

The Irish Catholic

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AGE IS NO EXCUSE

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‘Touching the wounds of Christ’

Priests tell of ‘heart-breaking’ Covid-19 ministry

Chai Brady

A Co. Kildare-based priest has spoken of the moving and humbling experience of helping to bring peace and consolation to patients suffering from coronavirus through the grace of the Sacrament of the Sick.

Fr Seán Maher described ministering to patients isolated from their loved ones as visiting “the wounded Christ in our world today”.

He said when he gets a call to go to Naas General Hospital to anoint someone suffering from the virus, he is also touched by the care and attention of the many medical and catering staff. He described “the kind nurse helping me to put on the PPE, who says to me ‘thanks for coming, because where we cannot bring healing, you can bring peace and hope’”.

Fr Damian O Reilly, who is working as a chaplain in St Vincent’s Hospital in Dublin described it as a “humbling”

experience “to be working alongside health care professionals and all the staff of the hospital.

“Because of the restrictions, families are unable to be with their loved ones and this is particularly difficult if the loved one is dying.

“To be a pastoral and spiritual support especially to the family is vital,” according to Fr O’Reilly.

Listening

Fr John Kelly, Chaplain at Tallaght University Hospital insists that the work of chaplains is by its nature face-to-face. “Listening compassionately, connecting immediately and loving unconditionally.

“Covid-19 has challenged and changed the way we provide this pastoral care. Wherever chaplains are, whether at the bedside or the other end of a video camera, it is about connecting people,” he said.

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A light that shines in the darkness



An Armenian priest holds a lit torch taken from the ‘Holy Fire’ flame lit during a ceremony in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on Sunday, when the Eastern Churches mark Easter. The event took place amid the coronavirus lockdown at the Old City. Photo: Ilia Yefimovich/dpa

More than a quarter ‘attend’ Mass online

Staff reporter

A new poll has revealed that 27% of Irish people say they have watched or listened to at least one religious service during the current period of lockdown.

The same poll found that 18% of people reported that they are praying more than they usually would.

The research also reveals that 85% of people believe that we will value family more after the lockdown

ends. Some 75% think we will value the elderly more, while almost one in three (31%) believe we will be more spiritual.

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MARY KENNY

Time really can heal all wounds

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LOW-EFFORT DIY

It isn’t difficult and you have nothing else to do, so... PAGES 31 & 33



JOHN MCGUIRK

Bashing Britain is cold comfort for Ireland’s afflicted PAGE 10



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LOVE
BOTH

It's time to re-open our churches again for prayer

I feel blessed under lockdown that within the allocated two kilometres from my home in Dublin are two beautiful churches which remain open for prayer despite this pandemic. As part of the permitted daily exercise, I always make a short visit to either Holy Cross in Dundrum or the Church of St John the Evangelist in Ballinteer.

Both are very different. Holy Cross in Dundrum was dedicated in 1837 and while having recently re-opened after extensive renovations, it retains a distinctive 19th Century feel in the heart of the village.

St John's was opened in the 1970s and is sited along a busy road surrounded by housing estates. It is a huge space designed to meet the needs of an expanding suburb.

What both churches share in common is that they are open and welcoming centres of prayer for vibrant Faith communities. As I visit each day, they are never empty. A handful of people gather separately for private prayer. I have a profound sense that though we are apart, our presence together in the church before the Blessed Sacrament unites us in a very real way.

Cautious

People are cautious and observe the norms around physical distancing. A gentle smile and a wave have replaced the few words or the handshake of greeting. Everyone keeps to themselves for the sake of the safety of all of us.



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Parishioners kneel outside the door of the parish church in Kilcullen, Co. Kildare on Holy Saturday. Parishioners were invited to leave candles at the door of the church to unite with the Easter Vigil during the period of lockdown due to coronavirus.

I have friends in other parts of the country who have to content themselves with staying at home as their local churches are closed. Of course, one can (and should) pray everywhere. But, as Catholics our places of worship are more than gathering spots or meeting houses. For Catholics, our churches are a *porta Dei* (gateway to God) and an *ara coeli* (altar of Heaven).

It is in our churches where we encounter Christ par excellence in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle – God's abiding presence in good times and bad times.

I understand the concern

that has motivated the suspension of public Masses. It is also easy to see how this concern can extend to closing churches in the parts of the country where this is the norm.

“Health and safety is a valid concern – but it should not be allowed to become our sole master”

But I think it's time to reconsider. I appreciate the health and safety concerns, and I know that in some areas the sacristan or priest may be cocooning and

therefore unable to open the church.

Perhaps a parishioner who is under 70 could volunteer to open the church? Perhaps a rota could be put in place so that this is not burdensome to one individual?

When it comes to concerns around social distancing, people will be sensible as they are in the local churches I visit daily.

People are in the supermarkets and they are visiting off licences. Both of these interactions involve a certain amount of risk, but it is – I would suggest – a risk that is worth it to allow people to pray where they are familiar. To permit people to worship God where they were married, had their children baptised and buried their loved ones from.

Health and safety is a valid concern – but it should not be allowed to become our sole master. Pope Francis has often said that he wants a church that is like a field hospital rather than a Church that is stingy with God's mercy. It would be a pity if we were to run the risk with being stingy with allowing people to pray in their parish churches.

Observing all the necessary precautions, I think it's time our churches were open for prayer.

Priests tell of 'heart-breaking' Covid-19 ministry

Continued from Page 1

He recalls one patient who “after a pastoral conversation we prayed together, celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick and she received Holy Communion”

Fr Kelly said that the patient had not spoken to her brother since she was hospitalised, and he was able to connect the two “and they had a conversation which turned out to be her last as she died peacefully a short time later”.

He recalled another patient who he had met on numerous occasions during her treatment for cancer. “She recognised my voice behind the protective mask and goggles. Having listened to her fears and sense of

isolation I was able to connect her by Zoom to her husband and two sons. This was the last time they were able to see and hear their mother's voice.

“After her death the nurse and I placed a wooden cross in her hand as we prayed for her,” he said.

New situation

Shauna Sweeny – who is a lay chaplain at Tallaght – said that the new situation takes quite a bit of adjusting. “To see our patients having to go through this unthinkable ordeal is heart-breaking.

“Patients have not seen their family in weeks and feel isolated and lonely. Families are at home waiting to hear from the hospital and feel helpless. Staff are dealing with extremely stressful

situations that change every day,” she said.

In Naas, Fr Maher described one visit. “One of the patients is silent, there's nobody else there, his eyes are already swelling over and he can't respond. Another breathes heavily, makes the sign of the cross, and at the very end musters up the courage and the strength to say, ‘Thank you’. The third is a little bit more lively. As soon as you go in and say, ‘I'm Fr Seán, I'm here to say a few prayers’ – ‘Oh, am I in trouble?’

“A little bit of banter that takes away something of the sadness of the moment. ‘No, you're not in trouble, I'm here to bring you peace.’”

See Page 11.

‘It was a great life to live and I would do it all over again’ – Róise McGagh interviews Fr Martin Keane: See Page 34

Nun (103) makes a remarkable recovery from Covid-19

Aron Hegarty

A 103-year-old nun has become the oldest person in Ireland to contract and survive the coronavirus.

Sr Martha Hickey, an Infant Jesus sister, got the deadly virus over three weeks ago and, against the odds, has made a miraculous recovery.

The centenarian, who has devoted over 80 years of her life to the Church, first fell ill at her nursing home in Co. Cork and was later admitted to a neighbouring hospital.

Suffering with a high temperature and respiratory problems, a hospital test later confirmed that the Limerick native was coronavirus positive.

So proud

Despite her age, the brave sister's recovery was down to her having no underlying health conditions.

"We are just so proud of her," says Anne Linehan, one of Sr Martha's many nieces.

"We didn't think that she would make it at first – it is a fair test to come out of Covid-

19 at 103.

"We really didn't know what to expect when we heard that it was Covid-19 but the doctors and nurses couldn't be more delighted with her progress.

Ms Linehan added: "Right now, she is up out of the bed and walking with her walking aid and eating and in great spirits...the doctors are hoping she will be back in the nursing home early this week."

Sr Martha, who celebrated her milestone 103rd birthday on February 22, was born in 1917 and joined the order at the age of 19.

"She is a remarkable person," said Ms Linehan, who describes her aunt as "kind" and "resilient".

"On the year she celebrated her 100th birthday, she also celebrated 80 years of service as a nun.

"During her time as a nun she also worked in Malaysia, she was a primary school teacher and absolutely adored the children."

'Courageous' frontline workers applauded by Church leaders

Chai Brady

The leaders of Ireland's main Christian traditions have commended those working on the frontline during the coronavirus pandemic for "their work, courage and compassion".

They also encouraged those taking part in the evening appreciation of healthcare workers to pray for them when the applause has ended and people go back into their homes.

Archbishop Eamon Martin was joined in the call by

the leaders of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, as well as the Irish Council of Churches.

"We have the greatest admiration for our healthcare workers who are literally serving on the frontline in caring for the sick and dying.

"We also remember the countless others who are serving the community in ways, which in other circumstances, we would consider every day," the Churchmen said.

Knock townlands blessed



Fr Richard Gibbons PP, Rector of Knock Shrine, blesses the birthplace of John Curry, who at five years of age was the youngest witness to the Knock Apparition in 1879. Over a period of three days, Fr Gibbons blessed all 58 townlands of Knock parish, which consists of almost 900 homes, with Easter Holy Water. Photo: Adrian O'Boyle

Sins of past should not be forgotten – Bishop McKeown

Róise McGagh

Every generation is prone to blindness to injustices, the Bishop of Derry has warned.

In his homily for Divine Mercy Sunday in St Eugene's Cathedral, Dr Donal McKeown warned that "there is a widespread narrative that the past was full of outrageous mistakes and that we must consign those attitudes to the dustbin of history.

"The other part of that story is that we are wise and sensible today. So how dare anyone condemn how we modern liberated people deal with situations?

"But," he said, "in every generation, there is a real temptation to blindness in that we are tempted and encouraged to take as normal and sensible some attitudes, actions and laws that the next generations will mock as outrageous."

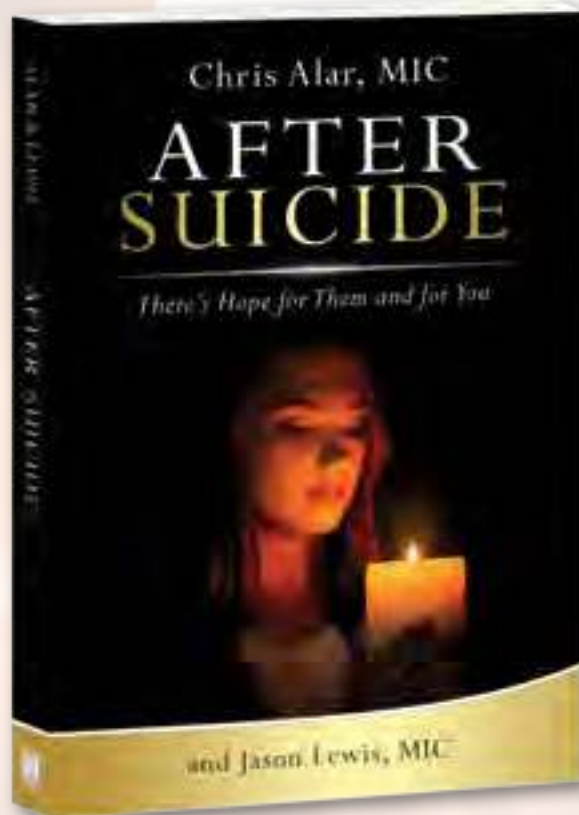
He insisted that "mercy and forgiveness are not about forgetting the past or drawing a line under it...that applies in

our personal lives as well as in our local politics.

"A wise man wrote recently that sin is inexcusable but forgivable. Mercy enables us to forgive and to remember – not merely to forgive and forget.

"God's grace enables us to tell a story about our lives that takes the rubble of the past and makes it into a foundation for the future – not into a pile of rocks to throw at others or with which to gash ourselves," he said.

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Successive ministers to blame for nursing home catastrophe – Prof. Des O’Neill

Aron Hegarty

Prof. Des O’Neill, a consultant geriatrician at Tallaght University Hospital in Dublin has claimed that what is playing out now in nursing homes with Covid-19 is the failure by successive ministers for health to prioritise care for older citizens.

He insists that blame for the failure to prevent the catastrophic spread of the virus in care homes rests squarely at the doors of the Department of Health.

“This has been a crisis that has been long in the making,” Prof. O’Neill told Brendan O’Connor on RTÉ Radio One at the weekend.

“It relates back to policy issues around the Department of Health over the past 20 years.”

He said senior officials who make policy have overseen privatisation “without

due attention to adequate support systems or engagement with the HSE or the nursing home sector”.

Prof. O’Neill warned that there is “not enough appropriate linkage into the public health system.

“The issue is around policy-making in the DOH, which has not adequately put into place linkages with the public health system...this has been absent in the nursing home sector, and not through any fault of the HSE or its staff.”

According to Prof. O’Neill – who wrote the Leas Cross report that revealed sub-standard living conditions in that home leading to the deaths of some patients – “They [staff in nursing homes] are working in a system that is not actually a system...This system has not been set up with any clarity in leadership or expectations.”



Jorge Lamelas, Alejandra Howard and Stephanie Gil star in a scene from the upcoming movie *Fatima*. Photo: CNS

Fatima film release pushed back due to pandemic

Staff reporter

A feature film about the story of the children of Fátima has been delayed until near the end of the summer due to the coronavirus.

The historical drama, directed by Marco Pontecorvo and distributed by Picturehouse, was originally scheduled for release on April 24, but has now

been pushed back until August.

“The circumstances that the world finds itself in now require precautionary measures and action,” read a post on the film’s official Facebook page.

“As a result, we are postponing the opening of *Fatima* in theatres to August 14, 2020.”

Based on real-life events, *Fatima* tells the story of young Portuguese

girl Lúcia Santos and her two cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto.

In 1917, the three young shepherds reported receiving visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary near the town of Fatima.

Jacinta and Francisco, who fell victim to the global flu pandemic of 1918, were canonised in 2017. Lúcia – who became an enclosed nun – died in 2005

During the Covid 19 outbreak, many families have had to experience short goodbyes with their loved ones.

Funerals being restricted has left people with no way to pay their respects to departed family members or friends.

As a small gesture, The Irish Catholic wants to remember those departed in our pages.



If you have a loved one who has passed, please send an obituary to news@irishcatholic.ie and we'll print it in the paper the following week for no charge.

Belfast fraudsters' attempts to steal parish donations

Chai Brady

A Belfast-based priest has decried the “despicable” actions of fraudsters trying to con vulnerable people out of their money by pretending to collect parish envelopes.

This comes after the Diocese of Down and Connor reported that certain “unscrupulous individuals” were offering to take weekly parish envelopes – which currently aren’t being collected.

Fr Paddy McCafferty PP of Corpus Christi Parish in Ballymurphy told *The Irish Catholic*: “Pretending to collect envelopes for the church or offering to do their shopping and taking the money from them, it’s despicable to

treat the vulnerable and older people in that way.

“The devil makes work for idle hands – there’s a lot of these criminals now, they have a lot more time on their hands to concoct various schemes and scams to try and hoodwink people, that’s inevitable but at least people can be vigilant and aware. Sadly, people do get taken in and with unfortunate consequences for them,” he said.

‘Scam’

The diocese highlighted to parishioners over the weekend that they had become aware of a “fraudulent scam targeting vulnerable people within parishes”. They said the scam had been reported

to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

“In line with the government’s ‘Stay at Home’ and social distancing policies, parish envelopes will not be collected at this time,” the statement continued.

“Parishioners who choose to use their weekly envelopes as normal, should retain their envelopes and, once government policy allows, the parish will arrange to safely collect them.”

In a statement to this paper the PSNI said they are currently “conducting enquiries accordingly” and they support the “clear guidance” given by the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Fr McCafferty insisted

there are still “great things happening” and his community are watching out for the vulnerable who are living alone and may not have much family nearby.

Hot meals

“We have a lot of young people here in the parish who are going around four times a week with cooked hot meals to homes of people who are on their own and are a bit older, and those who are self-isolating,” he said.

“It’s a little group, Cumann Spóirt An Phobail, and they’re tremendous, they’re a soccer club in normal time but they’re doing this now, they’ve been doing it for the last few weeks.”

Home Care Coalition slams ‘unacceptable’ drop in home care provision

Home Care Coalition has called for urgent action to help those impacted by the 20% reduction in home care provision as a result of coronavirus.

The Coalition, which is made up of 23 leading charities, not-for-profits and campaigners, also say home care providers and workers are still without sufficient PPE.

“It is unacceptable that anyone who needs

home care at this time is being forced to go without it because of a lack of resources,” says Coalition spokesperson Catherine Cox.

Pat McLoughlin, CEO of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, adds: “The withdrawal or reduction of supports leads to all of those involved or receiving services from this sector being put at risk.”



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Time heals all wounds

It is said that time heals all wounds, although the motto doesn't specify just how much time may be required. Still, it happens. Just look at Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil and their plans to govern together during this time of crisis.

The plans may not run smoothly, and there may be arguments over the finer details of power-sharing; but anyone who has memories of the Civil War transmitted by their parents will surely reflect on how extraordinary it is that these two warring political parties could now share such a sense of harmonious purpose.

For 40 years after the end of the Irish Civil War – which ended in 1923-24 – the two parties wouldn't even share a cordial drink together in Dáil Éireann. C.S. 'Todd' Andrews, a Fianna Fáil big cheese (and great-uncle of Ryan Tubridy) says in his memoir that his family wouldn't have a Fine Gaeler in the house.

In Blackrock, Co. Dublin, the De Valeras and the family of Kevin O'Higgins lived around the corner from one another. They never spoke or socialised. Dev, of course, had led the anti-Treaty party during the Civil



Mary Kenny



C.S. 'Todd' Andrews (far left) with Eamon De Valera. Political discussions today would surprise both.

War and O'Higgins was the most dominant force in the Cumann na nGaedheal government which set up the Irish Free State after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.

There were terrible wounds on both sides: the anti-Treatyites sought to destabilise the state, and were responsible for violence and burnings-out – about 200 'big houses' were burned out, and priceless

works of art destroyed as well as lives lost. But the Free Staters could be brutally repressive and the executions of noted republicans like Rory O'Connor and Liam Mellows were bitterly remembered.

Mandate

The Church formally supported the Free State government, since the government did have an electoral mandate and it could

validly claim to be "the proper authority" (St Paul exhorted Christians to accept the "proper authority"). But there were priests whose own sympathies were on both sides, too.

Msgr Pádraig de Brún, the Gaelic scholar and friend of Sean MacDiarmada (and uncle of Máire Cruise O'Brien) was among the most ardent of the clerics on the republican side. There was even a well-known priest, Fr O'Daly, who was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the IRB, although the clergy were forbidden to join secret societies.

But the clergy were divided, as the people had been. There were ardent Catholics on both sides, after all. De Valera and O'Higgins were both devout Catholics, both doing what they believed was right.

It took a long time to get over the experience of Civil War. It will not be an easy period of history to commemorate in 2022. And yet, it is, surely, a healing development that the political descendants of those Civil War parties could work together, today, in a coalition. 'Todd' Andrews may well be turning in his grave!



● In this time of the pandemic, individuals frequently post grief-stricken messages on Twitter when they lose a family member or someone they love. This is often a parent or grandparent, but occasionally, the tragic death of a younger person is announced.

A mother posted a message earlier this week that her son had died (though she didn't specify that it was the virus) and she was utterly devastated – as any mother would be. It was a very touching tribute. She added, with understandable heartache: "Life just isn't fair."

Indeed, it is not. I remember my own mother reciting the *Salve Regina* (Hail, Holy Queen) a prayer she loved, sometimes stressing that phrase that we are "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears".

Life is often nearer to a vale of tears than to a forum of fairness: though that doesn't mean we should give up hope.

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‘Every life is precious irrespective of age’ says Bishop Nulty

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighin has called for “special care” for those grouped in centres or homes for the vulnerable and elderly.

The bishop’s statement comes after eight people died in Maryborough Centre at St Fintan’s Hospital, Portlaoise (see pages 12 and 13).

“This news brings home...the huge need for special care for those who are grouped together in similar centres or in homes for vulnerable or older people,” Bishop Nulty said in his statement.

“It is imperative that the best possible treatment is made available to those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19,” the bishop added, “and that staff working in these homes and facilities are equipped with a sufficient and proper supply of PPE.”

Productivity

Bishop Nulty stressed that we must not “lose the person behind every statistic...every life matters. Every life counts. Every life is precious irrespective of age or potential productivity.”

“This is someone’s mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, son, daughter or friend.”

Bishop Nulty offered prayers and “deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased”. He thanked all workers who care for those who have contracted or are threatened by the virus, saying: “The hearts and hands of the staff are the hearts and hands of family to many patients at this time.”

More than a quarter ‘attend’ Mass online

Chai Brady

A new poll has revealed that 27% of Irish people say they have watched or listened to at least one religious service during the current period of lockdown.

The same poll found that 18% of people reported that they are praying more than they usually would.

The research – carried out by Amarach on behalf of The Iona Institute – was conducted in the second week of April and also reveals that 85% of people believe that we will value family more after the lockdown ends. Some 75% think we will value the elderly more, while almost one in three (31%) believe we will be more spiritual.

A more detailed look highlights some unexpected findings. For example, 24%

of 18-24 year olds saying they are praying more than usual. This is the same for over 55s, but far higher than the age groups in between. Just 9% of 25-34 year olds say they are praying more than they normally would.

Some 37% say they are praying about the same as usual, while 43% say they don’t pray. Two percent say they are praying less than usual.

Encouraging

The poll finds that 15% of those aged 18-24 have watched at least one religious service in the current period. This rises to 44% among the over 55s.

Brendan Conroy of the Iona Institute said: “It is encouraging that so many people are still taking part in religious services in whatever way they can during the current unprecedented situation.

“Weekly church attendance figures in Ireland are about 30% and so the 27% who are tuning into religious service online, or via tv or radio, is about the same as that. In other words, they are doing their best still to take part in communal acts of worship”.

Mr Conroy said: “It is also good to see that almost one in five people are praying more. This is a natural religious reaction in a time of crisis. For example, you are more likely to pray for your loved ones.

“It is also obvious from the survey that people are using this time to take stock. The fact that 85% think we will value family more after, this, 75% say we will value the elderly more, and 31% think society will become more spiritual also indicate this,” he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bishop encourages children whose sacraments were delayed

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy said he will write to children in the diocese who are preparing for their First Communion and Confirmation to offer “words of encouragement” after the sacraments were postponed due to Covid-19.

