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Call to end schools handover until safeguards guaranteed

EXCLUSIVE

Ruadhán Jones

The divestment of Catholic schools in the Republic must stop until the Government gives a guarantee that the State will not attempt to undermine the Catholic identity of remaining schools, leading education experts have warned.

The "clock is ticking" for Catholic education because, as divestment – handing some schools over to State control – drags on, calls for "removal of all religious ethos from schools" are likely to grow.

The warning comes from leading academics Professors Patrick Connolly, Eugene Duffy and Eamonn Conway in a position paper seen by *The Irish Catholic* and due to be published in the journal *The Furrow* early next month.

However, their radical plan would see the number of Catholic schools drop dramatically to make way for others where parents no longer want a Catholic ethos.

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'Your children will be disciples of the Lord'



Kieran and Bernadette McKeating with their baby Gideon and Amélia, Luisa and Radko Vykukal take in the atmosphere and talks of the Divine Mercy Conference on Saturday, February 18, in Dublin's RDS. Photo: Alexis Sierra. See pages 18-19.

Tributes paid to Irish bishop shot dead in US

Chai Brady

Tributes have poured in for the Irish-born Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles David O'Connell who was shot dead in his home.

The 69-year-old Cork native was a well-known community peacemaker who spent decades ministering in areas afflicted by poverty and gang violence.

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin said the "tragic death" has sent "shockwaves" across the diocese.

"Bishop David worked tirelessly for peace and harmony in communities; may he now rest in the peace of the Lord," Bishop Gavin said.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles José H. Gomez said in a statement: "It is a shock and I have no words to express my sadness. As a priest and later a bishop here in Los Angeles for forty-five years, Bishop Dave was a man of deep prayer who had a great love for Our Blessed Mother,"

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MARY KENNY

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Call to end schools handover until safeguards guaranteed

» Continued from Page 1

Up to two-thirds of Catholic primary schools would need to be divested for such a strategy to succeed they say, with the three experts recommending between 400-800 schools.

All three have worked in teacher education and continuing professional development of Catholic teachers for many years.

The Church has to negotiate a settlement to safeguard the future of Catholic education or else see its patronage "eroded" by legislation and curriculum changes, they warn.

This outcome "would be the worst of both worlds for the Church's mission: in charge of Catholic schools but not in control, yet without a meaningful voice in their own schools," warn the three influential academics.

However, they argue it is also wrong to refuse to facilitate change for those parents who want their child educated in a school that does not have a Catholic ethos.

They add that if the Church does not work with the State to facilitate change, "then it will be forced upon it by constitutional referendum, with a resulting radical removal of faith from the Irish publicly-funded school system".

A strategy is needed "urgently" to ensure enough schools for parents who want a Catholic education for their children and staffed by people who want to work in the Catholic ethos, they say in an article for the March edition of *The Furrow*.

"It is imperative that further divestment, beyond what may be realised by the

pilot reconfiguration process currently underway, should cease until negotiations are concluded," the professors warn.

"Continuing unilateral divestment by individual patrons locally can only undermine a negotiated settlement at national level."

Divestment is in the best interest of the State and the Church, they argue as both support the right of parents to determine the type of school their children attend.

"The ongoing delay in progressing the divestment of Catholic primary schools in Ireland is not in the interests of children, of parents, of the Church or of the Irish State."

For the Church, "the political reality is that the opportunity to influence an outcome favourable to Catholic education is fading".

However, any such settlement must ensure Catholic schools receive the same concessions and supports the State affords other patrons.

These include the right of patrons to "insist on relevant qualifications for teaching in a Catholic school" and that "schools must be granted an unchallengeable legal basis upon which they can give full expression to their ethos".

In their article, the professors say that divestment should reflect the synodal process: "There should be a sincere and deep listening to and engagement with all those concerned and likely to be affected by it."

A number of bishops have agreed to pilot projects with the Department of Education to consider removing the Catholic ethos from some schools.

Fresh restrictions on the Latin Mass seem heavy-handed in a synodal Church

The Traditional Latin Mass is celebrated in about a half-a-dozen churches in Ireland. Where it is celebrated, it is well-attended and has attracted some considerable interest from devotees who say that the find that form of the Mass – celebrated widely before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s – prayerful and reverent. Other people tell me that they appreciate some of the feastdays and solemn occasions that are part of the older traditional calendar that are no longer either a feature of the modern liturgy or have changed dramatically.

I am not a regular attendee at the Traditional Latin Mass, though I have been for funerals, weddings, anniversary Masses and other liturgical celebrations. I have always found it both beautiful and prayerful. I have found the people I have encountered there after Mass to be warm and welcoming. And, at least in Dublin, there is a higher number of younger Catholics present than at most other parishes in the capital where I have attended.

“There is also a paradox in so much papal time and energy being taken up by this issue”

Those who attend the traditional Mass are, in my experience, conscientious people concerned about the same things that other Catholics are concerned about, this includes the crisis in the transmission of the Faith that has occurred in Ireland in recent decades.

Some have also told me of experiences at post-Vatican II Masses that they have found off-putting including Masses where the altar cloth was replaced by a pride flag and another Mass where two priests dressed as characters from the vulgar programme so beloved of British BBC audiences for the crude caricatures of Irish people *Mrs Brown's Boys*.

I have seen similar things myself – none of which strike me as offering much of a conduit to God.

And yet, the issue that seems to occupy much of the time of Rome-based liturgists is not the Mrs Brown Masses, but further restrictions on the Latin Mass.

Pope Francis this week intervened for the third time to crack down on the celebration of the Latin Mass (see page 4).

The Holy Father has



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

insisted that the Vatican must now approve new celebrations of the old rite by signing off on bishops' decisions to designate additional parish churches for the Latin Mass or to let newly ordained priests celebrate it.

Of all the issues facing the Church in the 21st Century, it's hard to see why the small Latin Mass community is occupying so much time in Rome. Former colleagues there tell me that a lot of the opposition is motivated by a small number of people around the Pope who see (at least some) devotees of the Latin Mass as being critical voices around this Pontificate.

The narrative seems to feed an idea that small Latin Mass communities are hotbeds of anti-Papal thought busy turning faithful Catholics against Pope Francis. If that's true in some places, I certainly see very little evidence of it in Ireland.

Of course, the United States is a different matter: there everything is political, and everything is black-and-white. Too many Church leaders have allowed their very legitimate disgust at the Democratic Party's near religious devotion to abortion to co-opt them to some causes linked to the Republican Party that are dubious to say the least.

Many of these capitalist elements are indeed hostile to Pope Francis and there is evidence that some indeed see the Latin Mass as a way of rallying opposition to the Pope.

Paradox

But there is also a paradox in so much papal time and energy being taken up by this issue. Francis speaks beautifully and often about his vision of a decentralised Church where decisions that reflect local needs can be taken

locally rather than being sent up to 'head office' for decisions from distant officials.

He has also warned against an infantilisation of bishops who see themselves as branch managers reporting to the CEO in Rome rather than as they are successors of the apostles in their own right.

Granting more powers to the Dicastery for Divine Worship in Rome rather than trusting the judgement of the local bishop on matters such as the celebration of the Latin Mass for the few thousand people who regularly attend it in Ireland seems to me to be high-handed and certainly not in the spirit of synodality.

Additionally, if the Pope's close confidants imagine this is a way to ease their fretting over potential criticism of the Pope, they're unlikely to write the sequel to *How to Win Friends And Influence People*.

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Irish missionary in Pakistan decries extremism behind attacks

Jason Osborne

An Irish Columban missionary in Pakistan has criticised the “religious extremism” behind violent attacks in the country following a deadly terror attack at the end of January.

A bomb detonated January 30 inside a mosque in Peshawar in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa killed 101 and left hundreds more wounded. The mosque is located inside a

high-security compound that includes a police headquarters and counterterrorism department.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Liam O’Callaghan described it as the “worst possible attack” and “horrendous,” adding that over the last four decades “this extremism has just grown and grown and grown and it has polluted everything”.

“All of my time here, and much longer, we have been living with this reality of extremism,” Fr O’Callaghan said.

While there has been “revulsion”, “shock and anger”, he described it as “almost a worry” that there’s not more of a sense of outrage.

Fr O’Callaghan said that there have been moments of “real fear” during his time in Pakistan, including the first Gulf War and a period of upheaval in the mid-2000s, the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy, which broke out after a Danish newspaper published 12 editorial cartoons

on 30 September 2005, most of which depicted Muhammad, the main prophet in Islam.

Violence

“There was extreme violence,” Fr O’Callaghan said, continuing, “All western things like KFC or McDonalds or western banks were attacked and vandalised, there was a major emotional outbreak against that – the perceived insult to the prophet in those cartoons”.

Fr O’Callaghan described perceived blasphemy as the issue

at the root of many of these outbursts, saying that it’s “horrendously abused” and that accusations of blasphemy often result in mob rule.

“This law has been horrendously misused, where just on an accusation that your man burnt the Quran and then there’s a big emotional thing pumped up by the loudspeakers from the mosque and it’s mob rule. That is for me the most fearful [thing],” he said.

See page 20

Millions face starvation in Somalia warns Trócaire

Ruadhán Jones

Millions of people face the prospect of starving to death, Trócaire warned as it launched its 50th Lenten

campaign.

Repeated failed rains have led to nearly eight million people – almost half of Somalia’s population – struggling to find food, the

charity said in a February 21 statement.

“Millions of people are facing the prospect of starving to death. Thousands have already died. This is a

shocking scandal,” said Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra.

Health services

Trócaire runs all of the health services in the Gedo district of Somalia supporting more than 220,000 people a year.

In recent months the number of young children presenting with malnutri-

tion has trebled, and there is growing pressure on the services.

Ms De Barra thanked the people of Ireland for their support and continuing generosity over the course of the charity’s 50 year history.

“Since Trócaire was set up half a century ago, Irish people have been unstinting in their support of the

work we do and the difference that support has made cannot be underestimated. The number of lives not just changed but saved is huge,” she said.

Ms de Barra said the terrible events recently in Syria and Turkey show just how vital humanitarian organisations are when disaster strikes.



Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra and volunteers Mohamed Mohamud Nuh, from Gedo and Lía López Blanco (7) from Guatemala launch Trócaire’s annual Lenten campaign, as the charity of the Irish bishops’ conference celebrates its 50th anniversary. Photo: Trócaire

Ancient Bible expected to bag \$50 million at auction

Staff reporter

An ancient codex containing what is believed to be the earliest, most complete copy of the Hebrew Bible ever discovered is expected to go for \$50 million at auction this May.


‘Codex Sassoon’, which dates back to around the

9th or 10th Century, is due to come up for auction at Sotheby’s in New York for the first time in more than 30 years.

The book is named after its recent owner, David Solomon Sassoon, who assembled the most significant private collection of Judaica and Hebraica manuscripts in the world.


He died in 1942, leaving the codex to come to auction from renowned collector Jacqui Safra after a decades-long stewardship.

With an estimate of \$30 million to \$50 million, it will be the most valuable printed manuscript or historical document by estimate ever offered at auction.



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Conversion therapy report 'bogus' says Prof. Patricia Casey

Ruadhán Jones

A recent report on conversion therapy is a "bogus" attempt to interfere with doctors' discussions with their patients, a prominent psychiatrist has warned.

The report, conducted by the Department for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, explores "conversion therapy practices" in Ireland as the Government mulls introducing a law banning the practice.

The report includes the results of an anonymous, online survey involving 278 people

and which the report describes as being "not statistically representative".

Prof. Casey said the study has "no credibility whatsoever", adding that an online survey of this kind would not be accepted in any peer-reviewed scientific journal.

"I don't know of any therapist or psychiatrist practising it [conversion therapy] in this country," Prof. Casey told *The Irish Catholic*. The report is part of "bogus" attempts to interfere with a doctor's "discussion of sexual orientation and gender

issues" with their patients.

"We're not really talking about conversion therapy, this report is dangerous if they're going to act on it," Prof. Casey said.

Any law would "intrude on rightful occupations", she warned, calling it "despicable".

The Irish psychiatrist was critical of the involvement of activist organisations including the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) and LGBT Ireland.

The report, titled *'An Exploration of Conversion Therapy*

Practices in Ireland' defines conversion therapy as a practice intended to "change a person's minority sexual orientation to heterosexual or minority gender identity to cisgender".

Included in this definition are interventions that "perpetuate stigma, oppression and exclusion and seek to change, suppress or modify sexual orientation or gender identity expression".

In the conclusion of the report, the authors say that "Prayer and pastoral care can provide support to LGBTI+ peo-

ple of faith however, efforts to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity that are rooted in worship or spirituality can cause significant harm".

"The right to believe religious scripture about the nature of sexuality and gender identity is protected by international human rights legislation," the report continues.

"The right to inflict potential harm based on religious teachings to change or suppress sexual orientation and gender identity or for other faith based reasons is not."

Tributes paid to Irish bishop shot dead in US

» Continued from Page 1

Archbishop Gomez said.

"He was a peacemaker with a heart for the poor and the immigrant, and he had a passion for building a community where the sanctity and dignity of every human life was honoured and protected."

Bishop O'Connell was found dead in his home in Hacienda Heights about 32km from downtown Los Angeles on Saturday, February 18 at about 1pm.

As this paper went to print a man was arrested this week in relation to the incident as part of a homicide investigation. Carlos Medina (65) was taken into custody after a standoff with police which lasted hours.

Mr Medina is the husband of the bishop's housekeeper, and had done some work around the bishop's house.

Pope reaffirms Vatican's authority over Latin Mass

Jason Osborne

Traditionalist communities in Ireland are facing further uncertainty after the Vatican Press Office published a rescript confirming that dispensations from the July 16, 2021, motu proprio *Traditionis Custodes* are reserved to the Apostolic See.

The document, published in Ital-

ian and signed by Cardinal Arthur Roche, the Prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, was approved by the Pope during a private audience with Cardinal Roche February 20.

The rescript affirms that permission to use a parish church to celebrate the pre-Vatican II Mass, to set up a personal parish for the celebration of that Mass or giving a priest

ordained after July 2021 permission to celebrate it must be granted by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

Traditionis Custodes was issued by Pope Francis in the belief that it would enable the Church to "press on ever more in the constant search for ecclesial communion." Primate of All-Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin previously told this paper that while

the Pope is concerned that the pre-Vatican II Mass was creating division in the Church, it is not a "big issue" in Ireland.

"So it wasn't a big issue for us in Ireland I don't think. Perhaps there are places where it had become more of a political... row between different camps, I didn't experience that in Ireland and nor do I even today in Ireland," he told this paper in January.

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382 homeless deaths in Dublin in five years

Staff Reporter

Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín has described as "incredibly tragic" figures which reveal that 382 people experiencing homelessness have died in the last five years.

"Behind each one of these statistics is a human being, and perhaps a family.

"There can be no doubt now that

the issue of homelessness is not just a humanitarian crisis but a national emergency, and it needs to be treated as such," he said.

Deputy Tóibín insisted that authorities must provide more concrete solutions. "We need beds. We need food. We need social workers. We need education. We need mental health services and drug rehab centres.

"Many of those who've died have died by suicide and drug overdoses. We need to start funneling resources and funding into working class areas, the task cannot be offloaded onto community groups and volunteers - we need Government funding," he said.

The statistics were released to Mr Tóibín under the Freedom of Information Act by Dublin City Council.

Intemperate joy...



The choir from St Joseph's Mercy secondary school, Navan, Co. Meath, are pictured with Fr Robert McCabe and the studio congregation after the Temperance mass on RTÉ on Sunday, February 19.

Poland emerges as Europe's leader...

It's over a year now since the brutal war in Ukraine commenced, and it's striking what a unifying effect this has had on Europe – and on domestic politics. Left and right, in the main, are in agreement about supporting Ukraine's as a sovereign nation; the ubiquity of Ukrainian flags from Cork to Copenhagen attests to this solidarity.

It has also changed the political map of Europe, and prompted previously neutral Finland and Sweden to apply for membership of NATO. Ireland's – democratically supported – military neutrality will also come under increasing pressure, according to commentators. Professor Michael J. Geary, an expert on Irish foreign policy and European integration, recently gave a significant address at TCD describing the mounting challenges to Irish neutrality which these realignments will bring.

Extraordinary

And an extraordinary outcome of this tragic conflict is the rising power and influence of Poland as a European pathfinder. Poland, which was once wiped off the map of Europe as a country – in 1795 – and once carved up between German and Soviet dictators – during World War II – is now emerging as the most influential “lynchpin” of Western, Eastern and Northern Europe.

Former British diplomat Sir Ivor Roberts says that Poland “will soon become an indispensable European power in its own right” – being the most decisive influence on the Baltic



Mary Kenny



President Joe Biden and Poland's President Andrzej Duda shake hands, March 25, 2022. Photo: CNS/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters.

states, and having shown much more clarity and resolve than Germany and France. (Germany's caution deriving from its dependence on Russian gas and feeling justifiable guilt about the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941; France believing it could mediate with Putin.)

Poland is currently building Europe's largest army with 300,000 troops – it has three times as many battle tanks as the UK. President Biden's three-day visit to Warsaw this past week signals how important Poland now is in the landscape of European diplomacy – it's the first time a US president has visited an overseas country twice within a year.

European Commission

True, the European Commission has its run-ins with Poland's conservative government, headed by President, Andrzej Duda, and Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. Brussels has never liked Poland's

tradition of adhering to faith and fatherland; it is constantly critical of Poland's insistence that its own constitution takes precedence over EU law. So such tensions continue.

But the respect in which Poland is now held by so many of its neighbours and allies in supporting Ukraine – the Poles have taken in more war refugees than any other country – and standing up to Putin, will continue to bestow leadership status on Warsaw.

John Paul II's fortitude and charisma surely played its part, too, in restoring Poland to this pride of position, and gave Polish people back the confidence in their country that they had never really relinquished.

● Quite a few pals of mine are turning their spring break into a visit to the Vermeer exhibition now on at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. Lucky them! It is the largest collection of paintings by the Dutch Baroque painter ever gathered together – and includes a borrowing from Ireland's National Gallery of the wonderful “Lady Writing a Letter With Her Maid.”

Johannes Vermeer, who was only 43 when he died in 1675, had a great eye for the domestic, and the Dutch attention to order.

No chance of joining visitors at the Rijksmuseum – it's already sold out, right up to June 4. It's huge success is testament to the hunger, among the public, for classical painting, and beauty in art. I've always thought that the Church should make a lot more of its long tradition of supporting art: people really do yearn to see beautiful paintings.

I took away from it was that when the Lehmans lost their religion, they lost their moral compass.

In the early days, the practice of their faith kept them grounded and provided a framework for reflecting on what was right and wrong. The family kept the religious observance days faithfully. But once they secularised, they were more easily tempted by money, greed and the corruptions of capitalism, and their moorings and connection with a moral order dissolved.

There's a new production of the Lehman trilogy now in London, and if a streaming viewing is made available, it's worth seeing as an instructive story.

Building on sand...

The Lehman Trilogy is a play written by the Italian writer Stefano Massini, translated into 24 languages and performed in many locations.

It's about three Jewish immigrant brothers to America in the Victorian era, who started in small retailing trades. Eventually the family became enormously powerful investment bankers in New York. Then, in 2008, Lehmans filed for bankruptcy (with over \$600 billion in liabilities), an event which played a major role in the financial crisis of that year, which, of course, also affected Ireland.

It's a riveting story of a family's rise and fall, but one of the messages that



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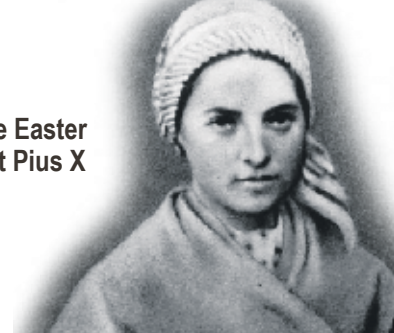
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Missionary bishop criticises Honduras 'disaster' govt

Ruadhán Jones

The government in Honduras is "a disaster", plagued by infighting and corruption, an Irish missionary bishop has warned.

The Church is a lonely voice of stability and justice in the Central American country, Bishop Michael Lenihan OFM told *The Irish Catholic*. The Limerick-born bishop was speaking ahead of taking up his role as archbishop of the Central American country's industrial capital, San

Pedro Sula, in March.

Bishop Lenihan's new diocese is badly effected by gang violence, but the government doesn't have the strength or cohesion to combat it, he warned.

"There's a lot of corruption in the government," Dr Lenihan said. The new government formed a few months ago under President Xiomara Castro has already received a great deal of criticism.

"They haven't delivered on their promises. They have terrible prob-

lems within congress, for instance at the moment they're trying to elect the supreme court. They can't. They can't decide or agree on the candidates. This has gone on for a week. It's embarrassing," the Irish Franciscan said.

The government is "incapable" and "a disaster", he continued, saying Honduras "really is a third world country in questions of government".

The Church is heavily involved in tackling social issues in Hondu-

ras, but faces difficulties of its own, Bishop Lenihan said.

The evangelical Churches have "grown disproportionately over the last number of years," the bishop warned.

"It's incredible, both the number of evangelical Churches and the number of people who have joined them.

"People who were good Catholics have all of a sudden left, entire families have joined the evangelicals.

"We have to study that, why is it

happening and how can we address that problem as a new pastoral zone, support one another in our dioceses."

In his own diocese of San Pedro Sula, the evangelical movement has made significant inroads. In 1999, the region was 99% Catholic; now it is just 57%.

Following his appointment by Pope Francis in January of this year, Bishop Lenihan will take up his archbishopric in ceremony in March.

See pages 12-13.

Irish convents hugely significant but ignored says historian

Staff reporter

Irish convents formed the "backbone of Irish Catholic society" for centuries, but they have been largely ignored, an Irish historian has said.

Convents and the women religious in them were "hugely significant" to the development of the Church and Irish State, Dr Gillian O'Brien told *The Irish Catholic*.

Dr O'Brien is leading a project to draw attention to the cultural, architectural and historical significance of convents as "they've been kind of ignored" in the past.

"They do really form the backbone of Irish Catholic society, from the late 19th century until well into the 20th and they don't get recognised," she said.

"And by not recognising that, you're writing the

history of women out to a very large extent. They're the teachers, they're heavily involved in employment in the local area and if we don't look at them, we're missing a huge section of society," Dr O'Brien added.

The historian, who helped design the award-winning Nano Nagle place in Cork city, warned "There's an urgency about it and in 20 years' time there will be real regret that these women's voices weren't recorded and the buildings in which the nuns had lived for in some cases centuries haven't really been recorded."

See pages 14-15.

Video on transgenderism for teachers criticised

Chai Brady

Well-known Christian psychologist and political commentator Dr Jordan Peterson has criticised a video which advises Irish teachers what to do when pupils want to identify as the opposite gender.

Taking to Twitter, Dr Peterson told his 3.9 million followers that the content of the video used by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) was "faux compassion/ignorance" and "both unfathomable and unforgivable".

In the animated video a teacher is told by a parent that their child wants to identify as another gender, and wants to be called Liam

rather than Lucy.

The teacher says "after this I set about preparing the class for Liam's social transition".

"I taught lessons investigating and challenging gender stereotypes... explained that some people don't identify with the gender assigned at birth," the teacher states in the video, later saying that helping a pupil switching gender can help them feel "happier and more like themselves".

In a response to a query from the *News Letter*, INTO's general secretary John Boyle said they encourage their members to seek advice from expert groups "in dealing with all manner of sensitive issues in classrooms".

He said INTO organises a wide-ranging annual summer programme of professional development for teachers who can attend voluntarily.

"Course materials include videos which provide guidance for teachers on how to address a variety of LGBT+ related topics that may arise in the classroom in a sensitive manner," he said.

"It is important to stress that the videos you have cited are not part of the primary curriculum and are not used as teaching resources in our schools - they are support materials to help teachers to deal sensitively with issues that arise from time to time in today's classrooms."

