts of the world that have suffered and laboured beneath violence and tensions, such as South Sudan has, for so long. Such service requires sacrifice – and sometimes it means sacrificing everything. Fr O'Connell tells me that on April 23, a number of martyrs connected to their order are due to be beatified.

"We've got three men and seven laypeople from Quiché in Guatemala from 1980-91, and they're going to be beatified on April the 23," Fr O'Connell says, continuing, "they were guys who were just doing the ordinary things and unfortunately, it was a very right-wing government at the time. Anyone

who was trying to help the poor, they labelled them as communists and socialists and they were in trouble, but they weren't doing anything remarkable. They were just going about their ordinary priestly lives of the sacraments and just helping people."

If such love and service seems too lofty an ideal, Fr O'Connell stands by Pope Francis' encouragement to dream, as St Joseph did.

"I must say, I did like the Pope's encouraging young people to dream," he says. "I'd love to encourage young people to dream and to follow their dreams, no matter how big they are."

The Pope goes on in his Vocations Sunday message to say that "Joseph's dreams led him into experiences he would never have imagined". The same is true of the modern religious vocation – if it's dared to dream, it could lead to unimaginable places. Even to God himself, a Lord who "always surprises" and "never disappoints".



Fr Con O'Connell MSC

Franciscans Friars - OFM

Living the Joy of the Gospel

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

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

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



Friars Denis Aherne and Ronan Sharply celebrated their Solemn Profession in Killarney in September last year.

words of St. Francis: "God has sent us into the whole world so that by word and deed we may bear witness to him."

All God's Creatures

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

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



Together we seek to follow the footprints of Jesus.

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

Peace and Good

Pope Francis, who chose St. Francis as his patron and model when he became Pope, said, "Francis of Assisi - for me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man



Saint Francis delighted in the Lord!

who loves and protects creation. He is the man who gives us the spirit of peace, who tells us we should work to build peace, within our hearts and among ourselves."

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

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

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We look forward to hearing from you and having a conversation. God will do the rest!
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My Life - Is This It?

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Congregation of

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If you feel that God might be calling you to be a Dominican Sister why not talk with us? We would be happy to explore with you any questions you might have.

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Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles

A Time to Listen to the Voice of God



A Time of Great Change

Every few generations there comes a time of great change. A time when the challenges faced in the world bring humanity, collectively, to the brink of despair. A time when many feel sure that “this is the end”.

For the current generations, living through the COVID-19 Pandemic, that time is now. It is undoubtedly a pivotal time in history. It is a time of suffering for so many thousands of people, not only due to the sickness caused by the Pandemic, but the knock on effects of rolling lockdowns on the world economy and on every aspect of our personal lives.

While it is surely a time of sorrow, of struggle, of frustration and of tribulation, it is also a time of profound grace. In the stillness and the isolation we cannot help but hear the voice of God, if we would only listen.

As the Communications Officer for the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, I have a front row seat into the digital world now occupied two thirds of the world’s population.

The realities of life and death are very much at the forefront of our minds. To a large degree, especially for those who have and are living through extended lockdowns, the distractions of everyday life have been curtailed and we are confronted with the, sometimes uncomfortable, cacophony of our own thoughts.

Searching for Meaning

The disruption and distancing from our “real” lives has brought into sharp focus our fragility and vulnerability. Young people, in particular are searching

for meaning, for ways to find authentic connection in a world that is by necessity physically disconnected.

Over the last year, more and more people have turned to prayer. *Statistics show that Google searches for prayer surged to the highest levels ever recorded* and some preliminary studies show that people want to continue to grow their faith once restrictions are lifted.

“The disruption and distancing from our “real” lives has brought into sharp focus our fragility and vulnerability”

Pope Francis has over 52 million followers on Twitter alone, making him the second most followed world leader after Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

There is a much deeper understanding of the importance of “we” rather than “me”, and these current times offer an opportunity for discernment fully rooted in our dependence on God. It is an opportunity for the faithful to respond to the signs of the times by engaging with people in the online spaces.

It is in times of discomfort that we question our priorities, we discover what is essential and what is merely superfluous. This is surely a time when God is asking us to listen a little more intently and inviting us to consider the deeper questions about the purpose and meaning of our lives.

Missionary Creativity

In one of his first documents, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis calls for pastoral and missionary creativity in proclaiming the Gospel. He further encourages people involved in pastoral work to eliminate outdated ways of thinking and doing. *“Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities.”* (33)

The time for that creativity is now, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles have reflected upon this pastoral creativity in the face of the tremendous challenges we are facing today. We have embraced and explored the online tools at our disposal to attend Mass, conferences and trainings, host prayer meetings and to plan and deliver Justice workshops on a variety of topics. We are called to be courageously committed to God’s reign of Peace and Justice and this call is more urgent than ever.

Join Us

We invite you to join us in God’s mission by following our social media channels and connecting with us via our website. Should you wish to attend any of our workshops, or find out any more about our work and our community please contact us via email.

www.olaireland.ie
info@olaireland.ie

Ardfoyle Convent, Ballintemple, Cork

Facebook: OLA sisters | Twitter: @OLAireland | Instagram: OLA sistersireland



Sharing in Our Mission

Interested in volunteering overseas?

Email: volunteering@olaireland.ie

Interested in joining our Lay Mission Movement?

Email: imm@olaireland.ie

Do you feel God is calling you to be an OLA sister

Email: vocations@olaireland.ie

POOR CLARES CORK

In his recent book, *“Let us Dream”*, Pope Francis encourages us to allow this very challenging time of pandemic to be a period of growth and discernment in our lives, a time for us as followers of Jesus, to look anew at our busy lives and to see if we need to make changes. He writes about his own experience of a very serious respiratory illness as a young man in Argentina: he describes it as a personal “Covid” time and how it became for him a time of reflection. (Already a diocesan seminarian, at this time he discerned a calling to become a religious with the Jesuits.)

St. Francis of Assisi too had his “Covid” times, during which suffering matured him and led him to give his life to God. He inspired our foundress St. Clare, in 1212, to follow his Gospel dream.

Pope Francis says to us, and especially to young people, for whom he has a special love and interest: “Most of all we need prayer, to hear the prompts of the Spirit... We need too a healthy capacity for silent reflection, knowing we are loved by God, called to be a people in service and solidarity.”

The life of a Poor Clare Sister is a life of prayer and compassion and service in the Church. We pray for the whole world and especially for those who are suffering, whether that is due to the pandemic or due to poverty, war, illness or any other cause. As enclosed contemplatives, prayer is central to our lives and here, in the Cork Poor Clare Monastery, we are privileged to have daily Eucharistic Adoration. Living in community we try to fulfil the Lord’s command to: “Love one another” and we strive to do this too by our life of prayer, day and night.



Sr Faustina at Adoration



From left to right, Sr Anthony Mary, Sr Francis, Sr Clare, Sr Miriam and Sr Faustina



Sr Colette Marie, Sr Clare, Sr Faustina and Sr Anthony Mary pictured in the garden

If you are interested and think God may be calling you to the life of a Poor Clare Sister, take some time to dream about it! And feel free to contact us by post: Poor Clares, College Road, Cork or by email: vocationspoorclarescork@gmail.com

God bless you



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A Call of the Heart



Vocation literally means a calling. Jules Chevalier, a young Frenchman, born in 1824, heard God calling him to live his Christian life in the service of others. In his life and time that led him first to the diocesan seminary, then to a parish in central France and eventually to founding a religious movement that would spread to over 50 countries across the World.

One part of this movement was a group of priests and religious brothers called the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. This movement also included two groups of religious women the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the MSC Sisters. Over the years other religious groups sprang from this movement. Other branches from this tree were groups of lay men and women inspired by Chevalier's vision. That vision was of a World ruled by love. From the heart of Christ Chevalier saw a new World emerging. "From the pierced heart on Calvary I see a new world emerging, And this creation, so fertile, full of grandeur, and inspired by love and mercy, is the Church, the mystical body of Christ which makes this new creation present on Earth."

Love of God

Chevalier's vision came from his personal experience of the unconditional love of God. That is to say that God puts no conditions on His love for us. God does not say, I will only love you if you do this or when you do that. God loves us before we do anything. Chevalier experienced this love during a retreat in the seminary. He wanted to share this love with everyone. (Hence the MSC motto, May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.) From this experience came a desire to love others as fully as he had been loved by God. This same desire is expressed in the First Letter of St. John,

*"My dear people
Since God has loved us so
much
We too should love one
another" (1. Jn. 11)*

For Chevalier this way of loving required him to embrace the call to be the Heart of God in his World. Being a person of heart involves working for truth, justice and peace. Above all, for Chevalier, this way of being in the World is based on compassion. Literally this means empathising with the suffering of others and allowing our heart to go out to them. Chevalier in his day worked with a lot of people who had lost faith in life, love and God through their experiences of

war and revolution in the France and Europe of his time.

In Ireland one of the places the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) work is Killinarden in West Dublin. It is in one of the ten poorest local areas in the country. We have ministered in the parish here for more than 40 years. One of our brothers Giacomo Gelardi MSC (pictured below) works with some of those in greatest need in the area. Giacomo writes of his work in Killinarden.

"The issues encountered in Killinarden range from material and financial poverty, to unemployment; from joyriding, to drug dealing; from poor mental health, to families shattered by addiction with resulting child neglect or, worse, abuse.

As everyone is God's child and has the right to a dignified life, we make sure that there is enough food and heating in the house; in some occasions we have also provided furniture. At the same time we offer a safe place to talk, to listen to as well as to encourage, and if necessary to refer people to experts and professionals.

“These strange times may be inviting you to reassess your relationship with God and with God's world”

During the school closure in the lockdown, there has been a high risk that children might miss out on their daily hot meal. Thus, supported by the local Gaelscoil, we began to provide food hampers to the most disadvantaged families. 'Masked up' and sanitiser in hand, we shop, pack and deliver. This is also an opportunity for outreach, to keep the relationship with the families alive, otherwise this would be next to impossible due to the restrictions. In most cases we are the only people knocking at the door and willing to exchange a few words and listen to their stories. People do not miss the chance to let out their frustration, tiredness and anger due to the isolation”.

Giacomo Gelardi MSC



As a World we have been through a hard year. We have witnessed the devastating impact of the virus on families, on businesses, schools and the very fabric of our society. Many families have experienced the death of a loved one, finding it difficult to fully grieve their loss. Social isolation and financial insecurity have caused deep distress, undermining health and well-being.

God calling us

In the midst of all this difficulty can we hear the voice of God calling us? Calling us to reassess our priorities in life? Calling us to treat one another better, to treat the Earth better?

These strange times may be inviting you to reassess your relationship with God and with God's world. Perhaps you have experienced the loss of a loved one. Perhaps you find yourself grieving, confused and unsure of what life is all about. Perhaps the pandemic has made you reassess your life and to ask, what am I being asked to do with my life? You are not alone in your wondering and confusion. Often the beginning of a call of God, a vocation, comes in the midst of change and confusion. It may be that you are being invited to find the meaning of your life among like-minded people and to live and serve God as a member of a religious order. As Missionaries of the Sacred Heart we try to respond to God's call with hope, with generosity and above all, with love.



Asking the right questions during ‘vocations crisis’



Fr Colm Mannion OP

Born in Birr, Co. Offaly, I didn't come in contact with the Dominican Order until I moved to Dublin in my early 20's. After some years involved with the Legion of Mary, I eventually received the grace to put myself forward for the priesthood. While it took some years for me to take that step (I was 28 when I eventually entered), I can honestly say that from the day I first received the Dominican habit I never had any serious doubts about my vocation. After completing my studies in St. Saviours Priory, Dublin, I was ordained to the priesthood in 2014. I then went on to do further studies at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington DC. After three years in the United States, I came home to Ireland and was asked to take on the role of vocations director for the Irish Dominican Province.

Priesthood

There are two reactions I typically get when I tell people that my role

as a Dominican is to promote vocations to the priesthood. First, there are those who will say something like 'that's a very demanding job, you must be incredibly busy'. Then there are those who will throw me a strange look and say something to the effect of 'you must be twiddling your thumbs all day, sure there's nobody interested in the priesthood anymore'!