In a statement read out after Mass at St John’s Cathedral over the weekend, Bishop Leahy said that the postponement, on top of many other restrictions on funerals, weddings, baptisms and other services, was unavoidable.

He added it has come “as a disappointment to some. Though understandable given the Covid-19 crisis, it is a further sacrifice not least for the children. I am grateful to our diocesan advisors who have put resources up on our diocesan website for the children preparing for First Communion and Confirmation,” he added.

Jesuits launch new web portal

The Society of Jesus has launched a new global portal with a catalogue of initiatives being taken around the world by the Jesuits.

“We want to show the creativity that is going on in the Church and in the Society of Jesus,” said John Dardis SJ. “There is a real desire to reach out to people who are in diverse ways struggling with the virus. We have a real awareness of what people are suffering and we want to show how God is already part of that answer.”

Face mask campaign launched for refugees

Face masks being made by people in Direct Provision will be part of a ‘buy-one gift-one’ campaign run by the social enterprise We Make Good, who have said with every mask sold one will be donated to an asylum seeker.

The masks are made by women from a refugee background who work for the The Textile Studio, an initiative that provides jobs, training and leadership opportunities.

Project partners, the Irish Refugee Council, are delivering the masks to asylum seekers. CEO Nick Henderson said: “We are delighted to partner on this fantastic project which simultaneously supports a fantastic social enterprise and assists people living in Direct Provision.”

Peacekeepers’ sacred moments in Syria



Army chaplain Fr Piotr Delimat CF and Irish soldiers, all members of the 61st Infantry Group, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), celebrate Easter Sunday Mass in Camp Faouar on the Golan Heights in Syria. Fr Delimat is originally from Poland but has worked in Ireland for a number of years, he is on his first tour of duty as a military chaplain.

Priest defends celebrity chef from newspaper ‘cheap shot’

Staff reporter

A Co. Cavan-based priest has hit out at a newspaper over what he described as a “cheap shot” against well-known chef Neven Maguire.

Fr Charlie O’Gorman hit out at a recent article in the *Sunday Times* which he believed had been critical of Mr Maguire.

In a subsequent letter to the newspaper Fr O’Gorman, formerly of the parish of Blacklion where Mr Maguire runs his

award-winning restaurant, said that “Neven is far too busy preparing free meals for the elderly and vulnerable people in his home are of Blacklion to have time to reply”.

Mr Maguire and the staff of his restaurant, MacNean House, have been preparing meals for the vulnerable in their local community, as well as donating food to intensive care nurses.

Fr O’Gorman said he was writing “on behalf of those people who are being kept safe and well by him”.

Sr Stan appeals for more support

Róise McGagh

Sr Stan has appealed for support for Focus Ireland as a video of a child teaching other children how to avoid Covid-19 gained traction online. The video of the child who is homeless demonstrating how washing hands kills the virus has over 20,000 views across social media.

Sr Stan said: “This crisis is

additional stress for families who are homeless and we are working hard to support and protect them in their hour of need. Our staff are supporting parents and ensuring they are getting meals and helping them to deal with anxieties”.

It is a lot more difficult for people who are homeless to self-isolate said a Focus Ireland spokesperson, “especially if are staying in a shared living space”.

Martin Mansergh

The View



A virus reveals the consciousness of vulnerability and the value of religion

For many years past, there have been warnings of the danger of a pandemic, which mostly went unheeded. Now it is upon us. We were quickly reminded of the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which carried off millions of people, young adults in particular.

Throughout history, and to this day in many parts of the world, lethal disease outbreaks, malnutrition, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters have been part of lived experience, underlining the fragility of life, sometimes for even the best protected. That consciousness of vulnerability, brushed under the carpet most of the time while on the surface life appears secure, stable and predictable, is what makes many people value their religion.

Worldwide, with limited exceptions, the decision has been made to put the preservation of life first, ahead of economic considerations, budgetary rules and personal freedoms. While everyone is called on to make some sacrifices, there is huge admiration and gratitude for those who, at much risk to their health and lives, have put themselves in the front line, fighting a deadly threat which has already ravaged society, but which, left unchecked, is capable of inflicting massive death and devastation.

Appreciation

It is clear that those who perform vital and fundamental services, particularly in situations that can be life or death for them and others, need to be appreciated in every way.

There will be lessons to be learnt. Both here and elsewhere, calm, informed and responsible leadership guided by expert advice and that commands public trust is vital in helping

societies to come through a traumatic and for some a tragic period, the duration of which is still uncertain. There are many worries, not just about contagion and loved ones, but also the fall-out for livelihoods, families and communities.

Here in Ireland, leadership in this unprecedented crisis has had to be provided by a departing government. Yet it is exercising emergency powers with consent. Leo Varadkar, as a doctor, has demonstrated the judgement and political behaviour required from the top at the height of a pandemic, just as Germany is fortunate still to have in place Chancellor Angela Merkel, a trained scientist who relies on sober analysis, not on rhetorical or chauvinistic bluster.

Answers

We have come to appreciate again, especially in our compact society, the value of public service broadcasting, to inform, assure, and to throw light on anything that requires immediate answers. RTÉ has performed an essential service in this crisis, and Government has to see that it is there for the future, without prejudice to separate ongoing debate as to how it should best fulfil its remit to the whole community and reflect the depth and diversity of values that inform our national life.

The Bible warns us of the besetting sin of hubris, the moments when we feel that everything is attainable. We are a world away from where we were when we voted in February. In a context where overall the country was performing strongly, there was public impatience with failure to crack hospital overcrowding, unaffordable housing and homelessness.

The immediate agenda now is different, but they at least must not return.

A new Government will face formidable challenges, overseeing a gradual but



Angela Merkel.

safe return to a more normal but changed life, and steering the economy and the country through many dangers amidst international volatility back to health. Recovery initially will necessarily be state-led. This does not mean that state socialism will now replace the social market economy. The majority of issues that a new government will face will have to be responded to as they arise. No programme

for Government will be able to foresee or settle them all in advance beyond a general orientation.

In a crisis, people look primarily to their national governments. However, no one should underestimate the value of EU and Eurozone membership in providing a safety net, without which the government of any smaller or more vulnerable country could be mercilessly buffeted by the markets. Ireland is wise to have re-aligned itself with those that want the European Union to be as forthcoming as possible in underpinning the stability of the European economy.

For a young diplomat in the 1970s, when Ireland joined the EEC, the Netherlands stood out in its commitment and enthusiasm for the European project.

It is hard to get used to the change for many years now to a more negative attitude to the needs of European solidarity, reflective of deeply divided

internal politics.

It is an ill wind that blows no one any good. We temporarily have a much cleaner environment. The homeless on the streets can be given accommodation. Patterns of drug-dealing and other forms of criminality have been disrupted. An emergency overriding one-tier health system has been established. The possibilities of working more from home have become obvious.

“Are economic recovery and Brexit too much for the British Government to cope with?”

We will also need to ask questions. Is concentrating people in high-rise apartments near city centres or in tightly-packed, open-plan work spaces such good planning? Are massive cruise ships a major health hazard? Are economic recovery and Brexit too much for the British Government to cope with

at the one time, so should there be an extension to the transition period beyond the end of the year? Do countries need to be more self-sufficient with regard to some of their vital needs during an emergency, and do we rely excessively on global outsourcing and supply chains?

Temporarily, many people are without the company of family friends or colleagues, and are not free to go any distance to socialize or participate in meetings, gatherings, sport and entertainment.

As against that, creative use is being made of social media to stay in contact and communicate with each other even more than normal.

While the churches have done their utmost to continue to serve their Faithful congregations this way, many people are waiting for the day when they can safely greet and be in direct communion with each other again in a church setting that means so much to them.

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The inconvenient truth for the Aussie media: Pell is innocent



Political and ideological biases have often poisoned the facts, writes **David Quinn**

Do you remember the case of Fr Kevin Reynolds? He was the priest RTÉ wrongly accused of fathering a child through rape, one of the most serious allegations you can make against someone.

The allegation was made on an edition of *Prime Time Investigates* in 2011 called 'Mission to Prey'. Before the programme went to air, Fr Reynolds offered the programme-makers a DNA test to prove he was not the father of the child alleged to be his. The programme declined to take up the offer because they were so convinced of his guilt.

The rest, as they say, is history. The show went to air, but shortly afterwards a DNA test proved that Fr Reynolds was not the father of the child in question. RTÉ had to issue a humiliating apology and Fr Reynolds won a big payout from the station for the appalling defamation.

A question that remains is why RTÉ was not willing to wait for the results of the DNA test? Was it because they could not entertain the possibility that a priest might actually be innocent of an alleged offence? Had they lost sight of the presumption of innocence that belongs to all of us by right because of the general atmosphere against the Church?

Lost sight

Is it also possible that the Australian police, the Australian legal system, much of the country's media and public lost sight of Cardinal George Pell's right to be considered innocent what he was accused of child sex abuse?

Cardinal Pell, now aged



Workers cover graffiti at the entrance to St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne, Australia on April 8. The cathedral was vandalised after Cardinal George Pell was released from prison the previous day. Photo: CNS

78, was released from prison very recently having served 405 days of a six-year sentence after being found guilty of sexually assaulting an altar boy in the sacristy of Melbourne's St Patrick's

Cathedral in the 1990s, when he was archbishop there.

At this stage Cardinal Pell, as he later became, was already a high-profile Church figure in his country because of his willingness to



Cardinal George Pell.

be a combatant in Australia's 'culture wars' over issues like abortion. He was also a controversial figure within the Church because of his opposition to changing Catholic teachings on matters like women priests, celibacy and contraception.

“The media wanted to punish someone for the Church's undoubted and terrible failure to properly protect children down the years from clerical sex abusers”

He had a 'take-no-prisoners' style which meant he was loved by some and loathed by others, including in Australia's mainly liberal media, not least in the ABC, their equivalent of RTÉ.

ABC has been hostile to Cardinal Pell for decades. The hostility only grew as he rose through the ranks, becoming

Archbishop of Sydney, being made a cardinal by Pope St John Paul II and then being brought to Rome by Pope Francis to become the Vatican's treasurer.

(I should add that I have met Cardinal Pell several times down the years and on a personal level he is much more engaging than his often-stiff media persona.)

In any event, the higher he rose in the ranks, the more of a media target he became, especially as he remained willing to take on all-comers in debate on all the hottest topics.

Cardinal Pell over the years has had several allegations of child sex abuse made against him. All had fallen apart except for the one over which he was convicted. He maintained and protested his innocence all along and defenders pointed out the implausibility of this particular allegation against him.

Verdict

To cut a long story short, the first time the case went to trial, the jury could not return a verdict. At the re-trial, the jury came to a unanimous guilty verdict. Cardinal Pell appealed and on a two-to-one vote, the court decided not to overturn the verdict. He then appealed to Australia's highest court and had the guilty verdict overturned in a unanimous seven to zero ruling. Legally, he must be presumed innocent.

But the matter does not rest there. Other allegations exist, which the Victoria police are investigating and civil actions against him may be taken.

On the other hand, he might well sue the Victorian police for how it dealt with his case and sections of the media for how they covered it.

His defenders make the point that Australian media outlets, including the ABC, had so poisoned the well of public opinion against him, any jury was automatically biased against him before any trial began, and also wanted to punish someone for the Church's undoubted and terrible failure to properly protect children down the years from clerical sex abusers. Essentially, the high profile, high ranking, combative Cardinal Pell became the scapegoat.

In a way, his case was

similar to that of Brett Kavanaugh in the US. He had been nominated by Donald Trump for a place on the American Supreme Court. He was accused of sex abuse by a woman named Christine Blasey Ford, but also by a number of others. Some of those other accusations were prima facie absurd.

“It was a classic case of confirmation bias, that is, we believed whatever suited us”

In the case of Blasey Ford it basically came down to her word against his and who we believed seemed to come down to our politics. Conservatives believed Kavanaugh and liberals believed Blasey Ford. It was a classic case of confirmation bias, that is, we believed whatever suited us.

But at the end of the day, Brett Kavanaugh was legally entitled to his good name and to the presumption of innocence. He has never been charged, never mind found guilty of the allegations made against him. It would have been a huge injustice if his nomination to the US Supreme Court had been blocked.

In the case of Cardinal Pell, it was his word against that of his accuser, except that when you examine the nature of accusation, it is very hard to believe the alleged incident happened, especially as we are expected to believe it took place in the sacristy of a crowded cathedral, right after Mass, when plenty of people were milling about and that Cardinal Pell had unexpectedly broken off from the procession leaving the church after Mass and was not accompanied by his usual priests.

As far as I am concerned, Cardinal Pell is innocent, and as far as the law is concerned, he is innocent. Even some of his severest critics within the Australian Church, including Fr Frank Brennan, SJ, insist he is innocent.

But for many others he is guilty and as with Brett Kavanaugh, what we are willing to believe about him seems to come down to our political and ideological views.

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Bashing Britain is cold comfort for Ireland's afflicted

“Excellent investigative journalism in the *Sunday Times*”, tweeted *Irish Independent* columnist Colette Browne on Sunday morning, in response to the extensive report the London-based paper had just published laying out the multiple alleged failures of Boris Johnson's government during January and February, leading allegedly to the present dire state of affairs across the Irish Sea.

She wasn't wrong. It was, indeed, a riveting report, suggesting that Mr Johnson's administration had simply failed to take matters seriously enough, quickly enough, and that the exceptionally bad outbreak in Britain can be traced to a series of missed meetings and decisions taken too late.

Ms Browne's assessment was widely shared in the Irish media. “Devastating”, was the verdict of the *Irish Times* columnist Fintan O'Toole. On RTÉ, Tommy Gorman suggested that the British Government had been distracted by Brexit, and absurdly, that Britain didn't have figures of the stature of Tony Holohan, Ireland's Chief Medical Officer.

At the same time as Irish journalists were slobbering over the latest drama from across the water, an interview was being published in Colette Browne's own newspaper, the *Sunday Independent*, with our own Health Minister Simon Harris. It began by noting that Mr Harris “is more popular than ever”. The first question posed to the minister was “whether he was uncomfortable being so popular”. He must have struggled with that one.

Ventilators

In fairness to the interviewer, he did ask Mr Harris why action had not been taken earlier. “Look”, said Harris, “four months ago, nobody knew about this virus. We had a general election on February 8 and nobody asked me about ventilators, because you didn't know about the virus, and neither did I.”

And that was that. No follow up, no hard questions. And so, in the one day, we had the spectacle of the Irish press denouncing a “devastating” report that Boris Johnson's government hadn't prepared properly in January, while accepting at face value that the Government here “didn't know” about the virus in February.

That same day, Ireland reported 39 new deaths. Norway, Australia, and New Zealand reported one each.

Nobody expects any government



With some honourable exceptions, we don't have journalists in Ireland, we have cheerleaders, writes **John McGuirk**



Minister Simon Harris (left) has reason to be happy with the performance of the Irish media which has little good to say about British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (above).



to be perfect, but the utterly unquestioning attitude of our media to Leo Varadkar and company is beyond credulity. If you don't remember, let's recall some of the mistakes: the Government sent a memo to nursing homes telling them that bans on visitors were, well, banned. Then it sent a memo to nursing home staff telling them that they had no need to wear personal protective equipment. Then, if those weren't enough, it told nursing homes that patients who were sick were not to be sent to hospitals.

All of those things happened in February and March. And at the time of writing, Ireland ranks 10th in the world in terms of deaths per head of population. Not tenth best – tenth worst.

And yet, for all that, the same Irish media that obsesses over the failures of Boris Johnson can only muster, to Simon Harris, questions like “is it hard being so popular?”

We don't have journalists in

Ireland, by and large. With some honourable exceptions, we have cheerleaders.

“We have a Health Minister who says he didn't even know about the virus on February 8 – but it broke out in Wuhan, China, in early December”

You really do get the impression sometimes that independence from Britain might have been a mistake. Not because of the economy or anything else – but because it's made life for our politicians and our journalists so much harder. You would wonder whether they'd actually have more fun sitting on the opposition benches in the House of Commons, not having to make any decisions at all, but getting to blame Boris and the British for everything.

“You really do get the impression sometimes that independence from Britain might have been a mistake. Not because of the economy or anything else – but because it's made life for our politicians and our journalists so much harder”

Our media would certainly have an easier time of it, getting to actually ask hard questions, and hold people to account.

Here's the thing: this is Ireland. What happens in Britain is interesting, and has some impact on us, but what happens here is actually far more important. The people of whom hard questions should be asked are not in London; they're in Dublin. For weeks now, Minister Harris has promised that testing would increase. For weeks, it has not increased. For weeks, the nursing homes have been becoming death traps for those unlucky enough to be in them, and for weeks, nobody has challenged the Government about it.

We have a Health Minister who says he didn't even know about the virus on February 8 – but it broke out in Wuhan, China, in early December. What was he doing? Boris Johnson missing five meetings about the virus in January merits a five-minute report

on the *Six One News* by Tommie Gorman, but the health minister not knowing about the virus in February didn't get a mention on RTÉ.

It's not news, much of what we get in Ireland. Journalism is very important at times like this – both to inform the public, and to challenge those who govern us. When Minister Simon Harris and An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar don't have to worry about hard questions, they don't have to think, or work, as hard as they should. They should be afraid of every press conference they walk into, but they're not.

“The Irish media”, said Simon Coveney this week, “is great.” In any other country, if the government was praising the media like that, journalists would be asking what they were doing wrong.

Imagine if Donald Trump started saying American journalists “were doing a great job” – people would stop trusting the American media, and think it was just saying things that made the president happy. Well, that's exactly what's happening in Ireland, where we're expected to believe that other countries don't have people just as good as Tony Holohan. They do. And they also have better journalists than we do too.

‘Thanks for coming, because where we cannot bring healing, you can bring peace and hope’



Medical staff, wearing protective suits and face masks, treat a patient suffering from Covid-19 in an intensive care unit of a hospital near Paris. Photo: CNS/Benoit Tessier, Reuters

Iwalk into the wounded Christ in our world today. This walk begins with a phone call. ‘Naas Hospital’ flashes up on the screen of the phone. And you know that this means some more Covid-19 patients need to be anointed. You answer the phone and hear that there’s three patients on a covid ward.

You change your clothes quickly because you know that everything has to be washed when you come back. Bicycle tops are always good; you can bring the zip all the way up to the top when it comes to it – and jogging pants because you can change them quickly, and old shoes that you can douse with Dettol when you get back, they’re good too.

Into the car, check in at the desk, put the oils into a small cup because nothing can come back. Three small cotton buds will be used for the anointings. Leave everything else at the desk: keys and jacket go there. Then you stand for a moment at the bottom of the stairs and it becomes frighteningly real as you realise where you are going. A strange fear takes over at the pit of your stomach. And you say a quick prayer to Our Lady and St Thérèse – please, please, please don’t let me get infected today.

The door opens onto the covid



To bring the Sacrament of the Sick to coronavirus patients it to touch the wounded side of Christ, writes Fr Seán Maher

ward and you walk in. And what do you find there – there, where Christ’s side is wounded in the world today?

Pride

A young doctor comes up – a gentle young man. Once he sported the dark locks that would have been the pride of a young man. But his hair is now shaved back to avoid infection. He puts on PPE.

The catering staff, with a steely courage in their eyes, are leaving out food that looks like a Christmas feast. They are not skimping on what they are offering.

The Indian nurses help you with great kindness to put on the PPE. The mask is difficult to breathe in

and the nurse just says: “You’ll be ok Father, you’ll get used to it after a while.”

The Filipina nurses smile and, strangely, the smile seems to come out through the mask.

Names are very important you’ve gotten to know so many by name. There’s Ron, who’s not bad for an Aussie; there’s Triona, who keeps promising to bake a cake as soon as the flour is back on the shelves. And there’s one unnamed friend, the kind nurse helping me to put on the PPE, who says to me “thanks for coming, because where we cannot bring healing, you can bring peace and hope”.

One of the patients is silent, there’s nobody else there, his eyes

are already swelling over and he can’t respond.

Another breathes heavily, makes the sign of the cross, and at the very end musters up the courage and the strength to say: “Thank you.”

“We say them today so that you might believe, as Thomas said long ago, in the one who is ‘my Lord, and my God’”

The third is a little bit more lively. As soon as you go in and say, “I’m Fr Seán, I’m here to say a few prayers” – “Oh, am I in trouble?” A little bit of banter that takes away something of the sadness of the moment. “No, you’re not in trouble, I’m here to bring you peace. Where are you from?”, “Kilkenny”, “Oh, I’m from Cork”, “Well, we all have our crosses to bear.”

And then comes that moment when you walk back out again.

Was there Resurrection here? Yes, there was. Did you put your hands into the wounded side of Christ here? Yes, I did. Did these

words mean anything? Yes, they did. The pulse of the Resurrection must be felt there. These words have never meant more because to walk with the Risen Christ now is to walk with him into those places that St Thomas knows well, into the doubts of woundedness and there bring peace.

Beyond the limits of healing, and there to bring hope. Into the dark stairwell of fear and there to find the courage that changes things. These things are said, these things are true.

We say them today so that you might believe, as Thomas said long ago, in the one who is “my Lord, and my God”. That you might believe in the life that lasts, that you might believe in the life that brings new hope even into the darkest of days, and you might have the Faith that says, with Christ our humanity will rise again.

Fr Seán Maher is a priest of the Diocese of Kildare and Lieghlin. This is an extract from a homily he preached at the weekend about his experience of pastoral care of those with coronavirus.

“The pulse of the Resurrection must be felt there. These words have never meant more because to walk with the Risen Christ now is to walk with him into those places that St Thomas knows well, into the doubts of woundedness and there bring peace”

Ireland has been quick to congratulate itself on the response to Covid-19, but for all the rhetoric there is precious little evidence that talk of solidarity extends to nursing homes, writes **Michael Kelly**



When this current pandemic passes – and pass it will – undoubtedly many people will breathe a sigh of relief. Those unable to exhale such a relief, of course, will be those who have lost their lives in residential care where the coronavirus has been particularly devastating.

From day one, the information – such as it was – being released by the communist authorities in China indicated that Covid-19 was having a bigger impact on older citizens.

As *The Irish Catholic* went to press this week, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre reported that of the 610 Covid-19 related deaths in Ireland, the median age of those who died is 83. This is despite the fact that the median age of confirmed cases is 48 years.

Nursing homes are bearing the brunt. Coronavirus has infected roughly a third of all such facilities across the State with 335 outbreaks in residential care settings.

