

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

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UNSOCIAL DISTANCE

Many people won't engage with new model of the Church Pages 18 & 19



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Coney Barrett's exclusion would be a failure of liberalism Page 7



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Border parishes warn Covid-19 can't overshadow Brexit chaos

Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

With Britain stepping up preparation to crash out of the EU, priests who minister in border parishes have warned that the coronavirus should not distract attention from the long-term effects of a 'no deal' Brexit on communities.

Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher, a diocese which straddles the border, and priests who minister in parishes along the frontier told *The Irish Catholic* of parishioners' worries for their livelihoods and more.

Issues

Bishop Duffy said that border communities have dealt with very particular issues for 100 years since Ireland was divided in two and have adapted, but "when livelihoods are affected and freedom is affected, that's a different thing".

He said that the Good Friday Agreement

brought "a lot of stability and a lot of hope to people throughout Ireland but particularly in the border area". He added that "it's vital for peace and tranquillity in Northern Ireland".

Fr Oliver O'Reilly PP of Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan, said there are thousands of people in border parishes, including his, that work and live on either side of the border who are "hugely concerned and worried about the future and what a hard border could mean".

"They would also be very worried because they remember the old border and the violence that was part of that and the criminality that was part of it as well, so all of those worries are on people's minds," he explained.

Covid-19 has "totally overshadowed" the Brexit process, he said, adding: "One of the big worries I would have is Boris Johnson is playing politics with the border. I don't know whether it's

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Bags of hope in college



Third-year students Victoria Wilson and Elise du Crest collect their gift bags at the Mass for the dedication of studies at the Catholic Chaplaincy, Queens University Belfast. See pages 20-21

Grave visits will be 'great solace' in second lockdown

Staff reporter

The fact the Government has included visiting a grave as an essential purpose, which allows for travel outside the permitted 5km limit during the six weeks of level 5 lockdown, will be "a great solace" according to one of Ireland's top psychiatrists.

UCD lecturer Prof. Patricia Casey also told *The Irish Catholic* that churches being allowed to remain open for private prayer under the Government's restrictions will help people get through the second lockdown.

"It's obviously very important that people are able to visit graves, it brings comfort to people, it brings solace, it can help people feel closer to their loved one," Prof Casey said.

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MICHAEL KELLY

Good sense has prevailed when it comes to funerals

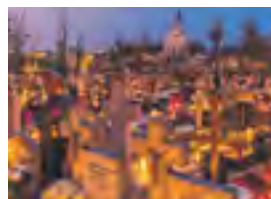
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REMEMBERING ALLHALLOWTIDE

Sharing ideas for celebrating the unofficial triduum of Hallowe'en

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DAVID QUINN

What to expect in mother and baby homes report

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1 in 5 of people who died by **Assisted Suicide** in Holland came under pressure from family to do so.*

Know the FACTS to oppose Assisted Suicide. See more at

www.thelifeinstitute.net

See page 5 for more information.

*Prof Theo Boer. 'Pressure on patients is cause for concern'. Dutch News. 2015.

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Personal sanity depends on truth

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Sins and saints in one documentary

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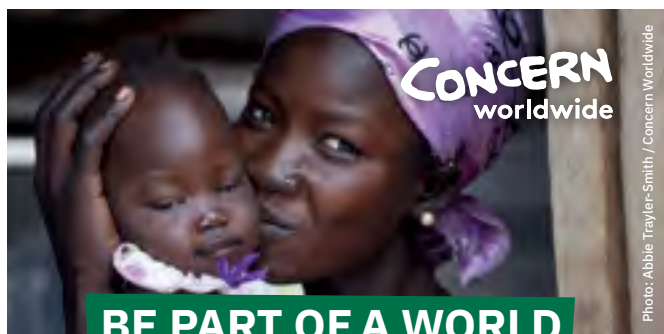
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Good sense has prevailed when it comes to funerals

Among the new restrictions announced by Taoiseach Micheál Martin this week was a limit of ten people at a funeral in the Republic. In the North, funerals are limited to 25. The restriction to ten people at a funeral was cruel and - mercifully - quickly changed.

At the same time that only ten people were to be allowed at a funeral in the Republic, 25 are permitted to be present at a wedding. The contrast between the two was odd and strangely indicative of an attitude that sees celebrating a wedding as more important than marking the obsequies around death that are central to Irish life.

Realistically, for a wedding the spouses need two witnesses and a priest to act as a presider and solemniser. It's not ideal, and while many people choose small weddings it is not something that any couple would be comfortable with. At the same time, they have their entire married life ahead as a couple to celebrate both together and with their friends.

Vows

Might it be an idea, for example, to hold a reception for their family and friends at their first anniversary and invite a priest to preside as they renew their vows? After all, the wedding vows mention "for better or worse" - there is no doubting that getting married while virtually alone is unlikely to be the happiest moment



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

of their wedded life, but the vow does presuppose better times.

Those burying the dead have no such opportunities in the future. It's true that events like anniversary Masses are deeply embedded in Irish culture, but they are not like the funeral.

“If the intention was to limit gatherings, then the ten should've been for weddings and the greater number permitted at funerals”

It's a feature of death and dying, of course, that those affected by and large tend to be from an older generation. They were born when larger families were the norm and it would not be uncommon to read in the newspaper of a person dying who had eight, nine or ten siblings. Older people themselves also had larger families and may have five, six or seven children.

Were their children and brothers and sisters to be denied the opportunity to space out as 25 people in a

church that could hold 1,400 people?

Were they to be disallowed the opportunity to stand at a distance is a churchyard as someone who has been a part of their life for decades is lowered in to the grave?

Restriction

I think that the Government had it backwards in this particular restriction. Surely if there can be 25 present at a wedding, then 25 should have been the norm for a funeral Mass as well?

Thankfully there was a rethink here, and there may well be a need for some more flexibility depending on the shape of immediate family. I understand that the Government acting in haste may think that a one-size-fits-all model is the way to proceed. It is not in this instance.

The unique place of a funeral in the spiritual and emotional life of a family needs to be treated in a unique fashion.

📌 To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please fill in the form on page 16. You can also phone 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

Priest says he'll continue to offer sacraments despite ban

Staff reporter

A priest based in Wales has vowed that he would rather be arrested than refuse to administer the sacraments to Catholics. It comes after the Welsh authorities announced this week that they would follow the lead of authorities in the Republic and ban public worship. It makes the Republic and Wales the only places in Europe where Mass is banned as part of Covid-19 restrictions.



Fr David Palmer [pictured] took to social media to vent his frustration at the ban. "Wales has decided to close the churches again. I will be arrested before I deny the sacraments to the people of God again," he said on twitter.

Fr Palmer - who followed the rules during the last state-imposed restrictions on public worship - added: "I repent for having backed down before.

"Eternal life comes before this life...our Faith means nothing," he said.

'Great solace' during second lockdown

» Continued from Page 1

"So I'm pleased that is included specifically as an exception to the 5km rule, I think it's also very important that churches are allowed to remain open so that people can go there for private prayer in the absence of being able to attend churches for Mass, at least people will get some comfort and spiritual assistance from being able to have private prayer in churches."

"I personally don't see why they can't allow church services with proper social

distancing and facial coverings as well but that's the Government decision, in the absence of that this is the next best option although it's far from ideal."

Important

She said that this is even more important for the second lockdown "for the simple reason that having had one lockdown and now being faced with another people are absolutely exhausted from Covid-19, I think very many people are angry about this and I think

these facilities and exemptions to the lockdown are important".

Other essential purposes which allow people to travel outside the 5km include travelling to work which is listed as an essential service, attending medical appointments or getting medical products, attending a wedding or funeral and farming purposes.

Up to 25 guests can attend wedding ceremonies, receptions and funerals under level 5 restrictions which will last for six weeks.

Brexit chaos

» Continued from Page 1

playing politics or whether he's serious about this or whether he's using this as a ploy in negotiations but it's wrong what he's doing, it's quite unethical. He's playing with people's lives and livelihoods and it's playing into the hands of extremists on both sides of the border."

Fr La Flynn, administrator of Pettigo with parishioners in both Donegal and Fermanagh said a lot of the concern in his community is the pandemic at the moment. "Part of the price we might be paying for the urgency of the Covid situation at this time is that we are not able at a national level or cross border level to give time or dedicated attention to the challenges in terms of cross border relationships.

"So many of our parishioners in Pettigo are working in the North or family members are working in the North, their marriage relationships - all of these things bind people together across the border," Fr Flynn said.

Failure

He warned that "the failure of a robust and secure arrangement between Britain and the EU in terms of how we put the terms of the protocol into action will have a concrete effect on people's lives.

"And God forbid, if it was to happen that there were to be some kind of customs checkpoints or whatever, that it was necessary to reimpose those at border crossings, that will threaten the whole Good Friday settlement because those will become flashpoints for strong emotions".

📌 See page 13.

Restricting public prayer during level 3 was 'severe', says bishop

Chai Brady

Not being able to go to Mass is a "great disappointment" to the Faithful and when Ireland was in level 3 it was a "severe" restriction, according to the Bishop of Clogher.

Commenting on the letter sent to the Taoiseach signed by Ireland's four archbishops on October 9 regarding allowing people return to public worship during level 3, Bishop Larry Duffy said the Covid-19 situation has changed since then.

"Even since that was mentioned we seem to have gone into a darker place in terms of numbers. I suppose the issue would be the closing of churches is at level 3 in the southern arrangement, that's probably a bit severe, if it was level 4 or 5 I think it might make more sense," Bishop Duffy said.

"I would feel that the Church has done very well in terms of protecting people's health when they have been open, I'm not aware of too many catching the virus because of being at church. I would feel that being in level 3 is too early, if it was in level 4 or 5 it would probably be more

appropriate."

Regarding attending Mass in person, he said: "So many people appreciate Mass, being able to go to Sunday Mass, being able to go to church and to celebrate their faith and to gather as a community to do that.

"The loss of that for any reason is going to be felt and disappointment is part of the reaction to that."

Decisions

Being the bishop of a diocese that straddles the border and since public Masses are still permitted in the North under their restrictions, Bishop Duffy explained a whole-island approach would make things "easier".

"We have two different health groups doing their best to make decisions, it would be nice and it would be good if we had one set of rules for the whole island, it would certainly be easier in some of our parishes which are across border but we respect the rights of the people who are elected to power to make these important decisions – and in truth I don't envy them having to do that," he said.

In safe hands



Twins Sonny and Tom receive First Holy Communion at St John the Baptist Church, Newcestown, Co. Cork.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Aontú councillor resigns from Derry and Strabane District Council

Derry City and Strabane district councillor Dr Anne McCloskey has stepped down due to differences of opinion with her party over Stormont's handling of Covid-19.

She said in a letter that she had "reluctantly" decided to resign her seat, saying that she "can no longer participate in any aspect of an administration which does not act in what I consider to be the best interests of the people".

Citing the harm caused by the lockdown measures, she said "International scientific opinion now indicates clearly that lockups are not an effective method of preventing the spread of this illness, and their collateral damage in terms of health and economic outcomes will outweigh any benefit."

She also made reference to the "flawed, and indeed immoral" use of RT-PCR testing as a driver of public policy. She will continue in her

role for the next weeks until another Aontú member is co-opted in her place.

Measures to protect children from sexual exploitation to be taken forward

Minister for Justice in Northern Ireland Naomi Long has announced her intention to strengthen existing law protecting children from sexual exploitation.

Ms Long said: "The sexual exploitation of children is an issue which is, and should be, of deep concern for all of us in society. I am determined to play my part in tackling this type of abuse and making our communities safer for our children and young people."

She said that the new measures will include changes to terminology to remove terms such as "child prostitution" from existing legislation, legislating against adults posing as children online, as well as offering greater protections for children in the law around voyeurism.

Calls for Jesuit priest's release after 'flimsy, risible' charges of terrorism

Chai Brady

Irish organisations have called for the release of a Jesuit priest in India after he was arrested on "outrageous" and "flimsy" charges relating to terrorism.

Fr Stan Swamy from Ranchi in India was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India and imprisoned on October 8. He was accused of having links with banned extremist groups.

The priest is a human rights activist who has worked for over 50 years with the poor and marginalised of India especially its indigenous people. During July and August of this year, he was interrogated multiple times

for over 15 hours by the NIA.

The priest was described to be "by all accounts among the most gentle and beneficent and self-sacrificing of people, exactly the kind of qualities you would want imbued in a priest", according to Dr Michael Kinsella of Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.

He said the arrest was based on "the most risible, the most flimsy of charges of terrorism; an outrage, the whole thing is a house of cards". He added there hadn't been a warrant for his arrest.

"The epicentre of this story really is where the worst excesses of religious intolerance and extremism meet the grubby demands of corporate culture capitalism.

"It's kind of the nexus of where the Hindutva movement, which is by all accounts an extraordinarily racist, inhumane, brutal enforcer of a dilapidated but nonetheless dangerous caste system in India, has come down hot and heavy on the native peoples of this particular area in which the good father is domiciled," Dr Kinsella said.

Devoted

"He is an extraordinary man who has devoted his life to do this, and of course this is where you have corporate barons who have been raping and pillaging that particular area of India for God knows how long under the pretext of economic development."

Ireland's Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice are also calling for his release and asking people to write to their local TDs and raise concerns about Fr Swamy's case.

He is reported to be the oldest person in India to have been arrested on such charges. He is also in poor health.

Fr Swamy is one of many prominent human rights defenders who have been arrested recently in India following caste-based violence in 2018.

Fifteen other people have also been detained on similar charges including some of India's most respected scholars, lawyers and academics.

Priests on the run in Galway



Fr Gerard Geraghty of Augrim and Kilconnell, Galway and Rev. John Godfrey of Aughrim and Creagh make headway on his 3km 'Prayer Run' for support of the local parish.

Ruadhán Jones

A Catholic priest and a Church of Ireland minister have joined forces in East Galway for a daily 3km prayer run for their parishes' spiritual and financial well-being. Fr Gerard Geraghty of Aughrim and Kilconnell and Rev. John Godfrey of Aughrim and Creagh have committed to running every day while churches are closed.

"John came up with the idea and we

discussed it," said Fr Geraghty to *The Irish Catholic*. "Because of the lockdown and distancing, we're not meeting with parishioners that much. We decided that since the churches are closed and we both exercise that it might be an idea to combine prayer with exercise.

"At the beginning of a 3k run, we take a verse from the Bible and just mention it as we begin our run and see where it takes us."

Fr Geraghty said there has been a good

response from the local community.

"It's very encouraging. John and I would run on the road – people honk their horns just to say hello," said Fr Geraghty. "That's nice, it's encouraging and it's comforting."

The two priests have organised a Go Fund Me page for those who may wish to donate, at [gofundme.com '3K a Day to Pray - Aughrim & Creagh Parish Unions'](https://gofundme.com/3K-a-Day-to-Pray-Aughrim-Creagh-Parish-Unions) or '3K a Day to Pray - Aughrim & Kilconnell RC Parish'.

Archbishop blasts anti-mask protests

Staff reporter

Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin has hit out against those organising anti-mask protests and warned that any restrictions on the right to public worship must be minimal.

Speaking at an online gathering of the Dublin Council of Churches, Dr Martin praised the tireless commitment of those – particularly frontline

workers – responding to the pandemic.

However, he said it would be wrong "not to note the emergence of some negative trends in Irish society.

"When you look at some of the protests against mask-wearing and other restrictive measures, behind outward talk of respecting individual liberties there was also [a] strain of negation of the virus," he said.

On the fact that

Government restrictions currently ban public worship in the Republic – along with Wales the only part of Europe with such restrictions – Dr Martin insisted that "there can be a justification for the closing of churches, especially at crucial moments or to protect vulnerable people".

But, he warned that "such measures should however be limited to the minimum period necessary".

What do you think?

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Freedom and boundaries...

I am a firm supporter of freedom of speech and of expression. Debate is essential. Even when a saintly person is being considered for canonisation there is the tradition of 'the devil's advocate' – to give a hearing to the adversarial view. Ideas have to be tested. Even wrong ideas deserve an airing because we can learn from error.

Thus, the brutally slain French schoolteacher, Samuel Paty, was only doing his job when he was imparting a lesson on freedom of speech to his pupils at Conflans St Honorine in the Paris region. And he was doing an important job – 14 and 15 year olds need to learn about freedom of speech, and respect for others' views, especially in an era when social media so often closes down debate, and drives a prevailing, dominant narrative. (Google and Facebook have been proven to manipulate material to their more left-wing perspective.)

However, part of any lesson on freedom of speech needs to include



Mary Kenny

the premise that there are certain moral, ethical and legal restrictions on free expression. The most famous one is that you do not shout 'Fire!' in a crowded theatre, when there is no fire. You

do not publish a claim that someone is a thief if you do not have full proof. In France, there are restrictions on invasion of privacy. There is broad agreement on the principle that there are

certain boundaries.

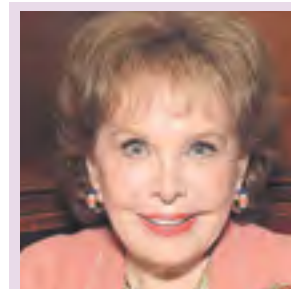
So I do wonder if there were other ways of teaching about freedom of speech than showing the young adolescents the cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed in a particularly obscene way? Murder is heinous, and never justifiable: the slaughter at the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine

in 2015 was evil and horrible. Yet, was it wise, prudent, or sensitive of the magazine to republish them again, as they did recently? A ghastly tragedy had occurred: wouldn't it have been better to mourn the victims with dignity, rather than repeat the provocation?

“The aftermath, too, will have a profoundly unsettling and divisive impact on France's multi-cultural society”

The killing, by an almost unspeakable method of decapitation, of Mr Paty was atrocious; absolutely nothing excuses or mitigates this crime, evidently by a young Chechen Islamist, Abdullah Anzarov, subsequently shot dead by the police. The aftermath, too, will have a profoundly unsettling and divisive impact on France's multi-cultural society.

Uphold freedom of speech and of expression. But liberty isn't licence to publish anything. *Je ne suis pas Charlie Hebdo.*



● One of those old-style Hollywood movie stars, Rhonda Fleming [pictured], died last week, aged 97. She sure was 'old-style': a committed Republican, a lifetime friend of Ronnie Reagan, and deeply religious. She was also married six times – twice widowed, four times divorced. In Hollywood, even back in the day, being deeply religious and divorced four times was never seen as a contradiction. If a marriage fails, you gotta move on!

Yet Rhonda (born Marilyn Louis) did many charitable deeds, and was pleased to say she never had to remove her clothes to seem alluring. She also made some fine movies, including *Gunfight at the OK Corral* and Hitchcock's *Spellbound*. How nostalgic we are, in the time of Covid-19, for the fine old days of the cinema!

Swede dreams of being at Mass

● It's sad that people in Ireland cannot go to Mass – in an actual church – for the next six weeks, especially since Ireland has been the only country in Europe where churches have not been open for Mass since mid-September.

Catholic Mass is now more accessible in Lutheran Sweden than it is in what was once Catholic Ireland. In Stockholm, on a recent weekend trip, I visited the beautiful Catholic Church of St Eugenia's, on the Kungstradgarden [pictured], near the former Royal Gardens, and just a short walk from the harbour. It is identified by a glittering gold cross outside of a terrace of classically designed buildings.

Inside, there was much activity for individuals and families, and during the afternoon, women – mostly young, I noticed – sat in prayer or in reflection.

There seemed to be a special devotion to St Therese of Lisieux, and a focus, too, on St John Newman. There were many candles



lit by the side of the altar. There was devotional literature available, and pro-life texts as well.

St Eugenia's is a Jesuit-run church, and although this building was only open in 1982, it stands on a site occupied by the oldest post-Reformation Catholic church in Scandinavia. Masses are in Swedish, English, Polish and Arabic.

Sweden has the lowest level of religious practice in Europe (according to Pew research) but it still has more Mass attendance than Ireland. What a thought.

IN HOLLAND, A WOMAN WITH DEMENTIA WAS HELD DOWN AS SHE STRUGGLED AGAINST THE DOCTOR TRYING TO EUTHANIZE HER.

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- In Canada, the number of people dying by Assisted Suicide increased **FIVE-FOLD** in 4 years
- In Washington State, **56%** of people undergoing Assisted Suicide said they felt a burden
- In Belgium, even **children** can be euthanized. In that horrific case in **Holland (above)**, the court found the doctor did **NOT** break the law

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Charity gives hope by supplying soap

An Irish charity has supplied almost one million people with soap and hand sanitiser in some of the world's poorest countries to help prevent major Covid-19 outbreaks.

Concern Worldwide has been supplying cleaning soaps since the pandemic began in countries such as Syria, Haiti, Malawi, Niger and Somalia where many people struggle to afford basic items. "Cleaning hands is essential in crowded slums to help prevent the spread of Covid-19," said Kwanli Kludstrup, Concern's country director in Haiti, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere.

"But many of the people we help can't afford a simple bar of soap – so we had to do something to try and prevent them getting this lethal virus."

Covid-19 support line for older people

ALONE manage a national support line and additional supports for older people who have concerns or are facing difficulties relating to the outbreak of Covid-19 (coronavirus).

Professional staff are available to answer queries and give advice and reassurance where necessary.

The support line is open seven days a week, 8am-8pm, by calling 0818 222 024.

Jerusalem holy sites re-open

The iconic Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified, died and rose from the dead, has re-opened as coronavirus restrictions in the Holy Land begin to ease.

A second national lockdown was lifted in the Holy Land at the weekend after a steady decline in the rate of daily infections.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Western Wall, and the compound revered as the Temple Mount by Jews and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary will permit small groups.

Senators row over mother and baby homes commission bill

Ruadhán Jones

Independent senators Rónán Mullen and Lynn Ruane clashed over "present hypocrisies" and a lack of honesty during Seanad debates over the Mother and Baby Homes Commission Bill.

The argument arose when Senator Mullen said politicians were "running with the pack" in condemning the past, rather than looking for "nuance".

Lynne Ruane shot back that Mr Mullen's "line of debate is insulting to the survivors about whom we are

speaking. We are speaking about a specific area of the church and institutions. We are not here to defend something that clearly happened."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Mullen's said that he was not defending the "cruelty" of the past but attacking "the blanket shaming of everybody who acted in that past".