“Too many people today talk about the ‘vocation crisis’ as if it’s a numbers game”

Although these two responses may seem polar opposites I believe they are often rooted in the same source. That is, many people in Ireland today assume that the time of religious vocations has passed. They therefore conclude that the job of a vocations director is either impossibly demanding or else just a complete waste of time to begin with. I disagree with this common assumption. Encouraging young people to consider religious life is certainly not a waste of time, and while it does require some effort, nothing should be seen as impossible where God is concerned (see Lk 1:37).

As a Province, the Irish Dominicans have proved that vocations are still to be found in this country. Last September for example we saw four men take the first step and enter our novitiate in St Mary's Priory, Cork. That brings the total number of men in formation for the Dominicans in Ireland up to 13, with more currently working on their applications to enter this year. Admittedly, that may not sound like a lot when compared to days gone by. But, remember that our Lord told St. Peter to 'feed my sheep' (Jn 21:17); He never said 'count my sheep'! Therein lies an important distinction. It's about food, not numbers. Or we could say substance, not abstractions.

Vocation crisis

Too many people today talk about the 'vocation crisis' as if it's a numbers game. Think of the questions that always arise whenever the topic is discussed: 'how many are entering the seminaries?', 'will it be necessary to invite more priests from foreign countries?', 'would the pool of potential candidates not double if the Church ordained women?'. A separate article would be needed to address each of those proposals (particularly that last one!). Here, I simply want to make the point that we will never find the right answers if we don't even know how to ask the right questions.

The challenges facing the Church cannot be solved like a maths problem. Of course we need to be realistic and take practi-

“The Church will surpass every challenge so long as we have faithful priests who love the Church as Christ loves His Bride”

cal steps when planning for the future. But no young man is ever going to commit his life to serving the Church if only to 'fill the gap' in a parish. By allowing ourselves to get distracted by statistics (concerning tough they may be) we miss the essential point. The Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is both a natural and a supernatural entity. Thus we need to take concrete steps, but always through the eyes of faith.

Instead of talking about how we can get 'more' priests, perhaps it's time to turn the conversation back to what it means to be a priest. What does it mean to act in Persona Christi? This in turn will prompt us to ask how can we guide young men in prayer and help them develop a loving relationship with our Lord. Where can seminarians get solid formation with authentic Catholic teaching? How can we support men to become priests of heroic virtue and holiness? These

are the type of questions that we need to start asking.

Holy priests

The Church will surpass every challenge so long as we have faithful priests who love the Church as Christ loves His Bride. That concept will probably sound strange to many Catholics today. But we don't just need 'more priests'; we need 'holy priests', men who are willing to lay down their lives for love of Jesus and His Church. The good news is that these men are out there! Perhaps not in great numbers, but it's not just about quantity. The Lord has promised to remain with us so long as two or three gathered in His name (Mt. 18:20). In faith we pray that the Lord will continue to send labourers into His harvest.

To learn more about the Dominicans, visit their website www.irishdominicanvocations.com.



THE BENEDICTINE NUNS

KYLEMORE ABBEY®

*You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."
(Psalm 27,8).*

The Benedictine Community of nuns was founded at Ypres in Belgium in the year 1665, and moved to Kylemore, Connemara, Co. Galway, in 1920.

At present we are a community of 10 nuns, each called at some point in her personal history to give herself to God in a life of prayer and service lived according to the Rule of St. Benedict, which gives wise and profound guidelines for such a life.

Our Prayer

The Benedictine motto "Ora et Labora", (Pray and Work), summarises the direction of our daily life and mission. Prayer has to be the core activity of Christian life, and the Rule of St. Benedict structures the life of the monks in such a way that awareness of the presence of God in life and in the world is at the centre of community life and work.

Through commitment to a life of prayer, nuns and monks are contributing to the prayer-life of the Christian Church as the Body of Christ. We come together several times throughout the day to celebrate the liturgy of the Church, – Mass and the Divine Office – which is also our community prayer: reading and singing the ancient Psalms and meditating on Holy Scripture, like generations of Benedictines have done before us. The daily timetable allows ample time for personal prayer, reading and study, which nurture the life of faith and lead to an ever-deepening relationship with God.

Our Work

The Rule of St. Benedict requires that a community should do its own work and earn its living. Our everyday work consists apart from housekeeping duties, of music teaching, soap-, can-

dle- and chocolate-making, monastic hospitality and retreat activities, as well as involvement in the administrative and conservation work of the Kylemore Trust and the running of the visitor destination Kylemore Abbey and Gardens.

One of the core values guiding us is Stewardship – looking after the Kylemore Estate and everything it encompasses with care and diligence and striving after environmental sustainability in the spirit of Pope Francis' encyclical letter "Laudato Si".

WEBCAM

Not being able to welcome guests or tourists to join us for prayer in our monastic church because of the Pandemic, we have recently begun to stream our daily mass and some other prayer services through webcam, see <https://www.kylemoreabbey.com/monastic-church-webcam/>



Vocation Story Sr. Jeanne

When I was 24 years old, a few months after I had started to work on my doctorate in Physical Chemistry in my native country Germany, something stirred me to face seriously the question of the aim of my life: did I want to pursue an academic career? look for a job? get married? A few times previously it had crossed my mind to wonder if I was maybe called to the religious life, but the thought had always faded away again. Now it returned. Should I become a nun?

I met a few people who had found clarity about their vocation in Taizé, so I decided to take part in a one-week trip to this community of monks in France, hoping to find an answer in prayer there. During the veneration of the Holy Cross icon on Friday evening, I felt quite clearly that God wanted me to become a Religious.

I had no idea what sort of community I should join. Somehow a contemplative



community seemed to be out of the question for me, because I thought that only in an active community would I be able to serve God with the talents he had given me. So when I had finished my doctorate, I entered a Missionary Benedictine Congregation. 12 years later, when a meeting

of young Benedictine women brought me to Kylemore Abbey in Ireland, the question came up again. Is a contemplative life the form I am being called to after all? After several years of discernment I finally became a full member of Kylemore Abbey on the Feast of St Brigid 2021.

CONTACT: VOCATIONS, KYLEMORE ABBEY, Connemara, Co. Galway H91VR90

✉ vocations@kylemoreabbey.ie 🌐 www.kylemoreabbey.com and follow us on Instagram @kylemorepax



Who are the Capuchins? As Franciscans we are part of a larger family of Catholic friars, sisters and dedicated laypeople founded by St.'s Francis and Clare of Assisi in the 1200's.

The Capuchins came about when in the 1500's a group of those friars decided to seek a more radical following of the Gospel according to the original spirit of St. Francis. Becoming known for their distinctive hooded habit, rough cord and bare feet, they chose a life based on contemplative prayer, gospel poverty lived in simple brotherhood, care for the poor and respect for all creation.

We still choose that life today. Could you?

The Capuchins in Ireland:

Since our arrival in 1616 we have served the Irish people during some of the most difficult times in their history. To this day the Irish Capuchins are working as "brothers of the people" by living the good news of the Gospel, reaching out to those on the margins who are in need and by extending the gift of peace to one and all. Today we are present in Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Carlow and Donegal, with missions in Zambia, South Africa and South Korea.

Any famous Capuchins I would know?

Perhaps the most famous of our saintly brothers is St. Pio of Pietrelcina in Italy. Padre Pio as he was known became renowned for the many miracles and healings that took place through his prayers and for the hospital he founded for the relief of the sick and poor. He



Rebuilding the Church, Serving those in need, Brothers to all

was the first priest to receive the Stigmata, (the visible wounds of Christ's passion), which he bore for 50 years as a witness to Christ's love for all of us. Many Irish people still seek his prayers and intercession with the Lord.

“Two periods of silent meditation, the Divine Office, the Rosary, Lectio Divina and time in adoration are always part of the prayer schedule of the friary”

As well as St. Pio we have been gifted with many saintly and good brothers down through the years. In Ireland the most famous of these was the "Apostle of Temperance" Fr. Theobald Mathew, who did so much for the relief of the poor. His statue can be seen in both Cork and Dublin city centre.

What work do you do?

While according to the vision of St. Francis our primary work is the simple living out of Gospel brotherhood together we also have many and varied apostolates. Preaching, teaching, chaplaincies to hospitals and hospices, parish work, working with young people, leading prayer groups, ministry to immigrants, online ministry, guiding prayer and retreats and working with the homeless are all part of our Capuchin way of reaching out to our brothers and sisters and building the Kingdom with them.

What's your prayer life like?

Our day, like our life as friars, begins and ends with prayer.

Two periods of silent meditation, the Divine Office, the Rosary, Lectio Divina and time in adoration are



always part of the prayer schedule of the friary, the crowning moment of which is the celebration of the Mass together each day. It is there we meet our Eucharistic Lord and from there that we draw the grace and help necessary for our life as brothers and our ministry to the people. It was said of St. Francis that he did not so much pray as become prayer. That is what every friar aspires to, while being invited and supported to journey ever more deeply into the way of prayer by the fraternity.

Regular times of retreat are also encouraged and made available to all the brothers.

You're all "brothers" but some of you say Mass, how does that work?

The Capuchins returned to the original vision of St. Francis that the Order would be a "fraternity" a group of brothers living as equals and sharing Gospel life together. Francis, while ordained a Deacon, was never a priest himself. While many of the friars are ordained

priests all the friars are equal by profession of the three vows we take to become Capuchins; namely Chastity, Poverty and Obedience. It is this profession that makes you a Capuchin. After that you may feel called to priesthood or to non-ordained ministry. This will be discerned with the community during formation.

What is Formation?

Formation is that period of time spent training as a friar and "discerning" or seeking out as to whether this way of life is for you or not. During this time you will have the experience of living and working with the friars and growing in commitment to the Capuchin Franciscan way while being guided by brothers specially trained to help you make your decision. From Postulancy, (the first stage of formation) to taking perpetual vows usually takes about 8 years.

Making Contact...

A vocation is a mysterious thing! It needs to be discerned carefully and



with an open heart. If any of the above has caught your interest or even just your curiosity take some time to read over it, to pray, and research a bit more. You can find out all about the Irish Capuchins at www.capuchinfranciscans.ie and then get in touch by dropping an email to Br Richard on capuchinvocation@gmail.com

“Whatever else may come of that first step you can be sure you will meet a brother”

Pope Francis Gives New Impetus to Religious Brothers Today:

A fresh look at the vocation of the Religious Brother in the world today

Martin Kenneally,
Presentation Brothers.

One of the highlights of Pope Francis' visit to Ireland in August 2018 was his visit to the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin's inner city. There, on a daily basis, Brother Kevin Crowley, a freeman of the city, and his team of helpers provide parcels of food, cooked meals, a space to dine and chat for hundreds of people in need of a helping hand or social companionship. The Centre offers the, 'All are welcome. No questions asked' kind-of-hospitality. Pope Francis seemed very at home among a team of sisters and brothers in solidarity with those most in need.

In his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis draws on the inspiration of his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi to inspire the world at this time of crisis. The document, along with the fraternal witness of the pontiff himself, points to an opportunity for the whole Church to take a fresh look at the need for all to live as 'brothers' (and 'sisters') in order for humanity to flourish in our Post-Covid world. For Religious Brothers, Francis' vision brings into relief the gift that their vocation of Brotherhood has to offer the world at a time of unprecedented crisis and at time when the future of our common home (planet Earth) is under threat.

"The vocation of the Brother is part of the answer that God gives to the absence of brotherhood which is wounding the world today."

Vocation...Prayer, Community, Service

We, Religious Brothers, live in community, pray together daily, and exercise a ministry of service in line with the charism of the Founder. Some of us choose to join communities wholly made up of Brothers. Others choose to join communities whose members include both Brothers and priests living and working together for the mission of the Church.