An Irish celebration...



James Martin (second from right), an actor with Down Syndrome, celebrates with Tom Berkeley, Seamus O'Hara and Ross White after their film set in the North, *An Irish Goodbye*, won Best British Short at the Baftas in London on February 19.



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Rory Fitzgerald

The View



Politicians are losing the confidence of many decent people on immigration

As we mark the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the issue of immigration has spilled over onto the streets of our country, amid acrimonious protests and counter-protests. Yet most Irish media outlets still refuse to discuss the issue in a balanced and reasonable way. Ireland has a remarkable and positive story to tell about migration. Yet refusing to acknowledge the complexity of the issues involved is sowing fear and confusion in many communities.

In my house, my Italian-Scottish wife is an immigrant, and my Italian mother-in-law is also an immigrant. Many talented hardworking immigrants support Ireland's essential services and enhance our society. We now have many fantastic people from various cultures in Ireland and, by and large, we all tend to get along remarkably well.

Yet we also have a housing shortage, and so capacity issues are coming into play, as the waiting lists for health services and housing lengthen.

Irish people

Polls now show that a majority of the Irish people believe Ireland has taken in too many refugees during the past year. A *Sunday Independent*/Ireland Thinks poll recently found that 56% felt Ireland had taken in too many, against just 30% who thought it had not. 14% were unsure.

My family took Ukrainian refugees into our own home last spring, a mother with two children. They told us of the night a missile landed in their street, smashing their windows. They told us how they fled in a darkened train, with people fleeing the carnage in Mariupol. Such people need our protection, and deserve all our help. I was proud to see the generous supports the State had made instantly available to help them. The mother wept when given a buggy and clothes from a local charity set up to help Ukrainian refugees. They soon found their own home and are settling in well here.

The problem which this Government is failing to address is that the very generosity of its supports for Ukrainians is attracting people who are abusing Ireland's asylum process. For example, I



Protests about immigration have been mounting.

know of Muslim Arabic speakers - who do not speak Russian or Ukrainian - who appear to be pretending to be Ukrainian and are registered as such by the State. They therefore may avail of the generous benefits and immediate right to work given to Ukrainians.

I've noticed that the 'Ireland is Full' and 'Ireland for All' protestors often talk past each other on these issues. One group says that they want to make refugees welcome. Yet many opposing protestors interviewed actually agreed, but said they worried that many of those arriving are not refugees at all. They argue that many are economic migrants from safe European countries like Albania and Georgia. They say many are hiding their passports or using fake documents to gain entry.

“Arriving and making false statements as to your identify and nationality is an offence under immigration laws”

Indeed, RTÉ recently reported that from February 2022-January 2023 of the 6,926 people who applied for asylum at Dublin Airport - who did not claim to be Ukrainian - 61% had no documents. Since they must have had documents to board the plane, this raises legitimate concerns. Clearly, many are not telling the truth about who they are.

Arriving and making false statements as to your identify and nationality is an offence under immigration laws. Making any false statement for financial gain is fraud, which

is also an offence. Yet the Government is doing little to prevent such offences, which means fewer resources for real refugees. The Irish Government is undermining public support for genuine refugees by tolerating such misconduct.

Many states detain or rapidly return people who arrive unidentified at their borders, to prevent criminals and terrorists arriving under the guise of being refugees. After all, some of those who committed the Paris terror attacks in 2015 arrived pretending to be refugees. Yet Ireland immediately releases those who have lost or destroyed their documents into the community. Irish politicians then call those raising such concerns about this racist or far-right. There may be some genuinely far-right actors involved in these protests, but many seem to simply be concerned local people.

We know that 61% of those who claimed asylum at Dublin Airport, but not claiming to be Ukrainian, did not present their travel documents to immigration officials. However, it is harder to discern how many of those claiming to be Ukrainian are in fact Ukrainian. CSO statistics show that immediately after the Russian invasion, only a handful of Ukrainians arriving were young adult males. This was because Ukraine forbade most men aged 18-60 from leaving the country, as they were needed for the war effort. Yet by May 2022, in just one week, 3,516 males aged 20 to 60 arrived in Ireland claiming to be Ukrainian. The Government does not appear to have done much to ascertain the truth of these claims.

The often vitriolic online chatter around these fraught immigration issues suggests many feel the Government

is discriminating against Irish people. Some argue that homeless Irish people do not have access to free hotels, while working Irish people do not have access to medical cards or welfare payments, without identification or a means test. Some veer well beyond understandable concerns, well into the territory of conspiracy theories or outright xenophobia.

Yet the Government could address the public's reasonable concerns about abuse of the asylum system. It could adopt a rapid asylum decision-making process for those from safe countries. The Netherlands does this in seven days. Asylum seekers should normally claim asylum in the first safe country entered. Since Ireland has no direct flights to unsafe countries, virtually

all asylum seekers have necessarily come through safe countries.

Although far from Ukraine, Ireland has taken a far higher proportion of Ukrainian refugees per capita than most EU states. As we hit the buffers in terms of capacity, other EU countries could be asked to assist, as we helped when thousands were arriving into the Mediterranean EU states. Ireland is clearly reaching capacity limits.

Asylum system

The problem of significant levels of fraud in the asylum system is also obvious. Yet the Government seems reluctant to acknowledge this reality, perhaps believing that admitting it would legitimise anti-immigrant feeling. Yet robustly tackling false claims

would have the opposite effect. It would enhance people's confidence that those arriving in their towns and villages are genuine people in need of help.

Politicians are now losing the confidence of many decent Irish people on this issue. Public support for welcoming refugees is waning, thanks to its mismanagement of the asylum system. Nationalistic feeling is on the rise in certain quarters. This could soon spill over into a wider hostility to EU immigrants and other groups. This would be tragic, because if the Irish hearts harden against immigrants, we will lose a crucial part of our own culture: the warm welcome for which we are famous.



On March 9, *The Irish Catholic* Newspaper will produce a special supplement dedicated to showcasing retreats around the country. *The Irish Catholic* provides a direct channel to 90,000 Catholic readers who may be particularly interested in joining you on retreat during 2023.

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Irish-born bishop shot dead in LA



Bishop David O'Connell is pictured speaking with parishioners outside St Frances X. Cabrini Church in Los Angeles on July 19, 2015. According to local news reports, he was fatally shot, February 18, and it has been ruled a homicide. Photo: OSV News

Ruadhán Jones

Irish-born Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles David O'Connell, was shot and killed on February 18 in his Hacienda Heights home, a neighbourhood east of LA.

His death is being investigated as a homicide, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department confirmed to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles early February 19.

“Bishop David worked tirelessly for peace and harmony in communities; may he now rest in the peace of the Lord”

Tributes have been paid to the 69-year-old Cork native, who spent decades ministering in south LA to a community afflicted by gang violence, poverty and broken families. Pope Francis made him a bishop in 2015.

In his home diocese, Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin said his “tragic death” has sent “shockwaves” across the diocese.

“We will pray for Bishop David at Mass throughout the Diocese of Cork and Ross in the coming days asking the Lord to comfort his family, his colleagues and all the bereaved,” Bishop Gavin said in a February 19 statement.

“Bishop David worked tirelessly for peace and harmony in communities; may he now rest in the peace of the Lord.”

He extended “sympathies and prayerful support to the O'Connell family in Cork, to Archbishop José H. Gomez and the people, priests and

religious of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.”

In a press release, the LA County Sheriff's department said deputies had responded to a medical emergency on the 1500 block of Janlu Avenue in Hacienda Heights and found the bishop suffering from a gunshot wound.

According to the Sheriff's release, “Paramedics arrived and pronounced him dead at the scene”.

The shooting happened around 1pm local time Saturday inside what local media is reporting as the bishop's residence.

Auxiliary bishop

‘Bishop Dave’, as he was known, was episcopal vicar for the archdiocese's San Gabriel Pastoral Region since 2015, when Pope Francis named him an auxiliary bishop.

He was ordained to serve in Los Angeles in 1979, having studied for the priesthood at the former seminary All Hallows College. After ordination, he served as associate pastor in several parishes and as pastor at St Frances X. Cabrini, Ascension, St Eugene and St Michael's parishes – all in south Los Angeles.

As well as ministering to a community afflicted by gang violence and poverty, Bishop O'Connell had to deal with tensions between locals and members of Los Angeles Police Department and the LA Sheriff's Department that eventually boiled over during the LA riots in 1992 that followed the beating of Rodney King by police officers.

The riots broke out during then-Fr O'Connell's first tour at St Frances X. Cabrini (1988-98). Bishop O'Connell would later tell how he was in Wash-

ington, testifying before a panel on Capitol Hill about violence in urban America, when the riots started. He came home days later to find widespread destruction in much of his parish's territory.

Apart from aiding neighbourhood recovery efforts, Fr O'Connell pushed to restore trust between the inner-city residents and law enforcement. He and other local faith leaders helped organise meetings with police officers in people's homes and provide opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation.

“Those who knew him testify that he seemed most at ease with the people he spent all those years with in south LA”

As a pastor, Fr O'Connell also saw first-hand the effect of broken families on the community. That inspired him to organise retreats for men – usually in the mountains – focusing on how to be good fathers and husbands, something he saw as key to the health of a community.

During his time as auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, evangelisation, pastoral care for immigrants and ensuring the future of his region's Catholic schools were all top priorities for Bishop O'Connell.

He was the chairman of the interdiocesan Southern California Immigration Task Force, helping coordinate the local Church's response to the influx of migrants from Central America in recent years and navigating the challenges presented by changing

immigration policies.

But despite his long list of accolades and accomplishments, Bishop O'Connell was known as a low-key priest with a down-to-earth demeanour who spoke the love of Jesus. Those who knew him testify that he seemed most at ease with the people he spent all those years with in south LA.

“It's been the great joy of my life to be the pastor of these people, especially the ones who are suffering or in need or facing difficulty,” Bishop O'Connell said after being named a bishop in 2015.

Great privilege

“And it's been a great privilege, a great blessing to be given these parishes all these years, to be pastor all these years. The people have touched my heart the way they are sincere.”

On learning that Bishop O'Connell's death was being investigated as murder, Archbishop of Los Angeles José H. Gomez said he was “deeply disturbed and saddened by this news”.

Archbishop Gomez also gave the update to parishioners gathered for Sunday Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels February 19.

“We continue to pray for Bishop Dave, and for his family in Ireland, and we pray for law enforcement officials as they continue their investigation into this terrible crime,” he added.

In his homily, Archbishop Gomez pointed out that he and Bishop O'Connell had just celebrated the annual Mass for the Sick together a week earlier on February 11.

“We had a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary on that side of the sanctuary,” explained Archbishop Gomez.

“So as he was starting the homily he went over there and prayed to the Blessed Mother. And then he turned around and said at the beginning of the homily: ‘She told me to tell you that she loves you.’

“That is who Bishop Dave was,” continued the archbishop. “He had a wonderful sense of humour and a beautiful devotion to Our Blessed Mother. We all miss him very much.”

“From the moment I met him, I was struck by his goodness, kindness, prayerfulness, and simplicity of heart”

In an earlier statement February 18, Archbishop Gomez called the death of Bishop O'Connell a “shock” and said he had “no words to express my sadness”.

Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who was ordained an auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles with O'Connell in 2015, also responded to the news.

“From the moment I met him, I was struck by his goodness, kindness, prayerfulness, and simplicity of heart,” Bishop Barron tweeted.

“Throughout the course of my years in the LA Archdiocese, Bishop Dave was a constant source of support, encouragement, and good humour,” he continued.

“He dedicated his priesthood to serving the poor. I can honestly say that he was one of the most Christ-like men I've known. May he rest in peace.”

Additional reporting OSV News.

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Understanding of marriage at the heart of synodal process



Synod can't cast Christian teachings on marriage into doubt, writes David Quinn

Some readers of this newspaper will have taken part in the parish gatherings that are part of a worldwide 'synodal process' that is underway at the instruction of Pope Francis.

Parish gatherings fed into diocese-level reports, which then fed into a national report. An identical process has been taking place in all parts of the Catholic world. The national reports went to Rome. Each continent is then to hold its own synodal meeting where the Church in all the individual countries of the continent in question are to gather.

The European meeting took place earlier this month in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Four delegates from Ireland were there in person, and ten attended online.

A worldwide meeting is due to take place in Rome later this year.

I suspect very few Irish Catholics, including regular Mass-goers were aware of, never mind following, events in Prague. The synodal process has simply not caught the imagination of ordinary Catholics.

Parishes

In Dublin archdiocese, an average of 35-40 people attended the parish gatherings. Meath diocese also noted very small numbers.

In England and Wales, an estimated 8% of practicing Catholics attended. In France it was around 3.5%.

If the Holy Spirit is working through this process, the effect is less than energising. It in no way resembles a 'New Pentecost' so far.

In addition, the documents sent by the various national Churches to Rome do not seem

to accurately reflect what was said in parishes. In parishes, the main concerns appeared to be about the ageing cohorts of Mass-goers and declining vocations. Topics that the media love to highlight like women priests, divorce, or LGBT issues were further down the list of concerns.

But the way the synodal process seems to be designed is that it is overly weighted towards groups that feel alienated by Church teaching. This is defensible if the aim is to work out a more pastoral approach to these groups, but if it is manipulated by organisations within the Church to change core Catholic teachings, that is a different matter entirely.

One of the organisations that officially represented the Church in Ireland (via the internet) at the event in Prague was 'We Are Church', which dissents from Catholic teaching on matters such as the nature of marriage and the priesthood. This gives the impression that the Church is willing to entertain their demands and in time alter certain fundamental doctrines. It is does not inspire confidence in the process.

“If we listen to the Church in Germany, then synods will become the ultimate body that decides Church doctrine, not the Magisterium”

'We Are Church' told its members in 2018 to vote with their consciences during the abortion referendum. There was no affirmation of Church teaching with regard to the right to life. It is true, of course, that we must all act according to conscience, ultimately, but the Church also has a duty to point out what is the right thing to do.

They are also supporters of Fr Tony Flannery, who rejects key Church teachings on a whole range of issues.

At the event in Prague, divisions within the Church were clear. Germany has been holding a synodal process of its own, independently of the worldwide process, and is pushing in a very liberal direction indeed.

The countries of Eastern Europe were much more likely to affirm Catholic doctrine.

The Irish delegation seemed closer in sympa-



Pope Francis greets Zea Daolio and Enzo Bellelli during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican January 11. The couple received the Pope's blessing for their 70th marriage anniversary. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.

thy to the concerns of the Church in Germany than to the East Europeans, without being explicit about it.

Two of the Irish delegates had much to say about reaching out to those on the margins, including those alienated by Church teaching, but said almost nothing in defence of those same teachings. It was left hanging whether they want those teachings to change or not. One presumes they do not, but it would be useful for them to make this explicit.

Remarks

In his remarks, Archbishop Eamon Martin reminded the Prague meeting: "Synodality should seek to affirm and enhance the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops, not diminish it."

That he felt obliged to say this is instructive. If we listen to the German Church, then synods will become the ultimate body that decides Church doctrine, not the Magisterium. In that case, we will be pushed down the same road as Anglicanism which regularly puts doctrine to the vote and changes them. That is the path of liberal Protestantism, and it has never led to revival anywhere. It is hard to argue

that the Holy Spirit is guiding such a process.

Marriage

Cardinal Marc Ouellet delivered a very important homily at the Prague meeting. He clearly saw what is at the heart of the matter, aside from the question of authority, namely the Church's understanding of marriage, or more accurately, Jesus Christ's understanding of marriage. This is what many Catholics, including, it seems, not a few bishops, seem to have lost faith in because it is the teaching about marriage that is under the most constant attack.

“Have many of us become convinced instead that Christ's one view of marriage is too alienating and lacking in pastoral qualities?”

In his homily, Cardinal Ouellet reaffirmed and explained Christ's understanding of marriage as the permanent and indissoluble union of one man and one woman, directed towards having children.

He said that Christian

marriage has certain "divine properties", namely "unity, fecundity, indissolubility". He said that this participation in God's grace "strengthens, purifies and sanctifies human love, multiplying its chances of happiness".

Do we still really believe this, or have many of us become convinced instead that Christ's one view of marriage is too alienating and lacking in pastoral qualities?

Mentality

Referring to the Gospel of the day which sees Jesus again arguing with the Pharisees over the proper interpretation of God's will and law, Cardinal Ouellet says: "The Lord takes exception to this mentality [of the Pharisees] that claims to obey God while acting contrary to his Word. This warning also concerns us and challenges us in our work to achieve a more synodal Church. Are we not sometimes tempted to interpret the Word of God in a way that is contrary to what it really says?"

There are certainly those in the Church who wish to do precisely this even if, in their own minds, they are acting with the best of intentions.

Pope Francis is not seeking to change Christ's teaching on marriage. He simply wants it applied as mercifully

as possible, which is why he believes divorced and remarried Catholics in certain precise circumstances should be permitted to receive Holy Communion again.

“If we break with this understanding, then we break with Jesus, and that would be the ultimate schism”

The synodal process is, in fact, making it extremely clear that the Church needs to study once more, and to come to a deeper and better understanding of why God intends marriage to be the permanent and indissoluble union of one man and one woman orientated, where possible, towards children.

If we break with this understanding, then we break with Jesus, and that would be the ultimate schism. It is a path we must never go down and the Church in Ireland would provide the most valuable possible service to the synodal process if it helps the Church overall to deepen its understanding of the teaching of Jesus about marriage. It will do no good at all if it seems to cast his teaching into doubt.

Trinity hears of St Brandsma's resistance to Nazis



Staff reporter

There was a full house in Trinity College Dublin for a talk on the life of St Titus Brandsma, who was killed by the Nazis for speaking out against anti-Jewish laws.

Dr Fernando Millán Romeral O.Carm., former prior general of St Brandsma's Carmelite congregation, explored the saint's battle for truth and freedom in his February 11 talk.

Fr Millán praised the Carmelite saint's "ethical resistance" to the Nazis in his native Holland.

St Brandsma's "ever-burning passion for truth and freedom shone through in his journalism", which he used in the battle for truth, freedom and people's lives. St Brandsma was canonised by Pope Francis on May 15 last year.

The event was a joint venture organised by the Loyola Institute and the Carmelite Congregation in Ireland.



Provincial of Irish Carmelites Fr Michael Troy, O.Carm. and Dr Fernando Millán Romeral O.Carm speak with Dr Fainche Ryan of the Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin, after the event on February 11.



Loyola Institute students Ursula Halligan (PhD student), Nemo Castelli SJ (PhD student), Sarah Clarke (MPhil Student) after the presentation.

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The Knock Prayer Book is the perfect accompaniment this Lent for those who are beginning this period of reflection and repentance wanting to go back to basics.

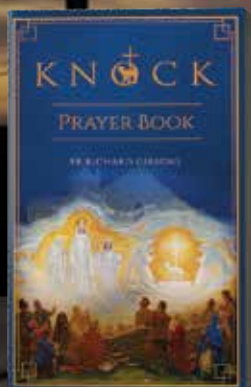
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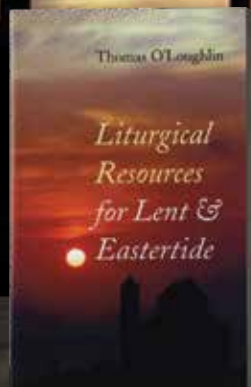
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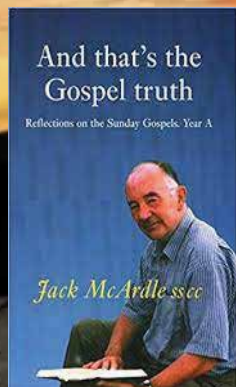
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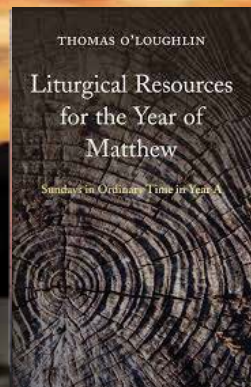
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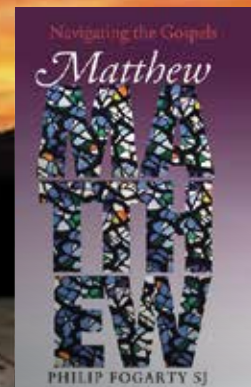
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‘The government in Honduras is a disaster’



The Church in Honduras faces many challenges, Bishop Michael Lenihan OFM tells Ruadhán Jones

It came as quite a shock to Limerick-born Bishop Michael Lenihan OFM when he got a call from the papal nuncio telling him he would be Honduras' newest archbishop. "It came out of the blue completely," he tells me over the phone.

Pope Francis announced Dr Lenihan's appointment last month to the newly formed archdiocese of San Pedro Sula. The newly erected see centres on the Central American country's industrial capital, the city of the same name in the North Western corner of Honduras.

The elevation of San Pedro Sula "had been spoken about in the bishops' conference in the past number of years and it was approved by the conference, but nobody really expected anything to happen soon because you know the Vatican advances slowly," Bishop Lenihan explains. "But in the end this was a big surprise as well."

“The roads are bad, the infrastructure is bad, employment is bad, is Bishop Lenihan's summary”

Born in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, the Irish Franciscan already has an intimate knowledge of the political and ecclesial landscape in Honduras. For the last 10 years he has served as the bishop of La Ceiba, which neighbours his new archdiocese.

"I would know most of the priests and the religious. I know a lot of laypeople because I work with [lay apostolic organisation] Delegates of the Word and the catechists and I would know some people in the schools. There's a Franciscan school, so I would know the parents and the kids. It's so different from last time I was appointed bishop, because the last time I knew nobody.

"At least, I'm known, they know me and I'm no stranger to the diocese of San Pedro. At the same time, I don't think they were expecting that I would be the archbishop either. Rome has spoken, everybody has to listen," he jokes.

The diocese he inherits is already well-organised and in good shape, Bishop Lenihan continues.



Drug cartels pose a serious problem in Bishop Michael Lenihan's new archdiocese San Pedro Sula. Here Honduras' special forces escort drug leader Jose Miguel Handal after his arrival to a military battalion in Tegucigalpa in 2015. Photo: CNS/Reuters.

His predecessor, Bishop-emeritus Angel Garachana Pérez CMF, has an extensive pastoral plan in place

"In a sense that's a blessing, I don't have to think about a new pastoral plan," Bishop Lenihan explains. "Every diocese will have its own pastoral plan but we can all sit down and chat with one another and see what we can do in common for the pastoral zone and what are the pastoral priorities."

Evangelisation is a big concern, not just for San Pedro Sula but for Honduras more widely. There has been a significant increase of evangelicals in Bishop Lenihan's areas. In 1999, the region was 99% Catholic; now it's just 57%.

Evangelical Churches

The question Dr Lenihan wants to answer is what can the archdiocese do to stem the flow of Catholics from the Church into the evangelical movement? The evangelical Churches have "grown disproportionately over the last number of years," he adds.

"It's incredible, both the number of evangelical Churches and the number of people who have joined them. People who were good Catholics have all of a sudden left, entire families have joined the evangelicals. We have to study that, why is it happening and how can we address that problem as a new pastoral zone, support one another in our dioceses."

This is one among many challenges that face the new archbishop when he takes possession on March 11. When Bishop Lenihan arrives, there will be 40 parishes to visit, Confirmations to be done and an auxiliary bishop to be installed. While this is not directly his task, at 72 years of age he is conscious that he will need someone to help him.

More broad reaching concerns will be the social and political

condition of San Pedro Sula and Honduras. As an industrial region, San Pedro Sula suffers from great inequality between the richest and the poorest.

"The majority would be poor, working class," Bishop Lenihan says. "A lot of people have come from the rural areas to the city looking for work. The children move to the city to study, so there's big influx from the rural areas."

"And of course the immigration aspect as well, a lot of the areas have been drained because of the immigration. People leave the country in droves looking for the American dream. This is both from the city and from the rural area, you have droves of young people and families leaving for the US every day."

