

# The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, April 27, 2023

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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## Euthanasia committee promises fair hearing for concerned voices

Jason Osborne

The voices of people opposed to the introduction of assisted suicide must be fairly heard, the chair of a Government committee discussing the topic has insisted.

Chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on assisted suicide, Kerry TD Michael Healy-Rae, told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper that it's of "vital importance" that this committee does its work "in an extremely fair fashion, and that everybody, whatever their viewpoint will get heard".

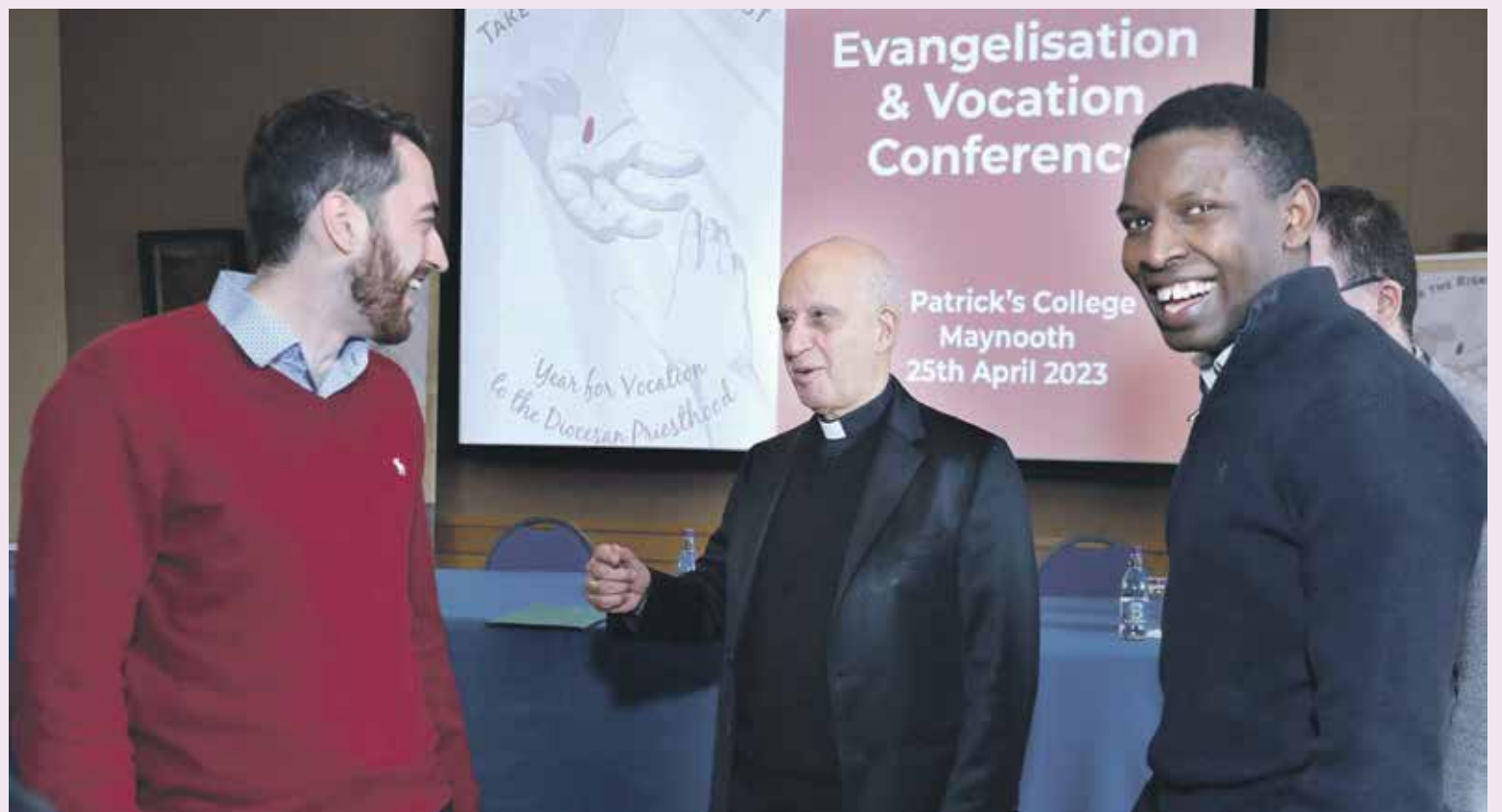
It was recommended in 2021 that the committee be established by the Joint Committee on Justice, which examined People Before Profit TD Gino Kenny's *Dying with Dignity Bill* and found "serious technical issues". The legislation aimed to legalise euthanasia.

Asked whether the concerns from palliative care experts and bodies such as the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (CPsychI) would be heard by the committee, Deputy Healy-Rae assured that "everybody's thoughts and considerations and all the different groups in the country, everyone that has a view on this, that needs to be heard, will have to be heard".

"This is such a serious matter, it

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### A vocation of joy...



Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Evangelisation, speaks with Maynooth seminarians Mark Caffrey (Meath) and Barnabas Tumwekwase (Raphoe) at the vocations conference in Maynooth on April 25. Photo: John McElroy. See page 3

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

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## Euthanasia committee promises fair hearing for concerned voices

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has to be done properly. All the different stakeholders have to be heard," he said.

Independent Senator Rónán Mullen, who's also on the committee, told *The Irish Catholic* that it's his sense that Mr Healy-Rae is determined to be "scrupulously fair" as committee chair, and that it's his hope that there will be a "greater freedom" to engage with and listen to those coming before the committee, "including those with expertise in working with people in end of life settings, those with expertise in palliative care settings and so on".

"It's not immediately obvious to me that the Government is pushing this in a particular direction behind the scenes the way they were definitely doing with abortion.

"I'm hoping that politicians will be a bit freer to engage with the issues as legislators," Senator Mullen said.

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on assisted suicide held its first meeting in a private session last week, and must issue a final report within nine months of the first public session.

## British Govt is waging war on Catholic schools in NI...while praising them at home

One of the key planks of the Good Friday Agreement, the 25th anniversary of which we celebrate this month, was the idea of parity of esteem. In short, that no identity would be exaggerated in the region at the expense of another. We don't need to rehearse the history, but the first 50 years or more in the North were dominated by a supremacist ideology which sought to treat Catholics as second-class citizens and ensure that Catholics knew they were second-class citizens.

It was crucial to reaching a settlement to ensure that the (then) minority community knew that their rights and identities would be respected in the context of a shared society.

Catholic schools have always been a key part in helping the Catholic community ensure that their identity thrived: this was not just the case from the point of view of faith, but in also guaranteeing that the Irish identity with which most Catholics identify was also enshrined in terms of language, culture and Gaelic games.

Twenty-five years on, the British government appears to have given up on the idea of parity of esteem.

**Choice**

Both the British prime minister and the British secretary of state for the region have engaged in a campaign against parental choice in education in recent weeks. Really, it's a long-running campaign simply repackaged. The speaking notes are taken directly from the vested interests who have always opposed choice in education and want to impose a one-size-fits-all model on the North that is alien to almost every other part of the world where there is diversity (including, ironically, in Britain).

I am not opposed in any way to what is narrowly described as integrated education, as if schools outside of that sector are not integrated. People should be – and are – free to send their children to these schools. Why they oppose affording that right to others is, however, hard to understand.

Just 7% of families in the North opt to send their children to what the Department of Education terms as integrated schools. Of course, the term is deliberately loaded. And people who

should know better – even President Michael D. Higgins – can't resist slurring other schools by describing them as 'segregated'.

**Diversity**

Diversity is, and should be seen as, a strength in a place like Northern Ireland where a lack of parity of esteem has been at the root of so much pain. Integrated schools are an important part of a diverse educational offering and the rights of parents who want to choose such an education must be respected. But the same respect should be afforded to parents who want to exercise their right to have their children educated in the Catholic sector. Why can't freedom to choose in education run both ways? Why is the British government and its acolytes so intent on hammering square pegs into round holes in a drab one-size-fits all mould?

**“Despite the fact that many Catholic schools are in the most disadvantaged communities, they send more school-leavers to third-level than the other sectors”**

There is also a factor that no-one really likes to talk about. Many schools that luxuriate in the term integrated are really just middle-class bastions with few children from traveller, ethnic minority or special needs backgrounds.

And, some of the schools with the most integrated communities are Catholic schools that are proud of their identity as Catholic schools.

Some 52% of so-called 'newcomer children' have opted for a Catholic school. Catholic schools have shown that they are leading contributors to a more integrated educational provision. Likewise, at the height of the civil conflict in the North, Catholic schools were at the forefront of diverting students away from the madness of paramilitarism.

At a pragmatic level, Catholic schools in the North have also shown a particular genius at tackling educational disadvantage. Catholic

## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



schools, despite historic and institutionalised discrimination, have long outperformed other sectors. Despite the fact that many Catholic schools are in the most disadvantaged communities, they send more school-leavers to third-level than the other sectors. This one factor alone should be enough for the crusaders to pause for thought, never mind the much more important issue of parental choice. Why is the British government working with vested interests to deny parents a right that is taken for granted in every other free country in the world? Why too are Sinn Féin and the SDLP – the parties that claim to speak for the broader Catholic community – on the fence on this issue? It might be a good question on the doorstep as they come canvassing for votes ahead of local elections next month.

**Britain**

Britain's secretary of state for the North is very 'motherhood and apple pie' when

it comes to prioritising integrated education at the expense of a more diverse offering. He boasts that he will use funding as part of campaign of "nudging and cajoling" to push the one-size-fits-all model. It doesn't seem much like a level playing field. And, for all of Chris Heaton-Harris' pieties, Britain is on a cost-saving drive and sees diversity as too expensive. He should be honest about this.

One would also be naive not to see a bigger agenda at work. Catholic schools with their own distinct identity and ethos educate young people to be discerning and think for themselves. Bishop Donal McKeown was perceptive in his observation last year that "schools and groups that do not bend the knee to the blinkered agenda of the powerful will always be damned for other reasons.

"Sometimes, however, it is just because they dare to speak uncomfortable truths," he said. Long may our Catholic schools speak such uncomfortable truths.

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# Personal encounter trumps digital evangelisation, Vatican expert tells Maynooth

**Ruadhán Jones**

Personal encounter is needed to win people to Christ, as the “virtualisation of evangelisation” risks weakened outreach, the Vatican’s head of evangelisation told a Maynooth gathering.

To evangelise, the Church must offer spaces for “interpersonal encounter”, Archbishop Rino Fisichella said at the launch of the Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood on Tuesday, April 25.

Otherwise, “we will be confronted with a virtualisation of evangelisation... with a real risk of ending with a weak and ineffective evangelisation”, the head of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Evangelisation warned.

Raising his smartphone above his head, Archbishop Fisichella declared that the phone “is not an instrument.

This is a new culture”.

“If we don’t have this digital culture in front of us, we cannot understand the new way of evangelisation and vocation of new generations,” he added later.

However, the Church doesn’t offer a technical instrument, the Italian archbishop said, “but the announcement of the salvation brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”.

Without the mission, there is no Church, said Archbishop Fisichella, adding that without the push for missionary outreach, “the Church loses strength and falls into the temptation to stand on its own and its own structures”.

“If the newness and originality of the revelation of Jesus Christ is discarded, the very presence of the Church in the contemporary world becomes

useless,” Dr Fisichella told the crowd gathered in Renehan Hall, St Patrick’s College, Maynooth.

Evangelisation happens “under the light of an encounter. The vocational dimension rests in its entirety on this concept”, the archbishop said.

“The Church does not evangelise because she is faced with the great challenge of secularism, but because she must be obedient to the Lord’s command to bring the Gospel to every creature. This is our vocation.”

Archbishop Fisichella gave the keynote address, ‘Priesthood in a Synodal Church’, at the Irish bishops’ conference to open the vocations year. The conference included contributions from Archbishop Eamon Martin, Maynooth rector Fr Tomás Surlis and an expert panel of speakers.

# Don’t ‘scapegoat’ NI Catholic schools as causes of division

**Chai Brady**

Parental choice must be respected and schools in the North should not be “scapegoated” as a cause of division, the leader of Aontú has said in a debate on integrated education.

Speaking on BBC Radio Ulster this week, Peadar Tóibín TD said integrated education “is a wonderful component of the education system” but defended the existence of Catholic and controlled schools.

“We believe that where parents want an integrated education system they should be facilitated in achieving that for sure, but we’ve forgotten about parental choice... we live in a pluralist state, there are plural value systems and parents should be given the opportunity to

select a school according to their value system,” Mr Tóibín said.

He said that schools can be “scapegoated” in general conversation regarding divided communities in the North.

“Catholic and controlled schools are not the cause of division in Northern Ireland and actually their ethos and their teachers over the last number of decades have been very, very positive in actually healing division in our communities,” Mr Tóibín said.

“I think we can very, very quickly and very easily fall into a narrative that in some way the schools are at fault, the division in the North of Ireland is significant because of issues of discrimination for many years in terms of housing, jobs and rights, the lack of parity of esteem.”

## The most Irish person...



Shelley Corcoran (centre right), author of Currach Books’ *The Most Irish Person*, is pictured with Cllr Uruemu Adejinmi of Longford County Council and Holly Courtney and Erin Forkan as the book was launched in Longford Library.



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**Prof. Massimo Faggioli**

Professor of Historical Theology Villanova University USA. He is also a columnist for *La Croix International*, and contributing writer to *Commonweal*.

**Prof. Myriam Wijlens**

Professor of Canon Law Erfurt Germany. She is a member of The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, an advisor to ARCIC III and a Co-Moderator of the Peter and Paul Seminar.

**Prof. Eamonn Conway**

Is a priest of Tuam archdiocese and Professor of Integral Human Development in the School of Philosophy & Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia.

**Mr. Christopher Lamb**

Is a British journalist who is the Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*. He is a contributor to the Vatican Insider page of *La Stampa* and a regular commentator for the BBC on Vatican and religious affairs.

**Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ**

Is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus, director of the Religious Life Institute and senior lecturer in pastoral theology at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge. She teaches Christian spirituality at the Cambridge Theological Federation.

**Prof. Maria Cimperman RSCJ**

Is the Associate Professor of Catholic Theological Ethics. Founding Director, Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (2014-2022) and Associate Professor of Consecrated Life Catholic Theological Union (Chicago, USA).

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# Politicians: following abortion proposals would be a 'betrayal' of the electorate

**Jason Osborne**

Pro-life politicians have criticised a review into the State's abortion law that contains recommendations to implement drastic changes, such as the removal of the three-day waiting period and decriminalisation of doctors acting outside of the abortion law.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, independent Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan said that the recommendations are "very

worrying and disturbing," and that it represents a "betrayal" of voters in recent years, especially as assurances were given in relation to restrictions on the abortion law.

## Betrayal

"I do hope that people will see this for what it is, that it's nothing short of a betrayal, because what it means is the loss of more life," Deputy Nolan said.

"Irish people were given commitments and potential changes

to the existing law would be a radical departure from every single commitment provided, particularly the three day waiting period, where it's been shown clearly that thousands of lives have been saved because that provision was in the law.

"It softened the edges, if you like, of a very harsh and cruel law."

Similarly, the leader of the Rural Independents TD group Mattie McGrath said that the report resembles the "slippery

slope that I and my colleagues warned about in the Dáil and during the referendum".

"All promises made during the referendum have been broken, and the slippery slope, which was dismissed out of hand, has only become more treacherous."

## Protection

Mr McGrath called on Government to prioritise the protection of women and unborn children by maintaining the current three-day waiting period.

Meanwhile, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said he would be "reluctant and uncomfortable" to make any major changes to the abortion legislation, in light of the fact that when he and others campaigned for a 'Yes' vote in the 2018 referendum, "we said that there would be safeguards".

"That included things like the waiting period, it included things like the protection of conscientious objections," he said.

## Capuchin Day Centre appoints CEO

**Ruadhán Jones**

The Capuchin Day Centre appointed a CEO for the first time in its history on April 21, after Bro. Kevin Crowley retired last year.

The new CEO, Mr Brian Friel, has extensive experience in the homelessness sector, having worked on the senior management team of the Peter

McVerry Trust and also volunteered at the day centre.

Founder Bro. Kevin sees the appointment as "a necessary step to ensure that the work he began almost 54 years ago" continues to meet the needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, according to a statement from the Capuchins.

The current director Fr

Kevin Kiernan also welcomed the appointment, saying it will "ensure that we continue to pair the values and ethos of the Capuchin Franciscan Order with best practice in service provision".

Mr Friel will formally take the post on July 1.

Meanwhile, the Peter McVerry Trust has also announced a new CEO to

replace Pat Doyle, who is stepping down after 19 years.

The Trust has appointed Francis Doherty, currently head of communications and housing policy, as chief executive.

Fr McVerry said he strongly believes "we have found the best candidate for chief executive in Francis", adding he brings great passion and commitment to the role.



New CEO of the Capuchin Day Centre Mr Brian Friel (centre) is pictured with Bro. Seán Kelly OFM Cap. and Bro. Kevin Kiernan OFM Cap.

## Spy Kids actress speaks out about pro-life conviction

**Staff reporter**

Speaking in an interview with the US Students for Life organisation, childhood star Alexa PenaVega described how she helped to save a baby from abortion.

Best known for her role as Carmen Cortez in the popular *Spy Kids* film series, Ms PenaVega revealed that a "well-known" man on Instagram reached out to her for help with a pregnant teenage girl considering abortion.

He asked Ms PenaVega to join a video call to help "talk her out of it".

"For about an hour and a half, we all spoke, and I just told her about the joy that I have with my kids, and the greatest thing that I ever felt was being able to tuck them in at night, seeing their beautiful little sleeping faces, and touching them...and the little tickles on their heads because that's their favourite to fall asleep," she said.

"What's wild is she decided to keep the baby," Ms PenaVega shared.

"I have a relationship with her and I get to see this baby on social media, and literally I can't tell you how many times I see this beautiful little girl."



Alexa PenaVega. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Equal level of Catholics and Protestants in NI workforce for first time

There are equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland's workforce for the first time since monitoring began over 30 years ago.

The Equality Commission said fair employment laws helped make possible the Good Friday Agreement by "bearing down on inequality and discrimination".

The watchdog's new report found that of the total workforce of 564,296 in 2021, 43.5% were Protestant and 43.4% were Catholic.

There were 349 more Protestants than Catholics, with 245,419 Protestants and 245,070 Catholics.

### NI Catholic school fights to stay open

A Catholic primary school in Co. Tyrone has received thousands of signatures in its fight to remain open after it was deemed unsustainable.

St Mary's Primary School community in Fivemiletown is now hoping that after their petition, which they say has 8,950 signatures, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the Education Authority (EA) will reconsider the school's closure in August.

The EA designated 105 pupils as the minimum number for a school to be sustainable, St Mary's has 42, but numbers were on the rise.

Parent and member of the board of governors Mairaid Kelly told the *Belfast Telegraph*: "We know that hundreds of letters have been submitted to the Department of Education, detailing the contribution of, and need for, a strong, small school like ours within our community."



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# Sexually transmitted infections – stigma or healthcare?

Health experts have, in the past, had ambiguous approaches to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) – once called “venereal disease”, (after Venus, Roman love goddess). Some thought prevention could be assisted by shame and stigma, discouraging people from risking infection by promiscuous relationships.

“So, better if the speciality was confined to the sort of chap unlikely to qualify for membership”

And undoubtedly some preachers portrayed “VD” as a punishment for sexual sins.

Yet other experts thought that the best



Mary Kenny

medicine was to encourage those who could be infected to come forward for treatment – in a more morally neutral way. Conditions like syphilis could lead to the feared GPI (General Paralysis of the Insane) if untreated. Great writers like Guy de Maupassant had died appalling deaths from the later stages of syphilis – probably worsened by drinking absinthe.

## Pox docs

The stigma attached to STIs once extended to the medics themselves who specialised in gonorrhoea or syphilis: they were

known colloquially as “pox docs”, and had lower professional status. It was said, by certain military gentlemen in London’s clubland – “You don’t want to run into your ‘pox doc’ at your club!” (Soldiers were compulsorily inspected for these maladies.)

“Since 2019, notifications of STIs have risen by 34% among young women (20-24 age bracket)”

So, better if the speciality was confined to

the sort of chap unlikely to qualify for membership.

In past times, people dosed themselves dangerously with mercury as a remedy against the dreaded “pox” or “clap”. But once antibiotics came onstream, and the condition became curable, attitudes changed and the “pox doc” was just another medical professional.

## Progressive innovation

Interestingly, the conservative Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, born into a family of doctors, enabled the opening of a VD clinic in the 1940s, considered a progressive innovation.

These infections are now usually treatable, but nevertheless, rising cases of STIs are a cause for concern, according to the latest report from the Health

Protection Surveillance. Since 2019, notifications of STIs have risen by 34% among young women (20-24 age bracket).

“Modern medical care seeks to heal the presenting patient rather than lecturing him or her”

Infections among young men increased by 17%. Infections of mpox (formerly called monkeypox) have also “disproportionately” affected gay and bisexual men. Among young people in general, the trend for STI infection is upwards.

The report’s authors say they “cannot definitively say why this has happened” –

although the basic reason for infection is usually an increase in sexual partners.

It would, probably, now be considered ‘moralistic’ and ‘judgemental’ to use the rise in STIs to warn against promiscuous sexual conduct. Modern medical care seeks to heal the presenting patient rather than lecturing him or her. (Mother Teresa took this approach to AIDS patients – care, not judgement.)

Nonetheless, these increased statistics surely are a health warning, and particularly for young women, for whom diseases like chlamydia and herpes simplex can cause ectopic pregnancy and pelvic inflammation.

There were health reasons, as well as moral ones, why monogamous relationships were considered the golden ideal.

## Context is everything

John Charles McQuaid was much-mocked – including by me – for his disapproval of women’s athletics. He considered the athletics field unfavourable for women’s physical condition and possibly damaging to future motherhood.

