

# The Irish Catholic

**MARIA STEEN**

Freedom to disapprove of abortion is under threat – Pages 6 & 7



**FAMILY & LIFESTYLE**

Sustainability in the home  
Pages 31 & 33



**MARY KENNY**

A brilliant education in life issues  
Page 5



Thursday, April 29, 2021

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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## Archbishop calls halt to First Communion plans

### Theologians criticise Government over-reach

**EXCLUSIVE**

Chai Brady and Jason Osborne

Archbishop Dermot Farrell has insisted that parishes in Dublin must abandon plans to hold First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies, warning that it may be the autumn before public health rules allow the celebrations to go ahead.

In a letter to priests obtained by *The Irish Catholic*, Archbishop Farrell insists that “no dates should be proposed by parishes, even provisionally, for such celebrations”.

“It is likely that it will be necessary to postpone until the autumn at least some celebrations which would otherwise take place over coming weeks,” the archbishop writes.

The move comes amid expectations that the Government in the Republic will permit up to 50 people to attend Mass but keep restrictions on weddings and funerals and

» Continued on Page 2

‘Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’



Canon Jimmy McPhillips PP uses a cotton bud to anoint Dylan Beattie with chrism during his Confirmation in Aghalurcher parish, Lisnaskea/Maguirebridge, Co. Fermanagh. Dylan was one of 68 children to be confirmed and is joined by his sponsor, Ciaran Beattie.

### Church urged to defy Government and restart Mass

Ruadhán Jones

The bishops have been urged by Catholic businessman Declan Ganley to reopen churches and begin Masses from Saturday in an act of peaceful civil disobedience, as “every other avenue has been tried”.

“We have to, we’re not going to get our cases heard in anything like a timely manner,” Mr Ganley told *The Irish Catholic*. “We are being prevented from participating in public worship every single day.”

Mr Ganley’s comments came as his challenge to the constitutionality on restrictions on public worship was delayed again until May 18.

He said that without action, “this is a can that’s going to keep being kicked” and that civil disobedience is “the only way”.

“We can’t get access to the courts – and there may be very good reasons for that – we need to resort to civil disobedience,” Mr Ganley said. “I’m a bottom of the rung layman, but I am willing to participate in civil disobedience.”

» Continued on Page 4

**DAVID QUINN**

New sex-ed confirms need for fewer Catholic schools PAGE 14



**APOSTOLIC WORK**

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**ORAN DOYLE**

The evolution of religious restrictions PAGES 16 & 17



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## Inside this week

### Homelessness

**Dire housing situation looms large over Ireland**

Page 10



### Israel Olatunde

**Racing for temporal and eternal rewards**

Pages 20 & 21



### Personal Profile

**Mary Brady's pioneering lifestyle**

Page 34



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

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# Church can't take on role of policing whether families have parties or not

**A**s this newspaper went to press this week all eyes were on the cabinet meeting at which a further relaxation of the Covid-19 restrictions was due to be discussed.

The Taoiseach Micheál Martin had indicated that there would be a relaxation of the ban on public Masses by mid-May. Let's not forget that just a few weeks earlier the Government made the provocative move to back the ban up with penal provisions. Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly made it a criminal offence for a priest to leave his home with the intention of celebrating Mass at which members of the public could be present. Similarly, it is likewise a criminal offence for a Catholic to leave their home with the intention of attending Mass.

Amid our gratitude at being allowed to return to

Mass, we shouldn't forget that the Government in the Republic embarked on some of the most draconian restriction on religious freedom in the world.

### Border

North of the border, even when it was deemed prudent to suspend public worship, this was done voluntarily and with the full co-operation of the Church and other denominations. There was no question of criminality as was the case in the Republic.

That being said, what has leaked out so far seems to suggest that the number of people attending Mass will be capped at 50 even in a

church built to accommodate 1,500 people. At weddings and funerals, no more than 25 people will be able to attend. Government briefings are also suggesting that ceremonies like First Holy Communion and Confirmation ought not to take place because of the risk of social gatherings afterwards.

**“For years priests have preached against excess around parties following the reception of the sacraments”**

The Government is right to have legitimate concerns about large social gatherings, but it is not in order for the Government to set rules as to which religious celebration should be allowed in the church and which should not as long as the public health guidance is followed.

It is also imprudent for the Church to accept responsibility for social gatherings that may take place in the context of First Holy Communion, Confirmation or indeed

Baptism. For years priests have preached against excess around parties following the reception of the sacraments. They have largely been ignored.

The sacraments – serving also as rites of passage – do not take place in isolation and the celebrations afterwards have become an important part of marking the occasion. But, the Church cannot regulate such celebrations nor should it allow the State to give the false impression that the Church is responsible for such celebrations.

### Policeman

In relation to sin, Pope Francis has said that the Church should not act as a policeman. The same is true of Covid-19 – the public health guidance is clear. The Church can – and should – warn against social gatherings that would be in breach of regulations. But, it is not for parish priests to do the work of the health authorities or the gardaí.

**📞 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.**

## Setting the Vatican rocking and rolling



Aerosmith's lead guitarist Joe Perry is set to speak at a Vatican-backed conference about creativity in music, science and the brain May 6-8. The rock and roll legend will be accompanied by a professor of neurology from Harvard Medical School in the hope that they will communicate a unity between the humanities and the natural sciences. Photo: Zack Whitford.

## Archbishop calls halt to First Holy Communion

**» Continued from Page 1** insist that parishes do not hold ceremonies that could potentially be followed by social gatherings.

Dr Eugene Duffy, a theologian at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick described as “odd” the idea that the Government would try to “choose which sacraments would or wouldn't be administered.

“They're making a distinction already between Masses and funerals. You can have much bigger numbers for a Sunday Mass than for a funeral.

“It isn't their remit to choose which sacraments. It's their remit alright to legislate for gatherings of people, but within that it's hardly appropriate or their remit to determine which sacraments could or could not be celebrated,” Dr Duffy said.

Dr Jessie Rogers, Dean of Theology at St Patrick's College, Maynooth agreed. “I think the Government's remit can only

be to say how many people can gather or these of the kinds of measures that need to be put in place. I wouldn't say that the Government should be saying you can do this one [Sacrament] and not that one.

“I do think it's valid that there are restrictions on kinds of gatherings...[but] I don't think you can single out a particular kind of celebration,” she said.

In his letter, Dr Farrell said that he is “aware that some parishes have been pressed” on the matter. He said that: “Following clarification of the public health requirements, I will issue guidelines regarding when celebrations of the sacraments may be held”.

Meanwhile, north of the border where public Masses recommenced in March, First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies have been taking place in line with requirements for social distancing.

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# Priest criticises Green Party's Ciaran Cuffe for 'cheap shot'

Chai Brady

A Dublin priest has criticised remarks made by Green Party MEP Ciaran Cuffe, who said the Church should use the proceeds of a 2019 land sale to build social housing rather than the likes of pastoral initiatives.

Fr John Gilligan PP said: "Politicians need to be realistic. It's easy to throw out these cheap shots and comments like that, but they have to see where the Church is coming from. Government has its

responsibilities and their duty to carry that out.

"The Church of the future in Dublin has to look after its assets and how it can continue to provide for vocations and pastoral workers for the future.

"We know funding has been affected greatly in the last while, if the future is to be sustained and there's no assets coming in and collections are all gone, salaries are being cut and people let go, we have to rationalise and be sensible. You always have to safeguard your future."

Former Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin said the proceeds of the €95 million sale of the Church's land at Clonliffe would be used to fund vocations and the ongoing formation of lay people and priests in 2018.

In a letter to *The Irish Times* last week, Mr Cuffe stated: "Perhaps the Catholic Church might rethink their intention to spend the €95 million from the sale on funding vocations and the ongoing formation of lay people and priests within

the Dublin diocese, and instead provide support for more housing of those most in need."

Speaking of the charitable work of the Church, Fr Gilligan said: "The likes of Peter McVerry, Sr Stan, Bro. Kevin, all of these people, they are the voice for the poor and they're working very hard and giving great witness."

The land was bought from the archdiocese by the GAA. 10% of housing built will be social and 10% will be affordable on the site.

# Organisers overwhelmed as 5,000 tune in daily to Sr Clare retreat

Ruadhán Jones

Bishop Dónal McKeown concluded the weeklong retreat in memory of Sr Clare Crockett by praying for her canonisation, as people tuned in from across the globe.

The retreat, organised to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Derry nun's death in Ecuador, saw an average of 4,800 people tune into the livestream every day.

"The amount of engagement we've had during the retreat, it was unbelievable," said Emmet Thompson, who ran the retreat's digital outreach. "We had people tuning in through our social media platforms and our webcam from all around the globe. That was surprising. To see people from Toronto, New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, the UK, all of Ireland, Greece – it was just all around the world."

Bishop McKeown of Derry celebrated the final Mass of the retreat, comparing Sr Clare's faithfulness to St Joseph's.

The retreat was "a celebration of God's grace in a local girl whose family are here in front of us", Bishop McKeown said.

Drawing on the three themes – dream, service and faithfulness – proposed by Pope Francis for the Year of St Joseph, the bishop of Derry said Sr Clare demonstrated all three.



A picture of a young Sr Clare Crockett, the Derry nun who was killed by an earthquake in Ecuador.

## First blessing for Franciscan Father



Fr Damian Casey OFM – who was ordained a priest in Adam and Eve's Church, Dublin, April 24, by Archbishop Dermot Farrell – gives his first blessing to Br Niall O'Connell OFM, Guardian of the Dublin Friary.