“The new government formed a few months ago under President Xiomara Castro has already received a great deal of criticism”

The social arm of the Church is very active in the city as a result, the Irish-born bishop says. During the pandemic, the Church worked "very hard" to provide food and shelter for many people who suffered from its effects. Anytime there is an earthquake or a storm, the Church is to the forefront in tackling the ensuing destruction of life.

One of the major reasons why San Pedro Sula remains such an impoverished city is the crime epidemic; the city's homicide rates are among the highest worldwide and gang violence is rife. A state of emergency was declared in Decem-



Bishop Lenihan is pictured with family from Ireland and America after his ordination as bishop of La Ceiba in 2012.

ber and extended into February of this year as the government attempts to crack down on gangs who run "a sort of parallel government in the cities", Bishop Lenihan says.

"They're violent gangs, they take over an area and no one goes in there," he continues. "Then you have opposing gangs. One gang looks after one part of the city, another gang looks after another. They won't allow people to move from one area to another. There's a lot of violence."

"Then you have the tax, they call it the war tax, the *impuesto de guerra*, to help them. What they do is they try and get the business people to pay a percentage of their earnings to them and if they don't they will kill them."

"A lot of businesses go down because of that, because they've received threats from the gangs. A lot of small businesses, they can't afford to be giving money to these groups. But the groups demand money from people, they send notes, letters, they call, they threaten the people and if the people don't pay, they can be killed or they close the business and move out of the area."

Combat the violence

I ask Bishop Lenihan if the government is doing enough to combat the violence, but he replies that they don't have the strength or the cohesion to do so. "There's a lot of corruption in the government," he says. The new government formed a few months ago under President Xiomara Castro has already received a great deal of criticism.

“The fact that those who are meant to uphold law and order – the police – are also corrupt adds to the difficulties”

"They haven't delivered on their promises. They have terrible problems within congress, for instance at the moment they're trying to elect the supreme court. They can't. They can't decide or agree on the candidates. This has gone on for a week. It's embarrassing."

"You have the political parties. Some are traditional, some are to the left, some are to the right and they just can't agree. There's a lot of infighting in congress."



Jose Francisco from Honduras leads his 8-year-old daughter, Zuabelin, by the hand on November 22, 2021, as they take part in a caravan near Villa Mapastepec, Mexico

The roads are bad, the infrastructure is bad, employment is bad, is Bishop Lenihan's summary of the state of the country. "There's very bad employment, a lot of poverty, misery and they haven't addressed these questions. The price of living has gone up, the petrol has gone up, every day... People are very upset with the government and very disappointed. Only God knows where this government is leading us to," he says, finishing his point.

The fact that those who are meant to uphold law and order – the police – are also corrupt adds to the difficulties. Talking about the effort to eradicate the gangs is well and good, says the Irish Franciscan. But when the police are "involved and receive money and allow themselves to be manipulated and be corrupted by the group" it means that there's "corruption from every angle".

“In the midst of this social and political turmoil, the Church has been a lonely voice of stability and justice, according to Bishop Lenihan”

"You meet a police officer and you don't know, are they on your side are they with the gangs or are they trying to create a bit of law and order," says the new archbishop. "You have some good police and there was an effort as well to purge the police over the last number of years and a cer-

tain amount of purging has been done – but more has to be done."

In the midst of this social and political turmoil, the Church has been a lonely voice of stability and justice, according to Bishop Lenihan. Before the recent elections, the Church was very vocal in advocating change. Change did come, he says, but not for the better.

"The government are incapable, all the new people in the different ministries – everything is just a disaster," he says. "It really is a third world country in questions of government. The conference of bishops, every time we have a meeting, we have a communicate and we call for social change and we call for an end to the corruption and for justice."

Health

"A better system of health in the country, a better system of education because the education system as well is pathetic, is precarious. The hospitals during the pandemic, they weren't adequate. The social structure here is very, very fragile. So a lot of work needs to be done, you need good leadership. Unfortunately at the moment, Honduras hasn't produced good leaders."

Though the social and political situations are difficult, the country is still a thoroughly Christian one. And even though the evangelical movement has made huge inroads, devotion to Our Lady remains strong. On the February 3, Honduras celebrates its national feast day, Our Lady of Suyapa.

Pope Pius XI declared her the Patroness of Honduras in 1925, but veneration of the

wooden icon associated with her began centuries before that. Now, "Millions of people come to the sanctuary [in Suyapa] every year. Many others go to Mexico, to Guadalupe. It's a very religious country," Bishop Lenihan says.

But for him, that makes the corruption even worse. "It seems a contradictory thing, how could such a religious country be so corrupt? That's the big question. The leaders are out for themselves and to make money. Hopefully commissions will come from the United Nations to oversee and analyse what has happened in the past."

“Hopefully it will be a very peaceful transition and I'll be able to get to know the archdiocese and work with the people”

For his own part, Bishop Lenihan says that after the initial shock, he has come to terms with the task ahead of him. Although legally he is set to retire in three years at the age of 75, he knows that he could have five or six years in the end to set the new archdiocese on its path.

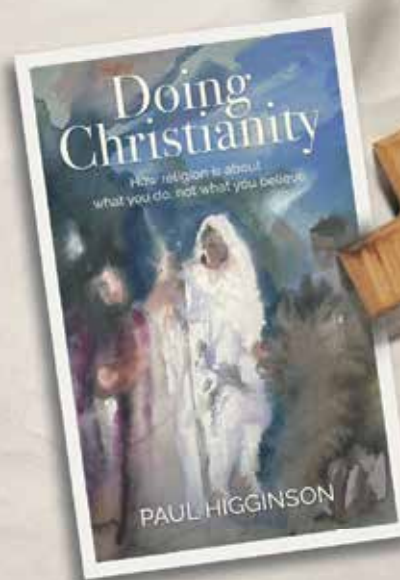
"Hopefully the Lord will give me the inner peace to continue," says Bishop Lenihan. "Hopefully it will be a very peaceful transition and I'll be able to get to know the archdiocese and work with the people. I'm positive and optimistic about the future."



Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez, now Apostolic Administrator of Tegucigalpa, Honduras greets Bishop Michael Lenihan OFM after Pope Francis announced he is to become Archbishop of San Pedro Sula. Photo: Suyapa Media

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Convents formed 'the backbone of Irish Catholic society'

Cistercian Sr Angela Finégan looks out of the church window at St Mary's Abbey in Glencairn. Dr Gillian O'Brien is on a mission to raise awareness about the significance of Irish convents and the women religious in them.
Photo: CNS/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters



We are writing the history of women out by ignoring convent buildings, Dr Gillian O'Brien tells Ruadhán Jones

Last week, the front page of *The Irish Catholic* blazoned a tragic tale of decline in the number of women religious in Ireland. We had the figures, but while that story was going to print, another real-life female community announced their withdrawal from a local town.

The Sisters of Nazareth told the parishioners of Kenmare, Co. Kerry, that they left with great regret. Declining numbers meant they simply couldn't continue. In their 160-year presence, the sisters had become integral to the life of the community, founding a number of schools and establishing a lace-making industry to help lift Kenmare out of dire poverty.

The backbone

It was this kind of work that made convents "the backbone of Irish Catholic society," says Dr Gillian O'Brien. A lecturer in Modern Irish History at Liverpool's John

Moore's University, she was part of the team that designed the award-winning Nano Nagle place in Cork City. Now, Dr O'Brien and one of her colleagues on that project Jessie Castle are on a mission to document Irish convent buildings and those who lived in them.

Dr O'Brien wants to "bring attention to the significance – cultural, architectural and historical – of convents around the country," she tells me, adding: "I think they've been kind of ignored."

"And I think convents are hugely significant... they do really form the backbone of Irish Catholic society, from the late 19th Century until well into the 20th and they don't get recognised."

"And by not recognising that, you're writing the history of women out to a very large extent. They're the teachers, they're heavily involved in employment in the local area and if we don't look at them, we're missing a huge section of society," Dr O'Brien warns.

“Even though the impact of the convent on Irish architecture, garden design and urban design is substantial, it is almost completely undocumented”

In a report the historian wrote to raise awareness about the project, Dr O'Brien notes that in 1800 there were 120 nuns living in 19 convents. A century later, this had increased hugely: 368 convents were home to 8,000 women religious. By the time the 1961 census was recorded, there were 13,259 nuns in the Republic of Ireland.

Also in the report, she warns of the urgency of the project, say-

ing that "even though the impact of the convent on Irish architecture, garden design and urban design is substantial, it is almost completely undocumented".

Urgency

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, she says: "We've already lost a lot and the population of the convents are getting older, so it's not really something that can be left on the long finger. There's an urgency about it and in 20 years' time there will be real regret that these women's voices weren't recorded and the buildings in which the nuns had lived for in some cases centuries haven't really been recorded."

Her project is an informal, unfunded one which will rely on the goodwill and interest of professional and amateur enthusiasts alike. While her primary interest is in the architectural significance of convent buildings, the Irish

historian argues that taking oral histories of the sisters is "really important" as well.

"There are great intergenerational memories because so many sisters have spent decades in convents," Dr O'Brien says. "They have enormous knowledge, not just of the convents but the community outside the convents, the local areas. There is an astonishing array of stories that are going unrecorded."

"A lot of these women have done really interesting things. At a time when most of these women joined, if they'd gone and got married, they would have had to leave the civil service or whatever job they were in. Whereas a lot of these women had careers they couldn't otherwise have and we're missing all of that in terms of recording it."

Again, she finishes with a warning, saying "We will only regret it after it's too late to do anything about it."

Clonmel

There are some stories that stand out to Dr O'Brien, passed on from one sister to another within the convent walls.

For instance, she relates how the Presentation sisters gained the land for their convent in Clonmel at a time before Catholic emancipation through some perhaps underhand tactics.

"They [the sisters] found it very difficult to get land because nobody really wanted to sell land to this bunch of women," she explains. "So what they ended up doing was, the father of one of the nuns bought the land from a local Protestant farmer and he said he was buying it essentially as a dowry for his daughter."

"But he didn't mention that his daughter was a nun! They couldn't get to buy it any other

way. So it was sort of bought in a slightly underhand way and they went on to design it themselves and they oversaw it..."

But ultimately, it wasn't the stories that were loud and brash that caught Dr O'Brien's attention. It was the "small, incremental things they talked about, the small stuff was really quite moving to hear".

Community

The conversations with nuns and sisters brought home to her "the importance of the chapel and community involvement and the amount of people they employed as well in a local community". She admits that until she spoke to the sisters, she hadn't really thought about how significant the convents were in economic terms.

"These women were some of the biggest employers in a local area, which is something we don't think about very often. Some of the buildings are amazing. A lot of them aren't that architecturally significant, but some of them are."

“They remain a ‘window into Catholic Ireland that we haven't been really looking at, not in that sort of way and not across the whole of the island’”

Often, the sisters weren't aware of the material treasures their convents contained, such as beautiful furniture or crockery. Because they didn't own things personally, they didn't place especial value on them, Dr O'Brien explains.

So far, she and Ms Castle have mostly visited Presentation Con-



Dr Gillian O'Brien

vents, the order they are most familiar with through their work on Nano Nagle place. At each convent, they take photographs and examine any written records that are available. They've discovered, in their journeys, the importance of the parlour as a source of information, as well as account books.

The convents' written records are one way to fill in the "huge gap" in the history of Irish women from the late 18th to the mid-20th Century, Dr O'Brien says.

"We've recently been using account books because you can tell what was being bought, what was being done within a convent looking at the account books which tell you everything from the type of materials they bought to make curtains or the habits to the food that was bought to donations that were being made. You've full income and outcome, it's like a business.

“There’s an amazing chapel in Wexford convent that was also designed and overseen by one of the nuns”

"Now, they all depend on who the bursar is... Some are very, very precise, while some of them say 'food' without outlining what. It depends on who was in charge at a given time."

Despite these eccentricities, they remain a "window into Catholic Ireland that we haven't been really looking at, not in that sort of way and not across the whole of the island".

Architects

Dr O'Brien's investigations have revealed another remarkable aspect of the many convent buildings that dot the Irish landscape – the

sisters and nuns often commissioned or reappropriated these buildings themselves, designing their own chapels and convents, creating the sites of "architectural and cultural significance".

"Clonmel was designed by one of the nuns," Dr O'Brien says. "There's an amazing chapel in Wexford convent that was also designed and overseen by one of the nuns. You have these women, who are working essentially as architects and they are designing these."

Beautiful

She singles out the "amazing stucco" of the Clonmel chapel for particular praise, but "every time you go into one of them there's something slightly different or remarkable".

"There's beautiful stained glass in the convent that recently closed in Rahan [in Co. Offaly] in a little chapel," Dr O'Brien says. "They all have little pieces. George's Hill chapel [in Dublin] – most of George's Hill convent is now social housing and has been for a number of years. The chapel is still open and used by community groups and by the nuns. That's an amazing building right in the centre of Dublin that people are not aware of."

The range of styles and types of buildings is remarkable, Dr O'Brien adds. George's Hill looks Georgian, so too does Wexford – they could "show off" that they were convents, she says, because they were built after emancipation. Something like Nano Nagle place, built during the penal laws, had to be "set well back from the road so that people wouldn't notice it. It wasn't secret, people did know it was there but it wasn't shouting about itself".

It is because people are unaware of the convents that Dr O'Brien has started her project. Last year, she and Ms Castle held a workshop with conservation-



The exterior of Dingle Presentation Convent, Co. Kerry, repurposed as the Disear Visitor Centre. Photo: Gillian O'Brien

ists, religious orders, local authorities and more to raise awareness about the importance of cataloguing the buildings before it's too late.

Project

It's a project that anyone can get involved in, Dr O'Brien stresses, as the equipment needed is as simple as a camera phone. "If someone said, what can we do, how can this be done, we essentially wrote a very short guide that can be used by anybody, you don't need special equipment," she says.

"It is to make sure they are catalogued and photographed and not lost. We've noticed when a building is closed, there are plans. It's not unusual for there to be a fire in buildings which are boarded up with plans to do something in the future and they then are demolished, or the interior is destroyed before being recorded."

“The convents’ written records are one way to fill in the ‘huge gap’ in the history of Irish women from the late 18th to the mid-20th Century”

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The garden at Wexford Presentation Convent. Photo: Gillian O'Brien

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Entering into right relation with creation with God's help

The west of Ireland has long been associated with monasticism and the ascetic practice of Christianity.



British author Paul Kingsnorth has found a home and outlet in both Ireland and the Eastern Orthodox Church for his eco-concern, writes Jason Osborne

The wilds of the west of Ireland have become home to English writer, Paul Kingsnorth, in a move that sees him better embody that prophetic voice “crying out in the wilderness”.

Modern humanity

Well-known for his books and essays, Mr Kingsnorth has more recently built up a following on the internet as he writes about the brokenness of modern humanity – particularly in relation to nature. His musings have struck a chord with many of those who feel disillusioned with the alienating manner of development of technology and culture.

While he addresses many modern ills, his initial concern

and continuing care is the way in which our current way of conducting ourselves is wreaking havoc upon the environment and instrumentalising humans in the process.

As he wrote himself previously:

“I believe that the global industrial economy – what William Cobbet called ‘the Thing’, but what we might equally simply call the human empire – is destroying the life support systems of the Earth itself, razing and homogenising the mosaic of human cultures and increasingly using humans as fodder in a techno-industrial machine which may one day supplant us. This is known as ‘progress’. Its cultural arm, individualist liberalism, is meanwhile engaged in stripping all meaning, truth and traditional support structures from our lives, in a headlong plunge towards what looks to be a glorified nihilism disguised as ‘freedom’.”

Strong words outlining a problem that Mr Kingsnorth is willing to live his life in opposition to. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* recently, Mr Kingsnorth told me about the golden thread of care for creation that led him from atheism, through Buddhism and Wicca back into the arms of Christ in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

“I think that’s the thing [concern for creation and how to

relate to it properly] that took me to Christianity in the end, but it long predates it,” Mr Kingsnorth tells me over Zoom.

“This kind of communion with creation and Creator that we’re supposed to have, and that’s right at the heart of the Christian faith”

“I’ve had a love of nature since I was a child. I think a lot of it was created by being taken on long holidays with my dad, lots of walking over the mountains, lots of wild camping, that kind of thing. But I’ve always had a great sensitivity to it, for whatever reason, and when I was at university, that pitched me into environmental activism because I wanted to protect the landscape from being destroyed and that took me into politics and cultural writing and things. At the heart of everything I’ve done has always been that sense that we are having this terribly destructive relationship with the rest of nature, and that that actually is a spiritual matter.

“That’s really what took me into Christianity. I suppose when I was younger I’d swallowed unthinkingly the general notion

that Christianity is very anti-nature and, you know, that there’s a sky god and that we’re told to dominate creation – all this stuff that you hear – slightly lazy, post-1960’s critique of Christianity. But when I started reading the Bible properly, when I started reading Genesis – the first few books of Genesis really still fascinate me – I thought, this is a completely different story, there’s something really deep in this,” he says.

Genesis

He frequently goes back to Genesis to discover what exactly that ‘right relationship to creation’ is supposed to look like, “this kind of communion with creation and Creator that we’re supposed to have, and that’s right at the heart of the Christian faith”. It was this, he says, and then going back to Christianity with fresh eyes, that allowed it all to “click into place” for him, that helped him to realise that concern for a right relation to creation has always been “entirely Christian”.

Taking creation and a sense of place as seriously as he does, I have to ask him: why Ireland? Why put down roots in the west?

“Well it’s a good question really because, you know, in many ways I’m very English and I’ve written a lot about England and I have a sense of being rooted in England, that’s where my ancestors come

from,” he laughs.

Growing up in the greater London area and moving around a lot in his youth ensured he’d always end up “wandering about,” he says, but that especially since he got married and had children, he’s wanted to “have some land, get off the grid as much as I could, live a simple life”.

“He’s seen some indications in the remains of the early Church that dot the landscape”

“We wanted to homeschool our children. If you want to do that sort of thing in England, you have to be a millionaire. You have to be rich to live simply in England now. That’s the irony of it. Simple living is a consumer product now and so it just sort of became clear that if we wanted to live like that, if we wanted to bring up our children that way, which we did, we had to get them away from the schooling system and to get ourselves away... We thought, ‘Where will we go?’ We’d always liked Ireland, we’d been here quite a few times, we had some friends here, so we came over on spec and thought, ‘Well, I wonder what it would be like to live here’. That was where we ended up,” he says.

A friend in the west suggested they explore that side of Ireland, and that’s where they decided to settle.

“We wanted to go to the west because there is something incredible about the west of Ireland. I don’t live right on the coast or anything like that, but there’s something incredibly magical and beautiful about the landscapes of

“Its cultural arm, individualist liberalism, is meanwhile engaged in stripping all meaning, truth and traditional support structures from our lives, in a headlong plunge towards what looks to be a glorified nihilism disguised as ‘freedom’”

the west. It's a wild place still, and it's still got some of that connection to the wildness of the natural world in some of the old cultures. It's just an enchanting place. I could spend weeks in the Burren or in Connemara, it has an incredible power to it – it's a remarkable place. It's nice to live near that."

Baptised in the Shannon in the middle of the pandemic, Mr Kingsnorth has since been appraising his arrival in Ireland with fresh eyes, and has been wondering what purpose God could have for him here. He's seen some indications in the remains of the early Church that dot the landscape.

“It's important that people do allow the Church and the saints to speak to them, Mr Kingsnorth says, as they do hold the key to right relation to creation”

"I came to Ireland for perfectly good rational reasons, but I think also maybe I was brought here because I had to see something about the early saints here and the early Church here which is so unique, and the early Church in Ireland and the early saints here are all inspired by the Desert Fathers," he says.

"The ways that they lived out in the West, on Skellig Michael and in the caves and on the islands, that's a

radical, green Christianity that really excites me, which I think we could draw from and we could learn from, so it's all here in the land, actually. It's there to be rediscovered. The Holy Wells are still there. We don't have them in England. The Holy Wells are still there. The Skelligs and the round towers are still there, so there's a whole legacy of this kind of Green-cave Christianity in Ireland to go and find again which I think is something that really has something to say. It certainly does to me."

Creation

It's important that people do allow the Church and the saints to speak to them, Mr Kingsnorth says, as they do hold the key to right relation to creation. Many of our modern ills, be it environmental destruction or State overreach (also of concern to Mr Kingsnorth), would be transfigured by the light of Christ-like lives.

"The alternative that Christianity offers, it's interesting, for me I suppose there are two things. There's firstly, once you have a faith in God, once you know the story of Christianity, you can see the pattern, then you know that what's happening is much bigger than what we're doing now, so you know that what's going on here is part of something bigger. You know that we're going to build the tower of Babel again and then it's going to fall down again. That's where we are again.

"I think the other thing for me, that I've been fascinated by, is how the ascetic life, especially, that we're supposed to be following as

Christians, is actually the solution," he says.

"You know, if we were living the way Christ told us to live, we would not be in this position. If we'd been living in the way that the saints had lived, or even trying to live like that, because most of us are not going to be saints, but if we walk in that direction.

“If we were doing that, at any level, then it's not possible for us to feed this giant, destructive growth machine that's wrecking creation”

"The voluntary simplicity and the sharing and the giving to the poor and the loving your neighbour. If we were doing that, at any level, then it's not possible for us to feed this giant, destructive growth machine that's wrecking creation. If we have that respect for creation, if we know it is creation, and that we're supposed to be tending and keeping it like we were in the garden, then we shouldn't be able to do what we're doing to it with factory farming and ocean pollution and everything else that's going on. Just actually living like a Christian is supposed to live would be the solution to this."

i Paul Kingsnorth's work and writing can be found at www.paulkingsnorth.net



Writer Paul Kingsnorth pictured in 2011.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



MARCH
2023 ISSUE

- The Synodal Times was in Prague, Czech Republic to report on the gathering of the Continental Assembly of the Synod with representatives of 39 European Episcopal Conferences present. Read our 10-page coverage, including interviews and analysis of the outcomes, by Gerry O'Hanlon and Eamonn Conway.
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Brandon Scott of The Synodal Times interviews Archbishop Eamon Martin in Prague.

Ruadhán Jones

TDublin's RDS was packed for the Divine Mercy Conference that took place over the weekend after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19.

At the closing Mass, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell thanked all those who attended and encouraged them to resist the temptation facilitated by social media to "speak ill of another".

"We live in a hyper-critical age," said Dr Farrell in his homily on Sunday February 19. For our age, the saying of the splinter and the plank "may be the most challenging".

In it, Jesus is asking to us be to less-judgemental and more understanding of the failings of others.

However, he added, "Truth without grace is harsh, but we must be equally aware that grace without truth is nothing more than sentimentality".

The conference began on Friday February 17 and concluded on Sunday 19. Speakers from around the world came to Dublin for the weekend of prayer, adoration and talks.

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Fr Alex Anandam and Sr Rose Mary man the Society of St Paul's stand, Saturday, February 18.



Fr Hayden Williams gives an impassioned talk at the conference.



People queue for a blessing with a relic.



Guy Fraval de Coatparquet and John Smith.



Jeremy Fineagan from Co. Meath, Mary O'Toole from Dublin and Elaine and Dorothea McDermott from Co. Meath.



Fr Pat Collins CM attends the conference.



Fr James Blount speaks at the Divine Mercy Conference.



Maria, Jude and Kate take in the stalls at the conference, February 18.



Eileen Rafferty and Bernie McCluskey from Co. Meath take time for a cup of tea between talks at the Divine Mercy Conference.



Fr Pat O'Donoghue of Cloyne diocese and Nora Hogan from Mitchelstown chat with Capuchin friar Fr Bryan Shortall on Saturday, February 18.



Karen Ludden, Rachel McGowan, Sarah McCrystal, Jessica McGowan and Carmel Ludden help out at the Divine Mercy Conference on Saturday. Photos: Alexis Sierra.

