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Pope to Irish Catholics: don't get stuck in the past

Michael Kelly in Rome

As the Church in Ireland continues the process of bishops, priests and laypeople working together to chart the future, Pope Francis has pleaded for Irish Catholics not to cling to past ways of doing things.

He was speaking in unscripted remarks after receiving a group of Irish people involved in Catholic education and being presented with a copy of a new Irish book on the synodal process.

The Pontiff insisted that returning to the roots of the faith is where the Church in Ireland will find life on the synodal pathway, but that Catholics cannot be imprisoned by the past.

"Dialogue," in the Church, the Pope said "is very important".

He said parishioners involved in the synodal process must discern the roots of the Faith "because the tree, in order to grow, needs close relationships with the roots".

However, he warned: "Don't stay stuck at the roots, no, but be in relationship with the roots...Only with the roots do we become real people: not statues in museums, like some cold, starched, rigid traditionalists, who think that life means living attached only to the roots.

"There is a need for this relationship with the roots, but also to move forward," he said.

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Learning the ropes...



Edward McGlynn (left) and Patrick McGlynn (right) who served their first Mass in St Mel's Cathedral, Co. Longford, April 24. The two boys were under the expert guidance of Grace Hourican and Ava Lyons and are pictured beneath the watchful eye of a portrait of St Mel.

Call to dial down rhetoric as NI election approaches

Chai Brady

A professor of human rights in the North has warned rhetoric in the run up to the election and at protests against the Northern Ireland Protocol are "very concerning".

Catholic academic Prof. Colin Harvey of Queen's University Belfast, who suffered severe online abuse after he was targeted in a speech at an anti-protocol rally earlier this year, said the principles of the Good Friday Agreement "are more important than ever".

"There is very concerning language being deployed at the moment, including in protests against the Protocol. The lessons of the past need to be heeded urgently. This is a time for determined civic and political leadership," Prof Harvey told *The Irish Catholic*.

"Our peace process is precious. And the values, principles and obligations of the Good Friday Agreement are more important than ever," he added.

Elections in the North are set for May 5, with polls indicating Sinn

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

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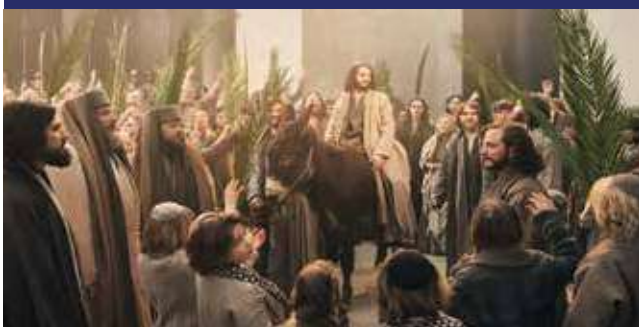
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Why do you seek the living among the dead?

The very mixed emotions experienced by priests in pastoral ministry as they deal with the ups and downs of their parishioners often leads to a wry, even black humour. Behind it often lies a deeper message. I remember a priest saying to me once of another cleric: "oh, he doesn't suffer from depression - but he is a carrier". It was an example of using a very real and serious medical illness that afflicts so many people to describe an attitude sometimes prevalent in parishes where someone themselves quite cheerfully will take delight in spreading misery to those around them.

Take a look at every parish council. Ask yourself how long it will take you to identify the "we tried that before and it didn't work" character. A variant on it is: "we've never tried anything like that before".

These are easily amongst the most crippling words that anyone involved in pastoral ministry will ever hear. They can suck the life blood out of even the most enthusiastic parishioner in seconds.

Problems

Evidently it was ever thus. St Paul in his Second Letter to the Thessalonians addresses some of the problems experienced in the early Church: "We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have any food if he refused to do any work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living in idleness, doing no work themselves but interfering with everyone else's."

"In the Lord Jesus Christ, we order and call on people of this kind to go on quietly

working and earning the food that they eat," he wrote.

Going on quietly working could almost be a *leitmotif* for pastoral ministry in the contemporary Church in Ireland. Too often we are looking for lightning bolt moments about the reform and renewal of the Church in Ireland.

"We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have any food if he refused to do any work"

Many thought the 2012 International Eucharistic Congress would mark a turning point in the Church in Ireland - despite all the wonderful graces, it did not. The same was true of the 2018 World Meeting of Families and the visit of Pope Francis - many thought it would be the longed-for shot in the arm that Irish Catholics had been waiting for, even with all the great initiatives that

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



form trying to attract more 'likes'. If we ourselves are not touched by Christ and transformed by the Gospel - however fragile our faith - then our proclamation is at best show, at worse the hypocrisy of a whitened sepulchre.

"The synodal pathway will not be either - at least not in and of itself. It is a vital moment in the life of the Church in Ireland"

As for the cynics whose only message is "we're finished" - we need to tell them that we have been to the tomb where they buried what we love and found it empty. We need to tell ourselves that the Gospel is right: one cannot find the living among the dead.

Despite all of our failings and sins, love has the victory - now that's Good News.

i To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

it did bring it was not that moment.

The synodal pathway will not be either - at least not in and of itself. It is a vital moment in the life of the Church in Ireland and a God-given opportunity for the People of God to become more fully themselves and take on more co-responsibility for the Church. But what is co-responsibility if not putting our shoulder to the wheel in the proclamation of the Gospel?

Proclamation

This proclamation of the Gospel rests in having a personal encounter with the Risen Jesus and taking him at his word. If this is lacking, then all of our missionary endeavour - our evangelisation - is merely that of a social media plat-

Pope to Irish Catholics: don't get stuck in the past

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Church teaching, the Pope said, "should grow instead of just hiding in the past."

"And this is the true tradition: taking from the past to move forward. Tradition is not static: it is dynamic - moving forward," he said.

Referring to the new book *The Synodal Pathway: when rhetoric meets reality*, Pope Francis said that the idea in the subtitle "is a very beautiful thing".

"To educate is not to say merely rhetorical things; educating is bringing together what is said with reality". People, he said, "have the right to make mistakes - but

the educator accompanies them on the path to guide them...the true educator is never afraid of mistakes, no: he or she accompanies, takes people by the hand, listens and talks".

The Pope was speaking during a private audience with a delegation led by Prof. Eamonn Conway of Mary Immaculate College in Limerick from Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) - an international research-based partnership on Catholic education.

i The Synodal Pathway: when rhetoric meets reality is available now from Columba Books.

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Senator vows to fight on after 'deeply personal attack'

Ruadhán Jones

Senator Sharon Keogan has said she will continue to contribute to the debate around surrogacy, after a "deeply personal attack" during an April 21 Oireachtas committee meeting.

Senator Keogan was referred to as being a "bigot", "crude", "cold" and that she should "check her Christian values" after raising concerns about the possibility of Ireland legalising commercial surrogacy.

After this exchange, Ms Keogan said in a letter to the committee's chair that the reference to her religious beliefs were "unacceptable", adding that she takes "great exception to this reference".

She finished the letter saying that she wishes "to continue to contribute to the work of this important Committee".

A number of commentators decried the "terrible intolerance" shown in the reaction to the senator's views.

Frank Coughlan, former news analysis editor for *The Irish Independent*, said that he was struck by the "venom" of the reaction.

Intolerance

"My view is that it showed terrible intolerance, but what's new about that" Mr Coughlan told *The Irish Catholic*. "It's over-played, but sometimes there is a sense that we're back to the 1950s where anybody who says anything that it not 'on script' has to be shouted down."

A prominent Irish theologian said that the reaction showed there has been an "unthinking collapse" into a "shallow", neoliberal way of thinking about profound issues since the rejection of Catholicism.

Fr Niall Coll told this paper that there is a moral vacuum around issues like surrogacy, adding that that it's "probably

going to get worse for people of faith... there is only one view allowed".

"This overtly one-dimensional secular view will be a great danger to the development of a truly multicultural and multireligious society in Ireland over the next 50 years," Fr Coll warned.

Law and ethics professor for Atlantic Technological University in Galway Leonard Taylor also raised concerns about the conduct in the senate committee, saying it makes people who have concerns "feel they have to be silent".

"If you look back over the transcript, Senator Keogan was not the only one expressing concern," Mr Taylor said.

But "to see that type of conduct in a senate committee would make you think twice about expressing your views", he added, saying that senate committees "need to model something better than what's happening on social media".

Dublin priest appointed to important Vatican role

Staff reporter

Pope Francis has appointed Msgr John Kennedy, a priest of Dublin diocese, as one of two secretaries to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

The announcement came last Sunday, April 24, and follows an instruction published last month which established two divisions for the CDF, doctrinal and disciplinary.

Msgr Kennedy has been appointed as head of the section with responsibility for discipline, and is second to the prefect of the CDF, Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer SJ.

The Archdiocese of Dublin congratulated Msgr Kennedy on his new position, wishing him "every blessing in this important lead-

ership role in the Church, contributing significantly to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world".

Msgr Kennedy joins the ranks of other senior Irish-born prelates working at the Vatican in the service of Pope Francis. The most-senior is Dubliner Cardinal Kevin Farrell who heads the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. His brother Bishop Brian Farrell is Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Sligo-born Bishop Paul Tighe is Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, while Cork-born Msgr Joseph Murphy is Head of Protocol at the Holy See's Secretariat of State.

Msgr Kennedy was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1993 and he began working at the CDF in January 2003.

French sister becomes oldest person alive

Chai Brady

Sr André of the Daughters of Charity, born Lucile Randon, has become the oldest person on Earth, aged 118.

The blind sister lives at a nursing home in Toulon along the Mediterranean coast. She begins each day with breakfast, a morning Mass, and has a glass of wine every day.

Sr André was born into a Protestant family in south-

ern France in February 1904. She converted to Catholicism when she was 19 and worked as a governess during World War II.

After the war she joined the Daughters of Charity and went on mission to a hospital in Vichy in central France where she served orphans and elders. This lasted 28 years until she was assigned to another hospital.

In January last year, she

tested positive for Covid-19 after an outbreak in her retirement home in which 81 of 88 residents were infected. A spokesperson from the home said: "She kept telling me, 'I'm not afraid of Covid because I'm not afraid of dying, so give my vaccine doses to those who need them'".

Sr André only experienced minor complications and is now the third oldest person ever in France's history.

All kinds of everything at the Pro-Cathedral



Irish Eurovision winner Dana performs at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, during a charity concert in aid of the Peter McVerry Trust, Dog's Aid and Blossom Ireland, April 25. Dana was one of six Eurovision winners who performed on the night, including Johnny Logan, Linda Martin, Niamh Kavanagh, Paul Harrington and Charlie McGettigan. Photo: John McElroy



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Faith-inspired poet urges artists to avail of Government scheme

Chai Brady

The founder of Poetry Ireland has encouraged artists "examining their faith" to apply for a Government scheme aimed to support the arts through a weekly €325 payment.

Poet and novelist John F.

Deane, whose works often focus on Christ and faith, has said it would be very helpful for artists' development and urged people involved in the arts to avail of it before applications close.

"I'm all for it. It's something that I have been fighting for or talking about in one form or

another. I would certainly recommend it to any artists who is serious about their work," he said, "In terms of painters and sculptors, there is heavy costs, so it would even help in that area, to buy materials."

Mr Deane said: "My work is examining faith in its many, many aspects. What you write

about doesn't really matter provided the poetry or the art or whatever it is that you're doing is good. It's terribly important to have that liberty and the back up to develop and extend the work.

"I would recommend any artists in any genre, faith or otherwise, nature or political

poetry, to go forward... I would encourage anybody, including people who are examining their faith and trying to find truth - which is what I'm trying to do."

The Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme opened for applications on April 12 and will close May 12.

There will be 2,000 artists and creative arts workers selected at random to be part of the pilot, which runs for three years until 2025. The main objective of the scheme is to address the financial instability faced by many people who are working in the arts.

Catholic schools confident of capacity for Ukrainian students

Ruadhán Jones

Catholic primary and secondary school bodies are confident they can manage the expected influx of Ukrainian students, as schools return after Easter break.

About one third of all refugees are aged between five to 17-years-old, meaning of the 21,000 that arrived

before the Easter break, 6,300 were of school-going age.

"It's very hard to tell where the number of refugees is going to go in the next number of weeks, but we are certainly ok in terms of school capacity," said Seamus Mulconry, general secretary of the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA).

He said that everything

that can be done to accommodate Ukrainian students is being looked at, including fast-tracking the accreditation of refugees who are teachers.

Meanwhile, John Curtis of the Joint Managerial Body and Association for the Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (JMB/AMCSS) said that they have not experienced any capacity issues, with a number of students already enrolled in schools.

"If there are any issues, it probably won't come to light until the next year," Mr Curtis said.

Some 262 primary and 58 post-primary schools have been assisted by the Department of Education with extra resources to date.

Dublin, Clare, Kerry, Cork and Mayo have the highest numbers of refugees in primary education, while Dublin, Kerry and Clare have the highest post primary numbers.

Irish rugby star plays for 'Audience of One'

Staff reporter

Irish women's international rugby player Claire McLaughlin (30) has said her Christian faith is really important, saying prayers before each match.

"I'm a Christian," Ms McLaughlin told *The Sunday Independent*, adding that "my faith has been really important to me over the past number of years."

Antrim-born, Ms McLaughlin was first capped for Ireland in 2016 and works a doctor in the emergency department of Ulster Hospital and is currently

recovering from an injury.

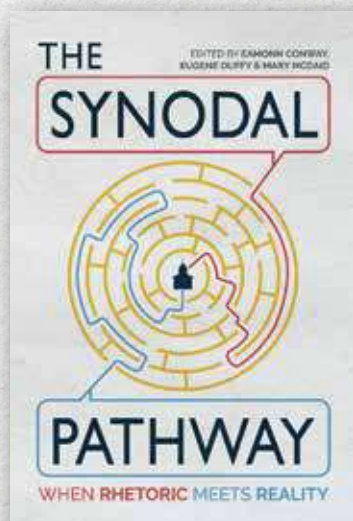
Whenever she plays, Ms McLaughlin said, "I wore a strap around my wrist and I put AO1 on it - Audience of One.

"I'd say prayers before going out on the pitch but I'd never pray that we'd win. Instead I'd pray for everyone to come out of it safely," she finished.

Ms McLaughlin has previously spoken about how her strong Christian faith plays a prominent role in her life, telling *The Irish News* in 2017 that "God has blessed me with a talent so I play for Him".

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God's merciful love



Worshippers attending St John's parish, Tralee, Co. Kerry for Divine Mercy Sunday, April 24, receive benediction from the Blessed Sacrament during the day. Photo: John Cleary

Call to dial down rhetoric as NI election approaches

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Féin are ahead of the DUP.

Dr Lawrence Kirkpatrick, a former professor in Union Theological College, in Belfast, said it "doesn't take much" for sectarian tensions to surface but "most people are fed up with the shenanigans and the rhetoric".

"There's so much in the loyalist communities about the Protocol at the minute. There's a real fear of course that Sinn Féin will be the largest party and will supply the first minister. There are definitely tensions. It's heightened always at an election time, particularly at this one because the overall outcome is in the balance," Dr Kirkpatrick said.



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What's wrong with nationalism, Leo?

I can understand Leo Varadkar being pleased and relieved that Marine Le Pen was defeated as French presidential candidate. There is a track record of racist ideas with her party – and besides, the Euro would have plunged in value if she had succeeded. So, even on practical grounds, we are spared yet another financial crisis – which always hits the poor hardest.

But Leo went further in his effusive congratulations to President Macron. He called it “A victory for Europe, for France, for democracy and for the political centre – a clear



Mary Kenny

defeat for populism, nationalism and for [Vladimir] Putin. Merci, la France.”

Democracy

Celebrating democracy and supporting Europe is all fine and good: but disparaging ‘nationalism’, and linking it with Mr Putin (as well as populism) is a very odd take for a politician who represents one of the high offices of the Irish State.

Here's an indisputable fact: there would be no Irish State without ‘nationalism’. The entire project which constructed Irish independence and sovereignty was built on a base of ‘nationalism’.

The Irish patriots – and leaders – of the historic past were almost all ‘nationalists’: from Theobald Wolfe Tone to Patrick Pearse, from Thomas Davis

to Michael Collins, including, at random, Daniel O’Connell, Charles Stewart Parnell, Douglas Hyde, Constance Markievicz, W.T. Cosgrave, Seán Lemass, John Redmond, Ernie O’Malley, Maud Gonne, Éamon de Valera – the entire canon of names and personalities who formed the Irish State were nationalists.

“The Irish patriots – and leaders – of the historic past were almost all ‘nationalists’”

Writers and artists were cultural nationalists – Yeats, Lavery, Seán Keating, O’Connor, O’Faoláin, Siobhán MacKenna, Micheal MacLiammóir, Sean O Riada – and so many more.

Peacemaker

In the North, did not that great peacemaker John Hume co-found a social and democratic party as a forum for the nationalist people?

A coherent nation needs to have a basis in some form of nationalism. That is, it needs to believe in itself, to have some collective self-esteem, as a nation. Without that sense of being a nation, of investment in nationalism, it has a weak identity and is liable to become a satellite state of a greater power.

Virtue

Obviously, any attribute, or even virtue, can become distorted and nasty if carried to the extreme: prudence can become avarice, generosity, recklessness, discipline can grow repressive, tolerance can morph into chaos.

Extreme or xenophobic forms of nationalism, are a distorted version of the natural, and even necessary, adherence to a nation's identity.

See how President Macron surrounds himself in a sea of French tricolours. See how every French president traditionally ends a speech with ‘Vive la France! Vive la République!’ That too is nationalism, and in my view, Leo Varadkar is mistaken to disparage the ideal. Not only mistaken, but unwise – like sawing off the branch of the tree which gives him structural support.

Tender love between mother and child



The Sistine Madonna.

In my schooldays, when we used to exchange little reproductions of ‘holy pictures’ among friends, the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael was a great favourite. And so I eagerly went to the new Raphael exhibition at London's National Gallery, which gathers together the largest ever collection of his paintings, as well as sketches, cartoons, tapestries and reproductions of his architectural design.

For a young man who died aged 37, Raphael Sanzio da Urbino certainly packed in a huge amount of work, rightly

noted for its exquisitely clear and lucid colours, fine lines and stunning portraiture.

He painted many Madonnas, and we are told he was always touched by the tender love between mother and infant. But here's an interesting feature of his portrayal of Our Lady as mother: very frequently, the infant Jesus is accompanied by the infant John the Baptist in Raphael's pictures. As if the painter supposes that John's parents, being older, might have requested Mary to look after him too.

Perhaps the most famous of Raphael's painting is the *Sistine Madonna*, regarded as the most perfectly accomplished composition, commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1513-14. Pope Julius lavished Vatican resources on art, and how grateful we are for such a heritage.

Raphael himself lost his parents when he was a child – his mother died when he was eight and his father when he was 11. He was brought up by his uncle, a priest.

This wonderful exhibition continues until the end of July.

● The British Department of Education is launching a new form of diversity: it wants to attract more men into the teaching profession. Last year, 105,000 female students were undertaking teacher training in Britain as opposed to just 31,000 males. But a drive to recruit older people, choosing to teach as a second career, is proving successful, and more older men are training to teach. “It's vital for boys to have role models in their male teachers,” says recruiter Katie Waldegrave, of the second-career organisation ‘Now Teach’. Absolutely so!

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Church in Ireland 'not to blame' for largest institutions that locked people away, says leading psychiatrist

Staff reporter

A leading Professor of Psychiatry has said that the Church cannot be blamed for the largest institutions in Ireland used by communities to lock people away from society.

Brendan Kelly of Trinity College Dublin has just published a new book, *In Search of Madness: A Psychiatrist's Travels Through the History of Mental Illness*.