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# Indian Jesuit victim of shocking abuse of law say Irish Jesuits

Ruadhán Jones

Fr John Guiney SJ, Director of Irish Jesuit Missions, called for the immediate release on bail of Fr Stan Swamy SJ, who has been incarcerated for more than 200 days awaiting trial.

Fr Swamy's arrest, on the grounds of terrorist activity, is a "shocking abuse of the law", Fr Guiney told *The Irish Catholic*.

"His incarceration is a real injustice," Fr Guiney said. "The allegation against him is that he's a terrorist, that he's a Maoist, when he's working for the rights of the indigenous and tribal communities."

The Indian Jesuit turned 84 on April 26, and is very frail, Fr Guiney continued, as he suffers from Parkinson's disease.

The Jesuits across the world are calling the Indian Government "not only to give Stan bail while they are putting their case together, but also to release some of his other colleagues", Fr Guiney said.

Fr Swamy is a man of "charity, peace and dialogue", who has spent the last 15 years being a voice for the voiceless, Fr Guiney continued.

"I was visiting India a year and a half ago and Stan at that time was being continually harassed by the National Investigation

agency, who were purporting that he was trying to violently overthrow the Government," Fr Guiney explained. "At that time, he found refuge in our social centre to avoid the harassment."

Fr Swamy's arrest is part of an effort by the ruling Indian People's Party (BJP) to challenge the democratic culture of India, according to Fr Guiney.

The new terrorist law under which Fr Swamy was arrested was deliberately changed "in order to encapsulate him within a kind of a statute that means any people who are associated with groups who stand up for people's rights in relation to the landless are seen as terrorists".

## TDs call for Govt grants for parishes which moved online

Chai Brady

TDs have rallied around a Tipperary priest who questioned why parishes haven't received financial support from Government despite their direction to move services online.

Fr Michael Toomey PP of Ardfinnan and Newcastle told *The Irish Catholic* he spent €5,000 setting up webcams to broadcast services to his parishioners in the churches in his parish. He also pays €180 a month to maintain the service.

Mattie McGrath TD of the Tipperary constituency said parishes should be treated like any other business and be eligible to receive State grants.

"They had grants available for business to go online, they were advertising them very heavily, so why shouldn't the Churches of all denominations get them?" he asked.

"They've been denied their religious freedom, they've been forced

to practice behind closed doors. They should be entitled to apply for those grants as any other business to go online."

### Separation

He added: "You're going to have people jumping up and down about the separation of Church and State... but the State has come and locked up the Church."

Michael Healy-Rae TD of Kerry said that it seems every other sector of society that needed assistance during the pandemic has received it, but not parishes.

He said: "There is an awful lot of money available for sectoral interests and considering that we are a Catholic country... I don't see why Government should not do something to assist every parish that needs assistance because a small amount of money might actually make a big difference to a parish and to a community."

## Government 'tricking' Faithful into compliance through ambiguity – Law professor

Jason Osborne

The Government has been "tricking" citizens into compliance through "calculated ambiguity" between legal obligations and public health advice, a leading law professor has said.

Professor Oran Doyle of Trinity College Dublin took to Twitter to criticise the Government's behaviour concerning religious restrictions throughout the pandemic.

Citing an article in *The Irish Times*, Prof. Doyle said Taoiseach Micheál Martin's insistence that the "Government was not 'anti-religious' in any way," and that the current restrictions were only

a general legal precaution against indoor gatherings was "wrong on both counts".

Prof. Doyle clarified that the new ban applies to both indoor and outdoor gatherings, and that "untangling the legislative cross-references" showed that the latest ban "doesn't capture anything new other than religious activity".

Prof. Doyle said "reasonable inference" is that the Government had two purposes: "Criminalise religious services" and "Conceal the first purpose by a bizarrely and unnecessarily convoluted set of legislative cross-references".

See pages 16-17

## A new 'Buddy Bench' at Doon CBS



Doon CBS Primary School, Co. Limerick, gratefully receive the gift of a 'Buddy Bench', made in the workshop at Limerick Jail on Mulgrave St, and presented to the school by Prison Officer, Tom Murphy. Pictured (from left): Doon pupils Cian Murphy, Eoin Murphy, Michael Dillon, and SNA Mary Campbell Ryan.

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**ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD**

## Church urged to defy Government and restart Mass

» Continued from Page 1  
"With a mask, with everything cleaned, with one way arrangements – we need to be careful and sensible in how we do this, reduce numbers in the churches. But we need to go back and start defying the State."

Mr Ganley said that in his personal opinion, "the Irish Catholic Bishops should order their parishes to reopen from this Saturday forward for the holding of covid mitigated public worship, with priests & stewards as well as the con-

gregants all aware we face possible arrest & prosecution".

He continued, adding that "every avenue has been tried at this point, every avenue. It was bad back in October, it's only got worse".

The move would not be without risk for the Church, Mr Ganley acknowledged.

"It's possible the charitable status of the Church will be threatened," he said. "The State may crack down very hard on the Church, but let's make them do it, make them show their hand."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Need for priests in Ireland 'great as ever in our history' – Archbishop Farrell

The need to pray for vocations is a call to all in the Church, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said on Vocations Sunday.

The archbishop of Dublin said in his homily April 25 that "the Church in this land needs priests and religious, as greatly as ever before in our history".

Archbishop Farrell encouraged those who hear the call to follow it as "if this is where the Lord is calling, then all I can say is that his heart will know no greater joy than in following".



# A brilliant education in life issues

**T**ruly, one of the great achievements of modern medicine is the treatment of babies in the womb. An unborn baby with a tumour on her lung – spotted by a routine ultrasound scan at 19 weeks – can now have corrective laser treatment surgery which saves her life.

**“Prof. Basky’s work is a testament to the amazing advances occurring in the medical treatment of the unborn, and their mothers”**

In Channel Four’s terrific new series *Baby Surgeons*, which started last Monday, we saw the wonderful Prof. Basky Thilaganathan do just that. To the joy of the parents, the baby girl came through brilliantly – although, obviously, like all surgery, the intrauterine laser treatment carried a risk. Significantly, the unborn infant was successfully anaesthetised during her treatment.

Prof. Basky’s work is a testament to the amazing advances occurring in the medical treatment of the unborn, and their mothers. His attitude is so respectful of the miracle of human life: he calls the unborn babies he treats “the youngest patients”. “It’s a miracle,” he says, “when a sperm and an egg meet – a perfect human being is formed.” But even when the human being isn’t medically ‘perfect’, there is more and more



**Mary Kenny**

help. “Nature is in control,” says Prof. Basky, who looks pleasingly like Yul Brynner, “but we can help at certain points.”

Last Monday, three sets of parents were seen. Parents with achondroplasia – they quite cheerfully referred to themselves as dwarfs – were supported through a pregnancy, after three miscarriages. The medical aspect was very openly explained: a mother with achondroplasia has a 50% chance of having a baby with the same condition. It turned out that Randika’s baby would also be a dwarf and she was “quite happy about the diagnosis”, and thrilled when the very sweet baby was born early, via a caesarean section.

**“This programme, although taking a neutral approach of straightforward reportage, was an education in human life development”**

Another couple had also suffered repeated miscarriages, and a fresh pregnancy produced triplets. But alas, one of these babies died at week nine. The mother grieved and was desperate to hold on to the two remaining girls: photographs of scans at every stage in the

pregnancy were displayed on a wall in her home. To her great grief, one of the remaining babies perished in the womb, and as the very small infant was delivered, lifeless, she was nonetheless named and treated with the greatest care and respect. The last triplet survived: and “though [the two who died] could not come into this world, they’re part of us”, said the mother.

## Reportage

This programme, although taking a neutral approach of straightforward reportage, was an education in human life development. Not only did it show the development of the unborn with close-up techniques but it most touchingly illuminated the attachment that the mother (and admittedly in a supportive role, the father) develops towards the life she is carrying. Prof. Basky, who heads up St George’s foetal medicine unit in London, said his aim was “to give babies a chance of life”, and parents the fulfilment of a family.

\*\*\*

On a different, although related, aspect of life, Dr Dermot Kearney, a graduate of UCD, and President of the Catholic Medical Association, says that the CMA is now successfully treating women who change their mind about abortion, after taking the abortion pill, mifepristone. During lockdown, this has been prescribed by the British



Some of the team behind *Baby Surgeons* on Channel 4

NHS to take at home, known as ‘Pills by Post’. Dr Kearney says that 141 women contacted the CMA for help with reversing the abortion procedure: of 73 who were treated, 38 have held on

to their pregnancies – 50% success – and ten have delivered healthy babies. The treatment involves administering progesterone, the female hormone. The Royal College

of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists are critical of the CMA’s approach. But it’s an interesting fact, in itself, that women are seeking help to reverse abortion pills.

## The shifting sands of international relations

Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand’s prime minister, has been widely celebrated as the ‘wokest’ of the woke political leaders. But now a shadow has crossed the profile of the much-praised Kiwi: Wellington has decided to prioritise trade with China rather than sharing intelligence with its western allies, known

as the ‘Five Eyes’ (US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand).

Forget Beijing’s human rights abuses and the atrocious persecution of the Uyghur Muslims. Business with China – on which New Zealand depends – comes first. Since Jacinda seems to be seeking ever-closer union with Beijing, it

looks as though NZ will be omitted from western intelligence’s secrets.

The best candidate to fill New Zealand’s position is surely France, which has much stronger links with Africa than the Anglophone countries – partly built up, by the way, by the French missionary traditions such as the Holy Ghost fathers.

● In suggesting that Shirley Williams missed out on becoming leader of Britain’s Labour party last week, I omitted the fact that James Callaghan won that role before Michael Foot. Thanks to John O’Mahony of Galway for correcting me on recalling Jim Callaghan, who was UK prime minister between 1976 and 1979.