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Confronting a culture of extremism in Pakistan



Columban missionary Fr Liam O'Callaghan describes an indifference to religious extremism in some sections of Pakistani society, writes **Jason Osborne**

January 30 this year saw another deadly blast in Pakistan, this time at a mosque located inside a high-security compound that includes police headquarters and a counterterrorism department. The attack's final toll saw 101 dead and hundreds more wounded.

As shocking as it is, it's just the latest in a long list of terrorist attacks in Pakistan in recent decades, most of which target Muslims. An Irish priest has seen more than a few blasts wrack the country in his 23 years there, Columban missionary Fr Liam O'Callaghan. Spending first 16 years in Pakistan's second most populous city, Lahore, before moving to Sindh province seven years ago, Fr O'Callaghan has been present for many of Pakistan's recent tragedies.

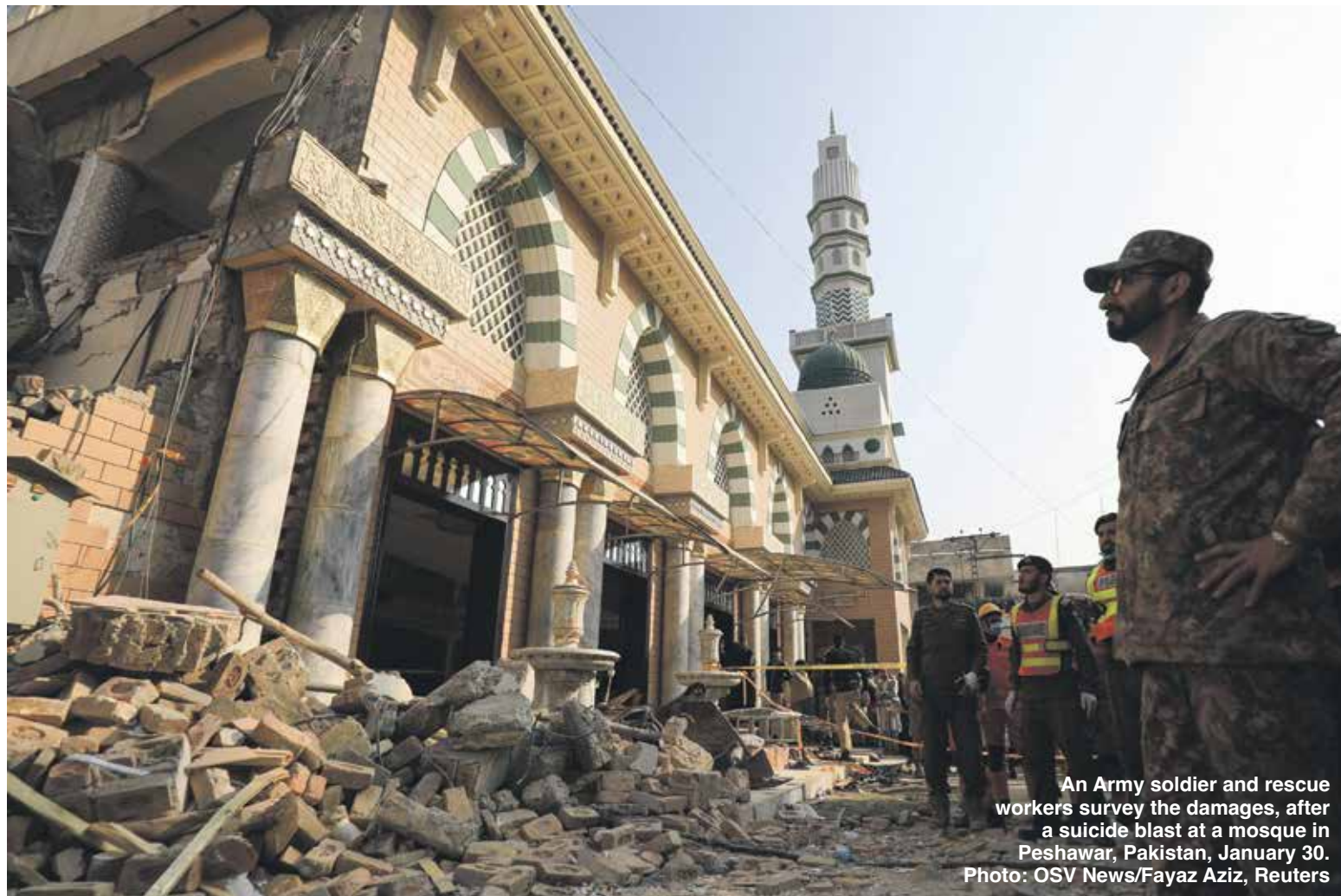
Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, he said that while there's "obviously revulsion and shock and anger", on a "strange level" there's almost a level of acceptance – almost.

“All of my time here, and much longer, we have been living with this reality of extremism”

“It's not the outrage you would have in another place, so that's almost a worry in a sense,” Fr O'Callaghan said.

Describing the January blast as “the worst possible attack” and “horrendous”, Fr O'Callaghan said that it was a “targeted attack on the police and on the government in general”.

“The mosque would have been right in the centre of the most security-tight centre of the city and yet it was reached. Most of those killed would have been police – it was a mosque for the police,” he said, noting that the attack was carried out while many hundreds of policemen



An Army soldier and rescue workers survey the damages, after a suicide blast at a mosque in Peshawar, Pakistan, January 30. Photo: OSV News/Fayaz Aziz, Reuters

were present for prayer in the mosque.

Fr O'Callaghan attributed the blame to an extremism that's just “grown and grown and grown” and “polluted everything” in the last 40 years in particular.

“All of my time here, and much longer, we have been living with this reality of extremism,” Fr O'Callaghan said.

Real fear

Moments of “real fear” that have remained with the missionary include the first Gulf War and a period of upheaval in the mid-2000s, the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy, which broke out after a Danish newspaper published 12 editorial cartoons on 30 September 2005, most of which depicted Muhammad, a principal figure of the religion of Islam. The newspaper did so, it argued, in an attempt to contribute to the debate about criticism of Islam and self-censorship. Muslim groups around the world complained, with the issue eventually leading to protests, including violence and riots in some Muslim countries.

“There was extreme violence,” Fr O'Callaghan recalled, continuing, “All western things like KFC or McDonalds or western banks were

attacked and vandalised, there was a major emotional outbreak against that – the perceived insult to the prophet in those cartoons”.

Blasphemy

Fr O'Callaghan described perceived blasphemy as the issue at the root of many of these outbursts, saying that it's “horrendously abused” and that accusations of blasphemy often result in mob rule. Introduced by the British in the 1860s, Fr O'Callaghan said that blasphemy laws were intended to quell tension between the various religious groups in the region at the time.

“This law has been horrendously misused, where just on an accusation that your man burnt the Quran and then there's a big emotional thing pumped up by the loudspeakers from the mosque and it's mob rule. That is for me the most fearful [thing],” Fr O'Callaghan said.

He experienced some of the panic that these outbursts induce on a couple of occasions, when people in areas he was ministering to were accused of blasphemy.

“I wasn't involved, but I was near, I was in the parish where it was – back 10 years ago, and then one again seven or eight years ago where a parishioner was accused of blasphemy. Again, the fear was

horrendous. The Christian area with 30-40 families, on the spot, just upped and left. They ran and locked the doors and went off to relatives out of fear of being burnt out or whatever.

“He experienced some of the panic that these outbursts induce on a couple of occasions, when people in areas he was ministering to were accused of blasphemy”

“That was real fear,” he said.

Fr O'Callaghan described the outcome of these episodes as “positive enough” because of the work that had been put into Christian-Muslim relations in the area over the years.

“We've been trying to build up Christian relations with Muslims and having various events and that and so we engage with the police. We've one really wonderful police guy in charge here and he did really well. He went to the mosque involved and tried to talk him out of it. He blocked the media from highlighting because the big fear

was the following Friday, that's when the emotions run high.

“It calmed down and eventually the people could come back after a little while, two or three weeks, I forget how long, so that was the closest experience, and I felt real fear and a real sense of danger, because you know from experience that there's no rule, there's no police.

“It's absolutely mob rule, and they can kill somebody and they will not be accountable so it's a shocking, horrendous abuse of the law,” Fr O'Callaghan said.

Extremism

Unfortunately, because of the strong current of religious extremism in Pakistan, the laws surrounding blasphemy “cannot be tackled”.

“There's no political will, no government can even attempt to,” Fr O'Callaghan said, highlighting the assassination of two politicians in recent decades who spoke out in mild criticism of the reigning climate.

“These extremists, they don't have that much political backing, they don't have any great power in parliament, but they have enormous power when it comes to these fear tactics and these horrendous attacks. The Pakistan that I have come to know – I would still say the majority of people are not in agreement with it, but even many of the Muslims are fearful, and understandably so. There's a kind of extremism by osmosis. Because these people are so loud and so aggressive, with their own media and social media and very bold and very forward, that kind of attitude is seeping in,” Fr O'Callaghan said.

“As shocking as it is, it's just the latest in a long list of terrorist attacks in Pakistan in recent decades, most of which target Muslims”

Out&About

'Come follow me...'



LIMERICK: Participants in the Diocese of Limerick's training in the catechetical programme 'Come Follow Me' are pictured with the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph after the three-day course.



DUBLIN: Students from St Audoen's NS help the Lord Mayor of Dublin Caroline Conroy launch Pawficcer Jojo, a booklet on safely travelling to school. Pictured launching the booklet with Mayor Conroy are pupils (from left) Kelly Jones Keogh, Layla Leonard Maguire, Ashton Ojogbede Hanlon, Riley Cullen, Ava O'Reilly and Jayden Richards.



HOLY SEE: Students from St Louis' Grammar School, Ballymena, visit the official Residence of the Ambassador of Ireland to the Holy See Frances Collins as part of their trip to Rome, February 10. The ambassador talked to them about her work and diplomacy in general. The group was accompanied on their trip by Fr Conor McGrath.

INSHORT

Sisters of St Clare to leave Kenmare

The Sisters of St Clare order are to leave Kenmare, Co. Kerry, after more than 160 years due to declining numbers.

In a letter read out to parishioners on Sunday, February 12, the sisters said they "regrettably" couldn't maintain a presence in the town.

"As a congregation, we are sorry to be bidding you farewell and we very much hope that the legacy we leave, after 16 decades among you, will be something you continue to value as a parish and community.

"We will carry Kenmare with us in our hearts and prayers always. We ask that you do the same for us."

Kenmare PP Fr George Hayes told Radio Kerry the prevailing emotion is one of sadness. "And shock too for a number of parishioners – they had no sense the presence of the nuns had been coming to an end."

The nuns had arrived at the invitation of Archdeacon Fr John O'Sullivan to a town impoverished after the Famine.

As well as their involvement in education, they established a lace-making industry to help lift Kenmare out of dire poverty.

Two of the schools they founded – St John's National School and Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine – still serve the young people of Kenmare.

Cork parish receives prestigious eco award

Carrigaline Parish, Co. Cork, received a prestigious award from Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI) in recognition of its environmental efforts on Sunday, February 12.

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin presented the ECI award in the Church of Our Lady and St John.

"The eco award in Carrigaline is really the culmination of a lot of work since the Pope's encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, which has generated a huge amount of awareness around our common home," Bishop Gavin told *The Echo*.

ECI encourages Churches of all denominations to take an ecological approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, community outreach and contact with the developing world.

Construction launched on McVerry project in Limerick

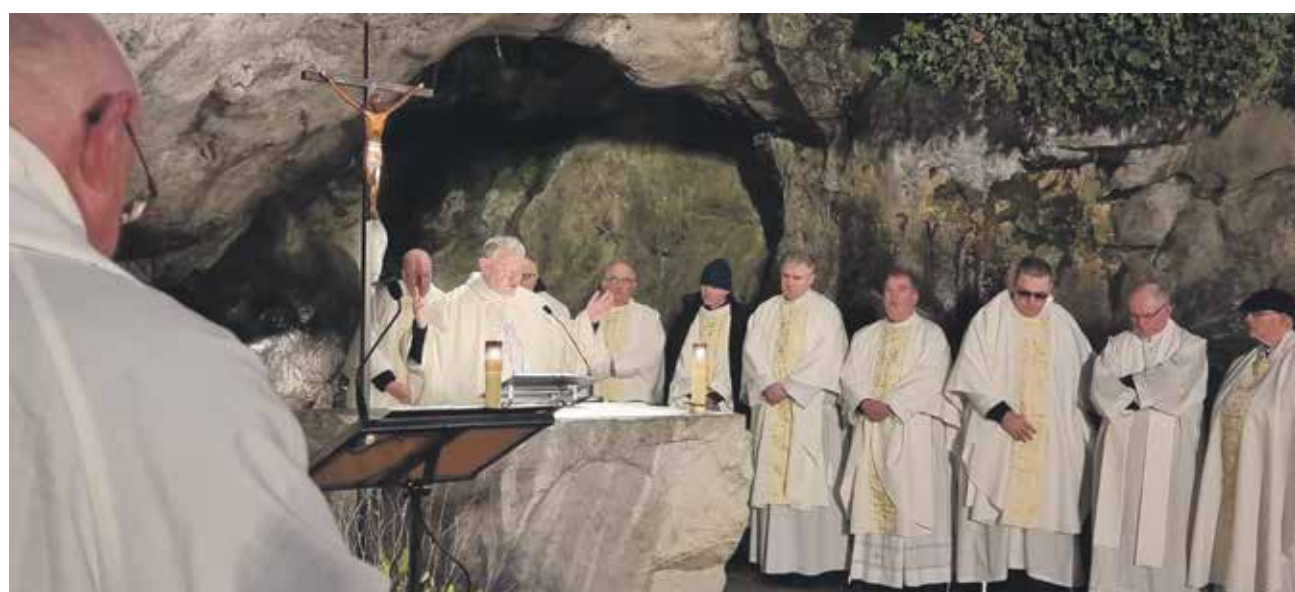
The Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien launched construction work on a new Peter McVerry Trust regeneration project in Limerick on February 13.

The new project will see the redevelopment of the former Office of Public Works property at 2-3 Lower Mallow Street, into 12 single-bed apartments for people on the local social housing waiting list.

The charity's CEO Pat Doyle said "We're delighted to be commencing this city-centre regeneration project which will provide 12 high quality homes to people from Limerick City."



SLIGO: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey is pictured with Eugene Foley and his family and friends after presenting Mr Foley with the Benemerenti medal for his 40 years' service as sacristan in the parish, February 13.



FRANCE: The directors of the Irish pilgrimages concelebrated Mass for gathered pilgrims in Lourdes ahead of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11. Pictured are chief celebrant Fr Lorcán O'Reilly OMI, Fr Ray Milton of Elphin diocese and Fr Tony O'Connor of Ossory. Photo: T. Gerard Bennet.



CAVAN: Couples in Kingscourt parish celebrating a jubilee of marriage are pictured after St Valentine's Day Mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt, February 14.



CAVAN: Annette O'Rourke, Chairperson of Kingscourt pastoral planning team makes a presentation at the recent St Valentine's Day Mass to Philip and Eva McCabe, marking their 66th wedding anniversary, Jim and Anna Carroll and John and Nettie Reilly marking their 60th wedding anniversaries.



DUBLIN: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty, President of Accord, blessed engaged couples Orla Gavin and Patrick Corcoran along with Ilona Catherine Dorrepaal and Patrick Michael Lennon at the shrine containing the Holy Relics of St Valentine in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Whitefriar St Dublin. Photos: John McElroy.



DUBLIN: Bishop Nulty blesses engaged couple Orla Gavin and Patrick Corcoran at the shrine of St Valentine on Monday, February 13.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



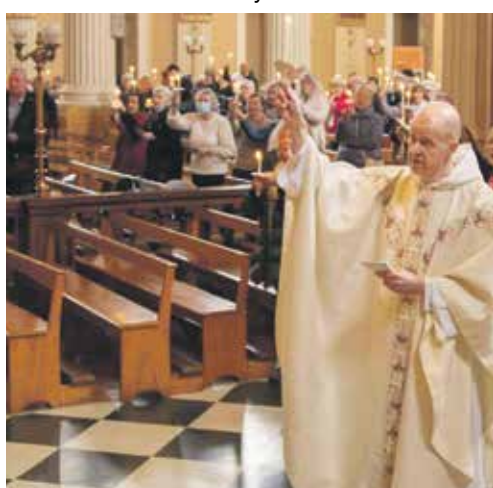
CORK: Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin enjoys a cup of tea with parishioners of Carrigaline Parish after presenting them with the Eco-Congregation Ireland award on February 12.



CARLOW: "Jesus is our Valentine," say the Poor Clare sisters in Carlow as they celebrate St Valentine's Day, February 14.



CORK: Fr Eoin OP gives Lewis and his brother Luke a candle on February 14, during the Lourdes Novena held by the Dominicans in St Mary's Church.



CORK: Fr John OP leads a procession at the Lourdes Novena.



CORK: Mary and Kathleen have a scone and cup of tea after the Lourdes procession on February 14.

ANTRIM

Lectio Divina, prayer and reflection over the Scriptures, takes place in St Comgall's Parochial House, Antrim parish, after 10am Mass beginning Monday, February 27. Sessions also to take place in St Joseph's parochial house after 7pm Mass beginning Friday February 24.

ARMAGH

A triduum of prayer to St Patrick to take place in St Patrick's Cathedral March 14-16. Mass on the three mornings at 10am and on the three evenings at 7.30pm. Talks will include: Tuesday March 14, 7.30pm, A time to look back, Archbishop Eamon Martin; Wednesday March 15, 7.30pm, a time to give thanks, Fr Peter Burns CSSR, Rector of Clonard Monastery; and Thursday March 16, 7.30pm, a time to look forward with hope and with joy, Bishop Michael Ruter.

CARLOW

The rosary will take place every Thursday during Lent beginning at 3pm on February 23 in St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen Parish.

CLARE

Brothers of Charity Services are holding a recruitment open day Saturday February 25 at their house in Industrial Estate, Gort Road, Ennis, V95 RH57.

CORK

A catechesis for adult faith formation is being held each Sunday and Wednesday at 8pm until March 22, in the Sacred Heart church hall, Western Rd.

A Medjugorje prayer meeting takes place every Wednesday night at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Third Order chapel, Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay.

First Saturday devotions take place in the Church of the Ascension, Gurranabraher with Fr Marius O'Reilly. Begins at 9.30am. Rosary, Mass, meditation for 15 minutes and Confession.

DONEGAL

A healing service takes place in the Franciscan Friary, Rosstown, on

on Sunday, March 5, beginning with rosary at 2.45pm and followed by Mass and a healing service at 3pm.

A two-part retreat for those who have suffered bereavement takes place in Ards Friary from February 24-26 facilitated by Fr Philip Baxter. The second part of the retreat will be held 17-19 March.

DUBLIN

Free book launch of *Christianity and Social Democracy* by John O'Brien takes place Saturday February 25 at 6pm in the Teachers Club, Parnell Square.

A series of Lenten reflections 'From Penny Catechism to the Catechism of the Catholic Church', take place in St John the Baptist parish centre, Clontarf. They begin Monday, February 27 at 7.30pm with a talk from Fr Terence Crotty OP on 'Jesus the teacher: teaching the four Gospels'.

GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (18-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral. An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact youth@galwaycathedral.ie for more information.

KERRY

Tralee area mission led by the Redemptorists takes place Sunday, February 26, until Friday, March 3. It is a mission for the parishes of St John's, St Brendan's and The Spa. The theme is 'Dream, Hope and Celebrate'.

KILDARE

A Lenten programme continues February 29 in Our Lady's Parish Centre, Leixlip from 7.45-9pm and will continue once a week for the rest of Lent. The theme is 'Living words - keeping Scripture alive today', with different speakers and topics each week.

LAOIS

The Growth in the Holy Spirit monthly retreat takes place February 25 in Ss Peter and Paul's parish church Portlaoise from 10am-1.30pm.

LIMERICK

Adoration will be held every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during Lent in the Adoration Chapel, Abbeyfeale from 10am-8pm.

LOUTH

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal novena takes place on Mondays at 10am (except holidays) in Holy Redeemer parish, Dundalk.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form (Tridentine) will take place on Sunday, March 12, at 5:30pm in Knock.

MEATH

St Mary's Parish choir, Navan, is working to build up the tenors and basses among their number. Music and training provided every Wednesday evening from 8-9:30pm in St Anne's Resource Centre.

TIPPERARY

Holy Family Mission are hosting a family day on Sunday, February 26, 10am-3pm. Prayer, talk, Mass, music, fun and games for all the family. Bring a packed lunch. Booking is essential contact info@holymission.ie.

TYRONE

The Seven Joys of Our Lady fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order meets each second Tuesday of the month in St Brigid's chapel, Brocagh, Clonoe Parish, at 7pm followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8-9pm.

WESTMEATH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, Monday to Friday from 2-7pm.

WEXFORD

Divine Mercy devotions take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in Wexford Friary, including Mass and blessing with the relic of St Faustina.

Rosary and devotions at Rocklands Shrine to Our Lady of Wexford take place every Monday at 3pm.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Missionary injured by land mine has foot amputated

● An Italian-born Catholic priest has undergone numerous gruelling surgeries, eventually losing his foot, after he sustained injuries in a land mine explosion in the Central African Republic (CAR).

The Catholic pontifical and charity foundation Aid to the Church in Need International (ACN) reported that Fr Norberto Pozzi, a 71-year-old member of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, was injured when the car he was traveling in drove over a mine, causing it to explode during the February 10 incident.

In a report released on Wednesday, February 15, ACN noted that the missionary Catholic priest ministering in CAR “has already undergone several emergency surgical operations,” adding: “In the most recent one, on Monday [February 13], doctors were even forced to amputate his left foot.”

Church seeks justice for beatified Argentine

● The Diocese of La Rioja in Argentina and the family of Blessed Wenceslao Pedernera, one of the four Martyrs of Rioja, announced that they will be plaintiffs in the case involving Pedernera’s murder in a trial for crimes against humanity perpetrated by the 1976-1983 military dictatorship in the country.

An armed forces officer is named as the intellectual author of the crime.

The public oral hearings to establish the facts concerning the crime that took place July 25, 1976, will begin March 10.

The hearings will take place in the chamber of the Federal Court of La Rioja.

The diocese said in a statement that “along with the Pedernera family, [the diocese] is participating in the proceedings as a private complainant”.

Beatification date announced for Polish family martyred by Nazis

● The beatification date has been announced for Józef and Wiktoria Ulma and their seven children, who were killed by the Nazis for hiding a Jewish family in their home in Poland.

The Archdiocese of Przemyska announced February 14 that the entire Ulma family – including one unborn child – will be beatified on September 10.

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, the prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, will preside over the beatification ceremony in Markowa, the village in southeast Poland where the Ulma family was executed in 1944.

Pope Francis recognised the martyrdom of the couple and their children in a decree signed in December. The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre has honoured the Ulmas as Righteous Among the Nations for the sacrifice of their lives.

Pope releases message for Lent

● Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking out new paths to take with Jesus and for avoiding the traps of stagnation or impromptu experimentation, Pope Francis said.

“Jesus is himself the way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey (of Lent) and in the journey of the synod, the church does nothing other than enter ever more deeply and fully into the mystery of

Christ the saviour,” the Pope said in his message for Lent, which began February 22 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Released by the Vatican February 17, the text of the Pope’s message focused on seeing Lenten penance and the synodal experience both as arduous journeys that lead to the wondrous experience of Christ’s divine light and splendour.

UK priest, lay volunteer acquitted after being charged for silent prayer ‘thoughtcrime’

A court has acquitted a Catholic priest and a pregnancy counsellor of crimes in connection with the “harassment of abortion clinic clients”.