"I think there needs to be a greater maturity among politicians about speaking fairly and truthfully without denying a single thing about people's experiences," Mr Mullen continued. "It demands honesty from us about

the past of others and our own present in terms of what we do and what we say."

He said it irritated people that he referred to two present social issues, abortion and direct provision: "Some of the people loudly banging the drum for accountability in relation to the past have shown no concern for unborn children in the present."

The senators argument took place while a bill regarding the information gathered by the Mother and Baby Home Commission was being debated.

The main purpose of the Bill is to ensure that specific details not released in the Commission's report will not be redacted, struck from the public record.

The Bill has garnered much criticism both for the speed with which it is being rushed through and due to the fact the details from the commission cannot be accessed for 30 years, under current legislation.

Amendments to the Bill suggested by the Seanad are currently under discussion before the Dáil.

Son of Irish immigrants to the US to be beatified

Jason Osborne

The founder of the Knights of Columbus, Fr Michael McGivney, is to be beatified during a special Mass on October 31 at the Cathedral of St Joseph in Connecticut.

Born to Irish immigrants to the US Patrick and Mary McGivney, Fr McGivney was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, and was ordained a priest in 1877.

Best known for establishing the Knights of Columbus, he founded the order at St Mary's Parish in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1882.

He originally founded the order with the intention of aiding widows and orphans, but the fraternal order for Catholic men has become the largest lay Catholic organisation in the world with two million members. It now sponsors a wide range of educa-

tional, charitable and religious activities.

Fr McGivney will be the first American parish priest to be beatified, and is considered a saint for the time of the coronavirus pandemic, having died of pneumonia complications at age 38 in 1890, during an outbreak of influenza.

"Fr McGivney has inspired generations of Catholic men to roll up their sleeves and put their faith into action," Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson said.

"He was decades ahead of his time in giving the laity an important role within the church.

"Today, his spirit continues to shape the extraordinary charitable work of Knights as they continue to serve those on the margins of society as he served widows and orphans in the 1880s."



Fr Michael McGivney.

Poverty not Catholicism reason for Covid-19 hotspots

Staff reporter

A data analyst has challenged a DUP minister's claim that there are more Covid-19 hotspots in Catholic communities, saying poverty is the key factor linked to outbreaks not religion.

Speaking to *The Irish News*, Peter Donaghy said it was in socially deprived areas that people won't have jobs which allow them to work from home. This increases their number of physical contacts.

Last Friday Mr Donaghy posted a graph on social media challenging DUP minister Edwin Poots over his controversial claims that the difference in transmission rates between nationalist and unionist areas is around "six to one".

Mr Donaghy wrote on *Twitter*: "The key factor behind areas badly hit by Northern Ireland's 2nd Covid-19 wave isn't religion, but poverty. Only one of NI's 40 least deprived postcode areas has over 400 weekly cases per 100,000, a quarter of the most deprived 40 areas do."

"Can't believe this needs to be said, but no, it isn't true that only majority Catholic areas are Covid-19 hotspots. The most recent positivity rate was over 14.5% in all council areas in Northern Ireland."

Nuptial bliss in Cavan



Rachel Parsons and Aidan McCabe following their celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt last week.



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The View



Amy Coney Barrett's exclusion from Supreme Court would be a real failure of liberalism

Amy Coney Barrett's life should be a role model for feminists. She has a marriage where her husband, Jesse, does more of the cooking and cleaning than she does. She manages to balance a busy household of seven children, including two adopted from Haiti, with working outside the home. She is the first mother of school-age children to be nominated to sit on the Supreme Court. Yet her ideological opponents are acting as if this is a moment which will set back the cause of women a century.

The reason? Amy Coney Barrett is a Catholic and has pro-life views. Here in Ireland, Senator Ivana Bacik, speaking on RTÉ's *Leap of Faith* radio programme chaired by Michael Comyn, affirmed that Coney Barrett's religion should not matter. Almost in the same breath, she then declared that Amy Coney Barrett should answer questions about her membership in a 'murky organisation' which seems to be a "*Handmaid's Tale*-type organisation".

She felt questions were warranted because Coney Barrett could have a "*Handmaid's Tale* view of women and LGBT people".

For those unfamiliar with it, Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* portrays a dystopian culture where fertile women who have committed criminal actions in the eyes of the state are forced into bearing children for the infertile. In the book, Atwood is particularly sympathetic to the handmaids who were once Catholic nuns.

Conversion

Old nuns are either killed or despatched to the colonies for hard agricultural labour in conditions of extreme pollution. Younger nuns are offered the choice either of the colonies or conversion and are frequently tortured. Catholic priests are murdered by being hanged on what is called the Wall. Christian denominations, including Quakers, Bap-

Amy Coney Barrett, with her family watching on, answers questions as she is vetted for appointment to the US Supreme Court.



tists and Catholics, are specifically named as enemies of the Sons of Jacob, the group that has created the legal, political and spiritual nightmare that is Gilead.

In short, it is the state religion that is the embodiment of evil in the novel, not Catholicism.

Margaret Atwood, in a 2017 *Sojourners* interview, spoke about communications from thoughtful religious people who 'got it' that this is

“They're interested in power. They're not interested in belief or in faith; they're interested in compliance and they're using religion as a way to get the compliance”

a book about religious freedom.

She says that those letter-writers understood that the Sons of Jacob abolish religious freedom because they are not interested in religion: "They're interested in power. They're not interested in belief or in faith; they're interested in compliance and they're using religion as a way to get the compliance, because once you set up a state religion like that, no matter what you call it – even

if you call it Maoism – anybody who doesn't agree with you is a heretic."

“What is the problem with the Kingdom of God? The Christian vision is all about building a world of justice and mercy”

The attacks on Amy Coney Barrett are by heresy-hunters – those who believe that abortion is sacred and anyone who dissents from this must be rooted out and removed.

Senator Bacik's other concerns include Amy Coney Barrett's 2006 commencement address at Notre Dame Law school. Amy Coney Barrett exhorted

graduates not to make their legal careers an end in and of themselves, but "a means to an end" that is part of "building the Kingdom of God".

This, apparently, makes her unfit to be a Supreme Court Justice, unlike Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a non-observant Jew who had a framed quote from the Book of Deuteronomy just outside her office: "Justice, justice, shall you pursue."

Speech

What is the problem with the Kingdom of God? The Christian vision is all about building a world of justice and mercy, which includes and respects everyone. In a part of the speech not quoted by Senator Bacik, Amy Coney Barrett calls on people not to be motivated by "ambition" and not to allow "satisfaction, prestige,

or money" guide their career decisions.

This is absolutely basic for anyone wishing to be a Christian. If a Christian is not building the Kingdom of God, they are failing in their primary mission. Excluding Christians from public roles or activism on these grounds would have excluded everyone from Rev. Martin Luther King to Florence Nightingale, from anti-slavery advocate William Wilberforce to Catholic emancipationist, Daniel O'Connell.

“Liberalism was meant to be the big tent protecting Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Christians, atheist and agnostics”

It would also have excluded the person who said in 2013: "I was reminded that while our time on Earth is fleeting, he is eternal. His life, his lessons live on in our hearts and, most importantly, in our actions. When we tend to the sick, when we console those in pain, when we sacrifice for those in need, wherever and whenever we are there to give comfort and to guide and to love, then Christ is with us."

That was Barack Obama, by the way. Liberalism was meant to be the big tent protecting Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Christians, atheist and agnostics by defending their right to freedom of expression.

If an absolutely basic Christian statement about building the Kingdom of God is enough to exclude Amy Coney Barrett from the ranks of women allowed to be Supreme Court judges, liberalism has failed.

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Pope slur shocks shoppers in Co. Antrim supermarket

Ruadhán Jones

Shoppers in one of the largest supermarkets in Ballymena, Co. Antrim were stunned when the words "F*** the Pope" were announced over the tannoy.

It is understood that a member of the public, a male youth, gained access to an unattended speaker at a Tesco store and shouted out the sectarian slur.

According to a report in the *Belfast Telegraph*, the police are treating it as a "hate crime".

Offence

One shopper, who didn't wish to be named, said he couldn't believe what he was hearing over the tannoy.

"All of a sudden the words 'F**k The Pope' were shouted through the tannoy system and echoed throughout the store," the man said.

"I was shocked and offended that this happened. It is not the sort of thing you expect to hear when you are on your way down an aisle."

The incident occurred on Wednesday, 14 October and a Tesco spokesperson said they were aware of the incident and apologised "to any customers who were in the store when it happened".

NET ministries: youth leading youth amid Covid-19 pandemic

Jason Osborne

While the Church in Ireland struggles to adapt to the rolling Covid-19 measures, NET Ministries are continuing to adapt to the moving times in an effort to reach out to the young people of Ireland.

"As the restrictions change, and as advice from the Government is different nearly every week, we're very much holding it all lightly and seeing where the Holy Spirit is asking us to respond to each restriction that's put in place," Ciara Ferry of NET Ministries Ireland told *The Irish Catholic*.

Describing their normal configuration, Ms Ferry said, "Well, normally what happens is we have one road team and then we have several discipleship teams that would be based in local areas, so for example, Letterkenny is one that would have been there for the past three years."

However, 2020 has seen their efforts to interact with the youth rewritten, with missionaries experiencing an altered year on the team.

Adapting their approach to the level of lockdown that the country finds itself in at any given time, Ms Ferry explained that the focus this

year will be having the missionaries accompany the young adults online in 'mentorship'-like relationships, as that is how the "most fruitful work is done".

"When lockdown was announced in March, all of our teams went completely online and there was eight teams across the country last year working at that time, and so they had to go online," she said.

Discipleship

"What they were doing was, at that point in the year, they would have certain discipleship students that

they would walk with very closely throughout the year so they were still able to be in contact with them... what we're very much pushing and very much encouraging at the moment is for that one-to-one relationship."

Speaking of the missionaries' commitment, she said. "For us, the commitment this year is really, it's humbling. The commitment that these missionaries have had to come to us – many of them are Irish – the commitment to come and do this year in such uncertainty shows the level of passion that they have bringing souls to Jesus, so it's really great."

NI housing wait twice as long for Catholics than Protestants

Staff reporter

Catholics in the North wait almost twice as long as Protestants for housing according to government statistics.

Out of 35,750 people on the housing list by the end of June 2020, 36.4% identified as Catholic while 38.2% identified as Protestant.

The figures, discovered by the *Belfast Telegraph* after a Freedom of Information request, found that although more people on the housing list identified as Protestant, on average Protestants wait nine months to be housed compared to 16 months for Catholics.

The constituency with the highest number of people on the waiting list was North Belfast where 4,354 people were waiting

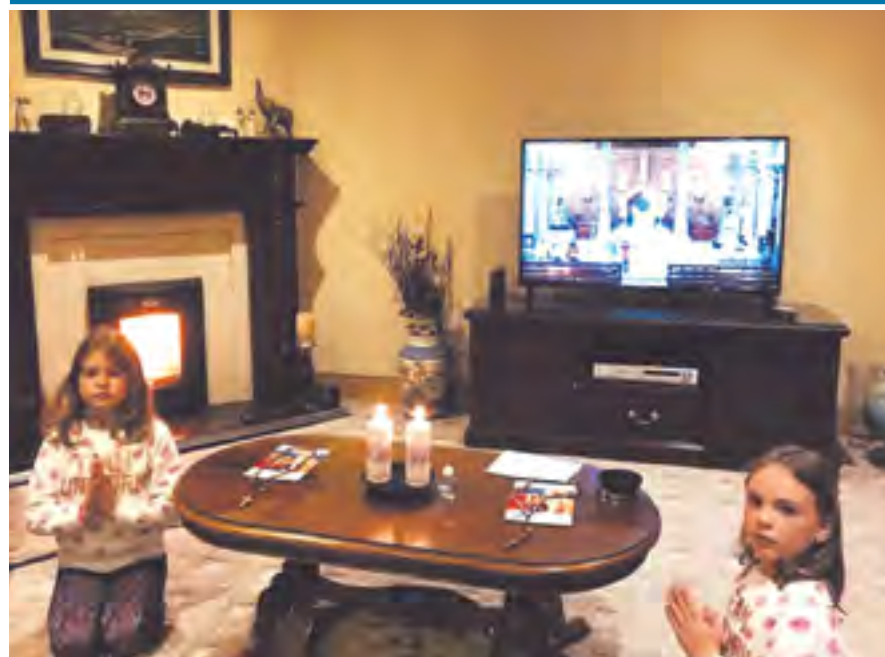
to be housed. This is 12.18% of the overall waiting list and more than the number of people on the waiting list in Mid Ulster, South Down and West Tyrone combined.

In north Belfast Catholics can expect to wait 20 months to be housed while Protestants will spend a median of eight months on the list.

The figures come weeks after plans were submitted for 18 homes on the Crumlin Road which were opposed by the former DUP MP for the area Nigel Dodds.

The overall median average for the North is 11 months. In 10 parliamentary constituencies Catholics waited longer to be housed while Protestants waited longer than the average time in two constituencies.

Sisters doing it for themselves!



Twins Aoibhe and Cadhla participate from their home in Tralee, Co. Kerry in an online enrolment service for First Communion/First Reconciliation 2021.

The greatest Commandment and its link to pure joy

It was an attempt to start an argument with Jesus, to disconcert him, when one of the pharisees asked for his opinion on the greatest commandment. Jesus cut through all their commentaries and debates with a simple and challenging answer: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:35).

Religious laws meant to be pointers to total love of God and the practical expression of that love in the way we treat people, beginning with ourselves.

It's no harm to remember that the people who plotted the death of Jesus were the religious leaders.

When religion gets warped it is very dangerous. People have been driven to scrupulosity, bitterness and justification of war by the concept of a severe, judgemental God. It is important to enjoy the loving, merciful God revealed in Jesus Christ. Loving with all your heart recognises God as the driving energy of life.

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



All your soul makes God the desire of your eternal spirit. All your mind means making space for God in personal prayer each day. All your strength directs you into practical works of charity.

The Trinity of love

The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity reveals that the inner life of God is about interpersonal relationships of love: love given, loved received and love returned. Think of it as a circle or a triangle. We are offered three aspects of love in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father, the source of all life, loved me into life. I was first a thought in the beautiful mind of God before ever I was spoken into life. As St Paul said: "We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to

live it" (Eph. 2:10). A friend gave me what I consider a work of art: a simple line drawing of a little boy, arms resting on a table, looking out with this message underneath: I know I am somebody 'cos God don't make no junk. The grammar ain't good but the message is brilliant. You are God's creation and God never made junk.

Accepting forgiveness

People drifted away from God but God did not drift from us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus is the face of mercy. He sat with the sinners and shared food with them.

What we have to learn is how to accept forgiveness, how to enjoy God's love. The most wonderful of the parables is the Prodigal Son, the story of a merciful Father who hugs us back and calls for a celebration.

The seven sacraments are celebrations of God's presence at the key moments of life. The sacrament of Reconciliation should never be a tribunal of enquiry

but a celebration of God's hug of forgiveness.

This sacrament was initiated when the Risen Lord breathed the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven. Whose sins you retain they are retained" (John 20:23). Retaining means telling someone who has no intention of giving up some serious sin that he/she is blocking God's desire to forgive.

The Holy Spirit is the breath of God and divine life within us. The Holy Spirit is the power of God's love transforming us into agents of God's love to other people. The proof of our love of God is how we respect and care for other people.

Love your neighbour

"Love your neighbour as yourself." Too many people cannot begin that programme because they have very low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem will be negative towards others too. True self-love is not a preoccupation with self but the joy that comes from knowing God the Father as our Maker, the Son as our merciful Saviour and the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. Aware-

ness of our own importance in God's eyes will spur us into respect and care for all others.

Prayer

Inspired by the words of the gospel, we pray.

May the Church avoid a web of legalism which obscures the joy and love of true religion.

May the lives of Christians today resemble the early Christian community when pagan writers remarked how these Christian love one another.

May our appreciation of God's love for us inspire us to treat others with deep respect as God's beloved children

May the thought that we are God's work of art sustain our hope in these difficult times.

(Add prayers for any local, personal or topical intention.)

O God, our loving Father, we thank you for creating us in love. May it be our joy to pass on your love to others. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Extract from Silvester O'Flynn, *Gospel Reflections and Prayers*, Columba Books.

Pope Francis: Climate change 'causing immense hardship for the most vulnerable among us'



countries – including Niger. Concern doesn't just provide emergency food to those affected by hunger. The charity continues to work alongside communities so they are able to feed themselves long into the future.

People's lives are transformed when they are equipped and empowered to do it for themselves. This is how real progress is made.

One of Concern's most vital funding sources – on which it absolutely depends – is gifts in the Wills of its supporters. These gifts ensure Concern will always be there for people in need of a helping hand.

What Concern's help looks like

In Niger life is a *constant* struggle for survival. A struggle which becomes almost impossible during the annual 'hunger gap'.

Causing untold suffering, the annual hunger gap is a desperate period. Food from the last harvest has run out and it will be months until more is available.

During this time, normal life grinds to a halt. Children leave education to help with agricultural chores at home. Adults travel anywhere they can to find work to earn even the smallest amount to support their families.

Every day becomes a terrifying battle to find food.

The hunger gap used to last 3 months, ending when the harvest was ready. But *climate change has made this terrible problem much worse*, with infrequent rainfall and rising temperatures drastically reducing crops.

As a result this torturous period now lasts 5 months from April to September, with people spending almost half their year struggling to stay alive.

And Covid-19 has further exacerbated an already dreadful situation. Restricted movement and border closures are impacting supplies to local markets, pushing prices up. Now even those who manage to work can't buy food because it's too expensive. Seeds for next season's crops are also being affected by these shortages. This means the pandemic's

deadly effects will be felt next year too.

Vulnerable families, who already have little to eat, are in grave danger.

But thanks to gifts in Wills, Concern is able to immediately support families in desperate need and equip them to support themselves long into the future.

For families affected by climate change in countries like Niger, one of the ways this is achieved is by providing communities with drought-resistant seeds, *proven* to yield more food ... the tools needed to farm their land ... and training to adopt climate-smart techniques. For example, crop rotation and composting to keep the soil in the best condition. And methods to capture and keep as much rain as possible.

Thanks to generous people leaving Concern a gift in their Wills, families can now grow their own food in their own vegetable gardens. The food they're growing now will feed them this year. **The knowledge and skills they gain will make sure they have enough food to eat every year from now on.**

Chawada Aboubacar is a mother of five. Thanks to her own hard work and support from Concern, she now has a thriving kitchen garden of her own. Her family own a small piece of land where they grow the grain, millet. When it runs out between harvests, it used to be a struggle to provide the food they needed to survive.

But Chawada now grows tomatoes, onions, cabbage and carrots in her kitchen garden. This garden will provide nutritious food for her family this year and for years to come. Keeping her children safe from hunger so they can thrive.

"We will start eating cabbage, carrot and lettuce in one month and then the onion in about six weeks. This garden helps me and my family. It makes me happy."

– Chawada Aboubacar
Having enough food prevents life threatening malnutrition, meaning Chawada and her children have the opportunity to live long and happy lives. What's more, any surplus food from

the kitchen garden can be sold, giving the family money to buy other nutritious food and essential items.

Best of all, a regular, dependable source of food means Chawada's children don't have to work on the

Your gift ensures your legacy lives on, supporting Concern to help people like Chawada and her family long into the future.

Many who do leave a gift in their Will have been so affected by the suffering of



With Concern worker Mounkaïla's help, Chawada can now grow food to help her family survive.

land and can go back to school. Getting the education essential for a brighter future for them.

By passing on the skills she has gained to her children, Chawada is ensuring they will be self-sufficient in the future; able to provide for both their own families and the wider community – helping to pull everyone out of poverty.

Be part of a world without hunger

“What would induce anyone ... only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was so urgent and necessary to do so?”

– Pope Francis

As you've just seen, gifts in Wills transform lives both immediately and long into the future.

Won't you help Concern fight poverty and hunger – to end it in some of the world's poorest communities – by leaving a life changing gift in your Will?

the world's poorest, most vulnerable families, they have chosen to make a lasting commitment: to be part of a world without hunger.

"I have two children and if they were in need, I would hope that somebody, somewhere would reach out to help them. With my legacy, I will be that person for somebody's loved ones – you could be too." – Fiona, Co. Louth

To discover more about how leaving a gift in your Will transforms and saves lives, please request your complimentary copy of 'Be Part of a World Without Hunger', Concern's legacy booklet.

Inside you'll see how legacies left by people like you are helping the world's poorest people. Both today and for years to come.

The booklet also answers many of the common questions people have about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to start the process.

Of course requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to leave a gift, or do anything else.

"Moments of kindness shine in the darkness and give so much comfort – that's the final gift I intend to leave to the world."

– James, Co. Wicklow

Extreme weather causing widespread droughts and floods, destroying crops and food supplies in world's most vulnerable countries.

The Pope expressed concern over the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather phenomena and the desertification of the soil. With climate change related hunger and malnutrition increasing, Pope Francis warned, "We have caused a climate emergency that gravely threatens nature and life itself, including our own."

The Pope made his comments as part of a written appeal for the 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation'.

Worldwide, droughts and floods have more than doubled since the early 1990's with Africa particularly badly affected.

An increase in droughts – combined with ongoing conflict and unemployment – means dry spells have an increasingly destructive impact on people living in already vulnerable communities. Such as those in Niger, Western Africa where 80% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods.

This year droughts and floods have already caused a 12% drop in cereal production in Niger compared with the already poor yields of 2018/19. 2.7 million people are now projected to be in severe acute food insecurity – urgently needing food if they are to survive.

“Listen to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, who suffer most because of the unbalanced ecology.”

– Pope Francis

Since 1968 Irish charity Concern Worldwide has worked around the world helping alleviate hunger caused by natural or man-made disasters. Over this period climate change has become one of the key drivers of hunger.