Eccentric and misogynist, was my verdict. But I have now learned that his was quite an accepted view, among doctors and sports experts, back in the 1940s and 50s.

## Unladylike

An Olympic ban had been imposed on women running over 200 metres after female competitors in 1928 were seen to be exhausted; and spectators thought this sight “unladylike”. Medical experts agreed that the running track often put too much strain on young women, and the stress might make them

“unfit for marriage” or bearing children.

The famous British athlete Harold Abrahamson, (the movie *Chariots of Fire* was based on his story) fiercely opposed women doing athletics – although he eventually changed his mind when an attractive young British runner, Valerie Ball, showed she was more than up to the challenge.

But the ban on women running 800 metres wasn’t lifted until 1960, and on 400 metres, until 1964. (Valerie Ball, an ace athlete, married and had three children – her health wasn’t damaged by a running career.)

John Charles’s views were old-fashioned, but they were far from unique, being shared by contemporary medical and sports experts. As so often in history, context is everything.



English athlete Valerie Ball.


“These infections are now usually treatable, but nevertheless, rising cases of STIs are a cause for concern, according to the latest report from the Health Protection Surveillance”

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● Many a young person departs from their native small town because they find the intimacies of a smaller community too confining. Then, later, they may come to see the better side. Graham Norton expressed this theme recently when speaking about his home place in West Cork. “I couldn’t wait to get out of there in the 1980s.”

But he started returning home when his father became ill with Parkinson’s, and after his dad died, “the people of Bandon were so good...it reminded me that lots of that kind of small-town stuff I had been running away from has benefits as well”. If small towns can be limiting, they can “also be supportive and lovely”. So true, Graham!

# Anglican service in Vatican basilica 'not ideal' says Irish ecumenist

**Ruadhán Jones**

After Anglican clergy celebrated the Eucharist in Rome's Basilica of St John Lateran, an Irish ecumenist said it was "not ideal, but not a disaster".

His comments come after Anglican Bishop Jonathan Baker of Fulham, a suffragan bishop with responsibility for Anglo-Catholic parishes in the dioceses of London and Southwark that have requested

not to be served by a woman priest or bishop, celebrated the liturgy April 18 as part of a conference in Rome for Anglo-Catholic clergy.

The vicar for the basilica's chapter blamed a "breakdown in communication" for the occurrence, expressing "deep regret" in an April 20 statement.

Irish Benedictine Fr Martin Browne, an official at the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, welcomed the apology and called for "perspective and generosity"

rather than "extreme positions" in the incident's wake.

There are provisions for Catholic buildings to be used by other Christians, but it "probably would have been more appropriate" if they had used an Anglican church in Rome, Fr Browne told *The Irish Catholic*.

The basilica "has a very important significance, so occasions where it would be used by other Christian denominations would very much be exceptional", he added.

The matter "wasn't thought about terribly carefully", said Fr Browne, adding that there was no "bad intention" on anybody's part.

Fr Browne criticised some of the language used by commentators in response to the incident: "I've seen language like 'blasphemy' and 'sacrilege' and so on, used – it wasn't any of those things."

"A lot of what I've seen over the last few days has not been very generous, in terms of commentary," Fr Browne continued.

"That happens I guess on social media, people tend to extreme positions. Something happened that was not ideal, but it was not a disaster. I think perspective and generosity are both needed."

*The Irish Catholic* understands that a lack of familiarity with Anglican clergy on the part of basilica officials may have led to the confusion. Outside of Britain and Ireland, the Anglican Church is not as common and the terminology is not well understood.

## State continues on 'sectarian path' in abuse inquiry

**Chai Brady**

The Irish Government is on "a sectarian path" by not including non-Catholic schools in their abuse scoping inquiry, the head of Journalism in Griffith College has said.

Dr Niall Meehan welcomed the fact several TDs have raised the issue of non-Catholic schools being left out of the inquiry, most recently by Labour TD Aodhán Ó Riordáin last week.

"The Irish State has a long history in terms of dealing with different denominations equally in a positive sense but it's not dealing with them equally in a negative sense," Dr Meehan told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It is including the Roman Catholic Church in its deliberations and investigations but it has, for the first time ever, excluded abuse in a non-

Roman Catholic setting. They are deliberately setting out on a sectarian path and they are trying to hide that fact."

Dr Meehan claimed that a lot of abuse outside Catholic settings is "ignored", adding that the "assumption is that abuse is something that exclusively" occurs in Catholic religious settings and "that is just a mistake".

The Government approved the scoping inquiry last month to inform it of a response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders.

In a response to Mr Ó Riordáin, Minister for Education Norma Foley said that the inquiry's response may "form a template for Government responses in respect of other settings", but stated it would focus on Catholic schools run by religious orders.

# Thousands of pro-lifers expected at March for Life

**Staff reporter**

Pro-life advocates across Ireland will gather in Dublin this bank holiday Monday to "push back" against extreme abortion measures and call for "positive supports for women in unplanned pregnancy".

The Pro Life Campaign's 'March For Life' takes place on May 1 at 2pm, marching from St Stephen's Green south (outside Newman University Church) to Leinster House.

Their spokesperson, Eilís Mulroy, said the announcement this month that a record 8,500 abortions occurred in Ireland last year

is "truly harrowing". She also decried the recommendations made following the abortion review which has called for a widening of the law including completely decriminalising abortion, extending the 12-week limit, and removing the three day period of reflection for women.

Ms Mulroy said: "More than one in three voters voted 'No' to retain Ireland's pro-life laws in the 2018 referendum. The abortion review has deliberately ignored the views of pro-life citizens at every step of this process."

"In addition, it has failed to consult with women who regret their abortions,

or women who availed of the three-day period of reflection and had their babies. In contrast, even the most radical wings of the pro-abortion movement have been listened to and

have gained unprecedented levels of access to the Government decision-making process," she added.

For more information about the March for Life visit: [www.marchforlife.ie](http://www.marchforlife.ie)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New wing named after religious sister opens in Dublin hospital

A new 98-bed hospital wing opened at the Mater Hospital in Dublin, April 20, has been named after the former chairwoman of the hospital, Sr Margherita Rock.

The new wing was officially opened by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly.

The €103m Rock Wing includes 16 new intensive care unit beds, as well as a new National Isolation Unit.

Sr Rock was a key figure in the life of the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, and was also a founding member of a number of institutions aimed at improving the lives of children and vulnerable people in particular.

### No progress on Finglas church social housing, says TD

The Church of the Annunciation site in Finglas has seen no development activity, despite being slated for social housing use.

More than 100 homes were approved for the site as part of a public private partnership (PPP) scheme last June.

Fianna Fáil TD Paul McAuliffe told the Dáil that there is "no activity" on the site. "It is a social housing site, mostly for older people. It is not due until quarter three 2026. It has no design yet," he said.

"Are we dealing with this as a real emergency at the implementation level with local authorities," Mr McAuliffe asked, questioning whether it was an issue with the local authority or the Department for Housing.

### St Angela's moves closer to ATU incorporation

The integration capital investment proposal put forward by St Angela's College, Sligo, and the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) has passed the first stage, Minister Simon Harris announced on April 24.

As the colleges make a preliminary business case, the Minister for Higher Education said it "will build momentum as the final stages of the incorporation agreement are nearing completion".

"I know all the parties are committed to ensuring a successful outcome in terms of the final agreement."

St Angela's College was gifted to the State to be incorporated into the newly formed ATU.

## Receiving the Holy Spirit...



David, Eileen and Issy are pictured with Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey at the Confirmation ceremony in St Nathy's Cathedral in Ballaghaderreen on Saturday, April 22.

# Priest recommends new 'good vs evil' film about exorcism

**Chai Brady**

A Pauline priest has recommended the Faithful watch a new film based on a famous exorcist which was partially filmed in Ireland. However, he adds they should take the "horror aspect" with a grain of salt.

Russel Crowe stars in *The Pope's Exorcist* which was released in Ireland on Good Friday and is based on the writings of Fr Gabriel Amorth SSP, a member of the Society of St Paul.

Maynooth-based Fr Alex Anandam SSP told *The Irish Catholic* he was "happy and proud to watch our own Pauline priest's life and ministry of exorcism in a film format".

"It's about the real life and ministry of the late Fr Gabriel Amorth, because the story line

is based on him it is worth watching. There is a theological aspect of evil against the power of good in the film – that's a moral aspect of theology," Fr Anandam said, but adds "the Faith-based elements are overtaken by these aspects of horror and thriller to attract the general audience".

Fr Anandam said that while it was "interesting", in the latter part of the film the "dramatic exorcism horror" brings down the theological aspect "which I thought would be more interesting for the wider Catholic population but I feel that this is being produced more for a wider audience".

Fr Amorth detailed his work in bestselling memoirs *An Exorcist Tells His Story* and *An Exorcist: More*

*Stories*. He often warned about the danger of occult practices and spoke of the need for exorcists. He said in 2006: "It is very important today because there are so many requests for them. People have lost the Faith, and superstition, magic, Satanism, or Ouija boards have taken its place, which then open all the doors to the presence of demons."

He died aged 91 in 2016. The priest, Fr Edward Siebert SJ, who helped produce the film described it as a "fun ride". The Jesuit said it "relies upon familiar biblical, literary and cinematic images to personify the lure of evil against the power of good. Any story that ends with the enemy's defeat is ultimately a story of hope".

## Bishop Leahy visits Vatican to discuss MIC's future

**Ruadhán Jones**

Bishop Brendan Leahy has met with Vatican officials to discuss Mary Immaculate College's (MIC) "closer structural alignment" with University of Limerick.

Bishop Leahy, chairperson of MIC's trustees, met with Archbishop Angelo Zani, outgoing Secretary of Congregation for Catholic Education, and Msgr Victor Boyle in Rome to update them on developments at MIC last year, minutes from the trustee meetings show.

The minutes from a September 6, 2022, meeting note that Bishop Leahy received positive feedback.

Last year, MIC and UL opened talks on closer ties, although MIC President Prof. Eugene Wall told staff that a merger was not on the cards.

The closer ties related to the fact that MIC

is not a university, according to a report from *Limerick Live*. This means that the college cannot access certain funding streams and rankings.

The minutes also show that a number of the trustees who were to retire agreed to remain as members as MIC and UL "dialogue towards 'closer structural alignment'" to maintain continuity.

The colleges established two negotiation teams, led by the respective presidents. MIC's team also includes the vice-presidents of academic affairs, administration and finance and governance and strategy.

Meanwhile, MIC has yet to fill the position of Head of Theology, which has been left open for almost a year. They have re-advertised for the position, with the deadline closing this Friday, April 28.

### 'To the heights'



Young pilgrims from Ferns diocese are pictured on Hum mountain during their pilgrimage to Medjugorje on Saturday, April 22.

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# Niamh Uí Bhriain

## The View



# TDs must keep their promise to voters after abortion referendum

**E**arlier this month, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said that 8,500 women had availed of abortion services in Ireland in 2022. He sounded pretty pleased about the numbers, even though, if he is correct, it would represent an enormous jump in the number of babies being killed by abortion.

In fact, it would represent a shocking jump of 25% since the previous year, and be more than double the number of women who travelled to Britain for abortions before the repeal of the 8th Amendment.

The scale of the loss of life is now becoming catastrophic. Mr Donnelly may have meant that 8,500 women attended a first abortion appointment with fewer returning for the abortion pill, but repeated queries for further information to his offices were ignored. Either way, the trend is both heart-breaking and disturbing.

It seems obvious that the State is utterly failing women in crisis, and failing all of its responsibilities to offer alternatives to abortion or give any protection to the helpless baby in the womb. Abortion now seems like a first, rather than a last, option.

### Making it easier

If the numbers weren't already bad enough, Mr Donnelly has equal enthusiasm, it appears, for plans to make it even easier to get an abortion and thereby increase those devastating figures even further.

The abortion review was set up to come to a pre-ordained outcome, stacked with abortion-friendly researchers and directors from the beginning. It will, therefore, make all of the recommendations it was expected to, including scrapping the three-day waiting period and seeking to trample on the conscience rights of pro-life medical professionals.

And yet, there are obstacles in the way of the demands of abortion campaigners, and the most obvious of these is that changes liberalising the abortion law even further need to be voted on by TDs.



Pro-life activists display signs during the annual all-Ireland Rally for Life in Dublin July 2, 2022.

**“We all remember how Simon Coveney was sent out to persuade middle Ireland by claiming the three-day wait was a restrictive measure because of the enormity of the decision involved in abortion”**

That's the nub of the issue – the law can only be changed and abortion numbers increased yet again, if TDs vote in favour of changes like scrapping the three-day wait. And so, those TDs must be held to account because they made a promise to voters in 2018 and they must keep that promise.

Voters were told that if they voted for repeal that 'safeguards' and 'restrictions' would be in place, and a great many reluctant Yes voters relied on those political promises. But the media has been relentless in supporting the radical and extreme demands of abortion supporters who even want abortion on demand made available to six months of pregnancy.

They are providing cover to TDs who may believe that they can sneak these radical changes past voters by claiming that the decisions are being made by faceless committees over which they have no power.

That's where voters need to shatter those illusions. Life Institute, for which I am also a spokeswoman, has been running a campaign for 12 months or more highlighting the need for politicians to be held accountable for the guarantees they gave in order to persuade voters to repeal the 8th in 2018.

### Betrayal

TDs need to understand that ditching what they described as reassuring safeguards would be a grotesque betrayal of promises made to voters and Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael TDs in particular now need to prove to voters that they didn't lie about those assurances in the abortion referendum.

We all remember how Simon Coveney was sent out to persuade middle Ireland by claiming the three-day wait was a restrictive measure because of the enormity of the decision involved in abortion. And we all know that data from the HSE has shown that up to 1,000 women a year change their mind during that three-day wait.

The billboards and leaflets and newspaper adverts highlighting this fact have already had an impact informing voters, with sources in the main political parties acknowledging that

constituents have been raising concerns with TDs.

In fact, an Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, has now said that he would be reluctant and uncomfortable to make “major” changes to the abortion legislation, given that the law was part of a package offered to voters in the referendum.

### 723,000 voted 'No'

The political parties would do well to remember that only 25% of voters, according to a recent Irish Times/IPSOS poll, want abortion made more widely available – and most of that 25% wouldn't vote for Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael if you paid them.

More than 723,000 people voted 'No' to repeal and a substantial chunk of Yes voters did so based on the promises given about safeguards and restrictions.

Stephen Donnelly is, of course, a blow-in from the Soc Dems and unlikely to understand the average

Fianna Fáil voter, and seemingly far more anxious to please the extremists in the Abortion Rights Campaign than the average Irish person. But he may discover that sort of disregard comes with a price, for the party, if not for himself.

In truth, the only changes to the law that Mr Donnelly should be considering would be to address the huge surge in abortions; the catastrophic mistakes made in aborting babies after a misdiagnosis; the failure to offer women life-affirming choices; and the reality that late-term abortions are being carried out, but the Government prefers to turn a blind eye to these sad and shocking realities.

The campaign to hold TDs to account for their 2018 promises will be ramped up to reach more key voters in the coming weeks. If you believe in saving 1,000 lives a year, make sure your voice is also heard.



# Hundreds attend week-long Sr Clare retreat

Ruadhán Jones

**H**undreds gathered in Long Tower Parish, Derry, for a week of talks and prayer in honour of Sr Clare Crockett, the Derry nun killed in Ecuador seven years ago.

Guest speakers including Andrea Corr, Fr John Joe Duffy of Creeslough, Co. Donegal and Sr Elena of the Servants of the Home of the Mother, Sr Clare's order.

The retreat finished on Sunday with Mass celebrated by Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown. In his homily, he praised the "little girl from Brandywell" whose story has gone around the world.

"She wouldn't want us to focus on her," Bishop McKeown said. "She would want us to focus on Jesus."

Sr Clare's witness from beyond the grave "tells us that resurrection starts here and now, with your story and with mine," he added.



The Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother – Sr Clare's order – are pictured with children who attended the retreat on Sunday, April 23.



Bishop McKeown with volunteer stewards.



A large crowd gathers in Long Tower church on Sunday, April 23, for the closing Mass of the Sr Clare Crockett retreat.



Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown greets those who came to Long Tower church for the Sr Clare retreat on Sunday, April 23.



Sr Elena SHM gives a talk during the retreat.



A young girl receives a rose outside Long Tower church.

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# QUB chaplaincies mark 25 years since Good Friday Agreement



Ruadhán Jones

Queen's University Belfast's chaplaincies hosted an ecumenical prayer breakfast to open last week's conference to mark 25 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Catholic, Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian chaplaincies gathered with students, staff, members of university senate, Church leaders and Ministers of State to pray for continued peace.

In the opening address, the chaplains reflected that the "prayerful reflection" is an "endorsement of the widely-held conviction that people of faith, many of them committed to public service and the common good, are vital contributors to these important conversations".



Presbyterian chaplain Rev. Nigel Craig, Church of Ireland/Methodist chaplain Rev. Danielle McCullagh and Catholic chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan co-hosted the ecumenical prayer breakfast in Queen's University Belfast.



Students from QUB provide musical accompaniment to the prayer service.



The UK's Minister of State for Northern Ireland Steve Baker applauds during one of the talks.



Inez Murray, a second-year medical student at QUB, reflects on the meaning of the Good Friday Agreement for those like her who were born after it was signed.



Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor George Davison enjoys the ecumenical encounter.



Students representing the various chaplaincies at Queen's University Belfast gather for the prayer breakfast.

# CSO survey reveals a nightmarish sexual world for many young people



In their young lives, adolescents are far more likely to have suffered the worst kind of sexual assault than much older women who have seen far more of life, writes **David Quinn**

There is a widespread idea that as Ireland becomes more liberal, it is almost becoming a kinder, gentler place. The evidence in favour of this notion is, to put it mildly, doubtful. There seems to be a rise in anti-social behaviour and general levels of aggression. Mental health problems seem to be on the increase, there is widespread abuse of drink and drugs, and now, it seems, in levels of sexual violence.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has just produced a major new survey on sexual violence in Ireland, the first full-scale report in 20 years and what it shows is sobering. Half of women report having experienced sexual abuse at some point in their lifetimes, but the figure is much higher at 65% among young women aged 18-24 than among women aged 65 or over. Among the older age group, 35% say they have experienced sexual abuse at some point in their lives.

In addition, 28% of men say they have been sexually abused and again the figure is much higher among younger men than older men.

A few words about the survey itself and the definitions it uses are in order before proceeding. For example, it uses the term 'sexual violence' throughout. Most people probably believe violence involves physical force of some kind, but the survey defines 'violence' much more broadly than this.

Its definition is: "a range of non-consensual experi-



ences, from non-contact experiences to non-consensual sexual intercourse".

This could include everything from sexually suggestive remarks or being shown pornographic material without permission, to rape.

It might have been better for the CSO to distinguish between violence, and other forms of sexual abuse or harassment.

A total of 4,500 people took part in the survey and the overall response rate of those contacted was 36%, which is not a very high participation rate, but generally people are more reluctant to take part in surveys of any sort than was once the case.

## Stark

These caveats aside, what the survey reveals is still stark, and it is surprising it has not garnered much attention or commentary. If the number of people who have experienced sexual abuse or violence at some point in their lives is even half what this survey indicates, then the problem is very bad indeed and as mentioned, worse for young people and especially young women.

The survey shows us the types of sexual abuse or violence encountered and includes 'non-consensual sexual intercourse', attempted intercourse, sexual touching and other types of sexual contact.

It reveals that whereas 25% of women aged 18-24 have experienced 'non-consensual sexual intercourse' at some point, the figure is 10% among over 65s.

What this means is that in the course of their so far young lives, 18-24 years olds are far more likely to have suffered the worst kind of sexual assault than much older women who have seen far more of life.

Perhaps it is the case that younger women are more likely than older women

to recognise and talk about sexual abuse when it happens?

For example, someone who was 20 in 1983 might have decided that a one-night stand where the couple were both drunk, but permission wasn't sought for sexual intercourse was not rape, whereas a 20-year-old today would say it was rape.

**“Even more worryingly, abuse in childhood seems to be on the increase as well and again the abuser is often ‘friend/acquaintance’”**

However, according to Cliona Sadlier of the Rape Crisis Centre, the CSO controlled as best it could for these differences of interpretation and even allowing for them there seems little doubt that sexual abuse of young people is worse than it was.

The survey also looks at who the perpetrator was, and again we see big differences by age group.

For example, among people aged over 65, it was much more likely that the abuser was a 'person in

authority' than if the person is aged 18-24. The figures are 14% versus only 1%.

The 'person in authority' could be a boss. If the abuse occurred in childhood, he might have been a teacher, or a doctor, or a priest. (Abuse by priests, even in the past, accounts for a tiny percentage of the overall total).

Abuse by authority figures today is probably much lower than it was because of much better protection measures in the workplace, schools and elsewhere.

The survey reveals that those aged 18-24 are a lot more likely to have been sexually abused by either a friend/acquaintance, or a stranger at some point, than are those who are over 65.

## Increase

Even more worryingly, abuse in childhood seems to be on the increase as well and again the abuser is often 'friend/acquaintance'. This could involve say, a 13-year-old and a 17-year-old who is known to them.

The increase in abuse is almost certainly the result of the growing sexualisation of society. The past is often attacked for being 'sexually repressive' but if that is true, society in the past also had in place sexual guardrails, that is, certain rules of sexual conduct and behaviour

aimed at protecting people. It is true that these did not protect everyone from abuse, that they did curtail freedom, and that people in authority sometimes abused their positions, nonetheless, they seem to have had some kind of protective effect.

## Free-for-all

Now it is a virtual sexual free-for-all. Young people are growing up in a world of all-pervasive, hard-core and often violent pornography and it is ludicrous to pretend that this is not having a bad effect on behaviour.