A prominent doctor appointed by Health Minister Simon Harris to the Medical Council two years ago has resigned in protest at what he has described as the Government's alleged "blunder" in regard to nursing homes.

Management

Dr Marcus de Brun, who runs the Rush Family Practice in Co. Dublin, accused Mr Harris of failing in his obligations to the people of Ireland. He described the management of the Covid-19 crisis as "the biggest political blunders in the history of the Irish State". Dr de Brun said those most at risk have "featured as something of an afterthought" to the Government in the pandemic.

"Unquestionably the most vulnerable cohort of patients in Ireland are those residents of nursing homes. This fact should have been entirely obvious to all involved in the management of the crisis," he wrote in his letter of resignation.

"Most of these individuals are of course elderly and most have significant underlying health conditions. Nursing home residents cannot or could not be expected to avail of the same measures applied to the general public," Dr de Brun said.

"It beggar's belief, and remains an evolving tragedy, that these vulnerable people were not considered as the first priority for the State, rather than being the last to be considered."

He also revealed that guidelines were used to refuse elderly people being tested in nursing homes. He said that until April 9, "nursing home residents were refused testing in nursing homes where Covid-19 had already been detected. Nursing home staff were advised 'to presume everybody has it'. Residents who had been booked for testing by their GPs were summarily removed from the queue for testing, without the requesting GP even being informed."

He said that only "after an outcry from some GPs and nursing home managers, was this rule/guideline changed".

* * * * *

One in five residents of nursing and other care homes believed to have died of Covid-19 were never tested for the disease, new figures reveal.

Nursing and other long-term residential facilities now account for almost 60% of virus-related deaths, according to the figures released by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

Of the 406 deaths linked to care homes, 77 are classified as "probably or suspected" and were not confirmed by laboratory tests, according to a breakdown provided for the first time by NPHE.

Nursing homes specifically account for almost half of all deaths in the current outbreak – 337 out of 687 total cases, of which 61 have now been classified as probable or suspected.

Emergency departments

In St Mary's Hospital in Dublin's Phoenix Park, there have been 15 Covid-19 related deaths. Many other service providers tell a similar story.

But, is this a case of bad luck or were some of our most vulnerable citizens failed?

All of the evidence is that nursing home operators acted swiftly. In early March, many reported that they had restricted visiting in a bid to stop residents contracting the virus. On March 10,

History will judge this Government on its neglect of our nursing homes



they were advised by public health officials that this was unnecessary.

For Aontú Leader Peadar Tóibín, the shift is hard to fathom. "We have been analysing the situation in nursing homes from the very beginning of this crisis, and it's difficult to now to comprehend that on March 10 the Government advised that 'socially restrictive actions around hospitals and nursing homes are not necessary'.

"As the situation quickly escalated, little action was taken," according to Mr Tóibín.

It was March 30 before Minister for Health Simon Harris met with Nursing Homes Ireland – the body which represents over 450 private and voluntary nursing homes

providing care for some 25,000 citizens.

“This has been a crisis that has been long in the making...it relates back to policy issues around the Department of Health over the past 20 years”

Following that meeting Tadhg Daly of Nursing Homes Ireland said that he had "informed the minister of the considerable challenges for hundreds of nursing homes in

meeting the care needs of our most vulnerable during Covid-19.

"The challenges presented to the minister centred around timely access to PPE equipment and testing within nursing homes, the necessity for the State to recognise the essential need for nursing homes to be supported around the critical area of staffing, and the need for enhanced staffing and logistical arrangements during this emergency to be recognised in Fair Deal," Mr Daly said.

That same day the Health Minister told the National Public Health Emergency Team to "examine the issues in nursing homes" and the following day Mr Harris announced that the HSE

St Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park.



would work "to identify measures to strengthen support for staff".

Mr Tóibín remains unimpressed. "Let's be clear, by the end of March, while the Department [of Health] were busy thinking and brainstorming, nothing practical was actually reaching the frontlines.

"Finally, on April 1, the department banned nursing home visits. This decision was three weeks late".

* * * * *

Prof. Des O'Neill, a consultant geriatrician at Tallaght University Hospital in Dublin is adamant that what is playing out now is the failure by successive ministers for health to prioritise care for older citizens. He is adamant that blame for the failure to prevent the catastrophic spread of the virus in care homes rests squarely at the doors of the Department of Health.

"This has been a crisis that has been long in the making," Prof. O'Neill told Brendan O'Connor on RTÉ Radio One at the weekend.

"It relates back to policy issues around the Department of Health over the past 20 years." He said senior officials who make policy have overseen privatisation "without due attention to adequate support systems or engagement with the HSE or the nursing home sector".

Linkage

Prof. O'Neill warned that there is "not enough appropriate linkage into the public health system.

"What we have are a range of small to large businesses that do not have this clarity of leadership," he said.

"The issue is around policy-making in the DOH, which has not adequately put into place linkages with the public health system... this has been absent in the nursing

home sector, and not through any fault of the HSE or its staff."

According to Prof. O'Neill – who wrote the Leas Cross report that revealed substandard living conditions in that home leading to the deaths of some patients – "They [staff in nursing homes] are working in a system that is not actually a system... This system has not been set up with any clarity in leadership or expectations".

“This is not just about Covid-19, although it has brought it into sharp focus. It is not just about rationing. It is about us as a society, doctors with their patients and families and individuals, discussing end of life”

On the tragic Covid-19 deaths in nursing homes, he insisted that "this is a reflection that we really, badly, need to rethink pay, conditions, support structures and engagement with the public health service and leadership in the nursing home sector."

He contrasted the situation in Ireland with that of the United States where each care home is required by law to have a medical director to take charge of the clinical needs of residents.

* * * * *

Another point of unease is whether some older patients are being given a fighting chance to beat coronavirus. In the North, a member of the assembly has claimed that he knows of a case where a patient and their family were not consulted before a do not resuscitate (DNR) notice was issued by a Belfast hospital.

Some elderly residents have

voiced fears over the use of such measures during the coronavirus pandemic when doctors are having to make difficult ethical decisions while allocating ventilators.

Some patients could have acute treatment withdrawn to instead offer it to those with a greater chance of survival, guidance has said.

Arrangements

Alex Easton, a DUP Assembly member on Stormont's health committee, alleged neither family members nor patient were consulted before a DNR notice was issued for someone who was conscious at the Ulster Hospital near Belfast.

Elsewhere, a senior medic has urged frail patients to discuss end-of-life arrangements with their families while they are still well.

Dr Hamish Courtney, from the Royal College of Physicians, said it is important that those dying from coronavirus do so peacefully.

Stormont's Health Committee was taking evidence on decisions whether to ventilate and the use of DNR notices for the weakest.

Dr Courtney said: "This is not just about Covid-19, although it has brought it into sharp focus. It is not just about rationing.

"It is about us as a society, doctors with their patients and families and individuals, discussing end of life," he said.

Talk of rationing when it comes to the lives of vulnerable elderly citizens will leave most people cold. There's also the fact that many frail patients may have considered end-of-life care in the context of a terminal diagnosis or when they are considered to be suffering from a fatal pathology.

Catholic principles do not dictate that life is sustained at all costs, but do provide a moral framework where patients are given a chance to survive and thrive.

Church teaching explicitly affirms that a patient or, if the patient lacks competence, his or her proxy can rightly refuse treatments that do not offer a reasonable hope of benefit or entail an excessive burden, or

impose excessive expense on the community.

But, what is the role of a DNR in the context of coronavirus?

"Significantly many residents of nursing homes have 'do not resuscitate' and not for transfer directions on their end of life plans," Mr Tóibín says. "But these directions were decided upon before anyone had heard of Covid-19.

"Questions must be asked with regards how many of these residents would have survived Covid-19 if they had the benefit from hospital treatment and ICU care," he said.

* * * * *

The failures to support nursing homes and other residential facilities is also part of the broader pro-life context.

Pro Life Campaign spokesperson, Maeve O'Hanlon said that "the fact that almost half of all deaths to date from Covid-19 in Ireland have occurred in nursing and residential homes is a devastating statistic. It was always going to be an immensely difficult challenge to protect the elderly and most vulnerable once the virus took hold, but a clear picture is starting to emerge that protecting residents of nursing homes was not given the priority it deserved when the HSE and others were planning their response to this crisis," she said.

Ms O'Hanlon also raises the uncomfortable issues of whether or not the State was hindering homes from getting vital staff, equipment and supplies. "The claim from nursing home representatives that the HSE were also actively poaching frontline staff from nursing homes to reassign to hospital settings as the Covid-19 crisis started, is very troubling. So too is the claim that acute hospital beds were freed up by moving patients to nursing homes, which in turn likely contributed to the spread of Covid-19 in these homes.

“My sister is not a statistic...and neither is she or anyone who dies because of Covid-19 or who has tested positive”

"It is clear from these and other decisions taken that nursing home residents were effectively abandoned by the Government at the early planning stage, leading to the catastrophic situation we now find ourselves in.

"The Government and National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) must be held more accountable for their actions.

And that accountability needs to happen immediately. With each passing day more and more lives are being lost. No stone should be left unturned to assemble the expertise needed to protect the lives of our beautiful and beloved elder and dependent citizens, who deserve nothing but the very best care and protection from this State.

"It is a terrible indictment of our society that our elderly and most vulnerable citizens became the

forgotten people when they should have been a top priority," she said.

The available evidence would certainly point that these vulnerable citizens were far from the top priority. And news broke late last week that eight patients with Covid-19 died over the bank holiday weekend in a Co. Laois facility. All were residents of the Maryborough Centre for Psychiatry of Old Age located in the St Fintan's Campus in Portlaoise.

The local bishop Dr Denis Nulty said that the devastating news "brings home to us in a very dramatic way the huge need for special care for those who are grouped together in similar centres or in homes for vulnerable or older people.

"We pray for those who have passed away in such distressing circumstances. We offer our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased. We give them and all who have worked to care for their loved ones the assurance of our prayers," the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin said.

"A very special word of thanks to all who work in any capacity in caring for those who have contracted or are threatened with this terrible virus - management, medical and nursing staff, carers, general workers in those centres and hospitals, suppliers and those who deliver those supplies to meet the many varied needs at this time of crisis.

Treatment

"The hearts and hands of the staff are the hearts and hands of family to many, many patients at this time. It is imperative that the best possible treatment is made available to those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19 and that staff working in these homes and facilities are equipped with a sufficient and proper supply of PPE. Every life matters. Every life counts. Every life is precious irrespective of age or potential productivity," Bishop Nulty said.

"In the nightly news reports, we hear many statistics that may confuse us. I am conscious that we might lose the person that is behind every statistic – this is someone's mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, son, daughter or friend. I am reminded of the very evocative poem composed and recited by a listener in memory of her recently deceased sister, on Joe Duffy's *Liveline*, broadcast on RTÉ Radio One, earlier this week. My sister is not a statistic.

"And neither is she or anyone who dies because of Covid-19 or who has tested positive," the bishop added.

As Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil prepare for what is being described as an historic deal to enter coalition government, those who were desperately failed during this crisis and their families must have accountability. The rush to don the green jersey and join in the national effort – particularly by journalists – must not stop the excavation of failures that have had the most devastating of consequences.

All of the baptised are missionary



The Celtic Tiger did more damage to Ireland's soul than the British did in 800 years, Aidan Donaldson tells **Martin O'Brien**

You come away from a few hours with Aidan Donaldson uplifted and challenged in equal measure and with a lot of think about.

He says: "The Church has a choice: to keep with the administrative maintenance model of Church that assesses the Catholicity of our people by how many times they go to Mass or to embrace a missionary model based on the radical message of Jesus in the Gospel."

Missionary disciple (at home and in Africa), social justice activist, Catholic educationalist, intellectual, "adorer of Beethoven", Celtic supporter and author of five books (the latest inspired by one of his heroes, Pope Francis) he has been an influential figure in the Church, in and beyond his native Belfast and Down and Connor for more than 20 years.

Another hero is St Óscar Romero, "my favourite saint" to whom Aidan Donaldson dedicated his 2012 book *Come Follow Me: Recalling the Dangerous Memory of Jesus Christ and the Church Today* (Columba) in which he posited that our wounded Church could be renewed by renouncing power and privilege and embracing the radical "dangerous message of Jesus".

Writing years before the unblocking of Archbishop Romero's canonisation process by Pope Francis, he described the assassinated archbishop of San Salvador as "prophet, servant of the Church and martyr who remembered the dangerous memory of Jesus".

We meet in his home in north Belfast, not far from Holy Cross Parish where he was born and went to primary school, and St Malachy's College where he received his secondary education ahead of his progression to Queen's University where he graduated in politics and attained a PhD in scholastic philosophy for his research into the Romanian sociologist and philosopher, Lucien Goldmann, that he developed into a book.

Dr Donaldson, aged 63, married to Philomena and the father of three grown up daughters, is a person steeped in the charisma of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers and has been the northern bishops' "go-to person" when it comes to education, being for example the writer of the bishops' document *Proclaiming the Mission: the Distinctive Philosophy and Values of Catholic Education*.

A one-time lecturer in scholastic philosophy at Queen's and at the now defunct St Malachy's junior seminary in Belfast, he taught religious education for 23 years at St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School in the west of the city and also served as chaplain there before assuming his current role as associate consultant to the Catholic Schools Support Service for Down and Connor and a member of the diocese's missionary leadership team.

Dr Donaldson plays a key leadership role in the Edmund Rice Network and his work with the Christian Brothers' Developing World



Immersion Programme through Project Zambia is highly regarded throughout the network worldwide and the wider Irish missionary movement.

In the course of a conversation in which he cites papal pronouncements on Catholic social teaching with ease, especially the works of Pope Francis, he recalls "two epiphany moments" in Ireland in early middle age that, looking back on it, changed his life and more particularly his sense of his responsibility as a Christian.

And a further two similarly unforgettable moments in Zambia.

The first happened "in 1998 or 1999" when he attended a month-long retreat organised by the Christian Brothers at the Emmaus

Centre at Swords and saw and heard Fr Peter McVerry SJ speak for the first time.

He went along thinking that he knew everything about liberation theology because he had read so much "about the God of liberation".

But he was in for a shock.

"Peter McVerry turned my head upside down. Listening to him I suddenly realised that there was more to being a disciple and to one's relationship with the poor than I understood from Matthew 25 and 'I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat'.

"He was saying that it wasn't that the poor needed us, but that we needed the poor because it is in the poor that we discover God."

Fr McVerry "had gone beyond liberation theology".

The second moment came in 2002 when Kevin Burke, his headmaster in St Mary's CBGS made the seminal decision to establish the St Mary's Zambia Immersion Programme aka Project Zambia which has resulted inter alia in the building of four schools and an ongoing feeding programme for 85 families or around 400 people in deprived areas around Lusaka.

Aidan wrote a book about the project *Encountering God in the Margins - Reflections of a Justice Volunteer* (Veritas 2010) and he has been back more than 30 times, most recently for five weeks last summer when he organised a joint missionary out-

reach programme with Cabrini University, a Catholic seat of learning in Pennsylvania.

He was sceptical about Project Zambia at the start, but it has turned out to be "a wonderful gift" for all involved.

“Those were absolutely shocking, dreadful times,” he recalls”

If Project Zambia has transformed Aidan Donaldson two experiences there encapsulate this.

One Sunday in Lusaka after participating in the usual three-hour Mass attended by 2,000 with lots of vibrant singing and dancing, the chair of the parish pastoral council asked him did he receive Communion and if so did he believe in the Real Presence.

When we replied in the affirmative to both questions the man asked him pointedly:

"What are you going to do with Jesus? Are you going to keep Him to yourself or are you going to share Him with everyone you meet?"

Aidan says "that hit me for six" because he had gone to Communion so many times without thinking enough about the awesomeness of the Sacrament and "the awesome responsibility" ensuing from receiving it.

"I began to wonder is my faith shallow, do we just obey ritual?"

"I have never been able to receive Communion in the same way since. It has completely transformed my understanding of the Eucharist."

Another experience that lives with Aidan is the day in 2008 when he asked Bro. Jacek Rakowski, a Missionaries of Africa brother from Poland who cares for abused former street children in the Home of Hope rehabilitation centre in Lusaka, how he could help.

“Aidan is excited by Pope Francis' repeated message that all the baptised are missionary disciples and agents of evangelisation”

disciples and agents of evangelisation



"He replied, I want you to look at everyone here and see them as a brother or sister. It would have been easier had he asked me for £10,000."

Dr Donaldson's latest book is the best-selling *The Beatitudes of Pope Francis – A Manifesto for the Modern Christian (Veritas)* which contains penetrating reflections on the six new Beatitudes for the contemporary era promulgated by the Pope in Sweden in 2016, complementing the original Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

One reviewer, Dr Gladys Ganiel of Queen's University described it as "a devotional aid, designed to exhort Christians to see social justice as integral to their faith – and to live that way".

Aidan is excited by Pope Francis' repeated message that all the baptised are missionary disciples and agents of evangelisation, is welcoming of his warnings about "pastry shop Catholics" who think that Crosses can be avoided in a world where everything can somehow be as sweet as cake, and energised

by the Holy Father's warnings that spiritual worldliness is a killer.

He echoes one of Pope Francis' most famous sayings by stating that the Eucharist is not a reward for people who are holy, rather strength or Divine medicine for sinners, because no one is really worthy of the Sacrament.

For Aidan Donaldson, there is no escaping just how hard and challenging it is to take up the Cross and be a follower of Jesus, to get our hands dirty by being side by side with the marginalised and the poor, no talk of "my yoke is easy and my burden is light".

He elaborates on a chapter in his book *Come Follow Me* by drawing attention to those who "to protect us from the Gospel message, i.e. renouncing wealth and privilege and feeding and empowering the poor, keep Jesus, God, safe in the tabernacle, accessed only by good people via a very highly clericalised vision of Church".

He is also critical of the consumerism and individualism that has, he says, taken hold in Ireland, exemplified in

people "fighting over things they don't need on Black Friday".

Echoing the concerns of those who have said that Ireland has lost her soul, he adds: "The Celtic Tiger did more damage to Ireland than the British did in 800 years."

Both Aidan and I cannot be but aware that we are meeting in the heart of North Belfast where Aidan grew up and where according to the book *Lost Lives* 572 human beings were killed during the Troubles, the highest death toll in any location save for West Belfast, where the toll was 698.

How as a young schoolboy did the Troubles impact him, I wonder, remarking to him that he was only a 15-year-old student at St Malachy's College when a loyalist bomb killed 15 people in McGurk's bar, a short walk from both his home and his school, in 1971.

"Those were absolutely shocking, dreadful times," he recalls.

His family then lived in the Cliftonville area "Shankill Butchers territory, and it was very frightening".

(The Shankill Butchers were a loyalist gang composed mainly of UVF members, who killed at least 23 people between 1975 and 1982).

He tells me that the Troubles directly impacted on his own family. His 17-year-old brother was critically injured when he was stabbed several times in a sectarian attack in his workplace in 1975, in "an early Shankill Butchers-type attack" and was lucky to survive and build a new life in Cork.

That happened in Mackie's factory where his father, Joe worked as a machinist. He pays tribute to his late father and his mother Alice (nee McLarnon) "devoted Catholics" who "were determined not to allow any bitterness enter into our home".

Some years later, Aidan himself, had a close shave with loyalist paramilitaries when he was targeted while a student at Queen's University "where I was a publicly outspoken Catholic on religious and justice issues".

He recalls he was threatened in the UVF magazine *Combat*.

One night a Protestant fellow student who studied near to where Aidan himself studied in the department of scholastic philosophy was abducted, had a bag pulled over his head and driven the short distance to the loyalist Annadale flats area.

The Protestant student later told Aidan how he protested that he was a Protestant, producing his student card, and that when one of the gang members pulled the bag from his head he shouted in disappointment "It is not Donaldson" and ejected him from the car and said they would be back for their intended victim.

Aidan recalls: "I have always felt so sorry for the poor guy who was mistaken for me".

I ask him if the fact that he was spared made him more mindful of his duty, as a Christian, to help others.

"The honest answer is that I have never thought about it like that. I believe that all are called to be missionary disciples and to see and

encounter God in others – even those in whom it may seem difficult to see as God's reflections. The greatest challenge for all of us is contained in the first of Francis' Beatitudes: 'Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart'.

Dr Donaldson continued: "It is all too natural and easy for us to judge people on what they do and forget to see them as what they are – children of God, created in His image and likeness and our brothers and sister.

“He was sceptical about Project Zambia at the start, but it has turned out to be “a wonderful gift” for all involved”

"Meeting people like Richard Moore [one of the persons he featured in *The Beatitudes of Pope Francis*] has been so rewarding and challenging for me. He didn't just forgive the person who blinded him – he befriended him. That is true Christian discipleship."

One of his most poignant memories is of helping his PhD supervisor, James Daly, gather up the personal effects of his wife, Miriam Daly, a fellow Queen's academic, from her office in the university after she was killed by loyalists in 1980.

"It was quite a task to pick up the belongings of someone who was so much alive just the week before."

Reflecting on what Northern Ireland has been through Dr Donaldson is anxious not to minimise what has been achieved but not to overstate it either bearing in mind that

"far worse things" have happened in other parts of the world.

He brings the perspective of a person who has worked with the victims of the genocide in Rwanda and with former child soldiers.

"I think we have learned to live apart peacefully."

To move on from there presents "a big challenge" for Christians, he says.

But he is anxious to sound realistic.

Recalling that he knows personally Jim Deeds, the Down and Connor parish development worker and Dr Gladys Ganiel, the Queen's University sociologist of religion as people (like this writer) closely involved in the Four Corners Festival, he salutes initiatives in reconciliation like the festival "which have edge, see difference as a gift, and have a vision of ecumenism that is not reduced to a bland common denominator".

Dr Donaldson speaks with evident frustration of "the great inability we have to learn from one another" in the North and while he acknowledges the theological differences that Christians have "these differences are not fundamental".

He adds: "In many ways we can gift to each other."

Aidan is currently putting the finishing touches to his latest book which

is due to be published in September, a biography of Sister Patricia Speight, a member of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa and a fellow native of north Belfast who has been widely recognised for her fearless missionary work in Kenya over the past 40 years.

Given that the concepts of 'immersion' and 'missionary discipleship' had recurred frequently in the interview it was fitting that when we finished Aidan invited me to join him in walking the few hundred metres to Rosemount House, a charity close to his heart that provides sheltered accommodation and one to one support for men seeking recovery from alcohol addiction and related mental health issues.