In 2019 alone, Concern helped 28.6m people in 24 of the world's poorest

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or visit **www.concern.net/bequest**



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**ENDING EXTREME POVERTY
WHATEVER IT TAKES**

What to expect when the Mother and Baby home report is issued



The stigmatising of unmarried mothers and their babies was wrong, but we should know that it was not confined to Ireland or Catholicism, writes **David Quinn**



The bleak surroundings of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home; right, Catherine Corless.

On October 30, the long-awaited report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation will be delivered to the Government.

Ahead of the delivery and publication of the report, the Government is seeking to pass a law which will determine what aspects of the work of the commission will remain confidential and which will not. Many people who spoke to the commission did so under a promise that their testimony would be confidential and that their identities would never be revealed.

The commission was established after local historian, Catherine Corless, tracked down records showing that 800 babies had died at the Tuam Mother and Baby home over a 40-year period ending in 1961.

A large majority of the deaths took place before the development of modern vaccinations and antibiotics.

Findings

When Mrs Corless published her findings there was a huge national outcry and the story was widely reported. Reports mainly fastened on was the allegation that the bodies of the infants had been dumped in a septic tank.

Some remains have been found in an underground structure, but we do not know yet what the original purpose of that structure was.

The report of the commission apparently runs to thousands of pages. Its task was huge, and the

investigation has taken far longer than originally envisaged. It has cost in the region of €14 million.

Ahead of the publication of the report, it is worth reminding ourselves of its terms of reference.

Among them were:

- Investigating the circumstances and arrangements for the entry of single women into mother and baby homes and county homes (which were State-run).
- Investigating the living conditions of residents.
- Investigating the mortality rate and comparing it with the mortality rate elsewhere in society.
- Investigating what happened to the remains of women and babies after they died.
- Investigating the extent to which vaccine trials were conducted in the institutions.
- Investigating how adoptions were conducted.

We already know much of what it will find. It will confirm that unmarried mothers and their children were harshly treated in Ireland in the past, that conditions at many of the homes were often extremely bad, that babies were often placed for adoption against the wishes of the mothers, that burial practices were frequently

terrible and haphazard, that common burial plots were the norm and no names appeared on gravestones, that the morality rate in the homes was high even by the standards of the time.

Unfortunately, to judge from the terms of reference, the commission will not be looking at the situation overseas at the same time. This remains to be seen, but if it is the case, it will be a big lacuna in the investigation.

“In Ireland, during the era in question, who was making significant efforts to help keep unmarried mothers and their babies together? The only person I can find is Frank Duff...”

The official report by Martin McAleese into the Magdalene homes did look into the international situation. It found that Magdalene homes were neither particularly Irish nor Catholic as institutions. There was many in Britain and America, for

instance, and they were generally not run by Catholic organisations.

If the commission did look at the situation in other countries, it would find that mother and baby homes were once commonplace and that unmarried mothers were routinely stigmatised and their babies taken from them and placed for adoption.

This was the case whether the society was Catholic, Protestant or secular. In social democratic Sweden, it was not uncommon during the period from the 1930s until the 1970s for unmarried mothers to be sterilised.

Commonplace

In Britain, mother and baby homes were commonplace until the 1970s, when abortion became widespread. Only 11% of the homes were run by the Catholic Church.

The peak year for adoptions in Britain was 1968, when 16,000 babies were adopted.

A Church of England spokesman said in November 2017 after a documentary about adoption scandals in Britain was aired: “What was thought to be the right thing to do at the time has caused great hurt. That is a matter of great regret.”

When you point out what was happening overseas, you are often accused of ‘whataboutery’, but singling out Ireland or singling out the Catholic Church for special blame can only be countered by pointing out what happened elsewhere during the same period.

In Ireland, during the era in question, who was making significant efforts to help keep unmarried mothers and their babies together? The only person I can find is Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, who made huge efforts, with very scarce resources to do so.

In a talk to The Iona Institute (which I head) in 2017, Mr Duff’s biographer, Finola Kennedy, pointed out how different Mr Duff’s attitude towards unmarried mothers was, compared with the common attitude at the time.

Mr Duff, says Mrs Kennedy, “compared the harsh treatment of mothers with that of those who fathered children outside marriage”.

In the decades following its opening in 1930, the Regina Coeli hostel helped to keep 3,500 children with their mothers. Mr Duff was a great Christian and humanitarian and his cause for canonisation is ongoing.

Has the ‘problem of unwanted babies’ gone away in the meantime? It has not. Last year, there were 6,666 abortions in Ireland. This will not stop today’s Ireland sitting in judgement on yesterday’s Ireland when the report of the Mother and Baby Home Commission is released.

“The official report found that Magdalene homes were neither particularly Irish nor Catholic as institutions. There was many in Britain and America, for instance, and they were generally not run by Catholic organisations”

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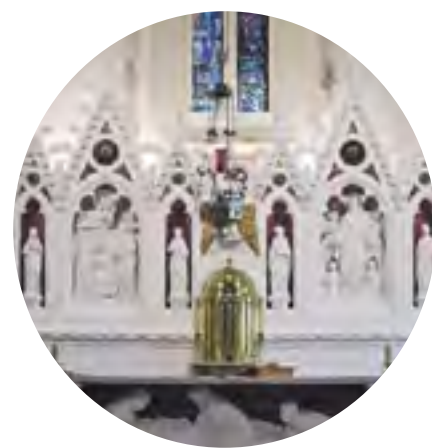
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The vaccine question



As Catholics, we have a responsibility to vaccinate, writes Ruadhán Jones

The question of vaccination comes up around this time every year, but never before with such force. We are all awaiting the results of the various tests underway for a vaccine for Covid-19 with bated breath. Some 240 vaccines are in early development, with 40 in clinical trials and nine already in the final stage of testing on thousands of people, as of September 25.

However, running alongside our desire for the vaccine is an increasing scepticism regarding the safety of vaccines. There is a consensus, however, that vaccines are not only safe, but actively promote good health. For example, vaccines for polio and measles have proven the most effective way of largely eradicating these illnesses. WHO credits vaccines with preventing two to three million deaths a year.

In a general sense, the Catholic Church teaches that we have a “moral responsibility” to get vaccinated due to our commitment to the common good of all around us. A 2017 document on vaccination

from the Pontifical Academy for Life explains that our responsibility to vaccinate is “in order to avoid serious health risks for children and the general population”.

Theologian and bioethicist from Mary Immaculate College, Dr Tom Finnegan says that Catholic teaching on the matter is “nuanced”.

“This matter is of some urgency for Catholics as some vaccines currently being developed are derived from such cell lines”

“If the vaccination is for a serious illness that is seriously affecting the community, then there’s a general obligation on Catholics to get the vaccine,” he told *The Irish Catholic*. “That doesn’t mean it’s an absolute duty and it doesn’t mean that a Catholic can’t in good conscience refuse to receive a vaccine.

“There’s a huge context dependence in this and a full answer couldn’t be given until you have input all lots of the specific facts particular to the situation. But there is a general obligation to receive the vaccine if it’s a safe vaccine for a serious illness that’s affecting the community. In this case, the more people that get the vaccine, the more the community can be protected.”

“The Catholic Church teaches that we have a “moral responsibility” to get vaccinated due to our commitment to the common good of all around us”

Stem cells

For Catholics debates regarding the reception of vaccines rarely focuses on the perceived health threat or safeness of a vaccine. Instead, Catholic concerns tend to have a more legitimate grounding with regard to the origin of the vaccine. In some cases, the vaccine may be developed using stem cell lines derived from aborted children, clearly a grave matter for consideration.

This matter is of some urgency for Catholics as some Covid-19 vaccines currently being developed are derived from such cell lines. The Vatican has given this matter a great deal of thought in the past, with three documents providing guidance – two releases from the Pontifical Academy for Life and one from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF).

All three reach the same conclusion, which is that “in general it can be permissible and still even be an obligation for Catholics to receive vaccine if the circumstances are right even if that vaccine was made possible by tissue material from an aborted baby,” said Dr Finnegan.

David Mullins, an Irish bioethics commentator, explained that the Vatican’s ruling came after controversy surrounding a vaccine for rubella. This vaccine was developed from stem lines derived from aborted fetuses and the question arose whether Catholics could receive it.

“The Vatican are clear and say, look – you could still receive the

rubella vaccine in good conscience, there wasn’t a compelling reason that you couldn’t take it because of the common good, and because the person receiving it wasn’t directly involved in the manufacture or procurement of the vaccine,” Mr Mullins said. “There’s all these levels of moral cooperation, but the Vatican eventually said that you could receive the rubella vaccine because people didn’t have immediate cooperation with the act itself.”

Vatican

As Dr Finnegan said, Church teaching on the matter is subtle and relies on “differing degrees of responsibility”, according to the CDF’s 2008 document *Dignitatis Personae*.

The CDF found that “in organisations where cell lines of illicit origin are being utilised, the responsibility of those who make the decision to use them is not the same as that of those who have no voice in such a decision”.

At the same time, said the CDF instruction, “danger to the health of children could permit parents to use a vaccine which was developed using cell lines of illicit origin, while keeping in mind that everyone has the duty to make known their disagreement and to ask that their healthcare system make other types of vaccines available.”

This was further clarified in the Academy for Life’s 2017 document on the same matter. The academy

said that “while the commitment to ensuring that every vaccine has no connection in its preparation to any material originating from an abortion, the moral responsibility to vaccinate is reiterated in order to avoid serious health risks for children and the general population”.

Vatican teaching is clear, then, that we have a duty to oppose the production of vaccines through illicit stem lines and to seek out alternative means where they are available. But in situations of serious health risks to ourselves or vulnerable members of our community and where no alternative is available, we are not only allowed, but have a responsibility to take part in a vaccination programme.

“Vaccines for polio and measles have proven the most effective way of largely eradicating these illnesses”

In the meantime, while a vaccine has yet to be created, we should support motions that call for ethical production. When a vaccine is offered, we should do all in our power – even where it is inconvenient for those who provide vaccines – to seek out ethical alternatives where they are available. Even when a vaccine is in use and we have used it ourselves, we should continue to argue for the presence of an ethical alternative until it is produced. In doing this, we uphold our dual responsibilities – the protection of life as such and our commitment to the common good of the vulnerable.

Concern mounts as the Brexit clock winds down



Border communities insist that a deal between Britain and the EU is vital for the peace process, reports Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

The coronavirus pandemic has dominated domestic and international news for most of 2020 which has led to the overshadowing of other current events but Brexit still looms large in the minds of many communities – particularly those on the border who will be most affected by Britain's departure.

Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher, a diocese which straddles the border, and priests who minister in parishes along the frontier told *The Irish Catholic* of parishioners' worries for their livelihoods and more.

Disintegrate

As Brexit talks disintegrate, with Boris Johnson's administration increasing preparations for the possibility of a no-deal, concern has turned to fear and anxiety.

"Many people live in one area and work across the border – any Brexit change could affect their lives greatly," said Bishop Duffy. "Particularly in a lot of the border areas, there's no major international industries or companies, a lot of it is small businesses so they can be rather economically fragile."

"For a lot of people, it would be important that there is an agreement and there would be assurances that people's livelihood would not be severely affected by Brexit, and we can't be sure of that at the moment," he warned.

He said border communities have dealt with very particular issues for 100 years since Ireland was divided in two and have adapted, but "when livelihoods are affected and freedom is affected, that's a different thing".

“There is an agreement and there would be assurances that people's livelihood would not be severely affected by Brexit”

Bishop Duffy commended the Good Friday Agreement for bringing "a lot of stability and a lot of hope to people throughout Ireland but particularly in the border area". He added that "it's vital for peace and tranquillity in Northern Ireland".

"I suppose for local people that visible sign of this would be the fact that border infrastructure, checkpoints and that, have all gone in the last 20 years and it's a great freedom to cross the border and there's no hinderance in travel or no checkpoints and this means a lot to people and they'd be very disappointed and really very hurt if that was to change," the bishop said.

Fr Oliver O'Reilly PP of Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan, said there are thousands of people in border parishes, including his, that work and live on either side of the border who are "hugely concerned and worried

about the future and what a hard border could mean".

"They would also be very worried because they remember the old border and the violence that was part of that and the criminality that was part of it as well, so all of those worries are on people's minds," he explained.

Covid-19 has "totally overshadowed" the Brexit process, he said, adding: "One of the big worries I would have is Boris Johnson is playing politics with the border. I don't know whether it's playing politics or whether he's serious about this or whether he's using this as a ploy in negotiations but it's wrong what he's doing, it's quite unethical. He's playing with people's lives and livelihoods and it's playing into the hands of extremists on both sides of the border."

Concern

Fr La Flynn, administrator of Pettigo with parishioners in both Donegal and Fermanagh split by the Termon River which serves as part of the border, said a lot of the concern is his community is the pandemic at the moment. However, although it would be the "overriding concern", it's not that "there wouldn't be reason to be concerned about Brexit and the implications of a no-deal Brexit, of the failure to reach agreement between Britain and the EU".

"It's not that that wouldn't be significant for people in the border area, but there's only so much that people can bear and be concerned with at a given time," said Fr Flynn.

"Part of the price we might be paying for the urgency of the Covid situation at this time is that we are

not able at national level or cross border level to give time or dedicated attention to the challenges in terms of cross border relationships."

He explained that he is familiar with border communities having grown up in the parish of Roslea on the Fermanagh-Monaghan border. His neighbouring parish of Clones was also divided by the border.

Currently living in Pettigo village where he lives in Donegal, he can walk a few hundred metres and cross the river to enter Fermanagh. The Lough Derg office is on the northern side of the border.

"This is how it is, this is how it works. So many of our parishioners in Pettigo are working in the North or family members are working in the North, their marriage relationships – all of these things bind people together across the border," Fr Flynn said.

“No matter what happens, we have to keep going,” he said, “but many parishioners don't know what to do”

"The failure of a robust and secure arrangement between Britain and the EU in terms of how we put the terms of the protocol into action will have a concrete effect on people's lives. And God forbid, if it was to happen that there were to be some kind of customs checkpoints or whatever, that it was necessary to reimpose those at border crossings, that will threaten the whole Good Friday settlement because those

will become flashpoints for strong emotions.

"At another level, the increased conversation over the last week or ten days about how vital it is on the island of Ireland that we would work towards an ever more shared consensus on how to address the public health issues – this is, if you like, another argument for the need to have the best possible working relationships. Anything about Brexit that complicates or prejudices those good working relationships is a liability for the political system," he added.

Border

Based beside the border of Donegal and Derry, Fr Colm O'Doherty PP of Clonleigh and Adm. of Urney and Castlefin said the parish is currently still coming to terms with the second lockdown and uncertainty around Brexit is a "double whammy".

“The parish is currently still coming to terms with the second lockdown and uncertainty around Brexit is a “double whammy”

"No matter what happens, we have to keep going," he said, "but many parishioners don't know what to do" regarding Brexit and Covid-19.

Fr Emlyn McGinn is the new parish priest of Forkhill in Co. Armagh just a few miles from the border. He says that the sense of fear is palpable locally.

"I think it [Brexit] is something to the fore of people's minds at the moment, there's a real fear about livelihoods and really anything that impedes free movement. That's the way most people would feel about it.

"I've ministered on both sides of the border and have enjoyed the freedom over the years to travel across the border without any inconvenience such as checkpoints, that certainly makes life easier overall," he said.

Fr McGinn said that as well as economic concerns "no one wants to regress back to a hard border and most people certainly don't want to do anything that jeopardises peace as well.

"It [Covid-19] has really taken the limelight from the Brexit negotiations, the media attention has lessened somewhat, in saying that it would still be something that people are very aware of in border communities," he said.

The parish priest of border parish Ardstraw West and Castleberg in Co. Tyrone, Fr Paul Fraser, said that Brexit has "taken a back seat" during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fr Fraser said the hope is that politicians "are playing a game of chicken" regarding the idea of a no-deal Brexit. "A hard border is unconscionable," he warned.



Despite being told that there is no such thing as truth, students are told to accept theories that are younger than they are without question, writes **Ronan Doherty**

While University College Dublin's marketing campaign to attract new students uses the slogan 'Think Bigger', my experiences in UCD and Trinity College Dublin have found the opposite encouraged.

In *God and Man at Yale*, William F. Buckley Jr. sought to expose what he viewed as an "extraordinary irresponsible educational attitude". Sadly, in Irish colleges today there is also an extraordinary irresponsible educational attitude. This takes many forms, from the over-prioritisation of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects to attempts at watering down of academic freedom.

However, perhaps the most prevalent and pernicious is the unquestioning, imposition of postmodernism. Despite being told that there is no 'truth', students are taught to accept theories, that are often younger than they are, as the truth without question. Ireland's colleges are churning out graduate automatons who possess marketable skills but have been fed a diet of postmodernist creeds that will damage society.

As Cardinal Robert Sarah succinctly writes in *The Power of Silence*, the postmodern "man enters a mentality that resembles a denial of reality". With so much denial and deconstruction, how are societies supposed to operate? Postmodernism leads to inevitable nihilism where nothing is taken as granted or sacred.

Postmodernism

Firstly, it should be stated, postmodernism should be taught, as elements of postmodernism have contributed richly to fields such as history or archives. Having already completed a MPhil in modern Irish history in TCD, last month I completed a masters in archives in UCD.

There are many positive, important contributions made to archives due to postmodernism

Colleges are churning out graduates fed a diet of creeds that will damage society



such as the encouragement of community archives or a holistic approach to archives.

Postmodernism crept into archival theories in the 1980s thanks to thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. These theories were championed and expanded upon by leading archival theorists such as Terry Cook. However, postmodernism in archival science is portrayed as a part of a positive steady line of progression.

The enthusiastic embrace of postmodernism led to relativist definitions of what a record is. If everything can be a record and can have different value to everyone; the archivist is faced with an impossible task as they must constantly evolve their professional practices in order to keep up to date with the latest philosophical trends in society.

But as has been shown by other leading archivists, lofty postmodernist archival theories are all well and good until you get

into the real world where common sense is often more valuable. Taken to its extreme postmodernism in the archives would deconstruct the archivist out of a job! As C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Abolition of Man*, "you cannot go on 'explaining away' for ever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away".

“The carefree, fervent embrace of postmodernism in historiography has its consequences”

Like in archives, postmodernism brought some good developments to the writing of history such as the questioning of orthodoxies and the promotion of social history. But again, postmodernism is presented almost universally as a constructive development.

Postmodernism brings with it a distrust of metanarratives, emphasis on relationships of power, de-simplification of

memory, questioning of truth and questioning of bias in historians.

Perhaps Pontius Pilate was one of the first proponents of the questioning of truth with, *veritas? Quid est veritas?* All these advances in historiography were needed, to varying degrees, and, like in archives, made the study of history more holistic; encouraging histories of non-elites. The questioning of truth is needed but as in *The Apostle of Common Sense* G.K. Chesterton wrote: "Merely having an open mind is nothing. The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid."

Disconnection

The carefree, fervent embrace of postmodernism in historiography has its consequences. For example, it is naive to think that the questioning of nation states has not contributed to communities feeling less connected, suffering a loss of identity.

The nationalist histories of the

19th Century were dangerous as they helped stir nationalism in nation-states; postmodernist histories of recent times are helping to deconstruct and disconnect those nation-states. In the struggle against hierarchies, the postmodernist scepticism of truth is hollowing communities and weakening trust in institutions. A lecturer once argued that politically driven history is bad history at times, which is true as it is can be one-sided and unnuanced. However, postmodernist history is also bad history at times, as it is motivated for ideological reasons.

These personal examples of graduate studies of history and archives are given as a microcosm experience of how postmodernism permeates Irish academia. This is not a case of Irish exceptionalism, it is a worldwide phenomenon.

However, this begs the question: so what if they're teaching postmodernism irresponsibly? In *God and Man at Yale*, Dr Buckley referenced a speech where a president of Yale declared that "even more disastrous [than unenlightened insistence on traditional values] would be the failure of the university to train the student to form convictions reached by his own effort of reason".

“Lofty postmodernist archival theories are all well and good until you get into the real world where common sense is often more valuable”



but in the end he let himself be persuaded, because he would have made things impossible for himself by not going. Maybe others felt the same way as he did...Katzinsky says it is all to do with education – it softens the brain.”

In a world where we're taught to believe that societal forces and hierarchies determine every action, what would it accomplish with one-person objecting? One wonders what Hans and Sophie Scholl would have made of this.

This postmodernist abyss of nothingness is not moulding good citizens. Social commentary on Ireland in recent decades has highlighted the pitfalls, at times justified, of blindly adhering to a set of dogmas. However, the embrace of postmodernism is every bit as dogmatic as the catechism and needs to be called out. It is incredibly naive to believe that graduates with deeply engrained theories of denial of basic truth and deconstruction won't negatively affect society.

“We must agree to at least have a debate on issues, we must ensure academic freedom is upheld”

During the first Covid-19 lockdown, I read *God and Man at Yale*. As I wrote this piece, I found that I shared the same Faith, middle name and am the same age as Dr Buckley when he wrote his vastly influential work.

Also during that lockdown, my family recently re-watched *Fawlty Towers*. In one scene Polly asks Basil: “What's the point in being alive?”

To which Basil replies: “Beats me. We're stuck with it I suppose.”

To this eternal “what's the point in anything?” mindset encompassing our postmodernist colleges, I answer: “We're stuck with it, get on with it.”

Actions must be taken to rectify this indoctrination of postmodernism, the extreme political polarisation seen today and to help rebuild communities. Some basic, key suggestions for how we rectify this are: we must agree to at least have a debate on issues, we must ensure academic freedom is upheld and we should encourage students to make up their own minds on academic theories.

These changes are urgently needed because if not the disintegrating Irish society will continue its postmodernist downward spiral where our communities hollow, believe in nothing, blindly obsessed with monotonous ‘progress’; each docile, indoctrinated automaton passively scrolling on their phone, caring only for their own privatised world.

1 Ronan Doherty is an archivist in Dublin, a Kilkenny native and historian of modern Irish and Church history.

Priests are at the coalface of all changes which take place in society



Fr Colm Kilcoyne challenged, consoled, edified and nourished people with the light of the Gospel, writes Archbishop Michael Neary

Ordained in 1959, Fr Colm Kilcoyne's ministry spanned a period of momentous change in Irish society and in the Church itself. Many people found that the foundations were crumbling around us and wondered where we could get a steady foothold. For some there was great emptiness, loneliness and a sense of bewilderment. Others recognised that things had to change and were endeavouring to encourage and facilitate a change – for many this led to a serious crisis of hope.