District Judge David Wain February 16 dismissed charges against Fr Sean Gough and Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, in a matter of seconds, in a hearing at Birmingham Magistrates Court.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce, co-director of March for Life UK was arrested, searched, detained and charged in December after she was approached by three officers outside a closed British Pregnancy Advisory Services abortion facility and admitted to them that she “might be” praying in her head.

Fr Gough, a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, was charged the same month after he subsequently held up a placard outside the clinic, also closed at the time, which read: “Praying for Free Speech.”

“Nobody should be criminalised for offering help. Nobody should be criminalised for their prayers. Nobody should be criminalised for their thoughts,” Ms Vaughan-Spruce said in front of the court after being acquitted.

Fr Gough similarly expressed relief at having been cleared of all charges and said afterward that “whatever your views are on abortion we can all agree that a democratic country cannot be in the business of prosecuting thought crimes.”

In November, Birmingham City Council imposed a Public



Fr Sean Gough, a priest in Wolverhampton, England, and Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, a pregnancy counsellor in Worcester, are pictured on February 16. District Judge David Wain dismissed charges against the two in a matter of seconds in a hearing at Birmingham Magistrates Court in England. Photo: OSV News/Simon Caldwell.

Spaces Protection Order prohibiting any activity within 492 feet (150 meters) of the clinic which might be aimed at influencing or harassing clients.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dropped the charges against Fr Gough and Vaughan-Spruce in January, but they decided to exercise their legal right for a court verdict on whether their behaviour had been criminal.

In court February 16, the CPS offered no evidence against either of them.

District Judge David Wain

said: “Because the prosecution decided to offer no evidence the matter is brought to an end. That brings proceedings to an end ... you are free to go.”

Speaking outside the court, Vaughan-Spruce said: “I’m glad I’ve been completely vindicated of any wrongdoing but I should never have been arrested and treated like a criminal simply for silently praying on a public street.”

After being arrested she was asked by the police “what I was silently praying for.”

“I told them I was praying

for people like my friend Amy, who was raped and became pregnant and was pressured into having an abortion which she deeply regretted, for people like Natalia, who took the abortion pills then passed her baby at home and saw that child down the toilet, which deeply traumatised her, for people like Kirsty, who also passed her child at home, in her own bed and on lifting up the covers saw what she described as being like a scene from a horror movie,” she said.

Cardinal thanks Portuguese abuse survivors for speaking out

An independent commission’s report on the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church in Portugal “points to the urgent need to combat whatever fosters silence from those who have been impacted by abuse,” said Cardinal Seán O’Malley of Boston.

Silence “impedes effective prevention and the administration of justice,” said the cardinal, who is president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

In a statement released at the Vatican February 17, Cardinal O’Malley thanked the

commission members and the Portuguese bishops who launched the study, but mostly the victims and survivors who came forward, many telling their stories for the first time.

“Our concern should first and foremost be with the victims, whose right to justice and to adequate care needs to be a common priority,” the cardinal said.

The commission’s report, released February 13, examined the period of 1950 to 2022; all dioceses and religious orders were asked to carry out a survey of abuse cases in their archives, then commission members visited

those archives.

But they also relied on interviews with victims and family members who phoned a dedicated line for reporting abuse.

Based on interviews with 512 victims whose statements were “validated,” the report estimated there were at least 4,300 victims of child sexual abuse by Church workers, mostly priests, during the 72 years covered by the study.

And, it said, 48.2% of the 512 interviewed said it was the first time they were telling anyone about their experience of abuse.

Freed Nicaraguan priests celebrate Mass with compatriots in exile

Two Nicaraguan priests, part of the group of more than 200 political prisoners released February 9 by the regime of Daniel Ortega, celebrated Mass with their compatriots in exile at Sts Agatha Church in Sweetwater, Florida.

After the Mass, Fr Benito Enrique Martínez, from the

Diocese of León, and Fr José Luis Díaz, from the Diocese of Matagalpa, spoke about their confinement in El Chipote, a maximum-security prison located in Nicaragua’s capital.

Fr Martínez, who publicly condemned murders committed by the regime,

described psychological torture, harsh conditions and that his arms “were completely raw from the handcuffs.”

Now, he said, he feels sadness, even though he is free, because his family is still in his country, and they are in danger.

Fr Díaz, the other freed priest who came to Miami, said during his confinement, guards wanted him to deny God and accuse Bishop Rolando Álvarez – who is now in prison – but he remained firm thanks to his faith in God, in the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Community life derailed...



Members of the community in East Palestine, Ohio, February 15, gather to discuss their safety and other environmental concerns at a town hall meeting following a train derailment that spilled toxic chemicals February 3. Photo: OSV News/ Alan Freed, Reuters.

Bolivia attorney general 'wants to intimidate us' says archbishop

In the case known as "Coup I," Bolivia's attorney general's office has requested that 10 bishops testify regarding their role in the alleged 2019 coup d'état that led to the resignation of President Evo Morales.

Archbishop Percy Galván of La Paz, the nation's capital, charged that the move is an attempt to "intimidate us," and two former presidents have decried this effort as persecution of the Church.

In 2019, Morales ran for the fourth time in a row, despite the fact that a referendum in 2016 had prohibited a fourth term for a president.

Morales was re-elected in a process questioned by

international organisations over suspicions of fraud. Amid widespread protests and strikes, Morales fled the country and was granted political asylum in Mexico and later in Argentina.

After Morales' departure, the second vice president of the Senate, Jeanine Áñez, became interim president of the country.

For Morales' political party, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), to which current president Luis Arce also belongs, this constituted a coup d'état.

Also in the "Coup I" case, in December 2022 the governor of the large Santa Cruz

Department, Fernando Camacho, was arrested and accused of the crime of terrorism.

In that same process, the authorities are now requesting that the prelates who participated in the meetings to restore peace to the country in 2019 testify.

Among them are Archbishop Ricardo Centellas, then vice president of the Bolivian Bishops' Conference (CEB); Bishop Aurelio Poeso, former deputy general secretary of the CEB; and Giovanni Arana, auxiliary bishop of El Alto.

Archbishop Galván spoke February 12 with the local press and reaffirmed the position of the bishops' confer-

ence "to always be available to clear up any doubts on this issue, that of our participation as bishops and that of the participation of the Church in those difficult and critical moments that our country had to go through."

Regarding the events of 2019, he pointed out that "the police had mutinied, the Army was confined to their barracks, we were totally unprotected. We had to do something."

"They want to intimidate us, but I think this is to not know the nature of the Church," he said.

Canada moves to delay expanding assisted suicide

The Canadian government has introduced legislation to delay by one year plans to include mental illness among the list of conditions eligible for the country's assisted suicide program.

The assisted suicide law – called Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) – excludes Canadians from eligibility whose only medical condition is mental illness.

In 2021 lawmakers excluded mental illness for a two-year period to allow additional time to study how MAID on the basis of a mental illness can safely

be provided and to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect those persons.

With the end of that two-year ban quickly approaching, Minister of Justice David Lametti has introduced legislation to keep the exclusion in place for another year, until March 17, 2024.

In a February 2 interview with Cable Public Affairs Channel, Lametti said that "the delay is not a hesitation to include [the mentally ill]. It is more a recognition of the complexity of it."

"And the fact that I think more peo-

ple, more experts, more practitioners, as well as Canadians generally need to internalise the standards that are going to be there."

Two conservative members of Parliament, Michael Cooper for St. Albert-Edmonton and Rob Moore for Fundy Royal, responded, saying: "This last-minute delay is indicative of the Liberal [party]'s reckless and rushed approach to expanding medically assisted dying to more vulnerable Canadians."



'Pope's ministry is for life', says Pope Francis

● Pope Francis addressed once again the question of whether he will resign the papacy in two conversations with Jesuit priests in Africa this month.

"I believe that the pope's ministry is *ad vitam*. I see no reason why it should not be so," the Pope said February 2 during a private conversation with 82 Jesuits in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Francis met the group of priests at the apostolic nunciature in Kinshasa, where he was staying during his January 31-February 3 visit to the DRC.

The conversations were reported in the Jesuit-run journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

The Pope, repeating information he had revealed in a prior interview, said that he signed a resignation letter two months after his election as pope in case he should become incapacitated.

He said he gave the letter to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican's secretary of state at the time, but he does not know now where the letter is.

"However, this does not at all mean that resigning popes should become, let's say, 'the fashion,' a normal thing. Benedict had the courage to do it because he did not feel like going on because of his health. I for the moment do not have that on my agenda," he said.

Members of Rome diocese supervisory body named

● As part of his recent overhaul of the Vicariate of Rome, Pope Francis has appointed six members to a new independent supervisory commission that will monitor the work and administrative and economic affairs of the vicariate.

The Vatican published February 15 the names of the new members and the guidelines of the commission, which will have supervisory authority over the Vicariate of Rome and all offices, agencies, entities and boards that depend on the vicariate or come under its responsibility.

The six members are

appointed directly by the Pope for a three-year term, which may be renewed only once.

They include: Myriam Tinti, an Italian lawyer registered with the Vatican court and a professor of canon law at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University; Stefano Di Pinto, an Italian lawyer and professor of criminal law, specialising in forensic science, city safety and anti-mafia efforts; and Stefano Fiorini, an Italian accountant and auditor.

The other members are Daniele Fiore Di Vito, Luca Monteferrante, and Vito Pace, a notary.

Vatican and environmental institute release guide for sustainability

● To help local parishes, schools, other groups and individuals reflect on the practical and concrete action they can take to help tackle today's environmental challenges, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Stockholm Environment Institute have released a guidebook.

Titled, "Our Common Home: A Guide to Caring for our Living Planet", the 20-page, full-colour guide connects scientific facts and figures on key environmental issues with reflections and teachings from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*.

The guide "aims to empower" local churches and local community efforts "with inspiration, with introspection, with careful consideration of what has to change," Cardinal Michael Czerny, the dicastery prefect, said during an online news conference February 14.

It represents "an important and hopeful collaboration between two great sectors: that of science, and that of faith," he said.

"The call to protect, care and regenerate creation must be a priority for everyone, regardless of one's belonging to this or that religion or none at all."



Letter from USA



Kate Scanlon

The FBI is facing scrutiny after a leaked memo suggested some “radical traditionalist” Catholics pose threats of racial or ethnically motivated violence. The memo has since been retracted by the bureau, a spokesperson told *OSV News*.

“Robert A. Destro, a professor of law at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, told *OSV News* the FBI’s memo overstepped the agency’s realm of authority”

In a leaked memo dated January 23, an analyst at the FBI’s Richmond Division said “Radical Traditionalist Catholics” are “typically characterised by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council”. The memo said the ideology can amount to an “adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and white supremacist ideology.” The memo also names far-right personality Nick Fuentes, who publicly self-identifies as Catholic and whom the memo says has ties to “white Christian nationalism”.

However, the memo distinguishes “radical traditionalist” Catholics as “separate and distinct” from “traditionalist Catholics,” Catholics who “simply prefer the Traditional Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II teachings”.

Nevertheless, the leaked FBI memo generated everything from unease over its contents to outrage from some quarters alleging the FBI was labelling all Catholics a threat.

Rick Garnett, a professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, told *OSV News* that although the FBI retracted the memo, “that it was ever composed is troubling”.

“While it probably does not violate America’s religious freedom laws for a law enforcement agency to discuss threats in particular communities, the memo echoes an ugly, and long-standing, tendency in the United States of seeing Catholics as somehow disloyal or particularly problematic,” Mr Garnett said.

Robert Destro, a professor of law at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, told *OSV News* the FBI’s memo overstepped the agency’s realm of authority.

If the FBI had evidence of criminal conduct from a member of one of the groups, Mr Destro said, “then it

FBI faces scrutiny about memo on ‘radical traditionalist Catholics’



A priest elevates the Eucharist during a traditional Tridentine Mass in July 2021 at St Josaphat Church in the Queens borough of New York City. Photo: CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz.

“Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares, alongside attorneys general from 19 other states, sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and US”

seems to me they should do exactly what they would do in a criminal case, which is they would get a warrant to wiretap them, maybe search their house.”

Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, expressed alarm at the memo’s contents.

“People of all faith groups have long found refuge in the constitutional protections of our great nation,” Bishop Knestout said in a statement. “We all seek to share in God’s gift of life, enjoy the fruits of liberty that our nation offers and assist one another in ensuring the common good.”

Extremism

Bishop Knestout noted in his statement that some of the groups named in the memo are not in full communion with the Church, adding, “If evidence of extremism exists, it should be rooted out, but not at the expense of religious freedom.”

“A preference for traditional forms of worship and holding closely to the Church’s teachings on marriage, family, human sexuality, and the dignity of the human person does not equate with extremism,” he said.

Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares, alongside attorneys general from 19 other states, sent a let-

ter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and US Attorney General Merrick Garland condemning the memo as “anti-Catholic”.

Mr Miyares said in a statement that “Virginia is the birthplace of religious freedom and has a long history of protecting the inalienable right to live your faith free from government interference or intimidation”.

“Upon learning of the document, FBI Headquarters quickly began taking action to remove the document from FBI systems”

“The leaked memo from our state capital’s FBI office is unacceptable, unconstitutional, and un-American. Frankly, it’s what I would expect from Communist Cuba,” Mr Miyares said.

“As attorney general, I’m responsible for defending Virginians’ rights, and religious freedom is the bedrock of the constitutions of the United States and of Virginia. Virginians should not and will not be labelled ‘violent extremists’ by their government because of how they worship, or because of their beliefs.”

The same FBI memo noted that “conversely, deep-seated anti-Catholicism remains a characteristic of many far-right white nationalists”.

A cited source in the FBI memo is the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organisation that monitors “hate groups” but has faced criticism from some who say the group too widely applies that label.

Intelligence Project

Cassie Miller, senior research analyst with centre’s Intelligence Project, told *OSV News* in an email, “There is a stark difference between traditionalist Catholics – who celebrate the Latin Mass and rebuff many of the liberalising reforms of the Second Vatican Council – and the radical traditionalist Catholics tracked by the Southern Poverty Law Center.”

“The latter group is made up of a handful of organisations that not only reject many of the modern Catholic Church’s teachings and practices, but openly embrace antisemitism,” Ms Miller said.

“The radical traditionalist Catholic groups we identify as hate groups promote Holocaust denial and argue that the reforms of Vatican II were part of a sinister Jewish plot, in addition to other racist, bigoted, and conspiratorial beliefs. These are groups that teach hatred of people based on their religious beliefs, and for that reason we consider them hate groups.”

SPLC in 2021 identified nine organisations as “radical traditional Catholicism hate groups,” including the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart

of Mary located in Richmond, New Hampshire, which is not canonically recognised by the Catholic Church.

On its website, SPLC says “(r)adical traditionalist” Catholics “subscribe to an ideology that is rejected by the Vatican and some 70 million mainstream American Catholics” and “may make up the largest single group of serious antisemites in America”.

A spokesperson for the FBI said in a statement provided to *OSV News*, “While our standard practice is to not comment on specific intelligence products, this particular field office product – disseminated only within the FBI – regarding racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism does not meet the exacting standards of the FBI.”

“Upon learning of the document, FBI Headquarters quickly began taking action to remove the document from FBI systems and conduct a review of the basis for the document,” the statement said.

“The FBI is committed to sound analytic tradecraft and to investigating and preventing acts of violence and other crimes while upholding the constitutional rights of all Americans and will never conduct investigative activities or open an investigation based solely on First Amendment protected activity.”

i Kate Scanlon is a national reporter for *OSV News* covering Washington.

Trust broken in the Holy Land say ambassadors to Vatican



Junno Arocho Esteves

A series of deadly raids by Israeli authorities in the West Bank and attacks on Jewish civilians in the first month of the new year have made the goal of a lasting peace in the Holy Land seemingly unattainable.

The January 26 raid in the West Bank city of Jenin, which resulted in the deaths of 10 Palestinians, including an elderly woman, as well as the shooting to death of seven people near a synagogue in Jerusalem by a Palestinian gunman, prompted a heartfelt appeal by Pope Francis for both sides to lay down their arms.

“The Israeli ambassador to the Holy See also said that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas ‘doesn’t condemn such attacks’”

“The spiral of death that increases day after day does nothing other than close the few glimpses of trust that exist between the two peoples,” the Pope said during his Sunday Angelus address January 29.

“From the beginning of the year, dozens of Palestinians have been killed during firefights with the Israeli army. I appeal to the two governments and to the international community so that, immediately and without delay, other paths might be found that include dialogue and a sincere search for peace,” he said.

Both sides view the conflict in very different ways. The Israeli government views its actions as a legitimate defence against “terrorists” in the region that seek to destroy the Jewish state, while Palestine considers Israel’s frequent incursions in Palestinian territories as an “illegal occupation”.

Yet both sides wholeheartedly agree with Pope Francis’ assessment: The sense of trust between the two sides is at its breaking point.

“I believe that this is a very central element,” Ambassador Raphael Schutz, Israeli ambassador to the Holy See, told *OSV News* February 9. “It’s very difficult to build peace when there is no trust.”

His counterpart, Ambassador Issa Kassissieh, Palestinian ambassador to the Holy See, also agreed with the Pope, noting that, “unfortunately, the situation is deteriorating more and more”.



The gold-covered Dome of the Rock at the Temple Mount complex is seen in a 2017 overview of Jerusalem’s Old City. Photo: *OSV News/Debbie Hill*.

“We see an escalation of the situation on the ground rather than seeing de-escalation on the ground,” Mr Kassissieh said in a Zoom call from Jerusalem with *OSV News* February 14.

However, both ambassadors offered contrasting views as to how the conflict has reached this point.

Synagogue attack

Citing the synagogue attack, as well as a February 11 attack that killed two Israeli boys and a young man in Jerusalem, Mr Schutz said violence against Israel by Palestinians is part of a “culture of hate” and claimed that the Palestinians allegedly celebrated in the streets “and were bragging about this ‘act of heroism,’ as they called it.”

The Israeli ambassador to the Holy See also said that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas “doesn’t condemn such attacks”.

“They are not taking responsibility for anything. And they are also not saying out loud that they recognise, at the end of the day, the right of Israel to exist as the nation state of the Jewish people,” Mr Schutz told *OSV News*.

He said that there was a time where he felt hopeful for a peaceful future in the Holy Land after the signing of the Oslo Accords, a historic series of agreements that saw the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organisation’s recognition of the state of Israel.

“The Palestinian Authority, he added, recognises the state of Israel”

“Back in ‘93, I was not only happy, I was also very much optimistic about the future. And right now, I must confess that I am less optimistic, especially because of the lack of trust,” Mr Schutz said.

For his part, Mr Kassissieh told *OSV News* that such attacks by individuals against Israeli citizens are “unacceptable.” However, he added, it also is important to look at “the roots of such incidents”.

“I would ask, who is the occupier,

who is the oppressor and who is under occupation? From here we (must) start. And when people are in despair and they’re crushed, unfortunately, individuals out of frustration act not in the right way or appropriate way”.

Noting that former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon condemned the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, Mr Kassissieh said it has a negative effect for both sides.

“Occupation corrupts and many, many Israeli security agents talked about the negativity of occupation in Israeli society. And you cannot be proud and talk about your democracy while you are controlling the lives of other people against their will,” he said.

The Palestinian Authority, he added, recognises the state of Israel. But, “it’s time for the Israelis to look at us equally as human beings, (as) people that have the very basic right of self-determination, the very basic right as humans to be an equal part in dealing with each other.”

Yet, despite the grim prospect of peace in the Holy Land and a two-state solution, both ambassadors said that not all hope is lost.

“Well, you know, as a principle, I say we should never give up, and we should always try to find a common denominator and speak with each other,” Mr Schutz said, adding that he is “a very strong believer that peace will come when Israelis and Palestinians will sit together”.

“Mr Kassissieh expressed his hope that Israel will one day ‘look at us not as a threat, but as partners for the future, for generations to come’”

“I think that right now, again, what we should try to see is to find ways to speak with each other, because this lack of dialogue is really among the principal disadvantages or factors that make the situation on the ground worse,” he said.

Mr Kassissieh expressed his hope that Israel will one day “look at us not as a threat, but as partners for the future, for generations to come”.

“When it comes to negotiations, I personally believe that if both sides are in the room alone and there is a will, they can strike a deal and they can finalise the issue,” he said.

“Yet both sides wholeheartedly agree with Pope Francis’ assessment: The sense of trust between the two sides is at its breaking point”

i Junno Arocho Esteves writes for *OSV News* from Rome.

Letters

Letter of the week

State failures making the needy more impoverished

Dear Editor, Dublin City Centre is in a sorry state of affairs. Reading your front page [*The Irish Catholic* – February 9, 2023] brought home the challenges facing our inner city churches. Anyone who has been out in Dublin, particularly in the evening, can see first hand the homelessness and drugs epidemic that is causing untold havoc in our capital.

More and more young people are being dragged into the world of drugs and criminality for designer gear, more and more people languishing in homelessness are roaming the streets asking for money for their next fix, and violence abounds.

I am not judging those who find themselves in these positions, it is

a systemic societal problem that allows this to perpetuate. Ireland has lost its faith and in many ways its compassion. We speak about tolerance and equality but more often than not those on the margins of society have become even more marginalised and impoverished.

Subsequent governments have failed to address major issues related to housing and healthcare in favour of 'easy wins' in referenda that the middle classes joyously sing praises about while being blinkered to the abject failings right in front of them. These issues will continue until we find, once again, the Catholic social teachings which this State was founded on. And while our 'dutiful'

politicians attack the Church and crimes of the past, they neglect to realise that it was the Church that filled the gaps in compassion that so many in political leadership were seemingly happy to leave unaddressed. This story continues to this day. In the past we had dedicated priests and sisters who had a solid grounding in the Gospel and understanding of what it means to be a Christian – which was reflected in their works – now we have soulless NGOs who think gender ideology is more important than supplying basic human dignity to those in need.

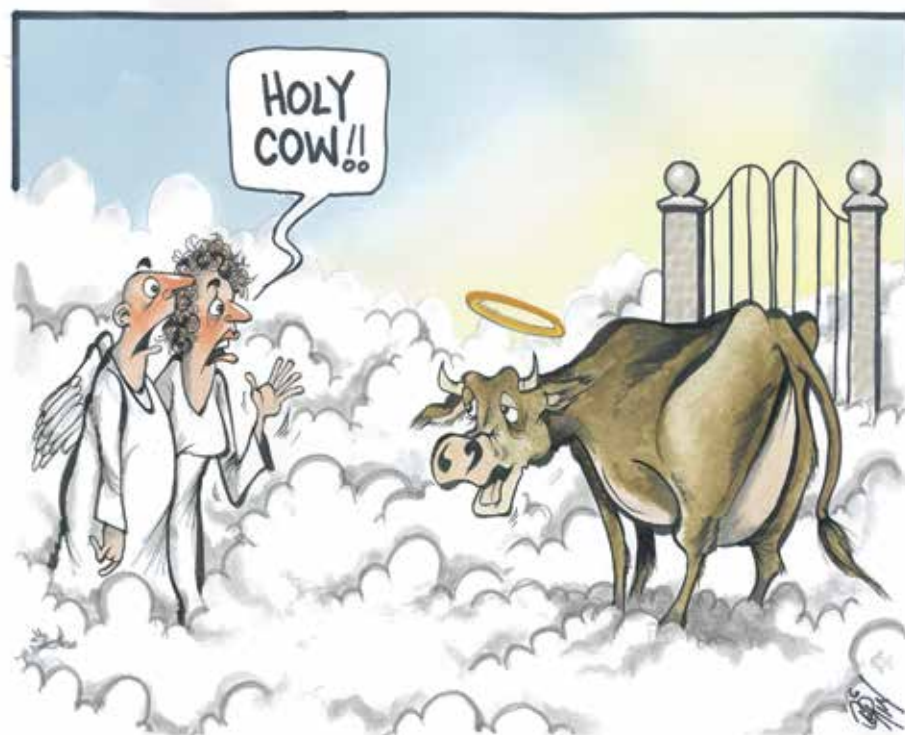
*Yours etc.,
Paul Brady
East Wall, Dublin 3*

A matter of conscience

Dear Editor, Watching each day the saga of school teacher Enoch Burke who was sacked from the school where he worked because he refused to obey the request of a pupil who wanted to change his name and gender: This is a matter of conscience for Mr Burke and nobody has the right to take it away.