In it, he points out how in the 1800s large mental asylums were built all over the world and societies and communities used these institutions to fill them with people with mental illness, with the intellectually disabled, or with those who were simply odd or eccentric.

Ireland was no different in that respect where, he said, "we used so many institutions, mother and baby homes, industrial schools, magdalen laundries".

However, he insisted: "interestingly, the

Roman Catholic Church did not run our mental hospitals which were the biggest institutions of all of these, by a very long chalk.

"So the usual, the current narrative in Irish history, which is that we blame the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed it is blameworthy in many respects - but we don't have that for the largest institutions in our history, which were the mental hospitals".

He also commented on the programs of sterilisations that were introduced in some

European countries in the 1930s for those in mental asylums. In Germany in 1939, he said it escalated to a program of killing people with mental illness and neurological disorders.

He added: "This was consistent with eugenics, which was a movement in psychiatry at the time, but not interestingly in Ireland. The idea of eugenics didn't particularly catch on among the Irish asylum doctors". He did not elaborate as to why.

Ukraine Redemptorists 'moved' by Irish support

Chai Brady

The Redemptorists in Ukraine have been "moved" by the Irish generosity funnelled through the Redemptorists in Ireland, as tonnes of aid is continually sent, including a generator worth €18,000 which arrived on Holy Saturday.

Full of gratitude

Cork-based Fr Gerry O'Connor CSsR, who coordinates the order's response, told *The Irish Catholic* they are "full of gratitude" as the aid has allowed them to provide a vast variety of supports to those fleeing the war.

In an interview with Common Home TV, an apostolate of the Redemptorists,

Fr Taras Kchik CSsR who is based in Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine's south east hailed the efforts of Irish people to support their bakery and retreat house which has been converted to care for displaced persons. In addition a kindergarten has become a makeshift home for orphans who fled Kharkiv.

Fr O'Connor said the €18,000 generator went to Fr Kchik's community which "is fundamental because they're having serious power cuts and shortages".

"They are full of gratitude, there's so many dimensions to what they're going through. The Redemptorists in some places are literally living in basements," Fr O'Connor said.

"We're in 10 locations, in the west they're able to

move freely around, it's different in the north and the east. I receive a list every Monday morning of what is the most urgent requirements both for themselves but more often for health posts or centres, or where families are gathered, so we try and work on that then."

Powerful

He said that while money is generally the best thing to send, "there is something quite powerful about the expression of people to people aid, where people buy something and give to a reputable group who transport it. So they [Ukraine Redemptorists] would have been quite moved by that, but as time has moved on the request become more and more specialised".

Youth beacons of hope as 50 JPPII awards presented in Limerick

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy has said the young people across Limerick committed to playing a role in the Church are "beacons of hope".

Speaking as he presented 50 John Paul II Awards in Scoil Pól Kilfinane, Bishop Leahy praised the "inspirational young people".

"The work they have been doing in their local areas

is tremendous and brings such richness to their parishes, their local communities and to themselves," he continued.

"For many there is a realisation that young people have a significant role to play in the Church, this gives me great hope for the future."

Gold medal recipient Ciara O'Riordan said that being involved in the programme "has been a life

changing experience for me... this is something I will always treasure".

The Pope John Paul II award is a participation achievement award for young people aged 16-18. The award programme, which is sponsored by the Knights of Saint Columbanus, is coordinated by the pastoral outreach team in the Limerick Diocesan Centre.

Double ordination joy for Midwest



Two new priests, Fr Antun Pasalic and Fr Jaroslawa Kurka OSB, were ordained in the Midwest of Ireland last weekend.

Fr Pasalic, pictured (top) with his parents Marco and Andja and his aunt Sr Verica, was ordained as a priest to the diocese of Killaloe by Bishop Fintan Monahan on Sunday April 24, in the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Ennis, Co. Clare. They are pictured in front of the Croatian flag, Fr Pasalic's homeland.

Meanwhile, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O'Reilly SMA ordained Fr Kurka in Glenstal Abbey, where the new priest will serve. Fr Kurka is a native of Katowice, Poland, and is pictured above with Archbishop O'Reilly.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gospel music festival to bring back singing to Dublin

The Gospel Rising music festival is coming to Dublin City centre, promising to "bring singing back to Dublin after two years of silence".

The festival, which will take place June 17-19, will comprise workshops, social events and an outdoor concert to showcase Ireland's gospel choirs.

Full-weekend festival tickets are available

from €85 (excluding fees) from GospelRising.com.

Lindsay Rountree, a founding member, said "this year is particularly special as choirs return to singing together in person again after a two-year pause.

"It's great to be able to offer this opportunity to get people back together on this scale."

Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Why feminists are afraid of strong women

Here is a peculiar thing that is becoming more and more apparent in what passes for public discourse these days - Irish feminists don't seem to like strong, opinionated women.

That might seem counter-intuitive: after all, the whole point of feminism, one imagines, is to encourage women to be whatever they want to be. We certainly hear lots of lip service paid to the idea of women forging their own path from taxpayer-funded groups like the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC).

It's strange then, to see the furious and aggressive reaction of the feminist establishment when feisty women like, say, Carol Nolan or Maria Steen express an opinion that goes against the groupthink that is strangling basic liberties in this country.

Carol Nolan was the recipient of ferocious abuse from the champions of women's rights in Sinn Féin when she opposed abortion. Pro-life women are subjected to all kinds of revolting comments on social media. And last week, Meath Senator Sharon Keogan, was the object of undeserved belligerence when she dared to express concerns about commercial surrogacy.

From the vitriol Senator Keogan received from the other women at the Oireachtas committee, you might think she had expressed outlandish, extreme or downright objectionable opinions. That's not the case.

“The whole point of feminism, one imagines, is to encourage women to be whatever they want to be”

Remember that Senator Keogan was talking about commercial surrogacy - that is surrogacy where women, usually poor women from developing countries, are paid to carry a child. Many people have serious concerns about the practice.

Calm

She said - in a calm and measured way - that she wholeheartedly objected to what she called the commercialisation of the human child and the regulation of women to the status of “simply incubators or wombs for hire”. She added that she believed that surrogacy was harmful

and exploitative and said she did not believe it was everyone's right to have a child. She asked those attending the hearing why most European countries did not allow commercial surrogacy, and why the Spanish High Court described it as “commercial exploitation of the child and the biological mother”. She also said that birth mothers should not be airbrushed out of the process. These are all fair questions, and you would think that in any genuine discussion by an Oireachtas committee of commercial surrogacy, her views would be respected and her questions answered.

Instead Senator Keogan was verbally attacked, in the most personalised way possible, and forced to leave the hearing.

Snarling

Her fellow senator, Lynn Ruane, led the charge, snarling that Ms Keogan was “bigoted” and “cold and cruel” - and telling her to “check your Christian values”. When Sharon Keogan objected, Ms Ruane continued to shout abuse at her. When Ms Keogan appealed to the acting chair, Kathleen Funchion of Sinn Féin, she in turn joined in the personalised criticism, as did Fine Gael Senator Mary Seery Kearney. It was performative outrage by politicians and campaigners who are so unaccustomed to being challenged that their reaction is to launch a personalised attack on anyone who dares to disagree. The aim was not just to vilify Ms Keogan, but to shut the debate down.

So, what was the reaction of the arch-feminists, such as *The Irish Times* columnist, Una Mullally? Certainly not to defend the right of the only woman in the Seanad who dares to ever express a different opinion.

Instead, Ms Mullally, writing for the paper which undoubtedly sees itself as the standard bearer for modern feminism, mused about “what should we do when senators go too far?”.

The royal ‘we’ being employed here refers to the elite feminists who decide what the rest of us women must think on everything from family, to children, to jobs, and abortion. There can be no room for diversity when it comes to what women are allowed to say, it seems.

“What processes are in place to sanction senators when they go too far? What protections do we actually have within our political



Senator Sharon Keogan

chambers to counter misinformation and conspiracy? Should people be able to say whatever they want, even when it's tinged with conspiracy, misinformation or disinformation?” Ms Mullally asks.

Sanction senators when they go too far? Sanction Sharon Keogan because she raises reasonable concerns about surrogacy which often exploits poor and desperate women. Who made Una Mullally the ‘Big Brother’ of Irish women and their words?

“What protections do we actually have within our political chambers to counter misinformation and conspiracy?”

Irish feminism has now turned into the very opposite of what it set out to be. It attacks and demonises women who know their own minds and are unafraid to use their voice to stand up for those being exploited - or express an opinion which, while it might not find favour in the corridors of power, is shared by a great many ordinary Irish women.

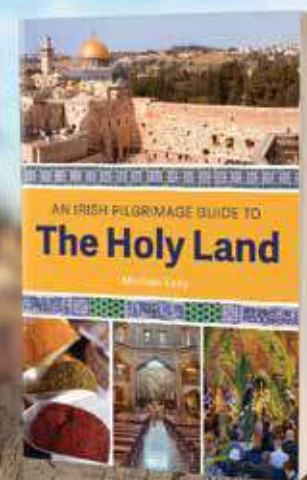
Irish feminists might be afraid of strong, opinionated women who disagree with their woke nonsense, but here's something they need to realise. Those feisty women are not afraid of them.

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Creative Responses to a Complicated



NET MINISTRIES IRELAND

Recently, a group of secondary school students visited the NET Ministries Ireland offices in Ballybofey. The way it happened was interesting. I had been walking past the secondary school chatting with a visiting priest who suggested that we stop and pray. This was around 4pm, and the students started coming out of the school. So, we prayed unobtrusively for a moment

and continued on. "That is the future of the Church," the priest commented. I could see his point. Those mostly baptised young people are, whether they know it or not, going to make up a large part of the Body of Christ in Ireland for the next sixty or seventy years. Do they understand the dignity of that identity? The degree to which they live out their baptismal calling is the degree to which

the Church will be healthy, thriving and flourishing in this century.

The next morning in our daily staff prayer we prayed for all Irish young people, for protection against the challenges they face - depression, anxiety, suicide, pornography, gambling, families breaking up, pressure for the future. Not two hours later, five of them had taken advantage of the beginning of the Easter holidays and had landed on our doorstep. The afternoon turned synodal when Tony, our director engaged them in conversation, and they ended up talking over each other in

their eagerness to give their opinions and ask questions. What was required that day was not a deluge of theology or even an invitation to youth group - but a place to stand in out of the rain and a straightforward answer to the questions they wanted to ask.

“The young people came back a few days later and brought a dozen friends”

There is no one program, approach or plan that will definitely make our

Churches full again. A complicated and messy problem requires a creative and flexible solution – the creativity of the Holy Spirit. A NET missionary, indeed a Christian, is only a person who has encountered the Risen Jesus in his or her own life and wants to tell other people about the difference that He has made. Seeking to employ those creative solutions, there is a pattern that NET missionaries will follow in the course of their work:

1. Meet the young people where they are
2. Build an authentic friendship with them
3. Create spaces for them to become a part of parish life so they can:
4. Invite the young person to an encounter with Jesus through sharing the missionary's own story of faith
5. Walk with them along the path of Christian discipleship.

Meet young people where they're at

Recently, members of the Delvin NET team had the privilege of leading a RE class, at which was present young Ukrainian refugees. The team recounted how at first the Ukrainians, (seated together at a table so the one English speaker among them could translate for the others,) didn't want to

participate in the lesson, which included reading the Bible. The team respected this wish but kept an eye out in case that changed. As the lesson went on, the Ukrainian group abandoned their other work and started whispering together. The team saw that they had picked up a Bible from a nearby table and the English speaker among them was translating what the missionaries were telling the rest of the class. This building up trust and friendship is merely the beginning of the work. The young people in a given parish will, over the course of the NET year, encounter the Gospel spoken about casually over coffee, played out in prayer, music and liturgy, lived out in service and offered intentionally in sharing the missionaries' own journey of faith. When young people are invited to be serious about their faith, to lay down their lives in service, they also become serious about their future, and that leads to discernment of a vocation, and to taking each challenge that comes through the lens of faith. No story in the NET annals proves this more clearly than the story of Ted Andrew, who passed into eternity three years ago this week on 25th April 2019. After serving as a NET missionary in Waterford he became a NET staff



Problem Being Found in Youth Ministry



member responsible for working with missionaries and mission partners to ensure that the work in parishes and schools was funded. In 2017, he was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma. After spending six months in Beaumont Hospital, still working for NET from his bed, he returned to Canada. Throughout his suffering he never let go of a desire to discern the priesthood,

and became friendly with his diocese' vocations director. In a letter sent his after his death, the vocations director recounted that while he was still sick Ted had promised to offer up his suffering for others thinking about a vocation to the priesthood and religious life. I don't think it is an accident that 15 former NET missionaries are now in active formation and discernment of

vocations to priesthood and religious life - many of whom decided to do so in the years since Ted's death, and many in Ireland. When young people are given the space, support and opportunity to encounter Jesus in a personal way and get serious about their faith, the fruit that will be borne in their lives is the creativity and flexibility that will bring many hearts back.



Ted Andrew

To help bring young people back to the Catholic faith, please sponsor a NET missionary. Donate today!

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Ukrainian faithful praise Elphin diocese for Easter celebrations



The congregation which celebrated Mass in the Byzantine rite at Sligo cathedral on Saturday



Fr Vasyl Kornitsky blesses some of the congregation.



Parishioners enjoy a dinner.

Chai Brady

The Ukrainian community in Ireland enjoyed an Easter Mass in the Byzantine rite in Sligo cathedral on Saturday.

Chaplain to the Ukrainian community in Dublin Fr Vasyl Kornitsky cel-

ebrated the Mass and Bishop Kevin Doran of the Diocese of Elphin attended and addressed the congregation.

After the consecration of Easter cakes, Irish parishioners organised a dinner and a concert with traditional Irish music for Ukrainians.

The Ukrainian Catholic Church in

Ireland Facebook page expressed their gratitude for the event stating: "We would like to express our great thanks to Bishop Kevin Doran and the Diocese of Elphin who invited and helped organise the Easter Liturgy for our Ukrainians living in these neighbourhoods."

The Irish Catholic

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Chaplain to the Ukrainian community in Dublin Fr Vasyl Kornitsky consecrates Easter cakes.



Ukrainians enjoyed some traditional Irish music.



Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin addresses the congregation.



Irish parishioners organise some dancing for the Ukrainian community after the Mass.

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Christ in the mission of the Church

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke bridges the gap between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church founded on the apostles. "He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for 40 days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). We are not given an account of all these appearances, but the encounters which are described follow a certain pattern. The people soon to encounter the Risen Lord are in a dark place. The Lord comes among them but, at first, they do not recognise him by the ordinary means of sight or sound of voice. Then the Lord says or does something which activates their faith into recognising the divine presence. The key to interpreting each encounter lies in the sign the Lord gave them to reveal his identity. For instance, Mary Magdalen did not recognise him by sight or even by hearing his voice. It is when he calls her by name that she makes recognition. We come to know the Lord when we recognise a personal call to a strong relationship with God.

"I have called you by your name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had lost hope and direction. Even when the Lord joined them and explained the Scriptures for them, they still did not recognise him until he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and gave it to them. These actions repeat what the Lord did at the institution of the Blessed Eucharist at the last supper. Their eyes were opened and they recognised him.

Christ's mission

The Gospel for today (John 21: 1-19) describes the miraculous catch of fish which was a sign of the expansive mission of the Church which would be founded on the apostles at the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The scene has changed from the claustrophobia of the locked doors in the room in Jerusalem to the open air by the Sea of Galilee. Seven of the disciples had gone back fishing. In John's Gospel, seven is a number always linked with the divine presence. Among the seven were Peter and the sons of Zebedee who had witnessed the earlier miraculous catch of fish at the beginning



The Sea of Galilee
Photo: CNS

of the mission of Jesus. Jesus then called them, "Follow me and I will make you into fishers of people." Now they had gone back to their former occupation as if they still did not appreciate the mission to which they were being called. Although they were experienced fishermen, labouring on their own they caught nothing.

Both miracles of fish took place by the Sea of Tiberias, given this name in honour of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor"

"It was light by now", indicating the new day of re-created humanity. But the eyes of the disciples still laboured under the dark of night and they failed to recognise the presence of Jesus on the shore. Even his voice they did not recognise when he instructed them on where to cast their nets. It is when they see the huge catch of fish that the Beloved disciple exclaims, "It is the Lord!"

In the mission of the future Church, acting on their own would be in the dark and unproductive. But when the

word of God directs human effort, the mission of the Church is full of divine power.

One hundred and fifty-three fish, we are told. Commentaries have suggested several interpretations of this number. The most likely is the suggestion of St Jerome that it is the number of species of fish known at that time, indicating that the mission of the Church would be to all nations. The net was not torn, a sign of unity in a community of diverse nations and cultures.

On the shore Jesus has prepared a breakfast of bread and fish for them. This menu recalls Chapter Six of John's Gospel which begins with the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and develops into the promise of the Eucharist, "I am the bread of life which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this

bread shall live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Peter's role

Both miracles of fish took place by the Sea of Tiberias, given this name in honour of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor. All other Gospel references to this place call it the Sea of Galilee. Why does this Gospel give the Roman name to the lake? It is likely that the evangelist wanted to link this episode with the role of Peter in the mission of the Church. By settling in Rome, Peter made it the geographical centre of the missionary Church and there he was led to martyrdom. At the end of today's Gospel Jesus indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God.

Peter, warming his hands by a charcoal fire had three

times denied any acquaintance with Jesus. Seeing Jesus on the shore cooking by a charcoal fire must have startled Peter. Three times he had denied Jesus, but three times the merciful Lord invited him to express how the depth of his love far surpassed his failures in the moments of threat to his life. "Lord, you know that I love you." He is then appointed the shepherd of

the flock. "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

The whole story is a great meditation on the presence of the Risen Lord in the mission of the Church, in human effort directed by the word of the Lord, in the mission to all nations, nurtured by the Eucharistic presence of the Lord as the bread of life, and following the leadership of Peter who was appointed to feed the flock.

Prayer

O Lord, we can relate to the aching muscles and empty nets, the tiredness of frustrating work, the disappointment of labouring in the dark.

You stand on the shore unrecognised, a stranger calling to us. Even when you speak, we do not recognise your voice.

Risen Lord, may the memory of this story strengthen our faith to see that you are

always present, even though hidden in the morning mist.

May we hear your word, take it to heart and translate it into action.

May we ever rejoice to accept your invitation to the sacred meal you provide for us.

May we experience the thrill of excitement in recognising your presence.

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The new politics: nationalism versus internationalism



The term 'far-right' obscures more than it reveals writes **David Quinn**

Politics has probably become confusing for a lot of people. I follow politics obsessively, and I find it hard to keep track of the rise of new parties across Europe. The breakdown of the traditional left/right divide has made it more difficult to work out which party stands on what side of that dividing line, or if it is even relevant.

For years in Ireland our choice was basically between a Fianna Fáil government on the one hand, or an alternative comprised of Fine Gael and Labour. That hasn't been the case for a long time now. The current situation is that parties can go into power in almost any combination. Who would ever have thought we would see Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil in government together, or that Fianna Fáil would shrink to the point where it represents only about one in four voters? Who would have thought Sinn Féin would become so popular, especially with younger voters?

In Britain, it is still basically a case of the Conservatives versus Labour, but with the twist that many working class voters have switched to the Conservatives, for the time being anyway.

“President Macron is extremely pro-abortion. In fact, he recently said it should be made a ‘fundamental right’”

In America, the two main parties remain the Republicans and the Democrats, but again with the twist that a lot of the working class now vote Republican.