He makes time to visit Rosemount regularly to help as a volunteer support worker and also assists frequently at the Westcourt Social Justice Desk, off the Falls Road, a Christian Brothers' project that advocates for the homeless.

Who can dispute Aidan Donaldson's contention that it is such places, wherever in the world, where those in the margins are shown love and support, that the new missionary Church – having consigned the 'maintenance model' to history – must always find itself?



Frailty and old age do not in for excluding patients from



If it becomes necessary to treat some and not others, this must be based on defined criteria and not the personal discretion of doctors writes **Martin M. Lintner**

“I would never have thought I would have to experience the necessity of triage again in my life,” an older colleague who remembers well the grim events of the Second World War said to me recently. Hardly anyone, including myself, could have imagined even a few weeks ago that we would experience the need for triage to be practised in our part of the world. Yet it is now commonplace in medical facilities in the north of Italy and Alsace, and hospitals in Austria, Germany and elsewhere are preparing to have to implement it as well.

Triage is the process of allocating resources in such a way that as many patients as possible can be treated as efficiently as possible in situations where there is an unexpectedly high number of patients and where medical resources are so limited that it is not possible for all patients to be treated appropriately. Criteria need to be established for the just distribution of the available medical resources in this exceptional emergency situation. This means prioritising and rationing the medical resources available by deciding whose treatment should be prioritised and whose treatment should not.

The term itself comes from the French *trier*, meaning to sort or to classify and was developed in medicine as practised originally in warzones and later in the context of responding to catastrophes. Concretely, it enabled decisions to be made about which wounded soldiers or those injured in catastrophes should be assisted first before a detailed diagnosis of the type and severity of their injuries could be undertaken. However, in the meantime, the term has become established in medicine in the general sense mentioned above, even if the conditions under which triage takes place, for example in



the context of the Covid-19 crisis, differ from that of a war or acute disaster situation.

The Covid-19 crisis is not a war situation, as I will explain below. Further, it is only partially comparable with an acute disaster situation because the Covid-19 crisis has been foreseeable at least for several weeks and therefore preparatory steps to avoid triage situations arising were, and still are, possible.

It is therefore vital that every effort is made immediately to increase medical capability. It is not only about the provision of resources for intensive care medicine, but also about the most prudent and financially responsible application of medical resources outside of intensive care medicine that can be deployed to treat Covid-19 patients in this emergency situation.

It is also important that all people working in the healthcare sector, especially those who come into direct contact with patients - such as doctors, nurses, triage teams -

are protected as much as possible from infection by personal protection equipment. This is not only for personal reasons, that is, to protect their own health, but also to ensure that the healthcare system can continue to function even in a time of crisis and that the sick get the care they need.

“The term itself comes from the French *trier*, meaning to sort or to classify”

From an immunological point of view, urgent measures must also be taken to interrupt the chain of infection as effectively as possible. Ideally, this includes mass testing. Individuals who are infected should not be identified and isolated only when they develop symptoms of the disease, but even earlier. In fact, and more importantly, those individuals who are infected yet

asymptomatic must be identified and isolated. It is also the personal responsibility of every single citizen to follow strictly measures to prevent infections such as hygiene, keeping physical distance, etc.

In the event that triage becomes inevitable it must be based on clearly defined criteria and must not be at the personal discretion of the doctors or the team tasked with carrying out the triage. In this way the personal burden of having to make triage decisions should be eased. It will also be eased by ensuring that such decisions are taken by a team, preferably consisting of at least two intensive care physicians, a nurse and possibly other specialist staff.

The criteria must be communicated openly and transparently and those required to implement them should have an opportunity to discuss them. This is necessary in order to achieve the broadest possible shared consensus, on the one hand, and to convey to

(potential) patients and their relatives a sense of confidence, on the other. Both aspects are required in order to guarantee trust in the health care system which can only function in this exceptional situation if there is trust and solidarity.

Finally, it must be ensured that if a triage situation becomes inevitable, fundamental medical-ethical and moral dimensions are observed and followed. This means in the first instance that decisions in relation to patient care continue to be taken based on medical criteria, taking into account the wishes of patients and their current clinical condition. The usual prognostically relevant scores should be applied. In a triage situation, the clinical determination of comorbidities and the general clinical condition of the patient (in the sense of clinical frailty) plays a role insofar as these



themselves constitute criteria treatment



towards utilitarianism. Discrimination on the grounds of age or against specific social groups and categories of patients must be avoided.

Exceptional circumstances might determine that the best possible treatment with the most likely successful outcome cannot be provided to individual patients. This may be because the treatment needed by other patients or the limitations of the healthcare system as a whole must be taken into account. In such situations the fundamental principle of natural justice pertains.

“The criteria must be communicated openly and transparently and those required to implement them should have an opportunity to discuss them”

Another problem in triage situations is whether it is permissible to discontinue the intensive medical treatment of a patient with a poor prognosis in order to treat a patient with a more favourable prognosis. I consider - again in accordance with the principle of justice - that in a triage situation the continuation of intensive medical treatment of a patient with a poor prognosis, with the consequence that a patient with a more favourable prognosis would remain untreated or would

have intensive medical treatment delayed, needs a stronger justification than in comparable situations outside of triage conditions. The actual proportionality of intensive medical treatment of a patient with unfavourable prognosis in such concrete cases requires not only the evaluation of the individual patient's progress in treatment, but must also consider the equal rights other patients have to receive intensive medical treatment according to their medical needs and prognosis.

To conclude, I would like to deal with the issue of comparing the Covid-19 crisis to a war. This is not just about the use of the concept of triage, which - as already shown - was originally used in war-time medicine. It is striking that in many instances discussions and political debates refer to us being 'at war'; that doctors and nurses are 'on the front line'; that 'war-like conditions' exist in hospitals; also, that appropriate measures can be seen as a 'bazooka' against the Covid-19 crisis, etc. I share the concern expressed by the Mayor of Berlin Michael Müller, among others. He criticised the use of "drastic war vocabulary" as "reckless, dangerous and irresponsible" because it "unnecessarily increases and stirs up fears". In any case, such rhetoric doesn't help to counter the sense of extreme threat and helplessness many people are currently feeling or help them to feel any more secure. It should also be noted that war rhetoric and people's anxieties can also easily be manipulated in order to justify legal measures and to enact regulations that restrict or override basic democratic rights at least temporarily.

However, given that legal measures restricting people's democratic rights are currently being enacted in many countries I believe that not only careful attention should be paid to the language we use and its impact, but also to the following aspects:

- That the procedures being enacted are adhered to meticulously in accordance with the rule of law; that decision-makers do not exceed their competencies; that the separation of powers under the rule of law is respected and that democracy is protected - taking into account also possible long-term consequences of measures and procedures restricting people's democratic rights.

- That proportionality is maintained between the general safety and protection of groups of people at risk, on the one hand, and the restriction of freedoms, on the other. This is in order to avoid putting at risk the acceptance of these measures by society over time and/or solidarity with the risk groups needing protection.

- That there is reliable regular and transparent communication of information in regard to the measures being taken and the political decisions being enacted to deal with Covid-19. This is in order to counteract a climate of panic and uncertainty and as an effective measure against the spread of rumours, half-truths and 'fake news'.

Martin M. Lintner OSM is professor of Moral Theology at the Philosophical-Theological College, Brixen, Italy. He is first published on April 1, 2020 and translated to English by Prof. Eamonn Conway.

“Exceptional circumstances might determine that the best possible treatment with the most likely successful outcome cannot be provided to individual patients”

are relevant for the prognosis. The patient's age can also play a role in the prognosis and in determining risk of mortality.

However, I consider it essential that these aspects, namely, comorbidities, frailty, age etc., do not in themselves constitute criteria for excluding patients from treatment in the sense of generalised criteria for maximising efficient use of resources. The principle of justice cannot be set aside and neither can the need for the most individualised assessment of a patient's prognosis that is possible to determine in the circumstances. The decision to treat patients differently must be justified on medical grounds

such as urgency and the prospect of a successful outcome.

It seems to me to be ethically legitimate to presume that comorbidity, frailty or older age adversely affect therapeutic outcomes only in the circumstances where it is no longer possible to determine the urgency and prospect of success of intensive care treatment, likelihood of survival, etc. in several patients admitted at the same time. This will be due solely to time pressure in such exceptional situations. I would consider any other approach in a healthcare system that must be committed to the dignity and well-being of each individual patient to be a first step down a slippery slope

Surviving lockdown on a virtual pilgrimage



While the coronavirus means we can't travel, we can still be transported to the heart of the faith writes **Ruadhán Jones**

The practice of making pilgrimage has a long history in the Church, reaching back to the 4th Century. Christians would travel to the sites of Christ's life, or to the graves of martyrs and saints such as Peter and Paul. For many today, Holy Week and the Easter is a time to make pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, as well as the sites of famous Marian apparitions such as Lourdes and Medjugorje.

But, as with many other aspects of our lives, pilgrimage has become near impossible because of the coronavirus. This Holy Week we were confined to our homes and this Easter season continues in the same fashion.

But if you still wish to spend Eastertide as a pilgrim, there are ways to do so. Virtual pilgrimages also have a long history, reaching back to the Middle Ages. Walking in Christ's footsteps wherever you were was a popular devotional ideal back then.

However, few nuns and women religious had the freedom or funding to make the journeys. Instead, by using images, holy objects, and the accounts of pilgrims, they conducted virtual pilgrimages within the convent.

By virtue of the internet, we can practise this domestic pilgrimage to an even greater level of detail. If you want to follow Christ's path on the Via Dolorosa, or to be inspired by the beauty of the Sistine Chapel, virtual reality offers an alternative.

Many of these shrines and holy sites are now accessible through video, images and remarkable

360 photography. We have picked out a few which are especially relevant old.

Life of Christ: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

A story is told about a 15th Century nun called Sr Maria Minz. Before she joined the Dominicans, Sr Maria vowed that she would make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But after joining her order, she saw no way of fulfilling her vow and this upset her.

Eventually, she worked out a way of conducting the pilgrimage within the convent. She said goodbye to her sisters and for one year – the duration of a pilgrimage – she didn't speak or dine with them. She walked round and round the convent, passing between shrines and altars, each identified with a holy location in Jerusalem.

“Pilgrimage has become near impossible because of the coronavirus”

Though her actions are remarkable, they highlight a tradition among women religious. Instead of visiting Jerusalem itself, they would imagine their convents as miniature models of the holy city. They would observe all the rules of a pilgrimage, such as fasting and solitude, and conduct them in their homes.

While this may seem an alien approach, it is one that is open to us in a less demanding but still rewarding way. Beginning at the top of Mount Nebo, where Moses was granted a view of the Promised Land, you can make a virtual pilgrimage through the Holy Land which takes in 84 locations, concluding with the Dome of Ascension.

This pilgrimage can be accessed on P4Panorma.com, a website dedicated to the production of virtual tours. The tour is free to access and provides brief descriptions of each site. Thanks to the 360 degree photography, you can get a near-complete image of all the sites. The main limitation is the lack of a tour guide's commentary, but the internet provides many different sources for information on the holy sites.

There are many different ways you could approach the



Olivewood crucifixes are seen at a shop on the Via Dolorosa, 'The Way of Sorrow', the path taken by Jesus Christ to his crucifixion on Calvary, on Good Friday April 14 in Jerusalem's Old City. Photos: CNS

tour. It can be an educational tool, for yourself or for children. To see the sites named in the Gospels – such as the Mount of the Beatitudes or the sea of Galilee – and the Old Testament can bring them to life in a vivid and concrete manner.

This would be a particularly good way to teach children about the life of Christ, used in conjunction with the Gospel or as part of religious education. It is incredible to consider that the site of Christ's birth, his baptism, his temptation and his miracles are still in existence and accessible from our homes.

Another possible approach is to use the tours as a devotional or reflective tool for the Easter season. It can be a great way to enter into a new understanding of Christ's Passion. On Holy Thursday, you could explore the room in which Christ's Last Supper took place. From there, you can move to the Garden of Gethsemane where Christ waited and prayed while the disciples slept. You could, in all, follow Christ right up to his Crucifixion.

Stations of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa

It may not be obvious, but every year we take part in a virtual pilgrimage in a manner similar to the nuns of the Middle Ages. The Stations of the Cross are an integral part of the Holy Week celebrations. On Good Friday, every parish conducts the stations to commemorate Christ's Pas-



A man carries a cross during a procession on the Via Dolorosa.

sion, but it is also a common practice throughout the year.

The stations are based on the Via Dolorosa, the Sorrowful Way, which is believed to be the path Jesus walked to his crucifixion. This processional route is in the Old City of Jerusalem and has been an important place of pilgrimage from early in the Church's history.

The Stations of the Cross as you find them in your local church are designed to represent the Lord's Passion, and are in a sense a virtual encounter with the Via Dolorosa. The recreation/imitation of Holy Sites such as the via was common in the early Church, and continues up to present times.

It was as a result of St Francis' special veneration for the Passion of Christ that the stations as we have

them today were created. The Franciscans established a settled route along the Via and during the 15th and 16th century began to build outdoor shrines to duplicate their counterparts in the Holy Land. By the 19th Century, the stations were a fixture in most Catholic churches around the world.

Now that we are confined to our homes, the physical practice of the stations is difficult. But it also offers the opportunity to conduct the stations in the footsteps of Christ on the Via Dolorosa. Through a virtual tour offered by youvisit.com, you can walk the via from beginning to end.

The tour includes 360 degree images of each station, as well as standard photos and videos. At each station, information is provided about the signifi-

cance of the site and, where appropriate, includes scriptural references and quotes. As with the tour of the Holy Land, there is no guide, but there is plenty of information available online.

Beginning at the Church of the Flagellation, the possible site of Christ's condemnation, the tour takes you along the winding route of the via through Jerusalem. It takes in the site of Christ's conviction, his three falls, his encounter with his mother Mary, with Veronica and finally his crucifixion. Fourteen stations are set up along the via and these are some of Christianity's holiest sites.

By walking in Christ's footsteps, we join in a memorial of his Passion. This was the intention of the stations down through the centuries. While it is better



The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

to do this physically, calling to mind the immensity of Christ's suffering, the virtual tour enables us to carry out a pilgrimage which is still true to the intentions of the stations. As we are reminded at the ninth station, when Christ falls for the third time he does so in sight of the place of his crucifixion.

Beauty and the divine: The Sistine Chapel

Rome has been a site of pilgrimage since at least the 7th Century. The Venerable Bede records in his Ecclesiastical History that princes and princesses would often visit the shrines of the apostles in Rome.

Similarly, St John Chrysostom expressed the love it inspired in many Christians, and himself yearned to see the remains of St Paul: "If I were freed from my labours and my body were in sound health I would eagerly make a pilgrimage merely to see the chains that had held him captive and the prison where he lay."

This love of Rome has carried on to our own era and is one of the reasons why the images of Pope Francis' solitary celebrations in St Peter's Square are so remarkable. Rome would typically be thronged with tourists and pilgrims at this time of the year. Instead, due to the extensive lockdown, the city is almost empty. Sites such as the Sistine Chapel,

St Peter's Basilica and all the Vatican museums are all closed to the public.

However, we are still able to make a pilgrimage of a kind to some of the Pope's museums and churches. The Musei Vaticani offer virtual tours to a number of the most popular sites, including the Sistine Chapel, Raphael's Rooms, the Chiaramonti museum, and four others. All of the tours can be accessed at museivaticani.va.

The tours are quite light on information, but are exquisitely detailed in terms of the photography. The fact that the museums and chapels are empty is also a great advantage. You are able to experience the Sistine Chapel without obstruction or distraction. The quality of the images mean that you can magnify them and examine the details of Michelangelo's ceiling to an extent otherwise unimaginable.

However, due to the lack of information provided during the tours, it is a good idea to look up the history and details before you enter the buildings. A little guidance helps to understand how each display is a testimony to the power of art as a way of understanding God and the divine.

Art has been an important part of the Church and many great artists, writers and musicians have used their talents in its service. The beauty of Rome's churches and its museums is a reminder of that fact.

By reflecting on the works of great sculptures, painters, and architects, we can come to know God in the beauty of his creation. It was St Augustine who described God as an author and it is his artistry that we see represented in the best art.

The Easter Season is an ideal time to contemplate the Sistine Chapel in particular. Pope St John Paul II, reflecting on the chapel at its restoration, said it "introduces us to the world of Revelation. The truths of our faith speak to us here from all sides". The works of Michelangelo and Renaissance painters such as Botticelli and Pinturicchio work in communion with each other to bring to life the Old and New Testament.

On one side of the chapel, the life of Moses is depicted – on the other, the life of Christ. The ceiling ranges from the beginning of time, through the creation of man and up to the New Testament.



'The Last Judgment' by Michelangelo Buonarroti is pictured in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Museums on February 21, 2020.



The Shroud of Turin in Italy.

Finally, on the back wall is Michelangelo's The Last Judgment. In this great fresco, St John Paul II said, Michelangelo "strikingly reveals the whole mystery of Christ's glory linked to the Resurrection. To be gathered here during the Easter Octave is extremely propitious. More especially we stand before the glory of Christ's humanity."

If you are looking for a way to contemplate Christ's death and resurrection this Easter season, a pilgrimage to the Sistine Chapel is a good possibility.

Contemplate the face of Jesus: the Shroud of Turin

Devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus is a relatively recent Catholic tradition. Though it has roots in the story of Veronica wiping the face of Jesus, the devotion was given papal sanction by Pope Leo XIII in 1895.

The modern devotion to the Holy Face began with the visions of Sr Marie of St Peter, a French Carmelite nun. In 1844, Christ told her that "those who will contemplate the wounds on My Face here on earth, shall contemplate it radiant in heaven".

Though formal recognition for the devotion came in the 19th Century, the tradition has a strong link with the Shroud of Turin. Believed to be the burial cloth of Jesus, the shroud shows a full-length photonegative image of a man, front and back, bearing signs of wounds that correspond to the Gospel accounts of the torture Jesus endured in his passion and death.

The shroud has been the source of a great deal of scrutiny and controversy. The Church has not officially endorsed or rejected the image, approving of the image in association with the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. Pope St John Paul II described the shroud as a "mirror of the Gospel", while entrusting to scientists the task of proving or disproving its true nature.

Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia of Turin led a special exposition of the Shroud of Turin on Easter Saturday,

April 11. This decision, he said, was in response to the "thousands and thousands" of messages he received asking for it to be displayed.

Pope John Paul II visited the shroud and reflected that "we cannot escape the idea that the image it presents has such a profound relationship with what the Gospels tell of Jesus' passion and death". It turns us towards Christ, making tangible his suffering and inviting us to discover the "ultimate reason for Jesus' redeeming death".

Pope Francis, when he visited the shroud in 2015, spoke of the love Jesus had for humanity when being crucified. He described the shroud as an "icon of this love": "The shroud draws [people] to the tormented face and body of Jesus and, at the same time, directs [people] toward the face of every suffering and unjustly persecuted person."

In light of these reflections, contemplation of the shroud, whether it is real or not, is an opportunity not to be missed. It offers us the chance to be like the pilgrims who have visited the shroud for centuries, seeing in the image of Jesus Christ's redeeming suffering and his exalting love.

www.shroud.com

“For many today, Holy Week and the Easter is a time to make pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, as well as the sites of famous Marian apparitions such as Lourdes and Medjugorje



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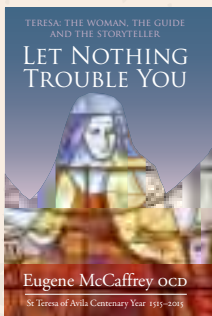
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Sending Positive Vibes
Fr Bryan Shorthall

A Dublin man through and through, Fr Bryan Shorthall's memories and reflections are interspersed with prayers, stories of Saints, and give a rare insight into the lives of the priests and religious who work so tirelessly about us – a stark reminder of the good that the religious continue to do in modern Ireland.

was €12.99 **€8.99**



Let Nothing Trouble You
Eugene McCaffrey OCD

Explore the remarkable story of St Teresa of Avila and the influence of this charming, attractive, witty woman, who fits as easily into the twenty-first century as into the sixteenth. Teresa belongs to everyone. She openly shares her humanity with us and teaches us how to make our own dreams come true.

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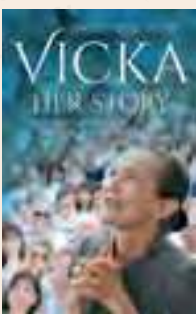


Hallelujah: Memoirs of a Singing Priest
Fr Ray Kelly

In 2018 Fr Ray Kelly auditioned for Britain's Got Talent and made it to the semi-finals of the show, demonstrating his astonishing ability to connect with people through his singing. This is his memoir, describing his fascinating journey from parish priest to fame and showcasing his passion for singing with his dedicated work as a priest.

was €16.99 **€11.99**

EMBARK ON A LITERARY PILGRIMAGE



Vicka...Her Story
Finbar O'Leary

In conversation with Finbar O'Leary, Vicka, the eldest of the six visionaries, tells of her special relationship with Our Lady and relays many of the Messages which the 'Queen of Peace' has given to her. Vicka also discusses her own physical and mystical sufferings and the journeys on which Our Lady has brought her.

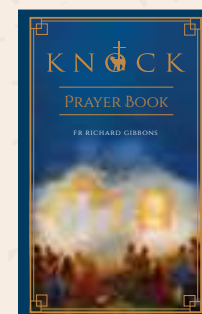
was €9.99 **€6.99**



Medjugorje: What it Means to Me
Editor Louise Hall

Deeply personal stories detail how individuals found themselves visiting Medjugorje, their experiences and encounters with God whilst there and the impact it has had on their lives today. It is for both those who already know of Medjugorje and those who have never heard about the village or the apparitions.

was €11.99 **€7.99**



Knock Prayer Book
Fr Richard Gibbons

The rector of Knock Shrine, Fr Richard Gibbons, has personally chosen this collection of prayers which are inspired by the life lived in Knock and what Knock means to all the pilgrims, visitors, volunteers and parishioners that make up its story. They range from Novena prayers to Our Lady to prayers for workers, families, hospitality, nature and even dogs!

was €14.99 **€10.49**

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DIVE DEEPER INTO THE FAITH



Freedom from Evil Spirits
Pat Collins CM

Written from personal experience, this book by Fr Collins is a guide on how we can free ourselves from the many debilitating influences that can take a stronghold in our lives. He attempts to offer practical advice to readers on how to overcome fear, addiction, and oppressive evil spirits.