It is a matter between God and the person who feels it a duty to obey. I think Mr Burke should get support from people in this matter, I feel he is persisting for his rights.

*Yours etc.,
Vera Loftus
Ferrybank, Co. Waterford*



Clarity to subject of conscientious objection

Dear Editor, In all the twists and turns of the Enoch Burke saga, he expects his religious endorsement to be upheld in his workplace asserting that it surpasses the rights of students and their parents and the school's duty of care to them.

Undeterred by the threat of daily fines of €700 he has turned up again and again at Wilson's Hospital School in Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath. Woody Allen once

said that 80% of success in life is just showing up. George Orwell said: "sanity is not statistical." And being part of a small familial tribe that has Enoch Burke at loggerheads with the board of management of Wilson Hospital School, a private Church of Ireland school, makes it refreshing to see Mr Burke standing up for his conscientious beliefs.

There is a close parallel between his case and that of

Ashers Bakery in Belfast that steadfastly refused to produce a cake, featuring the Sesame Street puppets Bert and Ernie, in 2014 for Gareth Lee, who supported a campaign to legalise same-sex marriage in NI. The ECHR ruled the claim was inadmissible because the applicant had not expressly invoked his rights under the European convention on human rights at any point in the domestic proceedings and had relied solely on domestic

law. There are many other legal routes open to Mr Burke, that include taking a case for unfair dismissal to the Workplace Relations Commissions (WRC) and seeking a leave for a judicial review. Burke's case could eventually make its way to the ECHR in Strasbourg, in order to give clarity to the subject of conscientious objection.

*Yours etc.,
Gerry Coughlan
Kilnamanagh, Dublin 24*

Parish can benefit from Lectio Divina groups

Dear Editor, The Living Word, or *Lectio Divina* as it is known in Latin, is a long established way of becoming familiar with both the Old and New Testament. It has the following five benefits:

- It fosters a sense of community among parishioners as it most often happens in groups around a kitchen table or in a parish room.
- It prepares us for Mass on Sunday

so that we get the most out of the Liturgy of the Word, the first half of the Mass.

- It reveals to us the continuity of the Bible.
- It allows lay people to take some responsibility for their own spiritual growth because a Living Word group does not necessarily include the parish priest.

- It is a way of studying the Bible in a liturgical way because the readings follow the feasts of the liturgical year, eg. Passover, Pentecost, All Saints' day, Christmas day etc..

I believe that every parish in Ireland could benefit from the practice.

*Yours etc.,
Andrew Kieran
Morningson, Co. Meath*

Teaching unproven gender theories in schools is unsafe

Dear Editor, Well done to *The Irish Catholic* for highlighting the message given by a leader in Catholic education that teaching 'gender theory' as fact is problematic, to say the least [*The Irish Catholic* – February 2, 2023].

It's important to deal with anyone who is expressing distress around their gender with dignity and care. Personally, if someone asked me to call them a 'she' rather than a 'he' or vice versa I would do it – I don't believe that doing so is in some way accepting gender ideology, but recognising that someone is experiencing a genuine human emotion that is causing them difficulties and this may help them feel accepted. Treating someone with respect creates a platform for further discussion and being obstinate is a road to nowhere.

However, teaching unproven gender theories in schools is dangerous. While a pastoral approach is best, to actually state as fact people can be more than two genders or switch genders is just unsafe and unscientific. More importantly, the Church, founded by Christ, is very clear on this issue.

We need to protect children from this dangerous ideology that causes confusion among young and impressionable pupils. Parents have a duty of care and they must resist any decision by Government to impose this belief system that is totally against Catholic teaching. Any Catholic school that embraces gender theory in the name of 'inclusion' is doing untold damage to their student body and the bishop of the diocese is morally obliged to intercede if the board of governors will not.

This battle is already happening in Catholic schools where teachers of no faith start throwing up 'Pride' flags and telling children they can be whatever gender they want if that's how they feel.

Be aware and be active.

*Yours etc.,
John Kelly
Citywest, Dublin 24*

The acute vocations crisis calls for more diocesan priests

Dear Editor, I was delighted to hear there will be a year dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood for dioceses [*The Irish Catholic* – February 2, 2023]. Currently there are major issues in terms of 'supply and demand', just like the

housing crisis! I feel our vocations crisis is more acute, as the celebration of Mass and the sacraments are the most fundamental needs for anybody.

*Yours etc.,
Brendan Walsh
Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow*

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.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, February 23, 2023

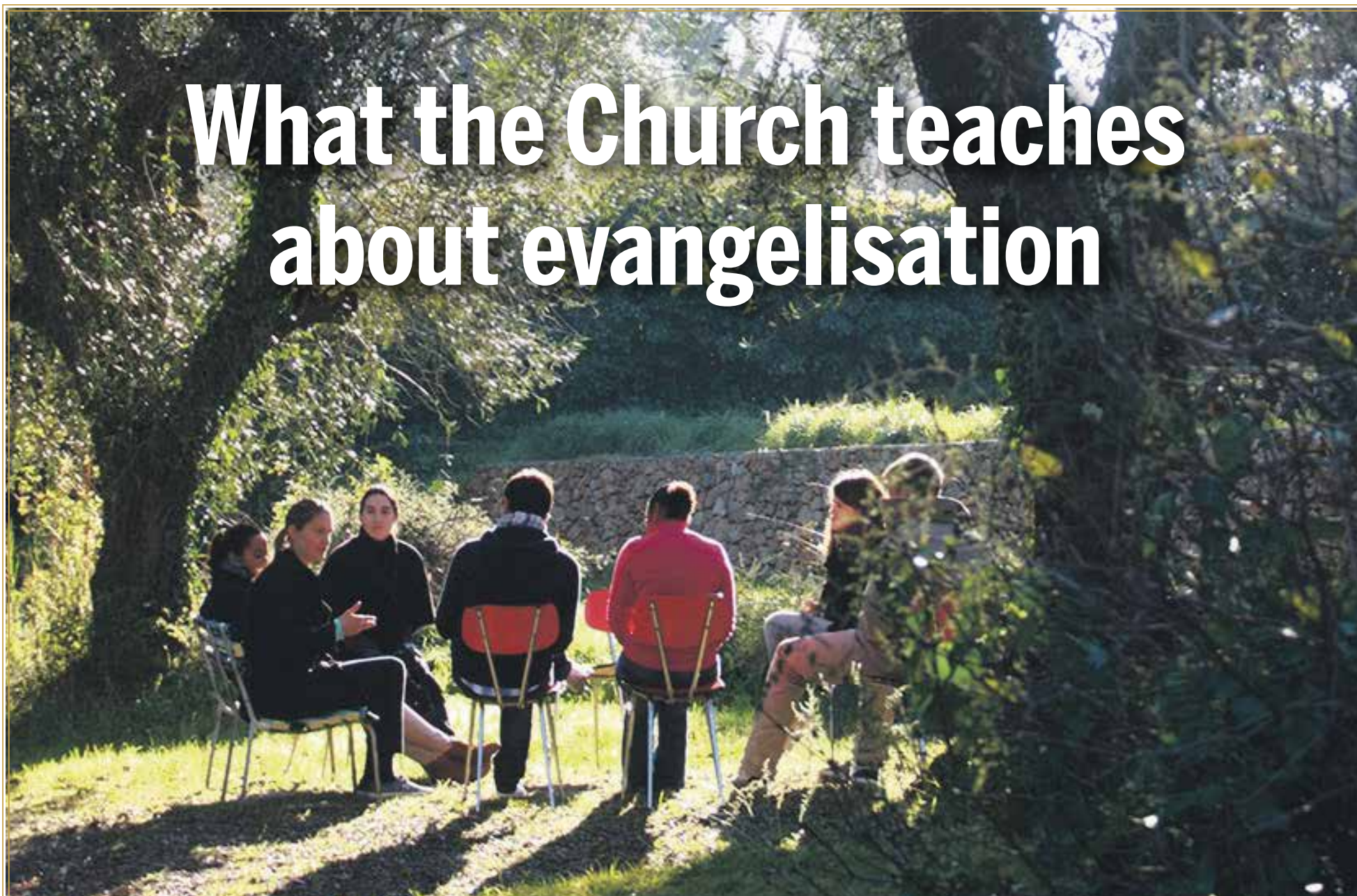
Questions of Faith

Is Christ really present in the Eucharist?

Page 32



What the Church teaches about evangelisation



A friend, who has been away from the Church for years, starts to reminisce about growing up Catholic. A co-worker tells you that she was baptised Catholic but never received any other sacraments. A neighbour begins to ask questions about God after the death of his wife. A family member joins a non-denominational Bible study and begins to criticise the Catholic Church. A stranger sitting next to you on an airplane admits that he was raised Catholic, but no longer goes to Mass.

These common, everyday events are all opportunities for evangelisation. Unfortunately, too many Catholics don't understand their role in the evan-



Evangelisation is nothing more or less than sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others, writes Lorene Hanley Duquin

gelisation process. As a result, people who are struggling in their relationship with God or the Catholic Church are often ignored.

It is as St John Paul II said, "There exists today the clear need for a New Evangelisation."

What is evangelisation?

According to the US Conference

of Catholic Bishops, evangelisation means "bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation". Evangelisation leads to conversion.

As Catholics, we believe that conversion is an ongoing process throughout our lives that brings us into closer union with God through Jesus Christ and his Gospel message. Sometimes, conversion is a dramatic event that shakes us to the core of

ourselves. Other times, it happens quietly as we are drawn toward new understandings and insights. Conversion is always the work of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit uses ordinary people and events to bring about conversion. When you allow the Holy Spirit to work through you to bring someone to conversion, you have discovered the essence of what it means to evangelise.

Why do we need to evangelise?

Before ascending into Heaven, Jesus commanded us to evangelise when he said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Mt 28:19-20).

Throughout his ministry,

Jesus used a variety of images about the need to evangelise. He talked about catching fish (Lk 5:10), sowing seeds (Mk 4:1-9), lighting a lamp (Mk 4:21-25), and how few workers there were for the harvest (Lk 10:2). He told stories about great rejoicing over a lost coin, a lost sheep, and a prodigal son (Lk 15:1-32).

Jesus was the first and greatest evangeliser. He came to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. We see in his teaching, his miracles, his interaction with people, and his sending out of the disciples, the example of his own evangelising activity. If we want to follow in the footsteps of Christ, then we must become evangelisers, too.

Who needs to be evangelised?

Children need to be evangelised in order to grow in faith and understanding. Inactive Catholics, who no longer attend Mass regularly, need to be evangelised so that they can return to a life of active faith. Alienated Catholics who have left the Church need to be evangelised so they know how much we miss them and want them to return. People who have no faith need to be evangelised so they can be welcomed into a new life with Christ and the Church. Most of all, we need to be evangelised ourselves in order to strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church.

How do we evangelise?

There are four essential elements in the process of evangelisation.

1. Listening. The most sacred thing a person can share is his or her own story. When we listen, we enter into a person's heart, mind, and soul. We see their search for meaning. We catch a glimpse of their struggle or their pain.

“There must be unceasing prayer to nourish the desire to carry Christ to all men and women”

2. Sharing our faith. We can share what our faith means to us in words by telling others how the Holy Spirit has worked in our lives. We can also share our faith through actions that demonstrate the ways in which we try to live authentically the Gospel message.

3. Extending an invitation. It might be an invitation to come to Mass or to some Catholic devotion, to talk with a priest or spiritual adviser, to read a book or pamphlet, to listen to a lecture, to assist in some ministry, to pray together, or to attend a parish social event.

4. Praying. St John Paul II tells us, “There must be unceasing prayer to nourish the desire to carry Christ to all men and women”.

While all of these elements are essential, the important thing to remember is that there is no step-by-step recipe for evangelisation. The Holy Spirit will use your natural gifts and talents for the work of evangelisation if you are open and willing. Before long, you'll begin to see that you've developed your own style of evangelisation!

What kind of evangeliser are you?

People have different preferences for how they share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. Here are some examples:

- Some people are active. They might help clean the church or help with the parish clothing drive. They evangelise by inviting others to join them. One woman decided to become Catholic after a friend invited her to help at the parish soup kitchen.

- Some people have had difficult lives and they can relate to others in similar situations.



A man drives a cart with images of Mary and the word “evangelisation” outside Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Cotonou, Benin, in this 2011 file photo. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

They evangelise by sharing how their Catholic faith helped them through a death in the family, an illness, or some other difficulty.

- Some people are willing to share their own personal story of being away from the Church for a while and finding a new life in Christ when they returned.

- Some people like to study the Catholic Faith and share what they've learned with others. They evangelise by becoming catechists, RCIA team members, or by becoming involved in adult education and apologetics.

- Some people love to meet new people. They evangelise by helping to make the parish more welcoming. One lapsed Catholic came back to the Church after someone in the pews asked if he would like to join the choir.

- Some people join the evangelisation ministry in their parish and develop creative ways to invite inactive Catholics and people who are unchurched to parish events.

- Some people casually bring God into the conversation at work or in the community without being overbearing or offensive.

- Some people are willing to pray with people who are going through a difficult time. You should be constantly on the look-

out for people who may be open to a conversion experience.

Seven signs that someone is open to evangelisation

1. The most common sign is when people begin to ask questions about God, good and evil, or the meaning of life.

2. Reminiscing about Catholic school, nuns, priests, or parish activities is another sign that someone may feel drawn toward God or the Church.

3. Asking about where they can find Catholic reading materials is yet another sign. It's a good idea to keep a supply of Catholic books, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets on hand.

4. Comments about the Pope, the Church, or parish activities can be someone's way of starting a conversation with you about faith.

5. Major life events or crises such as illness, death, the birth of a baby, graduations, a job loss or transfer, moving to a new home, separation and divorce, financial difficulties, tension, and other stress-related situations can trigger a desire to find a closer connection to God or the church.

6. Experiencing the presence of God during a Mass, a funeral, or the celebration of a Sacrament can stir



feelings.

7. Noticing your faith, love, and deep sense of inner peace can capture the attention of people who are searching for God. Don't be surprised if people begin to ask about your spiritual life. At that point, you'll know that you are truly an evangeliser and the Holy Spirit is working through you.

A challenge for today

The word “evangelisation” comes from the Greek word *euaggelizo-mai*, which means “to announce good news” or “proclaim glad tidings”. The early Christians used the word when they spread the news

about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, evangelisation has played a key role in converting people to Christ. Some of the greatest saints sacrificed their lives to spread the Good News of Jesus.

Today, evangelisation is becoming an increasingly important part of Catholic life following the direction of Pope St John Paul II, whose call for a ‘New Evangelisation’ captured the minds, hearts and imaginations of Catholics all over the world.

“The Holy Spirit will use your natural gifts and talents for the work of evangelisation if you are open and willing”

Lorene Hanley Duquin is the author of Catholic books, pamphlets, and articles on a variety of evangelisation and ministry topics. She has conducted workshops in parishes and at diocesan conferences in the United States and Canada.

Finding Christ on the waterfront

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

The Oscar's 'best picture' for 1954, *On the Waterfront*, is probably best remembered for Marlon Brando's ground-breaking performance. His visceral but measured portrayal of a sensitive ex-prize fighter deserves all its acclaim.

What's less well known is that the film was at least partly based on the life of a real priest who witnessed to Christ in the ports of America. Reviewer David Paul Baird explains that scriptwriter Budd Schulberg conducted his own research into corruption in the New York dockyards, at a time when it was making headlines.

“The shipyard sermon in the film draws much of its content from Fr Corridan's real life preaching at the docks”

However, Schulberg “found very few longshoremen who were willing to talk,” Mr Baird writes. “And then he met Fr John Corridan. A Jesuit known locally as ‘the waterfront priest,’ Fr Corridan ran a school which instructed the wharf workers in economics and led strategy sessions in trade unionism.

“Interestingly, his teaching in that setting was not explicitly religious: rather, what it offered was practical guidance based upon principles drawn neither from dog-eat-dog capitalism nor Communist ideology but from fundamental

Marlon Brando and Eve Marie Saint star in *On the Waterfront*, a profound meditation on conscience and truth.



Christian convictions about the dignity of man. The shipyard sermon in the film draws much of its content from Fr Corridan's real life preaching at the docks.”

The “shipyard sermon” Mr Baird references is probably the film's second most iconic scene, after Brando's “I coulda been a contender”. To set the scene, let me outline the plot.

The film is set on a New York dock rife with corruption. The local union, which controls who works and who doesn't, squeezes the poor dockworkers for every last penny. Brando plays Terry Malloy, an ex-prize fighter, who is tricked by the union into luring a man, Joey, to his death. Joey was to testify against the union, exposing its corruption.

Upset by his death, Terry begins to fall for Joey's sister Edie (played by Eva Marie Saint). Edie and the local priest Fr Barry (played by Karl Malden) start a campaign to root out the corruption, and Terry's

conscience is racked – he knows the truth, but to tell it would mean giving up his own brother, one of the union's crooked men.

Truth and justice

The major theme of *On the Waterfront* is conscience and its relationship to truth and justice. The conscience worked on is Terry Malloy – he knows the truth about the union and to gain justice for all those wronged, he should talk.

But he's a man who is easily led. His brother Charley is one of the big players in the union and keeps him on a tight leash. Charley feels for his brother, he likes him, he gets easy work from him.

But then Terry falls for Edie, whose brother he lured to his death. She hungers for justice with a righteous anger. All the big tough men of the union stay quiet, but she pushes and fights for real justice. Played by Marie Saint, a slim, angelic looking woman, there is

something of a saint's fury in her.

And then there's the priest, Fr Barry (based on Fr Corridan), the truth seeker. Urged on by Edie, he encourages the dockworkers to speak out against their corrupt bosses. But when one of them promises to do so, the union has him killed.

This leads to one of the great movie monologues, where Fr Barry addresses the dock workers and union men alike. Standing over the dead body, he proclaims Christ crucified to them.

“Some people think the Crucifixion only took place on Calvary,” says Fr Barry. “They better wise up! Taking Joey Doyle's life to stop him from testifying is a crucifixion. And dropping a sling on Kayo Dugan because he was ready to spill his guts tomorrow, that's a crucifixion.

“And every time the mob puts the pressure on a good man, tries to stop him from doing his duty as a citizen, it's a crucifixion. And

anybody who sits around and lets it happen, keeps silent about something he knows that happened, shares the guilt of it just as much as the Roman soldier who pierced the flesh of our Lord to see if he was dead.”

This is Fr Barry's church, the docklands, where he seeks to bring Christ. And so too was it Fr Corridan's. We can be eternally grateful to director Elia Kazan for bringing him to life on the big screen and for creating such a memorable dramatisation of a conscience at work.

“It says something for the way Brando plays it, elevating this tale of a conscience wrestling with the truth”

And the film is memorable, with Kazan's direction combining the stylised poetry of a crime drama with the more visceral attraction of down-to-earth realism. It takes the fresher elements of realism and moulds them to the careful craft of theatrical film.

Then there's Marlon Brando's performance, the stuff of legend in Hollywood, with the likes of Al Pacino and Jack Nicholson all recalling it as a seminal moment. Brando is very subtle, physical and yet undemonstrative, somewhat drawling but crystal clear – Malloy is a sensitive man in a brute's world and Brando draws that out excellently.

It's striking that the famous line, “I coulda been a contender” is often thought to be delivered in anger, when in fact it's sorrow and disappointment. It says something for the way Brando plays it, elevating this tale of a conscience wrestling with the truth.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



Saint Polycarp

St Polycarp: An early bishop who died in defence of the Faith

On February 23, the Church brings St Polycarp to our attention. An unusual name, Polycarp is one of those ‘titans’ of the early Church, a man who learned from those who had walked directly with Christ himself during his time on earth.

Born in 69AD, little enough survives of him and his work. Regardless, he was considered impressive and important enough to be taken note of, with accounts of his life and martyrdom appearing in early Christian texts. As mentioned, though, of significant interest is the fact that he learnt the teachings of Christ directly from the Apostles and became a disciple of St John the Evangelist.

Irenaeus, his pupil and then-Bishop of Lyon, wrote of him: “Polycarp was not only educated by the Apostles and lived with many of those who had seen the Lord, but it was the Apostles who sent him to Asia as Bishop of the Church of Smyrna”. (*Adversus Haereses III, 3,4, Historia Ecclesiastica IV, 14,3,4*)

The *Martyrium Polycarpi*, considered by

many to be the oldest and most authentic early account of martyrdom, was written by an eyewitness to Polycarp's own martyrdom. It is also the first work in which a martyr is defined as someone who dies for the Faith.

During his time as Bishop of Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey), Polycarp was recognised for faithfully preserving what the Apostles gave him – i.e. the early doctrine of the Church. He also gained renown for spreading the Gospel among the gentiles and confronting heresies, or misunderstandings regarding the Faith. Irenaeus in his account of Polycarp described him as a patient and lovable preacher, with a special care for widows and slaves.

Christians in Smyrna, under Polycarp's authority, were persecuted under Emperor Antoninus Pius. Polycarp himself was arrested and the account of his martyrdom narrates that he was “brought before the Proconsul, who tried to persuade him to recant, saying: ‘Think of your age ... change your mind ... swear and I will free you. Curse the Christ’. Polycarp

replied: ‘I have served Him for eighty-six years, and he has done me no harm. How could I curse my King who saved me? ... Listen clearly: I am a Christian’”.

He was burned at the stake, but reportedly remained unharmed by the flames (no doubt much to the puzzlement of his executioners). To put an end to him, he was killed by the sword.

The same account reports that Polycarp was the 12th person to suffer martyrdom in Smyrna, and that his death can be traced to what is now February 23 in the year 155.

Martyrdom aside, Polycarp was a big figure in the early Church and remains so for us today. He was close friends with another saint, Ignatius of Antioch, who would also go on to be martyred as so many Christians were in those days of the infant Church. The fellowship these early saints had with one another should serve to remind us of the importance of edifying friendships aimed at Christ.

Leave the 'Egypt' of our hearts and return to God this Lent



Paul Senz

One of the challenges we Catholics face is the way in which our liturgical calendar almost becomes like white noise in the background. There is such consistency in our liturgical year that we often don't give much thought to the changing of the seasons, the feasts, the memorials, the solemnities, as they pass by.

“In this light, the readings for Ash Wednesday are fitting, as they direct us toward the Lord, orient our minds to return to God”

But the seasons are there to help us mark the time, to help us consciously reflect on the mysteries in the life of Christ and in the life of the Church.

Ash Wednesday kicks off the season of Lent, during which we prepare for the paschal mystery, the salvific suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The 40-day period of prayer, fasting and almsgiving brings to mind and unites us with the Israelites' 40 years in the desert, Noah's 40 days in the ark and Christ's 40 days in the desert before commencing his public ministry.

We are fallen and we all stray from the path to God. But we know God is forgiving, his mercy endures forever. During this holy and penitential season we are called in a special way to face our sins, to get back on the right path and return to God.

As Pope Francis pointed out in his homily for Ash Wednesday in 2021, “Lent is a journey of return to God”. In this light, the readings for Ash Wednesday are fitting, as they direct us toward the Lord, orient our minds to return to God.

In our first reading, from the prophet Joel, the Lord through his prophet exhorts us to return to him with our whole heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning. We are told that the Lord is gracious and merciful, a refrain we hear again in the responsorial psalm: “Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.”

God's mercy is everlasting and perfect: All we need to do is accept the forgiveness he offers. Of course this brings to mind the parable of the prodigal son (see Lk 15:11-32). God wants nothing more than to lovingly welcome us back into his embrace.