Religious Brothers continue to impact so many lives for the better. And it does not go unnoticed. One fitting tribute to one such Brother can be found in the pages of *The Tablet* last year (17 October 2020). BBC Foreign Correspond-

ent and award-winning journalist, Fergal Keane, writes movingly of the inspiration and mentoring that his teacher, Presentation Brother Jerome Kelly provided in his life from his teenage years to adulthood, in his native Cork.

Identity and Mission

A wonderful affirmation of the Brother's vocation can be found in a document entitled *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL, Feast of St Francis, October 4th, 2015). This document will reward any reader, but especially those who are committed to brotherhood in spirit and/or in practice as a vocational pathway.

It reminds us that from the early centuries of Christianity, the consecrated life has been composed predominantly of lay members – women and men who yearned to live the Gospel in a radical way. It celebrates the way in which "the title of brother/sister underlies the common dignity and fundamental equality of all believers", (*Congregation for instituted of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church, Vatican, October 4th, 2015, Par.1*). It affirms the vocation of the Religious Brother as one who "represents a significant way of being in the ecclesial community, in which he is the prophetic memory of Jesus-Brother" Moreover, the document sees the presence of the vocation of the Religious Brother in the Church as calling the whole Church community to a greater sense of brotherhood and sisterhood.

"The vocation of the Brother is part of the answer that God gives to the absence of brotherhood which is wounding the world today."

Pope Francis has spoken of the need for the Church not to be self-referential but to be present among people, especially the wounded and suffering people as one would be present in a field hospital. In this regard, the vocation of the Brother can be seen to extend beyond the boundaries of the Church. In fact, in the view of the *CICLSAL document*, "the vocation of the Brother is part of the answer that God gives to the absence of brotherhood which is wounding the world today." (Par. 6).

Drawing on the words of Pope Francis, the document from CICLSAL continues: "Brotherhood ... is the pearl that Religious Brothers culti-



We believe that "What the world needs today are heralds of the gospel who are experts in humanity, who are familiar with their emotions, who can share them with others and at the same time are contemplatives who have fallen in love with God." (Pope John Paul II)

vate with special care. In this way they are for the Church community, a prophetic memory of its origin and an encouragement to return to it". (Par. 11).

Pope Francis' high regard for Brothers

The CICLSAL document also appeals to bishops and priests to encourage and promote knowledge and appreciation of the vocation of the Religious Brother in the local Churches. It asks that they promote this vocation especially in youth ministry. This might be one further concrete step in advancing Pope Francis' dream for a more fraternal Church.

From what we know Francis has a high regard for Religious Brothers. In an interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro SJ, the Pope was asked of his experience of Brothers in the Society of Jesus and of how those with the vocation to be Brother could be attracted to the Society. His reply is enlightening:

My experience with the brothers has always been very positive. The brothers I lived with during my time as a student were wise men, very wise [...] And I think this has to be preserved – the wisdom, that special quality of wisdom that comes from being a brother.... (*Pope Francis with Antonio Spadaro; Open to God, Open to the World, Bloomsbury, Continuum, London, 2018, P.101*).

At the conclusion of *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis cites the example of Blessed Charles de Foucauld who "made a journey of transformation towards feeling a brother to all." (*Fratelli Tutti, Par.286*). The Pope recalls how, "Blessed Charles ... expressed his desire to feel himself a brother to every human being, and asked a friend to 'pray to God that I truly be the brother of all'. Yet only by identifying with the least did he come at last to be the brother of all. May God inspire that dream in each one of us." (*Fratelli Tutti, Par. 287*).

A Special Witness in our Post-Covid World

It has been said that if the message of *Laudato Si* is that "Everything is connected", the message of *Fratelli Tutti* is that "Everyone is connected". (*Christopher Lamb, A better way is possible, The Tablet, 10 October 2020, P. 4*). The vocation of the Religious Brother has a particular witness and contribution to offer in this regard. Now is the time for a fresh assessment of the gift of Religious Brotherhood to the Church and world of our time.

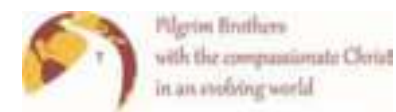
Invitation

I invited young men who are seeking a deeper spiritual meaning and challenge in life to consider the vocation of the Religious Brother. If you are interested in having a chat or in finding out more about this, you are very welcome to contact:

Br. Barry Noel, Vocation Director
for the Presentation Brothers:

087 7519794

barrynoel@presentationbrothers.org



As Presentation Brothers, "We see our religious life as a journey in faith and an adventure in hope. The Blessed Virgin Mary who is close to us as disciples of her Son helps us to deepen that faith and strengthen that hope." (Constitution #7)

COME JOIN US ON THIS JOURNEY!



Loreto Sisters in Ireland
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Serving Christ in a Spirit of
Justice Freedom Joy Sincerity Truth



The Loreto Crest is the cherished symbol worn by students in Loreto schools throughout the world.

The Latin words at the top of the crest 'Maria Regina Angelorum' (Mary Queen of the Angels) identify Mary, the mother of God as the loving mother who protects all those who call out to her and her Son.

The words at the bottom of the crest, again in Latin, 'Cruci dum spiro fido' translate as 'While I live I trust in the Cross'.

There are four symbols within the crest – the Cross, the Anchor, the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

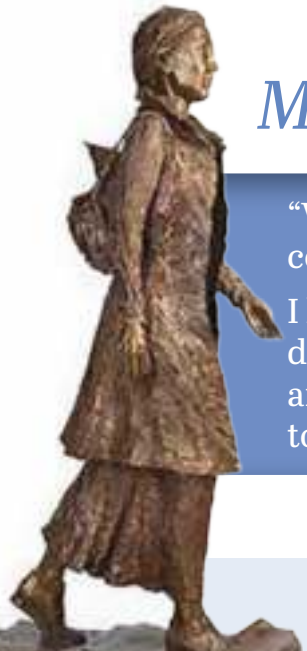
The Cross symbolises our faith in Jesus Christ.

The Anchor is a symbol of hope.

The Hearts of Jesus and Mary symbolise their constant love for us.

This year we celebrate the bicentenary of Loreto Sisters in Ireland. Our story began in 1609 when Mary Ward with a group of companions, founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary whose mission was the education of girls.

Teresa Ball was educated in the Bar Convent York which was founded by Mary Ward's Sisters. Later she joined the Novitiate and made her profession there. Then on August 12th 1821 Teresa Ball and two Novices returned from York to found a house of the Institute in Dublin at the request of Archbishop Murray. She chose the name 'Loreto' for her first house.



Mary Ward

"Women in time to come will do much I listened to God's deep dream for me and felt a longing to respond"



Frances Teresa Ball

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you"



For more information on the Loreto Sisters, please visit www.loreto.ie.
To explore a vocation, please contact Sr Marie on mariecarr.ibvm@gmail.com.



THE
SPIRITANS

Come
and
follow
us

"They left
everything
and followed
him"

Luke 5:11

Let
us
follow
him

Fr Paddy Moran C.S.Sp. is the
Vocations Director for the Spiritans in Ireland.

For more information on becoming a Spiritan missionary his e-mail is youth@spiritan.ie

www.spiritans.ie

Letters

Letter of the week

Fears of young Catholics about watering down doctrine

Dear Editor, I was delighted to see the extensive coverage given by *The Irish Catholic* last week to the concerns of orthodox young Catholics who are worried that the up-coming national synod will be the occasion for watering down doctrine. I too share their worries, especially looking at what is happening in Germany and their 'Synodal Way'.

One issue sure to be fought over in the Irish Catholic synod is the ordination of women to Holy Orders. I was disappointed and concerned, therefore, to read Dr Jessie Rogers say in response to the question of women's ordination, "I'm

sure that at some stage it will be the right time to open up that all again". Is Dr Rogers suggesting that the Church's doctrine on Holy Orders is not to be fully assented to as settled and definitive Catholic doctrine? This would be particularly odd, darkly ironic in fact, coming from someone who has just been made Dean of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, which houses the national seminary.

Perhaps I'm misinterpreting Dr Rogers' brief answer, and, if so, I'll happily accept correction. Perhaps she is saying only that there is potential for lay Catholic women, as lay members

of the Church, to exercise appropriate and orthodox leadership in the Church. If so, then I'm in complete agreement with her, adding only that lay Catholic men also should be challenged and supported in developing and exercising their appropriate and orthodox leadership roles! Let's hope the national synod promotes this along with fully and firmly promoting the Catholic sacraments and faith.

*Yours etc.,
Dr John Murray
Lecturer in Theology, Dublin City
University, Dublin*

Church must maintain rural Catholic communities

Dear Editor, It was sad to see in *The Irish Catholic* [IC 08/04/2021] Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe saying that there is a very real possibility that many small, rural churches face closure due to the pandemic and depopulation.

He rightly says that the communities in these rural areas are tight knit and the community spirit there is unparalleled – particularly when compared to urban areas. Although I understand there are financial realities that must be addressed and an aging demographic of priests, there must be something we can do to assist the Faithful living the rural way of life. People in these small towns and villages have a strong faith and they will be left behind. Bishop Fintan says that banks, shops, post offices etc.. are all closing down in these communities, even schools and GAA clubs are becoming unsustainable, so in many ways I understand that as many amenities leave so too will people, but if I know anything of the missionary spirit of Irish people the churches should stand strong and open despite



the challenges.

Perhaps that is a romantic idea, but if a missionary priest in the middle of nowhere in Zimbabwe is able to build a church and a congregation, surely in

Ireland we can maintain churches that are already built?

*Yours etc.,
Catherine Flynn
Celbridge, Co. Kildare*

'They are not conservative they are faithful'

Dear Editor, Both Michael Kelly and Fr Eamonn Bourke make wise observations about the synod in the Irish Church [IC 08/04/2021].

The terms 'conservative' and 'liberal' do not belong in any consideration of our Faith. St Bernadette Soubirous was asked, when Prussia was set to invade France in 1870, if she was afraid? Her reply was, "I only fear bad Catholics".

There are two types of Catholic – faithful and bad. I did not say 'good' Catholics,

for most faithful Catholics fall often in sin and need God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance.

Bad Catholics are found in the highest places in the Church and society. These are the kind who attempt to blur the clear divisions God has set between light and darkness (II Corinthians 6:14).

The Church is given the mission of preaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Our baptism calls us to be faithful to Christ and to follow Him even though

discipleship is demanding and difficult.

If there is to be a synod, it must not seek to impress the world or compromise with it. The message of the Cross is illogical to them that are perishing. We must nevertheless preach Christ crucified (I Corinthians 1:18-23). God the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

People will repent and be converted or they will choose to reject the message. We don't change the message but we insist upon it – welcome

or unwelcome (II Timothy 4:2). It is not our concern what the world wants or expects.

As Fr Bourke points out, there are a growing number of young people being drawn to the truth of the Catholic Faith. As Michael Kelly says, they are not to be patronised. They are to be cherished and encouraged. They are not 'conservative'. They are faithful.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Patrick McCafferty,
Belfast, Co. Antrim*

Understanding God's will after 20th Century horrors

Dear Editor, I would like to preface my letter by explaining that I have a licence to teach theology, specifically spirituality, in a Catholic seminary. In my years of study one tract that stood out was *Conformity to the Will of God* by Alphonsus de Liguori. This sublime booklet summarises traditional teaching that we reach holiness by conforming to God's will in everything that happens to us.

The theory is splendid, but I was left

with a nagging question: does it really still speak to us today after the horrors of the 20th Century, such as Auschwitz, the Gulag archipelago, the killing fields of Cambodia? Can such ordeals really represent the unfolding of the will of God for the victims?

I was surprised and delighted to get my answer in a book that was recently given to me: *He Leadeth Me* by Fr Walter Cizek SJ. The author writes out of a lived experience of 15 years in one of the toughest Gulags

in Siberia, following five years in the notorious Lubianka prison in Moscow (during World War II). He not only survived but thrived through his practice of aligning his will with the unfolding will of God. I can highly recommend carefully reading, even studying, both these works for a master-class in authentic Christian spirituality.