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## Maria Steen

### The View



# Even the freedom to disapprove of abortion is

Since the abortion referendum passed, there has been a concerted effort by abortion proponents – including the Government – to restrict the freedom of expression of pro-life supporters. Peaceful prayer vigils outside hospitals are likened to violence and there are moves to ban them. Not content with this, it now seems that even the silent disapproval of those who detest the intentional killing of innocent human beings is too much for the fragile feelings of the abortionists.

Two weeks ago a study was published in the journal *Contraception* entitled ‘Exploring providers experience of stigma following the introduction of more liberal abortion care in the Republic of Ireland’. The thrust of the study is that abortion providers need to be protected from judgment and disapproval for their views and their actions. They should rather be validated by all.

“GPs fare better, with doctors and nurses providing abortions in a hospital setting reporting higher levels of social isolation”

The paper was authored by PhD psychology student Brendan Dempsey, Dr Aoife Mullally (clinical lead of abortion services in Ireland and sister of *The Irish Times* journalist, Una Mullally) and Drs Mary Higgins and Mary Favier (both pro-choice activists during the 2018 referendum campaign).

### Stigma

The study was designed to examine whether abortion providers in Ireland experience stigma in relation to their jobs. This was measured using the Abortion Providers Stigma Scale – yes, apparently there is such a thing.

Out of 309 practitioners invited to participate, just over 50% (156) responded. The majority were GPs (67%) with obstetricians, midwives and nurses making up 31%. The vast majority of abortion providers were women (84%), with the largest cohort (42%) being in their 40s.

It found that Irish providers had fewer issues in disclosing their abortion work



Pictured outside Leinster House at a 2019 protest against exclusion zones are Alina Dulgheriu from the London based group ‘Be Here for Me’ with Elizabeth Howard who has taken part in pro-life vigils outside the Ealing abortion clinic in London. Photo: John McElroy.

than their US counterparts. They also experienced fewer instances of judgment and discrimination, but higher levels of social isolation. The study, rather unhelpfully, does not define ‘social isolation’, or consider the possible effect of national lockdowns (the research was carried out between January and May 2020). The only hint of what might be involved is suggested in the following sentence: “Irish providers may experience stigma-related isolation if family and friends are opposed to the liberalisation of abortion care.”

GPs fare better, with doctors and nurses providing abortions in a hospital setting reporting higher levels of social isolation. The authors believe this may have something to do with the fact that obstetricians and midwives/nurses work-

ing in hospitals are generally involved in surgical and later-term abortions.

### Instructive

The statistics are instructive here, and give us a picture of the reality of abortion in Ireland. Some 91% of abortions were carried out on babies under 12 weeks. According to the authors, a medical abortion (with the abortion pill) can take place until the baby is nine weeks and six days old. Between ten weeks and 11 weeks and six days, vacuum aspiration is available in ten hospitals around the country. This method of dismembering the baby was used in 25% of cases, either alone or in conjunction with the abortion pill.

The report states: “hospital staff may be attributed direct responsibility for ending the pregnancy and must encounter the

foetal remains.” To put it bluntly, having to confront the physical reality of a dead baby’s body after having been aborted by vacuum tends to put people off, and leads them to hold the person who did the dismembering morally responsible. The report states that GPs don’t encounter this problem, as the end of the abortion happens at home – usually in a toilet – away from eyes that might have to encounter the evidence.

The report notes with concern that the procedure of Dilation and Evacuation (D&E), like vacuum aspiration, is also highly stigmatising, and though it is not yet on offer in Ireland, Irish doctors are currently abroad training in this method.

The authors record an astonishingly high rate of abortions on emergency

grounds (44.2%), accounting for 69 out of the 156 providers who stated that they had carried out abortions on this particular legal ground. By contrast, for the year 2019, there were only three such cases in the whole country.

“The report states: ‘hospital staff may be attributed direct responsibility for ending the pregnancy and must encounter the foetal remains’”

Despite the fact that in 2018 we were told to ‘trust doctors’, the authors come to the (logical) conclusion that many abortion providers are ‘reframing’ – or

less euphemistically, lying about – the abortions they carried out as ‘emergency’ care. This is further highlighted by the fact that 37 of the providers were in the community (GPs or midwives), even though emergency procedures should only be carried out in hospitals, according to medical guidance. The authors surmise that providers may do this to avoid stigma, though they admit to no difference in levels of stigma reported between those providing emergency abortion and those who do not.

### Referendum

There is, as we pointed out in advance of the referendum, another possibility: that doctors are using this ground to get around having to wait the three days before performing an abortion, or consulting with a colleague, or indeed to carry out an abortion after 12 weeks. The legislation under this ground sets no time limit, can be signed off and carried out by one doctor rather than two, and can be performed immediately.

“It found that Irish providers had fewer issues in disclosing their abortion work than their US counterparts”



## under threat

In 2019, *The Irish Times* reported that approximately 2-3% of pregnancies involve a congenital abnormality, with only about 15% of that 2-3% being 'life-limiting'.

**“The study was designed to examine whether abortion providers in Ireland experience stigma in relation to their jobs”**

And whereas in 2017, babies at risk of physical or mental abnormalities (a ground far wider than 'fatal anomalies'), accounted for just under 5% of all abortions carried out on Irish women in Britain, almost 22% of the abortions accounted for in this study were carried out under the ground of 'Fatal Foetal Anomaly'. We know of at least one case – due to be heard by the High Court in June – where a wrong diagnosis was made, and a healthy baby aborted.

### Providers

But to return to the issue of abortion providers experiencing stigma, the report states: "Our findings suggest that Irish providers, particularly those working in hospitals, may benefit from supports to reduce abortion-related isolation and challenges posed by collegial interactions or later-gestation care." It also records medical practitioners experiencing "feelings of disapproval and disrespect from colleagues, as well as resistance and conflict". By contrast, GPs work in much smaller practices and tend to provide care alone, shielding them from "stigmatizing interactions".

The authors also surmise that hospital-based doctors and nurses may experience higher levels of stigma because they face protests outside hospitals. This is despite the fact that the gardai, when asked, reported that there was no threatening or abusive behaviour by those involved in pro-life vigils.

So the 'stigma' problem seems to arise in the following three circumstances:

1) friends and family don't agree with the abortion providers' actions;

2) abortion providers 'feel' that colleagues disapprove; and

3) unknown pro-life protestors (who have no interaction with them) 'make them feel' stigmatised.

It is always surprising that a group convinced that it is morally right is so sensitive to even unspoken disapproval. Yet they never seem to consider that the problem might be with their moral certitude. No, the solution is clear: to compel friends, family, colleagues, and pro-lifers to celebrate and validate the abortion providers. It's not enough that they enjoy a protected, secure, State job (and pension), which they are in no danger of losing, and that they are handsomely remunerated for their 'services'. It's not enough that – compared to their American counterparts – they experience far less judgment and discrimination, or that there is no danger of them being excluded from career progression. By contrast, an advert for a consultant post in Holles Street in 2019 made it clear that any doctor applying would have to be willing to cooperate with the abortion programme, thereby excluding Catholics and other pro-life candidates.

**“Hospital-based doctors and nurses may experience higher levels of stigma because they face protests outside hospitals”**

Pro-life people are expected to put up with social isolation, rejection, threatening and abusive behaviour online and elsewhere, not to mention educational and career exclusion. We're told that our freedom to hold our views means that we have to put up with these consequences, but it seems there's a different rule for abortion providers. Their freedom to hold their views cancels out everyone else's freedoms: even the freedom to disapprove. What is required, in the interest of freedom, is complete capitulation, leading to enforced uniformity, validation and celebration. Anything less might risk making an abortionist feel bad, and we can't have that.

# Make your home in me

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



One of the saddest features of society today is the number of people who are homeless and sleeping rough. But another sort of homelessness is the plight of people who have lost all contact with God. The Gospel today (John 15:1-9) recalls one of the seven great 'I am' statements in John's Gospel. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing." And Jesus invites us to make our home in him.

The Church is the community of Christian disciples called to bear fruit in his name, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Part of the Sacrament of Baptism is anointing with the oil of chrism. Jesus acquired the name Christ from the word for chrism. He is the anointed one and his followers are called Christians. But it is not enough to be Christian in name if we are not Christian in fact.

### Stages of growth

Notice the three stages of growth: remaining in contact with the sap of energy; pruning; and bearing fruit. The invitation to remain in contact is so important that it is mentioned no fewer than ten times. The greatest way of maintaining contact is through reflection on the word of God. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it." Jesus invites us to be at home with him. "Make your home in me as I make mine in you." A house is a structure but it does not become a home until people live in it. Home is where you belong and where you are always welcome when you return. A Christian is as much at home with Christ as a branch is with a tree. The life of a true disciple is rooted and grounded in Christ and always returns to Christ for meaning, sustenance and energy. "Apart from me you can do nothing". Cut off a branch from the plant and it withers. It is impossible to live a vibrant Christian life without a steady, daily life of prayer. In fact, the word *enthusiasm* comes from the Greek words for in-God.

### Pruning

May is blossom time in the Northern hemisphere and fruit picking time south of the equator. In between blossom and harvesting, many plants require pruning. Vines, just

like tomatoes, require a lot of pruning. The creeping vine needs a severe pruning in spring, otherwise it will send out too many wild and fruitless tendrils and leaves. Later on, a month before vintage, a second pruning snips off the weaker fruits to let more sap available to swell out the stronger crop. We have to ask ourselves where do we need pruning. Where do we need more self-discipline to find more time for our relationship with God...for relationship with family...for helping others? Where are we wasting the time and talents God gave us?