In Germany with the rise of alternative parties, the recently retired German chancellor, Angela Merkel, spent most of her time in power leading a Christian Democrat/Social Democrat coalition, equivalent to Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being in power together here.

Meanwhile in France, last weekend's presidential election was not between the candidate of the Socialist Party and the candidate of The Republicans (the successor of the Gaullist party) as was the case for decades. They did incredibly badly in the first round of the presidential election and the two run-off candidates were Emmanuel Macron, who



French president Emmanuel Macron. Photo: CNS

formed his own party, En Marche, just five years ago, and Marine Le Pen of the National Rally, which is labelled 'far-right'. Mr Macron is centrist.

If I were French, my political leanings would be towards the Gaullist Republicans. But as in Ireland, it would have been extremely difficult for a Catholic voter who takes issues like the family and the right-to-life very seriously to find a candidate to hang their hat on. It certainly wasn't Mr Macron or Ms Le Pen.

President Macron is extremely pro-abortion. In fact, he recently said it should be made a 'fundamental right' across the whole of the European Union. Ms Le Pen doesn't even want to cut public funding for abortion. She used to be against same-sex marriage (as most French people were) but has now changed her mind. Neither Ms Le Pen nor Mr Macron are practising Christians.

Label

Despite Ms Le Pen being constantly labelled 'far-right', this designation obscures more than it reveals. It probably gives the average person the impression that she favours a one-party state, as genuine fascists did, and the suspension of democracy. But that is not the case.

The main reason she is called 'far-right' is because of her stance on immigration. She wants to ban the wearing of the Muslim veil in public, she wishes to place very strong

limits on immigration from outside the EU, and she also wants employers to favour French citizens over immigrants when hiring workers.

She wishes to reduce the influence of the EU over France, restoring more power to the member-states. In general, she wants France to make more decisions for itself, and not delegate so much power to either the EU or NATO.

On economics, she is decidedly to the left, and favours generous social welfare benefits, an early retirement age, and increased public spending generally, regardless of the high level of government debt in France.

“Politicians like Donald Trump in America, Ms Le Pen in France and Viktor Orban in Hungary are nationalists who want strong borders”

Mr Macron wants more EU integration, the reform of the French economy to make it more free market, to raise the retirement age, and he is not as strict about immigration as Ms Le Pen. However, in general French politics now favours cutting back non-EU immigration, especially, it would seem, from Muslim countries because of worries about assimilating a large Muslim population into France and

the growth of Muslim extremism in a country that has seen some savage terrorist attacks.

Almost everyone in French politics, including Mr Macron, seems critical of so-called 'woke' politics, in particular when it attacks French historical figures for their involvement in France's colonial history.

In the end, Mr Macron won 58.5% of the vote versus 41.5% for Ms Le Pen. The two had also faced each other five years ago when Ms Le Pen won 33% of voters. It was a comfortable win for Mr Macron, although a lot of his support came from people who don't like him but dislike Ms Le Pen far more.

Support

Where did most of Ms Le Pen's support come from? The answer is from rural France, the working class, and those aged roughly between the ages of 30 and 60.

Retired people and the most affluent were the most likely to vote for Mr Macron.

These voting patterns are why it is basically impossible to see what happened in France through a traditional left-right lens.

Those most concerned about their livelihoods because they have low-income work, voted for Ms Le Pen, whereas not so long ago they would have voted Socialist.

A better read to interpret what is going on is as follows: politicians like Donald Trump in America, Ms

Le Pen in France and Viktor Orban in Hungary are nationalists who want strong borders. This means less immigration in order to protect local workers, and less ceding of national sovereignty to international bodies. They want to roll back economic globalisation to a certain extent so that fewer jobs go overseas.

“Mr Macron wants more EU integration, the reform of the French economy to make it more free market”

This message resonates very strongly with many working class and rural voters. It helps to explain Brexit also.

Mr Macron, on the other hand, is very much in favour of globalisation and international bodies, especially the EU. He is, in that sense, a liberal internationalist in the mould of Micheál Martin and Leo Varadkar. They do not mind ceding a sizable and growing amount of national sovereignty to multinational organisations, whether that be the EU or the UN.

In some countries (the US, Poland, Hungary), pro-life and family issues often feature strongly. In other countries, such as France or Britain, they are barely mentioned.

But if you want to try and understand the shifting landscape of international politics, the best way is no longer to think of left versus right, but as nationalist versus internationalist. That doesn't capture the full complexity of what is happening, but it goes a considerable distance towards doing so.

“Almost everyone in French politics, including Mr Macron, seems critical of so-called ‘woke’ politics”

Journeying towards God in Tandem



A new programme for young couples is seeking to help them grow individually, as a couple and in communion with God and their neighbours, writes **Jason Osborne**

Once the wedding is done and dusted, couples are often left adrift, figuring marriage out on their own. While it can be done, as with everything else on life, wisdom from those who've gone before is invaluable in preparing inexperienced couples for dealing with the many trials, and joys, of the path they've set out on.

It was an awareness of this that prompted the development of Tandem, a programme open to engaged or recently married couples. Based on a Christian ethos and born out of the French 'Teams of Our Lady' movement, it seeks to help young couples develop and deepen their relationship, as well as their communion with couples in similar circumstances.

Recently started in Ireland, it's not a pre-marriage or counselling course. Tandem consists of 14 meetings spread over roughly a year and a half, with the possibility of in-person or online meetings. The first batch of meetings with the first couples has been conducted entirely online, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but ideally, those taking part would be in a position to meet in-person – possibly sharing a dinner at one of the participating couples' home as they do so.

Each meeting sees the young couples gathering together with an accompanying couple or two, as well as a priest, who joins the couples on their journey. A new subject is discussed at every session, the topics ranging from money management in marriage to in-laws, the place God has in our marriage to how we use our free-time. Essential elements of marriage maintenance such as conflict resolution and time management are up for discussion too, providing a full range from the utterly spiritual to the utterly practical.

Programme

Bringing the programme to Ireland and accompanying the couples taking part currently are Ilaria and Pierpaolo Dondio, married for 17 years, and Anne and Mark O'Leary, married 32 years. Both couples participating in the Teams of Our Lady movement, when the opportunity to bring a non-committal programme to Ireland for young couples arose, they both leapt at it.



Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Anne says that the Tandem project for young couples was initiated by Teams of Our Lady in France in 1995, when the French bishops came forward and asked them to devise a programme for engaged and recently married couples.

“Each meeting sees the young couples gathering together with an accompanying couple or two, as well as a priest, who joins the couples on their journey”

“It was started in France and it was requested by the French bishops to Teams of Our Lady, or *Equipes Notre Dame*, to come up with a programme to offer to parishes for engaged couples and young, married couples as a

support for their marriage... It originally extended over 22 months,” she tells this paper.

“I think from the French bishops' perspective, when they looked at *Equipes Notre Dame*, they saw that *Equipes Notre Dame* is a long-term commitment because every couple commits each year...whereas Tandem, I suppose part of their thing was to set up a finite programme that couples could come to, could taste what's on offer, in different movements, but obviously in particular I suppose taste what was on offer from a Teams of Our Lady perspective over the 22 months,” Mark says.

Couples

Teams of Our Lady started in 1938, when four young, committed Catholic couples approached Fr Henri Caffarel in the hope of deepening their marriages and their faith. “Let us look and seek together,” he reportedly replied, and so in 1939, the first meeting took place in Paris. During

the following meetings, the couples' love and appreciation of the Sacrament of Marriage developed such that the Charter of Teams of Our Lady came into existence and their notion of married spirituality was filled out, spreading throughout Europe, and to North and South America.

Model

It was from this group and this model that Tandem was born. When considering the dearth of options for young couples, Pierpaolo says the choice to bring it to Ireland was obvious.

“[It's] based on the idea that there is little about for young couples at the moment. If you consider Accord, it's for marriage preparation, but what do you do after that? What do you do before that, also? Tandem goes where there is a need,” he says.

Both Pierpaolo and Ilaria are originally from Italy, and Ilaria says that there, it's much the same situation young couples find themselves in.

“I would like to say that in Italy, for example, we are Italian, it's the same. We were in Italy for the first year of marriage, really. The idea is that you do the marriage preparation and then you're on your own. After the marriage, you're on your own. There's not so much to help young couples to get started, you know?”

“As wonderful as it is to get married, you often feel alone and it's 'Now what?' after the wedding...But for young people, when we read the programme of Tandem, the fact that it deals with also practicalities – not only with the spirituality – because it's great to be spiritual, but often as a young couple, especially, you have practical issues to fix, to be able to discuss in a serene way, not as a fight.

“When considering the dearth of options for young couples, Pierpaolo says the choice to bring it to Ireland was obvious”

“I found that Tandem was just great; it had a little bit of both [practicality and spirituality]. Even the fact that it's limited in time, you know, that its meetings are numbered. It's not daunting, you know? Because if you say to a just-married couple, well, Teams is sort-of forever, it's a long-term commitment, it can be, well, 'Now we are busy, or we are still finding our way'. I found that it really responded to the needs of a Christian, young couple,” she says.

The idea of having both “accompanying” couples and a priest attend the meeting is that the vocations of both provide an irreplaceable richness for the young couples taking part.

“The idea is that both sacraments, the Sacrament of Marriage as explained and discussed by the couples at the meetings will enrich the priest, and the priest's Sacrament of



Pierpaolo and Ilaria Dondio.

the Holy Orders, with all his knowledge and theology and prayer life, will enrich the couples, so it's very nice," Ilaria says.

Programme's content

Tandem's first outing in Ireland is drawing to a close, with nine couples split into two teams of four and five couples having discussed the vast majority of the programme's content.

"When we started we had three engaged couples and they're all married now," Mark says, with his wife Anne saying that the couples' reception of the content, participation and feedback has been just "brilliant".

"I mean, it just has been a wonderful experience for us as an accompanying couple...we didn't know what we were getting into. It was a new programme and at the start you don't know the level of faith, but in this instance obviously, it excelled. But you may get another group and you have to allow for that, that may not have as much spirituality or whatever. You just go with where couples are at," she says.

"Having started the programme, it kind of reminds me of our involvement from a good few years back, we were involved for a good few years in marriage preparation courses," Mark says.

"I must say that we'd come away from the residential weekends and we would have got as much out of the weekend as any of the engaged couples who were actually doing the weekend. I think... these Tandem meetings that we

come away – well, we certainly come away humbled a lot of the time – but with a buzz and saying, 'Well, we've got as much out of that meeting'. Despite the fact that we mightn't always contribute to every aspect of it because there might be enough contribution from the others, but we'd always end up coming away just overawed really."

Pierpaolo says that their participation in the running of the Tandem programme has given them a renewed sense of where the Faith is at among the young Faithful of Ireland – a positive sense, too.

“Having started the programme, it kind of reminds me of our involvement from a good few years back, we were involved for a good few years in marriage preparation courses”

"As Mark and Anne said, it was a very nice experience to see the faith of young people so strong, even stronger than ours...all these movements are aging in Ireland and there are lots of people who just say that the young generation is lost. It's not interested anymore," he says.

"Thanks to Tandem, I can say, 'Well, I have a different experience'. Thanks to Tandem, I found young people very committed. Maybe the quantity is less, but the quality is very high I

have to say, and this is a hope for the future of any lay movement and of the Church in general. Thanks to Tandem, I experienced that young people are really – they can have a very complex, elaborated idea of faith. The ability of sharing, to build a community, so it's very positive for me."

Future

Asked about the future of the programme in Ireland considering its extremely positive reception among the participating couples and, admittedly, strange beginnings – because of Covid – they respond that they're willing to proceed however best suits the needs of the young couples they encounter.

"Ideally, we'd love to have a group in person. Whether it is parish-based or even Dublin-based or locally because it would serve the complete experience, but if that's not possible, we are happy to go on online, in Zoom, because, again, we are a service," Ilaria says.

"We want to provide this service and we'll do it in the best way for our couples. As for where to go next, again, I would say we are at the service of people asking for the programme. So, in the same way, our aim is to be ready. That's what happened with the first round, we had the programme ready and then one couple came up and they said, 'Oh, we would like to do something as a couple'. And we said there's either Teams of Our Lady or this brand new programme, Tandem for young couples. Then it was like wildfire. In two, three weeks we had nine couples."



Mark and Anne O'Leary.

Pierpaolo says that word of mouth is the best way for the programme to spread, as it belies a real enthusiasm to engage with the content.

"I think that when Mark mentioned the beginning of Teams of Our Lady, it was four couples going to Fr Caffarel, the founder, to start the group, and then they invited friends and friends of other friends, so it went 'viral'," he laughs.

"In my opinion, that's the best way to grow the movement. We

also tried to promote it through traditional channels, but I hope the future will be word of mouth."

While there is the possibility of it taking a more structured approach in future, they're happy to continue going as they are, trusting that God will send them out to guide and advise his young and eager flock.

i For more information about the Tandem programme, you can visit the website tandemteams.ie

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Prof. Eamonn Conway presents the book on synodality to Pope Francis while a papal aide looks on. Photos: Vatican Media

Papal nod for Mary Immaculate education project

Plea for Catholic schools to foster peace

**Michael Kelly
in Rome**

Pope Francis has urged Catholic schools in Ireland to form students to work for mutual coexistence and peace in a fractured world.

The Pontiff took time out of his busy Easter Week schedule to meet with representatives from the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) project at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick led by Rev. Prof. Eamonn Conway.

Highlight

Encouraging the work of GRACE to “highlight the distinctiveness of our Catholic vision of education” Pope Francis warned that: “In an age awash in information, often transmitted without wisdom or critical sense, the task of forming present and future generations of Catholic teachers and students remains as important as ever.

“As educators, you are called to nurture the desire for truth, goodness and beauty that lies in the heart

of each individual, so that all may learn how to love life and be open to the fullness of life,” the Pontiff said speaking to the group in during a private audience at the Vatican on Easter Wednesday.

Presenting the group to the Pontiff, Prof. Conway said that: “Those who stand here before you are in the front line of Catholic education in Ireland, teaching children of all ages as well as university students.

“We have a saying in the Irish language, *Ní neart go cur le chéile*, which means that strength comes from working together. The more experienced among us try to hand on our experience, of successes as well as failures; the younger inspire us with their enthusiasm and their energy,” Prof. Conway said.

Before meeting each participant individually, the Pope told them that: “Our faith is a great grace that each of us must daily nurture and help others to nurture as well. In the light of faith, educators and students alike come to see each other as beloved children of the God who created us to be brothers and sisters in the one human family.

Education

“On this basis, Catholic education commits us, among other things, to the building of a better world by teaching mutual coexistence, fraternal solidarity and peace. It is my hope that your discussions in these days will assist you in developing effective means of fostering these values at all levels of your academic institutions and in the minds and hearts of your students.

“At the same time, Catholic education is also evangelisation: bearing witness to the joy of the Gospel and its power to renew our communities and provide hope and strength in facing wisely the challenges of the present time. I trust that this study visit will inspire each of you to rededicate himself or herself with generous zeal to your vocation as educators, to your efforts to solidify the foundations of a more humane and solidary society, and thus the advancement Christ’s kingdom of truth, holiness, justice and peace,” he said.

At the end of the audience, Prof. Conway pre-

“In an age awash in information, often transmitted without wisdom or critical sense, the task of forming present and future generations of Catholic teachers and students remains as important as ever”



Pope Francis addressing the delegates at the private audience in the Vatican.



Zach Treacy meets the Pontiff while his father Patrick looks on.

The full delegation with Pope Francis in the Auletta Paolo VI.



sented Pope Francis with a new book *The Synodal Pathway: When Rhetoric Meets Reality* which Prof. Conway co-edited with Fr Eugene Duffy and Mary McDaid. The Pope said that he particularly liked the sub-title of the book 'when rhetoric meets reality' and said this is key to understanding the synodal journey in the Church.

Partnership

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) is an international research-based partnership between Mary Immaculate College Limerick, Boston College, United States, the University of Notre Dame Fremantle, Australia, and St Mary's University in Twickenham, London. GRACE also works in partnership with OIEC (International Office of Catholic Education) and provides an original opportunity for scholars of Catholic education and theology in the respective countries to affirm, study, collaborate, and respond meaningfully to challenges in the field.



Pope Francis with Prof. Conway.



The group listen intently as the Pope reflects on Catholic education.



Pope Francis with *The Synodal Pathway* by Columba Books.



The presentation of the book in the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican pictured (l-r) Fr Eugene Duffy (co-editor), Sr Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ (under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops), Cardinal Mario Grech (Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops), Mary McDaid (co-editor), Fr Patrick Connolly (contributor), Janet Forbes (Irish Synodal Pathway) and Patrick Treacy SC (contributor).



Fr Patrick Connolly jokes with Pope Francis while Dr Patricia Kieran and Prof. Conway look on.

Dublin diocese's pilgrims return to Knock after three years



Archbishop Dermot Farrell giving the homily during Mass at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday.

Ruadhán Jones

Pilgrims from across Dublin diocese returned to Knock for the first diocesan pilgrimage since Covid restrictions were lifted.

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell celebrated Mass for the pilgrims, who visited Knock Shrine Saturday, April 23.

Archbishop Farrell said in his homily that Mary brings her family to the shrine "to see her and be seen by her".

"At this International Eucharistic and Marian shrine, you find strength in God to bear the weariness and suffering of your lives," he continued. "Mary offers you maternal comfort and love and indeed whispers in your ear, 'Let not your heart be troubled, am I not here who am your mother?' Mary, so accessible in prayer especially in time of need, especially in time of suffering, especially at a time when we need to bend the ear of her son Jesus Christ."

Celebrating the pilgrimage Mass on Easter Saturday, Dr Farrell prayed that the pilgrims may meet the reassuring presence of Mary as they try to carry their cross or crosses in life.

"At some moment, our eyes will open and we will recognise the crucified Lord in the risen Christ who is actually walking with us at this moment," he said.

"The Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, who is also his first and perfect disciple, shows us the way."



A group from Maynooth Teresa Bennett, Miriam Ardiffe, Liam and Betty Brilly with Rita O'Reilly at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday.



A group from Rathmines and Rathgar last Saturday.



Pilgrims relax on Saturday before Mass in Knock.



The Dublin diocesan pilgrimage to Knock took place Last Saturday, April 23, the first organised diocesan pilgrimage since Covid restrictions were lifted. Pictured are a group of pilgrims from the Parish of the Travelling People at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday. Photos: John McElroy.



Margaret O' Mahony from Maynooth filling up her holy water bottles.



Pauline and Kevin Jenkinson, Theresa and John Flynn with Bernadette and Brendan Darcy from Jobstown, Tallaght.



A group from Malahide and Portmarnock on their way to Knock.



Tatjana Sator with Fr Gerhard Osthuies from Maynooth Parish.



Christine McDonagh and her daughter Ciara with Natalie McDonnell, Chelsea McDonnell and Nadine McDonnell at Knock last Saturday.



Fr Paul Thornton with Eamonn and Brid Harrington from Brackentown Parish at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday.



The choir in full voice during Mass at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday.



Archbishop Dermot Farrell meets families after the Mass on Saturday at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock.



Noelle Javurek, Roxana Pal, Eoin Mc Cormack, Damian Korus, Matthew Donahoe and Abigail Donahoe at the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock last Saturday.

Family fun at Arise Easter conference



Families and young adults listen to a talk from Fr Frankie Mulgrew during Arise Easter conference.

Ruadhán Jones

More than 200 families and young adults attended Arise's Easter conference in Tramore, Co. Waterford, for a weekend of Mass, talks, drama and family fun.

The Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan celebrated Mass during the conference, while Edith Farley gave a talk on the blessing of family life.

Christian theatre group Rise also performed, getting the audience involved, along with mime artist Steve Murray.