*Yours etc.,
Colm Fitzpatrick
Castleknock, Dublin 15*

facebook community

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

The older brothers (and sisters) and the coming national synod

There's no particular reason to have a synod in Ireland at this point. There are a number of things we could be doing better in the Church but I'm not sure a synod will achieve those things.

– **Adam Conroy**

This synod is a huge mistake. It will only create a platform for those who want to undermine core Church teachings. Forming a programme to find ways to energise young people who are not actively involved in Church would be time and effort better spent in my opinion. – **Martin Gillick**

At the moment they would be better concentrating on giving support to priests to open their church to Mass for the faithful.

– **Patrick J Cowley**

Dying with Dignity Bill offers easy way out but no answers

Like abortion, this is a highly emotive issue. Under the influence of emotion, we can lose sight of that powerful statement of Hubert Humphrey: "the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped." What appears to be a reasonable position can be very damaging in the long term. The 1967 Abortion Act in Britain allowed abortion under very strict regulations, but the law of gradualness meant that once the sanctity of life in the womb is diminished it results in situations where abortion is now allowed in cases where the pregnancy is a mere inconvenience. Euthanasia can go down the same road if we are not careful. – **Brendan Kennedy**

Small rural churches face closure due to pandemic and depopulation

So sad to see this but a sign of the times we live in. –

Margaret Hartnett

What's also sad is that you often find that it is these small rural churches are more attractive, homely, enticing and welcoming than the larger church buildings. – **Michael Foley**

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

Dropping terms like 'conservative' and 'liberal'

Dear Editor, In your editorial [IC 8/04/2021] you described the reaction of a priest friend when you relayed to him comments made by young Catholics regarding the coming synod.

His immediate response to their concerns, chills me: "But they're all conservative," he said.

Until we drop the labelling 'conservative' and 'liberal' and think and talk about 'Spirit-led' people instead, it doesn't bode well. The first reading from the second Sunday of Easter says: "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul."

Perhaps we should have a national, Catholic picnic first!

*Yours etc.,
Judith Leonard
Raheny, Dublin*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



The origin of our conflicts and differences

Why do sincere people so often find themselves at odds with each other? The issue here is not about when sincerity meets insincerity or plain old sin. No. The question is why sincere, God-fearing people can find themselves radically at odds with each other.

“Among other things, it can help us understand what’s at the root of many of the conflicts between sincere people and why we have a lot of religious differences”

There’s an interesting passage in Nikos Kazantzakis’ autobiography that intimates far more than it reveals at first glance. Commenting on Greek mythology and the many conflicts there among the gods and goddesses, Kazantzakis writes this: “The heroes in ancient Greek tragedies were no more or less than Dionysus’s scattered limbs, clashing among themselves. They clashed because they were fragments. Each represented only one part of the deity; they were not an intact god. Dionysus, the intact god, stood invisible in the center of the tragedy and governed the story’s birth, development, and catharsis. For the initiated spectator, the god’s scattered limbs, though battling against one another, had already



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

been secretly united and reconciled within him. They had composed the god’s intact body and formed a harmony.”

In Greek mythology, the supreme god, Dionysus, was intact, containing all the scattered pieces of divinity that took particular incarnations in various gods, goddesses, and human persons. Inside Dionysus, the intact god, there was harmony, everything fitted together, but everywhere else various pieces of divinity wrestled and sparred with each other, forever in tension and in power struggles.

Fertile metaphor

That image is a fertile metaphor shedding light on many things. Among other things, it can help us understand what’s at the root of many of the conflicts between sincere people and why we have a lot of religious differences.

What is the root cause when people are at odds with each other and there is no insincerity or sin involved, when both parties are honest and God-fearing? Today we speak of ideological differences,

historical differences, political differences, and personal history as to why sincere people often see the world differently and are at odds with each other. We have a language for that. However, I’m not sure our current language (for all its sophistication) captures the heart of this as clearly as does that particular metaphor inside Greek mythology. In the end, aren’t we all grabbing our own piece of God and making it the be all and end all, without accepting that those we are fighting also have a piece of God, and we have divinity fighting divinity?

Boiled down to its root, isn’t that what lies at the base of the tension between ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’, between soul and spirit, between head and heart, between young and old, between body and soul, and between the other binaries that divide us? Haven’t each of us grabbed an authentic piece of divinity and (because we don’t have a vision of the intact God) let our piece of divinity become the prism through which everything else must be seen?

We are not an “initiated spectator” who, as Kazantzakis puts it, has enough of a vision of the intact God to see how all the pieces ultimately fit in harmony. So we continue in our disharmony.

“Since we each emphasise one particular aspect of God, it is no surprise that, despite sincerity on all sides, we often don’t get along”

Much too can be gleaned from this image in terms of how we view other religions. Writing around the year 200 AD, one of our renowned Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, wrote a book he entitled (in Greek), *Stromata*, a word which literally means “being strewn about”. His concept (carefully nuanced through his Christian lens) was that God, while revealed normatively in Jesus Christ, is also “strewn” (in pieces) in other religions and in nature itself. In essence, what he is saying is that there are pieces of God lying around everywhere, though Clement doesn’t elaborate on how these discrete pieces of divinity

often fight with each other.

More recently, Raimondo Panikkar (died 2010), one of the major Christian commentators on world religions, again picked up this concept of God as “strewn” and applied it to world religions. For him, what Christianity sees as contained in the Trinity is experienced in pieces in by people in other faiths. For example, certain faiths, like Buddhism, make central the experience of contingency, awe, dependence, and self-effacement in the face of what they believe to be ‘God’. For Panikkar, these are religions of “God the Father”. Some other faiths, particularly Christianity but also Judaism and Islam, strongly emphasise “God, the Father”, but their scriptures and other beliefs have an incarnational principle, a ‘Christ’. Certain other religions such as Taoism and Hinduism focus much more on the experience of spirit, the ‘Holy Spirit’. Since we each emphasise one particular aspect of God, it is no surprise that, despite sincerity on all sides, we often don’t get along.

God-fearing people

And so we, sincere, God-fearing people, are often at odds with each other; but it’s helpful to know (and acknowledge) that an ‘intact’ God stands invisible in the centre of our conflicts and watches us fight with “his scattered limbs”, knowing that in the end all these strewn pieces will be united again in harmony.

“We are not an ‘initiated spectator’ who, as Kazantzakis puts it, has enough of a vision of the intact God to see how all the pieces ultimately fit in harmony”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 22, 2021

Personal Profile

Honoured by the Pope for hard work in the parish

Page 34



Is Vitamin D the solution to our Covid problems?



In recent weeks, the cross-party Oireachtas Committee on Health published a 28-page report suggesting that Irish people should take daily Vitamin D supplements. This comes due to growing evidence that it might help to prevent Covid-19 outbreaks.

This idea has been floating around internationally for a while, but the report symbolises a real breakthrough of understanding in terms of the importance of Vitamin D in the Irish context.

Furthermore, the same report recommended that anyone attending a Covid-19 test centre be given Vitamin D, and that an “opt-out” system should be developed for



Mounting evidence suggests that taking a Vitamin D supplement may be a game-changer in the fight against Covid-19, writes Jason Osborne

the supplement in nursing homes and among healthcare workers to encourage uptake.

While the Department of Health and NPHE had previously cautioned that there was insufficient evidence to prove Vitamin D's efficacy against Covid-19, increasing international evidence from our European neighbours like France, Spain and Finland

urged the review here.

It found that while Vitamin D is no “cure”, it can certainly help to limit the impact of Covid-19 and other illnesses.

When most of us think about this vitamin, we think of milk and bones (our thoughts guided perhaps by advertisements we saw as children), but further background on it might be of use.

Vitamin D

Vitamins are nutrients that your body needs in small amounts to work properly and stay healthy. Most people get a sufficient amount by eating a varied and balanced diet, but others need supplements. This can be due to a deficiency in some vitamin or other.

To turn to Vitamin D – it has several important functions. It does help to regulate the amount of calcium (hence the connection in the minds of most with milk, teeth and bones) and phosphate in the body, and is needed to keep bones and teeth healthy.

Furthermore, vitamins play

against each other in the ecosystem of the body; if you don't get enough Vitamin D, you may well be at risk of some of the more harmful effects of too much Vitamin A. Foremost among these being that too much Vitamin A over the years makes your bones more likely to fracture as you get older. As you may already have discerned, Vitamin D helps to offset this risk by contributing to strong and healthy bones.

People who ought to be watchful of a deficiency in Vitamin D include:

- All pregnant and breastfeeding women

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

STOLEN ROMAN STATUE FOUND IN ANTIQUE SHOP

A Roman statue, which is dated back to the first century BC, has been recovered almost a decade after it was stolen from an archaeological site in Italy.

The BBC reports that two Italian officers came across the sculpture of a headless figure wearing a toga at an antique shop in Belgium.

The officers were suspicious of its origins, and proceeded to search a database of stolen artefacts, discovering that the 'Togatus' statue had been missing since 2011. The sculpture is believed to be worth around €100,000.

The officers work for the antiquities division of the Carabinieri military police, and were in Brussels for a separate investigation earlier this year.

After work one evening, they made their way to the city's Sablon district, which is famous for its antique shops, which is where they came across the marble figure.

Their investigation confirmed that the statue had been stolen from the Villa Marini Dettina site near Rome in November 2011.

JAPAN APPROVES RELEASING FUKUSHIMA WASTEWATER INTO OCEAN

Japan has approved a plan to release more than one million tonnes of wastewater, contaminated with nuclear radiation, from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea.

The water will be treated and diluted so radiation levels are below those set for drinking water.

Tokyo has said that work will begin in about two years to release water used to cool nuclear fuel.

Reactor buildings at the Fukushima power plant were damaged by hydrogen explosions caused by an earthquake and tsunami in 2011. The tsunami knocked out cooling systems to the reactors, three of which melted down.

More than a million tonnes of water have been used to cool the melted reactors.

The move is strongly opposed by the local fishing industry, as well as by China and South Korea.

53% INCREASE IN NOTIFIED DEATHS ACCORDING TO KILDARE CORONER

A new report by the Co. Kildare coroner revealed a 53% increase in total notified deaths reported in the year from March 2020 to February 2021, according to RTÉ.

There were 867 deaths recorded in that time versus an average of 567 for each of the preceding five years.

There was also a 50% increase in the deaths notified from nursing and residential homes.

Senior coroner for the Co. Kildare District Professor Denis Cusack said lessons need to be learned from figures that show that one in 1,000 people in the county died from Covid-19 in that period.

Prof. Cusack told RTÉ's *Morning Ireland* that the number of deaths have gone up by one-and-a-half times, particularly in nursing homes, which he said "have borne the brunt of the deaths".

Close to 170 people died in nursing and residential homes in Co Kildare in the period out of 1,700 residents.

Tackle distractions and rejoice in the Lord's day

After the year we've endured, it may seem strange to focus a bit more on Sunday being a day of rest. Some of us have had our fill of sitting at home resting on the couch, with one day seeming to merge into the next and weekends spent catching up on grocery shopping, cleaning and tending to various DIY jobs or work in the garden. We can be tempted to treat Saturday and Sunday as being quite similar with nothing in particular happening that makes the Lord's day stand out as being special. This has become more of an issue at present as we can't even attend Sunday Mass, something that definitely marked our Sundays as dedicated to God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is very clear when it describes the celebration of Sunday as observing the moral commandment inscribed in the human heart to render to God "an outward, visible, public, and regular worship as a sign of his universal beneficence to all". It informs us that the Sunday Eucharist is "the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice". We wait and pray for the day when we can joyfully return to Mass but, in the meantime, we can still make Sundays what Pope John Paul II described as the "Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ's victory over sin and death".