In the life of the Church, and indeed the life of every Catholic, one of the most profound expressions of our journey of return to God is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

During the season of Lent, this Sacrament receives special attention, as Catholics around the world seek the Lord's forgiveness in the lead-up to Easter.

Throughout salvation history, we hear again and again about humanity's failings, God's mercy and our return to him. The story is the same every time: God makes a covenant with his people, the people break the covenant and God forges a new covenant with them.

The story changes for good at the coming of Christ and his death and resurrection: We are now united to God in a “new and eternal covenant” in the blood of Jesus.

We can still individually mess

up our relationship with God, but the Sacrament of Reconciliation has been given to us to right those wrongs. Like the prodigal son, we need only to accept the forgiveness that is already and always being offered to us.

It is never too early to seek and accept the forgiveness of God. In fact, the time is now.

In his Ash Wednesday homily, Pope Francis emphasised the urgency of returning to God. “In this life, we will always have things to do and excuses to offer, but right now, brothers and sisters, right now is the time to return to God,” he said.

We can see this in the second reading, as well, wherein St Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”. The only reason we can find to delay seeking God's mercy is our selfishness, our own attachment to sin.

“Ash Wednesday is our annual reminder that we are dust, and unto dust we shall return”

In his *Confessions*, St Augustine recounts that he would often pray asking God to make him chaste, “but not yet”. How many of us can relate to this prayer?

It is easy for us to talk about a return to God – and easy for us to say that we want to! But sometimes in practice it is not so easy. We don't always want what is best for us.

The Israelites' 40-year excursion in the desert was certainly no easy task, and at times they even yearned for the days of their enslavement in Egypt.

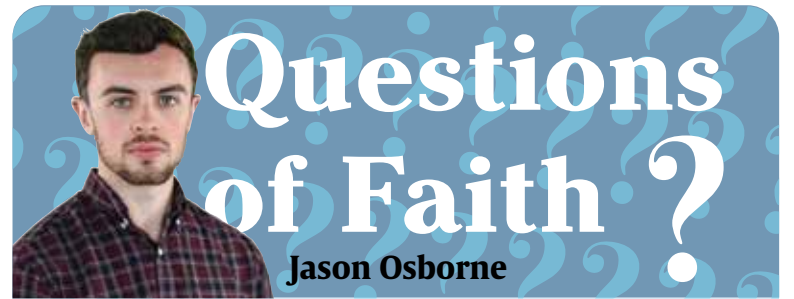
Pope Francis makes reference to this in the same Ash Wednesday homily:

“How difficult it was to leave Egypt! It was more difficult for God's people to leave the Egypt of the heart, that Egypt they carried with them, than to leave the land of Egypt. It is hard to leave Egypt behind. During their journey, there was an ever-present temptation to yearn for leeks, to turn back, to cling to memories of the past or to this or that idol.

“So it is with us: Our journey back to God is blocked by our unhealthy attachments, held back by the seductive snares of our sins, by the false security of money and appearances, by the paralysis of our discontents.”

Ash Wednesday is our annual reminder that we are dust, and unto dust we shall return. So the time is now to return to God, to turn away from sin and accept his mercy.

We look at the ashes and see the fleeting nature of physical things – “*sic transit gloria mundi*” (thus passes the glory of the world) – and remember the eternal, unchanging God who wants to welcome us home.



Is Christ really present in the Eucharist?



Recent polls in the US have indicated that belief in Jesus's presence in the Eucharist is at a historic low. A famous 2019 survey found that 69% of all self-identified Catholics said they believed the bread and wine used at Mass are not Christ, but rather “symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ”. The remaining 31% said they believed in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, which is known as ‘transubstantiation’.

What does the Church have to say on this topic? It's resoundingly clear. The “Real Presence of Christ”, as it's often put, in the Eucharist is a central dogma of the Catholic Faith. The Church teaches that when the priest consecrates bread and wine during the Mass, they are transformed into the literal “body and blood, soul and divinity” of Jesus Christ.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it this way: “The power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all” (1353).

“By this Sacrament,” the *Catechism* says, “we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood to form a single body” (1331). Belief in the presence of Christ in the seemingly-mundane bread we consume at Mass every week is heavily dependent on belief in Christ being who he said he was: the Son of God, God himself.

Looking at the Gospel passage in which, as the Church teaches, Christ institutes the Eucharist, we read the following:

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28).

The Church has always taken Christ at his word, and because the Church is established upon St Peter, who confessed that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” it has always taken Jesus to be God. Armed with those facts, it has always felt safe in believing that God's words alone have the power to “warp” reality as it were, taking mere bread and wine and making them his body and his blood.

Why is it so important that we consume Jesus's real flesh and real blood? Why wouldn't symbols be just as powerful? While there's of course some mystery wrapped up in something as strange as this, the place to look is in the Gospel according to John, chapter six. Jesus said:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:53-56).

Many have tried to interpret this as symbolic speech on Jesus's part, just as those gathered to listen to him did. However, Christ was insistent upon what he'd said, even to the point that people found it too much to stomach and left.

“Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’... After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” (John 6:60, 6:66).

Christ didn't soften his words or try to correct a misunderstanding as they left. They understood what he meant, and it was a step too far for them. Today, it is a step too far for many as well, as evidenced by the results of the aforementioned poll. However, the Church has resolutely maintained that Jesus is really present “body and blood, soul and divinity” in the bread and wine transformed at Mass.



Lost innocence



The biblical story of Saul is one of the great tragedies in all of literature. Saul's story makes Hamlet look like a Disney character. Hamlet, at least, had good reasons for the bitterness that beset him. Saul, given what he started with, should have fared better, much better.

His story begins with the announcement that, in all of Israel, none measured up to him in height, strength, goodness, or acclaim. A natural leader, a prince among peers; his extraordinary character was recognised and proclaimed by the people. They made him their king. The beginning of his story is the stuff of fairy tales, and it goes on in this way for a while.

Sour

However, at a point, things begin to sour. That point was the arrival of David on the scene – a man younger, more handsome, more-gifted, and more-acclaimed than he was. Jealousy sets in and envy begins to poison Saul's soul. Looking at David, he sees only a popularity that eclipses his own, not another man's goodness, nor indeed what that goodness offers to others. Instead, he grows bitter, petty, hostile, tries to kill David, and eventually dies by his own hand, an angry man who has fallen far from the innocence and goodness of his youth.

What happened here? How does someone who has so much going for him – goodness, talent, acclaim, power, blessing – grow into a bitter,



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

petty man who ends up taking his own life? How does it happen? The late Margaret Laurence, in a brilliant, dark novel, *The Stone Angel*, offers a good description of how this happens and how it happens in ways that are hidden to the one undergoing the transition.

Hagar

Her main character, Hagar Shipley, is a "Saul" of sorts. Hagar's story begins like his: She is young, innocent, and full of potential. What's to become of such a beautiful, bright, talented, young woman? Sadly, not much at all. She drifts, into everything, adulthood, an unhappy marriage, and into a deep unrecognised and unspoken disappointment that eventually leaves her slovenly, frigid, bitter, and without energy or ambition. What's as remarkable as sad is

that she doesn't see any of this herself. In her mind, she remains the young, innocent, gracious, popular, attractive young girl she once was in high school. She doesn't notice how small her world has become, how few real friends she has, how little she admires anything or anyone, or even how physically unkempt she has become.

Her awakening is sudden and cruel. One winter day, shabbily dressed in an old parka, she rings the doorbell of a house where she is delivering some eggs. A bright young child answers the door and Hagar overhears the child tell her mother: *That horrible, old egg-woman is at the door!* The penny drops.

Stunned, she leaves the house and finds her way to a public bathroom where she turns on all the lights and studies her face in a

mirror. What looks back is a face she doesn't recognise, someone pathetically at odds with whom she imagines herself to be. She sees in fact the horrible, old egg-woman that the child saw at the door rather than young, gracious, attractive, big-hearted woman that she imagines herself still to be. How can this have happened? she asks herself. How can we, imperceptible to ourselves, grow into someone we don't know or like?

Accept

In some way, it happens to all of us. It's not easy to age, to accept the fall from what we dreamed for ourselves, to watch the young take over and receive the popularity and acclaim that once were ours. Like Saul, we can fill with a jealousy that we don't recognise and, like Hagar, we can grow bitter and ugly without knowing it. Others, of course, do notice.

It's not that we don't gain something as this happens. Usually we grow smarter, wiser in the ways of the world, and remain good-hearted, generous people. How-

ever, we tend to be nastier than we once were, whine too much, feel too sorry for ourselves, and give ourselves over more to curse rather than bless those who have replaced us, the young, the popular, the acclaimed.

“How can we, imperceptible to ourselves, grow into someone we don't know or like?”

And so the penultimate spiritual and human task of the second-half of life is to give up this jealousy and ugliness and come back again to the love, innocence, and goodness of our youth, to revirginise, move towards a second-naïveté, and begin again to admire something.

Revelations

At the beginning of the *Book of Revelations*, John, purporting to speak for God, has some advice for us, at least for those of us beyond the bloom of youth: "I've seen how hard you work. I recognise your generosity and all the good work you do, but I have this against you – you have less love in you now than when you were young! Go back and look from where you have fallen!"

We might want to hear this from Scripture before we overhear it from some young girl telling her mother that some dour, bitter, old person is at the door.

“The penultimate spiritual and human task of the second-half of life is to give up this jealousy and ugliness and come back again to the love”

Jesus was lead by the Spirit

On the first Sunday of Lent each year, the Gospel is about the temptations of Jesus before he commences his public ministry. "Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1). We will reflect initially on the nature of temptation, then on the experience of Jesus and finally on the role of the Spirit.

The nature of temptation

Today's First Reading (Gen 2:7-9, 3:1-7) offers an explanation of how sin came into the world. The story of the forbidden fruit is the prototype of all temptation. As we learn from the Gospel of John, the devil is anti-truth and anti-life, being the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. The most successful deception is the half-truth, which is like the tasty bait used to lure the fish while concealing the sharp hook. The tempter begins by planting a doubt in the minds of Adam and Eve.

"Did God really say you were not to eat the fruit of any of the trees in the garden?" Then he turns their attention to the one forbidden tree, the tree of life, which was so enticing to look at and bearing fruit good to eat. Their senses are attracted to the bait. Then comes the deception. "Isn't God the cute one! No, you will not die. This is the tree which will give you the knowledge of good and evil. Your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods with the knowledge of good and evil." The temptation is to take God's place, having moral autonomy. You can make your own rules. Their eyes were indeed opened, not only to what is good, but now also to what is evil.

Temptations of Jesus

Jesus was about to commence his public mission to reclaim people to the kingdom of God. He needed time to prepare. In Scripture, 40, be it of days or years, is the number associated with preparation. He needed to clarify what he would do and what temptations he might face.

Because he was fasting, the first temptation was to change stones into bread. "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus would not be misled. "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from



the mouth of God." Providing bread for people is a noble task but there were many good bakers who could do that. It would be his role to recall people to the word of God with bread for the mind.

Then the master of the half-truth tried a second ploy. Attract people to be your followers by a sensational stunt. Go up to the roof of the temple, throw yourself down in the sure and certain belief that the angels will support you. But Jesus will not court popularity with tricks. This testing has clarified his intention to be on the side of those who are poor in spirit, gentle, merciful and willing to survive persecution for their ideals. All will be revealed later in the Beatitudes.

“Perhaps our greatest temptation today is to lose hope.

The third temptation is based on a huge lie. It's no bother to the devil (*"diabolos"* means one who divides and leads astray) to claim ownership of all the kingdoms of the world. If Jesus would but fall at the feet of Satan and worship him, he would receive mastery of these kingdoms. But Jesus would have nothing to do with power associated with violence, greed, hatred, war, inequality and other forms of evil. "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone." The followers of Jesus would be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

40 days of Lent

On Ash Wednesday we commenced our 40 days of preparation before Holy Week. The ashes remind us of our mortality and the need to repent and believe in the Gospel. Lent brings a challenge to take an honest look at our life, where are we heading, where we can improve, what should we give up? Where do we compromise on our ideals? Are we half-hearted Christians who settle for the minimum? If you are addicted to any of the i-gadgets ... the iPhone, iPod, iPad ... why not set aside one day each week as a Digital Detox Day. It might become an



'i-opener' in your life! Take on more time for prayer or good reading. Do something to raise funds for some charitable organisations.

Be part of the synod

Pope Francis has asked us to go beyond ourselves so as to recognise that we are part of the body of the Church. Anybody can see that the Church is seriously wounded and in need of reform. We are invited to take part in a synod, literally meaning to walk together. To walk with whom? With one another, prepared to meet, listen and discern. To discern what? Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, coming to know that the stranger on their journey was the Risen Lord. Returning to the opening line of today's Gospel: "Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness." The synod is not about gathering opinions, counting votes, majority rule or making new rules, much less new doctrines. This walking together is

ultimately about discerning where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

Ezekiel

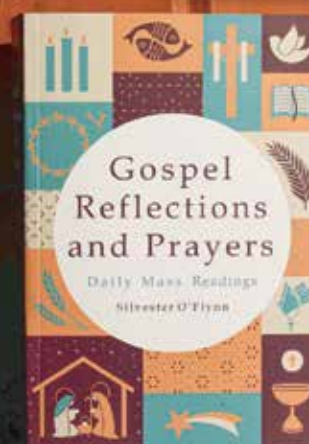
I feel guilty that I am not involved in any group meetings. But I am consoled by remembering that the Legion of Mary has active members and auxiliary members whose task is to pray. My prayer is inspired by the prophet Ezekiel (Chapter 37). He consoled the exiled Israelites who said, "Our bones are dry, our hope is gone; we are done for". Sounds a bit familiar, doesn't it? Perhaps our greatest temptation today is to lose hope. Ezekiel encouraged his people with a vision he had. He saw a valley strewn with dry bones. The breath (or spirit) of God entered them and they came back to life. "You will know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, and put my spirit in you, and you revive." Jesus was led by the Spirit. So are we, but we must walk with the Lord to discern the presence of the Spirit.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, breath of life.
Come to us in our valley of dry bones.
Come and renew the heart of the Church and the face of the earth.
Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Hope from the ashes for Lent and Ukraine

At least two big occasions demand our attention this week – Lent and the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Songs of Praise (BBC One, Sunday) covered both of these really well. The programme came from the Lincoln area, with presenter Sean Fletcher, who described Lent as a time when people challenge themselves, “dig deeper into their faith”, a “season for reflection and compassion”, with a “focus on prayer and care”. We saw children from a Catholic primary school in the area visiting the local cathedral to learn more about the striking Stations of the Cross – known as “The Forest Stations”, made from a variety of woods by artist William Fairbank.

Liturgy

The group was introduced by their teacher Pippa Tapfield as the “Shining Star” liturgy team – what a great idea! Later we visited them in their classroom involved in another Lenten project – painting “positive pebbles” to distribute in their local area. Canon Nick Brown explained how the Stations devotion grew from pilgrims’ desire to re-live their pilgrimages to the Holy Land to re-trace the Way of the Cross. The youngsters were inspiringly articulate in their expressions of faith.

We also met Deirdre



Sean Fletcher hosted a Lent-themed *Songs of Praise* on Sunday, February 19.

Steed who had welcomed a Ukrainian refugee couple into her home, along with their French bulldog. They attended her local church as well. For Lent she encouraged more compassion towards others who need us – there should be “less of us and more of them”. Also on the compassion front, many churches in the UK had registered as “warm places” for the winter and in a church café we met volunteer Cay Sherlock serving “bacon

butties” to those arriving because they couldn’t afford to heat their homes.

The music tied in with Lenten themes, but Sean Fletcher said they’d get in one more celebratory hymn before the solemn season started – “Raise a Hallelujah!” from a mainly youthful congregation in Derby was the highlight for me – upbeat and very contemporary in style. I liked the sentiments too – “up from the ashes hope will arise”.

Lent

Lent and Ukraine also featured on **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4). Presenter William Crawley introduced the topic of Lent for Christians quite well, with references to “spiritual spring cleaning”, small changes making a big difference, self-denial, fasting and the development of new habits and “soul tidying”.

But then he moved away from that to explore similarities in the Muslim season of Ramadan which starts towards the end of March, and the Jewish Passover. It was very interesting, but wouldn’t it have made more sense to deal with Lent now and those other seasons when their time came?

Later he gave quite a challenging interview to Dr Viktor Yelensky, described as “Ukraine’s top official for religious freedom”. Crawley put it to him that his position was rather contradictory as the Ukrainian government was planning to clamp down on those elements in the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine that stayed loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate under Patriarch Kirril, described as a loyal defender of Putin. There was a fear that those who didn’t cut ties, as some did, would constitute a “fifth column” for the enemy.

Temperance themes fit well with Lent, so it was

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA

EWTN Sunday February 26, 9pm.

A condensed version of the series documenting the miracles at Fatima.

LENT – A SEASON OF GRACE

EWTN Monday February 27, 9.30pm

Lent’s first week invites us to go deeper. Like Jesus, we journey to the desert and experience conversion.

STEPHEN FRY: WILLEM & FRIEDA - DEFYING THE NAZIS

Channel 4 Thursday March 2, 9pm

During the occupation of the Netherlands in World War II, a painter and a cellist used their artistic skills to save thousands of Jews from the death camps.

particularly appropriate for Temperance Sunday to take place just before Ash Wednesday. The televised **Mass** (RTE One, Sunday) explored such themes in such a positive way. The celebrant was Fr Robert McCabe, Central Spiritual Director of the Pioneer Association, which, we learned, was almost 125 years old.

Friends

He was in the company of friends of Cuan Mhuire and Tabor House. Beautiful music was provided by the Schola choir from St Joseph’s Mercy school in Navan, under the direction of liturgical composer Ephrem Feeley, with accompanist David Burke. As with the previous programme it gives so much hope to see

young people so involved in the life of their church.

In his homily Fr McCabe made generous reference to his “teachers” in the area of addiction support – Sr Consilio and Sr Catherine. He still had “lots to learn” and spoke of the support available to those “unwilling or unable to admit addiction”.

He called on us to “learn the vocabulary” of addiction so that we would be in a better position to help those in that grip – this year the Pioneer calendar linked the 12 months with the 12 Steps of the AA programme. Also recommended was a Lenten Pledge as a sign of solidarity. Check it all out at pioneers.ie

Film

Aubrey Malone



Head versus heart across two continents

On the surface it looks as if Zoe (Lily James) is commitment-phobic. She isn’t really. It’s just that Cupid hasn’t fired his arrows yet. When her mother Cath (Emma Thompson) tries to fix her up with a local vet, the nice but dull James (Oliver Chris) we know it just ain’t gonna work.

She has more in common with Kazim, (Shazad Latif). He’s the boy next door – literally. They’ve been friends forever but never thought about one another ‘that way’.

He’s from Pakistan. She’s a dyed-in-the-wool Londoner. Will the culture divide get in the way? Yes, yes, yes. His strictly orthodox family thinks you shouldn’t step outside such boundaries, even in matters of love. One of his sisters did. She

got cut off from all and sundry for her sins.

Will Kazim go the same way? It seems unlikely at first. His feelings for Zoe, and her’s for him, remain unvoiced. When he hooks up with an Indian beauty via Skype it looks to be all stations go for a marriage of convenience.

Documentaries

Zoe makes documentaries. She offers to film Kazim’s romance all the way to the altar.

We know all about the idea of the ‘made match’ (the Gaelic term was *cleamhnas*) in this country. Irish viewers will therefore find much to empathise with in *What’s Love Got To Do With It?* (12A). It’s a cross-cultural delight from start to finish. Director Shakkar



Emma Thompson and Lily James star in *What’s Love Got To Do With It*.

Kapur captures Asian culture to a T.

Having said that, this Bollywood-style confection isn’t wildly original. In fact you’ll

probably guess how it’s going to pan out from ten minutes in.

That doesn’t detract from its sweetness. It’s a latterday example of Capra-Corn (as in

Frank). We’re grugged even a kiss from the main leads until we’ve earned it.

The script is laced with whip-smart oneliners like Kazim’s, “Does it hurt less when you aim low and miss?” Sometimes these seem contrived (“A rupee for your thoughts?”) but most of them work.

Date movie

I was won over by it eventually. Hopefully you will be too. It’s an ideal date movie even if it (mysteriously?) missed St Valentine’s Day.

James is a natural before the camera. Everyone else scrubs up well too. Thompson can do anything. A national treasure like the queen Mum by now, she’s at the age where she’s having a blast playing eccen-

trics.

Here she exudes a Mrs Bennett aura. (Remember her from Jane Austen?) She wants to get Zoe married off before her body clock ticks beyond child-bearing age.

There’s a lot to be said for arranged marriages in an era of high divorce rates like ours but Kapur isn’t interested in saying it.

Computer dating, he implies, is okay if you’re a computer. Human beings prefer something more natural. They want to live in treehouses. They want to watch box sets with their significant other and think of Cinderella, Snow White and Rapunzel.

What’s love got to do with it? A lot, actually.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Finding the inner life of being alone



Author José María Olaizola

Dancing with Loneliness
by José María R. Olaizola SJ
Messenger Publication,
(€12.95/£11.95)

Peter Costello

The author of this book is a Spanish Jesuit, who is presently head of institutional communications for the Society of Jesus in Spain (which means in effect, when you think about it, the whole Spanish speaking world, which I realised during the translation of one of my own books a while ago now includes North America as a significant market).

This points to one of the great appeals of this book. It is written from inside Hispanic culture. The references are (largely) to films from the same culture and to such things as the traditional characteristics assigned by people from particular Spanish provinces.

The pleasant surprise of reading a book which did not see the world through the dominant Anglo-American culture of the internet was a great and pleasant surprise.

The key to this book, the author suggests, is a remark by the philosopher Paul Tillich. He said that language created the word “loneliness” to express the pain of being alone as it created the word “solitude” to express “the glory of being alone”.

Loneliness

Loneliness, we would all agree, is a terrible thing: the old lady speechless in a corner of a nursing home common room, a life of memories (however shattered) still to be expressed; the small child on the edge of the school playground the victim of bullying which is commonplace in ways parents have forgotten. These are loneliness states that are classed as “vicious” by the author.

Though there is another kind of loneliness which many find hard to comprehend: the loneliness of the artist, the

poet, the writer, the philosopher.

For people like these, isolation is an essential factor of life. I realise this in my own life. Some of my friends are accustomed to going walking together. But I have never liked that. I relish my solitary walks as moments for thought and contemplation.

It amazes me how very little people, even people claiming to be lonely, actually observe the immediate world around them: the trees, gardens, animals, wild and tame, the changing conditions of the area. Loneliness for the creative person is a necessity of life: team membership is certainly not for all.

In seeking out his examples Jose Olaizola eschews a constant reference to academic sources, preferring examples from life. He is writing for the ordinary reader and not for his peers. He is writing for me.

He speaks of “life and expertise” as “a tortuous tango”. I have recently been pursuing research into an Argentinean topic, and the tango in Latin countries has a status which is very difficult to convey. It is indeed a complex dance, but one which it is said to belong to ordinary people in the slums of Buenos Aires. It arises from people’s own hearts and minds. They are the makers, the performers, and the audience. It celebrates an end to isolation.

This is a book rich with insight that cannot be easily summarised. It is a book which seizes hold, however, and one finds oneself recalling and mulling over it in a fruitful way later.

Reading Jose Olaizola those moments all came pouring back into my memory. This I suspect will be the experience of many other readers. This is a wonderful and fruitful book, which can be recommended warmly, even given the sobering nature of his subject. One looks forward to other titles from the author’s pen.

A History of Alsace 1871 – 1939

by Liam Murphy
(Kingdom Books 2023).

J. Anthony Gaughan

Alsace and Lorraine have been described by historians as “the shuttlecock of Europe”. Both regions passed between Germany and France on five occasions.