Christian theatre group Rise theatre performing.



Guest speaker Fr Frankie Mulgrew is pictured with event co-ordinator Tim Nichols.



Bishop Cullinan speaks to children at the family conference.



Wilma Galea and Amanda Nolan enjoying a chat at Arise.



Edith Farley gives a talk during the conference.



Mime artist Steve Murray entertains the audience.



Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan meets families during the conference.

Out&About

Awaiting the Son-rise



DUBLIN: On Easter morning people from the Church of Ireland Rathfarnham parish and the Catholic parish of Rathfarnham and Ballyroan gathered before sun rise for an Ecumenical Son-rise celebration on Montpelier Hill, April 17.



DOWN: A choir from St Colman's College Newry, are pictured in Newry Cathedral after the chrim Mass for Armagh diocese, celebrated by Archbishop Eamon Martin, April 14.



SLIGO: Fr Niall Ahern is pictured with the Ukrainian choir who performed during Easter Sunday Mass in St Patrick's Church, Strandhill, April 17.

INSHORT

Significant reduction in people sleeping rough in Dublin

The Peter McVerry Trust has welcomed the significant reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in Dublin, down 27% year-on-year.

Some 92 people were found sleeping rough in Dublin, according to figures from the Dublin Region Homeless Executive's spring rough sleeper count, which took place end of March-early April.

This figure is a reduction on the 125 individuals recorded in Spring 2021.

CEO of the Peter McVerry Trust Pat Doyle

said they are "delighted to see a 27% reduction year-on-year".

"While we have seen a big drop year-on-year there are of course 92 people still sleeping rough, there is, and will be, ongoing and constant intensive engagement with these individuals to ensure we offer them all appropriate support and help," Mr Doyle said.

He added that the DRHE's count provides "valuable insight", helping to "ensure that people who may not have linked with services previously are picked up by the street counters".

Mr Doyle credited the housing first model for the reduction in numbers, saying it has created hundreds of tenancies for people in recent years.

"It will play a key role in further reducing the number of people sleeping rough," he said.

PLC announces countrywide marches for life

The Pro-Life Campaign has announced that regional marches will take place across the country this summer and autumn, calling on people to "raise our voices loudly and clearly".

Regional events are being held May 20 in Cork, in Galway on May 21 and May 22 in Donegal, with a further event to be organised for Dublin in September.

The PLC hopes the marches will "shine a spotlight on Ireland's abortion law and to call for resources to be put in place to support and inform women about positive

alternatives to abortion", a spokesperson said in a statement.

"All three events will have excellent speakers, be family friendly and build momentum for change," they continued.

"It's time to raise our voices loudly and clearly. The silence surrounding the devastating impact of Ireland's abortion law has to end."

The PLC called on pro-life supporters to help make the marches "a huge success" by inviting friends and families to be present.

"Let's stand united to deliver change," the spokesperson finished by saying.

You can register for the march in your own area by visiting <https://marchforlife.ie/>. For more information, email info@marchforlife.ie.



MONAGHAN: Fr PJ McGinnity says a silent prayer at the diorama of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, in St Patrick's church, Bawn. The model is the work of local artist Celia Richards.



ROME: Newlyweds Gareth Robinson from Athlone, Co. Westmeath and Claire Robinson (nee McCarrick) from Newcastle, Co. Down meet Pope Francis in Rome.



CORK: Ger Fitzgerald receives her award for Western Division Individual Winner in Cork County Council Mayor's Community Award 2022 from Mayor Gillian Coughlan and Chief Executive Tim Lucey. Among her roles in community volunteering Ms Fitzgerald stewards at 9am Sunday morning Mass in St Patrick's Church, Bandon, April 20.



WEXFORD: Members of Wexford Light Opera Society - led by local parishioner Mag Gurhy - hold a cake sale in the grounds of Barntown church for Masses on Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday. Funds raised go towards the Society and its operatic endeavours.



DONEGAL: The Catholic Police Guild NI's communications officer Chief Inspector Graham Dodds enjoys a thoughtful and relaxing day on the Lough Derg pilgrimage walk.



WICKLOW: Fr Donal Roche Adm. lights the Paschal candle at St Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town. Photo: Susanna Braswell



DOWN: Three students from Queen's University Belfast's Catholic Chaplaincy were given instruction in the Faith at the Chaplaincy this semester and were received into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Owain and Anjali celebrated in St Brigid's Parish and Robbie (not pictured) in his home parish of Ballymoney. They are pictured with Shannon Campbell, Fr Eddie O'Donnell and Fr Dominic McGrattan, April 16.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DONEGAL: Pilgrims learn about Lough Derg on the holy site's first Pilgrim Path Day, April 18. To join the Loughshore Pilgrimage to walk and pray the Pilgrim Path with Fr La Flynn and team on selected dates in May, August and September, visit <http://loughderg.org>.



DUBLIN: Fr Gary Chamberland CSC and the staff of University Church and the Notre Dame-Newman Centre celebrate Easter together, April 17.



DUBLIN: Trinity student Isaac Stowe being baptised by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell during the Easter Vigil in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, April 16. Photo: John McElroy.



DUBLIN: Children and parents take part in an Easter egg hunt after Mass on Easter Sunday in Ballyroan parish, April 17.

ANTRIM

A Biblical walk with the Blessed Mother – online course and retreat day. The programme will begin on Monday May 2 at 7pm for five weeks meeting online and then concluding with a Retreat day on Saturday June 4, 10.00-4.30pm. Cost is £35. To register e-mail livingchurch@downandconnor.org.

The Knights of Columbanus centenary anniversary event to celebrate the anniversary of the death of its founder, Canon James O'Neill on May 6 and 7 at Marine Hotel, Ballycastle. Guests include Dr Eamon Phoenix and Mickey Harte.

ARMAGH

The Armagh Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock will be celebrated this year on Sunday May 29 joined by Dromore Diocese and the Knights of St Columbanus. For more details, see the Archdiocese's website.

CARLOW

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in Askea Church on Wednesdays from 10am to 5pm.

CORK

May Day procession at St Joseph's Church, Glanmire to Grotto will take place May 1 starting at 3pm and finishing at the Grotto at approximately 3.45. Benediction will take place afterwards.

DONEGAL

Buncrana weekly scripture reading and discussion group enters its 38th year. Assistance with formation of groups available. Contact Brian on 0872913186.

Rosary to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Three Rosaries are prayed each Tuesday between 1pm-2pm in The Oratory, Buncrana. All welcome.

DOWN

The Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help begins on Sunday May 1 at 7.30pm in St Patrick's Church, Banbridge.

DUBLIN

Young Adult Catholic Conference for those aged 18-40 takes place in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin on Saturday, April 30 10am-5pm. Cost €25 includes lunch. Search young adult Catholic conference on Eventbrite for more information and to book.

FERMANAGH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will take place every Wednesday from 10.30am to 3pm in the Sacred Heart Church, Irvinestown.

GALWAY

Our Lady of Clonfert May Masses and devotions 2022 - Masses will take place at the Shrine each night, Monday to Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday Mass at 7pm and Sunday Mass at 10.30am and 7pm. Mass also each Friday at 12noon for the month. Rosary and Benediction following evening Mass on Sundays on the 8, 15, 22 and 29.

Latin Mass celebrated the second Sunday of each month throughout 2022 in the Parish Church of St John the Baptist at 5.30pm.

KERRY

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Wednesday straight after 10.30am Mass until 1pm at St Mary's, Listowel.

KILKENNY

There will be a pilgrimage to Knock Shrine on Saturday May 7, organised by the Irish Catholic Nurses' Guild. For booking, please contact Ann Kennedy on 087 932 9561. Bus leaving The Butts Green at 7.30am.

LAOIS

Rosary prayed daily at 9.30am, 7pm and 9.30pm at Portlaoise Parish.

LEITRIM

Daily Rosary at St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village at 6pm. April 21 marked the second anniversary of the community initiative of Daily.

LIMERICK

The Legion of Mary weekly meetings take place in the Pastoral Centre, Doon on Tuesday evenings at 7pm. New members most welcome.

LONGFORD

Ardagh and Clonmacnois Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place May 23-27 with Msgr Bernard Noonan. Book through Joe Walsh Tours at 01 2410800.

LOUTH

Marist thanksgiving Mass for 40 years of service in Dundalk will take place on Friday, May 27 at 7pm at Holy Family Church, Dundalk. Archbishop Eamon Martin

will preside at this Mass and there will be refreshments afterwards in the Gaelscoil.

MAYO

Synodal Pathway meeting Tuesday, May 3, Swinford, the Gateway Hotel, at 8 pm. All welcome.

MEATH

Eucharistic Adoration - Sunday 1.15pm- 8pm at St Patrick's Trim.

MONAGHAN

Joseph's Triduum in Carrickmacross - three days of prayer, believing, hope and love at St Joseph's Church, Carrickmacross April 27, 28, 29.

ROSCOMMON

Sacred Heart Chapel, Roscommon Adoration: Tuesday: 1pm - 2pm. Thursday: 11am - 12noon, 5pm - 6pm. Friday: 1pm - 2pm. Saturday: 11am - 12noon, 2pm - 3pm.

SLIGO

Adoration every Wednesday, 7-10pm, Cliffoney Church and every Thursday, 7-9pm, Grange Church.

Synodal Pathway meetings: Wednesday, May 4, Ballisodare, the Parish Hall at 8pm. All welcome.

TYRONE

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will take place every Thursday starting after 10am Mass and finishing at 12pm at the parish of Termonamongan (Aghyaran).

WESTMEATH

Fellowship of Sobriety Weekend - the Céili Community in Kibeggan is hosting a "Sober Living" weekend from Friday 29 April to Sunday 1 May. If you would like attend contact the Céili Community at admin@ceilicomunity.ne.

WEXFORD

A Spirituality of Our Times Conference will take place on May 13 at Ballyvaloo Retreat and Conference Centre, Blackwater with speaker: Jane Mellett of Trocaire. Times: 10am - 4.30 pm Cost: €30 (includes lunch) pay at the door.

WICKLOW

Parents who wish to have a child baptised in the parish of Wicklow and Rathnew are asked to attend an introductory meeting before booking a date. The next meeting will be on Thursday - 28 April at 8pm. This meeting is via zoom with Fr Donal Neary.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Pope's agenda cancelled for medical check-ups

● Pope Francis' agenda was cleared on Friday for needed medical checkups, a Vatican spokesperson said.

Francis, who is 85 years old, has been suffering from pain in his right knee, causing him to take smaller roles in some Vatican liturgies and to remain seated more often.

"The Pope has slowed down his activities today because of medical checkups that are needed today. That is why the schedule is empty today," Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, said on April 22.

The Pope's movements have been visibly more limited since the start of the year.

Masks no longer necessary inside churches in Spain

● Given the improvement in the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic in Spain, a Royal Decree states that the use of masks indoors is no longer mandatory, but keeps in place the requirement for hospitals and public transportation.

The Archdiocese of Madrid issued a statement April 20 announcing the decree going into effect and

called for the Faithful to be prudent and for those at greater risk of the virus to take precautions.

The archdiocese pointed out that the Royal Decree recommends that "people with greater vulnerability" continue to wear a mask in "any situation in which there is prolonged contact with people at a distance of less than 1.5 meters," or about five feet.

US diocese to pay out \$87.5 million for abuse claims

● The Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, will pay \$87.5 million to approximately 300 alleged sexual abuse victims, under a settlement reached April 19.

The payout, one of the largest by a US diocese, would surpass the Archdiocese of Boston's historic 2003 settlement of almost \$85 million, the Associated Press reported. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has the largest settlement to date, \$660 million.

A US Bankruptcy Court judge in Camden still must approve the settlement.

Payments of the funds will roll out over a four-year period into a trust. The agreement also requires the diocese to keep "maintaining or enhancing" child protection protocols.

Ukrainian Catholics crowd Swedish cathedral on Easter

● The Cathedral of Stockholm, Sweden, was filled past capacity Easter Sunday as Ukrainian Catholics in the Scandinavian country celebrated the Easter liturgy.

"What happened was that some people were standing outside the church as it was too full and impossible to enter," Fr Andriy Melnychuk told CNA via email.

Fr Melnychuk is the rector

of the Ukrainian Catholic Mission in Stockholm, Sweden's only Catholic diocese. He said before the launch of full-scale war in Ukraine, around 400-600 Ukrainian immigrants attended the parish.

But he estimated that 700-800 Ukrainian Greek Catholics were present for the Divine Liturgy in St Erik's Cathedral on Sunday, April 17.

Pope: Catholic education vital in 'an age awash in information'

● "As educators, you are called to nurture the desire for truth, goodness and beauty that lies in the heart of each individual, so that all may learn how to love life and be open to the fullness of life," Pope Francis wrote in a message delivered to a delegation from English-speaking Catholic universities on April 20.

No trip to Kyiv and meeting with Russian patriarch cancelled, Pope says

The Vatican will never stop its diplomatic efforts to mediate an end to the war against Ukraine, Pope Francis said.

However, the meeting between the Pope and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow planned for June has been cancelled out of concern it could cause "confusion," and there will be no papal visit to Kyiv while war rages, the Pope said in an interview with the Argentine daily newspaper *La Nación* April 21.

Pope Francis told reporters April 2 he was considering a possible visit to the Ukrainian capital. But in his latest interview, he told *La Nación* that "I cannot do anything that puts higher objectives at risk, which are the end of the war, a truce or, at least, a humanitarian corridor."

"What good would it do for the Pope to go to Kyiv if the war were to continue the next day?" he said.

When asked about Patriarch Kirill, Pope Francis said, "I am sorry that the Vatican has had to suspend a second meeting with Patriarch Kirill, which we had scheduled for June in Jerusalem." Their first meeting had been in 2016 in Havana, the first time the Pope and Moscow patriarch had met personally.

Diplomatic team

He explained that the Vatican's diplomatic team understood that such a meeting "at this time could lead to much confusion." Personally, he said he seeks to promote fruit-



Pope Francis kisses a Ukrainian national flag from Bucha as he meets Ukrainian refugees during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican April 6. Photo: CNS

ful interreligious dialogue because mutual understanding or agreement "is better than conflict".

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, had confirmed April 7 that Pope Francis wanted to meet with Patriarch Kirill in a "neutral place," but that the patriarch's support for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his war on Ukraine could make a meeting inadvisable.

In early March, soon after the invasion, Cardinal Paro-

lin had told the Italian news agency ANSA, "Kirill's words do not favour and do not promote an understanding, on the contrary, they risk igniting tempers even more and going toward an escalation and not resolving the crisis peacefully."

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the Russian Orthodox Church, told reporters April 22 that "the events of the past two months neces-

sitated adjustments to the plans and postponement of the meeting.

"Too many problems would now arise during its preparations" in terms of security, logistics, coverage of the meeting in the public space, he said, according to Interfax. "We will wait for a better time for this event."

Pope Francis told *La Nación* that he is willing "to do everything" to end the bloodshed.

Priest says papal Congo visit will let world know about conflict

A Catholic priest in Congo said Pope Francis will be visiting the country not only to reconcile it, but also to tell the world "about the conflicts that are tearing this country apart".

The announcement of the Pope's July 2-5 visit "sounded like the voice of the angel of the Lord to the poor shepherds in the region of Bethlehem: 'I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people,'" said Fr Georges Kalenga, a member of the planning committee who is also second deputy secretary-general of the Congolese bishops' conference.

Fr Kalenga told *Catholic News Service* that the Pope will be visiting to reconcile a people blighted by the evils of "tribalism, regionalism and clientelism, the exclusion of political opponents, practices and discourses that weaken social ties, compromise national cohesion on several levels, particularly on the socio-political level."

Pope Francis will visit Kinshasa, the country's capital, but he also will travel to Goma, in the east. Fr Kalenga said Goma is "the place chosen symbolically for the Pope's meeting with the people

who live in the eastern part of the country, bloodied for more than two decades by wars, rapes, massacres and all the other violations of human dignity."

It's a war that has claimed at least 6 million lives, as the warring factions fight to plunder the country's resources.

Fr Kalenga said the region is also "a symbol of all the natural disasters that many people in Congo have suffered, including the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, earthquakes, floods and epidemics".

German diocese cuts ties with Planned Parenthood affiliate

Following complaints by survivors of sexual abuse, a German diocese has announced it will no longer cooperate with a Planned Parenthood-affiliated organisation, given accusations of "spreading paedophile-friendly views" in previous decades.

As CNA Deutsch reported, the Diocese of Würzburg announced it would cease its cooperation with the abortion-supporting organisation that calls itself Pro Familia as "soon as possible".

Bishop Franz Jung had announced this affiliation in

March 2022, saying his diocese had asked the organisation to "offer a first point of contact outside Church structures for those affected [by sexual abuse] and their relatives".

In a statement released April 20, the diocese cited

concerns raised by the abuse survivors' council, or *Betroffenbeirat*.

The body had pointed out that Pro Familia not only has a pro-abortion stance, but also stood accused of pushing for a "decriminalisation of paedosexuality" in previous decades.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie



A continued crisis



Evacuees in the southern port of Mariupol, Ukraine, wait before boarding a bus to leave the city April 20, during Ukraine-Russia conflict. Photo: CNS

Priest's unexplained expulsion from Russia fuels fears for foreign clergy

A Catholic priest was expelled from Russia without explanation, amid fears for the well-being of other clergy ministering in the country.

Fr Fernando Vera, a Mexican member of Opus Dei, left Russia in mid-April after being told his residence permit was revoked.

Fr Kirill Gorbunov, spokesman for the Russian bishops' conference, told *Catholic News Service* April 21 no reason had been given for the priest's expulsion,

adding that the Catholic Church had "no reason" to believe it was connected with the conflict in Ukraine.

"All he did was relay to people what our bishops had already said – there's no indication he went beyond that," Fr Gorbunov told CNS.

"The letter he received states that a person has the right to appeal, so we hope he'll reapply for a visa and have a chance to resume his service here."

"Although I haven't lis-

tened to his church homilies, I know him personally as a balanced, reasonable person, who wouldn't take radical positions. ... Most priests and religious order members here are foreigners, and their superiors abroad are growing worried about them, with some suggesting they should consider leaving Russia for their own safety."

Fr Vera most recently headed Moscow's Sts Peter and Paul Parish, one of three Catholic parishes in the capital.

Fr Gorbunov told CNS a Polish priest had recently returned home from Moscow, fearing it could become harder to leave in future. However, he added that other departures had not been "directly connected with the political situation."

He said Fr Vera's expulsion was believed the first since 2002, when Bishop Jerzy Mazur was arrested in Moscow while returning to Irkutsk and forcibly repatriated to Poland.

Bishops say Peru 'cannot stand the instability any longer'

Peru's Catholic bishops published a two-page plea to the country's leaders, urging them to address the current political crisis with "greater responsibility" and take "radical measures" to fight corruption.

"Our weak democracy cannot stand the instability any longer," the bishops wrote. "It is crucial that both the executive branch and the legislative branch bring together people who are well-qualified and above reproach" for top government jobs.

Special interests must be set aside, they said, "in order to establish an agenda of priorities that respond to the basic needs of the population, especially those who are poorest," and which guarantee stable governance.

The April 21 message came a day after the country's prime minister referred to Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancaayo as a "miserable" person, after the cardinal spoke publicly about a meeting he had had with President Pedro Castillo.

President Castillo, a rural elementary schoolteacher and teachers' union leader with no government experience, won the presidency in 2021 just months after a standoff between the executive and legislative branches caused the country to have three presidents in 10 days.

The president has been battling congressional opposition, as well as accusations of corruption and criticism for placing political cronies in top government jobs.

Vatican clears Polish cardinal of abuse cover-up allegations

● The Vatican has wrapped up its own investigation and dismissed allegations that Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz had covered up cases of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy in his archdiocese.