The day of rest we should all be enjoying on a Sunday is not an excuse to just chill on the couch, lie in bed half the day or focus entirely on our own pursuits. All human life has a rhythm of work and rest and the institution of the Lord's Day according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural,



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

social, and religious lives". The way society operates today, it's become increasingly difficult for many working people to carve out that one day where they don't have to be engaged in labour. My husband works in the retail sector and is fortunate to have Sundays off in an industry where more and more people don't have that choice. One positive result of all the lockdowns is that heading to the local shopping centre on Sundays isn't an option anymore. We can immerse ourselves more in rediscovering Sunday. I highly recommend that all Catholics read Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter, *Dies Domini*, on the subject of keeping the Lord's day holy. He wrote glowingly, quoting St Jerome: "Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, it is the day of Christians, it is our day." What can we do to make our day, a day for God, rather than just another day of constant work and busyness with nothing marking its significance for us as Christians?

Catholics, if at all possible, abstain from labours and business concerns which stand in the way of worshipping God and participating in the joy that should be experienced on Sundays. We need to re-evaluate our understanding of leisure. Leisure is primarily a stillness of the spirit and an opening of our hearts and minds to receive. The ideal Sunday should contain plenty of time for prayer, reflection

and Christian meditation. I've noticed that tuning into online Masses at home has led to a bit of laxity with pyjama wearing and general lounging around extending into the late morning or early afternoon. Putting a structure on the day involves a bit of pre-planning, have the shopping for dinner completed the day before; try to have homework finished



and the house looking nice. Many families find that keeping things a little calmer adds to the sense of the peace and joy of the day and aim to have a few technology and phone-free hours. Every family is different but I think most can find time for the family Rosary and some scripture reading. With May fast approaching, planning some visits to various shrines of Our Lady would be perfect for sunny Sundays. It's an ideal time to enjoy the beautiful world God has given us. There is nothing like being out in forests or mountains or by the sea to help us to recapture our sense of wonder and tranquility. In *Dies*

Domini, St Pope John Paul II talks about how the beauties of nature, "often marred by the desire to exploit" can be rediscovered and enjoyed.

“Have an especially nice dinner, dress up a bit more for the day but make room in our homes and affections for those who may need our care”

Pope John Paul II also talked of how Sunday rest can help us to put our daily concerns and anxieties into perspective. We try to forget the material and focus on the spiritual, it's a time for reaching out to others and having meaningful encounters with those we live with. But it's also a day for going beyond our immediate family to perform works of mercy, charity and evangelisation. From the time of the early Christians, the Sunday gathering has been a time of fraternal sharing with the poor. Have an especially nice dinner, dress up a bit more for the day but make room in our homes and affections for those who may need our care. If we can't physically help, at least donate generously to charitable causes: so many are in need at the moment. Whatever we do to make Sunday more like what it should be, the important thing is to remember the lovely words of Psalm 118, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad."

» Continued from Page 31



- All people aged 65 and over
- People who aren't exposed to much sun, such as those who cover up their skin for cultural reasons, those who are housebound or confined indoors for one reason or another (particularly relevant after a year of overwhelming time spent in lockdown)
- People with darker skin, such as people of African-Caribbean and South Asian origin.

As many may have learned in History in secondary school as they studied the storied 'Age of Exploration', which saw people sailing around the world on limited supplies, deficiencies in Vitamin D can lead to rickets – something many explorers and sailors were afflicted with as their supplies dwindled to stale biscuits on their expeditions – but rickets is not to be limited to them either, as seen above. Anyone experiencing a deficiency in Vitamin D could develop it.

Sources of Vitamin D

Funnily enough, most of our Vitamin D comes from sunlight on our skin. This is one of the primary reasons Vitamin D supplementation is so important for Irish people – especially as we emerge from what was a long and dark winter.

The vitamin forms under the skin in reaction to sunlight, with the best source of Vitamin D being the powerful sunlight summer offers. Naturally, a fine line has to be walked between soaking up some sunlight in the pursuit of Vitamin D and earning yourself a nasty burn, so take care with that.

Other sources of Vitamin D can be found in a small number of foods. A couple of these are:

- Oily fish, such as salmon or sardines
- Eggs
- Fortified fat spreads
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Powdered milk

With regards to how much Vitamin D is needed, it is generally thought that you don't need Vitamin D in your diet every day. That's because any of the vitamin that your body doesn't need immediately is stored for future use.

The Food Safety Authority (FSA) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) recommend that all babies aged 0 to 12 months should receive a vitamin D supplement, with Vitamin D3 being the preferred form for infants. Products which contain other vitamins as well as Vitamin D, such as multivitamins, should not be used.

Vitamin D and Covid-19

In April last year, TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) released new research that said Vitamin D could help fight off Covid-19.

Their press release said: "New TILDA research highlights the key role of Vitamin D in the body's immune response to fight infection, and emphasises the importance of increasing intake while staying at home/cocooning."

Further to this, the study also disclosed that 27% of adults over the age of 70 who are 'cocooning' are estimated to be deficient in the vitamin.

The study found that Vitamin D plays a crucial role in preventing respiratory infections (such as Covid-19), reducing antibiotic use and boosting our immune system's response to infections.

Some further key findings, which should result in healthy action

among the Irish population, revealed that:

- 47% of all adults over 85 are deficient in winter
- One in eight adults over 50 are deficient all year round
- Only 4% of men and 15% of women take a Vitamin D supplement

As the risk of serious illness as a result of Covid-19 increases exponentially with age, it is particularly important on the back of these findings to ensure you're getting the right amount of Vitamin D if you're in an at-risk age category.

“It may be time to consider your own nutritional intake and see whether it's worth doing the same”

Principal Investigator of Tilda, Dr Rose Anne Kenny, said in response to the study, "In one study Vitamin D reduced the risk of chest infections to half in people who took supplements.

"Though we do not know specifically of the role of Vitamin D in Covid infections, but given its wider implications for improving immune responses and clear evidence for bone and muscle health, those cocooning and other at risk cohorts should ensure they have an adequate intake of Vitamin D."

While most people under 60 and in good health do not have too much to worry about themselves with regards to Covid, it's always a good idea to ensure you're getting the right balance of nutrients.

My risk of serious illness as a result of Covid-19 is very low as a 25 year-old, but I started taking a Vitamin D supplement this past winter in recognition of the fact that I was receiving next to no sunlight as I moved beneath rainy skies and tucked myself away at home. It may be time to consider your own nutritional intake and see whether it's worth doing the same.



Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



The kids are now in the final term of a very strange school year. My youngest, who is in senior infants, has had most of her school career disrupted by the pandemic. The older kids can learn remotely more easily, and could even stay in touch with their classmates online. The sense of isolation was greater for the smaller kids, I feel. They all returned gleefully after the Easter break, delighted to catch up with their friends and to be able to play games in the sunshine.

Theirs is a happy school. A small country school suits children best, I feel. Its scale is familial, and the kids soon get to know all the pupils and teachers. Since such schools are mixed, the kids get to know whole families of brothers and sisters. They have the benefit of making friends with the opposite sex. The older kids enjoy looking after the small ones, and the girls especially tend to dote upon them. Starting school last year was far easier for our youngest student, knowing her big brother and sister were there to look out for her.

I went to a boys' school with more than 500 pupils. Although I was very sociable, I remember not knowing hundreds of the boys there – even some of those my own age. I didn't even know all the teachers, and they didn't know me. It was fine, but it was a much more impersonal environment for a small child than a little school, where everyone knows

everyone and so there are no unfamiliar faces.

The summer is sliding towards us. It looks as though this year the nation will be holidaying in Ireland once again, as we did before foreign holidays were invented. Our water borne holiday, spent sailing along the coasts of Cork and Kerry was beautiful last year. The kids found a deep love of the sea, which I hope will never leave them.

I've been readying my boat for sea again, with the help of the older children. There's plenty hard graft in cleaning, antifouling and painting, but it all brings the promise of freedom. In this weird time, when the State imagines that it may regulate our every movement, there's something reassuring about the open sea. Twelve miles out, the Government's edicts no longer apply. Even with airports shut, there is the promise of distant shores. I have lived for months at a time aboard boats, where I feel more at home there than on land.

Once school is out, I hope to spend much of the summer afloat with the older children. There are some lessons that must be learned outside of school. The children learn a great deal from the sea. It teaches them wonder at nature, as well how the tides work, and how to navigate. At sea, you begin to see the world in a new way. As you are immersed in the forces of nature, you learn deeply that there is more to this world than meets the eye.



Honoured by the Pope for hard work in the parish

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

As integral to a parish as a priest is the local sacristan. Like a civil servant to the recently elected politician, he or she ensures continuity in change. Since 1973, 91-year-old Mary Geraghty has been a continuous presence as sacristan and volunteer in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Gains-town, Co. Westmeath.

“As she says herself, she never did the work for praise or acclaim, but in order to give back what she had received”

“I was brought up with it because my mother was sacristan there, it could have been 50 years,” Mrs Geraghty tells *The Irish Catholic*. “In my time going to school, I always had something to do with the Church. If it wasn’t scrubbing, it was cleaning or off doing something. My mother was very good that way.

“It kind of grew on me. When I did take it over from her when she passed on, I didn’t realise I’d be that length in it. I gave it up for about a year, I had small children and I couldn’t give it the time it needed. I went back again and I’m 48 years now.”

As she says herself, she never did the work for praise or acclaim, but in order to give back what she had received.

“Everything I do I like to give to something,” she says. “I do knit a lot



Mrs Mary Geraghty receives the Benemerenti Medal in honour of her work for the Church.

for charity. I knit the nativity which goes out for the schools and the church and different places. I’ve one done for Tanzania, a man going out there asked me to do one for them. For Easter, I did ducks and eggs and things for the persecuted Christians in the Holy Land. All through the Covid I was knitting for charity.

“I’d never take anything for anything I give, people appreciate the help then. I helped the cancer peo-

ple, I helped the orphans – I’m always knitting. It’s occupational therapy. It was great during the Covid because you see you were occupied and your mind was on different things, you weren’t just sitting around looking out. You were doing something all the time.”

It was much to her surprise then, when she was awarded the Benemerenti Medal, an honour bestowed on members of the laity for great service

to the Catholic Church, by Pope Francis earlier this month.

“I didn’t realise how much it meant until people contacted me – it’s gone mad now, everyone is at it now,” she says. “Everyone is greeting me, sending messages and everything, Facebook, text you name it. It’s the only medal with an image of the Lord that I know of now. You’ll always get the crucifixion or Our Lady, but on this the Lord has his hand up to bless you. It’s the most wonderful medal to have, I’ll treasure it.”

“The work she does has changed over time as the parish has developed”

For Mrs Geraghty, the Church had always been part of her life. Her mother would wheel her in the pram to say the rosary or while she worked. As she grew older, she helped out in the church and she can remember how her mother took care of the priests, even cooking them breakfast.

“I remember Dr John Kyne (Bishop of Meath until 1966) he often called to the house,” Mrs Geraghty says. “We used to be amazed at the way he was dressed you know? All I can remember is he had a big medal at the front of his jumper. But he was very good.”

The work she does has changed over time as the parish has developed.

“Oh there’s been a big change, they didn’t have the finances we’d have now,” she explains. “It used to be all white boards and as children we scrubbed it. Things weren’t as fancy in those days as they are now. It was all wood and different things, now it’s carpet and the like.

“They used to collect money every time something had to be done. My father used to say they’d collect the oats for the horses – the priests were on horses back then. I had many priests in my time, good

friends. A lot of them have died and gone on now.

“I had a priest there, Fr Kilmartin, we’d go to the church when anything would be on, Communion and the like. He’d say what he wanted and then you did it. Christmas was the same, he always came and discussed it with me. Then he’d come and I’d have it done. He always thought I was a brilliant sacristan, but I only did what he wanted!”

In her time, the number of people attending Masses have dwindled, but she is hopeful that it will pick up again. The hunger to return to Mass after the pandemic is still there, she says.

“People are distraught at the moment about it,” she says. “There are people who’d love to go back to Mass. I see it, but as I say, I’ve no line on it – the only line I have is the clothes line.”

Mrs Geraghty considers the work she did – and continues to do – as sacristan a privilege.