Alsace is located in eastern France on the west bank of the upper Rhine and borders Switzerland and Germany. It traces its origins back to the German Holy Roman Empire. But it was gradually absorbed into Bourbon France from 1648 onwards. Following the Franco/Prussian War of 1870-1, it was annexed by the German Empire in 1871.

After the defeat of Germany in 1918 it was returned to France under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The Wehrmacht – Germany’s armed forces – overran most of western Europe in 1939-40. Alsace found itself incorporated into the Third Reich in 1940. Then after the defeat of Germany in World War II Alsace once again was returned to France in 1945.

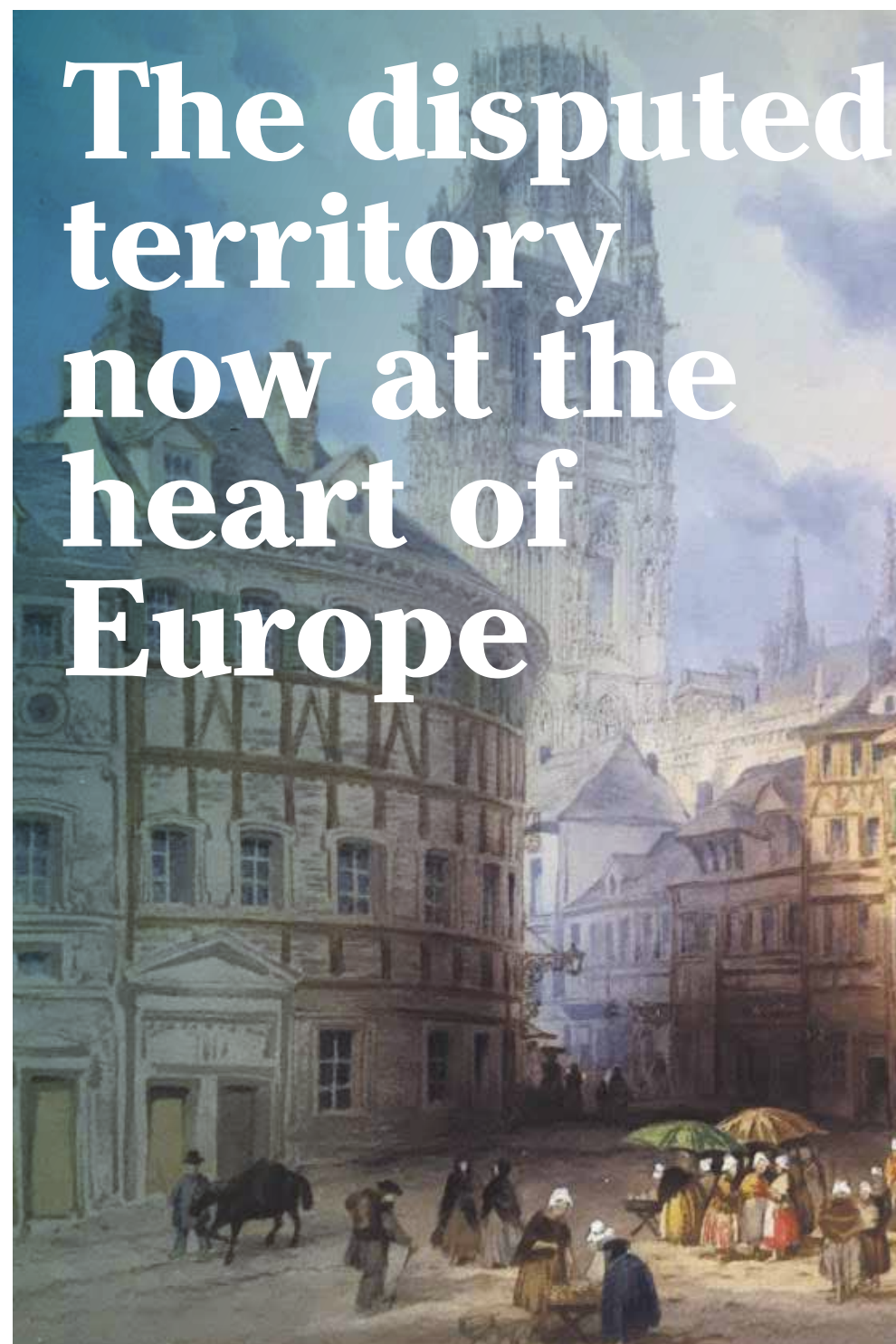
Detailed

Liam Murphy provides a detailed account of how the Alsatians coped with their various political overlords. All the while they attempted to retain as best they could their culture and language. He indicates how the policies imposed by the Germans and the French to hasten the absorption of Alsace were counter-productive.

“The Alsatian population, which was 75% Catholic, was determined not to lose their Catholic school-system”

In July 1871 Bismarck, the “Iron Chancellor”, initiated the *Kulturkampf* – an attempt to suppress and remove the influence of the Catholic Church across the German Empire, parish clergy were controlled, religious orders exiled. By 1875 it had failed. The attempt to impose it in Alsace had been strongly resisted.

In particular, the Alsatian population, which was 75% Catholic, was determined not to lose their Catholic school-system. The struggle over control of those



schools did little to promote loyalty to Germany in Alsace.

When the French troops entered Alsace in November 1918 there were scenes of jubilation. But the France of 1918 was very different from the France of pre-1870-1, the Catholic-minded Second Empire had given way to the Third Republic. It was the France of laicism and of a closely unified nation-state, with clerical controls very similar to the Falk Laws. Thus, its key policy for Alsace was to assimilate it into France. There were to be no concessions for ‘particularism’ or Catholic schools.

The new French policy was strongly opposed in Alsace and had to be abandoned. However, this did not happen before immense damage had been done to French prestige. It also

prompted a significant rise in support for local political parties, and even the beginning of an autonomist movement. (Echoes here of what went on in Brittany.)

“The new French policy was strongly opposed in Alsace and had to be abandoned”

For Alsatians their time subject to the Nazi administration during World War II was traumatic. They had little empathy for the Nazi ideology and in particular their aggressive anti-Church policies (which had long been part of the Nazi programme).

After occupying Alsace in 1940, Germany conscripted 130,000 men. Known as the *Malgré-nous*, against their

will, they were sent to fight on the Russian front, that quagmire of butchery. Of these 30,000 were killed, 10,500 reported missing, and the rest were taken prisoner.

Oppressive regime

On the home front the rest of the Alsatians had to endure a harsh oppressive regime. The war resulted in over 50,000 Alsatians losing their lives – proportionately more than three times that for the rest of France. The wartime Nazi rule led to an embracing of things French and a repudiation of things German. The prisoners of war held in the camps of Stalinist Russia were slow to return home.

Murphy, in an aside, recalls being made aware in no uncertain terms of this prevailing Alsace attitude: “I went on a wine

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Strasbourg Cathedral painted in 1850.

trip to Alsace in 2001. I had a pleasant conversation with the vineyard owner. We spoke in both English and French and at the end of the lunch I wished him all the best in both English and French and I also said 'Alles Gute' which means 'all the best' in German. He remarked to me that to say that to an Alsatian was equivalent to saying to an Irish person: 'You are British, of course!'

Liam Murphy is able to conclude this excellent study on a happier note. Since the 1950s Alsace and particularly Strasbourg, its largest city, has benefited from its location between a reconciled France and Germany within the context of the European Community. The territory of Alsace is at the core of the EU and Strasbourg is where the European Parliament meets.



A triumphant Hitler visits Strasbourg Cathedral in 1940.

A revealing book on Irish diplomacy in the divided modern world

Nine Lives: The Reflections of a Deliberate Diplomat
by Donal Denham
(The Liffey Press,
€19.95/£17.95)

Joe Carroll

It is rare if not unknown for a former Irish ambassador to publish a book about his life and times. Conor Cruise O'Brien gave us *To Katanga and Back*, but he had retired at Counsellor level and concentrated on his term in the United Nations Irish delegation, and of course as UN representative in the ex-Belgian Congo.

Beyond that junior diplomat, Eamon Delaney, published a witty account of his brief career under Iveagh House rules about 20 years ago, which achieved some success.

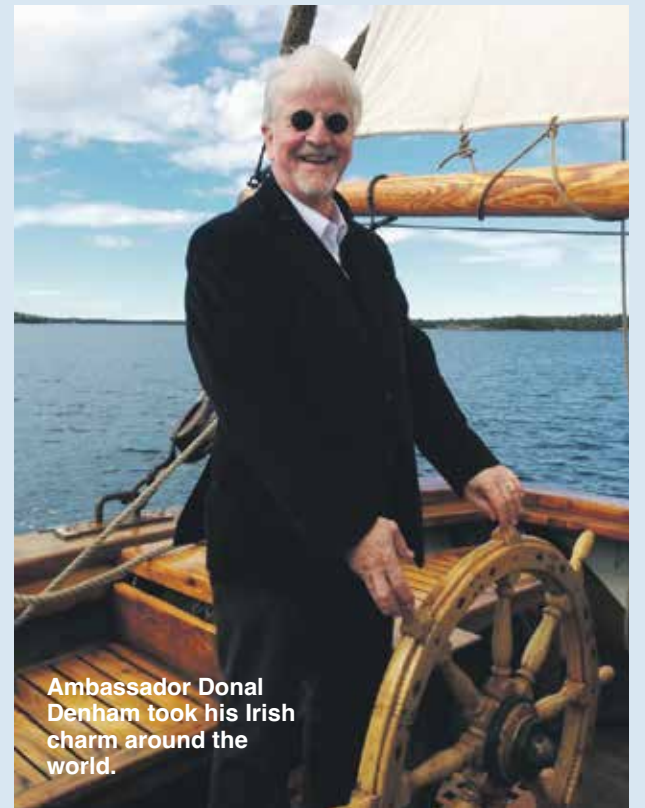
So it is interesting to have a fully-fledged ambassador giving a behind the scenes account of his diplomatic activities in nine overseas postings as well as his work in Iveagh House. Donal Denham does not reveal any State secrets, but he gives an at times fascinating account of life behind the glittering receptions and the exotic postings.

A lot of it is hard slog especially when you are representing one of the smallest countries in the world and trying to avoid the *faux pas* that could damage your record within the Department of Foreign Affairs and slow up the climb to the coveted ambassador level.

“In between there were stints in Iveagh House, usually on EU dossiers”

Denham in his account eventually makes it as ambassador, going to Lithuania in 2005, 31 years after joining the Department. In between he served in nine posts abroad: Paris, Lusaka, Brussels, Washington, Geneva, Ottawa, San Francisco, Vilnius and finally Helsinki – these names alone give a vivid impression of just where “our men abroad” are posted.

In between there were stints in Iveagh House, usually on EU dossiers. He reveals a rather cynical view of Irish membership of the ever-growing European Community, while observing at close-hand the dominance,



Ambassador Donal Denham took his Irish charm around the world.

and even arrogance, of the Franco-German axis when the big decisions were made.

“The one thing I will now say about the EU bureaucracy is that the rest of the world is safe in the complete and utter absence of initiative, creativity or imagination on the part of Brussels, relying almost entirely on the constituent Member States in the field to generate any sort of new thinking and proactive approach. God help Brussels without the UK!”

Perhaps his most enjoyable post was as Consul-General in San Francisco. Not weighed down by ambassadorial duties, he loved the city and the travel to the 13 western states that were part of his territory.

Indiscretions

One of the few indiscretions he reveals was during the visit of then Foreign Minister, Brian Cowen, to San Francisco while he was being briefed at an early breakfast by a senior official on why he should make a certain decision. “Brian turned to me, a mere acolyte a table away, and said to me in a loud voice, ‘Donal, let that be a lesson to you; never try to bullshit a bullshitter.’”

The book shows how much exhausting work has to be done at lower level in embassies to implement Irish policies at the highest level. And there is not always much thanks for it.

Denham also describes the strains that constant moving puts on diplomatic families as wives have to uproot settled homes, children have to switch schools and adapt to a new language.

“The book shows how much exhausting work has to be done at lower level in embassies to implement Irish policies at the highest level”

The decision to close the Irish embassy to the Holy See was taken while Denham was having a stint in Iveagh House and had to handle the “confetti blizzard” of protest letters to the Minister. They were ignored and “a personal letter from a former Secretary General and high profile Fine Gael supporter offering to mediate was also spurned.”

The author believes that “an intemperate Dáil speech by Enda Kenny who blamed the Roman Curia for the child abuse cover-up scandals which racked Irish society” dramatically underlined the break in diplomatic relations.

But, of course, his lips had to remain sealed – until now.

i Joe Carroll was formerly the Diplomatic Editor of the Irish Independent.

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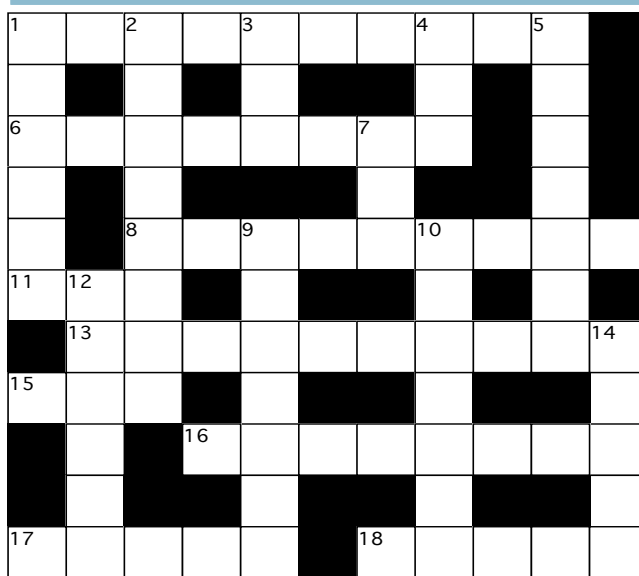
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 471



Across

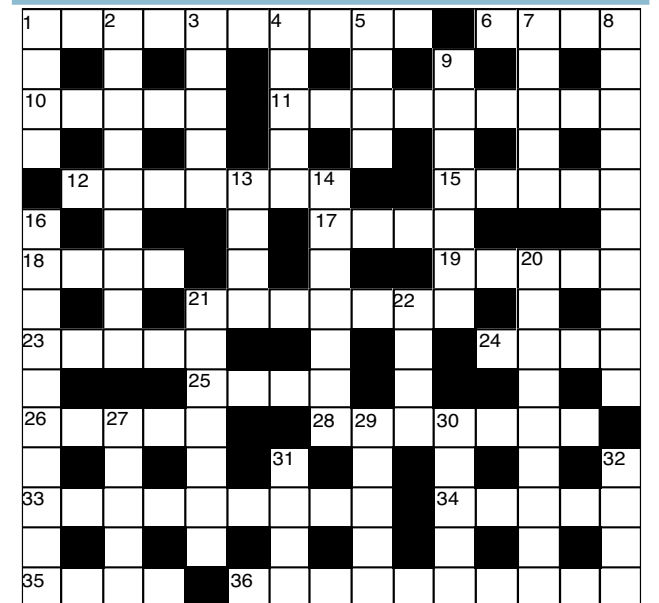
1. She's a special helper to the woman who is getting married. (10)
6. Two words used to describe the sound of a clock. (4,4)
8. Pieces of clothing like vests, that you put on before your other clothes. (9)
11. Signal 'yes' with your head. (3)
13. It holds the things you write with. (6-4)
15. You sleep in this. (3)
16. Give out, moan. (8)
17. They're left when something has been burned. (5)
18. Tiny branches. (5)

Down

1. He and Robin protect Gotham City. (6)
2. Counted in. (8)
3. Have some food. (3)
4. Enquire, make a question. (3)
5. What you spend in America - 'bucks'. (7)
7. Automobile. (3)
9. They treat people who are sick. (7)
10. Bray and Arklow are in this county. (7)
12. They involve fine singing and acting. (6)
14. Clare's county town. (5)

Crossword

Gordius 599



Across

1. Missionary order whose members are known as Verbites (6,4)
6. Curve (4)
10. Dense, not hollow (5)
11. Older alternative name for the Sacrament of the Sick (4,5)
12. Infinite (7)
15. Ointment (5)
17. Good fortune (4)
18. Association of oil countries (1,1,1,1)
19. Perfectly clear (5)
21. Crisp and brittle (7)
23. Wild mountainside plant (5)
24. Britpop band fronted by Damon Albarn (4)
25. The back of the neck (4)
26. Young nocturnal bird of prey (5)
28. Rodent snare (3-4)
33. Is this a fish or a dated hairdo of auburn shade? (3,6)
34. Norwegian playwright (5)
35. Type of sword (4)
36. Made pals with (10)

Down

1. Sundown (4)

2. Willing recruit (9)

3. Spanish tennis player Rafa has won the French Open an incredible fourteen times (5)
4. Cathedral city in Somerset (5)
5. Ploy (4)
7. Praise highly (5)
8. How odd! Less fur is scattered in this German city (10)
9. In quick, businesslike manner (7)
13. Always, at any time (4)
14. Defamation (7)
16. It involves the setting of one-and-a-half dozen holes in the ground (4,6)
20. Fell down (9)
21. Mythical being, half-man, half-horse (7)
22. Helpful suggestion (4)
27. Shelf (5)
29. Michaelmas daisy (5)
30. Type of offal (5)
31. The fruit of the blackthorn (4)
32. Christian name of children's author Ms Blyton (4)

SOLUTIONS, FEBRUARY 16

GORDIUS NO. 598

Across – 1 Season ticket 7 Rip 9 Cute 10 Caused 11 Beer 14 Delph 15 Trash 16 Hips 18 Crass 21 Equal 22 Civic 23 Kayak 24 Cold 25 Adieu 26 Spite 29 Espy 33 Comedy 34 Rash 36 Mac 37 Trigger-happy

Down – 1 Sou 2 Apex 3 Once 4 Truce 5 Cheap 6 True 8 Parish church 9 Clotted cream 12 Casual 13 Chalk 14 Decoy 17 In vain 19 Ankle 20 Scram 27 Prong 28 Theme 30 Pact 31 Myth 32 Trip 35 Say

CHILDREN'S No. 470

Across – 1. Tonight 7. E-mail 8. Balloon 9. Nests 10. Classes 13. War 15. Orbits 17. Island 18. Here 19. Dormouse

Down – 1. Tablecloth 2. Nile 3. Gloves 4. Tennis 5. Paws 6. Closer 11. Sailed 12. Easier 14. Igloo 16. Ants

Sudoku Corner

471

Easy

			7	9	4		3	6
3	4	7				1		2
	9		1					
2		9	8	4			1	
		3	6			4	8	
	8		3					
9	7		1		6	3		8
6				3				
5					2	6	7	

Hard

8				1				9
			2		9	3		
	1	6			7	4		
	9	7					2	
3								4
	5					7	1	
		5	8			1	9	
		3	9		2			
7				5				8

Last week's Easy 470

3	9	7	6	5	1	4	8	2
1	5	8	2	4	7	9	3	6
4	2	6	9	8	3	7	5	1
9	3	5	1	7	2	6	4	8
6	4	1	8	3	5	2	7	9
7	8	2	4	6	9	5	1	3
8	1	4	7	9	6	3	2	5
5	7	9	3	2	8	1	6	4
2	6	3	5	1	4	8	9	7

Last week's Hard 470

5	1	6	3	4	8	7	9	2
4	9	2	1	7	6	5	3	8
3	8	7	2	9	5	1	6	4
2	6	3	7	1	4	8	5	9
9	5	8	6	2	3	4	1	7
1	7	4	8	5	9	6	2	3
7	3	9	5	8	1	2	4	6
8	4	1	9	6	2	3	7	5
6	2	5	4	3	7	9	8	1

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



'Jesus lobbed a hand grenade of countercultural forgiveness'

RECENTLY I TURNED ON the TV and I happened upon a conversation between two children on a popular soap opera. I was intrigued and disturbed by the tone of the conversation but not fully understanding the context I had to do a little research. It seems that the girl's pet chinchilla (which I have never heard of before) has died and she blames the neighbour's, normally very docile, little dog.



The girl, who is somewhat ironically named Hope is full of anger and bitterness and determined to get revenge not only on the neighbour's dog but also on the dog's owners. So back to the conversation I witnessed between 12-year-old Hope and her friend Sam. Sam it appears is a thoughtful mature boy who has had a lot of traumas in his life because his mother whom he adored was murdered.

Visit

Sam has visited his mother's killer in prison in the hope that he can move on with his life and not be full of bitterness. When his friend Hope says that she wants revenge for the death of her pet, Sam cautions her and says that in his experience "getting cross and wanting revenge isn't the way forward... try to get over it and move on because forgiveness can be

therapeutic". His embittered friend replies, "Getting even is the best therapy there is".

I suppose that was the bit that disturbed me and particularly to hear those words coming out of the mouth of a 12-year-old child. I know it was just a TV programme but over the years I have come to realise that TV soap operas are much more reflective of real life than we might like to imagine.

Anger, bitterness and resentment and the desire for revenge are pretty powerful emotions and many of us may be familiar with those feelings, towards work colleagues, neighbours or even members of our own families.

Over the years, I have encountered in every parish, really very fine, kind, generous, church going people who also bear deep resentment towards another and somehow the message of forgiveness constantly

preached by Jesus does not seem to be able to seep through the cracks of those embittered lives. But I also realise how difficult it can be to get beyond bitterness and anger when a great hurt has been caused and a great wrong has been committed.

This week as I was driving past the site of the proposed new 42 modular homes for Ukrainian families in our local town, I found myself having a new sense of anger towards the man that caused this war and brought so much hardship to millions of innocent people.

Anger

Into that scenario of often justifiable anger, through last weekend's readings at Mass, Jesus lobbed a hand grenade of countercultural forgiveness and turning the other cheek that flies in the face of what we might be tempted to do and what the predominant media message we hear

every day encourages us to do.

Jesus, when faced with threats of violence against himself or others, even his enemies, or when he is presented with persuasive arguments why we might take revenge and get even says loudly again and again: "This is not what we are about, this is not who we are, we are better than this." It's a tough message.

The Gospel has the power to comfort the afflicted, but it can also afflict the comfortable and last weekend was one of those times. And perhaps it is no coincidence that this tough uncomfortable message comes just as we begin the season of Lent.

Lent allows us to reset the dial, to begin again, to have a fresh look at our lives and our relationships. Is there room for improvement? Are there silences that need to be broken, friendships to be repaired, family bridges that need to be rebuilt? At least let's think about it.

Longevity

During his homily one Sunday the priest asked his congregation, "How many of you have forgiven your enemies?" Almost everyone held up their hands, except for one elderly man, sitting near the back of the church.

The priest enquires; "Paddy, are you not willing to forgive your enemies?" "I don't have any," Paddy replied gruffly. "Paddy, that is very unusual. How old are you?" "98," he replied. The congregation stood up and clapped their hands.

"So, Paddy, would you please come down in front and tell us all how a person can live 98 years and not have an enemy in the world?" The old man tottered down the aisle, stopped in front of the pulpit, turned around, faced the congregation, and said simply, "I outlived all of them!"

The desert awaits...

"The desert awaits, ready for those who come, who come obedient to the Spirit's leading; or who are driven, because they will not come any other way. The desert always waits, ready to let us know who we are – the place of self-discovery. And whilst we fear, and rightly, the loneliness and emptiness and harshness, we forget the angels whom we cannot see for blindness, but who come when God decides that we need their help; when we are ready for what they can give us" – Ruth Burgess



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An earthquake survivor reacts while sitting amid rubble Hatay, Turkey, Feb. 9, 2023. Photo: OSV News photo/Emilie Madi, Reuters

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"We can never have too much confidence in our God Who is so mighty and so merciful."
 - St Therese

PLEASE HELP CATECHISTS TO TEACH THE FAITH

Catechists, working in unison with their local priests, play an extremely important role in proclaiming and teaching the Catholic Faith. Many missionaries ask the Little Way for help to support and maintain their catechists who very often witness to Christ in the face of extreme poverty or persecution.

Please can you spare a donation to support a catechist?

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries repeatedly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean, safe water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?