A culture without hope is never tempted to make commitment, to choose. We witness this in the areas of marriage and life-long commitment, in the area of priesthood and religious life today.

The priest finds himself at the coalface of all the changes which take place in our society.

Testimony

In his priestly ministry, Fr Colm responded positively and constructively to this situation as he beamed in the light of Christ's Gospel into the various areas of our culture. He has been doing this for the past 61 years and in recent years the way in which he carried his cross of ill-health provided its own testimony.

Having taught for 13 years in Glenamaddy, Colm moved to Achill. This was the time after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and great emphasis was being placed on communicating the richness of God's word in the homily at Mass and on communicating the Christian message.

Fr Colm was blessed with exceptional gifts in this area and he was appointed as the Director of the Catholic Communications Centre. For men entrusted with preaching the Gospel it was an enormous challenge to do so in a meaningful manner and in a language with which people

could identify and understand. This was an area in which Colm excelled. Many will remember his weekly column on the *Sunday Press*. Whether in the print or electronic media, Colm was very much at home. His racy style attracted readers and listeners as he communicated the richness and the depth of Christ's Gospel in the language of today.

He applied himself wholeheartedly to that important ministry. With Colm the Gospel of God came alive; he challenged, consoled, edified and nourished. He had a method of comforting the afflicted and at times enjoyed afflicting the comfortable.

Placing great emphasis on God's Word, he trained readers in churches throughout the archdiocese, impressing upon them the sacredness of the word and also its enormous potential.

In his hands the Word of God initiated a dialogue between the hearer who may be in a hospital bed, a broken home or suffering from a breaking heart and God.

The suffering and the struggling were enabled to make contact with God, question the Lord and as a result derive meaning and hope that enabled them to put the broken pieces of life together again and go forward in faith. In all of this, Colm very effectively utilised imagination in his preaching as he painted real life pictures and symbols. In short with him, God's word became alive.

He also ministered in Tooreen in the Parish of Aghamore and returned for a second term to the Communications Centre.

In 1985 he was appointed to Knock and there he set up a local communications centre which in many ways helped to pave the way for Midwest Radio and particularly for the programme *Faith Alive*. For the next number of years, listeners would enjoy Fr Colm present the Christian viewpoint as he unravelled many of the great truths of our faith in language and concepts that were understandable. His columns in the *Western People* and prior to that in the *Western Journal* were always topical and relevant.

“Colm very effectively utilised imagination in his preaching as he painted real life pictures and symbols”

In 1994 Fr Colm was appointed parish priest of Cong. He was confronted with an enormous challenge in the renovation of the church. Having consulted widely and wisely he courageously



The late Fr Colm Kilcoyne.

embarked on that project resulting in the beautiful church that is admired by all who visit Cong.

His own experience as a teacher enabled him to provide great support for teachers in the parish as he recognised the importance of a good formation as foundational for life. In his pastoral ministry he worked closely with and encouraged participation of the various committees and the pastoral council in planning the way in which the Gospel relates to human living.

“He could question and argue with the Lord but always maintained a deep faith in the same God”

Colm was called home by the Lord as the Church was celebrating the Feast of St Teresa of Avila. Like Teresa, Colm expressed a close intimate relationship with God. He could question and argue with the Lord but always maintained a deep faith in the same God. We lay Fr Colm to rest today on this Feast of St Ignatius of Antioch who wrote several letters to the various churches encouraging them to maintain faith in Jesus Christ in spite of opposition and persecution.

Joining with the Parish Priest, Canon Conal Eustace, with Fr Shane and Fr Dixy, with the people, religious and priests of the archdiocese, with the people in the places where Fr Colm has ministered and with his many readers and friends I offer my sincere sympathy and the promise of my prayers to Fr Colm's sister Marcella, his nieces, nephews and the extended family. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam usual.

1 Fr Colm Kilcoyne (1934-2020) was a priest of the Archdiocese of Tuam. He died on October 15. This is the homily preached by Archbishop Neary at the funeral Mass.

Critically, Irish colleges are not encouraging students to form personal convictions about academic theories; potentially more dangerous than the ideas themselves. The vast majority of students pass through college focusing on their future careers or socialising. This silent majority sit passively through lectures and regurgitate the necessary arguments to pass exams.

“In the end he let himself be persuaded, because he would have made things impossible for himself by not going”

In time, they make up the majority of graduates in society and are inculcated with postmodernist ideas that will be evidenced in their later actions in life. Perhaps some personally objected but their entire class seemed to agree with the lecturer so they passively sat by.

In *All Quiet On The Western Front*, Paul Baumer recalls his form-master Kantorek bullying his pupils into joining the war: “In fact, one of our class was reluctant, and didn't really want to go with us...

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Students praised for new Roscrea ‘Prayer Path’ creation



Cistercian College's Transition Year class of 2020 with Yvonne O'Rourke, Sinead Egan, Bro. Lawrence, Fr Lawrence, Dom Malachy Thompson, Fr McDunphy, Paddy Smyth, Catherine Smyth and Principal Gerry Grealish. Photos: PJ Wright

The Faithful gathered to mark the official opening and blessing of the new Prayer Path in Mount Saint Joseph Abbey created by the 2019-2020 Transition Year students from Cistercian College with singers, poetry readings and more.

Abbott Dom Malachy Thompson blessed the path and cut the ribbon. He congratulated the students, Fr Aodhán McDunphy and Paddy Smyth for their achievement in getting the project over the line despite the setback of Covid-19.

Fr McDunphy spoke of the many people who walk the path daily and commented on the amount of

prayer requests left in the vault each week. He said that perhaps the path is a way of reaching out to people and their needs at this time. Fr McDunphy offers all their prayers and petitions during his Masses.

The project that the students undertook was to restore an overgrown path in the monk's forest and this project would be the start of further forest trails on the monastic land – part of Green Campus Eco-Tourism. The work required carrying hard core stone up a steep slope in buckets and barrows the rest of the way and then the same process with a finishing grit, block laying, pipe bending, welding and horticulture.



Dom Malachy Thompson conducts the blessing.



John Brown, who worked as groundsman in Mount St Joseph for over 40 years recites his Prayer Path Poem.



Opening of Prayer Path.



Bro. Lawrence Walsh leads the way up the Prayer Path for the blessing.



Cutting of the ribbon with Paddy Smyth, Jack Verlin, Dom Malachy Thompson (with scissors), Peter Dillon and Fr McDunphy.



Parishes lament the absence of young people, but most are happy and do not want to be disturbed, writes Gerard Gallagher

When Pope Francis published *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'* and *Amoris Laetitia* there was an excessive amount of praise. It has been striking how much quieter the reception of *Christus Vivit* – his document on young people – has been. At a national level, there has only been minor scrutiny and promotion of this key document. Pope Francis raised a challenge to the Church to find new and more relevant ways of reaching out to our younger generations. Maybe the reality of coronavirus has accelerated the discussion on the role of young people in the Church and maybe it has focused on their absence too.

“The Church must reflect on the multi-faceted approach, blending an online Church and the real Church”

Covid-19 has challenged every aspect of political cultural, social and religious life in Ireland since we entered the most restrictive changes to our lives. For a country where Faith matters for many, our Faith would now be tested in new ways. Going to church stopped. Our older people were asked to stay at home. Our cultural way of life ceased in every manner. All sacramental life in parishes ceased, with expectations around the administration of sacraments to the sick and care for the dying. Many priests retreated to the ‘sanctuary’ to be seen via local social media platforms. Youth

“Covid-19 has challenged every aspect of political cultural, social and religious life in Ireland since we entered the most restrictive changes to our lives”

We pat ourselves on the back about online Masses, but many people do not engage with this model of the Church

and young adult ministry paused. Its leaders all reverted to online platforms of communication. I am not sure whose need was being met in this approach as I know many people did not engage with this model of the Church.

Young

Where is the Young Church in Ireland today?

In his encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis noted that we all need to reach out to the ‘peripheries’ and find ways of bring the Gospel to all situations and that we need to go out and meet young people on their search, where they are at in their lives. In *Christus Vivit* (177) he says youth and young adult leaders will have to inspire a new generation to be part of the Church.

There is an urban myth that young people are not interested in being part of their local parish. Whilst everyone encourages youth ministry, most pastoral leaders do not want anything to do with young people. Parishes lament the absence of young people, but most are happy and do not want to be disturbed. This could be because of parishes for generations

have struggled to reach out to young people. Parishes are preoccupied with maintaining pastoral programmes that do not include young people. Most Irish parishes have no youth ministry programmes. Our parishes have become older and more fixed on maintaining how things need to happen. As a result, young people find other ways to fill their time. Our parishes adapted to online ministry in recent months. I am not sure if this approach has attracted or sustained a younger demographic. To sustain a Church going forward a deeper reflection is required on how to keep our parishes relevant to young generations.

“There is an urban myth that young people are not interested in being part of their local parish”

Anxious

Young people have become more anxious. The National Youth Council of Ireland recently published a report that noted that Covid-19



Pope Francis embraces Nick Lopez, director of campus ministry at the University of Dallas. Photos: CNS

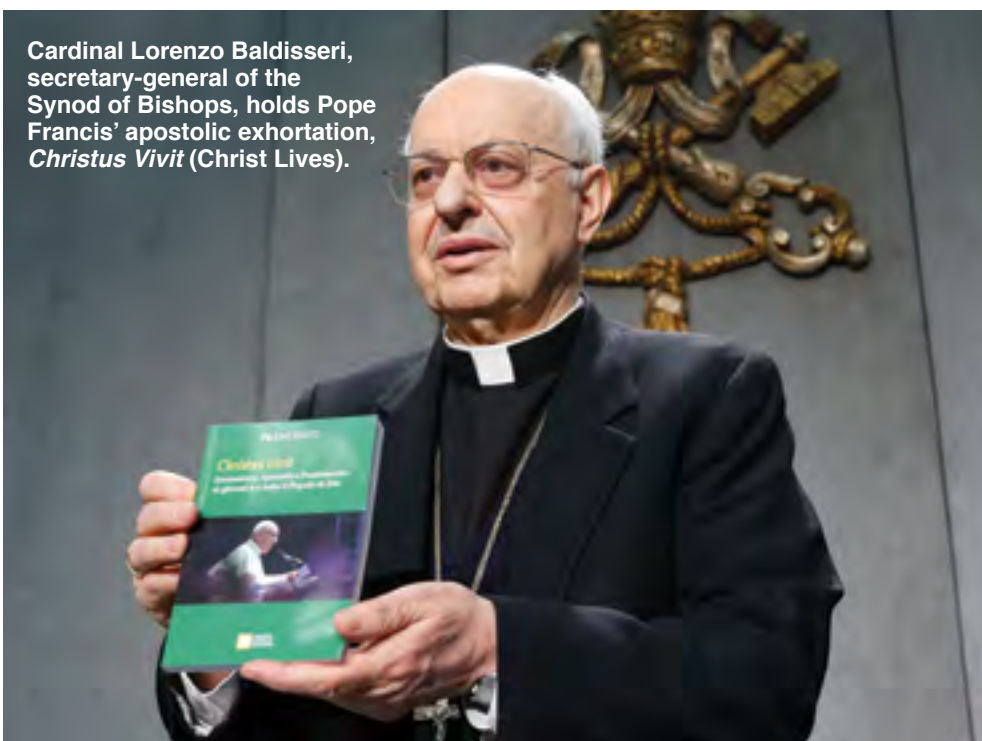
has had negative impact on young people’s mental health, education as well as an economic impact as they now have to deal with impending unemployment that could last for a number of years. An editorial in *The Irish Times* noted the following, “And the damage will linger long after the immediate crisis has faded: today’s 18-year-olds, facing into the second recession in their lifetime, will go out into a world with fewer jobs and greater uncertainty – a world emerging from a generational trauma whose scars will take a long time to heal.”

Participation and religious practice among this group has been in decline for years. Most of Ireland’s young adults are very much living lives culturally different and distant to the Church. Today’s young Irish person who has some type of Faith commitment has spoken about a fear of others about their Faith. Young people have spoken of ‘hiding their Faith’. Some young Irish people are beginning to identify with their Faith in an ‘underground’ manner.

The public square of the internet and online Church and Faith expressions are

now part of our reality. Covid-19 forced the majority of young people to spend even more time online, either for education, work and even for social connectivity. Our young people are spending increasing time online; however, they are not online with our parishes. Pope Francis has referred to the digital environment containing “swathes of humanity... immersed in it in an ordinary manner. In this ‘highly digitalised culture’ it can affect our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world” (CV 86-90).

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, holds Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit* (Christ Lives).



Pilgrims are pictured in a file photo during the opening ceremony of the Youth Day of the Archdiocese of Hanoi in Bac Ninh, Vietnam.

Faith life

Our young adults clearly differentiate their Faith life between online resources for entertainment but not as a means to publicly communicate their Faith. There is a reluctance or a fear of engaging the digital world with their Faith. While many young adults have personal faith and a relationship with God, it remains private.

“The public square of the internet and online Church and Faith expressions are now part of our reality”

Youth and young adult leaders and Church leaders need to reflect on the things that are necessary to assist this generation to find ways to express their Faith online as digital disciples and in real life as ordinary disciples.

The Church must reflect on the multi-faceted approach, blending an online Church and the real Church. Fr Eugene Duffy noted, “We need to explore some of the good work in the area of evangelisation that is now being done online and see how this can be extended.” This dual approach needs to be reflected and refined. The evangelisation of this generation of young adults and younger people will require leaders able to exist and navigate both territories. “Social media can be beneficial if used with moderation,” Pope Francis noted during his visit to Dublin. This will require training, trust, and time. “Youth and young adults are more engaged with technology today than they have ever been before and yet they remain one of the most

emotional and spiritually disconnected generations of our time.”

Little of the Covid-19 outreach to the Faith reality of our young people has been effective. Leaders need to reflect on “new styles and new strategies” as we cannot return to how youth ministry happened before Covid-19, (CV204). That model was not really working. We need now to be more flexible and experimental as we outreach to younger generations.

A reimagining of all approaches to youth and young adult activity needs to reach out to all young people and those who do not normally encounter our work and ministry. Rather than assume people are following us, there is a need to be proactive and reach out to the “ends of the earth” in bringing the message of the Gospel to the whole of society and not just to our followers online.

Methods

The Church must constantly seek out new methods and means to evangelise. All levels of leadership needs to reflect and pause on some of the opportunities that exist to partner and accompany a new generation of the young Church. Our understanding of co-responsibility in leadership needs to be revisited as we seek ways to restart and renew all our pastoral forms of ministerial outreach.

Pope Francis reminds us that ministry with youth needs to be “capable of being inclusive, with room for all kinds of young people to show that we a Church with open doors” and he adds, “Nor does one have to accept fully all the teaching of the Church to take part in certain activities” (CV 234).

The Catholic Church will look different after Covid-19. We need to be ready to

cast our nets out into deeper waters. Jesus invited his followers personally, one-by-one with the words “Come and See”. It is now time for further, deeper reflection by all those engaged and interested in younger generations to reflect on our approaches towards youth and young adult and their online Faith experiences.

“Little of the Covid-19 outreach to the Faith reality of our young people has been effective”

Covid-19 has severely impacted all aspects of youth and young adult ministry. A recovery plan to revive, restore and resume our youth apostolate will have to emerge once we have listened to this 2020 generation. They are not with us. We will need to go to where they are.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the former Archbishop of Paris, once commented, “We get the youth we deserve!”



Felician Sister Marget Padilla talks with pilgrims at the World Youth Day evangelisation centre in Krakow, Poland.

He argued that there was not as much a gap between the Church and young people, rather young people find it hard to find their place with the Church.

If you are reading this and have not really read Pope Francis' Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, I recommend it. If you wish to engage with a wider discussion on the role of

young people and Church, my book *Exploring Christus Vivit*, just published by Veritas, might assist further reflection.

Exploring Christus Vivit hopefully will challenge us all to find new paths to reach our young people. In the words of Pope Francis, it is time to begin again. “Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!...He calls you and

waits for you to return to him and start over again.”

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Gerard Gallagher is a Pastoral Coordinator in the Archdiocese of Dublin and has worked in young adult ministry for over 25 years. His latest publication is *Exploring Christus Vivit*, is just published and available from www.veritas.ie



Pope Francis poses for a selfie during a pre-synod gathering of youth delegates.

Despite actions of few, youth 'self-sacrificing' during Covid-19

Archbishop Eamon Martin presiding with (left) chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan and Fr Eddie O'Donnell PP, St Brigid's parish, Belfast.

Chai Brady

Young people are being "stigmatised" for the spread of Covid-19 despite many "stepping up" and being generous and self-sacrificial according to the Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Speaking at Mass for the dedication of studies at the Catholic Chaplaincy, Queen's University Belfast Archbishop Eamon said many young people have shown "great resilience" throughout the pandemic and have made huge efforts to keep the vulnerable safe.

Archbishop Eamon said: "I know that university communities are sharing in the anxiety, disruption and uncertainty that has

marked these months of pandemic. A first-year psychology student told me recently that this is not what she or her friends were expecting from college. 'It doesn't feel real', she said."

"And it's upsetting for her that young people are being stigmatised for the spread of Covid-19. At times the irresponsibility of a few has perhaps tarnished the image of all. But my experience of young people since the beginning of the pandemic has been of your generosity and self-sacrifice, your volunteering to help the elderly and isolated, your stepping up to serve in the retail and hospitality sector – not to mention the many students of medicine, pharmacy and nursing who

have supported our health workers and carers on the so-called 'front line'."

He acknowledged the "personal sacrifices" the students were making to keep their parents, grandparents and vulnerable family members safe. "These are stressful times for us all, and I am aware of the support and encouragement that you are quietly giving to each other, especially to friends and others who are fragile and struggling to cope, either mentally, physically or spiritually" he added.

Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain in Queen's University, said that because of social distancing the overflow congregation was seated in the chaplaincy cloister. As they couldn't provide the



customary hospitality afterwards, each guest was given a chaplaincy gift bag with a prayer book, candles, a bookmark and some treats "to enjoy with a cup of tea at home".

Eight students were commissioned for the pastoral team and will assist with campus ministry this year. Twice as many students volunteered to do stewarding to keep the chaplaincy a safe space.

Fr McGrattan said: "It was a great start to the academic year and the archbishop preached a very encouraging and inspirational homily."

The chaplaincy also launched their new digital broadcast service at the Mass to keep connected with students. It can be reached at: <https://qubcatholic.org/videos/dedication-of-studies-mass>







Out&About

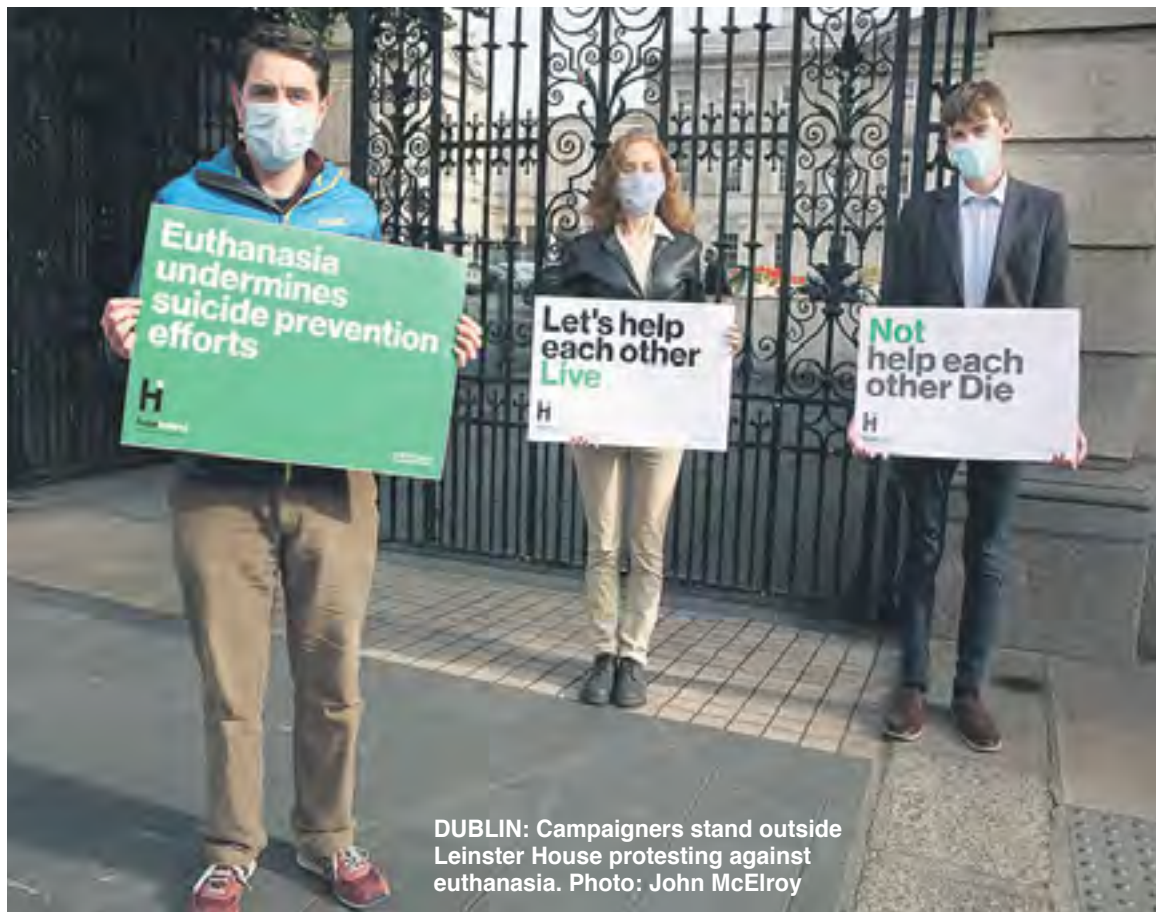
The work goes on in Birr



OFFALY: Emma Mulrooney, Aoife McMahon, Jack Kirwan, Megan Kearns and Chloe Conroy are pictured in St Brendan's Church, Birr. The John Paul II award candidates volunteered in the church as part of their parish work.