They are also growing up in a world of 'hook-up' apps, which means you can meet someone online, and then physically later on that same evening, have sex with them even though they might be a total stranger. Or else they might be a friend who you don't really know that well after all, and who might be a much worse person than you

believed.

It is also ludicrous to pretend 'hook-ups' cannot go wrong. Clearly they do, and often.

Or people might be at a party, with lots of drink (or drugs) involved, and this can obviously result in bad outcomes also. This could have happened 40 years ago of course, but back then pornography was not everywhere and some of the old sexual restraints were still in place.

The liberal promise was that untrammelled sexual freedom would lead to a happier, less repressed world. This does not appear to be how it is working out at all. It was always a very naïve promise, and it needs to be re-evaluated. Something has gone badly wrong, and what that might be needs an open, honest and mature debate in which the role of liberalism itself, and its possible harmful effects, is part of the discussion.

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# Out&About

## 'Jesus, we trust in you'



**DOWN:** Fr Alphonsus Chukwunye, celebrant of Divine Mercy Sunday Mass on April 16, is pictured with members of Newry Cathedral Divine Mercy group.



**TYRONE:** CBS Omagh senior prefect team present Marie Curie NI fundraising manager Sheena Havlin with a cheque for £719.



**CORK:** Fr Aquin Casey participates in Cobh Tourism's commemoration of the Titanic's sinking, marking 111 years since the boat sank in 1912. Photo: Cobh Tourism

### IN SHORT

#### NGOs urge Govt to revitalise overseas outreach

Irish charities have urged the Government to "lead and revitalise" global cooperation on overseas outreach, as multiple crises reverse progress on sustainable development goals (SDG).

Holding onto SDG's is becoming harder and harder for many communities due to the effects of crises like Covid-19, climate change and conflict, Dóchas told a Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence on April 18.

Dóchas, a network of Irish Humanitarian and Development organisations including Trócaire, urged the Government to show its commitment to human rights, justice and dignity.

"We ask that Ireland leverages its unique role

as SDG summit co-chair, to lead and revitalise global cooperation on the SDGs," said CEO Jane-Ann McKenna.

"This is a significant opportunity for Ireland to communicate our commitment to multilateralism and our shared values of human rights, justice and dignity for all people," she finished.

Ms McKenna referenced US President Joe Biden's speech to the Oireachtas, in which he said that "Ireland carries the moral authority with nations around the world".

"Now more than ever, we need to use this moral authority," said Ms McKenna.

#### Shield schools from 'schoolyard accident' litigation says senator

Senator Rónán Mullen has introduced leg-

islation to shield schools and teachers from being sued for accidents on school premises.

The independent senator warned that there is a gap in Irish law, leaving schools fearful of suits for accidents during lunch breaks and recreational activities.

Unless given legislative protection, 'no running in the year' or similar policies could become the norm due to the "overtly litigious atmosphere" in Ireland, Mr Mullen said April 18.

"Clear legal protection is needed so that schools encourage healthy recreation within the normal level of risk," said Mr Mullen.

His Civil Liability (Schools) Bill 2023 was launched on April 18 and "would substantially free schools from any threats arising from unreasonable litigation".

#### Cavan group raises €7,500 for famine appeal

The Cavan Famine and Aids Appeal for Africa raised €7,500 through its funding initiatives, to be sent to beneficiaries in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia.

The funds were raised from the funeral of the late Michael Sheridan, a small coin's collection at Christmas and the January church gate collection, as well as other donations.

The money will be allocated as follows: €2,500 each to Holy Rosary Sisters, Nigeria, Fr James Connolly, Zambia and to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Mutomo, Kenya.

These funds will be used to educate and train nurses, feed hungry children and provide health care to the sick.



**DERRY:** Andrea Corr of the Corrs delivers a talk on her own faith journey at the annual Sr Clare Crockett novena at Long Tower Parish on April 18.



**DERRY:** Retreat volunteer Ronnie White is pictured with Ms Corr after the retreat.



**MAYO:** Fr Charlie McDonnell PP gives the annual blessing of motorbikes in Lecanvey on April 2.



**LOURDES:** The hundreds of intentions and petitions given by the friends and families of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust over Easter were presented at the offertory and prayed for during the trust's Grotto Mass, celebrated by Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown on April 14.



**LONDON:** Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, eparch of the Ukrainian community in Ireland, leads a procession during Easter celebrations on April 16.



**BELFAST:** Methodist Rev. Harold Good gives an address at the recommitment service held in Clonard Redemptorist Monastery on April 16.



**BELFAST:** Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin and Church of Ireland Archbishop John McDowell light a candle symbolising the light of peace during the recommitment service.



**BELFAST:** US Envoy Senator Joseph Kennedy III at the recommitment service.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**BELFAST:** Fr Laurence McElhill celebrates the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination on April 14 with friends, family and fellow priests in the Parish of St Teresa of Ávila, Glen Road.



**WATERFORD:** Jane Mellett and Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan are pictured with those who attended a showing of *The Letter* in St John's pastoral centre on April 18.



**CAVAN:** Members of Cavan Famine and Aids Appeal for Africa display a cheque for €7,500 in funds to be donated to the Holy Rosary Sisters, Nigeria, Fr James Connolly, Zambia and to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Mutomo, Kenya. Pictured in the front row (from left) are treasurer Sheila McNulty and chairman Michael Cassidy; back row are John Sorohan, Liam De Paor and Mel Doherty.



**GALWAY:** Happy couple Laura Clarke and Ray Ryan are pictured after their wedding Mass in St Mary's, Mountbellew on April 15, with siblings Lee Ryan and Amy Clarke and Fr Karl Burns.

### ANTRIM

St Joseph's Young Priests Society to host a holy hour to pray for priestly and religious vocations on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, at 4pm in All Saints Church Ballymena. Guest speaker Fr Conor McGrath, vocations director for Down and Conor.

### ARMAGH

The next 'do this in memory' programme gathering for all P4 pupils and their parents will take place in St Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday, April 29, at 6.30pm.

### CARLOW

Dr Halyna Teslyuk, lecturer in Religious Education at St Angela's College, Sligo, to speak at 7.30pm on Monday, May 1, in St Clare's church, at Graiguecullen parish's solemn novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

### CAVAN

Christian meditation takes place every Thursday evening at 7pm in the Conference Room at the back of Cavan Cathedral.

### CORK

Monastic vocations weekend hosted by St Benedict's Priory, Cobh, to take place May 6-7. An opportunity to discern alongside the community. Contact 021 4811 354 or cobhty-burnconvent@gmail.com for more information.

### DERRY

Blessing of the Graves will take place in Leckpatrick Parish as follows: St Joseph's Cemetery, Glenmornan, Sunday, May 7 after the 10am Mass; St Mary's Cemetery, Cloughcor, Saturday, May 20 after the 6pm Mass; and Sacred Heart Cemetery, Derry Road, Sunday, May 21 after the 11.30am Mass.

Youth 2000 Ulster Retreat takes place in Maghera College from April 28-30, for young adults aged 16-35. Visit youth2000.ie for more information.

### DONEGAL

Healing service to take place in Rossnowlagh Franciscan friary on Sunday, May 7, starting with the rosary at 2.45pm and followed by Mass and healing service at 3pm. Confessions before and after Mass.

### DUBLIN

The Carmelite Third Order/Lay Carmel meet on the third Saturday of every month in the Oratory of Whitefriar street church at 3pm. New members welcome.

'Life in the Spirit' seminars take place in the Ignatian chapel at Gardiner Street Church every Monday from 7-9.30pm until May 15. Next talk May 1.

### GALWAY

Eucharistic adoration takes place in Galway cathedral from Monday to Friday from 11.30am-6pm and on Sunday from 1.15-6pm.

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for young adults aged 18-35 takes place in the church of St Oliver Plunkett in Renmore on Fridays at 8.15pm.

### KERRY

A book launch for *A Quest for Meaning* by Fr Gearóid O'Donnchadha RIP takes place in St Joseph's Oratory, Fenit at 5pm on Thursday, April 27, by Minister for Education Norma Foley.

### KILDARE

A day of prayer and celebration on Saturday, April 29, in Ballycane Church, Naas, conducted by Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill and Fr Eamonn Bourke. Starting at 10am, 'meet and greet' from 9.30am. Concluding with Mass in the afternoon.

### KILKENNY

Conversations with women in the Bible, a day to explore insights from their stories and God's transforming presence in their lives takes place in Pembroke Hotel on Saturday, May 13. Speaker is Sr Therese Fitzgerald SND.

### LEITRIM

Life in the Spirit seminars take place on Wednesdays at 8pm in Aras Pádraig, Drumshanbo.

### LOUTH

A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

### MEATH

Youth 2000's Leinster retreat takes place May 5-7 in Ashbourne Community

School for ages 16-35. More information on www.youth2000.ie

### MONAGHAN

The Alzheimer Society Monaghan to host a social club Friday, April 28, from 11am-1pm. Families are asked to join their loved ones who are living with dementia to come along to St Joseph's Pastoral Centre for a morning of fun activities and a cuppa.

### SLIGO

A Youth 2000 prayer gathering for young adults aged 18-35 takes place in the side chapel of St Anne's Church, Cranmore Road on the first Monday of every month at 8pm.

### TIPPERARY

Evening of prayer and fellowship for women on the first Monday of every month at Holy Family Mission, Glencomeragh. Begins with rosary at 7.30pm, Mass at 8pm followed by tea/coffee and lots of chat.

### 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.

### WATERFORD

Encounter experience for young adults 18-35 takes place Friday May 12 at 8pm in St John's Church, Parnell Street. Inspiring talk, followed by a short time of prayer, music then refreshments and fellowship.

### WESTMEATH

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

### WEXFORD

Rosary and devotions continue every Tuesday at 2.30pm at Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford until the summer.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a rosary. The person is wearing a dark blue habit with white cuffs. The rosary consists of white beads with a few brown beads and a white cross at the end. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Searching for the shoots of faith

**The Irish Catholic**

VOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT 2023

# Building and believing in a future of religious vitality



Prayer helps to recognise the richness of religious life despite modern vices, Chai Brady hears

Despite a growing secularist culture in Ireland, religious orders are dedicated to finding and cultivating the vocation of those who feel they are called to a life serving the Church's mission.

The attraction of sex, drugs, and alcohol can be huge obstacles for young people when it comes to being open to God's call, but having friends who are like-minded can be hugely supportive, according to the vocation's director of the Poor Clare Sisters in Cork.

Sr Colette Marie told *The Irish Catholic* that personally she believes that it is important for young people, or anyone who is serious about their faith – even apart from a religious vocation – to have a friend or network of people that are in a similar environment.

**“If someone contacted me about a vocation I would ask them if they have faith supports”**

She said: “We have to swim against the tide but if we're swimming against a strong tide on our own, we're asking for trouble.

“Youth 2000 is very good, I think anyway, I know I entered before it became prevalent, something like that I think personally is very important, or else a very good faith background in the family. But I think a lot of aspects of our culture nowadays are very unhelpful, even for a person who wants to live a good

Christian life, but particularly for anyone thinking about a vocation,” she said.

“If people are partying or if I was in a workplace where everyone was partying every night, or things that are wrong were accepted as normal – like drugs – if I was in that environment every day I would need to protect myself by being sure to have friends who would also be serious about the Faith, or serious about living a good life. If someone contacted me about a vocation I would ask them if they have faith supports. If your family aren't practicing the Faith – which can't be presumed – then are you belonging to some group in your parish, or do you go to some Youth 2000 retreats? Something like that.”

**“In the Poor Clare context, it can be particularly difficult for families to understand the contemplative life, which has huge restrictions on outside interactions”**

The Poor Clare Sisters are part of the Franciscan family, following St Francis of Assisi who inspired St Clare, the founder of the order, in Italy in 1212. The monastery in Cork was established in 1914. The enclosed congregation is dedicated to the contemplative life which means they disconnect themselves from the rigmarole of modern life and focus on prayer.

Asked what a person can expect when they enquire about a vocation with the Poor Clares, Sr Colette said: “If a girl contacts us about a vocation I suppose there are certain things that we would be hoping that would already be in place, ideally a young, or not so young, woman would want to be committed to her faith already so that would be an important thing for us. Also, the Poor Clare way of life is not hugely demanding but there is a certain routine so reasonably good health would be an important factor”.

## Social media

“Ideally for us the 20-40 age group would be what we would be looking for... the enclosed life, especially nowadays, is probably very different for a young woman to



Sr Francis, Sr Anthony Mary (standing) and Sr Colette Marie of the Cork Poor Clare community.

come in now than in the past when one could come from a very Catholic home and it mightn't be a huge change. I think social media has probably impacted a lot on a certain age group,” Sr Colette said.

“People are used to a lot of contact and part of the enclosed way of life there is less contact with family and friends because the relationship with the Lord is primary and particularly in the early years that aspect of vocation is important, the roots are put down, that we do give time to the vocation and to the contemplative life.”

In Sr Colette's experience when talking to young

women considering a vocation, they always agree social media has become a problem in their age group, that it is “quite invasive and intrusive and it's very important for everybody really to manage it in some way”.

“It is not even healthy to be constantly on the alert for the next message. I think for the life of Faith, God doesn't answer instantly in the way we might like. Even with my role as promoting vocations, I would check my email once a day, so if somebody contacts us about a vocation she is not going to get an instant reply,” she said.

Sr Colette adds that as

contemplatives their core vocation doesn't require a lot of social media use at all, but that if a sister is in a particular role she may need access to a mobile, depending on her duties in the community – but they do not have individual, personal mobile phones as Poor Clares.

## Support

Families might not always be supportive of a person pursuing a religious vocation, much less so in modern times than a few decades ago when it was basically considered a necessity to have a priest in the family.

In the Poor Clare context,

it can be particularly difficult for families to understand the contemplative life, which has huge restrictions on outside interactions.

Sr Colette explained the challenge further saying that “for the family it's a big cut off point in the sense you're entering an enclosed order, you may not ever get home again, your phone calls are restricted, so it's fairly radical. Generally speaking most of us in the community, our families would have given us some support. They weren't saying ‘I'm thrilled that you're entering’ because that wouldn't be very normal. My mother cried buckets when I was entering,





Bro. Denis Aherne OFM and Bro. Simon Fernandes FPM (Presentation Brothers) lead the entrance procession at the World Day of Consecrated Life.

God rest her, but over the years I'm sure she was quite happy that I was in the monastery and praying for the family and everything. So I think it does take time".

In a situation in which a family is completely opposed to the idea and threaten, perhaps, not to speak to a person who wants to begin the discernment process, Sr Colette admits this can be "very difficult".

However, Sr Colette adds that she believes the Lord can and does ask "big sacrifices", so he may ask someone to make that sacrifice.

"In the past when people joined missionary orders, they might never see the family say for 10 years, and 10 years is a long time, but it definitely would be very, very difficult," she said.

"I personally would have found it very, very difficult if my family said 'we'll never

talk to you again if you go there'.

She added: "I think discerning a vocation can be a slow business, Pope Francis says it can be a slow process, so that on both sides there needs to be time given to the accompaniment of somebody but also there can be a certain intuition, if somebody calls to a place and says 'gosh, this feels like home', that can happen too.

"It can be fairly clear, but at the same time there is definitely a discernment process, the congregation have a duty too to discern if God is calling this person to us. We all would love more vocations, but that is not the point, the point is: where does God wants this person? It's important that the congregation meeting the young person, that they really want to do the best for that person, to encourage them, to help them along, but at

the same time there is a duty to say if I thought a girl was not called to our way of life 'look I really think maybe you should try somewhere else or whatever'."

### Presentation Brothers

A well-known religious congregation in Ireland due to their hands on work in education benefitting multiple generations of successful Irish men and women, the Presentation Brothers are international and continue to work in Ireland, Canada, England, Ghana, Grenada, Nigeria and the US to this day.

The congregation of religious brothers was founded in 1802 in Waterford by Blessed Edmund Rice, who also founded the Christian Brothers. He was beatified by St Pope John Paul II in 1996. While initially their main focus was on education, the Presentation Brothers have branched out into the alleviation of poverty, social justice and more.

If a man is thinking about discerning a vocation with the congregation, Bro. Barry Noel who is on the leadership team of the congregation in Ireland, suggests they speak to one of the brothers directly.

Bro. Barry said: "A member of the Presentation family might be able to sit down and say 'What is all this about?', just to get a clear understanding because people must be able to understand what they are choosing and what they're getting into.

"So get in touch with the vocations director or anybody in the Presentation family that can give some information. Of course an important part of that information is the whole discernment process, 'is this really, what I really want?' and that comes with information, a bit of engaging and experiencing, a bit of formation and all of that," he said.

**"It's a wonderful opportunity to fulfil one's personal call of God into religious life, into some form of religious commitment, a commitment to serving others and sharing gifts"**

It can be more difficult for young men to be countercultural and take a different path to that of many of their peers, with so many negative attractions and illicit substances so readily available and socially acceptable, but according to Bro. Barry, "once young men are willing to spend some time in prayer, listening, engaging with the other aspects of life as they know it, I think they will begin to see the richness, the value and the opportunity of choosing this way of life".

"So sometimes maybe it's a bit of encouragement, and say maybe with all the attractions that are there, maybe it takes a moment of engaging with somebody, or listening or whatever and they say 'Wow, yes I was missing this all the time,'" he said.

"That need is always there and the attractiveness of all the other vices that are there it's only at the surface and it's really not satisfying a deeper need."

Asked about the work of the Presentation Brothers in Ireland, Bro. Barry said the congregation has seen a big movement away from their very traditional educational work in classrooms, particularly with the advancement of technology.

He gave the example of LEAF (Leadership, Education And Formation). It is an online project that offered a variety of programmes that were available online during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bro Barry said: "It has really reached out to people during the pandemic when people couldn't meet and gather, there was a number of Zoom meetings and gatherings. It's just amazing how it has expanded during that time, when everything else was contracting, the LEAF project blossomed.

"The main focus is the training and education of young people for leadership into the future, it's not 'education' per se, it is formation, so how best you can be useful and truthful and so on

**"If a man is thinking about discerning a vocation with the congregation, Bro. Barry Noel who is on the leadership team of the congregation in Ireland, suggests they speak to one of the brothers directly"**

as young leaders. It is Faith-based with a Christian philosophy."

Regarding their way of life as Presentation Brothers in general, Bro. Barry said it is "an exciting one".

"It's a wonderful opportunity to fulfil one's personal call of God into religious life, into some form of religious commitment, a commitment to serving others and sharing gifts," he said, adding that for the brothers they do this in community – an important aspect to the congregation.

"So you're not doing it alone," he explained, "you're doing it with the support of a community and probably in an international and multi-cultural setting. We would see that as one of the attractions to the Presentation Brothers.

"We are so international, and so global, and I think it's in line with the whole movement of the world today. There is so much integration, it's becoming a global village, people are so much more integrated with the advancement in technology and with the whole notion that we are not in silos. We are so enriched by others cultures and backgrounds, for each of us. That is the context we are operating in now."

At present there are Presentation Brothers from Canada, England, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Trinidad and the US.

Asked about his hopes for the future, Bro. Barry said: "We have always been open for business, and we will remain open for business. Other groups, other congregations have said 'listen, we are dying out in this part of the world let's close shop', we have not done that.

"We have said 'listen, God calls all the time and regardless of the time and the space God continues'. Now we haven't had big numbers, by no means, like other congregations we are aging in this party of the world, but we have had other persons from other cultures who have embraced our way of life and I must say there is great hope in terms of the membership going forward."



Cork Poor Clare community at prayer.

# Capuchin Franciscan Vocation

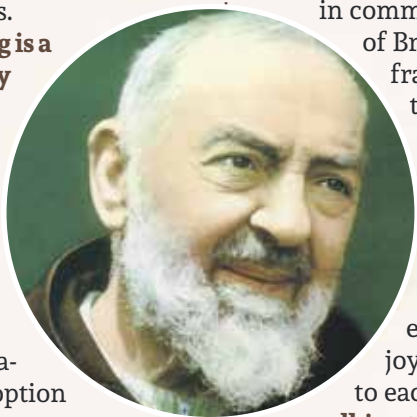
**W**e believe that everyone is called by Jesus. In many ways we could say – If I exist, then I am called! Your life is important and what you do with it is very important. Jesus Christ calls us in many ways and ultimately all of these ways lead us into deeper relationship with God, others, ourselves and the world around us.

**A vocational calling is a call to live in the way that feels most authentic to us.**

This could be as a person who chooses to marry and start a family or a person who remains single. It can also be an invitation to explore the option of religious life.

**As Capuchin Franciscan Friars we vow to live in poverty, chastity and obedience.** These three vows help us connect at a deeper level with God as well as the Friars we share our life with and the people we serve through our various ministries. We follow the rule of life given to us by St Francis of Assisi over eight hundred years ago. This rule is steeped in ancient wisdom and is the means by which we aim to follow the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

**The earliest name for the Capuchins was 'The Brothers of the people'.** This was a name given to us by those people that the early Friars served and its testament to the love and care the Friars had for these people. When the Capuchins were founded in 1525, Europe was a place of war, famine and plague. The early Friars listened deeply to the cry of the poor and did their best to respond to it. These Friars entered into some of the most difficult and challenging situations imaginable and often put their own lives at risk.



Why? Simply, because they saw those in need as their brothers and sisters. They had to reach out and help in whatever way they could. Even though our name may have changed to 'Capuchin' (referring to the long hood we wear on our habits) at our core we are still 'Brothers of the people'.

You may well ask how we live this vocation today. Firstly, we live in community as a fraternity of Brothers. The word fraternity meant more to St Francis than simply a gathering of Friars – it was a radically new way of living. To live in fraternity means to commit our lives, energy, talents, hopes, joys, fears and sorrows to each other. **It means walking together as brothers towards Christ in good times and not so good times.** It means living, praying, eating, laughing and sharing together all that we have. This was the dream of St Francis who believed that this model of life could be a way of peace and reconciliation in a troubled World.