“For the first communion, I’d go out of my way to have everything nice for them”

“I could go to the church every day and meet the Lord,” she says. “When I’d go to open it I’d be in the presence of the Lord. That kind of thing would be always on my mind. That’s why I’m there so long, it’s part of my life and it always was. I love helping people if I can at all. I’d keep up with the school, finance them in every way through my hands now, I won’t say I ever gave them dosh, but I always liked to help them. For the first communion, I’d go out of my way to have everything nice for them.”



Children’s Corner

Chai Brady

An investigation into matters of taste

When it comes to food, everyone has their own opinion on what is delicious and what is wholly repulsive. While some enjoy a generous helping of marmite, olives or blue cheese on their plate, others will have a feeling of deep dread in the pit of their stomach about the thought of eating them. There really isn’t much to be done about matters of personal taste but a more important question is: how do we taste at all?

We all know that some foods taste better than others – in our own opinions – but what gives us the ability to experience all these unique flavours? This simple experiment shows that there is a lot more to taste than you might have first thought.

Apparatus:

- A small piece of peeled potato

- A small piece of peeled apple (it must be the same shape as the potato so you can’t tell the difference)

Method:

- Close your eyes and mix up the piece of potato and the piece of apple so you don’t know which is which.
 - Hold your nose and eat each piece, can you tell the difference?
- Holding your nose while tasting the potato and apple makes it harder to tell the difference between the two. Your nose and mouth are connected through the same airway which means that you taste and smell foods at the same time. Your sense of taste can recognise salty, sweet, bitter and sour but when you combine this with your sense of smell you can recognise many other individual ‘tastes’. Take away your



smell (and sight) and you limit your brain’s ability to tell the difference between certain foods. Our sense of smell is responsible for about 80% of what we taste.

This is why when people have a cold and their noses are blocked, most foods seem bland or tasteless. Also, our sense of smell becomes stronger when we are hungry.

Explore which sense is more dominant – taste or smell? For some foods, smell might overwhelm our recognition of taste. Blindfold a volunteer and ask them to try a slice of apple. Tell them you want them to smell the flavour of the food while they are eating it. Put a slice of fresh onion under their noses when they start to taste the apple. Do they taste apple or onion? Discuss what this result says about our sense of smell.

Try other food combinations to continue your experiment and never underestimate the power of your nose!

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



RTÉ confession scene did wander over the border into disrespect

It's sad I know, but one of my hobbies is collecting confession scenes from film and TV drama. I added a new one to my collection last week.

'That' confession scene in **Fair City** (RTÉ One) caused a bit of a stir. Unfortunately, I came across the controversy first and caught up with the offending scene in omnibus edition last Saturday morning, so I did have pre-conceived notions. Artistically, I found it rather stilted, contrived and inevitably soapy – a woman claims she wants confession but it turns out she was the priest's old girlfriend (from pre-seminary days!) and, unknown to him until now, the father of her 30-year old daughter, thanks to a one-night stand the night before his wedding to another woman. Potboiler or what! Sounds like the extended title to a Dr Phil episode.

The scene took place in an oratory (featuring the lecturer put to more respectful use in RTÉ's studio Masses), and though it starts like a confession, it quickly gets derailed into recriminations and insult trading – he berates her for causing misery as a money-lender, leading to messes he, as a priest, has to clear up. She accuses him of hypocrisy and fires off a few standard broadsides against the Church "bishops in palaces", "Catholic hocus pocus"...I was surprised our old friend 'Catholic Guilt'



The controversial scene aired on Divine Mercy Sunday.

didn't have a cameo. I've seen a lot worse on RTÉ, but I think it did wander over the border into disrespect, especially with the smoking and drinking in the oratory. And there was no 'firm purpose of amendment' in the room!

On **Newstalk Breakfast**, on the Wednesday after the original broadcast, Ciara Kelly interviewed Fr Kevin McNamara from Kerry – his complaints had featured in the *Irish Examiner* that morning. He criticised how ill-informed the show was in its understanding and portrayal of confession – they should have researched if

they didn't know, he said. He described the way confession was presented as "blatant, casual and disrespectful". He had a problem with the format of the confession – e.g. no prayer to start, misuse of the stole, the drinking and smoking. The interview was respectful and Dr Kelly asked him if he found a "general level of disrespect for people of faith and Catholicism on TV or in media" – "without question", he answered. She also asked about reports that he'd called for Catholics not to pay their TV licences. He said that was not the case, that it was a misquote, but

he was posing the question – "Why should Catholics continue to pay their TV licence to a station which continually and deliberately shows a lack of knowledge and respect for the Catholic Faith and sacred doctrine?" To be fair it's also the station that broadcasts daily Mass!

Later that morning Fr McNamara complimented RTÉ on some good programmes when he was interviewed on **Today with Clare Byrne** (RTÉ Radio One). He stuck to his guns on his objections to the show, but added that he had spoken to the scriptwriter (later clarified

PICK OF THE WEEK

MASS

RTÉ One Sunday April 25, 11am

Fr Willie Purcell, national vocations director celebrates Mass on Vocations Sunday in the RTÉ Studios, Donnybrook. Music is led by members of the National Centre for Liturgy.

BABY SURGEONS: DELIVERING MIRACLES

Channel 4 Monday April 26, 9pm

Stories of pregnancy, childbirth and efforts to save unborn babies with pre-birth health issues.

FAITH AND LIFE

EWTN Friday April 30, 8.30pm

Featuring Fr Martin O'Hagan, a parish priest in Co. Down, and member of the multi-platinum music group 'The Priests.'

as being the executive producer) who was understanding and apologetic. RTÉ had issued a statement saying that the show being broadcast on Divine Mercy Sunday was purely coincidental and unintentional, apologising for that coincidence. Usefully Fr McNamara broadened the discussion to make some good points about the transformative aspects of confession, effects that he had seen in his 40 years of service as a priest. Again it was a respectful interview, with the host concluding "It was great to get your point of view".

On broader faith matters there were some interesting points of view when Sean Fletcher interviewed comedian Frank Skinner on **Songs of Praise** (BBC One, Sunday). Skinner described himself as a 'cradle Catholic', who had left the Church at age 19

because of issues with some of the teachings, like papal infallibility. He read a load of anti-Catholic books to bolster his case, but as he said, "it didn't work". An elderly priest advised him gently to "come back" and now he's a regular church-goer again.

At prayer he feels free and honest, with no act, no putting up a front. At prayer he says he offers himself for inspection and described how he feels God intervening. He prayed: "Somewhere in the swirl of me You also become present".

The hymn that followed was particularly apt – *Oh God you search me and you know me*.

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Film

Aubrey Malone



New look Oscar ceremony in a time of Covid

"The show must go on." Notwithstanding the pandemic, the Oscar ceremonies are taking place next Sunday – and not by Zoom as previously thought.

They'll be held at two venues in LA, the familiar Dolby Theatre and outdoors at Union Station. Because of the time difference, in Ireland we'll have to wait until the news on Monday morning to hear who won.

Some people feel America is opening its cinemas too early despite the huge number of vaccinations being rolled out daily, though most of this year's contenders were shown on streaming platforms rather than in actual venues. The ceremonies have also been pushed back from

their usual February date due to safety concerns.

It seems to be a foregone conclusion that Chadwick Boseman, who sadly died of cancer last year, will win the Best Actor award for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. When Peter Finch won a posthumous Oscar for *Network* in 1977 (he got a heart attack after being nominated) some cynic remarked, "Dying was a good career move for him." Sentiment often rules OK for the Academy – though it didn't work for James Dean two decades before.

Anthony Hopkins is a dark horse for *The Father*. Third favourite is Riz Ahmed for *Sound of Metal*.

Carey Mulligan looks likely to win Best Actress for *Prom-*



Chadwick Boseman in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*.

ising Young Woman. This is a lady I've admired for many years now. She's overdue a gong.

Her most likely competition will come from Andra Day for *The U.S. Versus Billie*

Holiday. Biopics always do well at the Oscars. Another possibility is Frances McDormand for *Nomadland*. McDormand won recently so that will cut her chances.

The 'Overdue Oscar' might

also come into play in the Best Supporting Actress category where the multiple-nominated Glenn Close is up for *Hillbilly Elegy*. Yes, her again. Close recently got a Golden Raspberry award for this. The 'Razzies' are sardonic Wooden Spoon awards. But strange things happen at Oscar time.

Olivia Colman may pip her for *The Father*, or the unknown Belgian actress Maria Bakalova. She's getting a lot of publicity for her comedic turn in the sequel to Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat*, the clumsily-titled *Borat Subsequent MovieFilm*.

Cohen himself has been nominated in the Best Supporting Actor category for this. His main threat comes from Daniel Kaluuya for *Judas*

and *the Black Messiah*.

The hot favourite to win Best Film is Chloe Zhao's *Nomadland*. Second favourite is *Trial of the Chicago 7*. Zhao will probably get Best Director for this too. Long shots are David Fincher (*Mank*) and Lee Isaac Chung (*Minari*).

It's a multi-ethnic lineup for sure. For those of us starved of actual films for so long it may be as close as we'll get to "the good old days," albeit in radically transformed circumstances.

There isn't going to be a host this year. That will come as some relief to those of us who've been recently overwhelmed by Jimmy Kimmel's spectacularly unfunny attempts at joke-making.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



An unusual view of Catholic life and culture



Willa Cather in her heyday.

Death Comes for the Archbishop
a novel by Willa Cather
(Virago Press, £8.99/€11.40)

Ruadhán Jones

Willa Cather's Catholic classic *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was recognised from the time of its publication for its excellence. But Ms Cather is an unusual figure in American literature – a prolific author, poet, journalist and schoolteacher – and the romantic flavour of her prose meant her works were left on the shelf, as it were, for many years after her death.

In Catholic circles, however, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* remained consistently popular. The 1927 novel follows the attempts of a French Catholic bishop and a priest to establish a diocese in New Mexico Territory in the 1800s. Based on the life of Jean-Baptiste Lamy, Archbishop of Santa Fe, it is a stylised, picaresque account of the lives of priests in the newly formed diocese.

Though not a Catholic herself – Ms Cather was an episcopalian – she drew on her journalistic experience in devoting many hours of research to ensure accuracy in all matters. This was in keeping with her overall desire to combine the eye for detail of a journalist with the fluid, instinctive approach of a novelist. Whereas journalism tends towards the immediate and sensational – such as the excesses of priest-come-baron Fr Martinez – the novelist has one eye on eternity and deals with life, death and everything in between with equanimity.

By instinct, she discerns the sacramental aspect of nature. Even before her conversion to the Episcopalian church, Ms Cather took this view. In her 1918 novel *My Ántonia*, the narrator describes how he feels like “something that lay under the sun and felt it, like

the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep.”

But after World War One ended, her novels took on a bleaker view of human nature. Always intrigued by the experience of immigrants to America, a constant sense of exile and *saudade* – longing for the absent thing – pervades her later works. These contrasting perspectives, a sense of oneness with creation and a sense of exile from its goods, come to fruition in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. It is like the sensibility of a Henry James is placed in the world of a Flannery O'Connor.

Missionary

Bishop Latour, the French missionary who ministers to the Mexican, Navajo, Hopi, and American people of his diocese, is a man of refined sentiment. But he is also a man comfortable in any circumstance. The native populations immediately take to him and he to them. Some of the most fascinating passages involve his reflections on or discourse with the native peoples and their cultures. The bishop's task is not an easy one and we follow him piecemeal through his 40 years of ministry, right up to his death, as the title suggests.

Though it spans 40 years, the book is short and quick to read. Ms Cather's fluid prose dwells as easily on the shape of the American south's landscapes as it does on the contours of the human mind. Don't expect an epic, in the mould of Flannery O'Connor or Cormac McCarthy. Be prepared for a terse meditation on religion, culture, death and life – all with an undeniably Catholic flavour.

A Christian classic revisited

The Abolition of Man
by C.S. Lewis
(First published in 1946 by Geoffrey Bles; available in many editions new and second-hand)

J. Anthony Gaughan

C.S. Lewis (1898–1963) was described as one of the intellectual giants of the 20th Century and arguably one of the most influential writers of his time. This slim volume – a literary outcome of the war with Hitler – given as a series of lectures, indicates that he deserved those plaudits. A profound discussion on the origin, value and importance of the natural law, it challenges those who question the validity of ‘traditional morality’.