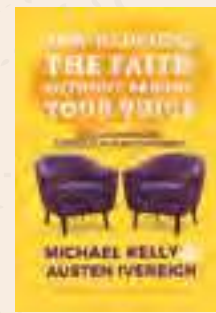
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Early Irish Saints
John J Ó Ríordáin C.Ss.R

These short essays on fourteen well-loved saints present a very readable and informative mix of historical fact and folklore. Fr John Ó Ríordáin's introduction provides a most helpful commentary on what the authors of the early lives of the saints saw as their function – something very different from the function of a modern-day biographer!

was €12.99 **€8.99**

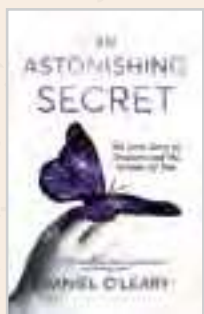


How to Defend the Faith
Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh

Within these pages, Michael Kelly and Austen Ivereigh aim to answer some of the most common criticisms of Catholicism to help Catholics and non-Catholics alike understand where the Church is coming from on controversial topics like abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and the use of condoms in the fight against HIV.

was €14.99 **€10.49**

FIND PEACE AND TRANQUILITY



An Astonishing Secret
Daniel O'Leary

Think well before starting on this book because it will take you in many directions and much of it may be new to you. But it will not be new to your heart. Your heart is already familiar with the mysteries Daniel O'Leary explores, so keep your eyes wide open and heart free as you read.

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Where I find God
Cora Guinnane & Joanne O'Brien

Escape to beautiful landscapes and thought-provoking entries from many of Ireland's finest thinkers about where they have found, and continue to find God in their lives. This beautiful book is truly a treat for the soul, a work that will cause you to pause and reflect on your own unique spiritual experience.

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Mindful Meditations for Every Day
Sister Stan

Sr Stan presents us with this gem of a book, filled with meditations and reflections based on her own life and role as a mentor in mindfulness. Mindful Meditations for Every Day carries you through the calendar year, with daily meditations, mindfulness exercises and scripture for each month.

was €14.99 **€10.49**



Out&About

Remembering those lost



DUBLIN: Balally Church is putting a Palm Cross on the wall for each person who has died from Covid-19 on the island of Ireland.



◀ **CAVAN:** Fr Martin Gilcreest was recently recalled to work as a chaplain in Cavan General Hospital. He had worked there for 18 years and left three years ago. He said: "The shoulder to the wheel, like everyone else."

▶ **CAVAN:** Margaret Reynolds prays at her table in her home in Belturbet. A lady who has attended Mass everyday of her adult life, she was unable to attend the funeral for her brother. Photo: Lorraine Teevan



INSHORT

Donate old clothes and avoid shopping online says charity

A Christian charity is encouraging people to avoid online clothes shopping and to do a wardrobe clear-out during the coronavirus lockdown

World Vision Ireland (WVI) are advising people to donate their unwanted clothes to charity shops when they open again.

With the global growth of 'fast fashion', clothing production has doubled from 2000 to 2014, with more than 150 billion garments now produced annually, and 73% of all textiles ending up in landfill or incineration according to WVI.

Last December, research from the European Environment Agency highlighted that after food, housing and transport, textiles are the fourth largest cause of environmental pressure. WVI and the Irish Environmental Network said that textiles also cause the second highest pressure on land use and are the fifth largest contributor

to carbon emissions from household consumption.

WVI said donating unwanted clothes to charity, and to only shop second-hand, will drastically improve humanity's carbon footprint.

"The fast fashion industry emits 1.2 billion tons of CO2 equivalent per year. People can reduce their carbon footprint by buying less, using what's already in their wardrobes, and only shopping at charity shops or second-hand shops," said Fiona O'Malley, Director of Communications and Fundraising at World Vision Ireland.

"You can also support sustainable fashion by doing a wardrobe clear-out during the lockdown and putting those clothes aside for charity.

"The general rule of thumb I would use for decluttering is if you haven't worn it in a year, give it to charity. If you haven't worn it in a year, it's obviously not a key piece of your wardrobe or something you'll miss. A wardrobe clear-out is a great way to give old clothes a new home, create more space in your wardrobe, and support wonderful

charitable causes."

She added: "It's important to remember that most charity shops are closed now, although NCBI is still selling clothes online via the Thriftify website, so if you don't have room to store your unwanted clothes, you can sell them online on Dondeal.ie or eBay. You can also upcycle some clothes by altering them. There are great sewing classes on YouTube and Pinterest is a great resource for upcycling ideas."

The Irish charity also encouraged people who have gardens to plant trees during the lockdown, to help reduce carbon emissions. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, convert it to sugars and wood, and release pure oxygen back to the atmosphere.

Efforts to house homeless continue during crisis

Homelessness charity, the Peter McVerry Trust, has said it increased the number of people housed by the Housing First programme since the onset of Covid-19.

Housing First, which targets people sleeping rough and the longest-term hostel users for housing and intensive supports, has housed 26 people in the past few weeks, with more move-ons expected before the end of April.

CEO Pat Doyle said: "Even in the midst of the pandemic we are still able to house people and help them to exit homelessness and we've helped 26 people secure a new home since the Covid-19 restrictions were imposed.

"The Housing First programme in particular is incredibly important as it works with people sleeping rough, people who have been using hostels for the longest, and those with the most complex needs. Many of the individuals targeted by the programme are most at risk from Covid-19 because of their health."

He added: "The fact that we are able to secure, make ready, and move people into housing is great because it provides them with a home that they can self-isolate or cocoon in."

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LOUTH: Bishop Michael Router celebrates the Passion of the Lord in St Peter's Church, Drogheda.



DUBLIN: A display in Sruleen parish church remembering coronavirus victims in the area and people who have died and when it wasn't possible to celebrate a traditional funeral.



DERRY: Year 14 pupil Ben McErlean, from St Patrick's College in Maghera, is making face masks for NHS staff.



DUBLIN: Two people pray while social distancing in St Saviour's Dominican Church on Holy Thursday.

CLARE

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

CORK

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

A Pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares Monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

DERRY

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

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

DONEGAL

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: The oratory St Mary's Buncrana, Tuesdays following Rosary after 10am Mass. Contact: 085 252 5612.

DUBLIN

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

Adoration Hour for Healing during Lent in St Laurence O'Toole Church, Seville Place, Dublin 1 at 8pm every Tuesday in Lent. Periods of silence, reflective music, individual prayers for healing all in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament www.northwallparish.ie

FERMANAGH

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

GALWAY

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

KERRY

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

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmearney, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

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

● **In the current Covid-19 crisis, readers are advised to check with local organisers to ensure events will take place. If organisers have put in place alternative arrangements, please email us the details and we will publish same.**

LOUTH

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

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

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

MAYO

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

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday afternoon from 2.30-3.30pm in the Oratory, Enfield, for Adoration, Rosary, Chaplet and petitions. Also once per month a Lay Apostle meeting. However, all meetings are presently suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic.

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

Dunshaughlin & Culmullen parish. Sunday Mass live on Facebook (Dunshaughlin.Culmullen.Parish), 12pm. All welcome.

ROSCOMMON

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

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

WESTMEATH

Holy Face of Jesus prayer meeting: La Verna retreat centre beside private hospital Ballinderry, Mullingar. Thursdays at 7.30pm. Contact: 085 2525 612

WEXFORD

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

WICKLOW

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

World Report

IN BRIEF

Japan diocese appointment surprises bishop

● Bishop Josep Maria Abella has said he was surprised to be announced new bishop of Fukuoka in Japan when almost all Church activities are suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 70-year-old Spanish priest said he was “perplexed” when the apostolic nuncio to Japan, Archbishop Joseph Chennoth, told him about the decision.

“Almost all the activities of the Church have stopped, I received a telephone call that surprised me,” said Bishop Abella, who has been working in the country for more than four decades.

Fukuoka had been without a bishop since April 2019 following the retirement of Bishop Dominic Ryoji Miyahara.

Gulf Christians mourn death of Arabia Vicar

● Catholics in Persian Gulf countries are mourning the death of Bishop Camillo Ballin, the Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain), last week.

The prelate passed away in Rome, a few weeks shy of his 76th birthday, following a long-term illness.

The Italian-born clergyman was a leading Church figure in the Gulf region as a scholar and expert of the Muslim world.

Catholics in Doha, Qatar said his life was spent “entirely in the service of God”, while Bahrain Catholics described him as “the heart of the Catholic community in Arabia”.

Top Myanmar monk donates to Pope’s Covid-19 Fund

● A prominent monk from Myanmar has made donations to the coronavirus emergency fund set up by Pope Francis.

Archbishop Marco Tin Win of Mandalay Archdiocese received US\$10,000 from Ashin Nyanissara, known as Sitagu Sayadaw, last week. “All we need to do is work hand in hand based

on a common platform to tackle Covid-19 and carry out charitable work through solidarity,” he said at a ceremony held in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The monk said he gave the contributions as a sign of compassion common to all religions and provided bags of rice, cooking oil, beans, onions, beans and salt for orphanages and others in need.

Pakistan church offered for Muslim food relief work

● A diocese in Pakistan has agreed to let a prominent Muslim charity set up a food collection and distribution camp at St Patrick’s Cathedral during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fr Saleh Diego, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Karachi, granted permission after visiting Jafaria Disaster Management Cell (JDC), a non-profit and charitable organisation.

“You can come and set up your camp at the cathedral compound,” he said. “We will coordinate and work together from this camp in providing food to those affected by the lockdown.”

The priest said he was impressed to see the charity having many Christian volunteers carry out relief work without any religious discrimination.

Kenya priest charged with spreading Covid-19

● A Catholic priest in Kenya has been charged in court with spreading the coronavirus, the second person to face such charges in the country.

Fr Richard Onyango Oduor was charged with having “negligently spread an infectious disease” after authorities said he failed to adhere to coronavirus quarantine rules following a visit to Italy.

The clergyman denied the charges in Nairobi, was freed on a 150,000 Kenyan shilling (US\$1,415) bond and ordered to spend 14 days in quarantine and reappear in court on May 2.

The other person charged with spreading the virus was Gideon Saburi, deputy governor of the coastal region of Kilifi County.

Pope postpones World Youth Day and World Meeting of Families

World Youth Day and the World Meeting of Families have been postponed for one year at the request of Pope Francis, according to the Vatican.

World Youth Day, which was scheduled to be hosted in Lisbon, Portugal in August 2022 will now take place in August 2023.

The World Meeting of Families, which was previously scheduled to be held in Rome, Italy in June 2021, will now take place in June 2022.

“Because of the current health situation and its consequences on the movement and gatherings of young people and families,” said Holy See press office director Matteo Bruni.

“The World Meeting of Families in Rome will be pushed back until June 2022 and World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, will be pushed back until August 2023.”

The Pope made the decision together with the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, which is responsible for organising the events.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the dicastery, said two large gatherings would not be held during the same sum-



Young pilgrims gather before World Youth Day Panama opening Mass in January last year – the one set for Portugal in 2022 has now been postponed for a year.

mer, which was one reason World Youth Day was pushed back.

Lockdowns

The other reason, according to Cardinal Farrell, is that although people are talking about ‘returning to normal’ and government leaders are

making plans for phasing out lockdowns and reopening businesses, the dicastery does “not believe travel will be that extensive” anytime soon.

World Youth Day, which is typically held every three years, last took place in Panama in January 2019, drawing an estimated 700,000 young

Catholics.

The youth gathering was started by St Pope John Paul II in 1985. At some past World Youth Days, attendance has reached into the millions.

The theme of World Youth Day in Lisbon in 2023 is “Mary arose and went with haste”.

The bishops’ local organising committee for World Youth Day in Portugal put out a statement on April 20 saying it welcomed the Pope’s decision to postpone the event.

The committee said it shared “with the Holy Father the call that, in the current context and in the coming time, the focus of everyone’s attention is on caring for the most vulnerable, families, and all who, for very different reasons, suffer from the effects of the pandemic caused by COVID-19”.

In 1994, St Pope John Paul II established the World Meeting of Families, which also takes place every three years in a different country. The most recent meeting was held in Dublin, Ireland in 2018.

The event, now moved to June 2022, has the theme: ‘Family Love: a vocation and a path to holiness’.

German bishops bemoan decision to keep church ban

Catholic bishops in Germany have voiced their disapproval at Chancellor Angela Merkel’s decision not to lift the ban on public church services.

Despite allowing thousands of shops to reopen, Merkel said the ban on public church services should remain until further notice.

She also announced that a state secretary of the interior ministry would talk with religious communities about the future of public services.

Bishop Georg Batzing, president of the German Catholic bishops’ conference, said he could not understand why the ban should remain in place while restrictions were

being eased in other parts of public life.

In particular, Bishop Batzing gave reference to a recent decision by the Federal Constitutional Court on the matter.

The court had ruled that the ban constituted a serious encroachment on the fundamental right to religious freedom and should therefore be reviewed continuously.

The priest added that Easter had shown that church services gave millions of people guidance and support in the difficult circumstances caused by the coronavirus crisis.

He said the ban was a major

impediment to the freedom of religious practice.

In a separate interview with national newspaper Die Welt, he stressed that he could speak for the Church in stating that it would be able to stick to hygiene standards and social distancing rules in churches.

Meanwhile, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, president of the Protestant Council, said he was confident that the discussions with the federal government “will very soon lead to a consensus that will make responsible forms of worship in our churches possible again”.

Foiled Easter attack on churches ‘no concern’, says Egypt priest

An Egyptian priest has played down the threat of a failed terrorist attack by a jihadi group on Christians which was neutralised by security forces last week.

The group, who have been linked to the Islamic State, was preparing to attack the country’s Christian community during Easter.

Fr Rafic Greiche, head of media committee of the Council of Churches of Egypt, though said that the incident would not “frighten or concern” Christians as “most places of worship” are closed because of Covid-19.

“I don’t think, and this is my personal opinion, that the churches could have been a

real target,” said the clergyman.

“The terrorist group perhaps intended to strike elsewhere.”

Base

The incident unfolded in al-Amiriyah, a residential district in eastern Cairo where the terrorists had their base.

After receiving a tip-off, police moved in and a gun battle ensued, which lasted several hours resulting in the deaths of one policeman and seven suspects.

Inside the flat, police found several weapons and a huge cache of ammunition which was to be used in the attacks.



Edited by Aron Hegarty
aron@irishcatholic.ie

The day will come



A woman models a small 'Vaccine Covid-19' bottle in this illustration photo. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have called for the development of an ethical vaccine for the virus. Photo: CNS

Bishop first to resume public Mass in US amid crisis

A US priest has become the first clergyman in the country to have amended a previously declared diocesan ban on public Masses since the coronavirus outbreak.

Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces, New Mexico has lifted a diocesan ban on the public celebration of Mass, issued guidelines for distribution of Holy Communion, and told priests they may resume sacramental ministry if they follow state-ordered health precautions.

"We [as priests] have been called by Christ and ordained to serve the people of the Diocese of Las Cruces, to bring them hope and consolation during this difficult time," he said.

His announcement came days after New Mexico's governor banned gatherings of more than five people – a restriction Bishop Baldacchino said priests must observe, even as he expressed objection to it.

The bishop also made provision for priests to resume weddings and funerals in accordance with state regulations on social distancing, and granted permission for them to be held outside on Church property for the duration of the pandemic.

"These past few weeks have allowed me to further analyse the situation and discern a safe way to proceed," he said.

"It has become increasingly clear that the state shutdown will last for some time," he continued.

"Depriving the Faithful of the nourishment offered through the Eucharist was indeed a difficult decision, one that I deemed necessary until I had further clarity regarding our current state of affairs, but it cannot become the *status quo* for the foreseeable future."

Dioceses across the US have suspended the public celebration of Mass, and many have restricted priests'

ability to hear confessions and anoint the sick.

While priests in some dioceses have tried to find ways to provide sacramental ministry, including drive-in Masses and Eucharistic adoration, some have banned these practices.

Bishop Baldacchino said the crisis had brought about "a time for renewal".

"In the events of these days and weeks the Lord is calling us out of our comfort zone," he said, adding "He [God] is calling us to seek new ways to reach the people.

"In addition to this mission with which we are entrusted, we also have the mission to keep people safe. The two must be equally pursued.

"While it is true that we need to take every reasonable precaution to reduce the spread of coronavirus, it is equally true that we offer the greatest 'essential service' to our people."

Italian bishop allows doctors give Communion to virus patients

A group of doctors in Tuscany has received a bishop's permission to distribute Holy Communion to those infected by the coronavirus.

Bishop Giovanni Nerbini of Prato made the six doctors extraordinary eucharistic ministers, allowing them to give Communion to over 100 patients on Easter, according to *Avvenire*, the newspaper of the Italian bishops' conference.

Dr Filippo Risaliti, one of

the six doctors who distributed the Eucharist, said the idea was inspired by Pope Francis' call for doctors and medical professionals "to play the role of intermediaries of the church for people who are suffering".

"We are the only ones who could do it, since only we can enter those rooms," he said.

"I cried with the patients. Hospitals are places of care, but we can't think of separating the body from the spirit."

He added: "They are lonely, suffering people, not only in body but also in soul."

Dr Risaliti said he and the other doctors understood the suffering the patients endure due "to isolation from affection and from relatives".

Protective gear

Dressed in protective gear, the hospital chaplain, Fr Carlo Bergamaschi, accompanied the doctors distributing Communion.

The priest carried a ciborium filled with consecrated hosts, which were individually separated by gauze pads to avoid contamination.

For patients who were on respirators and unable to physically receive the Eucharist, the doctors read a prayer at their bedside.

"It was one of the most beautiful experiences I have lived in my life as a man, as a Christian and as a doctor," said Dr Lorenzo Guarducci.



Vatican appoint new Directors to Financial Information Authority

● The Vatican's Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, has appointed a new Director and Vice Director for the Financial Information Authority (AIF).

Giuseppe Schlitzer enters as AIF's Director, replacing Tommaso Di Ruzza who completed his five-year mandate as of January 20 this year.

Schlitzer has held positions at Banca d'Italia, Italy's central bank, the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, and the General Confederation of Italian Industry.

The post was first held by Francesco De Pasquale (2011-2013) and René Brühlhart (2013-2014).

Federico Antellini Russo has been appointed to the position of Vice Director. He has been preceded by Alfredo Pallini (2011-2012) and Tommaso Di Ruzza (2014-15).

Russo has worked at the AIF since 2015. He served as an economist in the research and development section of the joint-stock company Consip from 2008 to 2013.

Pope Benedict XVI established AIF in 2010. It oversees the financial intelligence unit and seeks to prevent and counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Pope Francis further consolidated this Vatican entity in 2013. It is a member of the Egmont Group, a network of finance intelligence units at the global level.

Caritas launches fund for local Churches

● Caritas Internationalis has set up a new 'Covid-19 Response Fund' to help support the efforts of local Churches as they assist those suffering the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Church's human development arm released a communiqué last week, which announced a new fundraising initiative called the 'Covid-19 Response Fund'.

"Pope Francis is very much preoccupied with Covid-19," said Aloysius John, Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis, "and he wants the Church to express solidarity with the local Churches and

help them at this moment as a gesture of witnessing the universal love and care of the universal Church for the local Church.

"The coronavirus solidarity fund is a means to assist small projects which will allow Caritas to help the people who are confined."

One such project is Caritas Philippines' 'Kindness Centres', where people can bring their excess food supplies and have them distributed to local families in need.

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the Fund can do so through Caritas' website (caritas.org).

Vatican sets up pandemic task force

● The Holy See has established a task force to mobilise the Church's response to Covid-19 and deal with the aftermath of the pandemic.

Cardinal Peter Turkson says he has already established a central 'command centre' and five working groups, after Pope Francis asked his department to lead the Church's response to the coronavirus.

"We must act now. And we must immediately think about what will happen next," said the 71-year-old Ghanian prelate.

"The Pope is convinced that we are living through an epochal change, and he is reflecting on what will follow the crisis.

"We must offer our contribution in this crisis," he added. "It is a matter of putting actions in place to support the local churches, to save lives, to help the poorest."

The Vatican says the commission will report directly to the Pope while the body has already met him twice to discuss plans.

Pope Francis has given the dicastery a two-fold task of coordinating the Church's immediate response to the crisis and looking to what happens next.



Letter from Rome

Pope Simulator computer game set for 2021



A screen capture from a trailer for the new computer game *Pope Simulator*. Photo: Ultimate Games

A Polish software developer has announced a new computer game called *Pope Simulator* is to be released next year.

The game opens with a conclave in which the player is elected Pope, and then presents various scenarios that require decisions.

“Our idea assumes the possibility to use, among others, the pope’s so-called ‘soft power,’ and consequently influence the fate of the world and interfere in international politics,” said Ultimate Games CEO Mateusz Zawadzki.

A spokesman for Ultimate Games said the company have spent around €66,000 developing the game and that they have not set a price for it yet. It is projected to launch in 2021 for PCs and later on consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation, but probably the price tag will be in the range of €8 to €17.

A free version of *Pope Simulator*, though without a graphics interface, is already the favourite indoor sport of the Church.

Opinion

Almost every Catholic, it seems, has an opinion about what the Pope should do or not do - especially in the social media age. In addition to reporting on the actual Pope, a lot of time on the Vatican beat is spent



John L. Allen Jr

covering potential *Pope Simulator* adepts with a following and a cause.

As it turns out, there is a sprawling galaxy in Italy of Catholic groups which, in one way or another, identify themselves as heirs to the Knights Templar of the Crusades.

Most are small, though one branch has a following in about 50 Italian dioceses and holds an annual spiritual retreat in the Vatican, complete with the white robes and red crosses of the Templars of yore.

In a recent letter by Fra Massimo Maria Civale, a Catholic from Naples and ‘Grand Prior’ of the ‘Christian Knights Templar of Jacques’, was a request to Pope Francis that he “reopen the churches” around the world, meaning issue a directive that all priests are to make it possible for anyone who wants to receive the Eucharist physically to do so despite quarantine measures in place due to the coronavirus.

He began by saying government

decrees in Italy suggest churches can be open if they respect hygienic and sanitary measures necessary to contain the pandemic, and thus the Knights are “saddened by the dispositions of closure adopted by Italian dioceses”.

“We, Poor Catholic Knights of Christ, desire to fight the good fight of the faith for receiving the Eucharist, which is at the center of our spiritual life,” wrote Civale.

“The spiritual communion we receive with the means of communication is no longer enough,” he said. “We need the living and true body of Jesus for the salvation of our souls.”

“In that regard, we ask you to invite all the dioceses of the world to reopen the doors of the churches and every priest to provide Eucharistic corridors in respect of hygienic and sanitary norms, so that every believer who desires may receive the Bread of Life.”