As Capuchins we prefer to use the title 'Brother' – this is important for us as it links us back to St Francis' dream of fraternity and the early Capuchin Friars. Some of our Friars are ordained as priests and some are not. Either way we are first and foremost, brothers. **That's our vocational call – to pray, work and live as brothers of St Francis and brothers to each other.**

Responding to a vocational call takes courage. Pope Francis encourages us to take risks for Christ. If you feel the Lord is calling you to explore a religious vocation, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and trust that God has a plan for you and your life. And remember - **Be brave! Take a risk for Christ!**

Responding to a vocational call takes courage. Pope Francis encourages us to take risks for Christ. If you feel the Lord is calling you to explore a religious vocation, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and trust that God has a plan for you and your life. And remember - **Be brave! Take a risk for Christ!**



To find out more about consecrated life as a Capuchin Franciscan Friar email our Vocations Director, Brother Antony, at [vocations@capuchins.ie](mailto:vocations@capuchins.ie)



# On the Frontlines of Change: The OLA Sisters' Ongoing Commitment to Africa

The first Sisters set out for the shores of the African continent in 1876, answering an appeal by the Superior General of the Society of African Missions, Fr Augustine Planque, for women to work in the SMA missions in West Africa. Few of these young women would ever return. They answered the call with faith and fortitude, with grace and tenacity, in the full knowledge that death was not just a risk, it was a likely outcome.

This dire outcome is fortunately no longer the case, but the challenges of mission life still require a courage and commitment that few can muster. The health and education of the communities in which they serve were, and continue to be, of paramount importance to the OLA Sisters. The current generations of OLA Sisters stand on the shoulders of their predecessors and remain committed to providing quality healthcare, education, and other social and pastoral services, to the women and children of Africa, serving especially the most vulnerable members of society.

They are involved in a variety of programs and initiatives aimed at improving the health outcomes of the communities they serve, administering or working in hospitals, rural health care centres and clinics, as well as mobile health services that travel to remote areas to provide medical care to those who might not otherwise

have access. The OLA firmly believe that educating girls is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the overall health and well-being of communities. To that end, they have established schools and programs that specifically target girls, and they work daily to overcome the cultural and societal barriers that often prevent girls from receiving an education.

That they have been, and continue to be, a beacon of hope and compassion in Africa is borne out by the numbers of past pupils who regularly travel to Ireland to visit with their beloved teachers and mentors in Ardfoyle.

## Deep Gratitude and Appreciation

We are filled with deep gratitude as we reflect on the countless ways in which the public in Ireland have supported our mission, both spiritually and materially. Your generosity and kindness fill our hearts and inspire us to continue the work we have been called to do.

It is through your support and love that we are able to spread the message of hope to those who are in need. Your prayers and words of encouragement lift us up when we face the challenges of the day and allows us to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

With deepest thanks and appreciation,  
**The OLA Sisters**



Bugisi Health Centre.



Mwamapalala Health Centre.

*Courageously committed to God's Reign of Peace and Justice*



- Prayer
- Simplicity
- Zeal
- Mission
- Courage
- Faith
- Fidelity

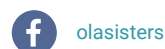
The joys of our vocation are many and varied. Being part of a community of believers and living out a vocation of service to God and others is incredibly rewarding. There is a great sense of joy in deepening one's spiritual life, being part of a spiritual family, and living according to a set of values and principles that promote peace, love, and justice. Our vocation provides us with the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with others and serve as a living witness to the power of the Gospel. Ultimately, our vocation to consecrated life is a beautiful way to share in the joy of the Gospel and witness to the presence of God in our lives.

We are an international group of Religious sisters; apostles rooted in faith and hope. Ready to risk it all for the Lord.

We strive to be examples of "Women in Communion". Living in international communities, we continue to fulfill the intense missionary dream of our founder, Father Augustine Planque.

There are many ways in which you can share in our mission, find out more on our website.

[WWW.OLAIRELAND.IE](http://WWW.OLAIRELAND.IE)



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# Franciscans Friars - OFM

## The “marrow” of the Gospel: The Franciscan way of life today

**S**t. Francis of Assisi referred to his Rule and form of life as “the marrow of the Gospel”, i.e., he intended the life of the Friars Minor to be based on the life of the disciples who walked the roads of Galilee with Jesus Christ. From the beginning the Franciscan vocation was one of mobility, itinerancy, and simplicity. It was to be characterised by a special closeness to people, by courtesy, humility, poverty and joy.

### Eight hundred years...

This year the Franciscans are marking the eighth centenary of our Rule. For eight centuries this simple rule has guided the Friars Minor, helping us to live this life in many different parts of the world, within different cultures and through very different historical moments. For eight centuries the story of Christianity in Ireland has been influenced by those who have followed the Franciscan way of life. From bustling urban centres, such as inner-city

Dublin, to peaceful havens like Multyfarnham, near Mullingar or Rosstown in Donegal, the Franciscans have been forming communities and sharing their vision with generations of Irish men and women.

### Who are the friars?

Today you can find Franciscan (OFM) communities in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Ennis, Rosstown, Multyfarnham, and Killarney. You will find friars ministering in our churches, involved in youth evangelization, teaching, chaplains to hospitals and nursing homes, preaching missions and retreats, supporting and working with the disadvantaged, caring for creation and working for justice and peace. You can read about some of the work friars do and how they discovered their vocations within our Order on our website, [www.franciscans.ie](http://www.franciscans.ie). The stories friars tell will never become Hollywood blockbusters! But there is a thread running through each friars' experience: a graced call to brotherhood, to share

a common life of prayer and service. There is a sense too, that the Gospel way of life is still possible, still attractive, still compelling.

### Formation

Those who join the Franciscans today typically spend their first year as postulants in our community in Galway. Here they are introduced to the ‘family spirit’ and learn to grow in those human and fraternal qualities which make of our lives a gift to others. The postulant participates in our daily prayers, our meals, our work, and apostolates, while receiving formation in our spirituality and charism. After the postulancy comes the novitiate; a spiritual year which takes place in Killarney. Formation continues at home and abroad, especially in our community in Rome, St. Isidore's. In Rome the international dimension of the Order, and the Church, are witnessed first-hand. If something of this way of life is appealing to you, why not contact us? May the Lord give you peace!

*Francis, Repair my Church...*  
*Join the Irish Franciscans in a life of...*

Prayer Brotherhood Loving service

Contact Friar Liam Kelly OFM,  
Franciscan Vocations Office,  
The Abbey, 8 Francis Street, Galway.  
087 - 3960262

Email: [irishfranciscansofm@gmail.com](mailto:irishfranciscansofm@gmail.com)  
[www.franciscans.ie](http://www.franciscans.ie)

*What is God calling you to do with your life?*

# Little Company of Mary Sisters



## NO, ROBOTS CAN'T DO OUR WORK

Our ministry is on the fringes...

Holding the hand of an abused, hungry mother and children as we provide sustenance and safe shelter.

Wiping the tears of neglected parents.

Listening with compassion as we reach into the brokenness of the confused and lost youths.

Holding the hand of somebody who feels life is unbearable.

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Email: [unaboland@yahoo.ie](mailto:unaboland@yahoo.ie) | Phone: 01 2987040



Handing back the joy to God



## Finding Joy in God

The Silence - The Solitude  
BUT  
Needing to find a Rhythm

Desiring to turn the experience over to God's Glory  
In the Company of others



Handing on the joy to the next generation!



Jesus waits for your response



Cell, Hermitage & Garden

## Consider Life with the Carthusians

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1084 St Bruno & Companions



Lectio Divina



Prayer in Cell  
*The Little Office of Our Lady*



Work and Study in Cell



Daily Mass & Confession



Walking Together



Gregorian Chant

© Monastère de la Grande Chartreuse.

## Poor Clare Sisters, Cork

### Jesus is the Light of the World.

In her day, St. Clare shone with His light.

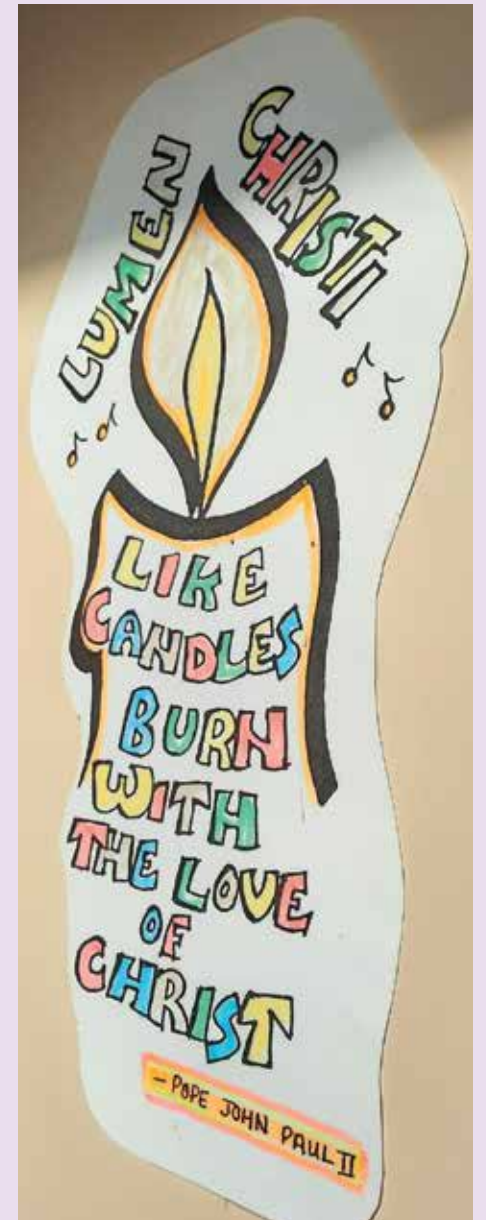
You too can be a candle burning brightly for God and His people.

•••

If you are interested in the Poor Clare Contemplative life, do check out our website: [www.poorclarescork.ie](http://www.poorclarescork.ie)

For more information about the Poor Clare vocation, our email address is : [vocationspoorclarescork@gmail.com](mailto:vocationspoorclarescork@gmail.com)

*God bless you!*



# Sycamore programme launched at Mardyke house



Pilgrim Brothers  
with the compassionate Christ  
in an evolving world

**S**YCAMORE is a faith formation programme for young adults (18 - 35), first developed by Catholic University Chaplaincies in London. You can look it up online and there is some excellent material and resources available.

The ten-week programme is held every Wednesday, at the Presentation Brothers, Mardyke House. This is a collaborative effort between the UCC Chaplaincy, the L.E.A.F PROJECT/PRESENTATION FAMILY and the Diocese of Cork & Ross. It is great to see so many young adults gathering every week for faith formation and prayer. Sessions run from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. followed by Night Prayer in the Community Chapel.

We would appreciate your prayers for this effort to nurture the faith of young adult Catholics, especially in the context of the many challenges of a secular society. And if you know of people

interested, invite them to make contact with us!

## Preslink donate to the presentation brothers schools and projects in west Africa

At a lovely reception in Mardyke House in January, students and staff from the PRESLINK organisation in PBC CORK presented a cheque for 18000 euros towards Presentation schools and projects in Ghana and Nigeria.

The cheque was received on behalf of the Presentation Brothers by Br. Emmanuel Aminenta, Province Leader, West Africa Province and Mr. Daithi O hAodha, Director of the Mission Development Office in Mount St. Joseph.

The money raised was a result of the many activities of Preslink during the first term up to Christmas.

Br. Emmanuel thanked the

students and mentors for their great work, friendship and support. Daithi O hAodha told the students that their work with PRESLINK was among the most important challenges they would ever undertake and would shape them for life. Mr. David Barry, Principal PBC, said PRESLINK was a vital part of school life and integral to the Catholic and Presentation ethos of the school.

Also in attendance at the event were Br. Ray Dwyer, Province Leader, AIP, Mr. Mick Sexton, C.E.O., PBST and members of the Mardyke Community and Staff.

Special praise was reserved for six staff who have mentored PRESLINK groups over many years: Aelin O'Donoghue; Enda O'Regan; Therese Kenneally; Sharon Gillane; Siobhan McGrath and Liam Lynch.

Thanks to PRESLINK and all their mentors for your wonderful generosity and support!

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Young Adults attending the SYCAMORE Programme at the Mardyke House Cork.



Br. Simon Fernandes with C.E.O. of Cork City Council, Ann Doherty.



Students of PRESLINK Presenting the Cheque to the Presentation Brothers.

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

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We have two Vocation Discernment Groups, one in Dublin and the other in Cork. You are welcome to join whichever group suits you!  
The groups meet every two months.

The **Cork Group** meets at Mardyke House, Cork. T12 W8RP (2 minutes from U.C.C.).

The **Dublin Group** meets at Presentation Brothers, Glashule, Dún Laoghaire, Co.Dublin A96 FH67.

The meeting times are arranged by agreement with the group, but usually take place on a **Saturday, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

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The Presentation Brothers are an international, Catholic Congregation of Lay Religious. Our life is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It involves prayer, living in community and service to people, both at home and abroad. Our special mission is to make the message of Jesus known among young people, especially those who suffer any kind of poverty and disadvantage.

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# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### 5-year-old beheaded, 33 killed by Nigerian Islamists

● A 5-year-old boy was reportedly beheaded when Islamists attacked a village in southern Kaduna State, Nigeria, leaving dozens of people dead.

In the April 15 attack, the killers descended on Runji village in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area (LGA) of southern Kaduna State, leaving 33 people dead, among them 14 children.

Condemning the attack in a Tuesday, April 18, report, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) called on the international community to put pressure on the Nigerian government to end the killing of innocent civilians.

CSW's press and public affairs team leader, Kiri Kankhwende, said he finds it regrettable that attacks continue unabated as the international community does little to help.

### Dozens killed seeking help amidst crisis in Yemen

● At least 85 people were killed in a crowd surge in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, April 19 as needy residents in the war-torn nation flocked to receive charity handouts from local merchants.

The tragedy only underlines the extent of dire humanitarian crisis in the war-torn country. Children were among the casualties.

In all, 322 people were injured, 50 of them seriously.

The Houthi rebels controlling the capital arrested three businessmen over the incident.

But some claim the ruling Houthis want to control aid distribution, with witnesses quoted by *The Guardian* as saying that panic was sparked while gunshots were fired close to the crowd.

### Pro-life group calls Trump abortion position 'indefensible'

● A US pro-life group pushed back on a statement from former President Donald Trump arguing that the abortion issue is solely a matter for the states post-Dobbs, calling the position "morally indefensible".

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, a group which previously backed Trump and many of his endorsed candidates, issued a statement April 20 criticising comments Trump's campaign made to *The Washington Post*.

In an article, a spokesperson for the Trump campaign said: "President Donald J. Trump believes that the Supreme Court, led by the three justices which he supported, got it right when they ruled this is an issue that should be decided at the state level."

### Dictator Ortega's attacks are 'a sign of desperation'

● Auxiliary Bishop Silvio Báez of Managua, Nicaragua, who is living in exile in the United States, responded to new verbal attacks by Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega saying they are signs of the weakness and desperation of the president of the Central American country.

"When he says these things, you have to interpret that it's for his people, so they see him as strong. And deep down, those of us who hear him must think that it's a sign of weakness, a sign of desperation. He knows that he is alone inside and outside the country," the Nicaraguan prelate stressed on April 16.

### Senate vote keeps abortion in veteran health benefits

● The US Senate on April 19 voted not to overturn a new rule adding abortion to the health benefits of veterans and their dependents, prompting objections from leaders of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), who called the vote "a gross failure".

USCCB's president, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, and Bishop Michael Burbidge, chair of the US bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities said it is "inhumane" to provide taxpayer-funded abortion as "a so-called solution to pregnancy"

## Church leaders plea for peace in Sudan as war erupts

World leaders – including those from the Church, humanitarian and diplomatic community – have appealed for a return to dialogue to save Sudan, as fighting triggered fears of a humanitarian catastrophe in the northeastern African country.

The leaders are pushing for a ceasefire, humanitarian access and respect for civilians and civilian structures, as the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continue fighting. They have been engaged in full combat since April 15.

### Saving lives

There are no signs the fighting could end soon, and humanitarian agencies say a key priority is to save lives. Analysts also warned the fighting could draw in neighbouring countries or even members of the international community.

On April 20, explosions, airstrikes and heavy gunfire were heard in Khartoum, the capital city, with residents reporting heavy smoke blanketing the city's skyline.

Another attempt at a ceasefire in the fighting between the two sides failed to hold on April 18, raising fears that basic necessities – including food, fuel, water and medicines – were running out. Countries trying to evacuate their citizens trapped in the conflict had lobbied for a US-brokered, 24-hour ceasefire, but the truce collapsed within minutes of its proposed launch at 6pm local time.



Smoke rises from burning aircraft inside Khartoum Airport during clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army in Khartoum, Sudan, April 17, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Reuters

of its proposed launch at 6pm local time.

"We are gravely concerned about the developments in Sudan and we are gathering information," Fr Andrew Ulemu Kaufa, a Malawian Montfort missionary priest who is the coordinator of social communication at the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), told *OSV News*.

### Support

"We are trying to see what kind of help AMECEA can give the churches and civilians who need humanitarian support."

Catholic bishops in Sudan and South Sudan said in an April 17 statement they are "saddened" by the violence, and want dialogue to preserve life and the unity of the country. Churches across the world also have prayed for Sudan or organised online prayer through social media.

In Kenya, Catholic bishops stressed the hardened positions of the two sides fighting and the urgent need for dialogue in Sudan was a lesson for the East African nation.

"Learning from what is happening in the neighbouring countries, especially the terrible and destructive ongoing war in Sudan, we

must raise the alarm to what happens when antagonists harden their hearts and allow pride and stubbornness to close any avenue for peace," Archbishop Martin Kivuva Musonde of Mombasa told journalists at a news conference in Nairobi April 20.

Hundreds of people have died and thousands more injured in the violence, the World Health Organisation's director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Twitter April 20. "I condemn all loss of life, especially attacks on civilians and health care," said Mr Ghebreyesus.

## Historic trip of Hong Kong bishop to Beijing first in 30 years

Bishop Stephen Chow of Hong Kong arrived on April 17 in Beijing, the capital of China, on a historic trip – the first of its kind in almost 30 years – and amid some tensions between the Asian giant and the Vatican.

Bishop Chow was appointed bishop of Hong Kong by Pope Francis in May 2021 and received episcopal consecration in December of that year.

The 63-year-old Jesuit prelate, who was invited by the local diocese and who will be in Beijing for five days, has

previously pointed out the importance of the Church in Hong Kong being a bridge between China and the island.

With the passage of the new security law in 2020, the Chinese government gained more power to suppress pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, which the regime viewed as a direct threat to its power.

According to the *Associated Press*, the bishop of Hong Kong met the bishop of Beijing, Joseph Li Shan. He visited the National Seminary of the Church in China

and offered a Mass at the Xuanwumen Church.

The bishop visited the tomb of the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), one of the first members of the Society of Jesus to live in China.

Bishop Chow's trip comes two weeks after Bishop Joseph Shen Bin of Haimen was appointed as the new bishop of Shanghai by the Chinese Bishops' Council, a communist-controlled episcopal conference. The appointment has not been approved by the Vatican.

## Church must be united but not uniform, say synod organisers

Catholics gathered at the continental level say the Church must be united, not uniform, and embrace its many forms of expression throughout the world, said members of the synod preparatory commission after a weeklong meeting at the Vatican.

"I think one of the most important things we have experienced during these ecclesial, continental assemblies, is that there is in fact more than one way of being the Church," said Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, a member of the commission

and president of the Australasian bishops' conference.

"We're beginning to experience a profound unity, which is not grounded in uniformity," he said at a news conference at the Vatican April 20.

"There are universal prin-

ciples that are a kind of positive expression of uniformity, but they all have to be incarnated in context of the local reality."

The commission gathered in Rome to reflect on findings from the continental stage of the process.





Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

## Birthday bash for supercentenarian...



Sr Francis Dominici Piscatella, a member of the Sisters of St Dominic of Amityville, New York, looks at a birthday cake while celebrating her 110th birthday at the Dominicans' motherhouse in Amityville April 20. The supercentenarian is the oldest nun in the United States and is believed to be the second oldest religious in the world. Also pictured is Sr Piscatella's primary caregiver, Dominican Sr Francis Daniel Kammer, 83. Photo: OSV News.

## People in Church 'create obstacles' to abuse reform, expert says

The Pope's safeguarding commission, preparing to move into a fresco-ceilinged palace in Rome's historic centre, must not be merely engaged in "PR", but become a refuge for those abused by clergy and silenced by the Church, said leading safeguarding expert Jesuit Fr Hans Zollner.

Speaking to journalists April 17 about his decision to leave the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Fr Zollner expressed his hope that the commission's new home will push the commission to take seriously the principles of

"transparency, compliance and responsibility", the lack of which he cited as the reason for his departure.

The new centre must be "a central focus point of encounters with victims from around the globe", he said. "This is what people are looking for."

After nearly 10 years of serving on the Pope's advisory body, Fr Zollner said that "it is a continuous impression on the part of victims that they are not listened to", and without naming individuals, he said there are people in the Church, who "for personal

or emotional reasons, create obstacles" in the fight against abuse.

Fr Zollner said there were "structural and practical issues" with the commission in a statement released March 29, the date his resignation became public.

Currently about 20 members serve on the commission, whose task, according to Pope Francis when he established it, is to advise him on "the most opportune initiatives for protecting minors and vulnerable adults" and "to promote local responsibility in the particular churches".

Fr Zollner is not the first member of the papal commission to leave. In 2017, two prominent members who were also abuse survivors also left the commission: Marie Collins resigned citing "resistance", "reluctance" and a "lack of cooperation" from the then-doctrinal congregation; and Peter Saunders, who said he was frustrated with the pace of change and "disappointed" the commission was not doing what he thought it was intended to achieve, was asked to take a leave of absence.