### Spirit-filled evangelisers

The source of sap for growth in the Christian life is the Holy Spirit. In a world becoming increasingly secularistic, Pope Francis sees the need for Spirit-filled evangelisers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit, filling us with an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity. He wants to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelisation full of fervour, joy, generosity, boundless love and attraction.

### Fruit hangs on fragile twigs

When we hear of our invitation to be active evangelisers our first reaction may be a sense of our inadequacy. It is important to remember that the sap of life comes up from strong roots and branches, but blossoms and fruit appear only on the fragile twigs and tendrils. History shows us that many of the people who bore great fruit in God's service were people who were conscious of their past failures. Moses had murdered a man. King David's moment of lust instigated a train of evil deeds. Paul persecuted the followers of Jesus but after his conversion he learned to smile at his own deficiencies. He saw how God deliberately chooses the weak and foolish of this world to confound the wise and strong, so that it might be plainly seen that whatever fruit is borne comes from God rather than human powers. So, whatever your own fears, trust in the Holy Spirit.

### Towards a better liturgy

Here in Ireland, our churches are still closed for worship except for small crowds at weddings and funerals. However, it looks as though

the strictures will be relaxed shortly and it is possible that full reopening will be allowed in the not-too-distant future. How many will return? It is likely that the number will be less than before. Many of those who came out of duty rather than reverence, arriving late and leaving before the last blessing, have lost their routine. While it would be sad if people no longer join in liturgy, yet it might not be altogether harmful. I hate saying this, but there is a dreadful minimalism here in Ireland holding back the development of good liturgy. It's like the story of the man who comes back from Mass on a Sunday morning. The wife asks him, "What did he preach about this morning?" And he answers, "About ten minutes". The watch was more important than the word. No problem with watching a television programme for hours, or a match that goes into extra-time, but Mass has to be quick. Returning after the pandemic will offer an opportunity to start afresh with a congregation who have come, not out of servile routine, but with a desire to hear the word of God and really celebrate the Eucharist. And miracle of miracles, there will be more people closer to the altar than to the back door! What an affirmation and support! It would make preaching a lot easier.

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# Sadness as Joe Walsh Tours closes its doors

Jason Osborne

Joe Walsh Tours announced its closure on Tuesday, with directors thanking both customers and staff in a statement.

Established in 1961 by Bangor-man Joe Walsh, the family owned-and-operated tour provider was famous in Catholic circles for its travel to pilgrimage destinations such as Lourdes and Medjugorje.

Commenting on the decision to cease trading, the directors said the decision to close the travel agent's doors was "in the best interest of all concerned".

Joe Walsh Pilgrimages Ltd. had not traded since the beginning of the pandemic and stated that it had done "eve-

rything they could" to see itself and its customers through the pandemic.

"Travel protocols in Ireland are the most restrictive in Europe, putting Irish travel companies at a disadvantage to their European counterparts," the statement added.

As with other travel agencies and tour operators, Joe Walsh Tours continued to pay overheads as it was unable to trade, while also waiting on refunds from suppliers, with the statement saying "Joe Walsh Pilgrimages Ltd. has worked full time during the pandemic for no return".

"Joe Walsh Pilgrimages Ltd. has business interruption insurance in place. The company had hoped to be able to continue trading with the benefit of a large refund

claim from the insurers," the statement read.

"However, it has not been possible to reach agreement with the insurers at this stage. This will now be a matter for the liquidators to progress in due course."

The company holds a bond with the Commission for Aviation Regulation (CAR), which will now manage any outstanding refunds, including those under the Refund Credit Note (RCN) scheme announced by the Government in 2020.

Any customer of Joe Walsh Pilgrimages Ltd. with money paid towards a cancelled booking or a future travel package is advised to contact CAR and make a claim at the website [www.aviationreg.ie](http://www.aviationreg.ie)

## Dublin task force aims to animate parishes

Chai Brady

The chair of the task force established by Archbishop Dermot Farrell has said there will be an emphasis on pastoral initiatives aimed at "animating parishes".

Msgr Ciaran O'Carroll of Donnybrook parish, chairperson of the 'Task Force on a Church for the Dublin of Tomorrow' which comes under the title 'Building Hope', said it is "exciting".

"It's mainly focused on pastoral initiatives, the emphasis is on giving hope to parishes and animating parishes and seeing what positive supports can be offered to the people of the diocese," he said.

The task force is composed of clergy, religious and laypeople. They met for the first time last week and again this week. It was established by Archbishop Farrell to prepare an assessment of the needs of the people of the Archdiocese

of Dublin as they emerge from the Covid crisis.

The archbishop urged haste, with the group expected to complete its work by the end of summer. Msgr O'Carroll admitted "we have a very short timeframe".

Asked about some of the details of discussions around finances, Msgr O'Carroll said: "Everything is possible, whatever is best to proclaim the Gospel. The group are going to work towards the mandate given it by the archbishop, I'm not going to pre-judge what's going to be in the final report."

In a previous statement Dr Farrell said the aim of the task force will be to "prepare an approach to a pastoral strategy" that supports parishes to undertake a "radical renewal", and that will allow communities of faith to look to the "future with creativity".

### Just reward for hard work



Jim Gribbon, formerly sacristan for 20 years in Nativity Church, Belfast, receives the Benemerenti Medal for service to the Church from Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor. He is pictured (from left) with Fr Aidan Keenan PP, Jim Gribbon, Bishop Noel Treanor and Bernie Gribbon (Pic 1); and with his family and Bishop Treanor (Pic 2).

## President Higgins' caricature of education in the North ill-advised – Aontú

Staff reporter

Aontú's Peadar Tóibín TD has urged President Michael D. Higgins to withdraw his recent comments which referred to schools in the North as "parcels of hate", describing them as a "caricature".

"The idea that schools in the North are responsible for the division in the North is an incredible example of revisionism," Mr Tóibín said in a statement.

"Division in the North is as a result of partition, it's as a result of decades of an orange state discriminating against nationalists and Catholics in terms of housing, jobs and rights."

He went on to say that Catholic schools have achieved "great results" in terms of fighting disadvantage, with the numbers of students going on to university after attending Catholic schools in disadvantaged areas "greatly improving".

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Draft scheme to regularise undocumented migrants announced

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced late last week her draft proposals for a scheme to regularise thousands of undocumented migrants to Ireland.

The opening of the "undocumented scheme" by the end of the year is a major part of the minister's Justice Plan 2021.

Minister McEntee's initial proposals would see eligible people having a period of

four years residence in the State without an immigration permission, or three years in the case of those with children.

They would also be granted permission for unrestricted access to the labour market, as well as having their years of residence by that permission recognised for the purposes of pursuing citizenship by way of naturalisation.

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# Ireland faces homelessness tsunami due to dire housing situation



Ireland is facing a trifold housing crisis, in terms of homelessness, rent eviction and affordability, writes Ruadhán Jones

On Friday April 23, the national ban on evictions from homes in the rental market was lifted. Housing charities and experts have warned of a potential “eviction crisis” as a result, as effects of Covid on jobs and household income takes effect.

**“As to social housing, just 5,000 new social houses were built in the last year, Dr Hargaden says”**

Social theologian and Director of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice Kevin Hargaden told *The Irish Catholic* that the “homelessness catastrophe, which has plateaued largely because of the eviction ban, will now almost certainly jump – unless there’s a mass intervention

on rent arrears”.

This is one of three potential crises facing Ireland in the housing sector, Dr Hargaden said. The other two are the complete lack of investment in social housing and an “affordability crisis”, where young professionals are unable to access the housing market due to exorbitant prices. The situation, he said, “is absolutely dire, we’re facing a tsunami of homelessness and a dysfunctional housing market, the likes of which we’ve not seen in the history of the state”.

But this cannot be blamed on the pandemic, which has instead seen a decrease in the number of people in homelessness. The number of people in emergency homeless accommodation fell by 2,000 people between January and December 2020, the largest decrease to date according to Focus Ireland.

Equally, this is an issue that has been increasing for a long time. Consistently over the last generation, we have had the highest rental increases across the entire western world, according to Dr Hargaden. He argues that the dysfunction of the market is down to a lack of investment in social housing and a reliance on subsidies as a remedy.

“Every submission that has been proposed there has our alarm bells ringing because it has the possibility to inflate the market further,” he explains. “When you subsidise a product, that’s just integrated into the sale price, turned into pure profit.”

## Social housing

“I’ve a friend in Edinburgh who’s a medical professional with the NHS. She’s a first time buyer using a similar scheme in Scotland. The support the scheme provides is €25,000 and as any first year economics student could tell you, the prices have risen by €30,000. Now the Irish Government is planning a similar scheme.”

As to social housing, just 5,000 new social houses were built in

the last year, Dr Hargaden says. This is despite Government claims that more than 22,000 were built, a figure that is largely made up of private housing that has been effectively re-categorised as ‘social housing’, the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice argue. The issue has been further exacerbated by the pandemic, which halted much of the construction sector.

“We spend €2 million a day on housing assistance payments which function as a subsidy from the public exchequer into the back pockets of private investors,” he says. “That could easily be spent on building social houses, but for ideological reasons, it isn’t.”

**“The eviction ban we’ve had the last year is the clearest example of housing policy in recent times that has had a positive effect on evictions and on homelessness”**

The Government’s reluctance to build social housing is down to “ideological commitments”, Dr Hargaden contends. He argues that an overreliance on the market to provide solutions and a false narrative which suggests renters and landlords are on a level playing field influences Government decisions. Dr Hargaden uses the example of the decision to end the eviction ban to illustrate his point.