In a written statement released April 22, the Apostolic Nunciature in Poland said the Vatican found the cardinal had been "correct" in his actions after it examined the findings of an investigation led by Italian Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco.

Following a request by the Vatican, Cardinal Bagnasco, the retired archbishop of Genoa, was in Poland June 17-26, 2021, "to verify certain cases related to the actions of Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz" while he was archbishop of Krakow from 2005 until his retirement in 2016, the statement said.

"The analysis of the collected documentation made it possible to assess these actions of Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz as correct and, therefore, the Holy See decided not to proceed any further," it said.

In his own written statement released the same day, Cardinal Dziwisz said, "I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to a responsible response to the allegations made against me" and gratitude to the Vatican "for having judged the case fairly".

Benedict XVI's secretary in isolation after testing positive for Covid-19

● Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's personal secretary, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, has been in isolation for the past 10 days after testing positive for Covid-19, according to German media.

The German news agency, *Katholisch.de*, reported April 20 that Archbishop Gänswein has been in isolation since April 11, a time period that included all of the Easter Triduum and Benedict XVI's 95th birthday.

Benedict XVI has tested negative for Covid-19, according to Archbishop

Gänswein, as have all other residents of the Mater Ecclesiae monastery, the retired pope's residence inside of Vatican City.

While the 65-year-old personal secretary was unable to join the pope emeritus in celebrating his 95th birthday on Holy Saturday, Pope Francis paid a visit to Benedict XVI's residence ahead of his birthday on April 13.

Archbishop Gänswein has said that both he and Benedict XVI have received three doses of a Covid-19 vaccine.

Vatican delegation works on diplomatic ties in Vietnam

● A Vatican delegation travelled to Vietnam, hoping to accelerate a process for enhancing diplomatic ties between the Holy See and Vietnam.

On April 20, the three-member delegation, led by Msgr Miroslaw Wachowski, the Vatican's undersecretary for relations with states, arrived in Hanoi to start a seven-day working visit, reported *ucanews.com*.

Other delegates are Vietnamese Msgr Francis Cao Minh Dung and Korean Father Han Hyun-taek. The delegates were warmly welcomed by Singapore-based Archbishop Marek Zalewski, non-resident pontifical representative to Vietnam, Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hanoi, three priests and officials from Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Committee for Religious Affairs.

Ucanews.com reported the group started to work toward agreements to improve bilateral relationships in 2009, but no meetings have been held during the past two years due to the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic.

The Vatican has had no diplomatic relations with Vietnam since the last Vatican envoy was expelled from the country in 1976 after the communists took control of South Vietnam.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán came calling on Pope Francis April 21, and, according to the official chronology, the encounter lasted a robust 40 minutes. From one point of view, the headline could well be that the two leaders could spend that much time together without coming to blows.

They disagree on almost everything, from the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe to the war in Ukraine. When Mr Orbán won a crushing re-election victory on April 4, he boasted that he had defeated his “opponent” in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine, and he took a congratulatory phone call from President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

“Mr Orbán and his Fidesz party, on the other hand, embody a deeply conservative, nationalistic, and identity-based Catholicism that sees much of the Francis agenda as dubious”

April 4 was the same day, as fate would have it, that Pope Francis was in Malta, urging a welcoming attitude toward migrants and refugees and even confirming his willingness to travel to Kyiv in what would amount to a show of support for Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian cause.

Even the vocabulary of this relationship suggests its challenges.

Pro-Orbán media in Hungary have used terms including “cretinous” and “senile” to characterise the Pope’s views on immigration, while a member of Mr Orbán’s ruling Fidesz party has dubbed Francis the “Soros Pope” for his views on the economy – and, let’s be clear, that wasn’t meant as a compliment.

Meanwhile, Francis repeatedly has blasted right-wing populism of Mr Orbán’s vintage, including during a recent trip to Greece.

“We cannot avoid noting with concern how today, and not only in Europe, we are witnessing a retreat from democracy,” Francis said. “The remedy is not to be found in an obsessive quest for popularity, in a thirst for visibility, in a flurry of unrealistic promises...but in good politics.”

When Francis spent just seven hours in Hungary last year for the conclusion of a Eucharistic Congress, he granted Mr Orbán just a few moments to say hello before a Mass in which he said that only

If Paris was worth a Mass, maybe Ukraine was worth a Pope/Orbán summit



Pope Francis greets Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán during his 2021 trip to Hungary. Photo: CNS.

“We cannot avoid noting with concern how today, and not only in Europe, we are witnessing a retreat from democracy”

human fraternity can defeat hatred, and also warned of a kind of religiosity that lives “on rites and repetitions” rather than the essence of the Gospel, in what many local observers took to be a swipe at members of the Fidesz party who trumpet their Catholic credentials while ignoring the Pope’s injunctions on social policy.

Advisers

It also can’t have gone down well with Francis and his advisers that Mr Orbán’s only other meeting in Rome that day was with Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right, anti-immigrant Lega party and not exactly a close friend of this papacy.

In general, Francis represents the sort of progressive, dialogic Catholicism most at home with the political centre-left and deeply committed to both European and global integration; Mr Orbán and his Fidesz party, on the other hand, embody

a deeply conservative, nationalistic, and identity-based Catholicism that sees much of the Francis agenda as dubious.

Yet there Mr Orbán and Francis were, smiling for the cameras and seeming for all the world as if they’d just had a nice, friendly exchange. What gives?

For one thing, Francis is well aware that even sworn enemies can find common ground once in a while, much as the Vatican and Mr Orbán’s Hungary have done over Ukrainian refugees.

According to the Hungarian government, since the beginning of the war more than 600,000 refugees from Ukraine have entered Hungarian territory. Of that number, roughly 17,000 have requested humanitarian protection while more than 100,000 have asked for temporary residency permits, both of which signal an intention to remain in Hungary at least for the time being.

After the encounter, a Vatican spokesman let it be known that the Pontiff had congratulated Mr Orbán for Hungary’s receptivity to Ukrainian refugees, conveniently omitting the fact that they’re still blocking new arrivals from anywhere else, not to mention that Mr Orbán has also refused to grant permission for shipments of arms to cross Hungarian territory on their way to Ukraine.

More broadly, Francis and Mr Orbán actually have something in common vis-à-vis the Ukraine crisis, despite the very different modalities in which they express it – to wit, both men seem determined to keep lines of communication with Putin and Moscow open.

Determination

In Mr Orbán’s case, that determination takes the form of more-or-less explicit support for Putin, accompanied by the bombast and chest-thumping typical of populist firebrands. With Francis, it’s more a question of discretion being the better part of valour – almost two full months into the conflict, Francis still has not mentioned Russia as the aggressor, nor has he called on Putin by name to reverse course.

Francis has vowed to do “everything possible” to try to bring the war to an end, and, apparently, that

includes refraining from rhetoric that would make any role for the Vatican as a possible mediator more difficult. Indeed, where others bristle at Mr Orbán’s affinity for Putin, Francis may well see it as an asset, in the sense that at least one European leader is still taken seriously in the Kremlin and thus may be in a position to help get the Vatican’s eagerness to help across.

“Whether the tête-à-tête actually produces any momentum remains to be seen, but the Pope may have felt it was a chance he simply had to take”

In other words, if Paris was worth a Mass, perhaps Francis believes that Ukraine was worth 40 minutes with Mr Orbán. Whether the tête-à-tête actually produces any momentum remains to be seen, but the Pope may have felt it was a chance he simply had to take.

i John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*

‘I don’t see, I don’t hear’: Mexican bishop on working with crime bosses

David Agren

Local crime bosses were the first to greet Bishop Salvador Rangel Mendoza when he arrived in the oft-violent Diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa for his 2015 installation. They insisted on immediately breaking bread with the bishop.

“It was an accidental thing,” Bishop Rangel said of the inauspicious arrival. “They told me ‘not to worry about a thing (and) that they were going to care for me like friends,’” he recalled. “What was curious was that instead of priests receiving me (in Chilpancingo,) they were the ones receiving me.”

The initial meal upon arrival was the first of many meetings with crime bosses in the diocese, which serves Mexico’s heroin-producing heartland in Guerrero state and has been rife with drug cartel conflicts.

The meeting set the tone for his time in Chilpancingo and offered a preview of his preference for seeking dialogue with all sides. It’s a pastoral approach he brought from his previous position as a bishop in central Hidalgo state, where crime bosses he got to know sent a pair of vehicles to escort him as he drove to Guerrero for his installation and called ahead for crime colleagues to prepare a welcome.

But it’s brought controversies and accusations, too. The Guerrero state government has accused him of accepting inappropriate gifts from criminals – something the bishop denies – and human rights defenders have expressed dismay with him courting relations with victimisers instead of victims of violence. Security analysts also say he appears to have become closest with a crime organisation known as Los Ardillos.

Earlier this year, Bishop Rangel resigned, having reached age 75, when Canon Law says a bishop should submit his resignation. His successor, Bishop José de Jesús González Hernández, was installed April 19.

Untold

Bishop Rangel denies allegations of any untoward relationship or playing favourites. But he insisted with Los Ardillos, “In their area there are no kidnappings, no extortion, no murders.”

A security analyst contacted by *Catholic News Service* said such claims of drug cartels pacifying the regions they dominate and being morally better than their rivals are common and often impossible to verify. “Every group I’ve ever talked to claims that they don’t extort, kidnap, or kill innocent peo-



Mexican Bishop Salvador Rangel Mendoza of Chilpancingo-Chilapa celebrates Mass in Chilpancingo, Mexico in this 2018 photo. Photo: CNS

ple,” said Falko Ernst, senior Mexico analyst at the International Crisis Group. “These claims are, from my experience, never free of contradictions.”

“Bishop Rangel denies allegations of any untoward relationship or playing favourites”

In response to criticism, Bishop Rangel said, “I’ve always said, ‘narcotics traffickers are persons, they have feelings and reasons for acting the way they do.’” He added his actions stem from his Franciscan vocation, which involves “coming closer to enemies”.

“We’ve worked for peace. They’ve heavily criticised me for that, for approaching narcotics traffickers, but it’s been the way to achieve peace in these places,” he said.

In his time as head of the diocese, Bishop Rangel often made national media head-

lines. He spoke with a rare candour for Catholic bishops, who usually prefer not opining on local political and security matters.

Collusion

He has blasted the local political class and perceptions of its collusion with drug cartels, saying after the 2021 Guerrero elections, “Narcos are going to govern us now, not politicians.”

Bishop Rangel also expressed disappointment with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who came to his diocese in late 2017 as a candidate and promised an amnesty for those in the illegal drugs business.

The bishop supported the amnesty idea, but it was never implemented. In the meantime, López Obrador has promoted a security policy of “hugs, not bullets” – which has resulted in fewer confrontations between security forces and criminal groups, but has not calmed the country, Bishop Rangel said.

“Narcos are taking advan-

tage of this benevolence, benign government actions or a certain weakness of the government,” he said.

Bishop Rangel arrived at a difficult time in Guerrero state, long a complicated mix of deep poverty in isolated Indigenous villages and the glitz and glamor of Acapulco. His installation came shortly after the September 2014 attack on 43 teacher trainees, whose school is in his diocese – and a tragedy, he says, in which no one knows what really occurred.

Fragmenting

Drug cartels had also started fragmenting in Guerrero as criminal groups fought over the production and commercialisation of opium poppies, which helped fuel the opioid crisis in the United States.

But opium poppy prices crashed by 90% during Bishop Rangel’s time in Guerrero as drug cartels switched to producing “China white,” containing fentanyl, he said. The situation became so desperate for poor farmers – who had

long grown opium poppies to make ends meet – that the diocese organised food collections for the impoverished mountain area.

Nowadays, Bishop Rangel says, drug cartels make money through extortion and kidnapping and have appropriated municipal government treasuries.

“Bishop Rangel arrived at a difficult time in Guerrero state, long a complicated mix of deep poverty in isolated Indigenous villages”

He’s often intervened in those disputes – including some involving the Catholic Church. His first meeting after being welcomed by crime bosses was to inquire about threats made against a priest. He later asked crime bosses extorting the cathedral in the

neighbouring Diocese of Tlalpa to back down.

Relationship

But the relationship between drug cartel members and the Catholic Church is complicated – especially as the former can appear pious. A pair of diocesan priests were murdered while returning from a town festival in February 2018, a crime that remains unsolved, but was thought to be cartel related.

Comboni Father John Sseonyondo was murdered 2014 and his remains tossed in a mass grave. Bishop Rangel says the Comboni missionary from Uganda refused to perform a Baptism because a godparent – a local village leader – was deemed inappropriate.

Bishop Rangel implemented a new policy of not asking questions of baptisms.

“The witness can be of any religion, any ideology” to avoid problems, he said, adding, “of course they’re not the best witnesses, but there has to be a witness”.

He recalled an especially sticky Baptism in which a crime boss with “25 children and involved with four women, all there,” brought a child to receive the Sacrament.

“What do I do?” he asked. “I don’t see, I don’t hear anything.”

“The meeting set the tone for his time in Chilpancingo and offered a preview of his preference for seeking dialogue with all sides”

Letters

Letter of the week

Wonderful efforts of religious in Poland to help refugees

Dear Editor, Thanks to you and the team for the brilliant coverage of the Ukraine crisis from the border in Poland [*The Irish Catholic* – April 21, 2022]. It really highlights the wonderful efforts Catholic religious orders and charities are doing to help the millions of refugees escaping the war, most of which have gone to Poland.

Sometimes donating to charity feels quite disconnected from the work that's being done, so it was great to see exactly how the €3.25 million raised by Irish parishes can be used to try to alleviate the situation refugees have found themselves in because of this terrible and unjust war. Caritas, as well as many other NGOs, are doing some wonderful work.

The Salesian priest Fr Gabriel said on your front page that Irish people are very generous. At a time when inflation is causing everything to become increasingly unaffordable, whether that be energy, fuel, food etc... costs, our little country can be proud of this wonderful response to the war.

I've been to Krakow on several occasions, a beautiful city full of priests and sisters who are very visible walking the streets, and it's incredible to see how huge tents and information points have been set up and an army of volunteers have responded.

Christ's love is strongly reflected in the actions of the Polish people and the Polish religious, they are an example to us all. While Ireland has

taken in tens of thousands of refugees, Poland has received millions. Parishes and religious really are pulling out all the stops to make sure all their properties are made available to refugees and that the people who have been displaced have everything that they need once they arrive.

By all accounts it's a harrowing journey, in which women and children leave their homes and their husbands/fathers behind and try to make a new life elsewhere, sometimes with little to no idea where they will end up. God bless all those who help.

*Yours etc.,
John Brady
Ballyfermot, Dublin*

Viable option to turf must be offered

Dear Editor, Great to see priests coming out questioning Government policy on the sale of turf [*The Irish Catholic* – April 14, 2022]. The majority of people know we need to stop using fossil fuels and move to more sustainable sources of energy, but there are still people, particularly elderly people, who use turf to cook and heat their homes.

A fair alternative must be offered. It was mentioned that cutting turf for personal use is not a problem. Do you expect a 90-year-old to be out on the bog cutting their own turf?

*Yours etc.,
Mick O'Connor
Cork City, Cork*



TDs inadequacies highlight importance of Church mission

Dear Editor, It's clear that religious congregations have been quietly at the forefront of the battle against the housing crisis, which was highlighted on your front page [*The Irish Catholic* – April 14, 2022].

They have been identifying unused land and buildings for use by those desperate for a roof over their heads while the Government has sat on its thumbs hoping private developers will fix everything.

For the likes of some vitriolic elected TDs, this fact seems to fall on deaf ears. They are happy to spew falsehoods and unfair assessments of the Church in the Dáil and they are rarely challenged – which highlights just how anti-Catholic our society has become.

We are now in a situation in which people in their 20s and even 30s are forced to live at home in unsuitable condi-

tions, perhaps even sharing with a sibling. Those who rent are unable to save for a mortgage due to the extortionate cost of renting and all the while the cost of living in Ireland continues to rise. What hope is there for young people wanting to move out and start a family? They are caught in a crisis created by those who made terrible decisions during the Celtic Tiger and continue to make terrible

decisions now.

Yet so many TDs want to virtue signal about the historical failings of the Church or harp on about sexuality and gender politics, all while Ireland crumbles around them.

If anything, their inadequacies further highlight the importance of the Church and its mission.

*Yours etc.,
Brenda Murphy
Rathgar, Dublin*

NI elections trap Catholics between rock and hard place

Dear Editor, Catholic voters in the North of Ireland have certainly been left between a rock and a hard place (although it's certainly no easier in the south!). As May 5 closes in, how should a Catholic vote? You have Sinn Féin who don't seem to give a toss about practicing Catholics. They also seem entirely happy to flout the democratic process and bizarrely run to Westminster when they want to impose laws on the North, such as abortion. That does not give the right message to nationalists.

The DUP have their pro-life position but it's hard to see nationalists voting for them.

The SDLP are a shadow of their former selves under John Hume. They stand on the shoulders of giants and as the years have gone by, I'm not impressed by them: A wishy-washy blend of nothing.

Aontú so far seem to be an impressive new party, the leader Peadar Tóibín TD is certainly a strong defender of the Faith. In a recent article in your paper quoting East Derry Aontú candidate Gemma Brolly [*The Irish Catholic* – April 14, 2022], she defended Catholic schools in the North. Perhaps there could be big wins for the pro-life party Aontú in the North? That would certainly be interesting.

However, at the moment it looks as though it will be a tight call between Sinn Féin and the DUP. The polls are close, close enough to consider that there could be a nationalist at the head of the government for the first time in history. This could tempt Catholic nationalists into voting for Sinn Féin, to get them over the line.

We must vote with our conscience, and pray deeply before making any decisions.

*Yours etc.,
Paul Gallagher
Belfast, Co. Antrim^e*

facebook community

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

Bombs to birdsong: Frontline religious praise Irish generosity to Ukraine

Wonderful news of how the light penetrates even the worst darkness. Well done to *The Irish Catholic* for sharing the news that others would wish not to be told. – **Eamonn McGrady**

Church must regain the nerve to teach unpopular things

The past can't be used as an excuse for not speaking out today on something as basic as the dignity of every human being and the right to life. Everyone of us, laity and clergy alike, have been confirmed and need to avail of the gift of courage to speak out strongly for what is right. – **Maria Conroy Byrne**

I wonder if first the Church needs to regain the faith to believe unpopular things... – **Eamonn Gaines**

Yes they should but it would take a lot of courage to speak out the media are so against the Church – **Eilish Higgins**

It all started with legalising artificial contraception, divorce and then onto the slippery slope to hell where many of our contemporaries have landed up. Where did they get on? Slackness might start off as venial but not to tell a person of the threat they are under can become mortal. – **Kevin Cooney**

Alternatives needed to turf selling as rural Ireland feels 'abandoned'

The Greens are a largely urban based party. As a result, they are completely out of touch with the concerns and needs of rural Ireland. They aren't interested in changing that ignorance of theirs either. – **Thomas O'Mahony**

Religious orders quietly lifting hundreds out of homelessness

Religious orders and ministers of religion never get the credit they deserve. – **Deirdre Quinn**

The mainstream media and politicians certainly don't want people to hear this. – **Mary Duggan Murphy**

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

Tanaiste's church visit is a private matter

Dear Editor, While we accept Mr Varadkar is a public figure, would it not be more in keeping with the ethos of the paper that when, and where, and how often he attends any church is a private matter between his God and himself.