Canon law says Catholics have the right to make their needs known to their pastors, and Civale was less pushy about it than many.

“Try playing the game with at least 100 people in the room whispering in your ear about what to do”

He even closed his letter by telling Pope Francis “we love you and will do everything we can to be witnesses to the Risen Lord”.

At one level, such fascination with how a Pope deploys his authority is a tribute both to the Papacy itself, which somehow remains keenly relevant despite centuries of secularisation, and to modern Popes, who have offered compelling examples of how

inspired use of the office can still move mountains.

At another level, this popular drive to tell the Pope what he should do is also a tribute to the ardor of ordinary Catholics, many of whom are passionate about the Church and feel called to push it to realise the best version of itself, however he or she may understand that.

Since *Pope Simulator* apparently will not be commercially available for at least a year, we will have to wait a while to boot it up and take a virtual spin in the Popemobile. When that moment comes, however, it might be worth reflecting on a couple points.

First, there is a world of difference between playing Pope and actually being Pope, one of which is that a Pope cannot just switch off his screen when he gets frustrated or bored. He has still got to make decisions, whether he feels like playing or not. Second, if you want the real experience of being Pope, try playing the game with at least 100 people in the room whispering in your ear about what to do, and thousands more sending nasty tweets about whatever you end up choosing.

If you still think it’s fun...well, now that video games may be included in the 2024 Olympics, you could be well on your way to a gold medal.

1 John L. Allen Jr is Editor of Cruxnow.





Christopher White

A new study in the US finds that while young people are experiencing heightened levels of loneliness and isolation as a result of social distancing, they are not experiencing a decline in their Faith.

Among those surveyed, 35% of respondents said that they are actually experiencing an increase of Faith and 46% attested to having developed new religious practices.

Yet while Church leaders may be relieved by that data, half of those who've attended an online service also reported they do not have anyone to talk to about how they are feeling, and 44% report feeling isolated because no one has reached out to them.

Clergy or Faith leaders account for less than 1% of those adults who have reached out to young people amid the pandemic, who represent what the study labels one of the "most lonely and isolated generations that have ever existed".

In addition, the survey found a severe lack of trust in institutions. On a scale from one to 10, over 60% of young people rank their trust level at five or lower for a range on institutions, including organised religion, with religious practice not offering a "protective effect" against the "epidemic of loneliness and isolation".

Concerns

The full study, 'Belonging: Reconnecting America's Loneliest Generation', was released this month by the Springtide Research Institute, surveying one thousand young people aged between 18-25.

In response, Paul Jarzembowski, who oversees Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), said the findings are a call for a greater pastoral response to isolation and loneliness among youth and young adults that was already an issue before the pandemic, which has only exacerbated the concerns.

"We need to reach out to them and support them during this time, and even beyond this time of social distancing, as its impact will certainly be felt for years to come," he said.

"This global health crisis will likely be the defining moment in the life of youth and young adults today. We cannot underestimate it as we consider how we best reach out and minister with young people."

Sr Nathalie Becquart, a member of the Congregation of Xavières, said the study's data is consistent with similar studies released in recent years.



Pope Francis arrives for a prayer vigil with World Youth Day pilgrims at the Field of Mercy in Krakow, Poland. Photo: CNS

Youth increasingly lonely but maintain strong Faith, finds study

Sr Becquart observed that while young people strongly value connections and friendship with their peers, "they also need adults who are figures of reference for them".

“Young people express strongly how they need to be accompanied to choose the right course in this complex and uncertain world”

She said this is not only consistent with the latest study – which found that “when a trusted adult outside their house connected with young people, nearly eight out of ten report feeling less lonely” – but also resonates with the conclusions from the Vatican’s 2018 Synod of Bishops on Young People, of which Sr Becquart was an auditor.

“Young people express strongly

how they need to be accompanied to choose the right course in this complex and uncertain world. They look for mentors who can walk with them and help them to discern how to live a meaningful life, that is for most of them a life of encounters, a life of friendships and fraternity.

“They emphasise horizontal communications instead of vertical communications and experimental approaches instead of theoretical approaches.”

Jonathan Lewis, assistant secretary for pastoral ministry for the Archdiocese of Washington concurred, saying “the number one way to pass on the faith is through thick relational ties”.

“It’s what Jesus did when he called people by name and it’s what still works. It’s just that in our culture that’s increasingly challenging for engaging young people along that process of Faith,” said Lewis.

“Emerging adults and young adults are some of the most transient, if not the most transient

population, in the history of the US,” he continued.

“As a result, Churches have a very difficult time knowing them and maintaining relationships.”

Lewis said that one of the major challenges is that parishes are “built to maintain neighborhood relationships. That puts people who don’t have a mortgage or have kids at a neighborhood public or parochial school, at a disadvantage”.

Social distancing

Jarzembowski encouraged Faith leaders to get creative in age of social distancing, but also not to forget the basics.

“Just making that one-on-one connection can go a long way towards reversing these trends. That means making a phone call or writing a hand-written letter to a young person,” he said.

“Church leaders can also host digital meet-ups for youth or young adults in their area. They can offer online sessions about spiritual and practical tools to cope with

loneliness, economic uncertainty, grief, and loss.”

Similarly, Becquart said that pastors and faith leaders need to engage the “concrete issues” faced by young people in their daily lives.

“During this pandemic we can observe that the main concern for many young people is unemployment,” she said.

“Jarzembowski said that it’s incumbent upon Catholics to examine their own lives to see what they can do to respond to the needs of young people”

By providing concrete responses, adds Becquart, a relationship of trust will be developed that will help create a space for young people “to share also their existential and spiritual questions and to express their feelings and difficulties”.

Looking ahead, Jarzembowski said that it’s incumbent upon Catholics to examine their own lives to see what they can do to respond to the needs of young people.

He pointed to Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, *Christus vivit*, written after the Synod on Young People, as a reminder that this is something the Pope sees as a priority.

“We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy,” wrote Pope Francis.

① Christopher White is a National Correspondent for Cruxnow.

Letters

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

Letter of the week

The killer North and South which isn't a virus

Dear Editor, I welcome David Quinn's excellent article on the killer, north and south of Ireland, which is not the virus [IC 09/04/2020].

As he states, many, many more will be killed by this virus compared to those through the coronavirus. Where is the outcry about this? Why the silence from so many quarters which are more than vocal on other issues? Why no criticism of what has happened in the North with abortion imposed on them courtesy of

Westminster and Sinn Féin. Is it in line with the Good Friday Agreement?

Regarding what is happening in the South, we now have women permitted to risk their lives by taking abortion pills without a visit to a doctor, and after we were cajoled into voting for abortion on the grounds that we were saving women lives by having a doctor prescribe and issue these pills and have the woman make three visits to the doctor.

It is indeed ironic to see the efforts,

rightly, made to save all lives affected by the coronavirus, while unborn babies can be aborted without any supervision and with no proof of how far the pregnancy has advanced.

Surely legally this is totally unacceptable? Where is the outcry about this?

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

Supporting 'good and caring priest' Fr Farragher

Dear Editor, As a Catholic priest living in Co. Mayo having returned from 40 years in England, I write to support Fr Stephen Farragher [IC 09/04/2020 'Priest criticised for allowing Muslim call to prayer in church']. I do so not to disagree with Fr Michael O' Sullivan M.Afr but to support Fr Stephen, who is recognised and appreciated as a good and caring parish priest by the people of the locality.

Possibly, what is not understood is the fact that, apart from some priests in a diocese like Dublin, his locality has long ceased to be a 100% Catholic area. Many followers of Islam have made their homes in the West of Ireland and as we know, coronavirus does not belong to a particular denomination.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Tom Taaffe,
Knock, Co. Mayo.*



We can't keep Good News to ourselves

Dear Editor, Sr Susan's excellent letter [IC 02/04/2020] is a clarion call to evangelisation which I feel merits a response. This call is particularly relevant during Holy Week.

At the Last Supper in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, after Judas had left, Jesus said to his disciples: "I give you one command, love on another. You must love one

another just as I have loved you" (John 13:34-36). This is what we are called to do.

God takes the initiative. He shows us Jesus Christ the full depth of his merciful love. Faith is personal, not private. We cannot keep the Good News to ourselves. Our baptismal mandate is to evangelise, to share our faith with others, to bring people to Christ.

During the ministry of Jesus on Earth we see clearly how he drew his disciples into close relationship, he taught them, he showed them his authority, and they sent them out to "love as I have loved you".

Loving, as Jesus means, is opening our hearts to God. Fr Pat Collins says that many Catholics are sacramentalised and

catechised but not fully evangelised. Pope John Paul II said: "They haven't crossed the threshold of faith to form an explicit personal attachment to Jesus Christ."

These days of isolation may be an opportunity for Catholics to reflect on what we are called to do.

*Yours etc.,
Kathleen O'Donnell,
Muckross, Co. Donegal.*

Coronavirus can teach us about our greed

Dear Editor, Many people are asking how God could let this coronavirus take such a grip on the world killing thousands of people young and old. I believe God hears every single prayer and responds appropriately. God is not just the God of humans; he is the God of every living creature and species in the universe.

He hears their cries also, as us humans continue to destroy their habitat, pollute their oceans and kill their food source in our greed for more.

More money, more material things, more power and more status. By having more, we appreciate less. How many of us valued meeting up with friends and neighbours, spending time with our families, going for walks in our natural

places of beauty and being physically present at religious ceremonies especially at sacred times of the year? Very few.

How many of us cared about the millions of sea life unable to survive in our filthy, plastic infected rivers and seas? How many of us cared about the millions of animals destroyed as they simply had no homes anymore due to mass deforestation and our insatiable desire to have bigger homes, more land and more superstores.

Do we even really care anymore about our children as we stuff them full of fast food, sweets and fizzy drinks made from chemicals many of us have never heard of.

Well God cares. He always did and he

always will.

This pandemic is a terrible thing but so is the state of our planet. We tend not to worry about things that are happening 'somewhere else'. But when that worry comes knocking on our door, we can no longer ignore it. This could be the wakeup call the world needs to look after our planet, our animals, our people and our children.

God please destroy this virus and heal us all, and after it is gone, continue to remind us to value what and who are truly important to us.

*Yours etc.,
Mary T. Armstrong,
Ashbourne, Co. Meath.*

facebook community

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

Priest criticised for allowing Muslim call to prayer in church

A most unfortunate affair – why priests feel free to insert all sorts into the liturgy, is beyond me, but more importantly beyond the intention of the Church, when she gathers to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. Ecumenical gestures have many other occasions where they are welcome when appropriate. – **David Gibson**

I don't believe he was at all misguided. We all pray in our own individual way to the same God. Any authentic prayer should be encouraged, no matter the religion. – **Sandra Dunne**

I think it was a good thing. I hope it will be reciprocated. – **Thomas Carty**

Shocking, should never have happened in the first place. – **John Winters**

To permit the Muslim proclamation that renounces and rejects Almighty God as revealed by Jesus Christ, the world's saviour in a Catholic church, is scandalous and blasphemous. – **Tad Sebastian Jones**

Misguided, not compatible with the Catholic Faith! The sentiment, in which he wished to be inclusive of others is honourable. The Church is the Faithful and established by Christ, not by any mortal man. Other religious beliefs are outside the true Faith. – **Malachy Kavanagh**

For goodness sake! Well done Father, You are a true Christian. Ballyhaunis is lucky to have you. Jesus was also criticised. – **Deirdre Quinn**

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

Cardinal Pell showed himself as man of virtue

Dear Editor, For years Cardinal Pell has been unjustly pursued by what can reasonably be judged an ideologically-driven mindset in the ABC. Coupled with the justice-denying efforts of the Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the Victorian police force, Cardinal's Pell's resilience and bearing through all of this has been inspirational [IC 09/04/2020].

When taken together with his charitable attitude to his accuser, Cardinal Pell has shown himself to be a man of such character and virtue that Australians in general would do well to emulate.

*Yours etc.,
Eamonn and Patricia Keane,
Kellyville, New South Wales, Australia.*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



▲ **USA:** A nurse in New York city wipes away tears as she stands outside NYU Langone Medical Center.
 ◀ **MEXICO:** Fr Jorge Zarraga of Tijuana is seen holding a monstrance while blessing people from a plane.



FRANCE: Women wearing protective masks walk in front of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, which was damaged in a fire one year ago. Photos: CNS



KENYA: An elderly woman receives a box of food donations given by an aid group to people in need in a poor section of Nairobi.



THAILAND: A woman prays as she passes a temple while commuting by boat along Bangkok's Chao Phraya River.



GUATEMALA: A bus driver outside Guatemala City directs people boarding a bus after they were deported from the US. The country's bishops condemn deportations during a health crisis.



Churches as field hospitals

Most of us are familiar with Pope Francis' comment that today the Church needs to be a field hospital. What's implied here?

First, that right now the Church is not a field hospital, or at least not much of one. Too many Churches of all denominations see the world more as an opponent to be fought than as a battlefield strewn with wounded persons to whom they are called to minister.

Churches today, in the words of Pope Francis, have often reversed an image in the Book of Revelation where Jesus stands outside the door knocking, trying to come in, to a situation where Jesus is knocking on the door from inside the Church, trying to get out.

So how might our Churches, our ecclesial communities, become field hospitals?

Viruses of fear

In a wonderfully provocative article in a recent issue of *America* magazine, Czech spiritual writer Tomáš Halik suggests that for our ecclesial communities to become 'field hospitals' they must assume three roles: a diagnostic one – wherein they identify the signs of the times; a preventive one – wherein they create an immune system in a world within which malignant viruses of fear, hatred, populism and nationalism are tearing communities apart; and a convalescent one – wherein they help the world overcome the traumas of the past through forgiveness.

How, concretely, might each of these be envisaged?



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Our Churches need to be diagnostic; they need to name the present moment in a prophetic way. But that calls for a courage that, right now, seems lacking, derailed by fear and ideology.

Liberals and conservatives diagnose the present moment in radically different ways, not because of the facts aren't the same for both, but because each of them is seeing things through its own ideology. As well, at the end of the day, both camps seem too frightened to look at the hard issues square on, both afraid of what they might see.

To name just one issue that both seem afraid to look at with unblinking eyes: our rapidly emptying churches and the fact that so many of our own children are no longer going to church or identifying with a church.

Conservatives simplistically blame secularism, without ever really being willing to openly debate the various critiques of the churches coming from almost every part of society. Liberals, for their part, tend to simplistically blame conservative rigidity without really

being open to courageously look at some of places within secularity where faith in a transcendent God and an incarnate Christ run antithetical to some of the cultural ethos and ideologies within secularity. Both sides, as is evident from their excessive defensiveness, seem afraid to look at all the issues.

“A deeper forgiveness, healing and atonement still needs to take place apposite the world's history with colonisation, slavery...”

What must we do preventatively to turn our Churches into field hospitals? The image Halik proposes here is rich but is intelligible only within an understanding of the Body of Christ and an acceptance of the deep connection we have with each other inside the family of humanity. We are all one, one living organism, parts of a single body, so that, as with any living

“In society, everything is permitted, but nothing is forgiven; in the Church much is prohibited, but everything is forgiven...”



Fr Tomáš Halik.

body, what any one part does, for disease or health, affects every other part. And the health of a body is contingent upon its immune system, upon those enzymes that roam throughout the body and kill off cancerous cells.

Today our world is beset with cancerous cells of bitterness, hatred, lying, self-protecting fear and tribalism of every kind. Our world is mortally ill; suffering from a cancer that's destroying community.

Hence our ecclesial communities must become places that generate the healthy enzymes that are needed to kill off those cancer cells. We must create an

immune system robust enough to do this. And for that to happen, we must first, ourselves, stop being part of the cancer of hatred, lying, fear, opposition and tribalism.

Too often, we ourselves are the cancerous cells. The single biggest religious challenge facing us as ecclesial communities today is that of creating an immune system that's healthy and vigorous enough to help kill off the cancerous cells of hatred, fear, lying and tribalism that float freely throughout the world.

Finally, our convalescent role: our ecclesial communities need to help the world come to a deeper reconciliation *vis-a-vis* the traumas of the past. Happily, this is one of our strengths. Our Churches are sanctuaries of forgiveness. In the words of Cardinal Francis George: "In society, everything is permitted, but nothing is forgiven; in the Church much is prohibited, but everything is forgiven."

But where we need to be more proactive as sanctuaries of forgiveness today is in relation to a number of salient 'traumas of the past'. In brief, a deeper forgiveness, healing and atonement still needs to take place apposite the world's history with colonisation, slavery, the status of women, the torture and disappearance of peoples, the mistreatment of refugees, the perennial support of unjust regimes and the atonement owed to Mother Earth herself. Our Churches must lead this effort.

Our ecclesial communities as field hospitals can be the Galilee of today.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 23, 2020

Personal Profile

Fr Martin Keane:
'My heart was still
in Africa'

Page 34



Low effort



Hanging around the house for such an extended period of time is no easy feat. One of the nice things about these times is that you can finally start to get stuck into that list of things you always said you would do to improve your living space.

You might be especially noticing the areas in your home that really just aren't fully serving their purpose: cluttered desks, unorganised storage and uncomfortable cushions. However, at the minute with supplies being slightly harder than usual to obtain, it can be tough to get motivated and even tougher to actually make any improvements.



Looking to do some DIY in your spare time? Róise McGagh shares some tips for getting started with minimal materials

There are some lazy hacks, that some would just call smart hacks, that can really spruce up your living space with minimal time, money and effort. Don't worry if you're the opposite of a handyman or if you're living in a rented space, you won't be making any major renovations.

A good idea is to take one room at a time, don't go straight in for a total house overhaul. The first thing you will want to do is have a long think about

what happens in this space every day. Take your living room for example. How can you make it so that you have space to do your home workouts and store your yoga mat? Maybe you want to have a well-lit cosy corner for reading, or the couch to be facing the TV so no one's neck gets strained and the TV beside the window so there is less glare. You might like to have a table at the ready to play cards on or a poof to place your

feet upon when you kick back for the evening.

Once you have thought through the way you want the room to be arranged you can get started. The simplest thing that you can first do when reinvigorating your space is to paint it. Most people have a good bucket, or five, of spare paint lying around. If you don't have enough of a new colour left to go over your walls you could try your supermarket, there could be a chance they have it in stock. If you're having no luck, you're bound to have enough left over of whatever colour you last painted to at least clean up your walls. If you have some white or magnolia to go over the ceiling

it can also add a subtle freshness to the room.

Next take some time to declutter and reorganise the room. Charity shops aren't open at the minute so most aren't taking donations. Try and repurpose the things you have lying around if they don't fit that room anymore, and never throw away things that can be reworked. Old cushions, dusty books, well used candle sticks and curled rugs can all be restored with a little tender love and care.

There are loads of online tutorials on how to restore your old belongings. One simple thing

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Family News



AND EVENTS

CORK QUIZMASTERS RAISE OVER €11K FOR CHARITIES

An online quiz set up by two cork natives has raised over €11,500 for charities since lockdown began. Patrick Ahern and Colm Lougheed set up and present a quiz live every Tuesday, it is free to join and they encourage people to donate to a selected charity every week. They also have themed quizzes on a Friday which is used to pay the bills and keep the other quiz up and running. The pair often MC and run events together in Cork, however have recently been forced to stop. They personally donated €1000 to pieta house on top of the donations received in their quiz on April 14. "The response from the public has been much bigger than anything we expected and we hope to be able to help out with some of the places that are most under pressure at the moment," says Patrick.

STUDY PROVES CHILDREN ENGAGE WITH HOW AND WHY STORIES

Children prefer storybooks that explain why and how things happen according to a new study in *Frontiers in Psychology*. Researchers have been aware of how causal information is more interesting to children, however they didn't know whether it influenced their preferences in activities like reading. "We wanted to explore how this early interest in causal information might affect everyday activities with young children - such as joint book reading," explains Margaret Shavlik of Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, one of the researchers. "We believe this result may be due to children's natural desire to learn about how the world works," explains Shavlik. The results could be helpful for parents and teachers and help increase children's interest in reading, an important part of early literacy and language skills. "If children do indeed prefer storybooks with causal explanations, adults might seek out more causally rich books to read with children, which might in turn increase the child's motivation to read together, making it easier to foster early literacy," added Shavlik.

REPLACE THOSE DRYER SHEETS AND FABRIC SOFTENERS

There are a few ways to make your washing more eco-friendly. One of these is to use dryer balls to replace your dryer sheets and or fabric softener. Never heard of them? Dryer balls come in lots of different materials and sizes, the most popular type being wool dryer balls. You can get plastic and rubber ones too however wool ones are slightly better for a number of reasons. Wool dryer balls are the most biodegradable alternative and they soften fabrics by agitating against the fibres in clothes. This means that on a shorter drying cycle clothes should feel softer. The way they work is that they help prevent wet clothes from sticking together in the dryer, they separate items and allow warm air to flow between them. The dryer balls also get hot quickly, which adds extra heat to the dryer and boosts the whole process. This means that a load of washing dries faster and more efficiently.

Saying goodbye during Covid-19 crisis



My husband's uncle died yesterday. He had Down's syndrome and spent his life surrounded by love, a valuable and cherished member of his family. He enjoyed his simple pleasures like his soft toys, his Star War figures and his cartoons.

When my husband and I visited him some weeks ago in hospital, a big tear rolled down his cheek as he sat, propped up in his ICU hospital bed, one of his favourite toys under his arm. He was soon giving us a few broad smiles and pretending to play his imaginary guitar. I brought him a little St Martin de Porres prayer card and he raised his hand and pointed intently at the image of the kindly saint. I'd like to think that St Martin was close to Uncle Ed in his last hours. Sadly, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we didn't see him again.

The arrangements for the funeral won't include the usual Irish wake, celebration of Mass and what's termed 'the good send-off'. That will have to wait for later.

Ed came from a big family and they'll be deprived of the usual comforts that would help them to deal with this tragic loss of a brother, an uncle, a friend. The death notice stated simply that the funeral would be private, not the family's choice, but because of the constraints of the coronavirus outbreak.

The shared stories of Ed's life, that should be shared in intimate conversation with family, friends and neighbours, will have to wait too. That's one of the most difficult things of all during these changed times: not being able to say goodbye in the way that is so much part of who we are. Even a hug among siblings and dear friends is out



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

of the question. My husband, normally so stoical, was upset and sad that he couldn't even give his own mother a hug to support and comfort her on losing her younger brother. A few feet can seem like an unbearable boundary when it separates you from those you love during the very time they need you most.