“The eviction ban we’ve had the last year is the clearest example of housing policy in recent times

that has had a positive effect on evictions and on homelessness,” he says. “It was introduced reluctantly, for short periods of time and intermittently updated. Despite the general goodwill of an eviction ban at the beginning, it has gradually been eroded.”

## Policy

“The current Government likes to talk about evidence based policy. Here we have an example of a policy having a great effect and it’s being removed arbitrarily due to external pressures from particular sectors in society who are already strong.

“We know that the pandemic has affected disproportionately

“What you’d actually have with the current arrangements is that the REIT’s (real estate investment trusts), the large investors who own hundreds of properties, they will send out a blanket eviction notice. And because there’s no scrutiny on their motivations because of this radically un-Christian understanding of property ownership the Government has, then the evictions are going to occur en masse.”

**“We’re failing people in precarious housing situations or who are actively experiencing homelessness”**

Dr Hargaden and the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice argue that there are a number of obvious steps that must be taken to improve the situation, such as increasing the number of social houses being built and introducing a rent eviction jubilee akin to the ban during the pandemic, citing the examples of cities like Vienna and Madrid.

## Structures

“People really have to question if they want to continue supporting the political and social and economic structures that are making it extremely difficult for ordinary people to know that they’ll be able to put a roof over their children’s head next month and next year,” Dr Hargaden says.

“We’re failing people in precarious housing situations or who are actively experiencing homelessness. And we’re failing people who in previous generations would otherwise have been well able to purchase their own homes.”





# 'Great excitement' as Fermanagh children receive Confirmation



Fr Jimmy McPhillips anoints with chrism by using a cotton bud. Photos: Donnie Phair.



Ryan, Claire, Conor, Aidy, Lauren and Niamh Kelly.

## Chai Brady

There was "great excitement" among families as 68 school-children received the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Clogher over the weekend.

The children of Aghalurcher parish in Lisnaskea/Maguirebridge, Co. Fermanagh, were some of the first to receive the Sacrament in the diocese this year.

Fr Jimmy McPhillips PP told *The Irish Catholic*: "We are blessed in the North that we're able to have our people back in church.

"We have a very, very active parish Covid committee, with the local GP as our chair, so we are following the law very strictly and we're doing it very safely so we could go ahead with our sacraments."

With First Communion coming up in a few weeks and three primary schools in the parish, Fr McPhillips

says "there's a lot of kids to go through the sacraments".

"We're happily doing it and we have everything in place, so we see the church as the safest place you can be."

Regarding the feeling among parishioners, Fr McPhillips said: "They were hopeful, it was an obvious green shoot for a lot of people. There was definitely great excitement among the families. Again, it was restricted, it was only the sponsor and the siblings, none of the parents were allowed into the church and each family had a seat allocated to them."

He added: "It's great to see the happiness in the kids' faces too. They're just back in school now about three weeks here. It's been a very difficult four months for the kids, so to give them a wee bit of hope too was so important. You just have to get on with it, we just have to live with this."



Michael, Shellianna and Nevaeh McCaffrey with mum and dad, Brian and Roxi.



Michelle, Stephen, Charlie, James and Sarah West.



Aine Collins with godfather Kieran Donnelly, mum Elaine Collins, dad Tony and sister Caoimhe Collins.



# The Irish synod and the quiet revolution of Francis



The Pope is putting greater faith in the local Church and does not believe that the magisterium must intervene to settle every doctrinal, moral and pastoral dispute, writes **Fr Declan Marmion SM**

**T**he Catholic Church is typically structured as a pyramid – the Pope at the top, people at the base. Pope Francis wants to turn this image on its head. He calls it an ‘inverted pyramid’. The clergy, bishops, cardinals, and even the Pope himself, are all located beneath the people, providing a system of support for the Christian community, and where the only authority is the authority of service.

One practical result is the appointment of laypeople to head key Vatican departments. Recently an Italian journalist and media professional was asked to lead the Holy See’s communications office. Francis has also urged Vatican officials to appoint women to leadership roles in the Curia, which typically has been a clerical closed shop. He has reopened the issue of women deacons, a topic much discussed at the Amazon synod. Progress might be too glacial for some, but the glaciers are beginning to move.

## Groundwork

The final document of the Amazon synod shows how Francis is laying the groundwork for reform in the Church. If he disappointed some by side-stepping (for now) the hot-button issues of women deacons and the ordination of married men, neither did he silence the discussion. He is putting greater faith in the local Church and does not believe the magisterium (the Church’s teaching office) must intervene to settle every doctrinal, moral and pastoral dispute.

Francis sees himself as a listener. The Pope, he believes, should listen to what the people are saying and learn from them. He accompanies the Church, heeding the different and differing voices, while trying to harmonise them.

This is Francis’ synodal vision. A synodal Church is a Church which listens, and this requires a new way of operating. It means real engagement with all members of the Church and reflects Francis’ desire



Pope Francis greets a youth delegate in 2018 before a session of the Synod of Bishops on young people, the Faith and vocational discernment at the Vatican. Photo: CNS.

for a less clerical Church preoccupied with rules.

‘Synod’ means ‘walking together.’ The Church is the People of God, “companions on the journey,” with a mission to proclaim the Gospel. On this journey, Francis urges pastors to “keep connected to the ‘base’ and to start from people and their daily problems”.

Synodality commits the Church to real engagement with all members of the Church. We do this, says Francis, “by discerning with our people and never for our people or without our people”.

**“He encouraged and approved of the open discussions and debates at the synod on the family”**

Francis has set the tone. He believes the search for truth is best undertaken together fostered in a climate of dialogue and honest debate. But synodality is not only about listening and collaboration, but part of a wider agenda of reform – including reform of the Roman Curia, of bishops’ synods, and of the papacy itself.

Nevertheless, the process of discerning and determining a consensus in matters of faith involves tension, disagreement and conflict – even among bishops themselves, as recent synods have shown.

Francis is unfazed by this. He encouraged and approved of the open discussions and debates at the synod on the family. He believes in the synodal process as a collective search for the truth, not one where majority rules, but where

the aim is to allow a common will to emerge in the Church. As one theologian put it: “dialogue is the means through which the Spirit communicates” (Ormond Rush).

## Processes

If synodal processes desire to consult as widely as possible, then the sense of faith not only of committed believers but also of those who are on the periphery needs to be heard. These include: the poor, those who are ambivalent towards, or dissent from, aspects of Church teaching, the separated and divorced, and members of the LGBT community.

Francis is aware that many reforms come from the periphery. The sense of faith pertains to all the Faithful and the Church has much to learn from the experience of its sceptical and alienated members.

The opposite of synodality is clericalism. This is a mindset that

resists the participation of laity in the life of the Church, keeping them on the edges of ecclesial life and away from decision making. It opposes the creation of synodal structures, where people can express themselves.

Synodality begins at home. The first level in which synodality operates is at the local level – it begins in the parish. Synodal processes include diocesan, regional and universal assemblies: from local or national gatherings to ecumenical councils. Synodal processes are currently underway throughout the Catholic world from Germany to Australia, while Pope Francis has chosen ‘synodality’ as the theme for the next world meeting of bishops in 2022.

## Limerick

Closer to home the Diocese of Limerick held a synod in 2016, the

first synod in Ireland in 50 years. This entailed a process of listening, discerning and identifying key themes to be discussed at the three-day Synod. The outcome was a ten-year synodal plan for the diocese (2016-2026) designed to bring about change with progress reports available online. In the context of fewer priests, new models of leadership are being explored.

**“The Pope, he believes, should listen to what the people are saying and learn from them”**

The Limerick synod was a call to “a more mission-shaped Church” and a rediscovery of “the vocation and responsibility of all the baptised”. The vision of the Church is that of a “community of communities”, including schools, hospitals, prisons, and nursing homes, as well as other, often new, religious associations, institutes and movements. Francis is convinced that the Church is only the Church if it is there for others, going out, and creating, what he calls, a “culture of encounter”. The mission of the Church is not restricted to tasks within the Church but is ultimately about the transformation of society.

There is a ‘quiet revolution’ taking place under Francis – one that is convinced that a synodal Church is the Church of the future.

**i** Fr Declan Marmion SM is professor of systematic theology at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth and editor of the Irish Theological Quarterly.



Xaviere Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, one of two undersecretaries to the Synod of Bishops, attends a news conference at the Vatican in this 2018 file photo. Photo: CNS



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# New sex-ed programme confirms need for fewer Catholic schools



It's hard for the schools to teach the Faith if all the parents want is 'Catholic-lite', writes **David Quinn**

**Y**our average Catholic school today is not, in fact, very Catholic at all. That statement needs a bit of unpacking. A Catholic school is, of course, officially Catholic in that it comes under the patronage of a local bishop or Catholic religious or educational body. Prayers will be said in the school. Catholic religious symbols can be seen. A priest will visit the school from time to time and children will be prepared for the sacraments. Religion class will be based on Catholic teaching.

But in practice how strong is the Catholic ethos of the average Catholic school when most parents don't practice the Faith, when the children are rarely taken to Mass, and when many teachers don't practice the Faith either, including maybe the principal?