*Your etc.,
Phyllis Bird
Clontarf, Dublin 3*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



▲ **RWANDA:** People wait to be served at the custom offices at the Gatuna one-stop border post at Gicumbi. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN CITY:** A girl waves as Pope Francis greets survivors and family members of victims of the 2019 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, after a Mass celebrated by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith of Colombo, Sri Lanka, to commemorate the anniversary of the attacks, in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.



POLAND: A pallet of instant noodles is seen in the Caritas warehouse in Lublin. Caritas Lublin is running a distribution hub for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.



USA: Oksana Herheliuk and her two small children pose for a photo in Spring Hill, Tennessee. They were able to successfully escape Ukraine in early March and are currently staying with Oksana's sister Olesia O'Bryan, a parishioner of St Philip's Church in nearby Franklin.



UKRAINE: Service members of pro-Russian troops are seen atop an armoured personnel carrier in Mariupol.



PERU: Demonstrators block a road access to a copper mine during a protest in Fuerabamba. Recent protests have shut down several copper mines in a country where mining is a key source of revenue.

Fear of missing out



It's hard for a child to have to go to bed in the middle of an evening when the rest of the family is still celebrating. Nobody wants to go to bed while everyone else is still up. No one wants to miss out on life.

Remember how as a child, tired and unable to keep your eyes open, you still struggled against anyone who would try to put you to bed. Exhausted or not, you didn't want to miss anything. You didn't want to leave and go to sleep while so much life was going on.

We never really outgrow that. That resistance is congenital and still haunts us on our deathbeds.

“We find it difficult to imagine how the world can even go on without us”

One of our more painful anxieties is triggered by a sense that we are forever missing out on something. This is also one of our major fears about dying. For most people, the heaviness and darkness of dying come not so much from a fear of what they might meet in the next life, judgment and punishment, but from a fear of annihilation. Moreover, the fear here is not so much that their personal identity will be snuffed out (though that is a real fear) but rather that they will be taken away from all the life of which



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

they have been part. The sadness lies in the having to let go, in knowing that life will now go on without us, of being taken off to bed while the party continues. And, this is deep inside us, so deep, that we find it difficult to imagine how the world can even go on without us.

Something wrong

However, this is not a sign that there is something wrong with us, some neurosis that needs fixing or some moral or religious issue that needs attention. It's the human condition, pure and simple, and God is the architect of that. In short, we're built to be part of a fabric, not single threads content in their isolation.

I was 23 years old when I watched my dad die in a hospital

room. He was still young, 62 years old, and ideally should have had a number of years still ahead of him. But, he was dying, he knew it, and despite a faith that gave him some comfort, was deeply sad about it. What he struggled with in his dying was not with some fear of the afterlife or some amends he still needed to make in this life. None of that. There was no unfinished business with God, nor religious and moral issues still to mend. Nor were there unhealthy fears of the afterlife. His only unfinished business had to do with this life, and what he would now miss out on in terms of (figuratively) being put to bed early while the party was still going on. In addition, for him, the party was in full swing. His adult children were just begin-

ning to establish their lives and give him grandchildren, and the younger half of his family were actively preparing to enter into their adult lives. He wasn't going to be around to see how all of this turned out and he wasn't going to be around to see most of his grandchildren. More important still, he had a wife, a soulmate, whom he would be leaving. It wasn't a good evening to be sent to bed early.

“One of our more painful anxieties is triggered by a sense that we are forever missing out on something”

Beyond all this, he still had his own siblings, neighbours, friends, a parish, civic involvements, sports teams, and countless other life-giving connections, and he was aware, not without huge heartache, that these were all about to end, at least on this side of eternity.

Why shouldn't he have been sad? Indeed, why shouldn't any of us be sad whenever we are facing a death of any kind, when we are being put to bed while the rest of life is still going on?

Communitarian

We are constitutively communitarian. As God himself said when he created the human family, it is not good for anyone to be alone. We are meant to be part of a family and a community, part of the fabric of life, and a fabric is made up of multiple threads. Thus, it's understandably saddening whenever our single, fragile, lonely thread is being pulled away from the rest of the fabric. No wonder little children don't want to be put to bed while everyone else is still carrying on with the evening.

Moreover, this isn't just true for the sadness we experience when we face our deaths. The same dynamic is operative whenever we undergo the various mini-deaths that beset us as we age, lose our health, retire, get fired from jobs, lose people we love, lose marriages, are geographically dislocated, or in any other way are pushed out of the mainstream of life towards the margins.

So it can be helpful to know that nothing is wrong here. Dying is hard. Letting go is hard. Being pushed aside is hard. Disappearing from life is particularly hard. That's why little children don't like being put to bed.

“The sadness lies in the having to let go, in knowing that life will now go on without us”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 28, 2022

Personal Profile

'The rosary is powerful beyond our understanding'

Page 34



Celebrating Easter as it deserves

If you're in any way like me, you'll be feeling like you're nearly at the end of your spiritual-attention span, having weathered a long Lent and embraced the Triduum, with all of its agony and ecstasy. The season of celebration is just beginning, however, and it's important we tune in to that which the Church is trying to focus our attention on.

There's a tendency to forget about Easter once the commercial hubbub around Easter Sunday has died down, but as Catholics we can't afford to slip into forgetfulness or obliviousness. The Easter season is well underway, and it's important to remember this as we continue to live out our lives over the next couple of weeks. It's vital that we know what we're celebrating and why if we're to fully reap the rewards Christ is offering us



With Easter Sunday come and gone, it's important not to forget to continue celebrating what God has done for us, writes Jason Osborne

through his Church.

Easter

The Word 'Easter' comes from old English, meaning 'the East'. The obvious connotations of this have been recognised by many religions throughout the ages – the sun rises in the east, bringing with it light and warmth, dispelling the darkness of night. The symbolism of this for Catholics reaches its zenith during the despair and darkness-filled Good Friday through to the

initially subtle light of the Easter vigil and on into the blazing glory of Easter Sunday morning.

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Now is the time to celebrate the transformative thing God has done. Killed on a cross on Good Friday, he's risen from the dead, and if this isn't a thing to be celebrated, you'll be hard-pressed to find something that is. It's difficult to know where to start when considering the changes Christ's resurrection has wrought upon the world,

but fortunately, the Church gives us plenty of time to mull it over throughout Eastertide.

Eastertide, or the Easter season if you prefer, is the most important time in the Church's liturgical calendar. During it, we Catholics thoroughly celebrate Christ's victory over death, his ascension to the Father in heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, which we celebrate at Pentecost.

The octave of Easter is made up of eight days, stretching from the first Sunday of Easter to the second. It's intended as a way of prolonging the joy of Easter Sunday. How many of us immediately wind down our celebratory attitude the moment we step back into work on Tuesday following Easter Monday? The Church intends that the deep joy and wonder of the resur-

rection be at the forefront of our minds throughout the entirety of Easter, but especially during the octave.

Eastertide is composed of 50 days from the first Sunday through to Pentecost, and contains both Divine Mercy Sunday and the Ascension within. For the Catholic looking for a spiritual boost (like myself), this is the time for you. Christ's pleasing sacrifice to the Father redeems us, and if we reflect intently on this, as well as on God's infinite mercy and the precious gift of himself in the Holy Spirit, we can't be but uplifted.

Glorias and Alleluias ring loud throughout the Easter season, and so they should, for it is exactly as St Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians:

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

ASTRONOMERS DISCOVER NEW TYPE OF STELLAR EXPLOSION

A newly-discovered kind of stellar explosion could be commonplace in the universe and may change people's understanding of how eruptions in stars occur, astronomers have suggested.

A micronova is a blast that lasts for just a few hours, which makes it very difficult to observe.

These explosions take place on the surface of certain stars and can quickly burn through huge amounts of material - equivalent to around 3.5 billion Great Pyramids of Giza.

An international team of researchers, led by Durham University, observed the phenomenon in three white dwarfs - the remnants of dead stars - as they fed in each case on a companion star.

According to the scientists, their findings could lead to more micronovae being found and challenge what is known about how thermonuclear explosions occur in stars.

VENICE READIES DAY-TRIP BOOKING SYSTEM TO EASE CROWDS

Venice plans to trial a reservation system for day-trippers, officials have said, in a bid to ease over-tourism as visitors flock back to the Italian city following the pandemic.

The pay-to-visit scheme will not cap tourist numbers but aims to entice some people to visit during the low season by charging them less.

"We will start with an experimental phase during which the reservation will not be mandatory, but optional" and will cost nothing, Venice's deputy tourism councillor Simone Venturini said.

Visitors just popping in for the day will be encouraged to sign up through incentives "such as discounts on museum admissions", he said. The start date will be announced in the coming weeks.

The system, which has been in the works for years, will become compulsory in 2023 and will see day-trippers pay between €3 and €10, depending on the season.

Visitors who sleep in Venice, already subject to the so-called tourist tax, will be exempt.

Life in the hugely popular watery city has slowly been returning to normal after the coronavirus pandemic, when the Grand Canal was emptied of gondolas as tourists disappeared.

EU PLAN FOR UNIVERSAL MOBILE CHARGER PORT TAKES STEP CLOSER

The European Union's bid to adopt a common charging port for mobile phones, tablets and headphones took a step forward when an EU panel backed the proposal, paving the way for an assembly vote next month.

The European Commission suggested a single mobile charging port more than a decade ago, hoping phone makers would be able to find a common solution.

It proposed draft legislation last year, a world first, after they failed to do so.

The European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee April 20 agreed with the Commission's proposal.

Apple's iPhones are charged from a Lightning cable while Android-based devices are powered using USB-C connectors.

The majority of phones sold in the EU are Android devices.



Foggy thinking among confused undergraduates

A friend who shares my fate of being a graduate student in philosophy was recently regaling me with tales of what teaching undergraduates was like. She informed me that an increasing number of them at her university were "both utilitarians and relativists". She said it laughing, because this quite a mean feat. The joke is that relativists are - well, it's difficult to say! It's hard to define relativism, at least in a way that doesn't make it sound obviously false. I've written before that I think almost all people who think they are relativists are just confused. But say that relativism is the belief that no moral standards are objective, but rather they are all relative to groups, communities, or individuals.

“How these two sets of claims are supposed to work together is a bit mysterious”

Utilitarianism, on the other hand, is an extremely demanding theory of morality that applies everywhere, in all times and places. Utilitarians believe that in any situation of moral choice, the right action is the one that best maximises happiness or pleasure or utility (which it depends on the type of utilitarianism, though a lot of utilitarians just think these are different ways of saying the same thing). Every action that a person could take that doesn't maximise utility is wrong, and that is the only thing that determines the morality of actions. The pursuit of "the greatest good for the greatest number" was a slogan of Jeremy Bentham's that still sums up utilitarianism well.

How these two sets of claims



Everyday philosophy Ben Conroy

are supposed to work together is a bit mysterious. Let's say our relativism is cultural - that it's the culture you belong to that determines what's right or wrong for you to do. If you happen to come from a utilitarian culture, you're fine (that said, what makes a culture utilitarian? How many of the people in it have to believe utilitarianism? A majority? 70%? Literally everyone? What if a majority of men are utilitarians but a majority of women aren't? What about subcultures? What units of space have cultures? If you live on the border of two of them...). But what if a culture's values are fiercely anti-utilitarian? The old-school utilitarianism I'm used to would just say that culture is wrong. But if you're a relativist utilitarian you presumably have to say that non-utilitarianism is right for the non-utilitarian culture.

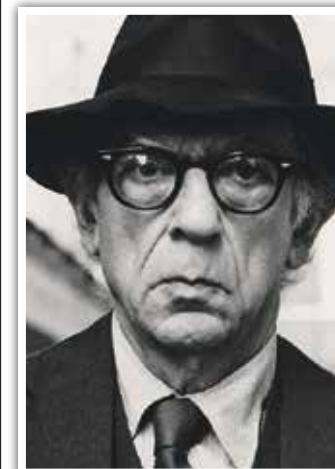
Utilitarianism

But this is a very odd kind of utilitarianism. Let's ask a few more questions. Does the happiness or pleasure or utility of people from non-utilitarian cultures stop counting entirely? Or should the people from the utilitarian culture still act according to utilitarianism in their dealings with those other cultures? If so, what if the utility-maximising thing to do is not to respect their culturally relative morality? In that case, which wins, the utilitarianism or the relativism?

It's possible to construct

answers to these questions. But not good ones! Utilitarianism and relativism are flatly incompatible. All they have in common is a vague sense that there's something progressive and broad-minded about them.

Now it's easy to either laugh at the poor undergraduates or worry about what's making



them think so foggily. For what it's worth I think that analytic philosophy departments mostly do a great job of ridding people of this sort of error (not every sort, but this sort). People like my friend who are charged with teaching them mostly care a lot about consistency, and clarity, and truth.

But a version of the undergraduates' error is quite widespread in Catholic circles. The error is rolling every position opposed to Catholic teaching

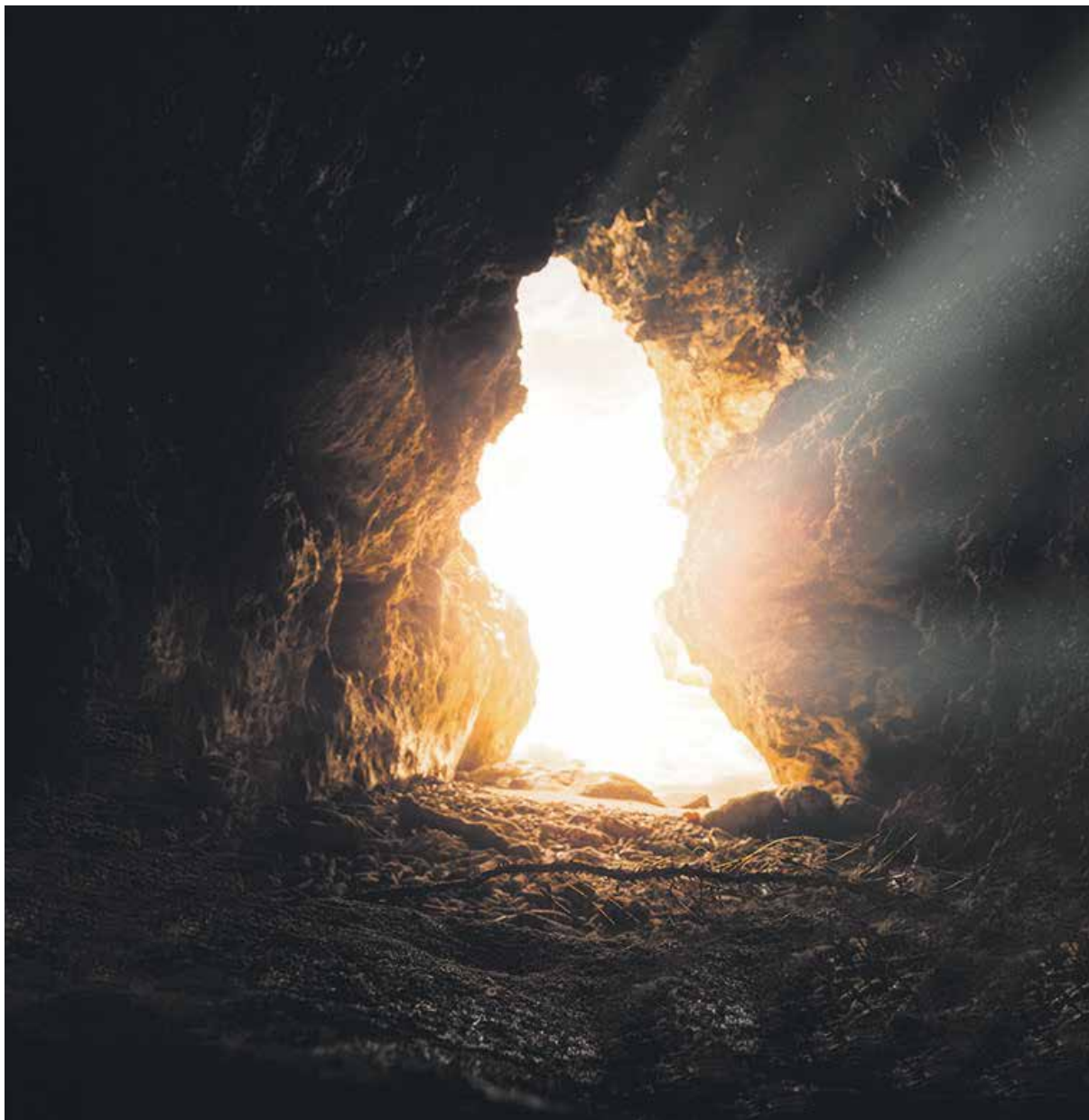
together into some kind of unified whole. Utilitarianism and relativism are both of course incompatible with Catholic ethics. But that doesn't make them compatible with each other.

Does it matter much if people get confused between different ways to be wrong? I think it does. Isaiah Berlin once wrote that "not all good things go together". I think he was basically wrong about that, but outside of hell it is true that not all bad things go together. Believing that they do inclines us to lazy thinking: we're less able to effectively critique errors when we can't get them straight.

“Utilitarians are wrong to think that no type of action - from torture to infanticide - is in principle off limits”

What's more, thinking that all bad things go together can cause us to miss things that the wrong theories get right. Relativists are wrong that every moral standard is culturally relative - but they're right that some are (CS Lewis believed, correctly, that standards of modesty were among them). Utilitarians are wrong to think that no type of action - from torture to infanticide - is in principle off limits. But they're right that morality demands a lot from us when it comes to relieving the suffering of others. There are lots of ways to be wrong, but almost no worldview is wrong in its entirety.

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“So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.

“All of this is possible only because of what we remember and celebrate during the Easter season: Christ’s dying, rising, ascending and sending of the Holy Spirit”

“The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:42-49)

All of this is possible only because of what we remember and celebrate during the Easter season: Christ’s dying, rising, ascending and sending of the Holy Spirit.

Maintaining celebration

Celebrating for 50 days may seem a tall order. Even in my college days,

one night was enough for me, never mind nearly two months. Obviously, then, the Church must have quite a different kind of celebration in mind for the duration of the Easter season.

Fortunately, it does, and as with all that the Church commands and recommends, these celebrations are synonymous with you worshipping God as he deserves – which is to your, and your neighbour’s, benefit. So how might we go about properly celebrating the Easter Season this year? Here are a few suggestions:

- Pay particularly close attention to the liturgical calendar during Eastertide, all the way up to Pentecost. Attend Mass as often as possible so



that the particular liturgical trappings of this period can suitably direct your mind and heart towards the salvific triumph of Christ’s resurrection.

- Pray the glorious mysteries of the rosary, as they are as compact a way as possible to meditate on Christ’s resurrection and ascension, as well as the elevation of his, and our, mother, Mary.

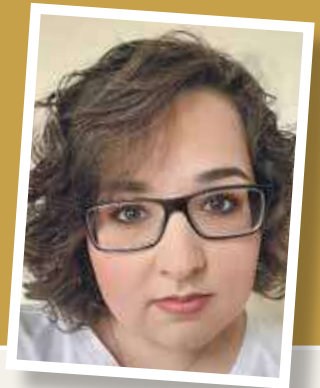
“Read the Easter sections of the gospels, meditating afterwards on what God wants to say to you through his word”

- Adorn your home with Easter icons or include them in your prayer, depicting the resurrection and the ascension. Icons are like windows into a mystery, and some of the more famous icons depicting Easter scenes are potent ways to centre yourself on the different elements involved in Christ’s triumph over death.

- Read the Easter sections of the Gospels, meditating afterwards on what God wants to say to you through his word.

While we can’t control our feelings, we can choose whether or not we take a celebratory stance this Easter. God has saved us from sin and death, and it’s our Catholic duty to trumpet this truth to the world by our words and by our deeds.