## Christians arrested in Libya on charge of apostasy from Islam

Libya's Internal Security Agency launched a campaign in the city of Tripoli to arrest Libyan citizens and foreigners accused of apostasy from Islam and preaching Christianity.

The security agency did not specify the number of those arrested and refrained from publishing their names, stating only their initials.

The agency released a video of six Libyans – including a girl – as well as a Pakistani and two Americans with their faces blocked out in which they

confess to the charges.

The two Americans worked at the Gateway International School in the Tripoli suburb of Zawiyat al-Dahmani that specialises in teaching English.

The government agency said that the two Americans and the wife of one of them belonged to the Assemblies of God Christian missionary organisation. It was not revealed whether the wife was arrested or not.

The Americans were accused of secretly turning the school into a centre

for preaching the Christian religion.

The Internal Security Agency noted that the organisation to which the Americans belong plays an important role in "seducing Libyans in various ways" to deviate from the Islamic religion.

Open Doors reported that the current number of Christians in Libya is 35,400 (0.5% of the population).

Libya ranks fifth on the organisation's list of countries where Christians face the greatest persecution.



## Vatican sends relic of true cross to Britain's King Charles

● As Britain's King Charles III walks into Westminster Abbey for his coronation, he will walk behind a processional cross containing a relic of Christ's cross given to the king by Pope Francis.

"The fragments of the relic of the true cross were donated by the Holy See in early April, through the apostolic nunciature, to His Majesty King Charles III, supreme governor of the Church of England, as an ecumenical gesture on the occasion of the centenary of the Anglican Church in Wales," Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office said, April 20.

A Vatican official said the two fragments in the coronation cross came from a relic preserved in the Lipsanoteca Room of the Vatican Museums.

The fragments now are under glass in the centre of the coronation cross, which is made of recycled silver bullion.

Anglican Archbishop Andrew John of Wales blessed the cross during a service, April 19.

The Anglican Church in Wales, which refers to the cross as the Cross of Wales, said it is inscribed on the back with words, in Welsh, from the last sermon of St David, a sixth-century bishop and patron saint of Wales: "Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things."

## Pope calls for end to culture of waste and indifference

● The world needs new economic models that respect human dignity and protect creation, Pope Francis told an interfaith delegation from England.

Responding to the needs of people and the environment "also requires a determination to overcome the 'throwaway' culture of waste generated by present-day consumerism and by a globalised indifference that inhibits efforts to address these human and social problems in the light of the common good," he said, on April 20.

"We need, in a word, to acknowledge that the environmental and social crisis of our time are not two separate crises but one," which, therefore, requires "the creation

of new and farsighted economic models," he said.

The Pope's remarks came during an audience at the Vatican with a delegation of religious and civic leaders from Manchester.

He expressed his appreciation for the delegation's efforts "as religious and political leaders to raise awareness of the urgent need to protect the environment and to work concretely to address the effects of climate change".

"You play an important role in contributing to a much-needed 'ecological conversion' grounded in the values of respect for nature, sobriety, human solidarity and concern for the future of our societies," he said.

## Papal academy launches centre to evaluate Marian apparitions

● The Pontifical International Marian Academy has created a commission to study and monitor cases of alleged Marian apparitions and other mystical phenomena.

The new "observatory" or monitoring body was officially inaugurated at the academy in Rome, April 15, and will study cases that have not yet received an official Church pronouncement regarding their authenticity.

Its purpose is "to provide concrete support to the study, authentication and correct disclosure of such events, always in harmony with Church teaching, relevant authorities and applicable norms of the Holy See," Franciscan Fr Stefano Cecchin, president of the Marian academy, said, April 13. It will specialise in cases such as alleged Marian apparitions, "weeping" statues of Mary, private revelations and stigmata.

# Letter from Brazil



**Eduardo Campos Lima**

**M**embers of indigenous groups were the largest number of people murdered in land disputes in Brazil in 2022.

According to the Bishops' Conference's Land Pastoral Commission (CPT), which releases a report on rural conflicts every year, 47 people were killed last year as a result of such disputes – and 18 of them were indigenous persons.

The study shows that 181,304 families were affected by land disputes in Brazil last year. The number of conflicts reached 1,572 in 2022, 16 percent higher than in 2021. More than a quarter of them involved indigenous peoples.

All kinds of violence associated with land disputes grew last year. About 30,000 families – one sixth of the total number of families suffering from such conflicts – faced armed thugs hired by large landowners or other agents claiming ownership of land. The number of attempted killings was 123, and 206 death threats were reported.

“We also noticed an increasing number of attacks involving pesticides, something that we call ‘chemical warfare’. That is disturbing, because it has several consequences for the people and for the environment,” said Isolete Wichinieski, a national coordinator for CPT.

According to the report, 193 people have been directly attacked with pesticides, an increase of 172% in comparison with the number of cases reported last year, which was 71. Almost 7,000 families suffered from the pesticides, 86% more than 2021.

“That is a problem that contributes to drive away those families from the countryside. Pesticides can have a serious impact on crops, rivers, and on the environment as a whole,” Ms Wichinieski said, adding that the pesticide attacks may even make food prices higher in different regions of the nation.

## Amazon

CPT's report also demonstrated that the Amazon continues to be the centre of most of the land disputes in Brazil. In 2022, more than half of such disturbances happened in the region. Most killings also took place in the Amazon, 34 of them.

“The attack on the Amazon became visible for many in Brazil with the Yanomami crisis,” she said.

In January, hundreds of cases of malaria and starvation among the Yanomami came to public attention after pictures of skinny senior citizens and children were released by an indigenous organisation in the Amazon.

## Land disputes grew in Brazil in 2022, and most victims are indigenous



Young people from the Mura tribe are pictured in a file photo at a deforested area in unmarked indigenous lands inside the Amazon rainforest near Humaita, Brazil.

Photo: CNS/Reuters.

The federal government took the patients in the most serious condition to hospitals in large cities and promised to remove 20,000 illegal miners from of the Yanomami territory.

Analysts blame illegal mining for the humanitarian crisis in the Yanomami territory. The large pits that result from the mining operations retain storm waters and become hatcheries for mosquitoes carrying malaria. Heavy metals used to obtain gold pollute the soil and the nearby rivers, killing fish and impacting the flora. Attacks by armed miners against Yanomami members were also reported.

Like the Yanomami, several other indigenous groups, especially in the Amazon, have been suffering with the invasion of their lands.

That is the case of the indigenous groups that live in the Javari river valley, where poachers and fishermen have been illegally operating. In May of 2022, the indigenous rights advocate Bruno Pereira and the British journalist Dom Phillips were murdered in the region. Their case has not been fully solved and the local residents are still dealing with land invaders.

“The Federal Police sent a mobile

**“In January, hundreds of cases of malaria and starvation among the Yanomami came to public attention after pictures of skinny senior citizens and children were released by an Indigenous organisation in the Amazon”**

base to the Javari valley. But we need a larger governmental structure there, including agents of environmental agencies,” lawyer Beto Marubo, a leader of the Marubo people, told *Crux*.

## Rural violence

CPT annual reports have consistently shown that rural violence increased in Brazil during former President Jair Bolsonaro's tenure. Not only did he loosen gun control and increased the number of weapons in circulation in Brazil, but he also incentivised land invaders in the Amazon and criticised indigenous groups and other traditional peoples for “having too much land”.

Since President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's electoral victory last year, Catholic activists like Isolete

Wichinieski have been waiting for concrete change in the land and indigenous policies in Brazil. While some progress has been made, more significant changes are still missing, she said.

“We know the current administration is formed by different political parties and that this limits its actions. The government still has not presented a land reform plan,” she said.

Lula created a ministry for the indigenous peoples, but still has not granted lands for 14 peoples who have been waiting for a long time.

“That is why we will keep mobilising landless peasants, small farmers, and traditional peoples for new land policies. The social pressure is very important now,” Ms Wichinieski said.

Bishop José Ionilton de Oliveira of the Prelature of Itacoatiara, who heads the CPT, said that it is promoting a campaign against rural violence along with 72 non-governmental organisations.

## Inaction

“We consider that the previous administration failed to take action on several occasions in order to reduce violence. We want to raise awareness in society about this problem, which has been steadily growing since 2016,” he told *Crux*.

De Oliveira said that many in the Church in Brazil are still distant from the debates concerning the protection of the “common home” and of its peoples – and that reality requires a continuous effort from bishops and priests to discuss such issues with churchgoers.

“That is why we release that report every year. We want that the people know what is happening in rural Brazil. It is also a way of denouncing that violence to the authorities. We will keep demanding that the government takes the necessary measures,” he said.

📌 Eduardo Campos Lima is a contributor to *Crux*.

# Iraq Christians struggle on 20 years after US-led invasion

Dale Gavlak

Some 20 years after the US-led invasion of Iraq started and six years after Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State, whose attacks started in 2014, the country's religious minorities are still trying to surmount challenges.

According to the UN International Office for Migration (IOM), more than 200,000 Yazidis who survived the Islamic State's brutality are still displaced, living in and outside camps across Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. The Islamic State abducted thousands of women and girls as sex slaves and massacred thousands of men.

## Apprehensive

Christians in the Kurdistan region say that while they appreciate its relative stability and security, they feel apprehensive about the future because of the recent history of violence in Iraq that forced them to pull up roots.

"My family once lived in the capital, Baghdad, but with the church bombings and sectarian attacks on Christians and other minorities after the 2003 war, we had to move

up north to Dohuk," an Iraqi Armenian man named Arsen told *OSV News*.

This Kurdish region also hosts Assyrians and other Christians, some of whom escaped IS, which attacked Mosul and the Nineveh Plains towns. In addition, camps for internally displaced Yazidis, who were targeted by IS militants for death, sexual slavery and forced labour, dot the area.

It is said that such camps are to be closed by the year's end, but many wonder where this will leave the Yazidis, who feel that their own government betrayed them by failing to protect them from Islamic State atrocities.

**“The government of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani allocated \$38.5 million (€35 million) to rebuild Sinjar and villages in the Nineveh Plains”**

"How can camps be closed when thousands of families have been living there for a long time? It's like taking



Members of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces take their positions during clashes with the militant Islamic State in the city of Ramadi June 19, 2014. Many of those who survived the Islamic State's brutality are still displaced, living in and outside camps across Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. Photo: *OSV News/Reuters*.

them to the streets. There needs to be a viable alternative," Fr Emanuel Youkhana, a priest of the Assyrian Church of the East, told *OSV News*.

The Yazidis with whom *OSV News* spoke added that they cannot return to Sinjar, their ancestral land where many of them lived at the time of the IS attacks because their homes and businesses were destroyed.

## Possibilities

"There is no security, or livelihood possibilities there. Instead, there are a variety of military forces in Sinjar: whether it's the Kurdish PYD (Democratic Union Party), Yazidi unit fighters, the Iran-backed Shiite Hashd al-Shaabi militia, Iraqi army. There are also Turkish airstrikes and an open border to Syria. I share their fear with them for Sinjar," Fr Youkhana said.

In March, the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani allocated \$38.5 million (€35 million) to rebuild Sinjar and villages in the Nineveh Plains.

Fr Youkhana runs the Christian Aid Program Northern Iraq (CAPNI) for displaced Iraqis around the city of Dohuk. This Catholic organisation also rebuilds homes and helps to restore livelihoods in several towns in the Nineveh Plains following its destruction.

"We are motivated by our Christian values because we are a Christian faith-based organisation and the basis of our work is love. In the case of Iraq, to share love means that you have to take care of people in need. And so, we address the needs of these vulnerable communities," he said.

**“What happened from the Islamic State invasion cannot be forgotten. It should be addressed openly to learn from it, to avoid it ever happening”**

CAPNI aids the displaced in more than 25 remote villages in the Duhok area by providing basic health checks and treating chronic diseases. It is also helping to repair damaged homes.

Over the past five years, CAPNI also has rehabilitated more than 1,450 houses, 32 schools, nine churches, and 200 shops in the Nineveh Plains towns. Now, it is focused in the next three years on encouraging sustainable development by providing livelihood opportunities to unemployed youth and vocational training for others.

"We are trying to help people have a stable and sustainable income," Fr Youkhana said. The projects require funding of \$3.3 million (€3 million) annually, but one challenge is funds as the war in Ukraine persists.

Microloans are available for those with business skills and a business plan either in agriculture, or in towns where there is a need for mobile phone maintenance, air-conditioning installation, car mechanics, to name a few enterprises. Grants also are available to female-headed households to start businesses often at home.

Fr Youkhana pointed to a project where Yazidis are working in eight greenhouses provided by CAPNI where a variety of vegetables can be produced even out of season, including, for the first time, broccoli. "They are able to receive a better income as a result of the project," he said.

## Peace-building

CAPNI also is engaged in peace-building and advocacy work for minorities in Iraq. "What happened from the Islamic State invasion cannot be forgotten. It should be addressed openly to learn from it, to avoid it ever happening," Fr Youkhana said of the Dutch gov-

ernment funded project aiding those on the Nineveh Plains.

**“Once Iraq loses its minorities, the majority is no more the majority”**

Iraqi Chaldean Catholic Church leaders, such as Cardinal Louis Sako, patriarch of Chaldean Catholics, and Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil have repeatedly urged authorities to protect and respect all of the Iraqi citizens.

On the recent Iraqi National Day for Tolerance March 6, adopted by the government to commemorate the historic visit of Pope Francis in 2021 to the country, Fr Youkhana made high-level presentations, including to the Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, where he warned of the worrying trend of Iraq's religious and ethnic minorities leaving the country.

"Once Iraq loses its minorities, the majority is no more the majority," Fr Youkhana said. "We will continue to advocate for as long as it takes."

Revising Iraq's schools curricula to remove prejudice and encourage respect for all of Iraq's rich ethnic and religious minorities, too, is part of CAPNI's work.

*Dale Gavlak writes for OSV News from Amman, Jordan.*



A Tomahawk missile aimed at military targets in Iraq is fired March 20, 2003, from the USS Bunker Hill missile cruiser in the Persian Gulf. Photo: *OSV News/US Navy via Reuters*

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Challenging accusations of evil against the Church

**Dear Editor,** I agree with David Quinn [*The Irish Catholic* – April 13, 2023] who stated: “Few in leadership positions in the Church seem to be attempting a response to this extremely serious charge, and that might lead ordinary Catholics to believe the charge is true.” As he pointed out, people in prominent positions are calling for the Catholic Church to be suppressed and the priesthood abolished as evil institutions, and these accusations are going unchallenged by the Church leadership.

The Catholic Church in Ireland, or anywhere else, is not an abomination. Church personnel have been guilty of serious criminal wrongdoing, but these offend-

ers are a small minority, just as they are in the minority in other institutions such as the police, army, teaching bodies, sports bodies, etc.

The Church has brought great good to our people and country, and the world at large. In and throughout the world the Catholic Church has brought education and health facilities to people who could not otherwise afford them. Missionary priests have stood against violent fascist regimes throughout the world, just as they did for generations in Ireland. People like Finlay, Banville, Barry, and others who like to unfairly condemn the Church

seem to have forgotten “the bowl they were baked in” as we say here in the North.

David is right in calling on Church leaders to address these issues. Ordinary Catholics also need to make their voices heard. We owe it to generations of good priests, nuns, and laity who made great sacrifices living as outstanding examples of God’s loving care for the poor and oppressed of Ireland and the world.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Brendan Kennedy,**  
Belfast, Co. Antrim

### Defender of the Faith

**Dear Editor,** In 1993 King Charles III declared that when he became king he would like to be called ‘Defender of Faiths’ rather than ‘Defender of the Faith’. This title was conferred on King Henry VIII in 1521 by Pope Leo X for his defence of the Catholic Mass and the sacraments. It was enshrined in law by parliament in 1541 on the instructions of the king. No monarch since Henry, with the exception of Mary I, exercised that title in the defence of the Catholic Faith.

King Charles should renounce the title and ask parliament for a new one to accommodate his wishes in that regard. Although King Henry broke the connection between England and Rome in 1533 he still remained a Catholic and defended the sacraments and the Mass until his last breath. The title of ‘Defender of the Faith’ is not a political title but a Christian title.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Herbert F. Eyre**  
North Strand, Dublin 3



## The ongoing malaise of clericalism

**Dear Editor,** David Quinn insists [*The Irish Catholic* – April 13, 2023] that “ordinary Mass-goers certainly did not bring all this opprobrium down on their heads. They are in no way responsible for the abuses carried out by a minority of priests and religious, or the cover-up of those abuses”.

I disagree.

Pope Francis speaks about the sin of clericalism as the root cause of abuse which is actually a two-edged sword. It can be defined as a cleric who

“Lords it over his flock, being a dictator over those whom he has been put in charge”, and a flock with members who worship the cleric, facilitating the abuse, and refusing to see and hear the meek protest of suffering of the child who is being abused.

One witnesses this ongoing malaise with numerous incidences relayed online and elsewhere of clerics continuing to wound the mystical body of Christ by their infidelity to the word

of God in the transmission of the sacraments. Instead of protests against this abuse, the flock remains sitting in the pew, deaf to the word of God, continuing to stuff the collection baskets with money, omitting to write letters of protest to the bishop responsible for overseeing the liturgy in his diocese and thus generally facilitates a climate, a culture, of ongoing abuse by being passive participants rather than active, informed and engaged members.

The results? Faith is diminished. The mystical body is depleted of members. Abuse continues. Repentance and conversion are avoided.

The solution? Return the crucifix to the altar. A visible reminder that it is God who is worshiped and thanked not man/woman who are in fact mere creatures, worthless servants, unable to do anything without him.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Jane Campbell**  
Ballina, Mayo

## The question of inbreeding among the Hapsburgs

**Dear Editor,** With regard to your article [*The Irish Catholic* – April 13, 2023] referencing Charles II of Spain (1661-1700) and the incidence of mandibular prognathism among the Hapsburgs, allegedly due to consanguineous intermarriage, it should be noted that the referenced ‘finding’ is advanced in a study published by Prof. Roman Vilas Peteiro of the University of Santiago de Compostela in *Annals of Human Biology* (Vol. 46, [2019], 7-8, pp. 553-561) in 2019.

The study was based on a visual analysis of facial deformity in only 15 members of the House of Austria from the Emperor Maximilian I to Charles II, all of whom, with the exceptions of the Emperor Maximilian I, Philip I and Charles V, belonged

to the Spanish branch of the Hapsburgs. The study, although conducted by ten maxillofacial surgeons, was based on observation of 66 exemplary portraits. There was no analysis of genetic material.

In addition, the study being confined to members of the Spanish branch of the House of Austria, mostly subsequent to the division of the realms of the Emperor Charles V in 1556, up to and including Charles II (1661-1700), the last of the House of Austria to rule Spain, does not explain earlier recorded incidents of the condition, e.g. in the Emperor Frederick III (1415-1493), nor in contemporaneous instances in the Austrian branch, e.g. Maximilian II (1527-1576) where issues of consanguineous intermarriage did not arise.

Understandably, the findings of the survey have not received universal acceptance not least of which the attribution of Charles II’s mandibular prognathism specifically to successive consanguineous intermarriage between 1556 and his birth in 1661.

While it is accepted that Charles II suffered from severe genetic deficiencies that might be attributed to consanguineous intermarriage, the question of whether or not his inherited mandibular prognathism arose exclusively from consanguineous intermarriage has not been satisfactorily answered by this study.

*Yours etc.,*  
**James O’Brien**  
Ballyhea, Co. Cork

## facebook community

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

### ‘Significant’ rise in parental concern over inappropriate education materials

Not just the reading list but the actual content of these programmes can be highly inappropriate. – **Neil Carmody**

The red herring nowadays is to overfocus on the literature and then when it gets removed everyone is cheering thinking that something was achieved. However the real agenda keeps moving forward as it has been doing in our education system for decades. But nobody is fighting that. So no real change or victory. The other side always knew there would be objections so they fling something really bad into the mix to create a sideshow. – **Deirdre Nic Eanruig**

Parents must stand together and protect their children. – **Mary Duggan Murphy**

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

## Ironic message from the US President Joe Biden

**Dear Editor,** How ironic (or hypocritical?) for the 46th President of the United States of America to wax lyrical about the Belfast-born actor James Martin – who happens to have been a Down syndrome

baby – while at the same time encouraging mothers of such babies to deprive them of life while still in the womb.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Fr Oliver Skelly**  
Coole, Co. Westmeath

## Are humanists and atheists becoming pagan?

**Dear Editor,** Reading through the media recently there has been news about atheists wanting to become chaplains in the army and others performing humanist marriages and birth naming ceremonies. It seems that they can’t do without the spiritual rituals and structures that organised religions have. So, are they turning into pagans rather than

materialists? For thousands of years all over the world very few peoples lived atheistic lives and if they did, it didn’t last. Most people find it healthier to have some sort of spiritual context to their lives and I would venture that it’s the same for atheists.

*Yours etc.,*  
**Brid Fitzpatrick,**  
Terenure, Dublin 6W

## 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, April 27, 2023

## Questions of Faith

What is the Catholic stance on the environment?

Page 32



# The role of mystery in life and faith

**E**xistence itself is a mystery, so it should come as no surprise that our lives are full of mystery too. By the grace of God, we Catholics know a great many things about the way the world really works, but that does very little to diminish the remarkable mystery staring us in the face each and every moment of our lives. If anything, it ought to enhance it.

The age-old question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” did a lot to prompt the beginnings of my ‘re-version’ to Catholicism. Despite the insistence of prominent atheists like Richard Dawkins that it’s a senseless question, it continued to haunt me anyway. After all, nothing about the world absolutely needed to be this way, and



**As humanity grows in knowledge, it’s possible that we will forget the humbling and essential role of mystery in life, writes Jason Osborne**

we can be sure of that because it wasn’t always this way and won’t always be this way.