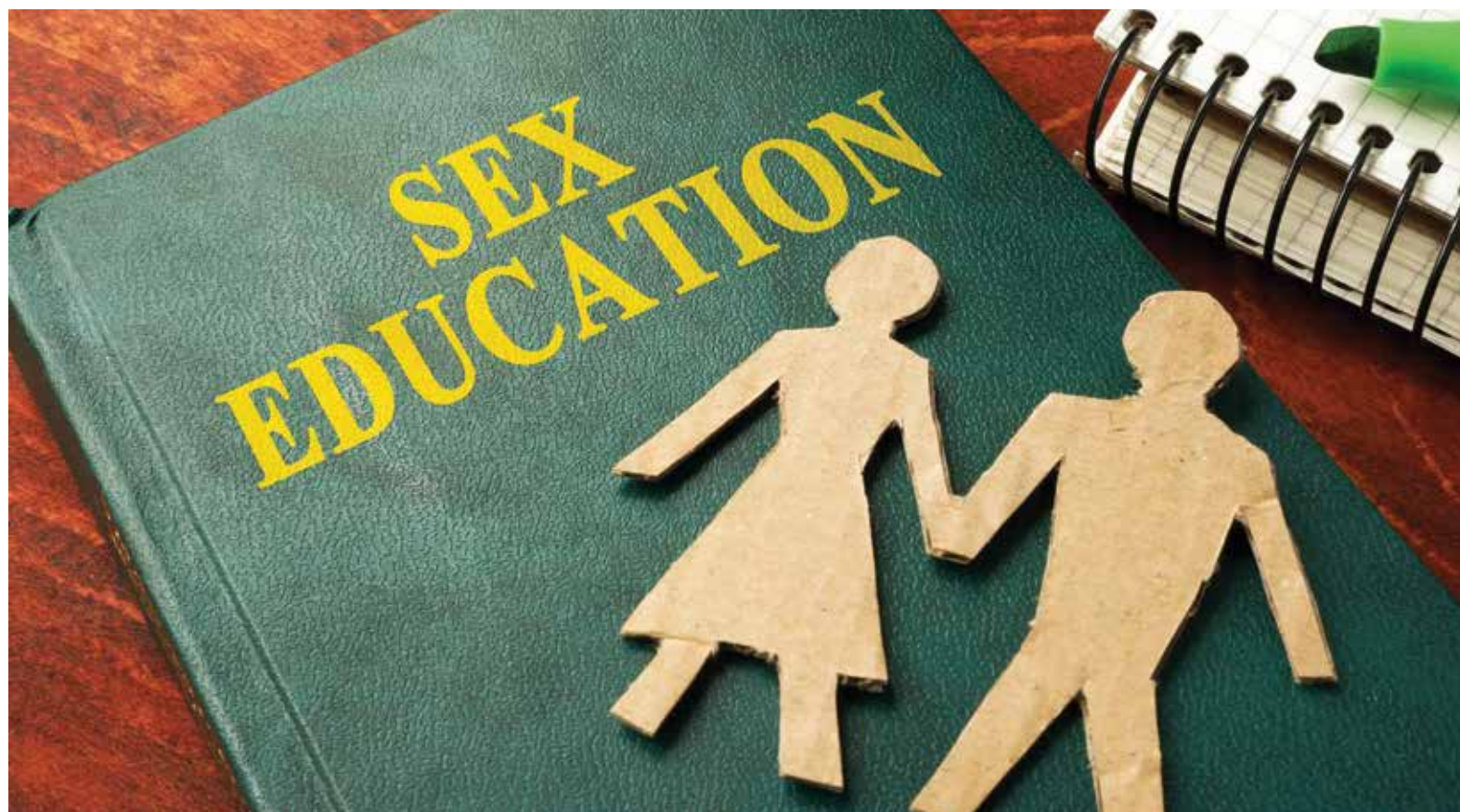
**“The introduction to *Flourish* quotes Pope Francis to the effect that ‘there is no stereotype of the ideal family’”**

In practice, a Catholic school will likely only be as Catholic as the local community, and the teachers, want. In a given school the teachers and the principal might be more or less committed to a strong, Catholic ethos, and in other schools, less so.

But even with the best will in the world, it is hard for a school to be strongly Catholic when the parents want 'Catholic-lite' at best. Religion classes usually reflect this, and so do Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) classes.

Critics of Catholic schools imagine that the full, unadulterated, 'hard-core' version of Catholicism is being taught to children. Nothing could be further from the truth. For the most part, what is taught is very soft and tends to avoid controversy.

The same goes in RSE. Catholic teaching with regard to cohabitation, sex outside marriage, divorce,



homosexuality, contraception, abortion etc., are now very much out of step with modern societies. Many teachers will profoundly disagree with the Church on all these points, except maybe abortion, and have no intention of passing on these teachings to pupils whether in primary or secondary schools.

## Morality

Critics of Catholic schools seem to believe otherwise. They seem to think that Catholic pupils are being taught the full, unexpurgated version of Catholic sexual morality. But not even when I was in school (I left in 1981) was this the case. Most controversial issues were simply avoided.

An outline of a new RSE course for Catholic primary schools called *Flourish* has just been published by the bishops. It can be found on the website of the Catholic Primary Schools Managers Association.

In its introduction, called 'Vision for Catholic RSE in Primary Schools', it says *Flourish* aims to "provide a framework based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and reflecting the dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God".

Correctly, it says there is "no such thing as an 'ethos-free' approach to RSE since it must be rooted in a particular value-system".

Even if you take the most liberal possible view, namely that anything which takes place between sexually consenting adults is morally licit, that is still a moral view. Consent makes it moral. Aside from that, there need be no relationship, never mind marriage, and this view doesn't care if one or both of those involved in a sexual act is being unfaithful to a partner. If it did, then it would value fidelity, and that would definitely be a value judgement.

The introduction to *Flourish* quotes Pope Francis to the effect that "there is no stereotype of the ideal family". This recognises that many schoolchildren will be from lone-parent families, divorced families, or will have parents who are cohabiting.

In some Catholic schools, only a minority of children might have parents who are actually married. It is no good a Catholic school alienating all these children and their families.

The challenge is to present Catholic teaching in a way that is non-judgemental, but at the same time does not simply relativise that same teaching and is true to the Catholic vision of sex and relationships.

**“In some Catholic schools, only a minority of children might have parents who are actually married”**

The introduction to *Flourish* acknowledges that primary schools will have LGBTI children and says the RSE programme "must not promote shame, but seek to reaffirm that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and is loved by God as they are".

It adds: "However, the Church's teaching in relation to marriage between a man and a woman cannot be omitted".

In lesson three for fifth class pupils, the issue is addressed again and acknowledges romantic feelings between people of the same-sex as well as people of the opposite-sex.

In lesson three for sixth class pupils, it tells teachers to keep in mind that children may bring up the fact that babies can come into the world via adoption, surrogacy, fostering and to same-sex couples.

It tells them to "emphasise that children are a gift from God in all circumstances".

But this avoids all discussion of whether all means of having children are equally ethical. For example, is paying a woman to have a baby for you (even if your egg is used) ethically the same as having the child yourself? Surrogacy and assisted human reproduction generally are full of ethical pitfalls.

## Fairness

In fairness, in the same lesson, sixth class pupils are to be told that in order to bring a child into the world, the "couple need to be committed to staying together and doing the very best for their child". It doesn't quite recommend marriage, but does say, "A married couple, as part of their wedding vows, promise to welcome children into the world".

To my mind, what the *Flourish* RSE programme does is implicitly confirm the extreme difficulty Catholic schools now face in imparting a genuinely, fully Catholic vision of sex and relationships to pupils.

It reinforces the fact that there are more Catholic schools in the country than there is realistic demand for, and this undermines the ability of those schools to have a proper Catholic ethos in multiple ways, including the teaching of RE and RSE.

We need to have fewer Catholic schools so that the remaining ones can teach the Catholic Faith more fully and more explicitly to their pupils, and in accord with the wishes of their Catholic parents.





# A stitch in time supports struggling parishes



A lack of volunteers makes it difficult for Apostolic Work to keep up with demand for Mass kits destined for beleaguered parishes, writes Chai Brady

**D**espite the number of parishes involved in making materials for celebrating Mass in impoverished countries dropping in Dublin by almost 90%, there are still dedicated members of Apostolic Work helping priests and nuns.

The Apostolic Work movement in Ireland began in 1923 in Belfast and grew in the context of burgeoning religious and missionary zeal throughout Europe in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. It's an organisation pioneered by women with all the work being done by volunteers.

## Dropped

Over the years in the Archdiocese of Dublin, the number of people involved has dropped sharply, with President

of Apostolic Work in the region, Mary O'Reilly (80), saying changing times and more recently Covid has put a big spanner in the works.

They still managed to send 200 Mass kits to Africa after the first lockdown but have now been forced into a standstill due to the current lockdown.

"In every Mass kit goes two vestments, an alb, chalice and ciboria, a bell and what have you, the contents of a Mass kit cost €400, and it does come to €400 by the time you itemise everything," Mrs O'Reilly tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"When I took over Apostolic Work we had 47 parishes involved, they were strong people working, sewing, collecting, and today we have six parishes."

## Changed

Much has changed since Mrs O'Reilly joined Apostolic Work, which she decided to do after the third of her three sons went to school and was looking to occupy herself in "something decent".

**“Before the first lockdown, Mrs O'Reilly was quick off the mark as she went to their head office on South Circular Road”**

Nowadays it's challenging to get young people involved, she explains: "In my day we were mothers of a family and we did our sewing when the children were at school, we attended meetings when the children were at school or at night, whereas young people today, when they're working, they don't have that time anymore."



Mass kits

"If you have a family, you're coming home and you've to occupy yourself with your children and mothers are doing that as well as probably having an office in their home. The whole thing is so totally different."