One of my nieces, a charming young woman who's training to be a nurse, took up the call to work during this crisis to add another pair of arms to what is regularly referred to as 'the war'. In many ways, it is a war. The efforts of so many are reminiscent of World War II, when British women were desperately needed to take up roles traditionally occupied by men, from the tough job of farming the land to working in factory production lines.

Those on frontline duties are called upon to be modern day heroes, sometimes putting their very lives at risk. While working with vulnerable Covid-19 patients, my courageous niece won't have the simple, reassuring comfort of a hug or kiss, even from her own family members.

Social distancing is even more of a cross for the elderly and those who live alone. It struck me recently that this is not just some strange dream where we consume our stocks of rapidly bought food, compare bread recipes online and adjust to children being under our feet,

morning, noon and night. This is deadly serious.

Many have already lost loved ones, this awful virus cruelly stealing away any last moments they should have had together. It's not all about illness and death, how I miss visiting my four beautiful grandchildren who live in Co. Armagh. We could all manage for a few weeks but it just dawned on me in recent days that I won't see their sweet faces anytime soon except through a computer or phone screen.



We all have the aching desire for human interaction and comfort. When that is taken away from us, we start to really focus on the only true source of unfailing comfort and joy, the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Spring is here, the Lord has truly risen as he said he would; green leaves

have appeared on the trees, and everywhere there are signs of new life and growth.

Life has changed, changed utterly, but the eternal love of God for each and every one of us can never change. God will never abandon us. My sister sent me a beautiful picture of Jesus carrying a woman along a lonely beach. It reminded me of how a father carries a sick or weary child. Our hearts are aching but we are not alone. St Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei in one of his books wrote: "We've got to be convinced that God is always near us. We live as though he were far away in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side."

“Many have already lost loved ones, this awful virus cruelly stealing away any last moments they should have had together.”

The Leaving Certificate won't be starting in June; those tickets to sunny summer destinations won't be used this year; even a beach, river or forest on our own lovely island is out of bounds if more than a few miles down the road.

Our world has got smaller as we all adjust to this global house arrest. And yet, as the recent Feast of Divine Mercy reminds us all, God loves us, all of us. The love of our dearest friend is greater than any hardships we may have to endure. If we call on God with faith and trust, there will be no end to our joy. May that knowledge sustain us in the months ahead.

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you can do to create space in a room is to add mirrors. Maybe you don't want that full length mirror in your bedroom anymore reminding you that what you considered 'getting dressed' today is basically just another pair of pyjamas. You can turn it on its side and put it in the hall or the living room. This is great for injecting some light and space into a dark pokey area.

Something that can also make a room seem clearer and brighter is to replace heavy curtains with light ones or blinds for the warmer month. Most people of course don't have the luxury of having a shed full of extra window dressings, so what you can do is make your curtains smaller. You can chop the bottom and sew a new hem (make sure it's straight!). Often curtains are also too wide, you could cut it down to one curtain per window or loosen the scrunch at the tops of them if you can, and take some material off the side. This will mean there is less material blocking the light coming in. You'll be shocked at how much of a difference you can make.

“you can finally start to get stuck into that list of things you always said you would do to improve your living space”

With the extra material, if you're really feeling that inner tailor and there is enough of it, you could make some covers for old cushions. This will really tie the room together provided the pattern is not an eye sore.

If you have decided to go for a bigger task like taking down a shelving unit and putting it up somewhere else, make sure you keep all of the parts somewhere so you won't lose them. Also be sure to

take a photo of what it looked like before so you can reference back to that if something goes awry.

“Maybe you want to have a well-lit cosy corner for reading, or the couch to be facing the TV so no one's neck gets strained”

If you have an idea but aren't sure how to execute it, YouTube is your best friend. If you can think of it, there is likely a tutorial out there along the lines of what you are looking for. Instagram can be great too. There are some great accounts that post DIY tips and tricks that could add to your project. One 'She-I-Y' hero is Laura de Barra. The Cork native's book 'Gaff Goddess' hit the best sellers list after it came out in September 2019. She shares different ideas on cleaning, making things and simple pieces of DIY tricks almost every day – and you don't need to be an expert to follow along.



One other really simple thing you can do is give your white towels or sheets a proper soak in some whitening washing powder to spruce them up, then give them a few minutes in the dryer to make them soft. Give that shower curtain a scrub with some bicarbonate of soda (which is also great for soap scum on shower doors, sinks and baths) and then throw it in the wash. Dust and repaint the skirting boards, polish the light switches. Even just simply giving your rugs a bash on the washing line and then letting them air out can perk up a room.

“Maybe you don't want that full length mirror in your bedroom anymore reminding you that what you considered 'getting dressed' today is basically just another pair of pyjamas”

Plants and art are also great additions to any room. Get out your inner gardener and create your own little windowsill herb garden. Painting your own picture for your own space is a great way to tie the room together. You don't need to be an artist, just get the colours you want mixed and let your inner impressionist assemble them on the canvas. Just don't do so much blending that they turn brown!

There is no end to the ways you can redo your home with what you already have lying around. It is just a case of getting a little bit creative, repurposing what you already have and getting down to it.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



The sky is a deeper blue than before the pandemic. It is no longer being washed pale by so many aircraft contrails. In Cork, we are on the flightpath from London to New York, so the effect is particularly pronounced. The silence is deeper too, as there are fewer cars and trucks rumbling about. People in towns and cities are breathing noticeably cleaner air, thanks to the lack of traffic. The coronavirus pandemic has given nature a break, and instilled an eerie and sometimes beautiful calm upon the world.

In our family, there was little time to appreciate such phenomena until our stay-at-home holiday began last week. At last, we could rest for a few days – after an intense few weeks with my wife working late shifts in the hospital, while the household struggled with various illnesses, home working and the new home schooling routine.

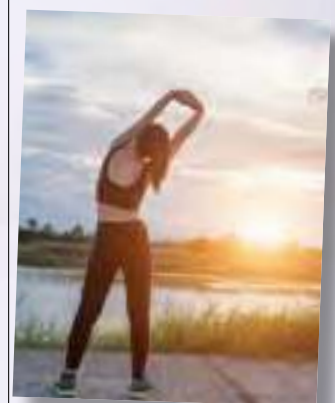
In happier times, we had booked a lakeside cottage up the country, but the coronavirus crisis meant that this holiday would instead be spent within the confines of our own garden. Thankfully, the weather co-operated magnificently in creating our holiday illusion - at times even going overboard and giving us the impression of being away in France or Spain.

“The coronavirus pandemic has given nature a break, and instilled an eerie and sometimes beautiful calm upon the world”

We had stocked up on treats and wine and so we began our staycation with a big family celebration to mark the beginning of our holidays. Soon, our workaday cares were forgotten. There was time to play football and hurling with the kids, to chat, and even to nap. I built a little treehouse, which the kids helped with. I showed the older kids how to saw wood and how to drill, and they quickly began making homemade wooden boats which they raced in the stream.

The sunny days saw us living almost exclusively outdoors, relishing again the sun on our faces after a long winter. The kids helped me to

build a firepit in the woods. I cut logs to serve as fireside stools for the kids. They gathered sticks and soon we had a warm fire blazing. For three evenings in a row we ate outdoors, cooking baked potatoes in the hot embers, toasting sausages on long sticks and debating why food cooked outside tastes so much better. The kids bravely took to immersing themselves in the stream and then warming themselves by the heat of the fire. The older kids even camped outdoors one evening, braving the still chilly nights and marvelling at the stars.



Happy hours were also spent digging out the vegetable patch and filling pots with compost. Seeds were planted, both flowers and vegetables. Lettuce, parsley, chives and thyme all were planted by the kids. In the evenings, we grown-ups sat outdoors, long into the dusk chatting, while the kids played in the treehouse.

After a long day spent outdoors, the fresh air and exercise saw the whole family sleep contentedly. Phones and laptops were forgotten, and indeed I sometimes even forgot that we were in the midst of a global pandemic - until I would absentmindedly pick up my phone, to be startled as my newsfeed relayed some new grim tally of death.

All the time, in the background, it was Easter; the time of a new light upon the world. New shoots grew brightly from the dead wood on the forest floor. Life was carrying on in all its colour and vigour, perfectly oblivious to the fact that half the world was quarantined indoors, and gripped by fearful rumours of illness, death and economic collapse. Yet there was no sign of all this out in the garden, apart from the bluer sky.

Fr Martin Keane: 'My heart was still in Africa'

Personal Profile



Róise McGagh

“It was a great life to live and as one says I would do it all over again.”

Fr Martin Keane set off for Kenya in 1971. He had always wanted to be a missionary. Since he was in national school in his home town of Cranny, Co Clare, he recalls being told stories of missions from priests home on their holidays.

He attended Rockwell College in Co. Tipperary where he now sits on the school board since he returned to Ireland in 2015. There he was introduced to Holy Ghost Fathers who ran the school.

Entering the order straight after school, he studied philosophy for three years in UCD. As part of his studies between 1965 and 1967 he did pastoral work in Trinidad and the West Indies of which he has fond memories.

In July 1970 he was ordained in Lissycasey, Co. Clare. “We were asked where we would like to be appointed to. So I said I would like to be appointed back to Trinidad if possible, I was told that Trinidad isn't really considered mission territory.”

And so he was appointed to Mombasa, Kenya. He learned Swahili, “which is a beautiful language, it's very musical. Oh I loved the music and the dancing and everything,” says Fr Martin. He was fully immersed in the language, “I picked it up fairly fast, then I was able to talk to people in their own language and able to say Masses in Swahili.”



From the very beginning of his work in Kenya, Fr Martin was involved in training young people. He was also director of vocations to the priesthood for the diocese. He says that after a year in Mombasa the bishop at the time called him and asked him to be his secretary. He was afraid he wouldn't have the skills but it was mostly driving the bishop to confirmations, “it was great actually because I saw nearly all of the diocese”.

The bishop said to him one day ‘you're young you could take on another job’. He said, “well I want you to be in charge of youth”.

“I had great days with all kinds of different youth groups; holding workshops and retreats and trainings with young people. They were very responsive.”

An African bishop took over the diocese after the Irish bishop

retired. Martin says that he asked him for a parish, “and he said start one”. The bishop named a place and Fr Martin started from scratch in Changamwe.

Many of the young people he worked with were unemployed. This spurred him on to develop projects such as a multi-purpose training centre in this parish.

He spent around five years there before he was transferred to the Holy Ghost Cathedral in Mombasa. “The year I started in the cathedral we were celebrating 100 years of the Catholic faith in Kenya and so I was given the job of organising it and it was marvellous,” says Fr Martin.

He came back to Ireland for a holiday one summer. “I think it was 1989 and I went up to see Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich in Armagh.” He invited him to attend the centenary,

“he gave me a very interesting answer, he said ‘I would love to come but a lot may happen between now and then.’” The cardinal then passed away on a trip to Lourdes.

After this he was transferred to another diocese in Nairobi. “I was very lonely leaving Mombasa, I loved Mombasa I was there for 20 years and I had known so many people.

“I went to Nairobi and I was in the university chaplaincy and they were wonderful.” He celebrated Mass with the students as well as the staff there, once again working with young people.

From here he went on to become the Regional Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Kenya and was then elected as Provincial Superior of the Irish Province from 1994 to 2000.

Returning to Kenya, he began to help out in setting up small Christian communities in Nairobi, where lay

people formed groups in their local area. “In many ways we were way ahead of Ireland, with the lay people in leadership and it came naturally to them,” says Fr Martin.

“Then I said, ‘my heart is still in Mombasa so I want to go back to Mombasa.’”

Over his years in Kenya he developed projects for young people such as the multi-purpose training centre in his first Parish Changamwe and a Vocational School in the parish of Mikindani. This meant young people had access to training in different skills such as carpentry, metal work, motor mechanics, dressmaking and tailoring to name a few.

He wanted to give young people practical, employable skills and it's still running after almost 20 years.

In 2007 Fr Martin was appointed to work on a new parish called Migombani. With help from sponsors in Clare under the ‘Building of Hope’ project, Fr Martin Keane was able to establish a Polytechnic Vocational School in the parish in 2010. Fr Martin Keane's says: “I believe there are around 800 students now.”

He had returned to Ireland five years after the school was built and at end of last year he went out to revisit the area for a few weeks, “that was lovely. It was a very emotional time for me, to go back and meet some of the people that I had known and worked with”.

He says that the inspiring young people were one of the highlights of his work, they kept him motivated: “I suppose really they were the people of tomorrow, it was the growth of the people who would be Church leaders and leaders in society as well.”

“The one thing that encouraged me very much was the response from them and there was such quality in their leadership, that encouraged me to keep going.”



Children's Corner

Róise McGagh

How to build your own secret fort

Being around family 24/7 can be pretty tough. Sometimes you just want to go and do something fun outside but that's unfortunately something that's not on the cards for a little while at least.

However, you can create your own private, cosy space inside your own home with minimal materials. A place for you to chill out on your own or maybe invite in a trusted sibling to nest and have some fun.

All you need to make your very own, secret blanket fort is, a space or a corner and permission to use it, two chairs and another piece of furniture nearby, pillows, some pegs, some safety pins and some large blankets or sheets.

First you'll need to figure out what shape you're going for and how it will be held together. Make a plan that seems sturdy and avoid taping blankets together or to walls as they will definitely fall down.

There are a few ways you could structure your fort depending on the materials you have. You could use some stiff couch cushions piled on top of each other as a wall and use some

heavy books to keep the blanket weighed down onto them. Then you can peg the rest of the blanket to two chairs to create your roof.

Other ways of creating a roof could be getting some old broom handles or sticks and put them across the tops of two chairs, just make sure they won't be able to slip, then drape the blanket over them. You can then weigh the edges of the blankets down with heavy books and make sure they're taut to create a sloped wall.

If your blanket isn't big enough try a sheet or safety pin some blankets together. Make sure to use plenty of pins so the blankets don't rip or stretch from the tension.

Once you have made a pretty sturdy fort, now it's time to decorate. See what you can

get your hands on, battery powered lamps are great and so are fairy lights for creating a nice chill, ambient environment. Once you have

lighting sorted (and battery powered lighting is recommended in case things get sat on and pulled down), it's time to bring in the soft pillows to make up your floor. Blankets and sleeping bags are also perfect for making this even more cosy.

Make sure you have a flap at your entrance and make up a cryptic password for letting people in. Then grab some snacks, a book, a torch or extra light and maybe a buddy, and spend some time in your own private space.

Don't get discouraged if you have to take down your fort because the chairs are needed for dinner time. Building a fort is most of the fun anyways, any you can just think of new ways to structure and improve your building every time.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



What a great time to phone a friend...

There are so many good dramas on TV at the moment, so it's great to have all this extra time to indulge.

One of the best last week was **Quiz** (ITV, Monday-Wednesday), based on the true story of an alleged scam involving contestants on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* I found it completely absorbing, and it helped that I couldn't remember how it turned out in real life.

The tone was whimsical at times, almost Ealing comedy style, but also it was sad, painful and very serious. I liked the background it gave on the creation of the hit show and on the 'community' of fans that built up around it as would-be contestants went to ridiculous lengths to get onto the show for a shot at winning the elusive million pounds.

The rampant materialism was evident, but contestants were also motivated by the thrill of the game, obsession and even vanity. The show lacked a deeper insight into such matters or even into the role of conscience. The similarly-themed film *Quiz Show*, based on an American quiz show scandal, did a much better job in this respect.

Michael Sheen was brilliant as Chris Tarrant, the show's host, Matthew Macfayden was all wide-eyed as an innocent (or was he?) as the alleged scammer Charles Ingram, and Sian Clifford



Sian Clifford, Matthew Macfayden and Michael Sheen starred in *Quiz* (ITV).

as his wife was enjoyably inscrutable. Mark Bonnar, who seems to be in every drama series these days was excellently edgy as the show's creator Paul Smith. Irish comedians Aisling Bea and Risteard Cooper did fine turns in serious roles as media executives.

This will probably turn up on one of the Virgin Media channels in Ireland so be sure to catch it. Apart from a few profanities it's remarkably free of 'adult content' and all the more enjoyable for that.

The Nest, a drama series that ended last week on BBC1, was a cautionary tale about surrogacy and the huge dan-

gers and complexities it gives rise to. Watching it felt like being dragged through an emotional wringer.

Surrogacy

It was hard to tell whether the show was supporting of surrogacy (hardly) or making a case for better legal frameworks, or maybe it was just telling a story and letting us make up our own minds. Issues of privilege and power imbalance were teased out in the story of a wealthy young couple paying a young girl recently released from prison to be their surrogate, but I didn't find it preachy as the plot took various unexpected

twists and turns, leading to a satisfying conclusion.

Martin Compston (*Line of Duty*) and Sophie Rundle (*Bodyguard*) were riveting as the parents, but Mirren Mack gave a mighty performance as the young girl, conveying a range of emotions – vulnerability, malice, bitterness, disillusion, despair and hope.

There was quite an amount of foul language and abortion was seen uncritically as an option, but underneath all this the show had a heart and maybe, ultimately, a pro-life perspective in the broadest sense.

Another series that ended last Sunday was the costume drama **Belgravia** (UTV), adapted from his own novel by Julian Fellowes (*Downton Abbey*). I was lukewarm at first and yes it had many of the clichés of the genre (including hidden family secrets and the inevitable cad), but it had a certain humanity – the characters were reasonably engaging, and the acting was classy. It was interesting to see Tamsin Greig and Paul Ritter from *Friday Night Dinner* in very different roles, showing how versatile they are, and they were joined to great effect by other stalwarts like Tom Wilkinson.

The drama was infused with themes of morality, family devotion, sin, redemption, hope, class privilege and judgementalism.

One of the most obnoxious

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC1, Sunday, April 26, 1.15pm

Seán Fletcher looks back on journeys to ancient and sacred places of pilgrimage, including Lourdes and the spectacular abbey of Mont St Michel in France.

VATICANO

EWTN, Sunday, April 26, 8.30pm, Monday, April 27, 7.30am, Tuesday, April 28, 2.30pm

On the Pope's schedule in the time of quarantine: presenting the latest news from the Vatican with excerpts and analysis of the Holy Father's recent audiences and writings.

NEW! HOLY ROSARY IN TIME OF PANDEMIC

EWTN, Monday, April 27, 2pm

From Our Lady of the Angels Chapel in Irondale, Alabama.



Tamsin Greig starred in ITV's *Belgravia*.

characters was a vain pastor with an addiction to gambling, a total lack of personal insight, and a repulsive sense

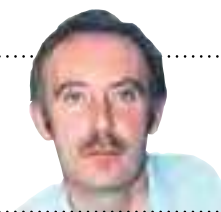
of his own importance. The one time he had to deliver a sermon (pre-written by an absent colleague) it was all about his own sins. A better man might have taken it as a sign, but he just took it as a nuisance. In one key scene a woman of loose morals actually referenced Christ when she tries to convince her husband of his own worth, in that while he was tempted, as Christ was, he did the right thing.

I found the ending quite acceptable – enough closure to be satisfying but enough openings for a potential second series.

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Film

Aubrey Malone



It's official – staying in really is the new going out!

One of the ironies of the coronavirus (Covid-19) virus is that at a time when we really need films to give us some escape from the crisis unfolding around us, we can't go to cinemas. I mentioned the New Faith Network a fortnight ago. Another option is Netflix. Many of you may already have access to this. If you don't, you can purchase it for about €9 a month.

There are many Christian films you can watch on it. *Come Sunday* (2018) has Chiwetel Ejiofor as Carlton Pearson, an Oklahoma minister who was declared a heretic in 2004 by the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops. The main bone of contention was his belief that hell wasn't eter-

nal, rather an indeterminate time somewhere between "ten minutes and ten million years". He later preached that hell was on earth rather than anywhere else.

I'm in Love with a Church Girl (2013) concerns a romance between a former drug dealer and a clairvoyant woman. It's based on the life of Galley Molina, a Californian man who converted to Christianity while in prison.

The Long Goodbye (2019), not to be confused with the Robert Altman film starring Elliott Gould, is the story of Kara Tippetts, a pastor's wife with terminal cancer who faces death with dignity and courage. She was the author of a memoir called *The Hardest Peace*, which won the



Chiwetel Ejiofor stars in *Come Sunday*.

2015 Christian Book Award in the Inspiration category. Since she died, her husband has been leading the church

they founded together in Colorado Springs.

The Young Messiah (2016) is a thoughtful re-telling of

the Nativity story directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh. It begins with the flight to Egypt after Herod's massacre of the innocents. When word reaches Mary and Joseph that he's died, they return – but by now Herod's son has announced his intention to carry on where his father left off. Adam Greaves-Neal plays Jesus.

No expense spared

The Gospel of Luke won the 2015 UK Christian Film Award. It's based verbatim on the Gospel. No expense is spared with a computer-generated Jerusalem and voiceovers by Richard E. Grant and Derek Jacobi. As a partner piece to this you might like to watch *The Gospel of John*. Also done

on a big scale, it has a cast of over 2,500. It stars Henry Ian Cusick as Jesus and is narrated by Christopher Plummer.

Other films you may enjoy are *Footprints: The Path of Your Life* (2016), *Hoovey* (2015), *In-Lawfully Yours* and *The Apostle Peter: The Redemption*. If you liked *God's Not Dead* you might wish to check out the sequel, *God's Not Dead 2*. It explores problems encountered in bringing the gospels into classrooms in America.

A Matter of Faith has a college student drifting away from her faith. She falls under the influence of a biology professor who teaches that evolution provides the answer to where we came from rather than anything more spiritual.



BookReviews



Peter Costello

Recent books in brief

Pastoral Ministry in Changing Times: The Past, Present & Future of the Catholic Church in Ireland

by Aidan Ryan
(Messenger Publications, €12.95)

Aidan Ryan has been occupied for many years with pastoral retreats for the clergy. This has brought him very close to the problems, fears and hopes of those who serve in parishes across the country. In this book he had collected together some ten articles he has published since 2006 in the pages of *The Furrow* dealing with various aspects of clerical life.



Significantly, the earliest dealt with 'clergy morale'. In the 14 years since then, circumstances cannot be said to have improved. One cannot but agree with his dissentation when he is reaching for a conclusion that the 'Faith' of the people is 'ecclesiocentric' rather than 'Christocentric'. But as the numbers to be seen in churches on Sundays shrink, even that attachment is in decline.

People speak of the decline in vocations since, say, 1950. But the truth may be that the impulse that drove many vocations then is still there, but it does not find its fulfilment in an ordination, but in work in the world.