CLARE: Bishop Fintan Monahan welcomes newly-ordained Deacon Damien OFM, who joined him for Mass in the cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul.



DUBLIN: Campaigners stand outside Leinster House protesting against euthanasia. Photo: John McElroy

INSHORT

Bishop Dermot Farrell launches interactive online programme for Sacramental preparation

Bishop of Ossory Dermot Farrell has launched a new parish-based programme of preparation for the celebration of the sacraments of Confession, Communion and Confirmation.

Underlining the need for effective preparation, Bishop Farrell noted that “much has changed in our parishes and

Church life and yet much remains the same. One of the key elements of a really fruitful and joyful celebration of the sacraments is an effective programme of preparation.

“I am delighted, then, to support a programme of preparation, developed here in the Diocese of Ossory, as a means to ensure that children can be well prepared to celebrate these sacraments in our parishes later in this school year.”

Under the leadership of theology professor Dr Dermot Ryan, the team that wrote the programme sought to develop a parish-based preparation programme that would permit children and their families to

journey together towards the celebration of the sacraments in the context of their parish communities.

Commenting on the programme, Fr Ryan stated: “This online and interactive programme ‘walks’ children through the steps necessary to understand, appreciate, celebrate effectively, and then live the sacraments.

“We introduce them to Ich Thus, a most important fish, who will guide those preparing for Communion and Confirmation, in different ways, to the same result.

“Online video modules, online

interactive games/challenges and quizzes to reinforce learning, downloadable resources; moments of prayer; an appreciation of the journey towards celebrating the sacraments are the key elements of what we hope will be a significant support to parishes in their efforts to help children on their faith journey.”

Teachers, with the aid of this preparation programme, lead children through modules which are released as the year progresses.

The programme is already available to parishes at www.myfaith.ie

Edited by Jason Osborne
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DOWN: SVP NI Northern Regional President Mary Waide with Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor and Fr Perry Gildea at a Mass celebrating St Vincent de Paul in Holy Family parish, Belfast.



WATERFORD: Bro. Edmund celebrating his 90th birthday at Mount Melleray Abbey, the occasion marked by a festive supper after Vespers.



DUBLIN: On the feast of the Holy Name of Mary Sheila Corless was presented with the Benemerenti medal by Fr Ciarán O'Carroll, in appreciation of her service in the Church of the Poor Clare Monastery, St Damian's, Ballsbridge.



DONEGAL: Ciaran Dunlevy with his mural of a famous photo of St Eunan's Cathedral and the Church Lane from the Lawrence Collection.



ANTRIM: Michael Ward presented Ciarán Bagchus with a framed and signed photograph of Catholic Knights At Queen's 19 as a parting gift, as Ciarán leaves for Spain to begin seminary.



DUBLIN: Fr Bryan Shortall featuring as a guest on *The Ryan Tubridy Show* to discuss the RTÉ television documentary *The Confessors*.

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

Vatican criminal trial begins against priests accused in abuse case

● Fr Gabriele Martinelli, 28, has heard a Vatican criminal court accuse him of repeatedly sexually abusing a younger student at a minor seminary inside the Vatican.

Msgr Enrico Radice, 71, former rector of the seminary, heard the court accuse him of obstructing the investigation by helping Father Martinelli “in different times and places, in Italy and abroad”.

The trial in the Vatican City State criminal court opened October 14 with the reading of charges related to abuse that allegedly occurred at the St Pius X Pre-Seminary, a minor seminary operated by the Diocese of Como inside the Vatican.

Both priests on trial are incardinated in the Como diocese. Boys in middle school and high school live at the pre-seminary and serve Mass at St Peter’s Basilica and attend a Catholic school in Rome while considering applying to a seminary when they are older.

Cardinal tells diplomats: 11 million Syrians need aid

● The apostolic nuncio to Syria met with diplomats accredited to the Vatican Thursday to inform them that an estimated 11 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Cardinal Mario Zenari, apostolic nuncio to Syria since 2008, said that, after nearly 10 years of war, the Syrian people had now been hit with a “poverty bomb” amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardinal Zenari explained that “many Syrians have lost hope,” while lamenting that Syria seemed to have disappeared off the “media radar.”

A statement from the Holy See press office said that the cardinal met with members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See in the Vatican’s new synod hall to “rekindle attention toward the situation in Syria.”

“What, unfortunately, is dying in Syria, in the hearts of different people, is hope: many people, after 10 years of war, no longer seeing economic recovery, reconstruction, are losing hope.”

Bring loved ones’ urns to church for blessing, Manila Archdiocese says

● The Manila Archdiocese said it would bless urns containing the ashes of coronavirus victims every Sunday after each Mass until November 8.

Ucanews.com reported the archdiocese said the Rite of Blessing for the Dead would be recited and urns would be sprinkled with holy water after Sunday Masses.

“We will be having the Rite of Blessing of cremated remains,” the archdiocese said in a

social media post. “The family may bring the urn and a picture of their beloved dead, and we will celebrate a worthy liturgical blessing for them.”

“This is in response to the call of [apostolic administrator] Bishop Broderick Pabillo to make our churches welcome places of prayer and consolation, especially for families who have lost a loved one during this pandemic.”

Addition of China, Russia, Cuba to UN Human Rights Council draws criticism

● A human rights group in Cuba criticised the election of China, Cuba, and Russia to the UN Human Rights Council, despite the history of authoritarianism and significant human rights abuses in each country.

Regis Iglesias, a spokesman for the Christian Liberation Movement, lamented that “solidarity with those who are suffering isn’t a value” in the modern world.

“Relativism, the lack of values, the indifference and the lack of leadership in countries of the free world have caused in recent years, perhaps decades, international organisations and governments to unfortunately forget their commitment to the human person and the peoples suffering under dictatorial regimes,” he said.

World Mission Sunday: number of Catholics continues to rise

The number of Catholics worldwide increased by almost 16 million in a year to 1.33 billion, according to statistics highlighted by the Vatican around the 2020 World Mission Sunday.

The figures, shared by the *Fides News Service*, showed that there were 15,716,000 more Catholics at the end of 2018 – the most recent year where numbers are available – compared to 2017.

This took the overall number of Catholics to 1,328,993,000, compared to 1,313,278,000 the year before.

The growth was spread across all inhabited continents, with an increase of 94,000 in Europe, 9.2 million in Africa, 4.5 million in the Americas, 1.8 million in Asia, and 177,000 in Oceania.

Fides noted that this was the third successive year that the number of Catholics in Europe had risen.

But the percentage of Catholics in the world population remained unchanged at 17.73%, meaning that the number of Catholics is increasing in line with broader global population growth.

Fides, the information service of the Pontifical Mis-



Leaders of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples hold a news conference at the Vatican, the topic of which was World Mission Sunday. Photo: CNS

sion Societies since 1927, presents the statistics annually ahead of World Mission Sunday, which took place last Sunday, October 18. The figures are taken from the *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae*, or *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, which was published March 25.

The figures indicated that the number of priests worldwide fell in 2018 to 414,065, with Europe registering the largest decrease, followed by the Americas. Africa, Asia and Oceania all reported higher numbers of priests.

Overall, there was a mod-

est increase in the number of diocesan priests and a drop in the number of religious priests. The number of Catholics per priest increased slightly, with a global average of 3,210.

Meanwhile, the number of bishops in the world fell year on year to 5,377. Permanent deacons continued to increase, reaching a total of 47,504, with the biggest rises recorded in America and Europe. The number of male religious decreased marginally to 50,941, while the number of female religious fell by 7,249 to 641,661.

The number of young men

attending a minor seminary decreased for the third consecutive year, to 100,164. But the number attending major seminaries rose to 115,880.

Fides also reported that the Catholic Church worldwide runs 73,164 kindergartens, 103,146 primary schools, and 49,541 secondary schools.

The Church oversees 5,192 hospitals, 15,481 dispensaries, 577 centres for people with Hansen’s disease (also known as leprosy), 9,295 orphanages, and 15,423 homes for the elderly, the chronically ill and people with a disability.

Swiss Church backs bill on corporate responsibility

The Catholic Church in Switzerland has backed legislation that would penalise companies that damage the environment or abuse human rights.

“This initiative focuses on human rights violations, whose primary victims are the poorest and most vulnerable,” the Church said in a joint appeal with protestant leaders. “It makes an urgent appeal, to both our government and the community of nations, to engage with determination and without compromise for the validation and respect of human rights worldwide.”

The statement was published ahead of a November 29 referendum on a corporate responsibility initiative

requiring Swiss companies to uphold environmental and human rights standards, under threat of controls and sanctions.

Multinationals

The religious leaders said obligations under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided a “protective shield” for people worldwide and applied to companies and multinationals under corporate responsibility rules set out by the 37-state Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

“Enterprises which base their business practices on a weak application of human rights, or

on insufficient controls over their own violations, gain an economic advantage at the expense of fundamental rights,” the Church leaders said.

If passed in the referendum, the legislation would trigger constitutional amendments imposing due diligence requirements on Swiss companies and their affiliates operating at home and abroad.

The statement said human rights and environmental protection should gain special advocacy in traditionally neutral Switzerland, which acted as a base for international humanitarian organisations.

Church fights ‘hunger never experienced before’

Fr Eckar Rolón does not expect his workload to evaporate October 15 when his small landlocked country, Paraguay, reopens its borders with neighbouring Argentina and Brazil after seven months.

Fr Rolón has coordinated a

massive food programme in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay’s second-largest city, since the coronavirus pandemic hit in March and borders were closed, eliminating jobs and depriving the city of goods.

His city, along with Puerto Iguazú in Argentina

and Foz do Iguacu in Brazil, form a zone known as the Triple Frontier that survives on trade, including a huge amount of illegal goods. Smuggling used to be the number one concern along the Triple Frontier, attracting international attention, but

pandemic-driven hunger has replaced it.

“Our biggest problem is hunger; we are helping feed people who have watched their livelihoods evaporate with the pandemic,” said Fr Rolón.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Masked conversation



Nuns wearing protective masks travel on a bus in Rome. Authorities in the Italian capital ordered face coverings to be worn at all times outdoors in an effort to counter rising Covid-19 cases. Photo: CNS

San Francisco archbishop performs exorcism before destroyed St Junipero Serra statue

Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco on Saturday performed an exorcism at the site of a destroyed statue of St Junipero Serra, calling the statue's destruction by rioters an "act of blasphemy".

"We pray that God might purify this place of evil spirits, that he might purify the hearts of those who perpetrated this blasphemy, that he might envelop them in his love, that their hearts might be softened and turn toward Him," Archbishop Cordileone said before a crowd of about 150 people.

St Serra, an 18th-Century Franciscan priest and missionary, has been criticised by some activists as a symbol of colonialism and of the abuses that many Native Americans suffered after contact with Europeans. However, historians say

he protested abuses and sought to fight colonial oppression.

An October 12 protest at Mission San Rafael Archangel began peacefully but then turned violent, as participants defaced the statue of the saint with red paint before dragging it to the ground with nylon straps and ropes.

Possession

Archbishop Cordileone offered exorcism prayers in Latin before sprinkling the site with holy water. The prayers the archbishop offered at the statue site are not the same as exorcism prayers offered by the Church if a person is believed to be the subject of demonic possession.

This marks the second time that Archbishop Cordileone has performed an exorcism in connection with a destroyed

statue of the saint. A crowd of about 100 people tore down a St Serra statue in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park the evening of June 19, and Archbishop Cordileone offered exorcism prayers after that incident.

Archbishop Cordileone last week decried the "mob rule" that led to the statue of the saint being "mindlessly defaced and toppled by a small, violent mob".

"There is no question that the indigenous peoples of our continent suffered under Europeans who came here and their descendants, especially after the mission era ended and California entered into the US. But Fr Serra is the wrong symbol of those who wish to address or redress this grievance," the archbishop contended.

Dutch govt backs euthanasia for children under 12

The government of the Netherlands has announced it will allow the euthanasiation of terminally ill children between the ages of one and 12.

"There is a need for active termination of life among doctors and parents of incurably ill children, who are suffering hopelessly and unbearably and will die within the foreseeable future," Health Min-

ister Hugo de Jonge wrote in an October 13 letter to parliament.

Euthanasia is already legal in the Netherlands for infants under one year, with parental consent, and of minors 12-15 with their consent and that of their parents. Voluntary euthanasia is available to those aged 16-17 without parental consent.

The health minister also

emphasised "the great importance of the best possible care for this group of terminally ill children".

Suffering

Those with "unbearable and endless suffering" would be eligible for euthanasia; their parents would have to consent, as would two doctors.

Children between 1 and 12 who have such conditions

may currently be given palliative care, or their nutrition may be withheld.

Rather than a law change, doctors who euthanise patients aged 1-12 will be exempted from prosecution, Mr De Jonge stated.

The government expect between five and 10 children a year to be euthanised under the new rule.



Pope picks Bishop Semeraro to lead sainthood congregation

● Pope Francis has named Italian Bishop Marcello Semeraro of Albano, secretary of his Council of Cardinals, to be the new prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. The bishop, 72, succeeds Cardinal Angelo Becciu, whom the Pope forced to resign in late September because of suspicious financial dealings.

Bishop Marco Mellino, who was adjunct secretary of the Council of Cardinals, will take Bishop Semeraro's place at the council, which Pope Francis established in 2013 to advise him on Church governance and the reform of the Roman Curia.

Announcing Bishop Semeraro's new Vatican post on October 15, the Vatican also said Pope Francis reconfirmed the membership of the six cardinals currently on the council and that he was adding Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa.

The six reconfirmed members are: Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state; Sean P. O'Malley of Boston; Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; and Giuseppe Bertello, president of the commission governing Vatican City State.

Analyst linked to Cardinal Becciu is arrested

● A political analyst allegedly hired as a security consultant by Cardinal Angelo Becciu has been arrested by Italian authorities in Milan, Italian media reported. Cecilia Marogna was arrested on October 13 on suspicion of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds by the Italian financial police after an international warrant was issued by Interpol at the Vatican's request, according to reports.

She is expected to be extradited to Vatican City to answer the charges, the reports said. The Vatican has issued no statement on the arrest.

Cardinal Becciu, the former prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, was asked to retire on September 24 by Pope Francis. The cardinal said the Pope mentioned allegations that he embezzled Vatican funds, diverting them to a charitable organisation run by his brother.

Italian and international media have reported several questionable financial transactions the cardinal allegedly made with Vatican funds during the time he was *sostituto* – chief of staff – in the Vatican Secretariat of State from 2011 to 2018.

Pandemic 'increases risks of human trafficking'

● While the Covid-19 pandemic has shut down or slowed most businesses, it does not appear to have put a dent in human trafficking, said Callista Gingrich, US ambassador to the Holy See.

In fact, the financial difficulties many families face around the world actually make people more vulnerable to traffickers' offers of quick cash or false promises of good jobs in other lands, said speakers at the US Embassy to the Holy See's symposium, 'Combatting Human Trafficking: Action in a Time of Crisis'.

Faith-based organisations "are among some of our best partners" in the push to end trafficking and assist the victims, Ms Gingrich said, pointing specifically to Talitha Kum, the international network involving some 2,600 women religious and their collaborators around the world.

Loreto Sr Patricia Murray, executive secretary of the women's International Union of Superiors General, said the poor who are susceptible to traffickers are "doubly vulnerable" during the pandemic, when many more families are facing hunger.

Letter from Rome



Carol Glatz

Catechetical cataclysms: restored Holy Stairs give meaning to crisis

After 20 years of restoration work and millions in funding from benefactors worldwide, the unveiling of the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy Stairs in Rome was supposed to be a grand, celebratory moment slated for this spring, in time for Holy Week and Easter.

The public was going to be able to see the brilliantly revived frescoes of the passion of Christ as they climbed the shrine's central marble stairs that, according to tradition, are the ones Jesus ascended when Pontius Pilate brought him before the crowd and handed him over to be crucified.

But, like the tomb on Easter, the shrine was empty.

The shock of a nationwide lockdown and the ongoing pandemic, however, have resurrected the actual significance of the shrine and what it represents: finding strength, meaning and grace during times of difficulty, fear or suffering.

Passionist Father Leonello Leidi, rector of the sanctuary, told *Catholic News Service* that since the shrine opened to the public in late May, "the Faithful have seen a deepened dimension of communion and union with the passion of Christ in this place".

People worldwide have been tested and tried, experiencing or witnessing illness or death from the coronavirus as well as fear, he said.

"It has become a significant moment that has to be evangelised. Therefore, this place becomes somewhere people can come to find the meaning of some of the things that are happening," Fr Leidi said.

Show coverings

One visitor, he said, was visibly emotional as he put on the required clear plastic gloves and protective shoe coverings before climbing the stairs on his knees.

The priest said he asked him what was wrong, and the visitor replied: "I was stricken by Covid, hospitalised and I also went through a very precarious situation. Now I've recovered and I came to give thanks."

This man and others, Fr Leidi said, see the sanctuary, which also symbolises the promise of resurrection and new life, as a place to express gratitude for their healing.

Mary Angela Schroth, the restoration project's coordinator, said the pandemic has prompted a real understanding of "what these



People pray on their knees as they climb the Holy Stairs at the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy Stairs in Rome. The stairs are believed to have been climbed by Jesus when he appeared before Pilate. Photo: CNS

“The frescoes are designed to walk people through cataclysmic biblical events in preparation for a reflection on Christ’s passion”

frescoes actually mean,” especially in the Old Testament depictions of the universal Flood, the deadly rivalry between Cain and Abel, and Moses bringing God’s healing to a poisoned people.

The shrine’s frescoes are “linked to what we’re thinking now about Covid, how is faith really helping us with these issues”, she said.

Created to be not just beautiful art, but also an instrument for catechesis and meditation, the frescoes are designed to walk people through cataclysmic biblical events in preparation for a reflection on Christ’s passion, said Passionist Fr Marco Pasquali, a theologian and a provincial secretary of the order, which serves as custodian of the shrine.

The flood, for example, is depicted by the shrine’s 16th-Century artists with people struggling in churning waves, desperately grasping onto whatever material objects remain,

while Noah’s ark floats away on the horizon toward rays of sunlight breaking through the storm clouds.

This event, Fr Pasquali said, helps describe what is happening with Covid-19.

“Nurturing one’s relationship with God does not depend on the specialness of the location”

Without a solid anchor or foundation with God, people cannot understand or “address the new things, the unexpected that is always around the corner”, he told CNS.

God’s response to suffering, Fr Pasquali said, “is not to punish but to bring to himself this negative effect and transform it into something good”. But it is also a process that takes time and hard

“labour to be born again”.

No longer accommodating huge crowds because of ongoing travel restrictions into Italy, in October the shrine was welcoming only a hundred or so visitors each day. People can take their time and ascend the stairs more slowly with mandatory distancing between steps.

The present circumstances actually are “favouring more of a meditative reflection on what the Holy Stairs and many other things in Rome, even the Vatican Museums” are meant to be, that is, “a little quieter, a more meditative experience”, said Legionary of Christ Fr Kevin Lixey, international director of the Patrons of the Arts office in the Vatican Museums, whose donors also generously funded restoration efforts.

The US priest recalled climbing the stairs when he was a seminarian “and not really even noticing the frescoes because it was so sooty black and really unrecognisable” and “you were really just kind of focused on the feet in front of you and trying to get to the next step”.

“Of all the projects that the patrons are involved in,” he said, the Holy Stairs is “one of the most

spiritual, touching restoration projects we could do.”

For those unable to visit the shrine in Rome, Fr Pasquali said, nurturing one’s relationship with God does not depend on the specialness of the location, but on the quality of time spent in prayerful dialogue and with a willingness “to be transformed”.

“Even far from here you can live the devotion of the Passion,” he said, by meditating on those steps Jesus took.

It is the time, not space, that opens the door to “the grace and the opportunity to transform my life and help me to understand the problems, find the solution or deal with it.

“Sometimes we don’t have the answers, the solution, but he can give us the strength to cope with a situation,” he said.

“Jesus wasn’t happy to live his passion, but he received the strength to live it for the greater good,” he said. “The Holy Spirit helps us see the bigger picture and so that can be done from anywhere, starting from the devotion of the Passion that has at its [heart] Jesus, not just the stairs.”

Carol Glatz is a correspondent with CruxNow.com



The damaged Holy Saviour Cathedral is pictured in Shusha, Azerbaijan, on October 8 after shelling during a military conflict. Photo: CNS

According to an Armenian archbishop, Turkey is perpetrating a “third genocide” against the oldest Christian nation in the world.

He claims Turkey is using Azerbaijan to attack the Christian community in Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian region of Azerbaijan that has been a *de facto* independent state since the 1990's.

Recent fighting in the region has seen its churches targeted by Azerbaijani forces.

“It was never a religious conflict,” Armenian Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan told Spanish news agency *EFE*, days after shelling impacted the Holy Saviour Cathedral, also known as the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral.

Archbishop Martirosyan is the current Primate of the Diocese of Artsakh – as Nagorno-Karabakh calls itself – of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Fighting over the region restarted in late September, and there's now a precarious Russia-backed ceasefire in place, so that both sides can retrieve the bodies of their fallen soldiers, and perhaps secure a more lasting deal.

Truce broken

The mountainous region has been in limbo since a 1994 truce that ended a conflict that broke out in 1988 – when both Azerbaijan and Armenia were part of the Soviet Union – when the region made a bid to join Armenia, since an estimated 90 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenian.

The conflict escalated into a full-blown war after the Soviet Union

Archbishop accuses Turkey of backing ‘third Armenian genocide’



Inés San Martín

collapsed in 1991. Some 30,000 people died in the war, and close to one million others were forcibly displaced.

According to Archbishop Martirosyan, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan was never a religious conflict because Armenians “don't combat against mosques. We have no problems with the peoples of other confessions, and we never have had.”

The archbishop has been in Artsakh since 1989, so has been an eyewitness to the entire conflict.