Another issue, she says, is many young people aren't taught how to sew at school. "When I left school, I was good at sewing, I didn't stay on to do my Leaving Cert, I was sent to Paris to learn how to sew and dress design and dress make and what have you. My parents could see there was no point putting a book in front of me. I was able to make my Confirmation dress, as my mother use to say, 'your brain is on the tip of your fingers Mary', so that's where they still are I'll tell you," Mrs O'Reilly laughs.

## Quick

Before the first lockdown, Mrs O'Reilly was quick off the mark as she went to their head office on South Circular Road to get everything she needed for Mass kits and brought them home to her house, which she says now looks like a warehouse.

"When we were sending out all these 200 Mass kits, every couple of weeks I'd have 10-12 Mass kits ready to go, the cargo crowd in the airport came down and collected them from me here and that was just so helpful," she explains.

Apostolic Work in Dublin ask people to sponsor Mass kits for €400 due to be sent primarily to priests and seminaries in Africa, they would then inscribe the name of a loved one on the chalice and ciborium – with Mrs O'Reilly giving the name of her late husband Paddy O'Reilly as an example. "I would get inscribed on the base of the chalice and ciborium Paddy's name. It would say, pray for Paddy O'Reilly RIP. That Mass kit goes out to Africa in memory of Paddy and then when the priest is saying Mass, hopefully he is saying it for somebody in his own congregation, but he'd also see Paddy's name and he'd pray for Paddy too. That's gen-

**“They still managed to send 200 Mass kits to Africa after the first lockdown but have now been forced into a standstill due to the current lockdown”**

erally what happens with the Mass kits," she says.

Often there is a domino effect, when one priest receives a Mass kit from Apostolic Work other priests in the area request one as well. Mrs O'Reilly says they generally send a lot of kits to a seminary – who have to request them. The seminary or priest is asked to pay for the postage and packaging which comes to €65, but receive the Mass kit for free.

**“Often there is a domino effect, when one priest receives a Mass kit from Apostolic Work other priests in the area request one as well”**

Sometimes people give a bit more than is needed for a Mass kit so they're able to pay for things like monstrances, with Mrs O'Reilly saying some of the priests who write to her have been trying and make do with whatever they have such as using a glass bowl as a ciborium.

## Churches closed

"Now, obviously we're still in Covid, I'm not so busy because I don't have enough of everything to go into a Mass kit. The churches are closed so we can't beg, normally we wouldn't necessarily be at a parish where there is a group of Apostolic Workers, we would just ask the parish priest if we could collect outside your church this week so that's what we're missing, we can't do that now because there's no congregation," she says.

Speaking of the future of Apostolic Work in Dublin, Mrs O'Reilly says: "I have tried to get myself replaced, at

80 – I'm grand there's nothing wrong with me – but if I drop dead in the morning that's the end of Apostolic Work in Dublin. All the other ladies are my age there's no young people involved. They just say 'no I couldn't do that', so in other words they can't take a Mass kit, they can't put it into their car, they can't go up to the airport and put it into the cargo area, I do all that. I'm delighted to be occupied and it's a nice occupation, it's not difficult. I'm doing it for so long I could do it with a blindfold."

## Strong

"It [Apostolic Work] is strong in other places but just in Dublin it's dwindling," she says, adding that some people, while sitting in front of the televisions in the evenings, crochet cinctures [a long, rope-like cord with tasseled or knotted ends which is tied around the waist outside a priest's alb], which is much appreciated and she encourages others to pick it up.

Writing to the Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, Mrs O'Reilly asked if the prelate would follow in Archbishop emeritus Diarmuid Martin's footsteps and become their patron, she added that while Covid has been a challenge and they have no money to shop for materials due to church closures, "no doubt we will come up with an answer to help us in the future".

And while that future is uncertain for the increasingly small group in Dublin, it seems those that are there aren't ready to throw in the towel any time soon.

**For those interested in becoming involved with or donating to Apostolic Work they can contact Mary O'Reilly at 25a, The Stiles Road, Clontarf, Dublin 3, or by calling: 018338556 or 0868891236**



President of Apostolic Work Dublin, Mary O'Reilly.



# The evolution of legal prohibitions on religious services



Government's actions suggest a preference for vaguely articulating a desired standard of behaviour and then tricking citizens into compliance, writes **Prof. Oran Doyle**

**L**egal prohibitions on religious services have been much in the news lately. In this unavoidably lengthy post, I will show how these prohibitions have evolved over time in order to identify precisely what changes have been recently introduced. I break the past year down into four broad time periods. I then explore some public commentary and the legal prohibitions on other types of event, in order to make more sense of rationale for the recent changes and the manner in which they were introduced. This analysis will illustrate broader concerns about the Government's response to the pandemic.

## The spring 2020 lockdown

The original regulations (SI 121/2020) applied from April 8, 2020 to June 8, 2020, being amended on several occasions during that period. Regulation 4(1) provided that it was a criminal offence to leave one's home without a reasonable excuse. Regulation 4(2) provided a list of reasonable excuses that was without prejudice to the generality of 'reasonable excuse' in regulation 4(1). Among the listed reasonable excuses in regulation 4(2) were the following:

- (o) in the case of a minister of religion or priest (or any equivalent thereof in any religion) -
    - (i) lead worship or services remotely through the use of information and communications technology,
    - (ii) minister to the sick, or
    - (iii) conduct funeral services,
- Regulation 5(1) made it a criminal offence for anyone to attend an event unless it was a 'relevant event'. Relevant event was defined as 'an event held for the purposes

of any matter which falls within any subparagraph of Regulation 4(2)'. In other words, the listed reasonable excuses in regulation 4(2) exhaustively determined the events which it was permissible to attend. Therefore, the only permissible religious events were leading services remotely, ministering to the sick, and conducting funeral services.

## Summer 2020 easing

On June 8, 2020, major changes were made to the scheme of restrictions. Rather than a general prohibition on leaving your home that also determined what events could be lawfully attended, the new approach prohibited (a) certain types of movement, (b) the holding of certain types of event, and (c) public access into certain types of premises where businesses were conducted or services provided. There were no restrictions on moving for religious purposes.

Regulation 6(1) prohibited the organisation of events for cultural, entertainment, recreational, sporting, social, community or educational reasons, unless the maximum numbers of people did not exceed 15. Events of other types were not prohibited. Section 31A(16) of the Health Act 1947 defines event as 'a gathering of persons, whether the gathering is for cultural, entertainment, recreational, sporting, commercial, work, social, community, educational, religious or other reasons...' It followed, given section 19 of the Interpretation Act 2005, that events for religious reasons were not prohibited by the regulations and could lawfully be held indoors without any restriction on numbers.

## During this period, stricter regulations applied for a time to Laois, Offaly and Kildare"

A third set of regulations was introduced on June 30, which applied in most counties until September. These regulations removed all movement restrictions but continued the same approach in relation to events. Regulation 5 provided that a person could not organise, or cause to be organised, an event for cultural, entertainment, recreational, sporting, social, community or educational reasons. Again, it was clear that there was no prohibition or numbers-restrictions on religious events.

During this period, stricter regulations applied for a time to Laois, Offaly and Kildare. This involved prohibitions on leaving one's county without a reasonable excuse. Again listed among the specified reasonable excuses was:

- (k) in the case of a minister of religion or priest (or any equivalent thereof in any religion) -

- (i) lead worship or services remotely through the use of information and communications technology,

- (ii) minister to the sick, or

- (iii) conduct funeral services,

But importantly this could not have implied any limitation on the holding of religious events as there was no general prohibition on leaving one's home, only leaving one's county.

## “Again, events for religious reasons were clearly not included within the definition of relevant events and therefore not prohibited”

As with the countrywide regulations, the regulations for Laois, Kildare and Offaly prohibited the organisation of events for cultural, entertainment, sporting or community reasons, while allowing indoor and outdoor versions of these events subject to much stricter criteria. Again, there was no prohibition on religious events.

## Autumn 2020 tightening

From September to October, restrictions were gradually tightened across the whole country, with more restrictive regimes at times for Dublin and Donegal. These regulations again prohibited the holding of 'relevant events', unless certain number limits were observed - with lower number limits for certain specified counties. A 'relevant event' was defined as 'an event held ... for social, recreational, exercise, cultural, entertainment or community reasons.' Again, events for religious reasons were clearly not included within the definition of relevant events and therefore not prohibited. Stricter restrictions were applied to particular counties, including at some points again a prohibition on leaving one's county without reasonable excuse, with the same listed excuses for ministers of religion or priests. In mid-October, this ban on movement was applied to all counties. But for the same reasons as above, this could not have implied any prohibition on religious events as there was no prohibition on leaving one's home provided one remained within one's county.

## Winter 2020-2021 lockdown

On October 22, 2020, the state went into a renewed lockdown. This was eased during December, with disastrous consequences, and returned at the end of December lasting until mid-April 2021, when there was a very slight easing. Apart from the December period, the same



Catholics stand outside Sts Anne and Mary Cathedral in Cork on April 4, 2021, praying that Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross would open the doors for Easter Mass during the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo CNS

## “These changes in wording were not made in the context of a prohibition on people leaving their homes but rather in the context of a prohibition on people leaving their counties”

prohibition on 'relevant events' applied, which did not include events for religious reasons. And there was again a criminal prohibition on leaving one's home without reasonable excuse. One of the listed reasonable excuses for leaving one's home was as follows:

- in the case of a minister of religion or priest (or any equivalent thereof in any religion) -

- (i) lead worship or services remotely through the use of information and communications technology,

- (ii) minister to the sick, or

- (iii) conduct funeral or wedding services,

Between mid-October 2020 and mid-April 2021, with the exception of the December period, there were two possible grounds on which it could be argued that religious services were prohibited: first, as a relevant event; second, as an aspect of the ban on leaving one's home without a reasonable excuse. I have already explained in detail in an earlier post why the first is untenable and the second unconvincing, particularly in light of the interpretative principle that criminal liability must be clearly imposed. Given the minister's very clear decision to permit events for religious purposes, it is difficult to argue that it cannot be a reasonable excuse to leave one's home to attend such an event. This is reinforced by a comparison between the Spring 2020 lockdown

and the Winter 2020-21 lockdown. In the former, the class of prohibited events was directly linked to the specified reasonable excuses for leaving one's home. In the latter, the decision was taken to break the link between prescribed reasonable excuses and permitted events, undermining any interpretation that you cannot leave your home to attend an event that is otherwise permitted, unless it is listed as a prescribed 'reasonable excuse'.