Faith
— IN THE —
family



Charlotte Vard

Young people face many new challenges that some adults who are of a different generation are not aware of. From the daily broadcast of their every move on social media, to dealing with the heightened anxiety that stems from the need to ‘fit in’, young people live life online.

TikTok is often their only source of news, if you could call it a news source. Whether you’re raising a teen, teaching in a secondary school, or are an older sibling, we all have a responsibility to do something to better understand what your daughter, son, student, brother, or sister may be dealing with. More than ever, I strongly believe in the importance of youth ministry, and what it can offer young people. From experience, when a young person tries out a youth group, youth choir or youth retreat more often than not they return. They would say things like, “It’s not what I thought it was going to be, I had fun,” or “that wasn’t too bad!”

I encounter young people in many areas of my ministry, especially in our parish youth group, Amadeus. For me a youth group serves many purposes. It’s a place where young people can feel part of a loving, supportive community – it’s time dedicated to working on and creating healthy relationships with other teens who may be seeking that same belonging. It can foster a foundation for a lifetime of walking with and even for Christ. The subjects discussed during youth groups allow young people to learn in a new way about the Faith that they were baptised into but perhaps know very little about.

Youth ministry is about giving young people as many opportunities as possible. During this Holy Week, these opportunities allowed them to see the community aspects of the Catholic Church, the diocesan family and the parish community.

Twenty-six of the youth group, Amadeus, attended the Chrism mass in Carlow Cathedral led by Bishop Denis Nulty. Afterwards the space to discuss the experience is an important one. It was a great night, “joy” was how one 18-year-old put it. Personally, I never thought I would



be explaining what holy oils are on a Monday night in Supermacs to four young lads but there I was explaining what had just happened to a bunch of young people who had a natural

curiosity, following a faith experience that had really touched them! These young people continued throughout the week by not only seeing but also doing. They took part in the washing of the feet, Stations of the Cross, they even led prayers around the cross with our parish priest, Fr Ruairí Ó’Domhnaill, and took part in the Easter Vigil and all with utter reverence. ‘Joy’ is what it also brought to me.

Throughout this Holy Week, Amadeus members have been active in their diocesan family, parish community, and in their own faith. They have helped to enrich what the Church does, but more importantly who the Church is. They are its present and its future. As much as I believe that there is so much for a young person to gain by being involved in the Church, the Church needs the youth just as much. Without them, it has no future or indeed present!

Pope Francis in his address at World Youth Day in Panama, described young people as the “now of God”. The Church is not in buildings and structures but in its capacity to attract and sustain people. Psalm 127:4 says: “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.”

The youth are the children of a young Church. They are her arrows and she is the warrior in the world. In other words, the Church needs young people and young people need the Church.

'The rosary is powerful beyond our understanding'

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Just five years ago, Aontú candidate for Belfast South Luke McCann had fallen away from the faith of his childhood. Now, in the midst of his election campaign, he took a break "in the thick of it" to go on a retreat over the Easter weekend. He puts the change down to the power of the rosary.

“Over the last five years, Luke says that he returned incrementally to the practice of Catholicism, before being catapulted forward by the arrival of the Covid-19 lockdown”

"I would always have believed in God and in Catholicism," Luke begins by telling me. Having grown up a Catholic, as he left home and went into the world, he left the practice of the Faith behind, he explains.

"If you're lucky enough to get the grades and support to get into university type life, your focus goes on different things. It goes on the socialising side of things, the sporting side of things. Unless you consciously go out of your way to make time for God, he'll not be part of your life basically.



Aontú candidate for Belfast South Luke McCann

"I would have gone occasionally to Mass, but it would have been sporadic. It could have been weeks or months at a time. Things like Confession went completely out the window."

Over the last five years, Luke says that he returned incrementally to the practice of Catholicism, before being catapulted forward by the arrival of the Covid-19 lockdown.

"Everything slowed down. Whenever you're running the rat race type life, you're in the office long hours, intense work. Around that I had been trying to get in things like training, playing a bit of basketball and socialising at weekends. There was just no time for God.

"When lockdown started, I began getting out into nature and YouTube was a really big thing for me, in terms

of learning. It was mostly American channels that I was learning from. We're talking Fr Mike Schmitz, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Matt Fradd at Pints with Aquinas. That was great."

Luke says he is also thankful that a close friend was on a similar journey to him, and they would meet regularly to discuss the Faith.

"We'd maybe go the odd day to Clonard Monastery, a beautiful old church in Belfast," he continues. "We'd go there sometimes at lunch and just sit there. We'd sit in front of Jesus in the tabernacle, just the peace of it. Someone mentioned, maybe my friend, that Bl. Carl Acutis said that whenever you're sitting out in the sun getting a suntan, sitting in front of the tabernacle is nearly the same only on

a spiritual level. There was something nice about that."

The next step on Luke's journey back to the Faith was the discovery of his nana's rosary book. He had been very close to his nana, who had "a strong faith", he says.

"Getting my hands on that rosary book was a big thing. I probably started by praying one mystery at a time, but then it's become a really important part of my life. I pray that every day now, the full rosary.

“That was a powerful experience, which inspired us to start up our own small rosary group”

"Another big thing for me was the men's rosary. We actually started our own, the exact same day that the big rosary rallies started. One of the things I learned in a Home of the Mother summer camp last year was that they took all the kids, about 10-18 years old, 60 in total, to the local cemetery, where everyone knelt in front of the graves and we prayed a mystery for the Holy Souls buried in each of the grave. For the next mystery, we'd move onto a different grave.

"That was a powerful experience, which inspired us to start up our own small rosary group. We basically did the same, and went for a coffee afterwards. I think it's a good way of men getting together to pray the rosary, and then have a good yarn. Talk about issues you're having personally and just try and solve all the issues of the world.

"Again, it's trying to encourage more people back to the Faith in a powerful way, and the rosary is powerful beyond our understanding," Luke finishes.

Luke's journey back to the Faith continued last summer, when he joined the Legion of Mary, which he says gave him a great sense of com-

munity: "in the first five weeks, I was invited to three, four even five barbecues and dinners. I was thinking, I've only been to two meetings here, they're so lovely and welcoming."

He also attended retreats given by the Servants of the Home of the Mother, an order with a number of houses around Ireland, after Fr Luke Demasi SHM invited him to help them at their youth retreats.

"Last summer, Fr Luke reached out to me as I had a bit of a podcast going talking about faith and economics actually," Luke says. "Basically, he reached out and said, we're doing this summer camp for lads aged 10-18, you seem to be into your sport, you seem to be into your faith, you could be a good influence if you were willing to come down. I did that, met them there for the first time then and then it was same again in the mid-term break during February."

It is partly down to their influence, Luke says, that he is "doing something that no other candidate would be doing at this time while running an election": going on retreat.

"They have a Holy Week on in Clongowes woods. I was invited to go down for four days from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday. I had to say to Aontú, I'm more than happy to run but at the same time I'm going to have to take four days out over Easter, in the thick of things. For me it's a nice break to spend in silence with God, having a relaxed time with the group there."

Luke is running as Aontú's candidate for Belfast South, explaining that he became increasingly disenfranchised by traditional republican parties, as his interest in economics and activism with Precious Life opened his eyes. This, combined with the advice of a priest to "dive into" politics encouraged him, so when Aontú asked him to run, he was more than happy to oblige.

Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Love Notes



Marta Osborne

Show more appreciation to strengthen the marriage bond

Recently in an argument my husband said that I only see the things he doesn't do and don't appreciate his efforts enough. What can I do to improve our communication and avoid becoming overly critical?

It just so happens that we find it easier to criticise people close to us than to praise them. Perhaps we become accustomed to the good we receive from them, just as one can become accustomed to beautiful sights if we see them every day. Meanwhile we all need praise to feel appreciated, important and loved.

A lack of praise in combination with criticism and unmet expectations can leave both spouses feeling frustrated and unloved. A lesson we all need to learn is that praise not only motivates

more than criticism, but when it's pertinent it can effectively communicate our needs to our partner in an emotionally positive way.

Some people find praise easy, others need to learn it. For praise to be truly fruitful it should have three elements: be genuine – stemming from a real desire to notice somebody's engagement or actions; specific – relating to a real situation or event; and adequate – not exaggerated, we don't like to be praised for something we didn't do, it makes us feel awkward rather than appreciated.

Avoid the 'apparent' praise

Watch out for apparent appreciation. These are messages with 'but' like, "It's nice that you put the laundry in, but you forgot to put the blue

towel in," or "It's good that you took care of it. It's long overdue". These messages are unpleasant and point primarily not to what the person did, but to what they didn't do.

When our efforts and endeavours are noticed and praised by our spouse, we feel good about it. Compliments improve the other person's self-esteem and self-worth. They also reinforce the behaviours involved. By praising our partner for something, we increase the chances that they will do it again of their own accord and with pleasure.

By complimenting someone, we show our appreciation and let them know that the other person's actions and behaviours are noticed by us. We show that we value them and it is important to us. Appreciation in everyday life builds closeness and strengthens the bond. It is like putting yourself in the second row and letting the other person be the one to shine, but choosing to focus on the good will certainly have a positive impact on how you feel as well.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Too busy ticking diversity boxes to tell a good story

I used to avoid television dramas based on true stories – impossible to know what was added for dramatic effect, and the ending, if you were lucky enough to get a satisfying one, was often known already. Recent dramas have changed my mind – these shows are really well made, there are satisfying twists and turns you'd never find credible in fictional drama, and people behave like real humans do.

This was largely true of **The Thief His Wife and the Canoe** which concluded last Thursday on ITV. The story itself was quite bizarre – it told of John Darwin, who faked his own death for the insurance money. As portrayed here his wife was reluctantly persuaded to be complicit – even to the point of lying to their two sons, his father and her brothers and parents. This went on for over five years and for most of the time he was living in a rented house next door! Later they attempted to move to Panama but a random photo taken there helped to expose the whole thing. The deluded families were devastated and understandably there was a huge family rift.

Acting

The acting was superb – Eddie Marsden played Mr Darwin as a self-absorbed manipulator with zero empathy (we could have done without his bit of brief



Paula Malcomson as DI Colette Cunningham in *Redemption*.

gratuitous nudity!), Monica Dolan impressed as the shy and sheltered mother who went along with the scam. Unlike him, you could have some sympathy for her, despite the awfulness of the crime. There was a great humanity about the characters, especially the two sons who had to endure the tragedy of their father's 'death', the joy of his return, (he claimed amnesia) and the sense of betrayal when they discovered the truth. Yet, in the final episode, themes of forgiveness and redemption were beautifully explored. We learned that Anne Darwin was Catholic and we did see her praying at one stage, and later engaging with a prison therapist and

chaplain but this side of her life was not deeply explored and her faith didn't seem to impinge on her calculations.

Searing

Even better is the third series of **The Spilt**, currently on BBC One, Monday nights. This is emotionally searing stuff as divorce lawyers slug it out in court and in their mixed-up private lives. It's so well acted by Nicola Walker, Stephen Mangan and Fiona Button in particular – I'd give them all BAFTAs. Ms Walker plays a wife who has been unfaithful, Mr Mangan her husband who has been unfaithful and their split is getting acrimonious, especially as he has a new and pregnant girlfriend. Their children suffer hugely

as the adults indulge themselves, though they remain very human people we can relate to. Ms Button is one of three sisters, a most likeable character who has her own issues to deal with. In the process she has an interesting friendship with the local vicar who is understanding and supportive. Religion is treated respectfully throughout, but the sexual morals are all over the place. The show mainly shows them and lets us draw our own conclusions. It's all about the characters and the story and I didn't feel creator Abi Morgan was browbeating us with any particular agenda.

I couldn't say the same for **Redemption**, a new drama series on Virgin Media One

PICK OF THE WEEK

SERVICE OF SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

RTÉ One Sunday May 1, 11.10am

Fr Vasyi Kornitsky leads members of the Ukrainian community in Ireland in a special liturgy. Mainly in the Ukrainian language, with English subtitles, it will combine elements of Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholic liturgy.

CATHOLIC IRELAND

EWTN Sunday May 1, 8.30pm

The show visits the Palestrina Boys' Choir in Dublin, presents the work of the Iona Institute, dedicated to the strengthening of marriage and family life, and recounts the life of St Columille.

MEITHEAL - GLEANN CHOLM CILLE

TG4 Friday May 6, 8pm

The people of Gleann Cholm Cille led by their parish priest, Fr McDyer refused to stand by and watch their rich Irish-speaking community and culture decline. This is the story of how they became a self-sufficient community from the 1950s on.

(Mondays). The programme makers are so pre-occupied with ticking diversity boxes that they seem to have forgotten to come up with an engaging story. The best thing about it is Paula Malcomson, who plays a Liverpool detective who gets transferred to Dublin where she can investigate the death of her estranged daughter. The plot has potential, but based on the first episode the execution is very poor – it all seems awkward, stilted and contrived, with gratuitous foul language.

The Cane Field Killings on Channel 4 (Sundays) is much better, but it is grim – focusing on a series of killings in South Africa being investigated by female detective Reyka (Kim Engel-

brecht) who has troubles of her own – abducted at an early age by a man who then raised her as her own before being caught. Now she visits him in prison and he seems to help with her investigation – echoes of *Silence of the Lambs*. Religion figures a little – we see one person praying, and the local pastor varies between caring and suspicious. There's violence, child abuse, township poverty, a messy but realistic plot and, most importantly, an engaging story.

📧 boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Film

Aubrey Malone



Covert nature of abuse in its various forms

There are a number of films available on Amazon dealing with the theme of sexual and other types of abuse. It's a subject we hear quite a lot about nowadays. While the material doesn't generally make for comfortable viewing it's something we shouldn't shy away from.

Miss Violence was widely acclaimed at the Venice film Festival some years ago. It begins with the suicide of a young girl in the middle of a party. This takes place so casually it's more disquieting than if it was telegraphed dramatically.

For the next hour or so we see life in her home going on with disarming normality. You can't help wondering what could have driven her to

such a pass. Hints are dropped but it's only in the last quarter that the film shows its hand. The delay makes the final revelation doubly impactful.

Abuse

A subtle hand is also at work in *The Assistant*. This deals with a Harvey Weinstein style theme – the abuse of women in the film industry. It's dark, slow-moving and enigmatic. And, like *Miss Violence*, adopts an almost casual mood for much of the time.

It tells the story of a young girl (an excellent Julia Garner) who accepts being treated as a menial before the full impact of what her colleagues have to undergo is unveiled. The idea of such behaviour being taken for granted by a male-



A scene from the film *Miss Violence*.

dominated industry is what's most amazing about it all.

The theme is more specific in *Seberg*, a biopic of the actress Jean Seberg. She was

repeatedly traumatised by the director Otto Preminger. He chose her to play Joan of Arc in *Saint Joan*, the film that kickstarted her career.

Sadly it proved to be a poisoned chalice for her. The critics vilified her for her performance. "I was burned twice," she said afterwards, "first at the stake and then by the media."

Vilified

When she afterwards began a relationship with a member of the Black Panthers she became even more vilified. The FBI lied about her becoming pregnant by him and having his child. She died young from suicide after a career that promised so much imploded when she reached 40. Kristen Stewart plays her compellingly.

Clerical abuse is dealt with in *By the Grace of God*, a film that echoes *Spotlight*

in its approach. While parts of it will be particularly disquieting for readers of *The Irish Catholic* it is of course important for us to confront this dark area of the Church's past so we can be sure such abuses aren't repeated in the next generation. It centres on three men who band together to break a conspiracy of silence.

The Mauritian (Amazon Prime Video) is based on the real-life story of Mohamedou Slahi, an innocent man who was imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay for years. The stellar cast includes Jodie Foster and Benedict Cumberbatch.

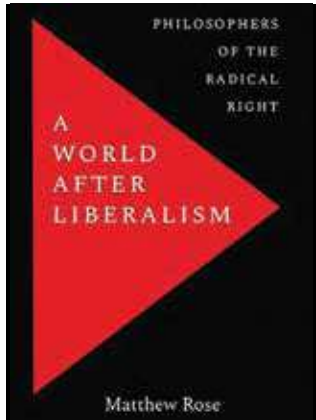
These films all make for disturbing – but ultimately cathartic – viewing.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Where the Right is wrong



A world after Liberalism: Philosophers of the Radical Right, by Matthew Rose (Yale University Press, £20.00/€25.00)

Frank Litton

Samuel Francis was a well-respected voice in conservative circles in the United States. He won several national awards for his column in the right-leaning *Washington Times*. Until, that is, 1995 when he went too far in his racist comments on slavery. He lost his column.

Now pushed to the outer margins of conservatism, his audience shrank to small groups and his writings were confined to newsletters with tiny circulations. He died in 2005 with his *magnum opus*, an eight-hundred-page study of United States politics and society, unpublished. Until, that is, 2016. Why was he now being taken seriously? The answer: Trump.

Francis had argued that the conservative Republican mainstream conceded far too much to the views of the dominant liberal elites. Politics was about power, and conservatives should cease arguing and find the power to unseat the elite.

There was, he pointed out, a sizeable constituency of middle and lower middle-class white citizens, those without college education, who worked in manufacturing. Neither Republicans nor Democrats spoke to their resentments as their incomes stagnated and fell and the values that bound them together in families and communities were disparaged.

Conservatives should give them voice with a nationalism strongly laced with racism. Trump mobilised this constituency. Those interested in understanding his success and decoding his message turned to Francis's analysis.

Trump's victory is not, of course, the only example of the weakening hold of the once rock-solid liberal democratic consensus. Populisms, on the

left and right challenge it, and the success of the autocratic Chinese model that so quickly brought economic prosperity to so many, is seen as a viable alternative.

So Matthew Rose's study of five thinkers on the radical right is timely. Rose guides us through the works of Oswald Spengler, Julius Evola, Francis Parker Yockey, Alain de Benoist and Samuel Francis.

He is an excellent guide to the different routes they take to the same conclusion. The liberal democratic order with its emphasis on the individuals and their autonomy ignores our equally important need to belong.

Their different versions of belonging have two things in common: they rely on the identification of an enemy as the focus of unity and they denounce Christianity whose universalism undermines the boundaries they would draw. As Trump's prophet, Francis wrote "Christianity today is the enemy of the West and the race that created it".

Time is running out for a liberalism tailored to the needs of a globalising capitalism that reduces citizens to consumers while governments hand over their job to technocrats. The centre disappears as radical left and right populisms take over the stage.

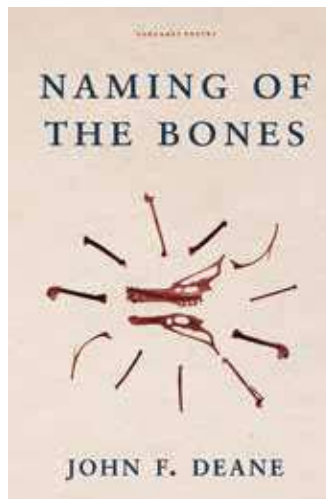
Catholics are suspicious of the radical left, with good reason given its traditional militant atheism. Perhaps it is for this reason that some look favourably on the radical right.

Further, its emphasis on belonging rather than autonomy chimes with Catholic social teaching [CST]. Rose's study warns against this temptation.

As his lucid account instructs us, the analyses of the right attack tenets central to Catholic social teaching. They reject the universalism that sees us all equal in the sight of God, all promised salvation. They have no time for an 'option for the poor'.

The Catholic tradition has its own understanding of how belonging can be balanced with autonomy, that is grounded in the Eucharist. It discourages us from turning our backs to the world, united by hatred and fear, to find security in a well-guarded enclave. Its global project is far richer than the impoverished globalisation that reduces all to economic calculation. A gift to the world, it is not a programme for a 'power grab'. It is spelt out in *Fratelli Tutti* by another Francis.