Perhaps then (though Fr Aidan does not say this) the priests of the future will also work in the world, as they did in the very brief post-war 'worker priest' movement, bringing the Gospel as they live it directly into the everyday lives of others.

This is a book to arouse many reflections, and not all of them will be for some comfortable ones.

Modern Culture & Well-being; Towards a Sustainable Future

edited by Catherine Conlon (Veritas, €14.99)

This wide ranging book brings together some 20 essays on aspects of modern life, and the effects of obesity, addiction and mental health. How are we to support well-being, physical, mental and spiritual, in an environment threatened by staggering changes?

The pieces are of variable quality and value, but many of the ideas will be found stimulating.

This book was prepared and printed before the present crisis, and many of the hopes and attitudes expressed here will inevitably be altered by what Irish society is going through now. Until this pandemic is passed the world, let alone Ireland, cannot see the way forward.

But while so many are under lock-down, and able to concentrate, in a way not previously possible, on important questions without distractions, perhaps new ideas will emerge. Hopefully we may in later years come to see this period of isolation as a 'think-in' which will produce remarkable results.



Proclaiming God's Name to Multitudes

by Eamon Flanagan
(Kolbe Publications, €7.99)

This is the latest volume of poetry from a Vincentian priest now based in what is really the heart of the modern city, that 'church at the crossroads' up in Phibsborough, Dublin, a place from which it is possible to observe the changing religious and social scene in Ireland, and to comment on it.

That Eamon Flanagan manages to write poetry in these hectic and dangerous times

is itself a sign that creativity and imagination are still widely active in Ireland, and that, as much as his insightful poetry, is a cheering fact.



The voices of silence

A History of Silence: From the Renaissance to the Present Day

by Alain Corbin
(Polity Press, £14.99)

When Silence Speaks: The Life and Spirituality of Elizabeth Leseur

by Jennifer Moorcroft
(Gracewing, €20.00)

Peter Costello

Silence, they say, is golden. But all too often we read about strenuous objections being made to the ringing of church bells in rural parts, and not only in rural parts: new residents to Clyde Road in Dublin 4 recently sought to have the bells of St Bartholomew's silenced, because they annoyed them. Having grown up listening to the sounding of the cracked bell of the Carmelite convent in Ranelagh sound the canonical hours, I find this odd. St Bartholomew's is a High Anglican church for whom the ringing of bells is significant. How it

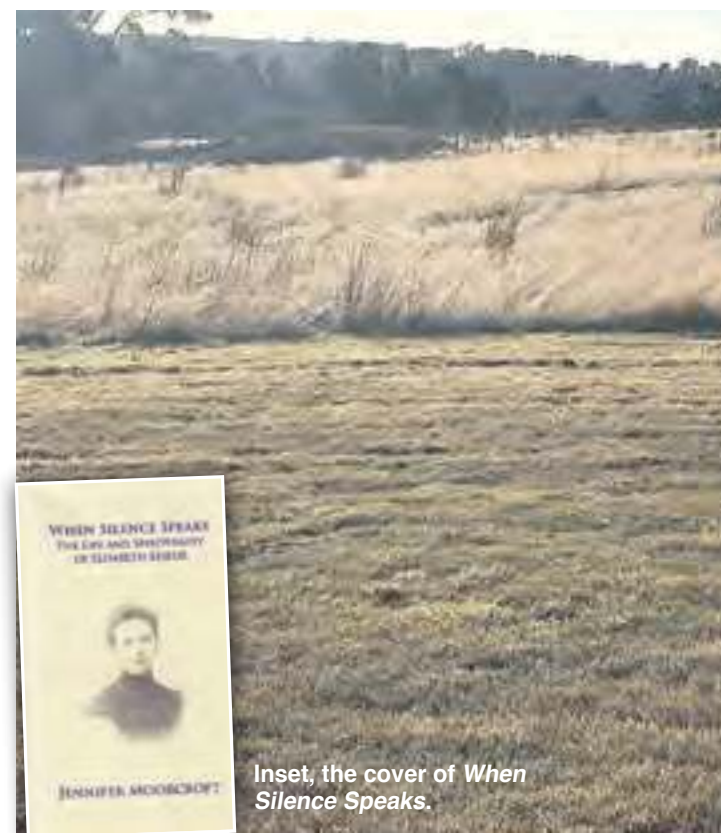
annoys people is beyond my understanding.

However, silence is indeed to be valued. But what is silence? The natural world is never silent, a hum of life prevails everywhere as those who stop and listen in field or wood well know.

What we really mean by silence is the absence of human noise. Since earliest times such silence as been valued by the reflective and mystically inclined for promoting insights into divine experiences and into life itself.

But since the industrial revolution, human noise has been compounded by the noises of industry. In the 18th century people even likened the din of industrial cities as like the 'pandemonium' in *Paradise Lost*, the terrifying clatter of all the demons in Hell gathered around Milton's Satan.

Oddly though, the silence that has descended on the neighbourhoods where we



Inset, the cover of *When Silence Speaks*.

live in this time of lock-down is very strange, even unnerving, one wakes at night bothered by the silence outside, which seems uncanny.

'Old friend'

For many people though silence was as the song says "an old friend", and not some-

thing to be fear. Hermits, recluses and monks have valued silence as well, for promoting spirituality.

This is addressed in the little biography, but Prof. Corbin's quite short book is a little disappointing. Despite the title it really covers only the 19th Century, the authors'

From Clonbur to Allantown: a Gaelic

The Lost Gaeltacht: the Land Commission Migration – Clonbur, County Galway to Allentown, County Meath

by Martin O'Halloran
(Homefarm Publishing, €29.00. Available online from Mayo Books at www.mayobooks.ie)

Ian d'Alton

On March 29, 1940, two buses left Clonbur village, sandwiched between Loughs Mask and Corrib, Co. Galway. They carried 24 apprehensive families to a hopeful new life in Co. Meath.

Economically, this sort of 'reverse Cromwellianism' saw them moving to better land; culturally, it was also one of the official government attempts to establish Irish-speaking colonies in the east of Ireland.

Martin O'Halloran comes from one of those families. His book was motivated by the importance, to him, of knowing how and why his family ended up in Meath.

Reflecting his background in public administration and

the private sector, he has approached this task with admirable thoroughness and detachment.

He has drawn upon scholars and experts to help him in his task.

The result is a fascinating account, as he says, "of a major and very significant internal migration of a Gaeltacht colony in Ireland that failed through political misadventure, abandonment and administrative indifference".

“O'Halloran characterises the area as being a 'rural slum'”

The families in Clonbur were tenants of the Ardilaun (Guinness) estate. Relations with the landlord were not good – the Guinneses resisted selling the land to the tenantry under the UK land acts. Social and economic conditions were bad.

O'Halloran characterises the area as being a "rural slum"; it is perhaps not difficult to see why families were prepared to uproot

Market day in Clonbur and, inset, an election poster.



That was the background to this particular migration.

One of the most

valuable sections of the book for scholars details how the families were chosen by the Land Commission (then in charge of resettlement), and O'Halloran shows how – and why – this was done.

Destination

The destination was the former Craig-Waller estate in Co. Meath, and O'Halloran details the land and the landed family which had owned it. Relations between

themselves into a new and possibly hostile new world. At least it wasn't as far away as America, Britain or Australia.

Following independence, the 1923 Land Act accelerated tenant possession, and in 1926, the Gaeltacht Commission report advocated spreading native Irish speakers throughout the State to bolster an 'Irish Ireland', socially and linguistically.

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.



the millennia.

To explore that one might well begin with the writings of Thomas Merton, especially *Elected Silence* (otherwise known as *The Seven Story Mountain*).

Silence though, the absence of speech, comes in different forms. The story of the French mystic and Servant of God, Elizabeth Leseur and her husband, is one which appealed deeply to many in the early 20th Century, but which now seems little known, as least here in Ireland.

She was married to an anti-clerical doctor, but she underwent a change of heart, and in her diary, the silent repository of her hopes, the silence of which was only broken after her death. Her husband, who became a Dominican, published the journal after her death in 1914.

This remarkable story is recounted by Jennifer Moorecroft. The journal is still in print as *The Secret Diary of Elisabeth Leseur* (Sophia Institute Press, £14.95). "This inspiring book," an admirer of it has written, "gives you a splendid example of how to live as a Christian in a secular environment that can be indifferent or hostile to your Faith."

'period', but does not it seem to me, despite the density of the French-style academic presentation, to penetrate to the essential heart of silence. He quotes or alludes to a wide range of writers (mainly French), but in no way that seems truly productive of an answer to the real value of

silence.

It does not provide what I would have looked for in history beginning, not perhaps with the Greeks, but with a survey of cultures without machines, to explore more deeply "the sounds of silence", and what they have revealed to the inner ear over

colony in rural Co. Meath

One of the original cottages.



landlord and tenant here seem to have been more cordial than those in Co. Galway.

But there was political hostility to the migrants, on the basis that local people should have benefited more from the estate's division.

Mostly that didn't last, though, and integration generally became the norm. O'Halloran details how the migrants fared.

The colony's proximity to Dublin ensured a measure

of economic success. It was largely a social success, too, and he details the part women played, the importance of sport, and how education was critical to its development.

It was, of course, a 'Catholic' migration, and O'Halloran chronicles the centrality of religion to the community's sense of cohesion, which was vital to its functioning and survival.

Yet whatever about pastoral and devotional

care, the lack of fluent Irish-speaking priests in Allentown was yet another nail in the coffin of preserving this as "Gaeltacht colony No.5".

As an Irish-speaking focus, it was a complete failure.

Those who were monoglot Irish-speakers soon had to become bilingual; and eventually even that bilingualism declined.

Mainly About Books

By the books editor

Some out-of-the-way Catholic sights in Rome

The lockdown came when many were planning summer excursions. Plans for travel have been postponed. So, being well supplied with books of all kinds, I have been rereading with pleasure some older travel books. One is *European Detours* (1981), subtitled 'A travel guide to unusual sights' – for once, an accurate description.

The author of this light-hearted treat was Nino Lo Bello, an Italian American financial journalist, and the author of *The Vatican Empire and Vatican, USA*. Given his Italian background and Irish wife, it was inevitable that the part of the book devoted to Italy contains a lot of material on curious Catholic sights in Rome.

The places he writes about are off-beat alternatives to the all too often over crowded visitor destinations in the Eternal City.

Everyone knows that the Vatican City is an independent entity, one of the 'micro-states' of the world. But what is not so well known is that Rome also shelters an even smaller state. This is the territory of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, a state the size of two tennis courts, which overlooks St Peter's.

The order was founded 1048, even before the First Crusade. Many think it exists to provide an agreeable social life for a few, but Lo Bello notes it sent ten White Cross teams to Vietnam to care for children during the war there.

The Order runs hospitals, leper colonies and dispensaries around the world. Visitors can have their passports stamped in an office on its medieval courtyard.

Not all tastes

Another curiosity is the ossuary in the crypt of the Capuchin church of Santa Maria della Concezione on the Via Veneto, though this may well not be for all tastes.

He also describes the Holy Stairs, a shrine in the Vatican which in Holy Week would formerly have been crowded with penitents ascending the steep flight on their knees. Tradition says the steps are from the residence of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem who used them at the trial of Jesus.

Another sight are the relics once housed in the Museo del Purgatorio. This was created at the end of the 19th Century by a Fr Vittore Jouet, with the support of Pius X and Benedict XV. However, in the last century it was closed for a generation, and when it reopened it had been purged of some of the stranger items.

“The items are all marked in some way by deceased souls who returned ‘to reassure the living about the future life’”

What remains are preserved in a cabinet in the Sacre Cuore del Suffragio on the Lungotevere Prati. There were (when Lo Bello wrote) no signs so visitors had to ring and ask for the museum's guardian. The items are all marked in some way by deceased souls who returned "to reassure the living about the future life". But, as Lo Bello notes, "the Vatican today remains



The 'Bambino of Rome'.

steadfastly silent about these 'signs from those who return'".

The most attractive sight of all is the 'Bambino of Rome'. The church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli enshrines a statue of the Infant Jesus, crowned and clothed with jewels. Every year at Christmas time the church is inundated with letters and messages from around the world.

These are placed at the foot of the Infant, and when the season is passed, having been checked for money or valuables, all are burned. None are acknowledged. This custom arose, it seems, at the end of 18th Century, but has no official recognition.

“They may not be part of what the Church wants to do today, but nevertheless, like all authentic manifestations of Faith, they are worthy of both of respect and perhaps a future visit”

But nevertheless heartfelt messages and pleas for favours sought still come in. Lo Bello quotes one from a small girl: "Dear Bambino, my mother is awaiting a baby. Make him healthy, make him intelligent and make him obey me."

The humanity of that has to have a universal appeal. Though these places belong to a former phase of Catholicism, they still speak of human needs, hopes and fears. They may not be part of what the Church wants to do today, but nevertheless, like all authentic manifestations of Faith, they are worthy of both of respect and perhaps a future visit.

Perhaps I should also remind readers of the excellent *Rome: A Pilgrim Guide* by retired priest Michael Rear (Gracewing, £14.99), a more conventional *vade mecum* which provide just the sort of information travellers with religious intentions will find most useful, and more to the point than the *Rough Guide to Rome*.

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Crossword Junior

Gordius 329



Across

- 1 The second month of the year (8)
- 5 Harry Potter's pet, Hedwig, is this kind of bird (3)
- 6 Yelling (8)
- 8 Large type of tree (3)
- 9 Sport played with a cue (7)
- 10 You aim at this (6)
- 13 Piece of torn clothing (3)
- 15 Slide out of control (4)
- 17 Person who produces food from the land (6)
- 18 Give something away for money (4)
- 19 Use them to cut paper, for example (8)

Down

- 1 Quickest (7)

- 2 Use it to keep your place in the novel you're reading (8)
- 3 Creature from another planet (5)
- 4 Use it to make bread (5)
- 7 Well-behaved (4)
- 9 Small building in the back garden (4)
- 11 They're left when something has been burned (5)
- 12 A fish breathes through these (5)
- 13 In the Shakespeare play, he was in love with Juliet (5)
- 14 They're microscopic and can make you ill (5)
- 16 We listen with these (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 16

GORDIUS No. 451

- Across** – 1 Biographer 6 Shop 10 Awful 11 Tae kwon do
12 Prudent 15 Ledge 17 Heel 18 Oboe 19 Omits 21 Somehow
23 Tryst 24 Tyro 25 Rind 26 Addle 28 Shebeen 33 Prankster
34 Cigar 35 Trey 36 Bad manners

- Down** – 1 Boar 2 Offertory procession 3 Riled 4 Putin 5 Ewes 7 Honed

- 9 Swallow 13 Expo 14 Threads 16 Postman Pat 20 Ivy League
21 Streaky bacon 22 Once 27 Drake 29 Harem 31 Etna 32 Errs

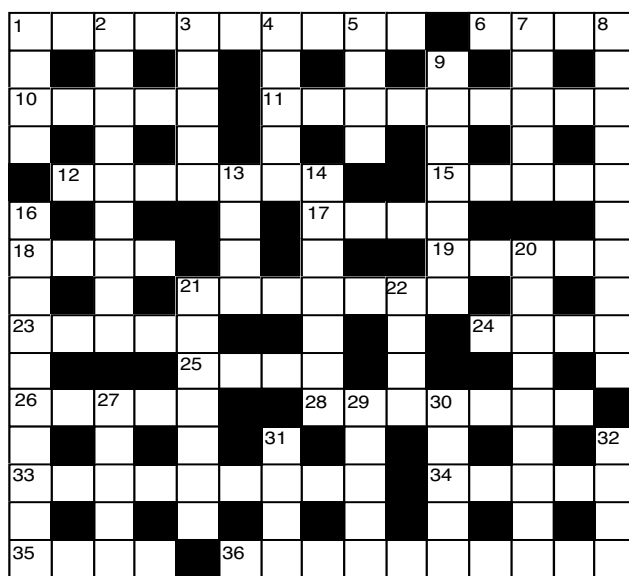
CHILDREN'S No. 328

- Across** – 1 School tour 5 Understand 7 Even 10 Easier 14 Aunt
15 Cry 16 Scot 17 Tee 18 Cue 19 Room 20 Pubs 21 Cyclist

- Down** – 1 Sauce 2 Hedge 3 Listen 4 Rudder 6 Ass 8 Victory
9 Natural 11 Attempt 12 Ice cube 13 Ryder

Crossword

Gordius 452



Across

- 1 Explosive action seen at noontide, perhaps (10)
- 6 Egyptian goddess, the wife and sister of Osiris (4)
- 10 Canadian territory associated with the Klondike Gold Rush (5)
- 11 Many people are moved by this person's work! (3,6)
- 12 Ornamental bottles, found by an artist in diners (7)
- 15 Accommodation for a minister of alternative means (5)
- 17 An arm or leg (4)
- 18 As a Russian ruler, he was Terrible! (4)
- 19 Fastening found in a flat chamber (5)
- 21 Absence of sound (7)
- 23 Illuminated by the transplanting of a tulip (3,2)
- 24 How will a rodent chew ginger nut and walnut starters? (4)
- 25 Imperial unit of measurement of area (4)
- 26 Help yourself and the detective to some drink (3,2)
- 28 Ten-gallon hat (7)
- 33 Changed religion as one added two points to a try? (9)
- 34 This nymph might have upset Diana or Aidan (5)
- 35 The cardinals' silver is what the robbers have taken (4)
- 36 Warrior whose vehicle had plenty of horsepower! (10)

Down

- 1 These are not the nights to start dreaming about your success (4)
- 2 Assume a role in order to dismantle (4,5)
- 3 Oriental warrior (5)
- 4 Bleat about an item of furniture (5)
- 5 English river of unusually splendid environmental origins (4)
- 7 The number you get when you total the spots on opposite faces of a die (7)
- 8 This nocturnal predator made it out of a slow creche (7,3)
- 9 Complain (7)
- 13 Pacific Island country where you'll get fish in jellied isinglass starters (4)
- 14 Parts of a garment that cover the arms (7)
- 16 Dinosaur that might make Cupid so old, literally (10)
- 20 The odds equate to two-to-one when it's almost the end of the working day (3,2,4)
- 21 The plane is diverted by a dog (7)
- 22 Arrive in company with me (4)
- 27 City in Northern Italy (5)
- 29 The royal line of Henry VIII (5)
- 30 Dance to make your colour leave (5)
- 31 Engrave part of a stretcher (4)
- 32 Rode around an East European river (4)

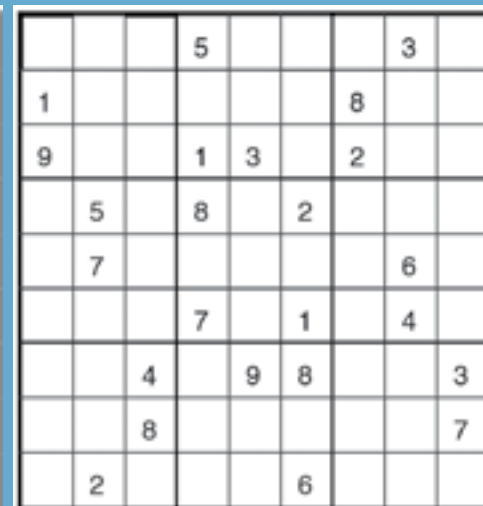
Sudoku Corner

329

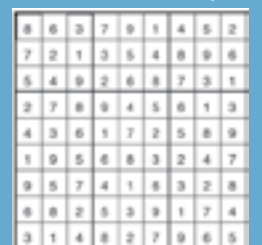
Easy



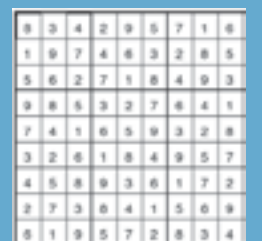
Hard



Last week's Easy 328



Last week's Hard 328





Fr Martin Delaney

Notebook

The power of reaching out despite social distancing

RECENTLY, I HAD A conversation with a friend whose husband died some months ago. She is desperately lonely and that loneliness is made far worse because her children and grandchildren cannot visit her during these Covid-19 Days. But it is the loss of her husband, her best friend that brings the greatest loneliness: "I miss his gentle touch," she said.

I was reminded of another conversation I had with a woman in one of my former parishes. A local sister, Sr Mary, who was also a massage therapist, offered massage for parishioners and her rooms were in our parish centre. One day I met a friend heading into her for a massage and I was gently teasing her about how she was spoiling herself. She laughed but then turned very serious and looked straight at me and said: "Since my husband died three years ago, nobody has touched me in a healing and compassionate way and that's why I come here for a massage."

Healing

In these days of social or physical distancing, healing and compassionate touch is the one



thing that is in short supply albeit for a very good reason. This is one of the greatest challenges and deprivations resulting from the current pandemic.

I was recently reading an article by Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California where he writes: "A lack of physical touch can affect people in more ways than they might realise...touch is the fundamental language of connection...when you think about a parent-child bond or two friends or romantic partners, a lot of the ways in which we connect and trust and collaborate are founded in touch."

Healing touch was a central part of Jesus' ministry and

particularly after the resurrection. The first thing Mary wanted to do when she realised it was Jesus in the garden was to touch him. In the gospel of last Sunday Jesus invites Thomas to touch his wounds.

Physical touch becomes the way Jesus' followers know his resurrection is real.

In our modern society, touch is one of the most controversial topics. How many disputes in workplaces, social settings and even at home are about when and how to touch and when not to touch. Touch can be coercive and unwelcome and yet can also be healing and transformative.

Power

Earlier in Jesus' ministry he felt power go out of him when a woman who suffered from a 12-year illness came up and touched the hem of his garment. It is a powerful story about touch because it reverses our usual fears.

She was forced to be socially and physically distant from her neighbours for those 12 years lest

they should be infected by her illness.

When she touched Jesus the opposite happened. His healing power and grace was more infectious than her infirmity. Is it possible in this pandemic there is something happening more powerful and infectious than the coronavirus.

We have by and large become very disciplined when it comes to distancing and cocooned isolation. We understand the dangers of physical touch but in order for us to come out of this crisis stronger than we went into it, cannot be simply about refraining from doing certain everyday things.

In the extraordinary commitment and courage of our healthcare workers and other frontline staff, in the countless and creative acts of kindness from one neighbour to another, we are witnessing something possibly more infectious than the virus itself.

Despite our isolation and separation from one another this extraordinary generous spirit has the power to bind us together in a way we not have experienced before and it is simply very touching.

Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

We are discovering ways to touch each other's lives which do not involve physical touch and the cumulative effect of these gestures of kindness and gentleness may well turn out to be far more contagious than the coronavirus.



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