Imperative

At the outset Lewis demonstrates that the first imperative for a rational and objective rather than an emotional and subjective-based ethic is an epistemology of direct realism, namely that the human intellect can and does know objective reality and not merely its own conceptual constructs. He then elucidates how ‘traditional morality’ is essentially a collection of the first

principles of the practical reason, i.e., the intellect actively engaged in the area of human behaviour. He shows that to attempt, as in some latter-day ideologies, to pick and choose different aspects of this value system is self-contradictory. Moral value imposes itself; it is not created. Thus if my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. If the pursuit of scientific knowledge is a real value, then so is conjugal love and marriage.

“Lewis provides 120 quotations from legendary figures in some of the greatest civilisations”

Following his critique of those who attempt to set up an alternative value system to that of the ‘traditional morality’, Lewis next turns his attention to those who reject the concept of moral values altogether. He notes the unstoppable progress of science and tech-

nology and lists some of the extraordinary advances in aeronautics, chemistry, eugenics and medicine. However, he warns that scientific and technological development without regard for objective moral values, namely, the dictates of the natural law, rather than enhancing man could lead to his detriment.

Observance

Adverting to the crucial importance of the observance of those objective values in society at large and especially in the area of politics, he emphasises that: “A dogmatic belief in objective values is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not a tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery”. He points out that, notwithstanding their scientific development, because of their lack of a due appreciation of objective values some states had allowed themselves to be led by an elite group exercising near-absolute control over their populations. Obviously Lewis here had in mind Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's proposed Third Reich. These two states were to become lurid illustrations of the catastrophic and unspeakable crimes that follow

the denial and rejection of objective values.

Quotations

Finally Lewis provides 120 quotations from legendary figures in some of the greatest civilisations the world has known. The quotations are drawn from the ancient-Egyptian, ancient-Indian, ancient-Jewish, Anglo-Saxon, Babylonian, Hindu, Greco-Roman and Old Norse civilisations.

“Lewis next turns his attention to those who reject the concept of moral values altogether”

He lists a number of aphorisms attributed to Confucius, who is synonymous with the wisdom of China. Aristotle, Epicurus, Homer and Plato represent the wisdom of Greek civilisation, Cicero, Justinian, Juvenal, Seneca, Terence and Virgil that of the Roman civilisation. All the quotations encapsulate and highlight the ethical primacy and importance of the natural law, also known as ‘traditional morality’.

“A profound discussion on the origin, value and importance of the natural law, it challenges those who question the validity of ‘traditional morality’”

Peace-makers are more than



Theodora Hawksley in search of peace.

Peace-building and Catholic Social Teaching

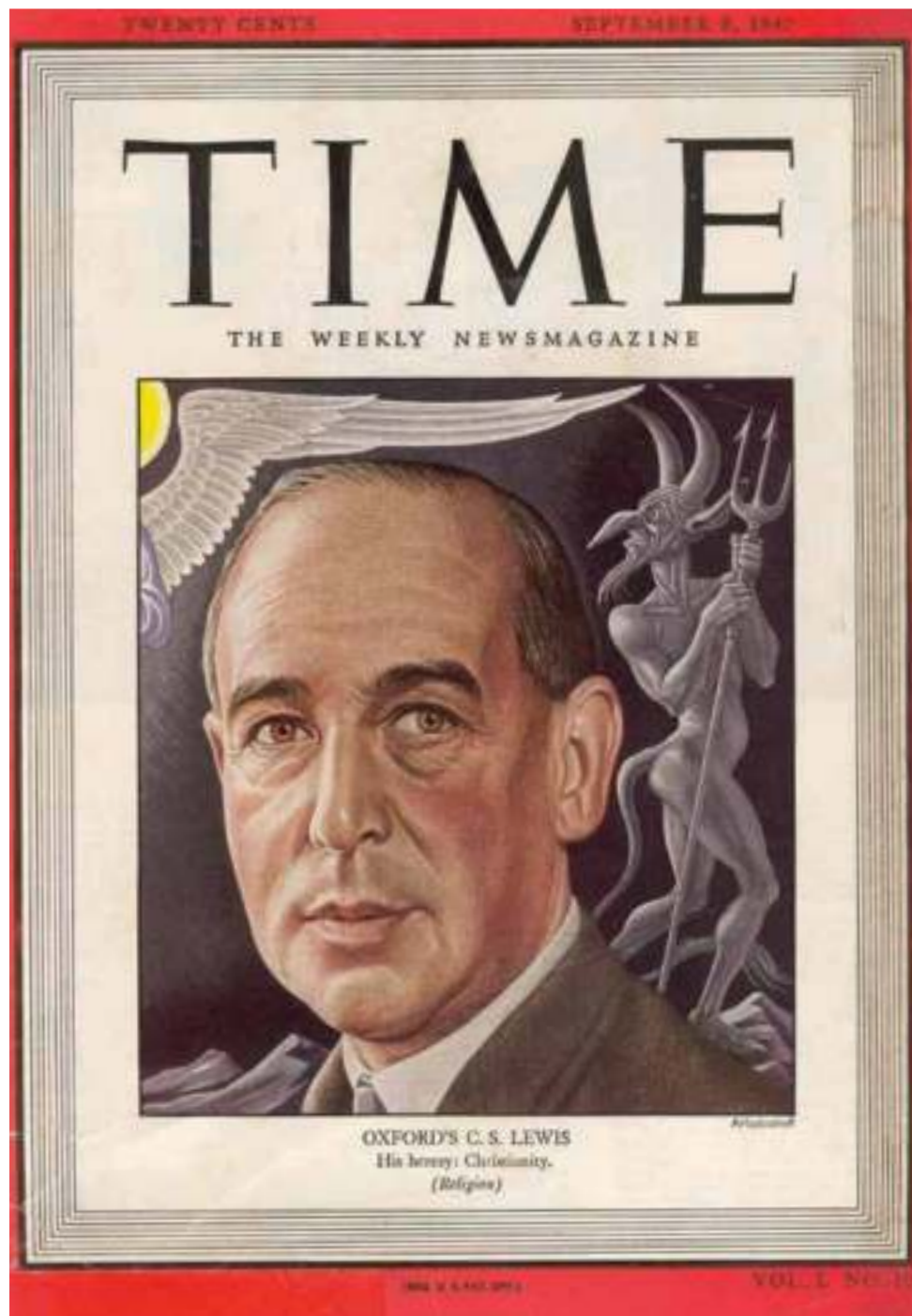
by Theodora Hawksley
(University of Notre Dame Press,
US\$42.00, paperback/
US\$100.00, hardback;
€50.00, paperback/€80.00,
hardback)

Peter Costello

Dr Theodora Hawksley is associated with the Jesuits in Britain and specialises in peace studies, black theologies and other explorations of the essential connections between Catholic social teaching and the realities of the world we live today.

This massive tome is described as one of the first scholarly monographs

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.



C.S. Lewis about the time he wrote *The Abolition of Man*.

blessed, they are saints

dedicated exclusively to theology, ethics and peace-building in the Catholic tradition.

This is a book of enormous relevance to Ireland, and to other largely Catholic communities. All too often what is called peace-making or peace-building are actually attempts to restore peace.

Here the emphasis suggests that peace-building is not an 'add-on'; it should be a daily conscious activity in the lives of those who call themselves Catholics.

Often in the past it has been too easy to find a theological justification for 'going to war'. But the problem really is why Catholics let conditions get to the

stage where violence by their co-religionists were allowed to get to that stage of open war.

This is a book which every serious religious library and indeed serious library in Ireland should have a copy. But its ideas and insights that Dr Hawksley derives from her studies of Catholic social teaching since the earliest days of Christianity should be ingrained in the minds and emotions of all. It is, of course, aimed at a largely academic audience; but the insights should not be lost on the widest possible readership through the efforts of others to propagate them.

That blessed nature of the peacemakers we have on the highest author-

ity. But St Luke adds what for many - or indeed most people - is a harder saying: "love your enemies, do well to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked..."

And there is where even the best kind of Catholic will be given pause, and turn away justifying in their hearts their hatred of some others. And even priests accept the need as they see to bless the cannons going to war. Reared to think of themselves as always right, Catholics can find it hard to accept that they are actually in the wrong.

Life in back row America

Dignity: Seeking respect in back row America

by Chris Arnade
(Sentinel/Penguin Random House, £20.00)

Frank Litton

For years, I taught a course introducing Irish politics to US students who came to work as interns in the Dáil and Seanad. Many were surprised to discover how much the people they met knew about US politics. Some told me that their knowledge and interest exceeded that of their neighbours back home, (though the students that supported the Republican party lamented that we all cheered for the Democrats).

Many factors explain our fascination with US politics - emigration has weaved close ties, the echoes of the John F. Kennedy presidency and, I suppose, the intrinsic interest of the politics of the world's first, largest and most powerful, modern democracy.

The ascent of Donald Trump in a whirl of upheaval, has, no doubt, increased the interest.

Chris Arnade couldn't wait to move from his family home in a small suburban town in Florida. Intelligent, educated in a Catholic school, he was equipped to do so acquiring a PhD in physics on his way to a lucrative career in Wall Street and a fine home in fashionable Brooklyn. He moved, as he writes, from the back row to the front row.

Entitlement

He never completely shared the sense of entitlement of those whose 'merit' propels them to the top table, nor did he buy into the neoliberal ideology that justifies the depredations of modern finance. After 20 years of increasing disenchantment, he left Wall Street.

The long walks he took for exercise brought him through a deprived area of the Bronx. Ignoring the warnings of the dangers in this wasteland - populated with prostitutes, drug addicts and the homeless - he came to know the inhabitants. Documenting in words and pictures the lives of those in the 'back

row' became his mission. He travelled across the United States, visiting places devastated when manufacturing industries departed. His investigations began in McDonald's hamburger joints, the only social centres that remained, where lingering long over cups of coffee, people talked to each other - and to him - of the day's travails.

There is a kind of 'poverty porn' in which the miseries of the poor are presented as a spectacle, exciting the reader's horror while they enjoy the satisfaction of their pity for the wretched lives laid out before them. Arnade's book is as far from this as possible. Yes, we learn of destitution, drug addiction, prostitution, petty crimes, of misfortune piled on misfortune. We learn also of pluck, endurance, initiative, kindness and humour. We learn of the struggles of those who have been abandoned by the powers-that-be, denied the dignity that comes with a decent wage, a good home and a community that these sustain. We learn all this in a manner that acknowledges their dignity and gives them the respect denied to them by the likes of Hillary Clinton and the Democratic party elite who consign them to the 'basket of deplorables'.

“Chris Arnade couldn't wait to move from his family home in a small suburban town in Florida”

Two messages struck me. Mr Arnade discusses racism, how it adds to the injuries of abandonment, and how the striving to belong and be respected can feed it. He supposed that the back-row would have as little use for churches as he did himself, an atheist. He discovered how wrong he was; attending services of every kind and description, he came to see how worship opened portals of love that sustained and consoled.

Mr Arnade's atheism weakened and his horizons on life expanded. This book gives us much to think about, widening the horizon in which we view US politics and, perhaps our own.



Religious fervour of poor blacks is a witness to faith.