The Big Bang implies that nothing in the Universe ‘was’ at one point, and that none of the things in it ‘were’ either. Just as they didn’t exist at one point, they’ll all surely pass out of existence too. None of them are truly necessary beings. Once this is understood, existence itself can no longer be taken for granted,

and instead must be seen through the lens of a wonderful mystery.

I bring up this example for no other reason than to show that the entire world is bookended by mystery, and is permeated by mystery every moment of its existence. None of this is necessary, and yet it exists regardless. The time we’re travelling through, too, the Easter season, is what compelled my choice

of this topic in the first place, as we’re currently celebrating the greatest of mysteries – the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

For some reason, of late, mystery has come to be viewed problematically both in and out of faith circles. Many of those who don’t subscribe to religion believe that science or the advance of human knowledge will push back all corners of mystery in the world eventually, as we’ll map

the depths of the ocean and the span of the stars, before coming to understand everything in them. Our gaze will stretch both forward and backward through time and we’ll both understand history and be able to predict the future. It’ll take a long time, sure, but it will happen, they say. According to this view, mystery is merely that which we don’t know yet.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those within the Church who hear the word “mystery” and assume it’s just a code-word for “the hierarchy made it up so as to keep the laity in darkness, subjugated to their will” or something similar. The bottom line with this approach is

» Continued on Page 30



for realities that probably have mundane explanations, that would dishearten and scandalise the laity if they knew.

**“Words spoil anything that surpasses them. Now, mystery is by definition that which is above our human reason”**

In the meantime, the rest of us often just ignore the word ‘mystery’ and accept it without much thought as a part of life. What all of these approaches misunderstand, is that mystery is an inextricable part of the human experience, and in certain ways it cannot be understood, explained away or just ignored. Rather, the mystery has to be entered into and lived, for God himself is at bottom, a mystery to us.

The German mystic and theologian, Meister Eckhart, said in his Sermons that, “We should learn not to give any name to God, lest we imagine that in so doing we have praised and exalted him as we should, for God is ‘above names’ and ineffable”.

Along the same lines, Robert Cardinal Sarah in his book, *The Power of Silence*, writes that:

“Never before has the world spoken so much about God, about theology, about prayer, and even about mysticism. But our human language lowers to a paltry level everything that it tries to say about God. Words spoil anything that surpasses them. Now, mystery is by definition that which is above our human reason.”

### Mystery

He goes on to quote pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who said that confronted with mystery, we are led to the “dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence...surcharging our blinded intellects with the...invisible fairness of glories which exceed all beauty”. What is the main thrust of these sayings? That God and his ways are, at bottom, infinitely mysterious to us, beyond

what he reveals to us. As Isaiah 55:9 says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”.

**“In Jesus, we can look God in the face. Despite this, he remains a mystery for Christians. Human and yet divine, come among us”**

In religious terminology, ‘mystery’ has a special meaning. Rather than simply denoting something puzzling or difficult to understand, Pope Paul VI defined mystery as “a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God”. Because God is totally other, we cannot

know him fully. Our experience of God is always mediated. That is to say, that we are touched by God through events and the created things that are visible to us. God “alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see,” 1 Timothy 6:16 says.

### Difference

There is one main difference – the person of Jesus Christ. “He who has seen me has seen the Father,” Christ tells us in the Gospel according to John. In Jesus, we can look God in the face. Despite this, he remains a mystery for Christians. Human and yet divine, come among us. He died and rose again, and his resurrected life is available to us even now, through his Holy Spirit and the sacraments. The

Church and the sacraments given it by Christ fulfil the definition of mystery offered to us by Pope Paul VI, as they are tangible realities full of the hidden presence and activity of God.

**“That mystery is God, revealed sacramentally through creation, fully through Jesus Christ, through his Church and through the unfolding of history”**

These tangible realities are not simply areas about which we don’t know enough, still less the concoctions of a clergy keen to leave us laity in the dark. Rather, they reveal the central mystery of existence, and invite us to live it rather than remaining on the fringes, merely thinking about it. That mystery is God, revealed sacramentally through creation, fully through Jesus Christ, through his Church and through the unfolding of history.

Allowing yourself to be drawn into this grand mystery is humbling, and far from obscuring our sight, reveals to us what life is all about.

**“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”**

# The supernatural potential of a horror film

## Faith in film



### Ruadhán Jones

Given the content of most horror films, it's not always a genre easily squared with the Catholic tradition. However, there is one horror film on the Vatican's list of 45 significant films – *Nosferatu* (1922). The film is director FW Murnau's unauthorised adaptation of *Dracula* and an important trend-setter in the realm of horror cinema.

With the location moved to Germany and the vampire-hunter character of Van Helsing removed, the film begins with an estate agent called Hutter, married to the beautiful Ellen, sent to Transylvania to sell a house to the reclusive Count Orlock. But Orlock turns out to be the infamous vampire *Nosferatu* and when he sees a picture of Ellen, he is consumed by a desire to make her one of his own kind.

Having billed it as a horror movie, let me say now – it's not the movie you expect. Horror cinema as we know it simply didn't exist at this point, although there were plenty of ghostly tales. Usually, they weren't attempting to scare, they were having fun with the new art form of film. So haunted houses led to 'prat falls' in the works of Buster Keaton for instance. There was comedic, stagey acting and playful animation.

### Direction

In Germany, they went in a different direction. Instead, they produced films like *Der Golem* (1920), like *The Cabinet of Dr Cali-*



A still from silent horror film, *Nosferatu*.

*gari* (1920) and of course *Nosferatu*. These films were interested in the supernatural and again the possibilities of the new art form to explore the supernatural.

**“Director Murnau uses stop-motion animation, mixes the projection speeds and distorts the film stock to convey the ghostly world of Count Orlock”**

This tied in with the development of German Expressionism, a genre that every budding film student ends up covering at some point. This genre experimented with the use of shadows and eerie lighting, with odd camera angles and distorted sets to create something uncanny and to upset audience expectations.

*Nosferatu* does all of this and

tries to take it a step further. Director Murnau uses stop-motion animation, mixes the projection speeds and distorts the film stock to convey the ghostly world of Count Orlock, a place within our world but twisted and – this is a word you're going to have to get used to – uncanny.

So it's not a scary monster movie, but it is a good film and an unnerving one at times, particularly when we have the close ups of a carnivorous plant consuming a fly or a spider trapping one. It's such a typically German theme – we've rejected nature and the otherworldly, and now they're about to bite back.

### Memorable

Murnau does create a memorable and controversial monster. Memorable because he turns *Dracula* into *Nosferatu*, a stiff, angular creature, pale and hairless with a long-hooked nose and unnaturally spindly fingers. The

controversy comes from the relationship between the stereotypical depiction of Jews and *Nosferatu*'s physical appearance. Thankfully we're distant from such latent antisemitism and I wouldn't have noticed it without reading reviews afterwards.

**“More than anything *Nosferatu* makes you wonder, and that's his mastery – he makes you question what you previously held to be true”**

But Murnau works very hard to show the kind of mastery that *Nosferatu* works on men and women. He gives us these wonderful, seemingly unrelated cross cuts between images of Hutter's wife, sitting dolefully by the sea, and *Nosferatu* calling for her

across the water. Or he shows Mrs Hutter becoming increasingly and exaggeratedly agitated as *Nosferatu*'s ship beats its way swiftly across the sea.

He's an iconic monster and so in that sense he's like our own. But he's not there to give you jump scares. Murnau does set up some tropes that would later be used to frighten, like the monster fading eerily into a shot or appearing as a shadowy image. But more than anything *Nosferatu* makes you wonder, and that's his mastery – he makes you question what you previously held to be true.

On the whole, it's a film that holds up to a modern viewing. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the Vatican chose it for their list. The acting and somewhat stertorous pacing are obstacles, but not insurmountable ones. You've got to be prepared for something closer to pantomime than we're used to.

The leaps forward made in acting and pacing that cinema made were quite something – if you look at *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927) made by Murnau only a few years later, you can see film beginning to separate itself from stage as something with its own distinct acting style.

So there is a level on which this is an historical document and if you're into films, you can enjoy it as that. But there are some moments that will give a more visceral thrill. *Nosferatu* disappearing into the shadows; his ghastly face spied through a window; the race between *Nosferatu* and Hutter for Hutter's wife. Those are exciting.

Equally, the film showcases the supernatural or metaphysical potential of the new art form. For such a materialistic creation it can be used to bring the immaterial world to life.

Don't go in expecting to be scared, to be made to leap from your seat. I think this film is more likely to bore you if you expect that. But if you go in wanting to be engaged, perhaps more intellectually than viscerally, you will enjoy it.

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Catherine of Siena

## St Catherine of Siena: A saintly love that set Europe aflame

**“B**e who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire,” our saint of the week is regularly quoted as saying. St Catherine of Siena certainly lived according to that maxim, so much so that not only is she a saint, she's recognised as an esteemed 'Doctor of the Church' and has a devoted following right through to today.

Born Caterina de Giacomo Di Benincasa in 1347 in Siena, Tuscany – Italy – Catherine was the 24th of an astonishing 25 children, most of whom didn't survive their childhood. As with many saints, much of what is known about Catherine's childhood only comes down to us through pious legend, but it is known that from an early age she began to understand that the religious life might be for her.

She was greatly influenced by the nearby Dominicans, and with her Dominican brother-in-law becoming her first confessor and spiritual director, she was all but confirmed to join the order, which is just what she did. Catherine had already garnered a reputation

for intense spirituality, as a result of personal ascetic practices and her desire for religious life.

This reputation was only solidified by her entry into the Dominicans. Initially, that entailed for her a life of solitude, silence and study, seasoned with the core elements of the spiritual life such as the sacraments and prayer. However, after a time and while still in her 20s, she experienced a “spiritual espousal” to Christ, which one way or another moved her beyond her local community, to care for the sick and the poor in homes, hospitals and elsewhere.

Her activity gained her disciples, and this expanded until Catherine began to travel, promoting Church reform as she did so. A tumultuous time in both the Church and the world, Catherine felt compelled to intervene, and so she took up the habit of letter writing to those she felt needed to be guided to the truth.

She didn't limit her political action to letters, though; when the city of Florence was placed under an interdict by Pope Gregory XI in 1376,

Catherine resolved to take public action for peace within the Church and within Italy, and closely following this, she turned her attention to the crusade, the reform of the clergy and the return of the papacy to Rome.

She went as an unofficial mediator to Avignon (the residence of the popes from 1309 to 1377) with her confessor and biographer Raymond of Capua, but while her mission initially appeared failed as she was all but ignored by the pope, Pope Gregory XI listened to her voice and her insistence played a role in seeing the pope move back to Rome.

The rest of her life saw an interplay between prayer and action, still contemplation and dynamic activity. For St Catherine, God is the “gentle first Truth”, “mad with love” and “charity itself”. The way to God, for St Catherine, is as she embodied: the lived dynamic of knowledge and love. The Church celebrates this great woman, patron of Europe, April 29.

# Including God in any and all human development



## The Wisdom of Pope Benedict

**W**ithout God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. In the face of the enormous problems surrounding the development of peoples, which almost make us yield to discouragement, we find solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5) and then encourages us: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who come together in his name to work for justice.

**“Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity”**

Paul VI recalled in *Populorum Progressio* that man cannot bring about his own progress unaided, because by himself he cannot establish an authentic humanism. Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God’s family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead

from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God.

Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity. On the other hand, ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today. *A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism.* Only a humanism open to the absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life – structures, institutions, culture and ethos – without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment.

Awareness of God’s undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples, amid successes and failures, in the ceaseless pursuit of a just ordering of human affairs. *God’s love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all, even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish.* God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our all, our greatest hope.

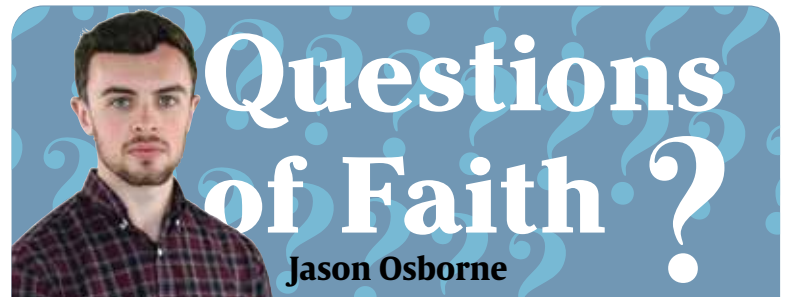
*Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, caritas in veritate, from which*

authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognising what is happening, we must above all else turn to God’s love. Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God’s providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace.

**“In union with the only-begotten Son, may all people learn to pray to the Father and to ask him, in the words that Jesus himself taught us, for the grace to glorify him by living according to his will”**

All this is essential if “hearts of stone” are to be transformed into “hearts of flesh” (Ezek 36:26), rendering life on earth “divine” and thus more worthy of humanity. All this is *of man*, because man is the subject of his own existence; and at the same time it is *of God*, because God is at the beginning and end of all that is good, all that leads to salvation: “the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:22-23).

Christians long for the entire human family to call upon God as “Our Father!” In union with the only-begotten Son, may all people learn to pray to the Father and to ask him, in the words that Jesus himself taught us, for the grace to glorify him by living according to his will, to receive the daily bread that we need, to be understanding and generous towards our debtors, not to be tempted beyond our limits, and to be delivered from evil (cf. Mt 6:9-13). (*Caritas in Veritate*)



## Questions of Faith?

Jason Osborne

### What is the Catholic stance on the environment?



**I**t might seem an obvious thing now, what with so much talk about the environment and “going green,” but humans have taken many approaches to the natural world throughout history. Sometimes, even when we talked a good game, our actions belied that we viewed the created world as something to be plundered, used and abused, and this continues through to today.

Somehow, for many who identify as conservative, caring for creation has come to be seen as merely a liberal or progressive talking point or stance, and if this is truly the case, it is a disaster, for the Church has always upheld the role we have to play as “stewards of creation”. We show respect for the Creator by respecting what he has made, and as with all things of God, living in accord with him and what he has made generally serves us well, too.

Scripture itself is packed with references to the goodness of creation, and to humanity’s role in caring for it and cultivating it. Right at the very beginning of the story of salvation, Genesis tells us that “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). A few more for our consideration:

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15)

“When you come into the land which I give you, the land shall keep a sabbath to the Lord” (Leviticus 25:2)

“Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:20)

“For ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it’” (1 Corinthians 10:26)

This is just a tiny selection of the things God’s word has to say to us about how to view creation, but of course there are many, many more. From the Psalms to Jesus’s appreciation of nature in

his Matthew 6 discourse, God’s role behind, in and beyond nature are very clear.

At the same time, the Church itself has been particularly strong on this recently, with Pope Francis making it a point of his papacy to exhort us to recognise the goodness of creation and to recognise ways in which we might be doing it and each other harm, while opening our eyes to ways in which we could do better. This isn’t Pope Francis’s line alone.

The environment is “God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole...Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.”

Thus Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his *Caritas in Veritate*, while St John Paul II warned that the “dominion” given to man over nature by the Creator is not an “absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to ‘use and misuse,’ or to dispose of things as one pleases.

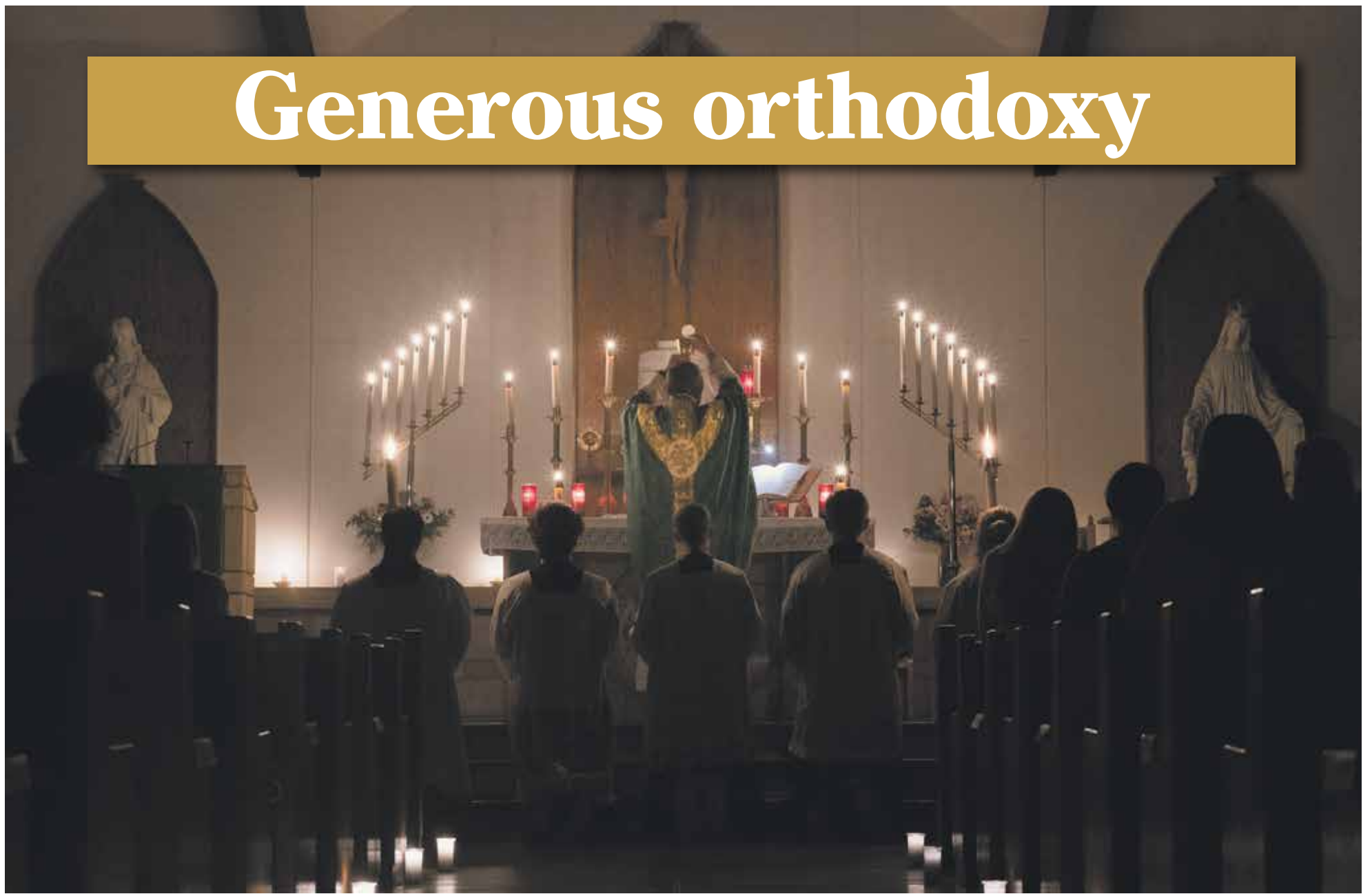
“The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to ‘eat of the fruit of the tree’ (cf. Gen 2:16-17) shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).

It’s clear then, that caring for creation should not be abandoned to environmental activists or those whose jobs it is to speak about green politics and lifestyles – it’s a duty incumbent upon humans as stewards of creation. The best ways to do this at a societal level can and should be debated, but it’s the sort of thing each of us can implement into our own lives through more considerate living.





# Generous orthodoxy



There's a saying attributed to Attila the Hun, a fifth Century ruler infamous for his cruelty, which reads this way: For me to be happy, it's not just important that I succeed; it's also important that everyone else fails. I suspect that Atilla the Hun was not the author of that, but, no matter, there's a lesson here.

The gospels tell us that God's mercy is unlimited and unconditional, that God has no favourites, that God is equally solicitous for everyone's happiness and salvation, and that God does not ration his gift of the Spirit. If that is true, then we need to ask ourselves why we so frequently tend to withhold God's Spirit from others in our judgments – particularly in our religious judgments. We are blind to the fact that sometimes there's a little of Attila the Hun in us.

For example, how prone are we to think this way? For my religion to be the true, it's important to me that other religions are not true! For my Christian denomination to be faithful to Christ, it's important that all the other denominations be considered less faithful. For the Eucharist in my denomination to be valid, it's important that the Eucharist in other denominations be invalid or less valid. And, since I'm living a certain sustained fidelity in my faith and moral life, it's important to me that



Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

everyone else who isn't living as faithfully does not get to heaven or is assigned to a secondary place in heaven.

Well, we aren't the first disciples of Jesus to think this way and to be challenged by him in our Attila the Hun proclivities. This is in fact a large part of the lesson in Jesus' parable regarding an over-generous landowner who paid everyone the same generous wage no matter how much or little each had worked.

## Familiar

We are all familiar with this story. A landowner goes out one morning and hires workers to work in his fields. He hires some early in the morning, some at noon, some in mid-afternoon, and some with only an hour left in the workday. Then he pays them

all the same wage – a generous one. The people who worked the full day understandably became resentful, upset that (while their wage was in fact a generous one) they felt it was unfair to them that those who had worked a lot less should also receive an equally generous wage. The landowner in response says to the complainant, "Friend, I am not being unjust to you. Didn't you agree to this wage? Why are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20, 1-16).

Notice that Jesus addresses the one making the complaint as 'friend'. That's a designation for us, we, the ones who are faithfully doing the full day's work. Note his tone is warm and soft. However, his challenge is less warm and soft: Why are you jealous because God is overly

generous? Why is it important to us that because we are doing things right, that God should be hard on those who aren't? Full disclosure: sometimes I imagine myself, after having lived a life of celibacy, entering heaven and meeting there the world's most notorious playboy and asking God, "How did he get in here?", and God answering, "Friend, isn't heaven a wonderful place! Are you envious because I am generous?" Who knows, we might even meet Attila the Hun there.