The spiritual vision important modern



Naming of the Bones by John F. Deane (Carcanet Press, £12.99/€14.95)

Thomas McCarthy

Founder of *Poetry Ireland* and Dedalus Press, as well as Secretary-General of the European Academy of Poetry, Achill native John F. Deane is highly unusual among our great humanist horde of world poets in that he has remained a man of profound Christian faith.

God's presence in nature and Christ's promises to mankind have featured significantly in nearly all of his work; and his work still glories in the liturgical calendar as if he were a child of some Catholic golden age. The great festivals of Christ's patrimony have marked the circadian rhythms of the earth; and, for him, existence without faith is both intolerable and pitiful. Once a candidate for the priesthood, he has remained a highly sophisticated and demanding lay Catholic, now husband and father:

"Something of Yeshua/Jesus has left its caul

In my flesh, my skull is riven with a blood-feud darkness

Like the painfilled leftover reek in an ancient beehive cell.

Child years were a haze of fragrances, frankincense, myrrh,

The perfumes of papa God's bazaars".

Meditation

He writes the above in *By-The-Wind Sailor*, a great meditation poem with its Chicago echoes of Lake Michigan and the Willis Tower.

Such luminous faith as well as the gift of poetry had brought him temporarily to Loyola University, Chicago, where he was Teilhard de Chardin Fellow in Christian Studies. But whether in far-off Chicago or walking

the fields of his native Achill, his faith is the same, the endurance of belief is simply astonishing.

Here in poems such as *The Dewfall* or *Quartet For the End of Time*, both crucial sequences written in response to the music of Olivier Messiaen, he responds to the great questions of human existence in the absence of God. He sees in the great human darkness a Holocaust that may take us all; and faith, or at least human yearning for faith, as the greatest hope of our Earth.

"What I fear most/ is disillusion. From the forces of evil deliver us", he writes in *Exile*, a poem written in memory of the English poet David Gascoyne.

“God’s presence in nature and Christ’s promises to mankind have featured significantly in nearly all of his work”

But it is to Achill, its seashore and sea winds, that he brings his "demons down" in poems like *Crossing the Sand* or *On Keel Beach*. Family memories and family origins are a consolation and a restoration: in poems such as *Bilberry Bells* and *Asphodel* and *The Wall* the warmth of family attachments is beautifully displayed:

"how images fade into a grieved absence, how my hurting arms

would comfort her, as I reach out now towards a lost radiance."

Poetry

In *Naming of the Bones*, Deane has assembled poetry of the most sublime beauty, arising out of thought processes that are profoundly Catholic in their early formation, yet now embracing the widest possible Christian earthliness. He is unceasing, relentless, in his thinking quest for the incomprehensible heavens, for that sense of godliness between saffron light and full moon.

Poetry is often called to be a political witness and older poets are often criticised by the young for not caring enough about whatever current battles rage upon the face of this earth. But while John F. Deane's thoughts embrace what happens inside the evil ways of men, his highest thoughts, and finest poems, create nothing less than a moving, modern-day prophetic hymnal.



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.

of an Irish poet



The poet John F. Deane at work.

Witnesses to history: what the Irish martyrs died and lived for



The 17 Irish Martyrs
by Mary McAleese
(Columba Books, 2022).

Thomas J. Morrissey

On 27 September 1992, Pope John Paul II beatified sixteen Irishmen and one Irish woman. They are the 17 about whom sometime president of Ireland Dr Mary McAleese writes in her latest book.

Each one of them chose to die a martyr rather than deny their faith in the teaching of the Catholic Church. They lived during the 16th or 17th centuries, eras marked by fierce struggles on issues of religion and power. In Ireland the English government determined to impose both Protestantism and political conquest on the majority Catholic population. In the resultant turbulence, hundreds of thousands died: among them hundreds of men and women whom tradition remembered as dying purely for religious reasons.

By 1904 documentation existed of some 460 reputed martyrs. A tribunal was established to examine their case for sanctification. After examination, 257 cases were admitted for further examination by the Roman Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Researchers

Over the years, some 80 researchers worked on the material, producing about 40,000 pages. The task seemed endless. In 1936, the Roman adviser, Fr Antonelli, suggested that they direct their attention to the strongest and best documented candidates.

In 1975 Dr Ryan, the Archbishop of Dublin, brought the work under the control of a special Diocesan Commission composed of a group of dedicated historical scholars. After years of work in the archives of the Continent and of Britain and Ireland, the evidence emerged for the 17 Irish people beatified by Pope John Paul II. Their stories are told here by Mary McAleese.

Her work is based solidly on the extensive reports of the Diocesan Commission and is presented in a lively style with a historical imagination that captures the interest of the reader.

Candidate

The author takes care to place each candidate in his/her historical context. This is done most fully in the case of the first candidate chosen, Patrick O'Haly, the first Irish bishop to die for the Faith in Ireland. The history of the English Protestant Reformation is outlined from Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth, and the role of Spain as the main Catholic power to which Irish leaders looked for support.

O'Haly became an Observant Franciscan and while studying on the Continent sought aid from King Philip II of Spain for his friend James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, who was planning an invasion of Ireland. Fitzmaurice landed with a small force, was soon killed himself, and his venture failed. O'Haly sought aid for Fitzmaurice but took no part himself in any armed undertaking.

Appointed bishop of Mayo by the Pope, however, O'Haly *did* return and eventually, accompanied by a fellow Franciscan, Conn O'Rourke, was captured near the strong garrison town of Kilmallock, Co. Limerick. Both men refused inducements to give up their religion in return for their lives and preferences, were savagely tortured, and then hanged-drawn-and-quartered. Subsequently, their bodies were left hanging for several days open to the mockery of government supporters.

Each of the martyrs were distinctive personalities with their own special histories. They were composed of two bishops, an archbishop, a number of men from religious orders, mainly priests, and six lay people. The lay persons included four from Wexford – a baker, Matthew Lambert, and three seamen, Patrick Cavanagh, Edward Cheevers and Richard Meyler. Their crime was that they gave shelter and assistance to a priest on the run who sought to escape to the Continent.

“The book has a helpful introduction which explains the significance and role of martyrdom in Ireland”

Refusing to deny their faith, they were hanged, drawn, and quartered. The remaining lay victims died in prison for their religious beliefs, refusing all inducements to accept the queen as head of the Church. They were from Dublin: Francis Taylor, a prominent citizen and former lord mayor, and Mrs Margaret Ball, also a prominent citizen, who had two sons who became lord mayors of the city. One of the sons became a very bitter anti-Catholic Protestant. He had his own mother imprisoned and left her to languish in penury and primitive conditions until she died.

The book has a helpful introduction which explains the significance and role of

martyrdom in Ireland and gives the history of research into the Irish martyrs from 1904 to the beatification of the 17 in 1992. The work on the remaining candidates continues.

There are some generalisations about the Irish people and their religious adherence which are discomforting to a historian, particularly the less than accurate comparison of the English population's embracing of the new state religion unlike the “devoutly defiant” Irish, who were “made of different stuff”.

Historical material

The book is attractively presented. Almost inevitably, with so much historical material, there is the occasional omission in proof reading, but such minor blemishes do not take from the power and relevance of the story of these Irish martyrs.

Their relevance may seem remote to many in the present-day Irish Republic, but at the present time thousands of people around the world are still dying because of persecution for their religious beliefs, and the echoes of the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries still resound in the northern section of our country, as well as in the Middle East and Asia.

A distinctive mark of the martyrs was their unconditional forgiveness of their persecutors. A true test of our Christian identity today, as the author observes, is to find loving forgiveness of past enemies, “to forgive the history we inherited and to build a new history where Christians do in fact love one another no matter what and in spite of everything”.



Mary McAleese signing her new book.

Classifieds

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www.mscmissions.ie

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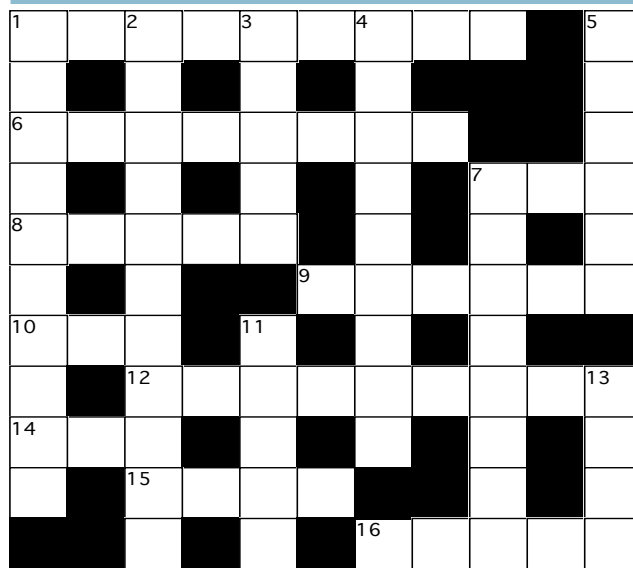


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Crossword Junior

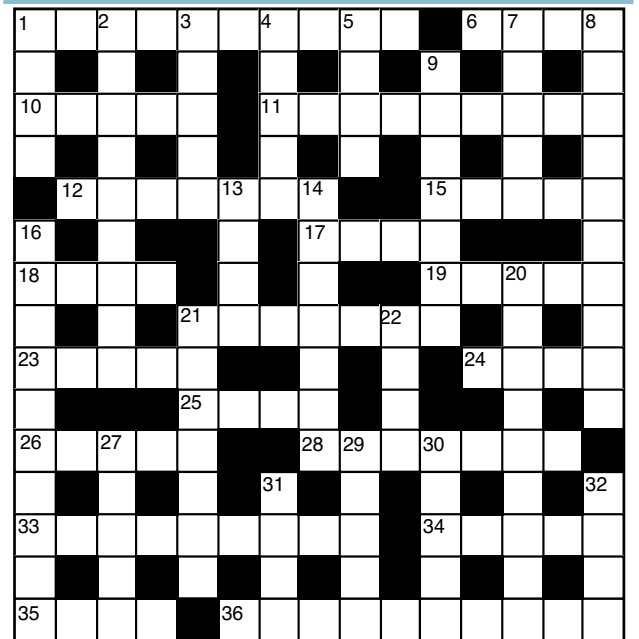
Ferdia 430



- Across**
- 1 This ape has reddish-brown hair (5-4)
 - 6 Pieces of jewellery you usually buy in pairs (8)
 - 7 Creature you take care of (3)
 - 8 'Correct' marks (5)
 - 9 Commands (6)
 - 10 Baby goat (3)
 - 12 A pilot flies it (9)
 - 14 Part of the pen you dip into the ink (3)
 - 15 Enjoy a book (4)
 - 16 You watch TV, you listen to this (5)
 - 18 Baby cat (6)
- Down**
- 2 Word used by magicians (11)
 - 3 Smiles in a slightly cheeky way (4)
 - 4 Look up to see someone walking on this in the circus (9)
 - 5 Spiky plant that grows in some deserts (6)
 - 7 Got ready (8)
 - 11 Fantastic (5)
 - 13 Coin that can be spent in many countries in Europe (4)

Crossword

Gordius 556



- Across**
- 1 Small aircraft that looks like a powered hang glider, (10)
 - 6 A Dundonian, for example (4)
 - 10 Use a razor (5)
 - 11 & 33a This optimistic statement suggests objects are facing skyward! (6,3,7,2)
 - 12 Pulverised, hammered (7)
 - 15 Boring types of the computer world (5)
 - 17 Highway (4)
 - 18 Letters traditionally seen above the cross in depictions of the Crucifixion (1,1,1,1)
 - 19 Britain's only native poisonous snake (5)
 - 21 Impales on shish kebab equipment (7)
 - 23 See 1 down
 - 24 In the distance (4)
 - 25 The chief way to upset Iman (4)
 - 26 Oriental warrior (5)
 - 28 Lourdes is in this historic region of France, now shared between two regions (7)
 - 33 See 11 across
 - 34 Heroic, courageous (5)
 - 35 Squirrels' home (4)
 - 36 Historically, female cinema employees (10)
- Down**
- 1 & 23a From which one gets the news - of Christian service only? (4,5)
 - 2 Agitated noisily (9)
 - 3 Huge marine expanse (5)
 - 4 Material torn in the stile (5)
 - 5 The first word of the Ave Maria in English (4)
 - 7 Seat (5)
 - 8 Committee members in charge of finances (10)
 - 9 Lists of topics for discussion at meetings (7)
 - 13 & 31d On the continent, this era coincided with Ireland's Golden Age (4,4)
 - 14 Sketching (7)
 - 16 Took something apart (10)
 - 20 The accused in a court case (9)
 - 21 Biblical region in central Israel (7)
 - 22 Propels a boat with oars (4)
 - 27 Tragic figure of Greek mythology found in the bone I have broken (5)
 - 29 More than enough (5)
 - 30 Hawser (5)
 - 31 See 13 down
 - 32 Payments due to professionals (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 21

GORDIUS NO. 555

Across - 1 Ghost story 6 Herb 10 Tonga 11 Astrakhan 12 Stylish 15 Sonic 17 Etch 18 Iron 19 Loyal 21 Charity 23 Teeth 24 Scar 25 Anew 26 Feral 28 Stealth 33 Faultless 34 Belle 35 Yoda 36 Measurable

Down - 1 Gate 3 Trail 4 Teams 5 Rats 7 Ethan 8 Binoculars 9 Harshly 13 Itch 14 Hebrews 16 Fifty-fifty 20 Yacht club 21 Chalets 22 To be or not to be 27 Round 29 Tasks 30 Amber 31 Fete 32 Pele

CHILDREN'S No. 429

Across - 1 Playground 7 Navan 8 Young 9 Illness 12 Tower 13 Slow 15 Van 16 Bono 17 Adam 18 Kitten

Down - 1 Pencil 2 Anvil 3 Genie 4 Obeys 5 Natural 6 Logs 10 New York 11 Servant 12 Thorn 13 Snake 14 Woman

Sudoku Corner

430

Easy

			4				9	
9		8					3	
			5	7			2	
	4		7	6	2	3	1	
1	3			9			7	
	7			3		6	4	
3		5	8					
6			2					
2					1	4		

Hard

9			8	6				
			4	3		7		
		5				6		
7					1		8	
8	2						4	1
	5		7					3
		1				5		
	3		4	1				
				3	5			2

Last week's Easy 429

9	5	4	2	7	6	1	8	3
6	2	3	1	9	8	4	5	7
1	8	7	5	3	4	6	9	2
5	7	9	8	2	1	3	4	6
3	1	8	4	6	7	5	2	9
4	6	2	9	5	3	7	1	8
8	9	6	7	1	5	2	3	4
2	3	5	6	4	9	8	7	1
7	4	1	3	8	2	9	6	5

Last week's Hard 429

5	9	7	4	1	3	6	8	2
1	6	8	2	7	5	9	4	3
3	4	2	9	8	6	5	7	1
8	5	3	1	4	7	2	6	9
9	2	4	6	3	8	1	5	7
6	7	1	5	2	9	8	3	4
4	3	9	8	5	2	7	1	6
7	8	6	3	9	1	4	2	5
2	1	5	7	6	4	3	9	8



Fr Bernard Cotter

Notebook

Easter showed fervent Faithful are truly the Church's treasures

Easter 2022 has come and gone, trailing both satisfaction and disappointment in its wake. Some were convinced the crowds would return this Easter, given that this year provided the first set of Holy Week ceremonies permitted in Irish parishes since Easter 2019. Some reported more people than expected, many more parishes reported fewer.

I was in the latter category. At one stage of the pandemic, when 50% capacity was permitted in our churches, the capacity attendance of Newcestown church was reckoned at 400, with 50% of that being counted as 250 people (we aren't very good at maths!).

For our Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the attendance was fewer than 100, with a similar number coming to the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday. Our 9pm Easter Vigil was attended by a good deal fewer than that.

Attendances

Some complained at the low attendances, but others couldn't see the point of bemoaning people who weren't there. I was happy to cherish those who showed up; their faith and commitment impressed me hugely.

In our parish, as in many other rural parishes, the GAA is the usual scapegoat for low church attend-



ances, due to their habit of arranging fixtures that compete with ours. Granted, they had scheduled two events on Holy Thursday evening that clashed with our evening Mass, so we might have had grounds for complaint that day. On Good Friday, our underage club is adamant that there be no games or training on that special day, but that lack of activity didn't add to the crowds attending the Stations of the Cross. The Holy Saturday blitz for children did little to affect our numbers, but finals arranged for Easter Sunday morning might have. The basic truth is that whatever the GAA organise won't affect the commitment of people with a strong faith. The pity is that there seem to be few enough of these.

Devastated

Some think Covid has devastated attendance at Masses. I believe Covid has clarified how things already were. Some had developed a habit of attending Mass, without faith ever affecting how they lived their lives. They were easily lost. In Ireland too, we have had genera-

tions of people put through the sacraments by tradition, but who never took on the Faith in a personal commitment (sacramentalised but not evangelised being the brief summary of their position).

On the other hand, Covid has deepened the commitment of those who want to belong. These missed the in-person services and have committed themselves in a new and much more fervent way to their faith. People in this situation have no hesitation in getting involved in Church life as needed, and rarely refuse roles suggested for them. These faithful ones are truly the treasure of the Church.

What of Easter 2023? The challenge is for our Church to devise a way of drawing those with an interest in God to a deeper knowledge and love of the Lord, and a deeper, more sustainable faith.

Only master diplomat survives parish life

My comments about sacristy rows that break out when priests forget to call out a (deceased person's) name during Mass struck a chord with many priests. One pointed out the importance of never forgetting to call out the Mass intention: "You can leave out the Gospel, or even Holy Communion", he mused, "but never forget 'the name'!" Another noted the importance of equality in parish ministry – to mention those names exactly the same number of times in each Mass, so that accusations of favouritism pass us by.

Only a master diplomat (with a thick skin) can survive parish life....

Only half the story

I wrote recently about the 75th anniversary celebrations of my church in Chicago (St Bernadette in Evergreen Park). I only told half the story. The sad news is that the parish is being amalgamated with its neighbour this summer, and the church itself will be no more in a couple of years' time. A shortage of vocations is not the issue here, but the shortage of Catholics attending Mass. The heartbreak for families whose faith-lives were centred on the church was palpable at the 75th birthday celebrations. This story may sadly be repeated in Irish dioceses before too long.



THIS EASTERTIDE, PLEASE HELP THE CHURCH IN UKRAINE



The Little Way Association is supporting the church in war-torn Ukraine. A grateful bishop whom we have helped writes: "Immediately after the beginning of the war we set up 450 places for internally displaced persons (women and children) from all over Ukraine in the houses of our diocese. In each facility they receive safe accommodation, meals, as well as clothing, hygiene products, etc. A further 1,200 places have been set up in the parish and family houses throughout the diocese. We wish you and all our benefactors God's richest blessings!"

The appeals for assistance continue to arrive at Sacred Heart House. A bishop in south-west Ukraine writes: "We are united and everyone wants to help those in need. Today we have many refugees. On the ground, in every city, town and village, we receive people who have left their homes because of the war. We provide them with housing and various kinds of help (food, hygiene items, clothes, etc.)."

"We try to help with humanitarian aid both in our territory and in the territory where hostilities are taking place. We share everything we can. As we are unfortunately not able to meet the current needs, we are asking you for your financial support for the procurement of the necessary items for the needy people who have been affected by the war or who have had to flee from the war zones."

This Eastertide, please give what you can for the families, clergy and religious of Ukraine. Every cent you donate will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to help the suffering people of Ukraine. To donate online go to littlewayassociation.enthuse.com/ukraine



"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 Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight." ~ St Therese

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