Leisure time

The Gift Of A Lifetime

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www.hospicefoundation.ie



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To receive your little wooden heart and information on remembering

Merchants Quay Ireland in your will, ring Emma Murphy, Legacies Manager at 01-524 0965 or email emma.murphy@mqi.ie

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork. Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmisions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

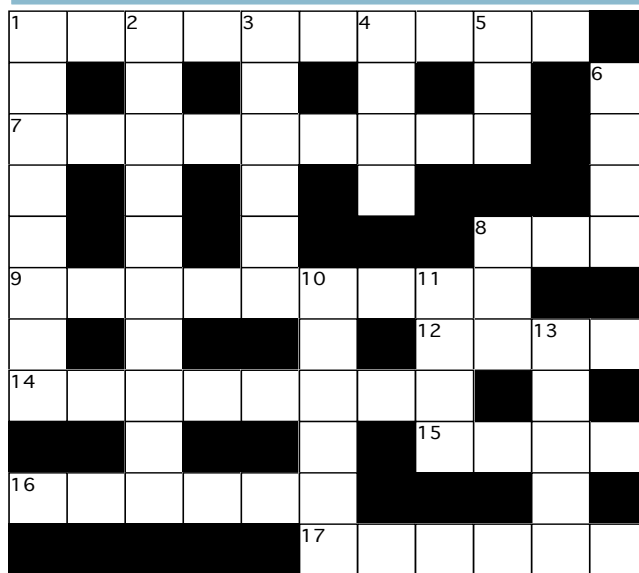
Trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 379



Across

- 1 You might spread this out before placing out the plates, knives and forks (10)
- 7 Say sorry (9)
- 8 Large type of tree (3)
- 9 This crawling creature is very good for the soil (9)
- 12 You might say this if you were hurt (4)
- 14 A baby one is called a joey (8)
- 15 Baby horse (4)
- 16 Paper hankie (6)
- 17 Plunging into the swimming pool (6)

Down

- 1 When you stop working and have a cuppa (3-5)

- 2 When you throw these, they should fly back to you (10)
- 3 As much as is needed (6)
- 4 Produced an egg (4)
- 5 You wear it round your neck (3)
- 6 Jack Horner pulled one out (4)
- 8 Australian bird that can't fly (3)
- 10 Told someone about danger (6)
- 11 The very top of a house (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 15

GORDIUS NO. 503

Across – 1 Volleyball 6 Shaw 10 Rabbi 11 Initiated 12 Brother-in-law 17 Oxen 18 Laos 19 Groom 21 Jesuits 23 Susie 24 Next 25 Sand 26 Shoes 28 Abstain 33 Artichoke 34 Mince 35 Ears 36 Bookmakers

Down – 1 Verb 2 Laborious 3 Evict 4 Brine 5 Laid 7 Hotel 8 Widow's mite 9 Vikings 13 Hive 14 Rotunda 16 Close shave 20 Obedience 21 Jessica 22 Tugs 27 Otter 29 Bleak 30 Tampa 31 Polo 32 Beggars

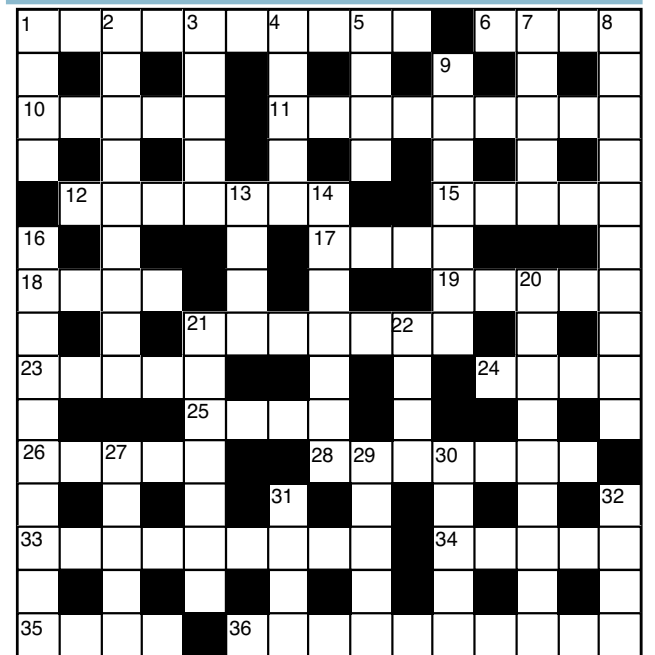
CHILDREN'S No. 378

Across – 1 Patient 5 Suir 6 Riding 7 Hurley 9 Mayo 11 Anger 12 Dressing 13 Cents 14 Armagh 15 Orbit 16 Meteor

Down – 1 Pyramids 2 Teddy bear 3 Night 4 Troy 5 Strange 8 Electric 10 Escape 11 Anchor 14 Arm

Crossword

Gordius 504



Across

- 1 The settling of the bill in advance (10)
- 6 Explosive device (4)
- 10 & 35a Her lounge is destroyed in a northern lake (5,4)
- 11 Iran moans at the formation of this European principality (3,6)
- 12 Musical genius (7)
- 15 Find Mr Affleck in an African country (5)
- 17 & 24a Where to kneel and pray that in Peru I die, perhaps (4-4)
- 18 Leave undone (4)
- 19 River which flows through Rome (5)
- 21 Giant slain by David (7)
- 23 Doting article identifying a great Hollywood dynasty (5)
- 24 See 17 across
- 25 Native Southern African tribe (4)
- 26 The horde scattered here in Offaly (5)
- 28 Synthetic (3-4)
- 33 Bad dream involving a nocturnal equine (9)
- 34 Sums of money borrowed (5)
- 35 See 10 across
- 36 Gymnastic movements you might find on wagons? (10)

Down

- 1 Wan, lacking in colour (4)
- 2 One's upbringing might be auctioned off (9)
- 3 Embers (5)
- 4 Skinflint (5)
- 5 Number written as IX in Roman numerals (4)
- 7 Chopping this may bring tears to your eyes (5)
- 8 Fish of this type have the turbot worn out (5,5)
- 9 & 16d How fleet comen breach a major Anglican get-together (7,10)
- 13 Mexican filled pancake (4)
- 14 Best (7)
- 16 See 9 down
- 20 For such a first romantic meeting, will the restaurant menus be in braille? (5,4)
- 21 Newspaper or journal (7)
- 22 One who is born along with a sibling (4)
- 27 Musical instrument most associated with church music (5)
- 29 Ward off or turn away (5)
- 30 Straw, leaves etc spread to protect vulnerable plants (5)
- 31 Royal hill in Meath (4)
- 32 Small, poisonous snakes (4)

Sudoku Corner

379

Easy

6	9	3		2	8		5	4
7			4		1			8
1							9	
8		6				9		1
			3		9			
9		4				6		5
	8							3
5			8		7			6
3	6		2	4		8	1	9

Hard

	2		8	9				4
							9	
9	3	8				6		
					9	7		8
7	6			8			5	3
8		2	6					
		3				4	7	2
	8							
4				6	3		8	

Last week's Easy 378

9	6	2	8	5	7	4	3	1
4	5	7	3	1	6	8	2	9
8	1	3	9	4	2	7	6	5
6	2	4	7	9	8	5	1	3
1	9	8	6	3	5	2	4	7
7	3	5	1	2	4	9	8	6
3	8	9	2	7	1	6	5	4
5	7	6	4	8	3	1	9	2
2	4	1	5	6	9	3	7	8

Last week's Hard 378

1	4	9	2	8	5	7	3	6
8	7	2	6	1	3	9	4	5
5	3	6	9	4	7	8	2	1
9	1	4	3	5	2	6	7	8
6	8	7	4	9	1	2	5	3
3	2	5	7	6	8	1	9	4
7	5	1	8	3	9	4	6	2
4	9	8	5	2	6	3	1	7
2	6	3	1	7	4	5	8	9

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Hatred can only stand in the way

AT THE HEART OF the Easter story is the triumph of life over death, love over hate and reconciliation over resentment. The following story brings the message of that first Easter right up to date. Over 80 years ago, in Greece, 50,000 Jews lived peacefully in Thessaloniki. It was a valued and vibrant community. Most of these Jews worked in the port. To the point that port of Thessaloniki was even closed on Saturday or Shabbat, the Jewish day when religion forbids working. Everyone hung out and liked each other. But on September 2, 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, this peaceful community would one day feel the terror of the Nazis. On April 6, 1941 Hitler invaded Greece in order to secure his southern front before launching the famous Operation Barbarossa and his huge campaign against Russia. Of the 50,000 Jews in Thessaloniki, around 48,000 were exterminated at the Auschwitz Birkenau death camp in Poland. The massacre of the Jews of Greece was brief but intense. Very few escaped. Among the survivors there were two brothers of a family known as Bourla. Their parents and the rest of their siblings died in the concentration camps. The two boys escaped simply because they were not at



Albert Bourla

home when the Nazi soldiers came to round up all the Jewish people.

Surviving

After the war, one of the surviving brothers Mois Bourla met another survivor Sara who had been within minutes of being shot by a German firing squad. A non-Jewish brother-in-law had paid a bribe to a Nazi soldier to spare her life. Mois Bourla married Sara and in 1961, a son was born into this miraculous family. His parents called him Abraham. He grew up and studied veterinary medicine in Greece. A brilliant student, Abraham got his doctorate in

reproductive biotechnology at the veterinary school of Aristotle University in Salonika. At the age of 34, he decided to move to the United States.

He changed his first name Abraham to Albert and met a Jewish woman named Miriam who then became his wife. Together they had two children. In the United States, Albert was integrated into the medical industry. He progressed very quickly and joined a pharmaceutical company where he became 'Head Manager'. From there, the road was short for little Abraham (Albert) to rise through the ranks to become Chief Operation Officer before obtaining his appointment as CEO of the company in 2019. Throughout 2020 Albert decided to direct all the efforts of the company to try to find a vaccine against a new virus which had just struck the world. He expended great financial and technological efforts to achieve his goal. A year later his work paid off and the WHO (World Health Organisation) and US government author-

ised his company to produce the long-awaited vaccine... Today this vaccine will be distributed in several countries including Germany, which counted thousands of deaths due to the pandemic. Ironically, this vaccine which will save the lives of millions of people around the world including many Germans was led by a Jew from Thessaloniki, son of Holocaust survivors, most of his people exterminated by Nazi Germany.

In memory of his grandparents, Israel was one of the first to receive the vaccine. Abraham Bourla known today as Albert Bourla: CEO of Pfizer!

Speaking in a recent interview about his family background Albert Bourla said: "You see, when my parents spoke of the Holocaust, they never spoke of anger or revenge. They didn't teach us to hate those who did this to our family and friends. Instead they spoke of how lucky they were to be alive and how we all needed to build on that feeling, celebrate life and move forward. Hatred would only stand in the way."

God be with the days when we had congregations in church

● The red glow of the sanctuary lamp caught the eye of a distracted and bored child. She nudges her dad and whispers; 'Da, when that light goes green can we go?'

Master Covid

by Una M Collins

And – what – Master Covid, have you achieved?
A world subdued? A people humbled and afraid?
Many, many deaths....So much loss, and loss and loss!
Was this your aim Master Covid?
But did you know
That God would move through each of the above?
That a subdued world is also blessed?
That a humbled people would stop and learn
That they could reach out in love
That they could hold each other as you passed through?
Because, Master Covid, you will pass on
But God will still be here
And we have learned, and learned, and learned
To really care...



HELP TRAIN A YOUNG MAN FOR THE MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD

YOUR EASTER GIFT TO OUR RISEN SAVIOUR

Each year THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION receives numerous requests from Religious Orders in mission lands for help to train their seminarians.

It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood

The great majority of young men who come forward to offer their lives to God, and His people, come from poor families. Their parents do not have the means to support them financially. The cost of educating and maintaining seminarians is often a heavy burden on the Religious Orders. It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood. We appeal wholeheartedly, this Easter/Pentecost, to all readers to help train and support a candidate for the priesthood.

Any donation you can send will be most gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction, to help to train a young man for the priesthood.

EVERY EURO YOU SEND WILL BE VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND FORWARDED WITHOUT DEDUCTION.



We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and blessed Easter.

A NOVENA OF MASSES FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

We are arranging for a Novena of Masses to be offered for your intentions during Easter as a mark of gratitude for your kindness and support throughout the year.

May Our Risen Saviour bring you His richest blessings, peace and happiness.

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION

Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466

www.littlewayassociation.com

- I enclose €..... to be allocated to:
- €..... **TRAINING YOUNG MEN FOR THE PRIESTHOOD**
- €..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**
- €..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state no. of Masses _____)
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to www.littlewayassociation.com

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.