## Values

One of the core values held by a certain group of Quakers is something they call generous orthodoxy. I like the combination of those two words. Generosity speaks of openness, hospitality, empathy, wide tolerance, and of sacrificing some of ourselves for others. Orthodoxy speaks of certain non-negotiable truths, of keeping proper boundaries, of staying true to what you believe, and of not compromising truth for the sake of being nice. These

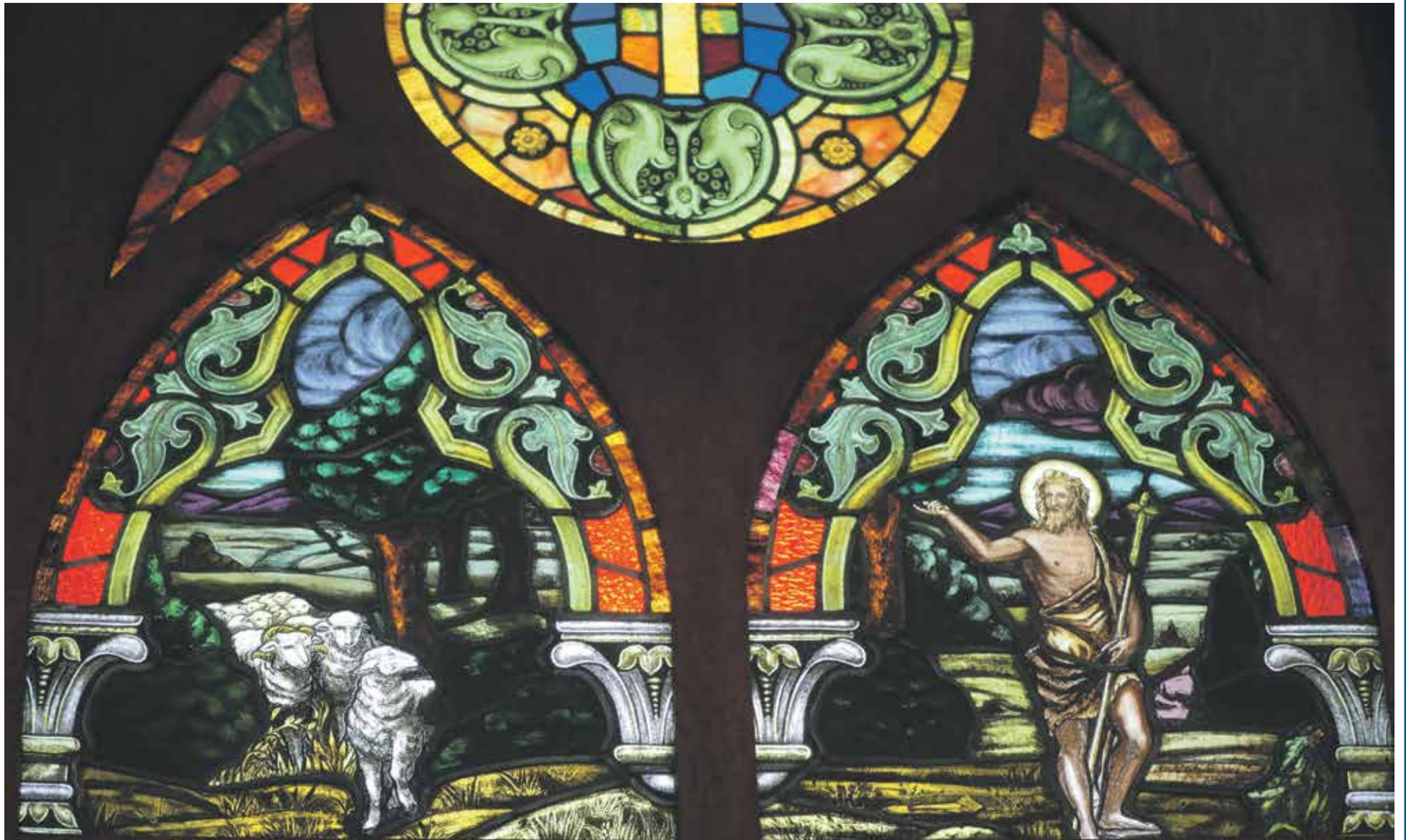
two are often pitted against each other as opposites, but they are meant to be together. Holding ground on our truth, keeping proper boundaries, and refusing to compromise even at the risk of not being nice is one side of the equation, but the full equation requires us to be also fully respectful and gracious regarding other people's truth, cherished beliefs and boundaries. And this is not an unhealthy syncretism, if what the other person holds as truth does not contradict what we hold – although it might be very different and may not in our judgment be nearly as full and rich as what we hold.

Hence, you can be a Christian, convinced that Christianity is the truest expression of religion in the world without making the judgment that other religions are false. You can be a Roman Catholic, convinced that Roman Catholicism is the truest and fullest expression of Christianity, and your Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus, without making the judgment that other Christian denominations are not valid expressions of Christ and do not have a valid Eucharist. There's no contradiction there.

You can be right, without that being contingent on everyone else being wrong!

**“Orthodoxy speaks of certain non-negotiable truths, of keeping proper boundaries, of staying true to what you believe, and of not compromising truth for the sake of being nice”**

# The Lord is our shepherd



A stained glass image of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Photo: CNS/Bob Roller

April 30, 2023  
Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Acts 2:14a, 36-41  
Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b4, 5, 6  
1 Pt 2:20b-25  
Jn 10:1-10

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon  
Greg  
Kandra



Most of us would probably admit: we don't know a lot of shepherds. (Where I live, in Queens, New York, they are pretty scarce.)

But I met one a few years ago, during a trip to Jordan. He was tending a flock by the side of a road, and the people on our tour bus wanted to stop and chat with him. Our guide saw an opportunity for an interesting experience, so the bus pulled over and we stepped out.

### Shepherd

The shepherd was young, bearded, wrapped in scarves to protect him from the sun and sand. He was in his early 20s, but polite and a little shy. (I'd almost say "sheepish".) He spoke no English, but that didn't stop our group from peppering

him with questions that our guide patiently translated. Where did he live? Were his days long? Did he have a family? (Answers: Nearby. Yes. Yes.)

I had just one thing to ask him: "Do you like being a shepherd?"

He shrugged and replied with a few words in Arabic. "He says it's okay," our guide explained. "But it's boring."

I laughed. I could understand how tending sheep might not be the most thrilling profession. But encountering this Gospel for this Sunday, I wonder if shepherds felt the same way during the time of Christ.

The world of the

shepherd Jesus describes in this Gospel is hardly boring. It's a place of thieves and robbers, fraught with danger, where the innocent are slaughtered and the helpless are destroyed.

But into this, steps the Good Shepherd, "the gate" who protects and defends them – the guardian who helps his sheep find pasture, security and shelter.

### Guides

Here is the one who guides those who are easily lost and who feeds those who hunger. The message is clear. In a world of turmoil and uncertainty, danger and risk, we find solace, comfort and direction by following the ultimate shepherd, Jesus Christ.

How we need that message today, just as the first Christians needed it 20 centuries ago. We need

someone to lead us on the right path. Significantly, we need to know we are not alone.

This Sunday, the scriptures tell us that. In an insecure world, Christ is our security. When times are hard, and threats of every kind loom, Jesus is with us. It's a message both calming and hopeful.

But why are we hearing this message now?

Every year on this fourth Sunday of Easter, we encounter Gospel readings that cite Jesus as our shepherd, and we hear once again one of the most familiar passages in all of Scripture, the 21st Psalm. In these first weeks after the Resurrection, we are reminded not only that Jesus rose from the dead, but that we who follow him may face difficulties of our own – thieves, threats,

violence, wolves.

In the afterglow of Easter, we're busy chanting "Alleluia". But that doesn't mean this is a time to take it easy and finish the rest of the chocolate Easter eggs. Clearly, the first followers of Jesus didn't.

### Foreboding

The tone this Sunday, in fact, is foreboding. The letter from Peter calls on the early Christians to be "patient when you suffer for doing what is good," and mentions insults, wounds and hardships of all kinds.

And in the first reading from Acts, Peter calls for repentance and Baptism as the way to be saved "from this corrupt generation". You don't hear a lot of Alleluias there.

No wonder. His was a time of persecution, imprisonment, and martyrdom. But is there any time for Christians when that hasn't been the case? Despite all that, whatever challenges each of us may

face, these readings assure us that we aren't left to face them alone.

This Sunday, in the midst of whatever we are living through, whatever struggles we're enduring, whatever headaches and heartaches are weighing us down – whether it's anxiety at work, stress at home, sickness and suffering, or even discrimination and persecution and pain – there is this simple truth: Emmanuel. God with us.

Take heart. Jesus leads us where we need to be. To him, shepherding isn't remotely boring. It is, in fact, a great act of love.

Look up. Look around. The Lord is our shepherd. No matter what, he doesn't abandon us.

The first Christians understood that. Do we?

**i** Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, 'The Deacon's Bench'. He serves in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

**“In a world of turmoil and uncertainty, danger and risk, we find solace, comfort and direction by following the ultimate shepherd, Jesus Christ”**

## TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



# A sliver of hope or more of the same...

If there are two sides in a controversy I prefer to hear a discussion between two representatives. When it's just one at a time being interviewed the presenter may not be informed or willing enough to ask the hard questions of both sides.

On **The Pat Kenny Show** (*Newstalk*, Wednesday) Michael Fitzmaurice TD, Independent, and Senator Pauline O'Reilly of the Green Party discussed speculation about a new political party for rural Ireland to oppose aspects of Green policy. At the start Mr Fitzpatrick got a solid run to explain his position. He brushed aside the host's interruptions and forged ahead – sometimes I think this is due to guests being on the phone so they can't pick up the body language in the studio.

I admire Deputy Fitzmaurice for his straight talking and support for pro-life values, though I wish he wouldn't fall so much into the habit of declaring how 'clear' he is (where are the politicians learning this jargon?). One of his main concerns was that farmers in particular found it very difficult to plan anything for "the future going forward" (Nooooo!) because of all the changes, restrictions and planning issues. I felt Pat Kenny sympathised with many of his positions.



Taoiseach Leo Varadkar says he is "reluctant and uncomfortable" about making "major" changes to the abortion law.

When Pauline O'Reilly finally got a word in, she made an uncharitable start, accusing Mr Fitzmaurice of "populist politics" and "looking for votes". She was interrupted more but was well able for it, and after some exchanges about the difference between culling and reduction of herds (voluntary, she stressed) it was a draw I think, but food for thought for a voter wondering what's best.

Deputy Fitzpatrick felt that many of their traditional supporters were feeling let

down by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. However, he admired the way the Greens had organised and pushed their policies. Senator O'Reilly did well but again damaged her argument by accusing Mr Fitzpatrick of being "anti-environment" and, bizarrely, "anti-future".

Disillusion with the more centrist or conservative political parties is particularly sharp when it comes to abortion. They still don't get it, I think. The issue flared up again last week when reports of the recommenda-

tions of the 3-year review hit the newspapers (a strategic leak?).

**The Pat Kenny Show** (*Newstalk*, Friday) dealt with it quite fairly, with a two-person debate between Peadar Tóibín TD (Aontú) and former TD Ruth Coppinger. I thought Deputy Tóibín was excellent – a model of clarity without having to repeatedly declare how 'clear' he was.

He stressed the human rights aspect of the pro-life position and how the abortion rate had more than doubled since the legislation that followed repeal of the Eight Amendment to a total of around 28,500 (a scandal missing an outrage). He pointed out how most abortions were carried out on healthy mothers with healthy unborn children, including those who died after an incorrect diagnosis.

In favour of the retention of a waiting period (the review suggests downgrading it to optional), he suggested that because many women didn't return for the abortion after the first consultation, that there may be thousands alive today because of the 3-day wait.

Ruth Coppinger complained about Deputy Tóibín's use of emotive language, like "lives", "babies", and "healthy children"! And then, ironically, she referenced Savita, mother and baby homes, the

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY

**BBC Radio 4 Sunday, April 30, 7am**

Topical religious and ethical issues. Presenting alternates between William Crawley and Edward Stourton.

#### FATHER MCGIVNEY: A PRIEST FOR OUR TIME

**EWTN Sunday, April 30, 4pm**

A roundtable discussion on the life and legacy of Fr Michael McGivney. This model parish priest and founder of the Knights of Columbus is the Church's newest Blessed following his beatification.

#### 12 ANGRY MEN

**Film Four Thursday, May 4, 3.15pm**

(1957) Henry Fonda is the one jury man who doubts the guilt of a young man who has been accused of murdering his father.

control of the Catholic Church over hospitals. She described the pro-choice movement as a "huge movement of women" – which of course could just as easily describe the pro-life movement.

On **The Hard Shoulder** (*Newstalk*, Friday) there was a similar discussion between Eilís Mulroy of the Pro-Life Campaign and Karen Sugrue of Together for Safety (irony alert! – obviously not concerned about the safety of living unborn babies).

She welcomed the proposed changes (all towards liberalising and loosening the law), was concerned for "women and pregnant people" and thought the 3-day wait "paternalistic". Eilís Mulroy referenced the "hor-

rifying" abortion figures and wanted some humanity brought to bear on the law. She remembered promises that the foetal pain relief issue was to be addressed during the review, but saw no sign of it in reports of the review recommendations.

A similar debate, this time between Deputy Tóibín and Labour leader Ivana Bacik TD took place on **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio 1, Friday). There was a report on the **Nine News** (RTÉ One, Friday) that Taoiseach Leo Varadkar was "reluctant and uncomfortable" about making "major" changes to the law as politicians had promised safeguards. A sliver of hope?



Pat O'Kelly

## Music

# A nationwide tour of Massenet's Werther

Last Saturday Irish National Opera began a nationwide tour of Massenet's *Werther*. Opening in An Grianán in Letterkenny, it proceeded to Navan's Solstice Arts Centre and then Galway's Town Hall Theatre, where it is tonight, Thursday April 27.

*Werther's* next port of call is Limerick's Lime Tree Theatre on Saturday 29, followed by Dundalk's An Táin, May 2; Glór in Ennis, May 4; The Everyman, Cork, May 6; Theatre Royal, Waterford, May 9 and Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny, May 11. The tour ends at Dún Laoghaire's Pavilion Theatre on May 13 and 14. The opera is being sung in French with English surtitles.

Sophie Motley, artist director of Cork's Everyman Thea-



Irish mezzo-soprano Niamh O'Sullivan is Charlotte in *Werther*.

tre, produces *Werther* with Viennese Philipp Pointner conducting. The cast has Italian tenor Paride Cataldo in the title role supported by mezzo Niamh O'Sullivan as Charlotte, Anglo-French baritone Charles Rice as Albert, Werther's rival,

and soprano Sarah Shine as Charlotte's young sister Sophie.

Following Manon's success in Vienna, Massenet was asked for another piece. The result was *Werther* that actually had its first performance, in German, at the Hofoper in

the Austrian capital on February 16, 1892.

The French language première took place in Geneva the following December while its first Paris performance took place at the Opéra-Comique on January 16, 1893. Although not an immediate success, *Werther's* worth was soon appreciated with productions in Chicago and New York by the Metropolitan Opera in 1894. Reaching St Petersburg in 1902, Massenet rewrote the title role for a baritone.

While its popularity has waned a little, it remains, along with *Manon*, the most often performed of Massenet's substantial operatic output. Interestingly, too, nine of the composer's stage works, other than *Manon* and *Werther*, have

been seen in Wexford over the years. His *Don Quichotte* shares with Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* the distinction of two productions at the Festival – the first in 1965, the second in 2019.

Born on May 12, 1842 in the St Étienne region of the Loire district where his father, Alexis, was a well to do ironmonger, Jules received his early music lessons from his mother, Eléonora, who was a talented amateur musician.

The family moved to Paris in 1848 with Jules being accepted by the Conservatoire. Following a period in South Western France to suit his father's deteriorating health, Massenet was back in the Paris Conservatoire in 1855 but limited family fortunes forced him to teach and

play percussion in a number of theatre orchestras. A meeting with Liszt was fortuitous in that he asked Massenet to teach Louise-Constance 'Ninon' de Gressy, the daughter of one of his wealthy patrons. She and Massenet married in 1866.

Appointed professor of counterpoint, fugue and composition at the Conservatoire in 1878, Massenet was known for his care in drawing out his pupils own ideas rather than imposing his own on them.

Massenet died in Paris in 1912 from abdominal cancer. By his own wish his funeral, without music, was held privately at Égreville, in North-central France, where he had his country house. He is buried in the local churchyard.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The golden age of British satire

**Uproar! Satire, Scandal and Printmakers in Georgian London,** by Alice Luxton (Icon Books, £25.00).

Felix M. Larkin

When Martyn Turner skewers today's politicians in his cartoons for *The Irish Times*, he is following in a rich tradition of visual satire that stretches back into the late 18th Century.

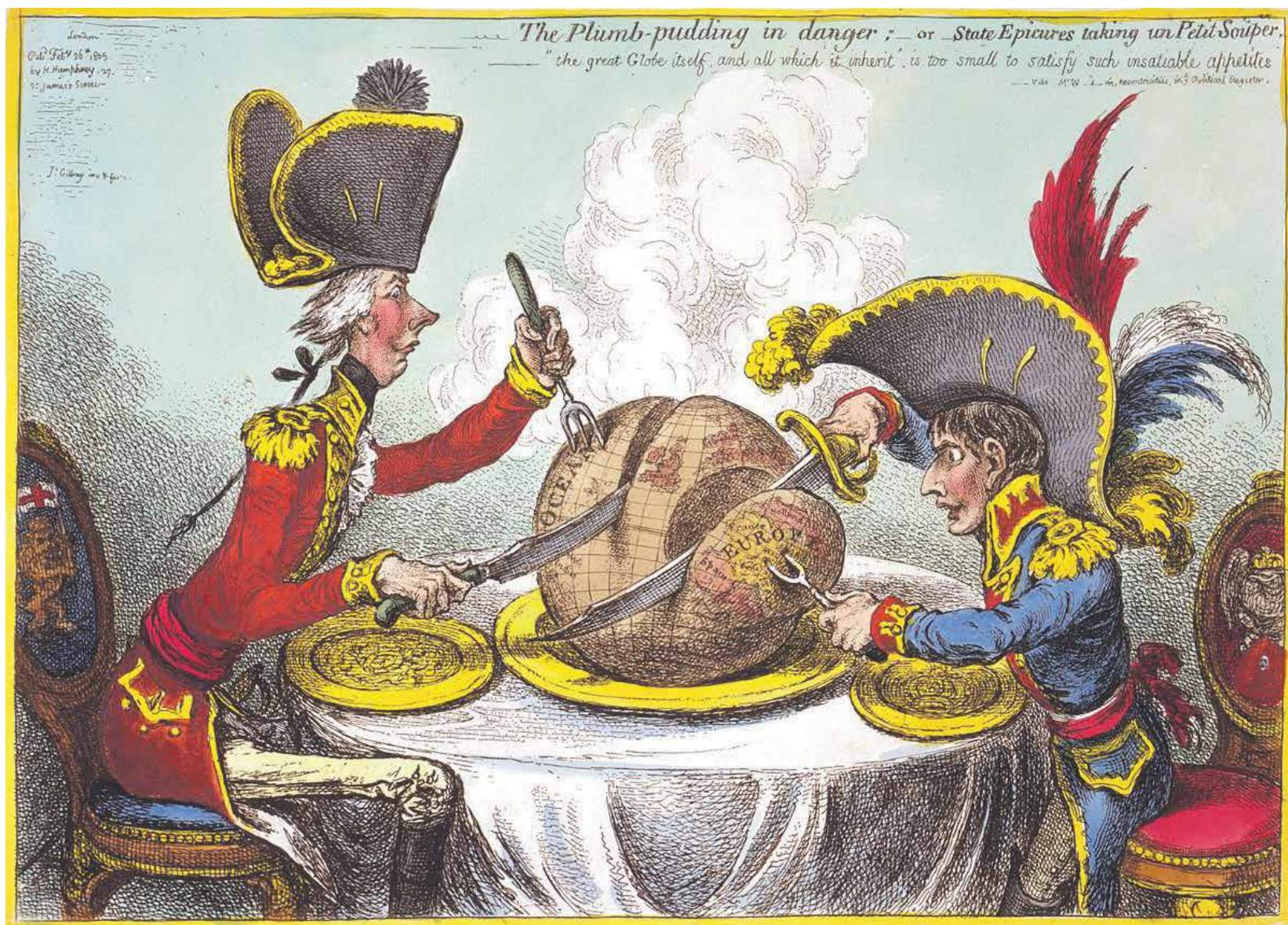
The early years of such satire in Britain – the period from the 1780s to c.1820 – is the subject of this brilliant book. That period is described by the book's author, Alice Luxton, as "the golden age of British satire" and her focus is on the three leading practitioners of the art of visual satire in the period: James Gillray (1756-1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827) and Isaac Cruikshank (1764-1811).

**“Luxton records that cartoonists ‘regularly switched between political sides, sometimes arguing for polar opposites within the same week’”**

Unlike today's cartoons, their work was published and sold as prints on single sheets of about A3 size – artefacts in their own right, as distinct from featuring in a newspaper or magazine. They were sold through specialist print shops, and Luxton tells us that “completed prints would be displayed in the multi-paned bow windows of print seller shops.”

She notes that “print shops were fashionable meeting places” and “as important to London's fabric as the bustle of a coffee house or the gentle curve of the Thames”. In 1790, the typical price of a cartoon was one shilling for a plain print and two shillings for a coloured one. The coloured cartoons were hand-painted after they rolled off the printing-press.

The cartoons were often



drawn to order, to serve as propaganda for one side or another in a political controversy. This was a time of acute rivalry between Whigs and Tories in Britain, represented by Charles James Fox and William Pitt the Younger respectively. Their rivalry was, in Luxton's words, “more than worthy of the satirist's pen” – but it was a pen for hire.