“The heart of this conflict is

rooted in the defence of the most elemental rights men have. The people who lived in the [Soviet] Karabakh couldn't exercise their most basic rights. And they spoke up. Yes, we're Armenian, we want to know our history, we want our churches to be open,” he said.

“They want to bend our resistance...they don't care that there is also a mosque here”

He told the Spanish news agency that for over 70 years the Azeris who ran Karabakh – incorporated to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan – shut down all the Armenian churches.

“This was the problem,” he said. “There's no religious conflict between Christians and Muslims here.”

* * * * *

“According to Archbishop Martirosyan, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan was never a religious conflict because Armenians ‘don't combat against mosques. We have no problems with the peoples of other confessions, and we never have had”

Armenians often argue that Christianity is like the colour of one's skin: it cannot be changed, hence the influence the Armenian Church has in the lives of the Faithful.

Speaking about the shelling of the cathedral, the archbishop said that the Azerbaijanis want to “stomp on the symbols of our Faith. They are barbaric. But this is no surprise for us: They did this in the war of the 1990s, when they attacked the monasteries.”

He believes that the churches are being targeted in an attempt to “weaken the moral” of the people.

“They want to bend our resistance,” Archbishop Martirosyan said. “They don't care that there is also a mosque here.”

He's convinced that the bombing that caused the shelling in the cathedral is the “classic behaviour of terrorists who cannot stand cultural, spiritual and religious values”.

He puts the blame squarely on the Turkish government, which supports Azerbaijan militarily.

“They destroy it all,” he said. “They're authentic vandals. A terrorist, Turkish President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, trains them and sends them to another terrorist, President [of Azerbaijan] Ilham Aliyev, who sends them to the front line.”

The archbishop was born in Sumgait, a seaside town of the then-Azerbaijan Soviet Republic. A pogrom in late February of 1988, during the early stages of the Armenian nationalist Karabakh movement, led to the systemic elimination of the Armenian population in the town, including Archbishop Martirosyan's family. The death toll is disputed: the official Soviet toll was 32, although Armenian sources put the figure closer to 200.

“Data provided by the Turkish Exporters' Assembly show the escalation in Turkish arms sales for 2020 peaked last month – on the eve of the first fighting with Armenia”

“This is the third genocide attempt,” the archbishop said. “The first was in 1915 [when the then-Ottoman Empire systematically killed 1.5 million ethnic Arm-enians], the second in Sumgait and other cities of Azerbaijan. Now, we're on the third one.”

The prelate is convinced Turkey is behind the current war because Mr Erdogan has a foreign policy of “expansivity” towards a “region controlled by Russia for over 200 years”.

Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, he argues, are the only thing preventing Turkey from accomplishing its goal.

According to *Asia News*, military exports from Turkey to Azerbaijan increased sixfold this year: data provided by the Turkish Exporters' Assembly show the escalation in arms sales for 2020 peaked last month – on the eve of the first fighting with Armenia.

* * * * *

In the wake of the Russian mediation between Armenians and Azerbaijanis which lead to an October 10 ceasefire, the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill released a statement calling for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh.

“A bad peace is worse than a good fight,” Patriarch Kirill wrote. “This old truth is today more relevant than ever. When there's peace, people can come together, communicate and search for solutions for problems. But when there's war, human blood is spilled, and crimes are committed. It's hard to reach joint political decisions.”

1 Inés San Martín is a correspondent with *CruXNow.com*

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Dying with dignity bill is a 'Trojan horse'

Dear Editor, It is ironic that the so-called Dying with Dignity bill was introduced into the Dáil during palliative care week.

Several professionals from the hospice and palliative care sector have warned that this bill is a 'Trojan horse' which will ruin our current gold standard of end of life care, where the patient, family and loved ones receive superb comfort, support, pain-management and person-to-person accompaniment to assist them through the dying process.

This bill seeks to make it possible for patients in certain circumstances to mandate that their care-giver team administer to them a lethal substance (section 13). What an absurdity. Two

such diametrically opposed cultures cannot exist side by side.

In other states where a 'death on demand' cultural expectation has taken hold, the grounds are forever being broadened. Push-pull forces drive up the numbers killed. There are no known adequate safeguards. This 'slippery slope' is all too real.

It is deceptive to speak of 'choice' when someone is distraught and shocked by a life altering diagnosis, feeling isolated, bereft of support, and fearful in the face of what might happen, and nudged, even pressured into ending their life.

All of us are disempowered by such legislation. It surrounds decisions with loaded language, where a particular

trajectory may even be presumed. It is very hard to resist this ethic of ambivalence, denying our intrinsic worth and undermining the impulse of our nearest and dearest to care for us.

All self-harm, suicide and self-destructive acts are an attempt to escape pain or from being a burden one's family. Let's not exacerbate this by making people feel unwanted, and that the system is loaded against them, as is the experience in other states. Rather let's support life-affirming, relationship-sustaining, resilience-building policies.

*Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy,
Lee Road, Cork.*

Financial transparency needed in Irish dioceses

Dear Editor, Thank you for Carol Glatz's article 'People have right to know how Vatican uses resources' [IC 08/10/2020]. It is clear that our Church under the leadership of Pope Francis is determined to implement a policy of financial transparency.

Here in Ireland the same necessary openness is evident for the most part at parish level where excellent and fairly full annual accounts are made available to parishioners in newsletters.

However, when on a second reading of the IC article I substituted the word Vatican with the word diocese I reflected on the fact that several Irish dioceses have adopted a code of secrecy and failed to publish annual accounts. Surely in this time of financial crisis within the Irish Church it is time for tardy dioceses to follow the excellent example of dioceses such as Elphin.

*Yours etc.,
Alan Whelan,
Beaufort, Co. Kerry.*



Strong Catholic media needed to 'fight distortion'

Dear Editor, You are so right that we need a strong media to fight distortion and this is fully shown in reportage on the Tuam Mother and Baby Homes [IC 08/10/2020]. I am not sure if your paper reviewed Brian Nugent's excellent book on this issue but, even if you did, perhaps you would consider doing so again in an effort to refute the many scurrilous

and unfounded accusations made against the Nuns who worked there under most trying conditions.

It seems that the Catholic media may have to adopt the method used in the mainstream media in repeating and repeating the facts, as it does with false accusations. It is surprising that we are so reluctant to show appreciation for all

the voluntary work done by religious sisters, brothers and clergy over the years and are reluctant to stand up for those unjustly accused.

In that category we could put our many candidates for sainthood such as Frank Duff, Edel Quinn, Matt Talbot, Frs Peyton, O'Sullivan and Doyle who lack support to promote their cause. How about a campaign for encouragement

for many to pray for their canonisation, and surely it is a time when we need much prayer to overcome all the evils evident in our society today and can do with all the help we can get from these holy people who have gone before us.

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

Obvious anti-Catholicism against Amy Coney Barrett in US

Dear Editor, In these days of restrictions, I've taken to watching the questioning of Amy Coney Barrett in the US regarding her Supreme Court confirmation and have found it to be extremely interesting.

Your paper has given a refreshing view of her merits. Especially because I found some coverage of her nomination to be astoundingly biased with much of the criticism about her very obviously based solely on her Catholic Faith.

Without a doubt there is an entrenched and deeply worrying anti-Catholicism in the US, something that

is not publicised nearly enough as it should.

We have the Black Lives Matter protests, which are ongoing there due to racism that no doubt exists in certain elements of the police service but where are the protests against the dogged and unrelenting attacks on Catholics and Catholic beliefs? What's even more disgusting regarding the negative commentary in the media about Amy Coney Barrett is that some of the publications have been very public proponents of women's rights. Just because she is a Catholic, they

feel she shouldn't be given the job, suddenly it doesn't matter that she is a very intelligent, impressive woman that has worked her way up in order to be considered for the position in the Supreme Court and this has been proven time and time again in how she answered every question put to her.

It is a sad reflection of the bias, hypocrisy and sickness that is rampant in the US which I fear is getting worse.

*Yours etc.,
Sarah Delaney,
Inchicore, Co. Dublin.*

facebook community

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

Phasing out religious symbols will create 'false impression' of religion

Most vocational schools don't have religious symbols anyway, so what's the big deal? No real change, won't affect Catholic schools one iota. – **Declan McSweeney**

In my many years as a volunteer diocesan student mentor in my local ETB school I never came across any religious symbols. The principal, chair of parish pastoral council, was meticulous in his non/denominational stance.

– **Alan Whelan**

Why should there ever be religious symbols in a State school, much less symbols of just one faith? They are not religious schools and have people of many faiths and none in them. – **Jim Duffy**

Masses to continue in North as new restrictions are introduced

Thank you NI. Thank you for being so sensible and caring to all Church goers. – **Deirdre Quinn**

Utterly shameful that the Republic continues to prohibit public Mass when other jurisdictions see its importance and continue to allow it. More needs to be done to bring pressure to bear on the Government to reverse their nonsense stance on this. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

I have to say that I work in our local Catholic church here in North Belfast and we are taking the advice we have been given very seriously in terms of the numbers attending, the wearing of face masks, the two metre rule and the sanitising of hands and the church. Everyone who is attending has bought into the whole idea of looking after each other by doing all the things we are asked to do, from sanitising the hands to wearing face masks and I salute all of them, both young and old, for their efforts. – **Tony Fullerton**

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

'Urgent action' needed to protect religious freedom

Dear Editor, As Senator Mullen has stated so eloquently attending Mass is "a low risk activity being conducted by highly responsible people". Maria Steen in her excellent article [IC 15/10/2020] outlined our right to religious freedom and to practice same. However, the four archbishops will not get any hearing from our secular government. So they need to take urgent legal action as the bishops have done in France and New York to protect religious freedom.

*Yours etc.,
Liam de Paor,
Carrickane, Co. Cavan.*

Assisted suicide prioritises profit

Dear Editor, People before profit is a phrase I appreciate so this letter is difficult for me. On someone's death and among the many things that happen, there is probably a stop to the benefit of insurance companies in the payment of pensions. Equally beneficial but in this case to the Government is the stop to payments of social welfare as well as any pensions.

In short and doubtless not intended, the effect is profit before people. Lives matter, whatever the colour and in or out of the womb.

*Yours etc.,
Gerald Murphy,
Whitehall, Dublin.*

● 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.

📷 Around the world



▲ **NEPAL:** Farmers harvest rice at a field in Bhaktapur on October 16, World Food Day.
 ◀ **SWITZERLAND:** People walk on the Ponte dei Salti (Jump Bridge) during an autumn afternoon in Val Verzasca. Photos: CNS



AZERBAIJAN: A firefighter hoses down debris at a house in the village of Baharli after it was hit by a rocket during the fighting over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.



USA: A patient in the Brooklyn borough of New York City arrives at the emergency entrance to Maimonides Medical Center during the coronavirus pandemic.



PHILIPPINES: An Aeta indigenous girl does her homework as another looks on after attending a session at a makeshift learning centre in Pampanga.



SPAIN: Men wearing protective masks rest at Castillo del Romeral beach after dozens of migrants arrived on Gran Canaria Island.



Personal sanity depends on truth

Looking at our world today, what frightens and unsettles me more than the threat of the Covid-19 virus, more than the growing inequality between the rich and the poor, more than the dangers of climate change, and even more than the bitter hatred that now separates us from each other, is our loss of any sense of truth, our facile denial of whatever truths we judge to be inconvenient, and our slogans of 'fake news', 'alternate facts' and phantom conspiracies.

Social media, for all the good it has brought, has also created a platform for anyone to make up his or her own truth and then work at eroding the truths that bind us together and anchor our sanity. We now live in a world where two plus two often no longer equals four. This plays on our very sanity and has created a certain social insanity. The truths which anchor our common life are becoming unmoored.

The root of sin

This is evil, clearly, and Jesus alerts us to that by telling us that Satan is preeminently the Prince of Lies. Lying is the ultimate spiritual, moral, and psychological danger. It lies at the root of what Jesus calls the "unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit". What's this sin and why is it unforgivable?

Here's the context within which Jesus warns us about this sin: he had just cast out a demon.



Fr Rolheiser

The religious leaders of the time believed as a dogma in their Faith that only someone who came from God could cast out a demon. Jesus had just cast out a demon, but their hatred of him made this a very inconvenient truth for them to swallow.

So they chose to deny what they knew to be true, to deny reality. They chose to lie, affirming (even as they knew better) that Jesus had done it by the power of Beelzebub.

Initially Jesus tried to point out the illogic of their position, but they persisted. It's then that he issued his warning about the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit.

At that time he's not accusing them of committing that sin, but he's warning them that the path they are on, if not corrected,

can lead to that sin. In essence, he's saying this: if we tell a lie long enough, eventually we will believe it and this so warps our conscience that we begin to see truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth.

“Hell isn't a place where one is sorrowful, repentant and begging God for just one more chance to make things right...”

The sin then becomes unforgivable because we no longer want to be forgiven nor indeed will accept forgiveness. God is willing to forgive the sin but we are unwilling to accept

“The religious leaders of the time believed as a dogma in their Faith that only someone who came from God could cast out a demon. Jesus had just cast out a demon”

forgiveness because we see sin as good and goodness as sin. Why would we want forgiveness?

It's possible to end up in this state, a state wherein we judge the gifts of the Holy Spirit (charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, endurance, fidelity, mildness and chastity) as false, as being against life, as a malevolent naiveté. And the first step in moving towards this condition is lying, refusing to acknowledge the truth. The subsequent steps also are lying, that is, the continued refusal to accept the truth so that eventually we believe our own lies and we see them as the truth and the truth as a lie. Bluntly put, that's what constitutes Hell.

Hell isn't a place where one is sorrowful, repentant and begging God for just one more chance to make things right.

Nor is Hell ever a nasty surprise waiting for an essentially honest person. If there's anyone in Hell, that person is there in arrogance, pitying people in heaven, seeing Heaven as Hell, darkness as light, falsehood as truth, evil as goodness, hatred as love, empathy as weakness, arrogance as strength, sanity as insanity and God as the devil.

One of the central lessons in the gospels is this: lying is dangerous, the most dangerous of all sins. And this doesn't just play out in terms of our

relationship with God and the Holy Spirit. When we lie we're not only playing fast and loose with God, we're also playing fast and loose with our own sanity. Our sanity is contingent on what classical theology terms the 'Oneness' of God.

What this means in lay terms is that God is consistent. There are no contradictions inside of God and because of that, reality can also be trusted to be consistent.

Our sanity depends on that trust. For instance, should we ever arrive at a day where two plus two no longer equals four, then the very underpinnings of our sanity will be gone; we'll literally be unmoored.

“Martin Luther once said: sin boldly! He meant a lot of things by that”

Our personal sanity and our social sanity depend upon the truth, upon us acknowledging the truth, upon us telling the truth and upon two plus two forever equaling four.

Martin Luther once said: sin boldly! He meant a lot of things by that, but one thing he certainly did mean is that the ultimate spiritual and moral danger is to cover our weaknesses with lies because Satan is the Prince of Lies!

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 22, 2020

Personal Profile

Canon Patrick Marron: living the gift of priesthood

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The forgotten triduum of Allhallowtide

Hallowe'en as it is celebrated today comprises a mishmash of different cultural traditions, some pagan – mostly Celtic – and some Christian. Even the origins of the celebration are somewhat controversial, with Neo-paganists attempting to 'reclaim' it from its Christian trappings.

However, what is certain is that Hallowe'en as we know it developed in relation to a feast which is definitely Catholic – the Solemnity of All Saints celebrated on November 1. There are more than 10,000 canonised saints in the Church, which means that not all of them can be recognised on a calendar of



Ruadhán Jones shares ideas for celebrating the unofficial triduum of Hallowe'en, All Saints and All Souls

365 days: All Saints Day commemorates all saints, canonised and otherwise.

This feast was first officially established by Pope Boniface IV in 615 as the "Feast of All Martyrs". In 840, the title changed to the "Feast of All Saints" as saints other than the martyrs were added.

However, from the 4th Century until 844 this feast was celebrated

on May 13. Pope Gregory IV transferred the celebration to November 1 so that it would coincide with harvest to be able to provide food for pilgrims. Some scholars argue it was moved in order to "baptise" a pagan holiday – it is possible that both accounts are correct.

Meaning

Hallowe'en, All Saints and All Souls form an unofficial triduum

sometimes called "Allhallowtide". The placement of the days is significant, expressing the Christian belief of the "Communion of Saints". The Communion of Saints is the union of all the faithful on Earth (the Church Militant), the saints in Heaven (Church Triumphant) and the Poor Souls in Purgatory (Church Suffering).

The solemnity of All Saints commemorates the Church Triumphant; All Souls the Church Suffering; Hallowe'en is a celebration, we might argue, of the Church Militant, those pilgrims left on earth to do the Lord's work. We celebrate with our fellow pilgrims, our earthly brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoicing in the gifts of God given to us in creation.

This act of rejoicing for the gifts of life is celebrated, in typical Catholic fashion, as a *memento mori* – a reminder of the inevitability of death. Many of the traditions which we now follow on Hallowe'en, such as trick-or-treating and lighting jack-o-lanterns, stem from its connection with All Saints Day and provide reminders of our death and eternal life. The symbolic location of Hallowe'en on the point of nature's death has a Catholic, as well as a pagan, significance.

Celebrate

"The Feast of All Saints is one of the greatest of all the feasts

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

COOL FOOD SCHOOL HALLOWE'EN TREATS

The Cool Food School are offering an interactive online workshop for children to learn how to make healthy Halloween snacks.

Facilitated by Tallaght Library, the course is aimed at "getting your kids in the kitchen, learning how to cook and making some fun, healthy, Halloween treats!"

"Halloween doesn't have to be all about sweets. We'll be making some fun, fruit based treats that will look (and taste) great for any Halloween party or simply, for yourselves!"

The Cool Food School teach online cooking classes, food education workshops and much more. The goal is to make the classes fun and healthy with the focus on children being actively involved in preparing (and eating!) the food!

The event will take place Friday: October 30, at noon, for more information visit

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/cool-food-school-halloween-treats-tickets-123041441263?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

CLOTH CORONAVIRUS FACE MASKS WORK - BUT ONLY IF YOU WASH THEM

Cloth face masks are useful in protecting against the novel coronavirus, but only if you wash them after every use, according to a new study.

Reusing these face coverings over and over without washing them can increase the risk of contamination, according to the analysis from the Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales at Sydney that was recently published in *BMJ Open*.

Additionally, the masks must be washed at high temperatures after each use to ensure they are thoroughly decontaminated.

The analysis is based on a randomised controlled trial published in 2015 that looked into how effective cloth face masks are in preventing viral infections from common respiratory pathogens such as the flu, rhinoviruses (common cold viruses), and seasonal coronaviruses.

"There was no significant difference in infection between [health care workers] who wore cloth masks washed in the hospital laundry compared with medical masks," the analysis concluded.

However, where cloth masks were improperly washed, chances of infection doubled.

INTERFAITH SOCCER TEAMS EASED MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN TENSIONS — TO A POINT

In Iraq, a social scientist tested the idea that positive contact can help ethnic groups reconcile after extreme violence by putting Christians and Muslims on the same soccer teams.

Players did make small behavioural changes on the field, but that didn't translate to broader attitudinal shifts.

Almost 54% of Christian players on mixed teams voted for a Muslim newcomer to win a sportsmanship award, given to a person not on their own team, compared with about 31% of players on all-Christian teams. And when researchers contacted players six months later, about 61% of Christian players from mixed teams were training with Muslim players at least once a week compared with 17% of players from the all-Christian teams.

However, the attitudes of Christian players from mixed teams toward Muslims in general didn't change much on surveys taken at the start and culmination of the league.

The project was run by political scientist Salma Mousa of Stanford University, an avid soccer fan who grew up in the Middle East.

According to ScienceNews Mousa's project adds to evidence suggesting that shifting people's behaviour toward rival groups may be easier than shifting their attitudes.

Early lifestyle changes can reduce Alzheimers risk



Last month saw the marking of World Alzheimer's Day as part of an international campaign to raise awareness of a condition that is still stigmatised and often misunderstood. It is estimated that there are about 50 million people in the world with dementia and this figure continues to rise with an ageing population. In fact, a substantial proportion of new cases now occur in poor to middle income countries. The age at which dementia develops though is rising in the West as general health improves.

Clustering of several cardiovascular risk factors in midlife also appears to synergistically increase the risk

In truth, while we know what happens to the brain in dementia, we don't really understand what triggers these changes. Indeed, it is now believed that several factors in midlife and even earlier influence our risk of developing dementia in older age. A review of the most up to date studies on dementia risk published in the *Lancet* this year identified up to 12 modifiable risk factors which might account for up to 40% of all cases of dementia globally.

But what are the main risk factors? High blood pressure in midlife has been associated in several studies with dementia in later life. For example, in one study of about 9000 adults aged between 50-60 a top blood pressure reading of 130 mmHg or more was associated with a 40% greater chance of dementia. Furthermore, in a pooled analyses of several large studies, more intensive blood pressure control lowered this

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



risk by about 20%. Higher blood pressure causes hardening of the arteries in the brain and even from the age of 40 has been shown to predict smaller brain volume in later life.

Obesity appears to increase the risk of dementia by about 20%. Fat cells are metabolically active and produce inflammatory chemicals that can pass into the brain and may be a factor. Diabetes has also been clearly identified as a risk factor though despite this, studies of intensive blood sugar control have not reduced this risk. Exercise may help lower risk but the overall effect seems to be small.

Taking alcohol in excess is certainly not healthy for the brain and accelerates brain shrinkage. Consuming more than 21 units per week was associated with a 20% increased risk of dementia in later life. Smoking is also a clear risk factor but giving up can offset this risk. For example, among 50,000 males aged 60 or older, stopping smoking over four years reduced the risk of dementia in the following eight years by 10%.

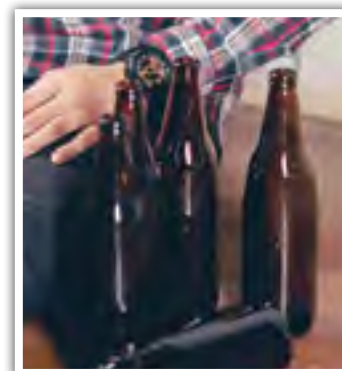
Clustering of several cardiovascular risk factors in midlife also appears to synergistically increase the risk. While a Mediterranean diet has been advocated to help prevent cognitive decline, evidence remains inconsistent. In

addition, studies of vitamin and other supplements have failed to show any effect.