### Polar opposites

Luxton records that cartoonists “regularly switched between political sides, sometimes arguing for polar opposites within the same week”. A cartoon would even be commissioned on occasion in reply to an earlier one, thus setting up a contest in humour among warring factions. Working to order, however, did not compromise what Luxton calls “the insuppressibly creative spirit” of Gillray, Rowlandson and Cruikshank.

One might have expected these cartoonists to be

sympathetic to the radical ideas of the French revolution, but as Paris descended into an orgy of bloodshed in the 1790s and then succumbed to the autocracy of Napoleon, they rallied to support the status quo in Britain and, for example, celebrated in their cartoons the victories of Nelson over the French in the Battle of the Nile and at Trafalgar.

**“According to Luxton, Napoleon later claimed that Gillray's prints did him more damage than a dozen British generals”**

This was, of course, what the government wanted – and probably paid them for. Napoleon

was a particular target of the cartoonists, and Gillray is credited with creating the myth of Napoleon as a small man – by caricaturing him repeatedly as “Little Boney”. In reality, Napoleon was of average height for his time – about five feet six inches. According to Luxton, Napoleon later claimed that Gillray's prints did him more damage than a dozen British generals.

### Ambitions

The rival ambitions of Napoleon and his British enemies for world domination inspired what Luxton calls Gillray's “most enduring work” in 1805. This is a cartoon entitled “The Plumb-pudding in danger”, and it depicts the British prime minister, Pitt, with Little Boney at dinner.

They are tucking into an enormous steaming plumb-pudding in the shape of the globe and are dividing it between themselves –

France, Spain and most of the rest of Europe for Napoleon; the Americas and the West Indies for Britain. The caption is adapted from Shakespeare: “the great Globe itself and all which it inherits is too small to satisfy such insatiable appetites”. It is a cartoon very much in the modern mode, lampooning everyone – not peddling a particular line.

**“Magazines such as *Punch*, founded in 1841, would thus monopolise visual satire in Britain for the rest of the 19th Century”**

Single-sheet cartoons became obsolete when technological advances in printing facilitated the

production of illustrated newspapers and magazines for a mass market. Magazines such as *Punch*, founded in 1841, would thus monopolise visual satire in Britain for the rest of the 19th Century.

### Enthusiasm

This book is recommended reading for everyone who appreciates satirical humour – and who does not appreciate it? It is written in a lively style that complements the author's evident enthusiasm for the subject matter. Many of the particular cartoons that she references are reproduced in the volume, but in most instances they are unfortunately so small that it is difficult to make out the rich detail in them or to read the captions. This is my only criticism of what is a very fine book by a promising young scholar.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

# Italy in WWII viewed by Irish eyes in the Vatican



T. J. Kiernan, Ireland's ambassador to the war time

**Roman Imbroglia: Italy and the Irish During World War Two**, by Isadore Ryan (Published by the author, available through Amazon, €24.99 / £22.19; contact isadore.ryan@gmail.com)

**Dermot Keogh**

This is a most welcome, widely-researched and original book. It covers untold historical ground, introducing readers to a 'new' cast of Irish men and women religious and diocesan priests who lived in precarious conditions in a Rome controlled by Mussolini and the fascists, then occupied by the Germans and finally liberated by the Allied forces.

Throughout those terrible war years, Pope Pius XII and the Holy See remained hemmed in by arrogant victors – Fascist and Nazis – who ultimately were defeated by the Allies. During the years of Fascism and Nazism, Rome was a city where many were complicit, fellow travellers who witnessed without moving a muscle the deportation of some 1,259 Jews by train from the centre of the city to Auschwitz.

With the exception of the former, sacked Irish Minister to Germany, Charles Bewley, who was in the pay of the Nazis throughout the war, the Irish who occupy the pages of this intriguing volume were about

500 in number (fewer as the war progressed). They were mainly religious and diocesan clergy and nuns trying to survive in a city of starving people, while – in the case of a large number – risking their lives to take part in the rescuing and hiding of those in danger of imprisonment, deportation and/or execution.

Ireland had diplomatic representation to the Quirinale and to the Holy See. In the former, Michael MacWhite, who interpreted Irish neutrality according to the letter of the law and looked askance at the 'escape line' headed by the courageous and most undiplomatic – according to MacWhite – of diplomats, Msgr Hugh O'Flaherty.

## Trouble

The latter appeared never to be out of trouble with his superiors at the Holy See. This volume sheds new light on the work of that generous hearted priest from Kerry who, with the help of British Intelligence and scores of Italians and Irish volunteers, secured the escape –

the author argues – of some 6,000.

While MacWhite did not actively help O'Flaherty, the Irish chargé d'affaires to the Holy See, Thomas Joseph Kiernan, was less scrupulous about crossing diplomatic boundaries – or rather his wife Delia Murphy certainly showed herself to be. Among the Irish in Rome, she was regarded as a saviour, hosting parties where she sang and fed the malnourished community with whatever food she could lay her hands on.

When called upon by O'Flaherty, she was willing to engage in many unneutral acts to save escaped Allied prisoners and others in danger. This book identifies the large number of Irish people involved in unneutral activities in Rome during those years.

Perhaps the emphasis on Rome in the title sells the book short as the text also covers the role of the Irish in central and northern Italy. The nuns of the Little Company of Mary (Blue Sisters), besides running a hospital in Rome, had a nursing home in via Cherubini

in Florence and the Villa San Girolamo in Fiesole – made more famous by the film, *The English Patient* – and run by Mother Veronica (Agnes Killee) during the war years where she helped nurse scores of patients in impossibly overcrowded conditions lacking medicines and food.

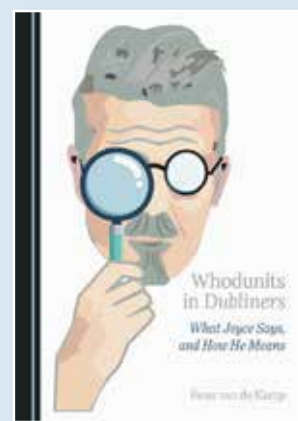
## Community

Eight of the nuns in that community were Irish. Their names deserve to be known. Forced by the Germans to abandon the villa, the nuns continued to give assistance to the wounded. Returning to the villa after the German retreat, the nuns returned to find this historical building was "only a shell – a ghost of its former self, pock-marked, skeletal, its windows like black and empty sockets".

In conclusion, this book introduces the reader to a wide cast of actors like Agnes Killee whose witness to major historical events has languished unread until now in the chronicles and the files of many religious institutions. This book sheds light on the wartime role of Irish diplomats, clergy and religious whose story and years of witness deserves to be told.

*Dermot Keogh is Emeritus Professor of History at UCC.*

# New light shone on Joyce's Dublin



**Whodunits in Dubliners: What Joyce Says, and How He Means**,

by Peter van de Kamp (Cambridge Scholars, €92.99/£81.99; ISBN: 9781527581487.)

**Peter Costello**

For a generation Dr van de Kamp has led the annual Dubliners seminar at the James Joyce International Summer School in University College Dublin, a gathering that is a major event in the Joycean calendar.

This has given him a unique position to expound, debate and discuss his insights with his students, and to benefit in turn from their observations on a book that is a key among Joyce's works, but all too often one neglected by those who set out to read Joyce. All too many people make a start with Joyce's 'masterpiece' *Ulysses*, but overlook its essential predecessor, Joyce's volume of short stories.

These were described by one critic at the time, that is to say more than a century ago, as follows: "They are all of them brave, relentless, and sympathetic pictures of Dublin life: realistic, perhaps but not crude, analytic but not crude." Joyce's "practice of the short story is certainly unique and certainly vital". He was seen as an outstanding figure of the developing art of the Irish short story.

The aim of this book is to conduct 15 autopsies, one on each story, with the advantage often denied a mere forensic pathologist, of changing his mind and exploring new dimensions in the texts on a continual basis.

His book, moreover, works on aspects of each story, not in sequence, but as a whole. We can take chapter seven, on "A Pain-

ful Case". What strikes me at once about this story as a whole is its setting in Chapelizod. The interpretation of the story focuses on the death of Mrs Sinico. But one asks "Why Chapelizod"?

This place had personal associations for Joyce for it was here that his unmarried father had lived when he was running the local distillery; Joyce had grown up with his father's stories about the village. And also about the Mullingar Hotel where he may have resided, and where (much later) Finnegans Wake would be set. The place connects Joyce's own beginnings with the climax of his literary life.

And, of course, it was famously associated with the legend of Isolde and Tristan, which is, as much as Joyce's story is, a tale of adultery ending in death. These two aspects are not discussed; but it seems to me they would make a fruitful source of reflection.

However, this is the fate of a critic who sets out to dissect a story: there is always more to be discovered; more, much more to be understood in context.

One aspect of Joyce's approach to setting stories in his native city which most readers are unaware of, but what was important to Joyce in writing his stories, are the local social and topographical details. Take for instance the discussion of street lighting in the essay on "Two gallants", this is quite fascinating. The public lights in Joyce are electric, new, and literally more illuminating than the old gaslights.

But it is important to say that this book is aimed at an experienced Joycean readership; it will provide little joy to readers very new to Joyce. But for those moving deeper into the mysterious realm of James Joyce they will fascinate.

Down to the late 1960s it was still possible to see large parts of Joyce's Dublin still in place. Now a century later than the book's creation all that is more or less gone. Joyce's Dublin is as much a shadowy ghost as is the London of Dickens. Peter van de Kamp goes a long way to a guide to long overlooked, but meaningful aspects of Joyce's city.



# Leisure time

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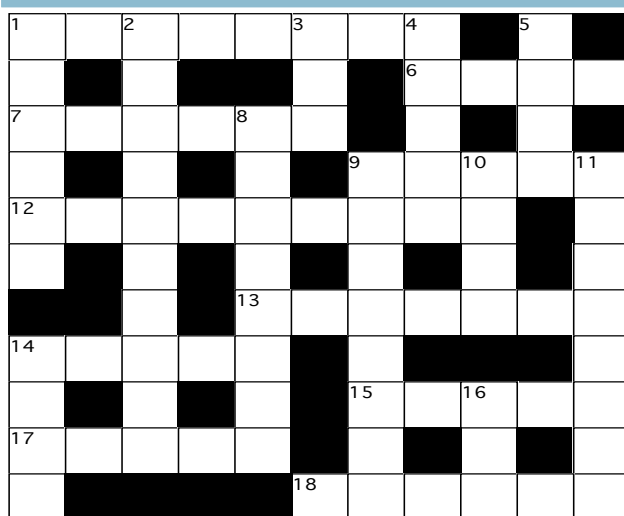
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### Crossword Junior

Gordius 480



Across

- 1 Cinderella fell in love with Prince \_\_\_\_\_ (8)
- 6 You use shampoo when washing it (4)
- 7 Paris and Lourdes are in this country (6)
- 9 Destroys something with fire (5)
- 12 The Dingle family are in this soap opera from Yorkshire (9)
- 13 Brings something into the country (7)
- 14 Spike on a fork (5)
- 15 Paved part of some gardens (5)
- 17 Put it in a slot - it looks just like a coin (5)
- 18 Academy Awards, given to

people who work in the movies (6)

Down

- 1 Hot drink (6)
- 2 You set it to help you wake up (5,5)
- 3 Frozen water (3)
- 4 Horrible creature that robs graves (5)
- 5 The King of the Beasts (4)
- 8 Garment with buttons (8)
- 9 This instrument makes us think of Scotland (8)
- 10 Back (4)
- 11 Use them to cut paper, for example (8)
- 14 Creatures you take care of (4)
- 16 Hot drink (3)

### SOLUTIONS, APRIL 20

GORDIUS NO. 607

Across – 1 Can 3 Charity shop 8 Nicene Creed 9 Vacuumed 10 Plume 11 Heels 13 Helps 15 Unearth 16 Quarter 20 Hated 21 Seeds 23 Con-ga 24 Portable 25 Vetoed 26 Lily-livered 27 Lid

Down – 1 Conspicuous 2 Nocturne 3 Canoe 4 Ravioli 5 Youth 6 Hamlet 7 Pod 12 Short-handed 13 Hutch 14 Squad 17 Tawny owl 18 Athlete 19 Petrol 22 Small 24 Pal

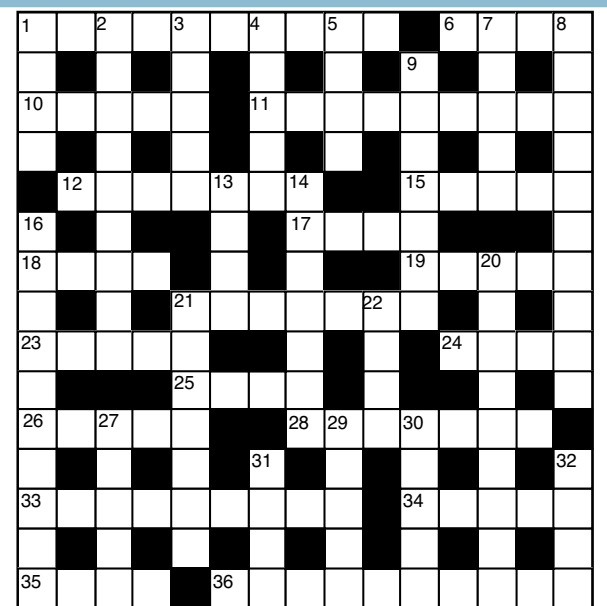
CHILDREN'S No. 479

Across – 1 Fountain 6 Ears 7 Liffey 8 Brown 11 Swiss 13 Round 15 Are 16 Trot 17 Puppets 20 Tease 21 Prepare 22 Wheat

Down – 1 Full stop 2 Unfair 3 Treasure 4 Near 5 Grow 8 Bad 9 Overtake 10 Nastiest 12 Soap 14 Net 18 Poem 19 Stew

### Crossword

Gordius 608



Across

- 1 Dramatist (10)
- 6 Feathered creature (4)
- 10 Indian or Sri Lankan coin (5)
- 11 Irish abbey with a faulty lemon lift (9)
- 12 State formally (7)
- 15 Tier, stratum (5)
- 17 Major military alliance in this part of the world (1,1,1,1)
- 18 It's hunted by a predator (4)
- 19 Dog associated with Wales (5)
- 21 6 across with magnificent plumage (7)
- 23 Supple (5)
- 24 Joint covered by the patella (4)
- 25 The Eternal City (4)
- 26 Bunch or band (5)
- 28 Perished in water (7)
- 33 Witch (9)
- 34 Criminal burning (5)
- 35 Band worn round the waist or over the shoulder (4)
- 36 Use it when hanging garments out to dry (7,3)

Down

- 1 Meat from pigs (4)
- 2 Currently, right now (2,7)
- 3 Castor (5)
- 4 Turkey's third-largest city (5)
- 5 & 31d A source of miraculous water (4,4)
- 7 What tusks are made of (5)
- 8 Resolute, can't be put off (10)
- 9 Knoll (7)
- 13 Skin complaint characterised by pimples (4)
- 14 Brought in a piece of legislation (7)
- 16 Says sorry (10)
- 20 Silver medal competitors (7-2)
- 21 Confuse, mystify (7)
- 22 Name adopted by Gabrielle Chanel, fashion great (4)
- 27 Man-eating monsters (5)
- 29 Take a test again (5)
- 30 Huge marine mammal (5)
- 31 See 5 down
- 32 Minor problem, catch (4)

### Sudoku Corner

480

Easy

	6	1		2	4	3	9	
		9		7	2	4		
	2		3			1		
9	3							
4		2				5		6
							7	2
		8			3		5	
	4	7	1			6		
	9	3	5	7		8	1	

Hard

6			9					2
	3	4						9
				7	5			3
		8		1				7
		5	4		7	2		
4				9		5		
	4		6	8				
	5					4	7	
1					4			3

Last week's Easy 479

1	5	4	8	7	2	6	9	3
9	2	3	5	1	6	7	4	8
8	6	7	3	4	9	5	1	2
5	7	2	4	8	1	3	6	9
4	9	1	7	6	3	8	2	5
6	3	8	2	9	5	4	7	1
7	4	5	1	2	8	9	3	6
3	1	6	9	5	4	2	8	7
2	8	9	6	3	7	1	5	4

Last week's Hard 479

3	6	2	4	7	1	5	8	9
1	8	5	2	6	9	4	7	3
9	4	7	5	3	8	6	1	2
2	7	3	8	1	4	9	6	5
8	1	4	9	5	6	2	3	7
6	5	9	7	2	3	1	4	8
4	3	8	6	9	2	7	5	1
7	9	6	1	8	5	3	2	4
5	2	1	3	4	7	8	9	6

Notebook

Fr John Harris OP



# How important is a wall?

Recently I visited our Irish Dominican community in Rome. By God's good grace we have the care of the ancient basilica and convent of St Clement (San Clemente) since 1677.



Courtyard, Basilica of St Clement.

In the list of popes St Clement is ranked as third after St Peter (Peter, Linus, Cletus, Clement). He is said to have been pope in the last years of the first Christian century, sometime in the 90s. He wrote a very important letter to the Church in Corinth which was undergoing divisions at the time. It is interesting that the bishop of Rome felt he had the right to 'interfere' in the disputes of other local churches. In the letter St Clement ask for unity and order in the Church. A witness to the belief that the role of the pope was from the very beginning seen as caring for the unity and communion of the Church. The pope was never to be a cause of division and strife in the life of the Church.

Dominicans were given the care of the basilica. It became a place of refuge and study for the Irish Dominicans. It continues this vital role to this day. Members of the present-day community study and teach in the various ecclesiastical universities in Rome.

From the archaeological investigations it is clear that there has been a Christian church on the site since at least the Fourth Century. The basilica is just a block away from the Colosseum. Today the basilica is the fourth most visited site in Rome.

In the 19th Century a Dominican called Fr Joseph Mullooly (1812-1880) from Lanesborough in Co. Longford was assigned to the community. He was a man of incredible intellectual and practical abilities. He was interested in the relatively new science of church archaeology. In 1857 he began excavating under the basilica to see if there were any remains of an earlier church under the present day church. What he found was amazing. He not only

discovered the earlier basilica from the Fourth Century but also beneath this earlier basilica he found the remains of two buildings from just after the fire of Rome. Dating from possibly the times of Pope Clemente himself.

Because of Fr Mullooly's pioneering work we can now visit three levels which brings the story of the church right back to its beginnings in Rome. To go down the stairs is to go down two millennia. In this one place is the history of the church. We now know that the present basilica is from the 12th Century and that it was not simply built over the earlier basilica but it actually used the same internal walls when constructing the new basilicas in the 12th Century. We can see clearly that the walls of the present day church are the same walls from the Fourth Century.

When I was studying for my doctorate in Rome the members of the community were required to give tours to various groups who visited the excavations. On one day among one of my groups I had a very inquisitive visitor. To tell you the truth she was rather annoying. About ten days after my tour she returned. She asked to see me again and then asked me to show her the wall of the Fourth Century church and for me to prove to her it was the same wall of the church we use to this day. This was easily done since all she had to do was look. She stood for a long time looking at the wall. Eventually she turned to me with tears in her eyes. She said that for years she had been battling with the claims of the Catholic Church. She said that she had many difficulties with the Church's doctrines and practices, but she said she couldn't

## Cancel culture

There is a story that when an Irish government was going to remove a statue of some British monarch after the establishment of the new state, Douglas Hyde, the first president, was asked his opinion. He said that as far as he was concerned it is better to turn the pages of history than to tear them out. Dr Hyde's approach to history has much to teach us in our present-day approach to tearing things down and ripping things up.

argue with bricks and mortar. She kept saying to me "this is physically the same church today as the Fourth Century" and I kept agreeing that it is physically the same church. She left me that day without saying another word but after the following Easter she contacted me to say that she had been baptised into the Catholic Church. The cause of her final step towards conversion was the wall in San Clemente.

## What are the Irish doing here?

● During the 1950s the Queen Mother of England visited the excavations of San Clemente. At the end of the tour she turned to the British ambassador and said that the tour was wonderful but she wondered what were the Irish doing in such an important place. For a few moments there was silence and no one felt it was opportune to give the lady a quick lesson in Irish religious history. Eventually the silence was broken by the British ambassador saying, "Historical reasons Mam... historical reasons".



## A PLEA FROM HONDURAS:

PLEASE HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR FAMILIES AND THE ABANDONED LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

The Missionary Sisters of Christ the Master in Comayagua, Honduras are counting on our help to bring vital food, medicine and other assistance to more than 800 people. Sister Alba Moreles Galvez has written to THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION: "We have been working in this extremely impoverished area for ten years, where families live in wooden shacks in very basic conditions. I hope that the Little Way will assist us with five programs. These are: 1) Comprehensive Nutrition. We need to provide food to three groups, as well as training in gospel values and the development of agricultural projects. 2) A group of girls live and are educated at a Home run by our Sisters. They have nowhere else to go. 3) We wish to provide food and medical aid to older adults, who are often abandoned. 4) Provisions are needed by extremely poor families, as well as training in literacy, to give the young especially a better chance in life. 5) At San Isidro Farm we hope to expand self-sustaining agricultural projects, such as egg production."

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez recommends that we help the Sisters, whom he knows well. He asks for as much as we can send these communities living in extreme poverty.

**This Lent, we urge you to give alms to our fund for the hungry, sick and deprived. Without any kind of deduction for administration, this fund is used to support missionaries providing life-sustaining assistance to destitute families and individuals.**



Sr Alba writes: "We provide education, complete formation, to children and young people in situations of extreme poverty, we take care of the abandoned sick and we go where no one wants to go to evangelize."



"We can never have too much confidence in our God Who is so mighty and so merciful."

- St Therese

## LENT WITH ST THERESE

In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine: "Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: "Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."

## 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?**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**
- €..... **TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
We ask for a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to  
[tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

**In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.**

**Every euro you send will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction.**

**Little Way benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions in the Missions.**