Higher childhood education levels and lifelong higher educational attainment also appear to lower dementia risk. Cognitive ability improves with education up to late adolescence when the brain is most plastic but further gains after the age of 20 appear limited. However, mental activity in general might help to maintain cognitive function but studies are inconsistent with some however showing beneficial effects.

Interestingly, in some large studies a lower age of retirement seems to be associated with worse subsequent performance of memory and language tests.

Social contact is another factor that has been linked to dementia incidence even after adjustment for socioeconomic and lifestyle factors. In a UK study of 10,308 people, frequent contacts at the age of



60 was associated with a lower dementia risk over 15 years of follow up. This might in part be explained by enhancement of cognitive reserve and encouraging beneficial behaviours.

What about sleep? Well, poor sleep affects cognitive function and has been linked to chronic inflammation and other changes

in the brain. Studies suggest that sleep times of less than five hours may confer a greater risk of Alzheimer's dementia. Depression later in life may also be a factor but there doesn't seem to be a link when it occurs at a much younger age.

High blood pressure in midlife has been associated in several studies with dementia in later life

Finally, traumatic brain injury has long been identified as increasing the risk of Alzheimer's in later life. More recently what's been described as chronic traumatic brain encephalopathy acquired from sports injuries may also increase the risk of dementia though more research is underway.

So to summarise, what can you do to preserve your brain health and substantially lower your chance of vascular and Alzheimer's dementia later in life? Well the available evidence supports aiming for a systolic blood pressure (top reading) of under 130 mmHg, cut down alcohol to less than 21 units week, avoid or stop smoking, reduce obesity, sustain midlife physical activity and avoid situations that might lead to head trauma!

What's become clearer is that several factors earlier in life may cause brain changes that predispose to dementia, and that addressing these probably helps to stave off its later development.

Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

» Continued from Page 31



because it celebrates what could have been impossible," writes Mary Reed Newland in *The Year and Our Children* (1956). "The cross is a tree that bears fruit... Aside from all the lofty things to be said about the saints and to the saints on this day, we want our children to understand in the marrow of their bones what the principal idea is: 'We are so glad for you. Now pray, so we'll be there too!'"

“What is certain is that Hallowe'en as we know it developed in relation to a feast which is definitely Catholic”

All Saints Day and its Vigil, Hallowe'en, are days of celebration and hope first and foremost. It is a family day – we celebrate the memory of those family members, our brothers and sisters in the faith, now sharing eternal happiness in the presence of God. Unsurprisingly, a wide array of traditions have developed in connection with this great feast.

All Saints is a holy day of obligation, so as a Catholic, our first responsibility is to attend Mass (if it's taking place) – after that, a variety of celebrations are open to us. How you spent the vigil, Hallowe'en, depended on where in Christendom you lived. For instance, in Brittany, the night was solemn and without a trace of merriment. In Ireland and Scotland, whence we draw our traditions, it was a lively combination of prayer and merriment.

Saintly costume parties

It is claimed that in the Middle Ages, churches that were too poor to display the relics of martyred saints at Allhallowtide let parishioners dress up as saints instead. This is one origin story for the practice of dressing up for Hallowe'en and All Saints. Another suggests it is linked to the practice of "guising" – dressing in disguise and going door to door for food or coins – which was common in Ireland and Scotland.

However, given the current state of the world, it seems unlikely that we'll have the chance to trick-or-treat. But that doesn't mean we can't dress up! Perhaps, if your children are the right age, now's the time to try out an All Saints costume party. These parties combine fun, elements of surprise and macabre with a focus on the aspect of the Communion of Saints.

Costumes of saints are, of course the recommended apparel. If they've already done their confirmation, perhaps they could dress up

as their patron. It's a great chance to explore the rich visual history of the Church, as well as the lives of the Saints. Encourage your children to do some research, perhaps preparing a short synopsis for a guessing game later in the night.

Party pieces

The party, out of respect for the feast it commemorates, traditionally combines festive and reflective elements. Having donned the costumes, it begins with a rosary dedicated to the Poor Souls. Then follows a candlelit procession to a graveyard – well, a makeshift one at least.

You can create your own graveyard out of wood or stone. Old wooden pallets or scrap lumber painted white and formed into a makeshift cross would do nicely. There should be at least four crosses, one each for:

1. Departed Family
2. Departed Friends
3. Departed Clergy
4. Forgotten Dead.

You can paint the names on the crossbar. These aren't intended to "scare" us: they act as reminders for the souls we must remember in prayer. At each tombstone lay red berries and an evergreen branch to symbolize the passion of Christ which wrought eternal life for us. Then prayers for each group are said after the berries and evergreen are placed.

If it seems too morbid, remember that it pales in comparison with the more ghoulish of our modern Halloween practices! Once that's done, the next few stages are more on the merriment side – party games and some fancy grub. Guessing games, scavenger hunts, bobbing for apples and other family fun should lighten the mood. As for food, well, there are plenty of options to choose from.

Soul cakes

My recommendation for this year's All Saints celebration is the soul



Soul cakes. Photo: Malikhpur

cake. In England, it was common during the Middle Ages that beggars would go from door to door, asking for food or donations in return for prayers for the holy souls. This practice became known as "souling" and the cakes frequently offered to them as "soul cakes".

“All Saints is a holy day of obligation, so as a Catholic, our first responsibility is to attend Mass”

Soul cakes are essentially a type of shortbread and can become quite fancy depending on what you add. The following recipe is a traditional, English take on the cakes. You will need:

- 175g butter
- 175g caster sugar
- 3 egg yolks
- 450g self raising flour
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- A few gratings nutmeg
- About 100ml milk
- 100g dried currants plus handful to decorate
- Demerara sugar to decorate

The recipe is as follows.

1. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/ gas mark 5. Line several baking sheets with baking paper. Set aside.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks. Sift together the flour, mixed spice and nutmeg. Add to the creamed mixture along with the milk to give you a soft dough that you can easily roll out.
3. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured surface with a lightly floured rolling pin to 1/3 inch thickness. Cut into rounds with a 3 inch biscuit cutter. Using the dull side of a knife mark a light cross indentation into the tops of each biscuit. Push currants into the crosses. Sprinkle with a bit of demerara sugar and place about 2 inches apart on the baking trays.
4. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes until puffed and golden brown. Scoop off onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Hallowe'en tends to overshadow the feast of All Saints, but by celebrating with a saints costume party and themed cooking, the two become a wonderful mix! Even if you don't follow them to the letter, I hope these ideas provide some useful inspiration.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Two wheels are good. We've recently had a slew of brand-new bikes arrive at our house. The coronavirus pandemic had seen bikes become impossible to come by over recent months. For a time, bikes became the new toilet paper, as shops ran out and the lead time to buy a bike stretched into months. To much excitement, the three older kids have finally got their long-awaited mountain bikes. Even our toddler got a little balance bike, which she scoots along skilfully.

The pandemic has caused sports clubs, holidays and playdates to become far too thin on the ground. Last summer, I managed to keep the kids going by immersing them in water, as it were. From kayaking, swimming, surfing, fishing and sailing, the kids were kept busy and happy in the brine. It was amazing to see them embrace the sea and become proficient both on and in the water.

Inevitably, as the seasons turn, and the days darken, the increasingly frigid waters seem less inviting. Boats and kayaks are now being laid up for winter all along the Irish coast. Yet there are beautiful crisp autumn days to be enjoyed ashore, and cycling provides a wonderful way to get the kids out and exercising in nature. It was inevitable that Covid-19 restrictions would increase this autumn, as coronavirus cases inevitably spiked. I knew that the kids would need something joyful to keep them going as winter encroached upon us. The arrival of the new bikes is therefore the perfect antidote to our increasingly restricted movements.

Cruising along on a bike gives an incredible feeling of freedom. For kids, there is also the challenge of developing their fitness and skills. What they learn now will stay with them for life, as embedded instinct. I used to do a lot of mountain biking in my youth and the instincts I developed then remain like some sort of indelible subconscious programming. The older kids are now learning how to tackle trails and to mountain bike downhill safely. The skills required to deal with off-road trails gives them huge control over their bike, and the ability to easily deal with gravel and potholes when they encounter them on the road.

The greatest fear for the parents of budding cyclists is cars. The proliferation of greenways around Ireland is therefore a boon for families who like to cycle. Kids can travel for miles without encountering traffic. For their first big trip on their new bikes, I took the older kids



on a 20km round trip, largely along greenway route by the Owenabue river in Cork harbour. This is my home river. I grew up along its banks and, as a boy, I explored its every nook, by land and sea. It was here that I first voyaged out alone in my first boat, aged 12. This ever-changing river was the scene of many great childhood adventures.

As we set out along its banks, the scene was picture perfect, with blue skies and autumn leaves overhead. We glided serenely through the landscape with the crisp air on our faces. The water was like a mirror, reflecting the golden woodlands of the opposite bank. When we stopped to rest, I told the kids admittedly somewhat sanitised stories of my childhood scrapes along the river. To tell the unvarnished truth would mean risking becoming a bad influence on my own kids. They should do as I say, and certainly not as I once did.

The kids took turns leading the way along the path, carefully avoiding walkers and slowing down for meandering small children. We eventually met the road, where I had cycled many times with my father at exactly their age. In my mind, those long gone days seem mere moments ago. I distinctly remember being a small boy, daydreaming about being a man one day, showing my children these places that were so vast and magical to me. I suppose it must be a dream come true then, to see my children's faces lit by bright joy, as we cycle through my childhood wonderland.

Canon Patrick Marron: living the gift of priesthood

Personal Profile



Jason Osborne

Canon Patrick Marron's ministry spans both time and experience, childhood and adulthood, lay and religious, carefree life and stressful life. However, given his time back, he says he would do it all over again.

"I love my ministry. I found it very challenging, and I regretted that I wasn't a better priest. I've regretted that many a time; that I possibly could have done more. Now, I'll leave that to others to decide but that's my conviction. That I would love to be able to do far more for people. People in general are very appreciative and never forget," he tells *The Irish Catholic*.

“He has made such a contribution that it will be impossible to sum up over the 20 years”

The Monaghan native was born in Carrickmacross in 1932, and from the very beginning he seemed destined for the priesthood. His father owning both a garage and taxis, an unusual link to the priests of the parish was provided.

"My father, not only had he a garage, but he had taxis. He drove the parish priests. The priests were always around our house. He had a garage and all the priests used to come there. I suppose, I used to dress up as a priest and say Mass - well, pretend to be saying Mass," he laughs.

"I suppose it was that, in the sense that they were always around. My father used to drive them every-



Canon Marron with Clogher clergy being presented with an apostolic blessing from Pope Francis.

where. Neither of them (the priests) could drive and he was their right-hand man for years."

Vocation

The warmth of childhood familiarity compelled Fr Marron on through school to his future vocation. However, the warmth he felt towards his vocation was not limited to the priesthood, but also to his career as a teacher as well.

Reading a letter of commendation from the principal he worked under for so many years, he says:

"I have known Fr Marron for 25 years, and for 20 years he has been a colleague in the staff of St Michael's. A founder member of the school, he has made such a contribution that it will be impossible to sum up over the 20 years. He is an extremely competent and dedicated teacher. He maintains an apparently effortless discipline and good relationship with his pupils and is highly respected by them. Scarcely any of his pupils ever fail

a public examination. In fact, year after year, the results obtained by his pupils - even by those of limited intellectual ability - could only be described as outstanding."

Nostalgia is heavily present in his voice as he tells me, "I loved teaching - loved it."

An amicable man, Fr Marron got on not only with his students, but with the contentious communities along the border to which he was sent afterwards.

Having spent much time ministering in the north, he says, "There was an MLA on to me there before you came on and he described me as a 'community man', I got involved in everything, Catholic and Protestant."

Stationed in Fintona parish for 32 years and still there now, he reflects on this, "I got on well with all sizes of the people. I was in the PACE which was the Protestant and Catholic Encounter. But the thing that bugged me most was the discrimination - it was horrible. You couldn't

really describe it in any way other than unfairness, injustice."

Faith

The antidote to this, in his view, is the Faith. The most rewarding experience of his life has been seeing young men pass into the fraternity of priesthood. Asked about the best memories his life has left him with, he said with joy in his voice:

"Ah, vocations to the priesthood...I decided we'd have a priesthood exhibition. That we'd go around different orders and different schools and different dioceses and ask priests - there was a committee of four or five - I was with them and they got postcards and little excerpts from the different colleges of what the priests did and so on, and we had an exhibition for one week. There's no point in describing the exhibition, but three of those lads who were involved in the setting up, this is a memorable thing, of the exhibition - three of those are now priests in the dioceses."

He's keen to point out the difficulties involved in the priest's role, though.

"It wasn't always easy. Priesthood is a difficult calling. It's not a soft job, but it is a calling, it is a vocation.

"You have the difficult situations, but you have the grace to come through it," he says.

Advice

Asked what advice he'd pass on to young priests or young men considering religious life, he said, "I would tell them that it is a very rewarding life, as well as being a difficult life. Great satisfaction in not only spreading the Gospel, 'go teach all nations', but the graces to know that the sufferings of this life are not to be compared to the life to come."

“The warmth of childhood familiarity compelled Fr Marron on through school to his future vocation”

Fr Marron is well aware of these graces, with pandemic life proving difficult for him, especially of late. Following a fall and a stint in the hospital, he reflected, "When I was in hospital, I was saying to myself, 'You may have had a physical sickness, but that definitely was impeding on your mental health.' You've no one to visit you except - you're only allowed one member of a family once a week for one hour. That was very sore."

"You'd look up at the ceiling to see would you see flies. You couldn't see them, and you'd look out the window and you couldn't see birds flying around. All you could hear were voices and the trolley going up and down, and you were glad even for that."

Despite the difficulties, Fr Marron's life and experience inform him that this too shall pass.

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet

The remarkable St Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* and David Attenborough

David Attenborough's new documentary 'A Life on Our Planet' was released this month on Netflix and it is certainly something that everyone should see. In this one and half hour documentary, Attenborough makes a powerful call to action for humanity to work together to restore biodiversity and the balance of our ecosystems. *A Life on our Planet* is Attenborough's love letter to the natural world, his eye-witness statement to the devastation he has seen through his career from the 1950s to today. He urges humanity to stop fighting against nature and start working with it and says we have a choice, that we are at a crossroads: "We will either be the architects of our collapse or we can engineer our salvation."

I would encourage everyone to watch this powerful documentary with their families and recommend it to their friends, answering the call of *Laudato Si'*, to become painfully aware of what is currently happening to our world, to God's creation.

On the Feast of St Francis of Assisi this year, October 4, Pope Francis signed his new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. In which Pope Francis acknowledges that a dark cloud hangs over the world as we continue to battle the Covid-19 pandemic and he renews his call for us to come together, in social friendship and solidarity and to protect the common home we all share. *Fratelli Tutti* asks the question: what are the steps we must take in order to build a more just and fraternal world in our daily lives, relationships, politics and institutions? We must find ways to collaborate with others in solidarity, ways to be inclusive of all and protect the world we all share. These are key questions for all of us because now more than ever, people in our communities need hope. What steps can we take so that we can reach out to others in a spirit of friendship, compassion and love? We

are reminded of how interconnected we truly are and called to embrace that interconnectedness in a spirit of kindness and openness. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis warns against current trends which are solely aimed at spreading division and hatred. We are asked to recognise the beauty and goodness that God has instilled in each of us. This new encyclical, like *Laudato Si'*, takes inspiration from St Francis, who saw God in all living things. We are invited to experience a familial relationship with all that exists, as Francis did, which takes us to the heart of what it means to be human. Care for our common home cannot be separated from the desire to build a just and inclusive society, for we cannot be healthy if the world we depend on is not healthy. The Feast of St Francis marked the end of the Season of Creation this month. With the launch of a new encyclical from Pope Francis on that date, let it not be the end of a season but a spring board from which we can reach out to others in kindness and work together to protect our common home. Jane Mellett is the *Laudato Si'* officer with *Trócaire*.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Sins and saints under the spotlight on RTÉ

There's something iconic about the Confession box that draws attention, an intensity about the confessing and forgiveness of sins that makes one wonder why more people don't have recourse to it.

The Confessors (RTÉ last week, BBC One on Monday, BBC Two on Tuesday) was an absorbing and insightful programme, uneven at times but with so much to enjoy. It was at its best when it kept the focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation – the spirituality and the mechanics of it. We got to see so many different types of Confession box, with priests filmed in front of them, though I thought Reconciliation rooms deserved more attention.

The programme started on a whimsical note and was cheerful for about 20 minutes, then the emphasis strayed away from Confession to talk about the lives of priests in general and explored the effects of the abuse scandal.

It was interesting but very much like a lot of other programmes on the issue. Much of it was filmed in pre-Covid-19 days, but things took a turn as the virus began to spread. While again the emphasis veered away from Confession it was fascinating to watch the priests coping with Mass going online – on Facebook, YouTube and the like. One said Mass to a con-



Fr Chris O'Donnell featured in RTÉ's *The Confessors*.

gregation in their cars and I wondered why this practice didn't become more common.

Another priest said Mass outside his own front door and was joined at a distance by a handful of parishioners. In another creative move we saw a priest hearing outdoor confessions, while another took to the bike and travelled around blessing homes and meeting people at gates and doorways.

Unbalanced

Things got somewhat unbalanced when controversial issues came up – for example, a few of the priests criticised the celibacy rule, but no-one spoke in favour. Some favoured or would accept

women priests, but no priest explained or defended the Church's teaching.

One of the saddest things was to see Confession boxes used for storage – mostly cleaning materials. Now, I could wax lyrical about the cleansing of souls, but it came across more as a case of redundancy. I felt the programme lacked a sense of strategy for promoting the Sacrament of Reconciliation (not inevitably tied to the box of course), for re-investing, re-discovering, re-imagining.

I confess I spent more hours than was healthy watching the live **Senate Confirmation Hearings** (YouTube) for Judge Amy Barrett. I was impressed by

her humanity, professionalism, dignity and clarity. Yes, she declined to answer some questions as these were issues that were already in litigation or likely to come before at the Supreme Court, but in a time where lines are often crossed that shouldn't be, it was good to see someone respectful of boundaries.

Her contributions amounted to a fascinating education in US law – now I know great stuff about originalism, textualism, 'stare decisis' and super precedents!

There was undercurrent of anti-Catholic prejudice, as if everyone except Catholics could bring their principles with them to the court. And it did get repetitious – Democrat senators kept using the occasion to attack Trump, and when they did ask questions of the judge it was always the same few topics: the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), *Roe vs Wade* (abortion), and pos-



Senator Ivana Bacik.

PICK OF THE WEEK

NATIONWIDE

RTÉ One, Monday, October 26, 7pm

The team explores the history and services of Kylemore Abbey.

OILITHREACHT

BBC Two NI, Monday, October 26, 10pm

This episode delves deeper into the meaning of the pilgrimage, as the pilgrims persevere through the hardest part: the all-night vigil.

CATHOLICS COME HOME

EWTN, Monday, October 26, 10pm, also Tuesday, October 27, 9.30am

As a troubled youth, Tracey searched desperately for love and acceptance from others. Instead, she found it in a deep relationship with the Lord and a true home in the Catholic Church.

sible post-election challenges to the result. Some Republican senators were cringingly folksy as they wandered way off the point.

Those hearings and related issues surfaced on a timely **Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio One) last Friday night, when Michael Comyn spoke to Peadar Tóibín TD, Senator Ivana Bacik and Prof. Robert Schull of Notre Dame. Both Bacik and Tóibín believed in the state being a republic, and in the separation of church and state. Tóibín believed in diversity but felt that the public space was being "cleansed" of diversity, with people of faith reluctant to admit they were practising.

He referenced the ironic case of a female Aontú candidate being disinvented to a "women in politics" event

about diversity when it was discovered she was pro-life!

Senator Bacik thought the Catholic Church still had "undue dominance", and in a cheap shot referred to a "shadow welfare state", though later said this was due to the state abdicating responsibilities. The generous service of religious to the very vulnerable in society, despite serious flaws in the past, is very public. Prof. Schull reckoned Coney Barret would be confirmed and regretted the "profound" polarisation in the US.

I suspect it may get worse before it gets better.

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Film

Aubrey Malone



Desperate situations require desperate remedies

The recent closure of Cineworld provided proof, not that it was needed, that the film industry is on its knees today. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Online companies have made a killing, as I said a fortnight ago in this page, due to the large numbers of people watching films from home rather than venturing out to the multiplexes to do so.

Criterion Films have released a Blu-Ray version of Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments* that enhances its epic credentials. It's available on Amazon. People criticise De Mille for wanting to serve both God and Mammon. They have a point. He got away with murder with the censors by the

'morals' he tacked on to his often lurid works, but here he was at his best.

Having said that, I've never been 'into' Blu Ray. Whenever a technological development comes along we're expected to jump up and down with excitement. When the dust settles we often wonder if the old system was just as good if not better. Remember when they told us we hadn't lived until we bought a CD? So we threw out all our vinyls (I did anyway). Now vinyl is back...what was all the fuss about?

Cancellations

2019 was Hollywood's most lucrative year in box office history. This year it's lost over \$20 billion – and count-



A scene from Cecil B. De Mille's epic movie *The Ten Commandments*.

ing. Cancellations, deferrals, re-schedulings, downsizing – these are all part of the famous 'new normal' we

hear so much about. People do what they have to in order to survive. Often it's not half a loaf or even a quarter. It's fru-

gality with a capital 'F'.

Some film companies are playing brinkmanship with supply and demand. It's often a case of 'the hungry sheep looked up and are not fed.' We're expected to put up with it because we have no option. Who expects perfection at a time of such deprivation? Don't give in to this.

Disney has rushed some of its films into production before the customary gestation period has elapsed. In recent months I've flagged releases on Netflix and other streaming platforms like *The Faith Channel*.

In the late 40s, the 'eternal rectangle' (i.e. television) threatened to spell the end of cinemas. They rose to the challenge by doing things

television couldn't, i.e. visual splendour. Megabucks blockbuster releases ensued. Now a new two-headed hydra has made its appearance: VOD (video on demand).

Remakes are another attempt to cater for a starved market. *Rebecca* is a modern day re-working of the Daphne Du Maurier classic. It has Lily James and, more interestingly, Kristin Scott Thomas as the eerie Mrs Danvers.

If you have access to the Irish Film Institute Player you can see *The GAA Connection*. This has a wide-ranging number of matches played from the 1940s to the 1970s.

Some of them were set in motion by Catholic archbishops, a wide-ranging practice of the time.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



She knew what she wanted

House of Cards, a novel
by Alice Curtayne
(Cluny Classics,
£14.50/\$17.95)

Mary Kenny

We often hear it said that before the rise of modern feminism, marriage was seen as the *summum bonum* of a woman's ambitions. In Alice Curtayne's compelling novel, first published in 1939, an Irishwoman makes it indig- nantly clear that this was not the case in Ireland.

Our heroine, Anne Farrelly, is making a successful career in Italy as a business adminis- trator, but she's appalled by the Mediterranean idea that there are only two acceptable life choices for a young woman: marriage or, if of a religious disposition, the convent.

"It is different in Ireland," she tells her Italian hosts. "There, a girl who is not drawn to a religious life, nor romantically inclined toward marriage, may seek a third course in a career, and find just as much happiness."

This is very much Anne's point of view (and I think



Alice Curtayne.

quite true for some women in the 1930s) and her experi- ence.

Duty

Orphaned young, Anne was raised in the West of Ireland by an aunt – more dutifully than warmly – and sets off, aged 17, to earn her living as a teaching assistant in an English city, which the author calls Mallingford, though probably based on Alice Cur- tayne's own experience in Liverpool.

Anne's driving ambition, from the start, has been 'independence'. She has been given a fine convent educa- tion – which involved some financial strains – and that is her one asset. The hardships of life in an English town in the 1930s are evoked with a gritty realism: people weren't always kind to teenagers struggling to make their way in the world, work conditions were tough and lodgings were basic. And life could be lonely.

“Sexual harassment is encountered in the form of the men in the street who would habitually ‘pester’ young women”

But Anne is fiercely deter- mined to succeed; she studies at night to master office skills, beginning with shorthand and typing. Significantly, she is discouraged in this endeav- our by the one kind landlady she has found: "Teachers are ladies, you know, but type-

writers [typists] ain't...you're leaving your own class to go into a lower one."

But Anne is a resolute kind of character: she doesn't feel she has the disposition for teaching, and she perceives there is more scope for ambi- tion in business.

Then, suddenly, she's in Italy, when she's given the chance to work for an inter- national American electric firm in Milan. (Again, this is very likely based on Alice Curtayne's own experi- ence of working in Milan.) It's a culture shock, but also an opportunity to learn, to expand horizons, to absorb the glories of Italian art and opera, to meet new people, see exquisite churches; it is all impressively described and memorably observed.

Sexual harassment is encountered in the form of the men in the street who would habitually 'pester' young women, and in some cases pinch their anatomies. Anne is utterly exasperated by this, and in one satisfy- ing scene, delivers a firm slap across the face to one of her pesterers. But, custom of the

country, she is told by Ital- ians that "ladies do not go out alone". Girls should be in groups, or with a companion. (The role of the chaperone, or *duenna*, also figures in Maura Laverty's contemporaneous novels about Spain, *No More than Human*.)

There's a significant – and prescient – account of an American woman who tries to prosecute a street sex har- assed. She is laughed out of the Italian court, and told to lighten up; accept the Italian way.

Proposal

Romance looms in the shape of a very nice American called Jim – a good Catholic (which is important to Anne) – and she comes to value his friendship greatly. He is truly smitten, yet she cannot bring herself to accept his marriage proposal.

Anne has become out- standingly successful in her job, rising in the ranks through her brains and dedi- cation, and is much appreci- ated by the company (earning the dizzy sum of £1,000 a year). But for a woman at

this time, marriage usually implied renouncing a career and giving up independence. It would have meant join- ing Jim in America. The story really brings home how sol- emn a step it was, in those times.

The joys of conjugal love might balance the choices for some, but in a frank moment of disclosure, Anne admits she regards sex with distaste. "Marriage means exploring all that too – oh, I couldn't."

A modern feminist reader might perceive Anne's tem- perament as fundamentally lesbian: she has a basic 'scorn' for men, and she is usually more inclined to befriend women.

Although I think the author's intention was simply to tell the story of a serious- minded young woman who cherishes her independence, loves her work and cannot yield that independence; but realises, too, there is a price to pay.

House of Cards achieves an admirable balance of being a riveting social history as well as an absorbing narrative about a young woman's life. I would call it a minor classic, and I greatly welcome its re- publication.

'Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang...'

Peter Costello

At this time of the year, with the leaves changing colour and beginning to fall, the lines in the banner above from *Sonnet LXXIII* are always in my mind, especially with their hint of a Catholic outlook in Shakespeare (a much-discussed topic today, more so than it once was), through its allusion to the systematic wrecking of the abbeys and monasteries of England by Henry VIII's criminal minions (the original model of today's rapacious priva- tising oligarchs).

The poet was alluding, not to the singing birds that have flown south, but to the monks whose voices' notes once filled the choirs stalls with golden notes.

This painting by Dublin-born artist George Barrett RA (c. 1732-1784) is of the Cistercian foundation of Melrose Abbey, in the Scottish Borders, which lingered on into the days of Cromwell, but whose ruins were later saved from final destruc- tion largely through the action of Sir Walter Scott.

It is one of the pictures in the latest show at Dublin's Gorry Gallery, of 18th- 21st Century paintings. These shows are always interesting, with a varied and unusual selection, and in some ways are an education in themselves. The show was to run over the next three weeks, depending on safety regulations.

This feast for the eye and mind will provide a much-needed break for many, and ought to be visited.

📍 Gorry Gallery, 20 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2; email: Gorrygallery@icloud. com; tel.: 01-6795319.



Melrose Abbey.

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.

Philosophers arguing for God's existence

The Ontological Argument, a critique from a Thomistic perspective

by J. Anthony Gaughan
(Kingdom Books, €15.00)

Donal Murray

In this book, Fr Tony Gaughan has undertaken a careful and thorough reflection on what Patrick Masterson, President Emeritus of UCD, describes in his foreword as "one of philosophy's perennial and still fascinating preoccupations".

Generations of philosophers, theologians and students experienced something of that fascination with what seemed to be a surprisingly simple way of proving the existence of God.

Nevertheless, there remained an underlying feeling that this 'proof' could not quite achieve the goal that St Anselm, who formulated the Argument, hoped it would be: "A single argument that needed nothing but itself alone for proof, that would itself be enough to prove that God really exists..."

The book explores these doubts and relates the many objections that were raised, firstly by Gaunilo, a Benedictine monk, and also by St Thomas Aquinas.

Prof. Patrick Masterson rightly describes the discussion of Anselm's argument as "perennial". It continues today and presents possibilities for viewing the question from a fresh perspective. Cardinal Walter Kasper, for instance, remarked: "Augustine had already characterised God as that than which there is nothing greater, *quo nihil superius*. We can, to be sure, know God only in the light of the truth which is God himself and is present in the soul.

"Knowledge of God therefore presupposes illumination by the truth which is God and is present in the soul. In the *Proslogion*, Anselm relates this idea to the image of God in the interior of man where the reality of God directly manifests itself.

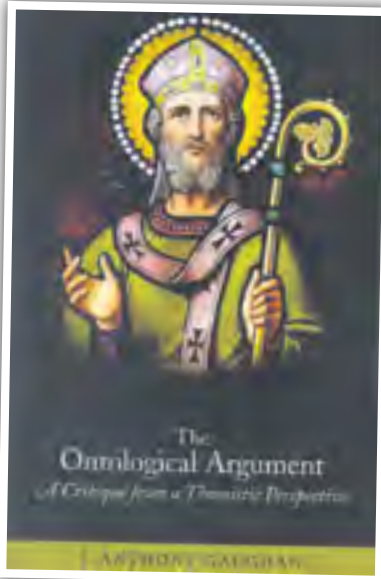
"The Ontological Argument is meant to give expression to this ontological connection.

Proof

This seems to suggest that Anselm's argument should not be seen as seeking to establish a proof for the existence of God based on a rather detached definition of the being, whose existence he is seeking to prove. Many of the critiques of Anselm's argument come down to saying that the argument would work only for someone who already knows that God exists.

The Fifth Lateran Council taught "every spiritual soul is created immediately by God". Pope Benedict describes that event where each human soul is individually brought into existence by God as our original memory.

We have indeed, from the very beginning, been aware of the pres-



ence of God in our thinking about truth and goodness.

"This means," Pope Benedict said, "that the first so-called ontological level of the phenomenon of conscience (the level of fundamental reality and truth) consists in the fact that something like an original memory of the good and true...has been implanted in us, that there is an inner ontological tendency within (the human being), who is created in the likeness of God, toward the divine. From its origin, (our being) resonates with some things and clashes with others.

“We can treat it as a problem...or it can be treated as a mystery which we cannot lay out in front of us as an object or objects to be analysed from a distance”

"This anamnesis (memory) of the origin," Benedict continued, "which results from the godlike constitution of our being is not a conceptually articulated knowing, a store of retrievable contents. It is so to speak an inner sense, a capacity to recall, so that the one whom it addresses, if he is not turned in on himself, hears its echo from within. [The reader] says: 'That's it! That is what my nature points to and seeks.'"

* * * * *

Anselm died in 1109 whereas the Fifth Lateran Council occurred in the 16th Century, but it might be interesting how that might have affected Anselm's thinking.

Some other ideas in theology and philosophy might also lead to fruitful approaches to the question.

Gabriel Marcel pointed out that there are two possible ways of approaching a question. We can treat it as a problem – as a problem which we lay out in front of us to be examined, analysed, taken apart and its constituent parts examined, or it can be treated as a mystery which



we cannot lay out in front of us as an object or objects to be analysed from a distance.

Faced with mystery we recognise that we are part of the mystery ourselves. Might it be argued that in the Ontological Argument, Anselm was thinking of the question of God's existence as a problem when, in fact, it is the ultimate mystery – the ultimate question in which we are fundamentally involved?

Anselm wrote a brilliant argument in the philosophical tradition of which he was a master, but his approach perhaps falls more into the problem category than into reflection on the mystery.

In our time – and in many ways it is a loss – we are tempted to be

problem solvers rather than explorers of mystery.

On the other hand, one might argue that the philosophical and religious thinking and the experience of the world around us will raise new questions and new opportunities to see new perspectives on many issues, not least the perennial preoccupation with the argument of St Anselm.

Generation

The perennial investigation of the Ontological Argument will continue and it will, inevitably be influenced by the ever-changing cultural context which means, as St John Paul said during his visit to Ireland, that every new generation is a new con-

tinental to be won for Christ.

During the new generations that lie ahead there will no doubt be some who will be drawn to the fascinating and frustrating Ontological Argument.

They would be well advised to begin by reading Fr Gaughan's book which will provide them with an excellent account of 'the story so far' of the perennially intriguing Ontological argument.

i Before his episcopal appointments, Donal Murray, who holds a doctorate in theology from the Angelicum in Rome, lectured on theology in Mater Dei, Clonliffe and UCD.

“The perennial investigation of the Ontological Argument will continue and it will, inevitably be influenced by the ever-changing cultural context which means, as St John Paul said during his visit to Ireland, that every new generation is a new continent to be won for Christ”

Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 355



Across

- 1 You take it with a camera (10)
- 7 Person in charge of a game of hurling, for example (7)
- 8 Huge meal, banquet (5)
- 9 Show you see in a Big Top (6)
- 12 Striped cats (6)
- 15 Donegal and Antrim are in this province (6)
- 17 Creepy-crawly (6)
- 18 The number of players on a soccer team (6)
- 21 Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of ____ (4)
- 22 The USA is the United _____ of America (6)

Down

- 1 Wear this if you jump from a plane! (9)

- 2 In the sales, something might be labelled 'Special _____' (5)
- 3 Row a boat using this (3)
- 4 It's made of coral (4)
- 5 A king or queen lives here (6)
- 6 They are counted in an election (5)
- 10 Slice (3)
- 11 There are five of them on a banjo (7)
- 13 It was written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (6)
- 14 You might see it blast off into space (6)
- 16 Notice with the eyes (3)
- 19 Started a fire (3)
- 20 This person will treat your sick pet (3)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 15

GORDIUS NO. 477

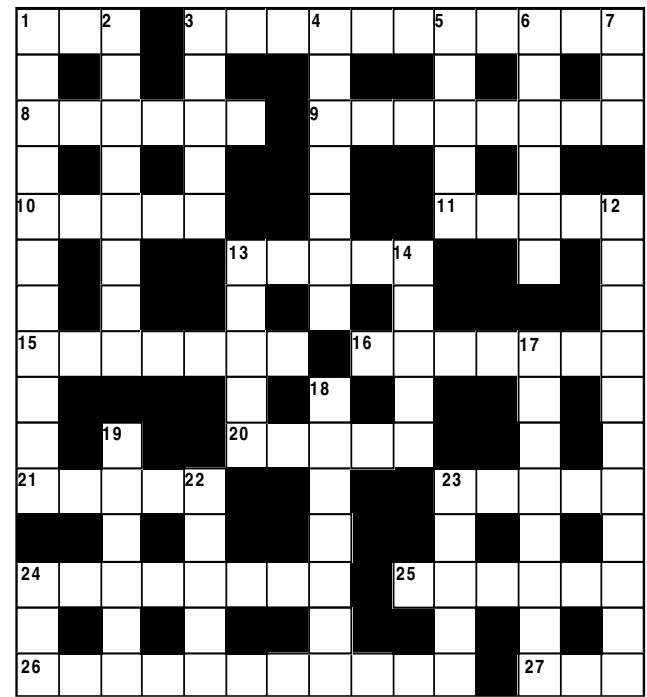
- Across** – 1 Mop 3 Loop the loop 8 Unripe 9 City Hall 10 Topaz 11 Touts 13 Model 15 Needful 16 Vatican 20 Nifty 21 Plaza 23 Movie 24 Kalahari 25 Fondue 26 Power plants 27 Sea
- Down** – 1 Mountain top 2 Perspire 3 La Paz 4 Picardy 5 Egypt 6 Opaque 7 Pal 12 Saint Teresa of Avila 13 Mourn 14 Leaky 17 Calvados 19 Carlow 22 Abhor 23 Moots 24 Kop

CHILDREN'S No. 354

- Across** – 1 Shower 5 Moons 7 Ankle 8 Pancake 9 Fresh 10 Airport 13 Fan 15 Starting 17 Ark 18 Looked 19 Bridge
- Down** – 1 Starfish 2 Oak leaf 3 Elephant 4 Tomato 5 Miner 6 Swept 11 Petrol 12 Rinsed 14 Asked 16 Axle 17 Air

Crossword

Gordius 478



Across

- 1 Meadow left entirely alone at first (3)
- 3 If some grubs be free, make items of junk food (11)
- 8 Tasty treat whose name is the French word for 'lightning' (6)
- 9 Fails to care for adequately (8)
- 10 Right off, the sinner makes it back to Clare's county town (5)
- 11 Initially, sturdy hands extract a fine amount of wheat (5)
- 13 & 15 Satanic lice I disperse for the patron saint of music (5,7)
- 16 Forgive, remove blame (7)
- 20 African home of some sunken yachts (5)
- 21 It makes one red to see a rogue upset (5)
- 23 Underground tomb (5)
- 24 At the point of death, one writes a final letter to a snake (4,4)
- 25 Biddable, easily managed or taught (6)
- 26 With which to spread dairy produce on your bread (6-5)
- 27 Write Eastenders' Ms Branning in Morse code (3)

Down

- 1 How the octet relied on a polygraph (3,8)
- 2 Ocean lying west of Ireland (8)
- 3 Sublime feeling occurring during a Chablis sampling (5)
- 4 Letters from admirers, or armour made of air circulating devices? (3,4)
- 5 Laws, regulations (5)
- 6 Engraved with acid (6)
- 7 Distress signal from a so-and-so? (1,1,1)
- 12 A speedy thoroughfare is the traditional British journalists' haunt (5,6)
- 13 & 18d Absolutely spotless (5,3,4)
- 14 Bone - tasty if boiled (ideally as starters) (5)
- 17 Is this insect a hen rather than a cock? (8)
- 18 See 13 down
- 19 An autumnal colour is surest in composition (6)
- 22 Bird prized on the golf course (5)
- 23 Selected a hundred stockings (5)
- 24 Room used for scientific research (3)



Your heart for the homeless



Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

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.

Classifieds: 01 687 4094

Sudoku Corner

355

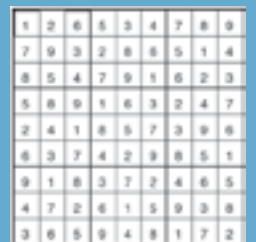
Easy



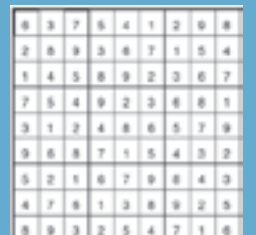
Hard



Last week's Easy 354



Last week's Hard 354



Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Words and thoughts for a newly-arrived grandniece

I WAS IN YOUR HOUSE the day they brought you home. I watched your two-year-old sister and wondered what was going through her mind. I saw your mother, glad to be home but tired too, having carried you so lovingly, through those long months of waiting, and now sharing you with a world that, above all times, is so uncertain of itself.

I watched your father, holding you in his arms but looking to your sister, wondering maybe how he could reassure her that though he is full of joy and love for you, the joy and love he has for her will never diminish.

I watched my brother as he took you in his arms and was reminded again that he is a grandfather. I watched...

Gratitude

I listened...listened to all that was being said around you. How beautiful you were, quiet and small. I heard words of gratitude that all had gone well and that you had arrived safely.

I heard my nephew speaking to your sister, encouraging her to reach out and touch you. Holding tight to her teddy and bunny, she looked on and wondered.



Then she stretched out a hand, touched yours and smiled. I listened to the silence of that moment of contact and knew that you would always have an older sister, looking out for you and stretching her hand to you along life's way. I heard, yes *heard*, her smile – maybe yours too. I heard the sound of love.

I hoped...hoped dreams for you and that the world will find itself again, and soon.

I hoped that you would only hear of Covid-19 and know it as something that did not impact heavily on your life, though it took its toll and took it heavily on many people.

In years to come, you will be remembered as one born during the year of 'the virus' – but it is *your* year, *your* year to be born and to bring fresh hope, deepened love and desperately needed faith to us all.

“As my hand grows older and weaker, yours will grow bigger and stronger. As my hand depends on another, your hand will give support and security. Your hand is perfect, blessed and precious. May it make a difference for many”

I felt your hand as it lay on mine and remembered holding your sister's hand the day she came home from Sligo Hospital

too. I wanted to hold on to this moment, so I took a photo. It is a photo that speaks of friendship and of my hope that you will be surrounded by many friends throughout the days of your life.

It speaks of God's hand and his asking us to put ours in his, since our names are and always will be carved there. It is a picture that speaks of contact and the need for all of us to do all we can to be in contact, not least in these strange and challenging times.

It is a picture that speaks of change. As my hand grows older and weaker, yours will grow bigger and stronger. As my hand depends on another, your hand will give support and security. Your hand is perfect, blessed and precious. May it make a difference for many.

As your sister reached out to it, as I held it, as your parents marvelled at it, the difference is already made.

And, as I drove home, I prayed for you. As I write these lines, I celebrate you and all children born in this strange year.

When we wonder what good came from 2020, may we be reminded of you and all of them.

There were candles

On Sunday evening when I went to lock the church, I noticed candles burning in the candelabra. This has been a constant and, for some reason, those candles burn with an added brightness during these times when our churches are not open for public Mass.

To me, at least, they are signs of living faith and though people cannot gather in great numbers, still they come in ones and twos to light a candle, say a prayer, ask a favour and maybe say thanks.

A musician friend told me he was once playing a tune and as he neared the end, a man who was clearly enjoying the tune, shouted: "Keep her lit!"

I'm only saying!



PLEASE HELP TO RE-HOUSE FAMILIES MADE HOMELESS BY THE MONSOON IN PAKISTAN

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are working to help rehouse families whose homes were damaged by a monsoon

The Little Way Association receives many requests to help the homeless. Fr Basharat Exupear from the emergency department of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Pakistan writes: "Sad news to share with you that during the months of August and September 2020 monsoon rains fell for two to three weeks and water damaged the walls and roofs of our people's mud houses. Almost 300 poor people's homes have been destroyed in St Mary's parish, Derikabad. At present the people are forced to live under the hot sun and in tents which are insufficient to keep the households and to stay inside with eight to nine family members. They cannot sleep outside because it is a desert land and at night insects, wild animals or snakes can attack. "The Oblates have distributed food, medicine and other necessities for one month among the most affected families. We urgently request your esteemed organisation to help us rebuild as many of these families' houses.

The sum of €1,756 will rebuild one house

"We have prepared the budget for one house for one family which is €1,756. This sum will provide the burnt bricks, cement bags, sand, windows, doors and roofing for one house. Please Little Way help us. Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary."

All your contributions to our homelessness fund will go intact to this and similar projects which provide shelter for victims of natural and man-made disasters. Please give whatever you can. Thank you.



"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses."

- St Therese

Feast Day: 1st October

WE WISH ALL OUR FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS A VERY HAPPY FEAST DAY

In gratitude for all your kindnesses a Novena of Masses was offered for your intentions from 23rd September to 1st October.

MAY ST THERESE OBTAIN FOR YOU ALL A SPECIAL BLESSING FROM HEAVEN

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

Your kind gift will be forwarded intact and gratefully received.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **BUILD HOUSES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES**
- €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**
- €..... **MASS OFFERINGS**
(Please state number _____)
- €..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to tinyurl.com/lwadonations

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.