During the December period, matters were more relaxed. The ban on relevant events continued but with some exceptions. The restriction on leaving one's home without a reasonable excuse was replaced with a restriction on leaving one's county without a reasonable excuse, which was itself suspended for a period. It was a reasonable excuse for priests and ministers to leave their home to lead worship or services, without the qualification of 'remotely through the use of information and communications technology', although this was tightened again as of December 25, 2020. These changes in wording were not made in the context of a prohibition on people leaving their homes but rather in the context of a prohibition on people leaving their counties. They therefore do not shed much light on what should count as reasonable excuses for leaving one's home.





## Public perceptions

On 9 June 2020, the observatory [*the Covid-19 Law and Human Rights Observatory*] published a blogpost pointing out that religious services were no longer prohibited. Nevertheless, public debate seemed to proceed on the basis that they were prohibited. Personally, I found it quite difficult to disentangle whether the people involved (primarily government and NPHE officials, religious representatives and media commentators) either (a) realised that there was no legal prohibition and were involved in a discussion about what the public health advice should be or (b) were operating under a misapprehension about the legal position. Of course, it is possible that some participants realised there was no legal prohibition while others thought there was a legal prohibition. The observatory raised this issue in its submission to the Special Oireachtas Committee on Covid-19 Response, our interpretation at that point being that the removal of legal prohibitions on religious services appeared to be accidental and that NPHE and others had not realised that religious services were no longer legally prohibited.

As we moved into the Winter 2020-21 lockdown, there were two important Government statements about the position on religious services, both of which I analysed in my earlier post: the Minister's statement to the Dáil that there was no penal prohibition on attending

religious services and the Department of Health's statement to the-journal.ie [a similar statement was also given to *The Irish Catholic*] that there was no penalty attached to religious events because they were not included in the definition of 'relevant event'.

## Other classes of prohibited events

To complete the picture, it is important to note that the regulations have prohibited or restricted other types of events: household events, sporting events, training events, weddings/wedding receptions, funerals.

## Funerals have been restricted to limited numbers"

The regulations have been quite confused in their terminology around 'weddings' and 'wedding receptions', making it unclear whether they are to be viewed as a composite category, or whether different restrictions apply to weddings as distinct from wedding receptions.

Funerals have been restricted to limited numbers. It might be thought that this explicit allowance of funerals with limited numbers implies that other religious services are prohibited entirely. But an equally plausible interpretation is that, given cultural norms around funerals, a criminally enforceable restriction was thought necessary whereas no criminal measure was thought necessary for religious services.

## The most recent changes

On Saturday April 10, the Minister for Health made SI 168/2021, which came into force on Monday April 12. This removed the prohibition on leaving one's home without a reasonable excuse, replacing it with a prohibition on leaving one's county or a 20km radius from one's home without a reasonable excuse. This deleted the only arguable – although far from convincing – basis on which it could be contended that religious services were prohibited. The prohibition on relevant events continued, although now with an exception for members of two households meeting outdoors. Without doubt, this did not cover religious events.

## “In the case of a minister of religion or priest (or any equivalent thereof in any religion)”

On Monday April 12, the Minister made SI 171/2021 which inserted Regulation 10A. This needs to be set out in full:

10A. (1) A person shall not attend a specified event in a relevant geographical location (regardless of whether or not, in the case of an applicable person, the event is held or to be held in his or her relevant travel area) other than in accordance with paragraph (2).

(2) A person may attend a specified event in a relevant geographical location where the person attends the event in order to –

(a) work, comply with a contract of employment or contract for services, or otherwise engage in work or employment, including work related to –

(i) the provision of services to, or the performance of the functions of, an office holder appointed under any enactment or under the Constitution, or a member of either House of the Oireachtas, the European Parliament or a local authority,

(ii) the provision of services essential to the functioning of diplomatic missions and consular posts in the State, and

(iii) farming or agricultural activities,

(b) participate in education, including education at a primary school, a secondary school, a university, a higher education institution or other education and training facility, crèche or other childcare facilities,

(c) go to an essential retail outlet for the purpose of obtaining items (including food, beverages, fuel, medicinal products, medical devices or appliances, other medical or health supplies or products, essential items for the health and welfare of animals, or supplies for the essential upkeep and functioning of the person's place of residence), or accessing services provided in the outlet, for the applicable person or any other person residing in the person's place of residence,

(d) access an essential service,

(e) fulfil a legal obligation (including attending court, satisfying bail conditions, or participating in ongoing legal proceedings), attend a court office where required, initiate emer-

gency legal proceedings or execute essential legal documents,

(f) in the case of a minister of religion or priest (or any equivalent thereof in any religion) –

(i) lead worship or services remotely through the use of information and communications technology, or

(ii) minister to the sick, or

(g) attend to vital family matters (including providing care to vulnerable persons).

(3) This Regulation shall not apply to an event that is organised in accordance with Regulation 6(2), 6(3) or 10(1).

(4) In this Regulation, “specified event” means an event other than –

(a) a wedding reception,

(b) a sporting event,

(c) a training event, or

(d) a funeral.

(5) Paragraph (1) is a penal provision for the purposes of section 31A of the Act of 1947.

Disentangling what events this provision applies to is far from straightforward. We must first go back to the definition of ‘event’ in the primary statute:

‘a gathering of persons, whether the gathering is for cultural, entertainment, recreational, sporting, commercial, work, social, community, educational, religious or other reasons...’

From this, we must subtract dwelling events (covered by regulations 6(1) and 6(2)), events for social, recreational, exercise, cultural, entertainment or community reasons (the ‘relevant events’ covered by regulation 10(1)), and wedding receptions, sporting events, training events and funerals).

What is left is commercial, work, educational, religious and other events. However, Regulation 10A(2) allows one to attend a specified event in one's county or 20km limit in order to work or participate in education. So this leaves commercial, religious and other events.

## “It is also difficult to square with the Government's earlier statements that no penalty attached to religious events”

But there are already significant restrictions on commercial activities, in that the owners, occupiers and managers of premises are prohibited, subject to criminal sanction, from permitting members of the public to access those premises unless they are an essential retail outlet or provide an essential service, defined in the schedule to the regulations. The only thing left is religious and other events, but it is entirely unclear what ‘other events’ might be.

In short, it is difficult to see that Regulation 10A accomplishes anything other than impose a criminal prohibition on religious services. Almost the same end could have been achieved by amending the definition of ‘relevant event’ to include ‘religious reasons’ and deal with them through Regulation 10, but this would have made the change clear in two words, compared to the 200 words it has

taken me here.

I say ‘almost the same end’, because prohibiting religious events through regulation 10A rather than regulation 10 has resulted in the important difference that religious events are prohibited outdoors, while relevant events are now permitted outdoors so long as they only involve people from no more than two different households. This has the result that if a priest were to meet a parishioner for outdoor confession, they would both be committing a criminal offence; whereas, if two people were to meet for a chat or to exercise, they would not be committing a criminal offence. The differential criminalisation of facially similar religious and non-religious activities probably makes regulation 10A more vulnerable to legal challenge.

Regulation 10A appears designed with the sole purpose of criminalising religious services, while concealing that sole purpose through a bizarrely and unnecessarily convoluted scheme of legislative cross-references.

## Why the new law now?

It seems to me that there are two possible explanations for the introduction of Regulation 10A. The first is that the Government believed (mistakenly, in my view) that the prohibition on leaving one's home without reasonable excuse implied a prohibition on attending in-person religious services. The Government was sufficiently confident in this position to communicate it in a letter to Mr Declan Ganley at the end of March [revealed by *The Irish Catholic*] and yet accidentally removed the criminal prohibition a few days before the position articulated in that letter would be presented to the High Court. Realising its mistake, the Government then hurriedly introduced Regulation 10A to re-impose a criminal prohibition on religious services. This is implausible. It is also difficult to square with the Government's earlier statements that no penalty attached to religious events.

While we must be cautious about attributing motivations, the more likely explanation is that the Government has known all along that religious services are not criminally prohibited. The Ganley litigation caused an accountability moment where the Government either had to create a legal basis for maintaining in court that religious services were criminally prohibited, or accept that religious services had not been criminally prohibited. The Government chose the former option. The new-found clarity is welcome from a rule of law perspective and allows an informed debate on whether the law is a proportionate and coherent response to the pandemic. But the obfuscation up to this point and the continued obfuscation about the reason for introducing the new restrictions is a damning indictment of the Government's willingness to lead citizens through the pandemic in a way that respects citizens' autonomy and capacity for reasoned choice. It suggests instead a preference for vaguely articulating a desired standard of behaviour and then tricking citizens into compliance through calculated ambiguity about the dividing line between legal obligations and public health advice.



# Irish religious tackle racism



The Irish OLA sisters believe racism and discrimination must be addressed as Ireland becomes more multicultural, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

**T**he problem of racism afflicts every society where different races come into contact. In the modern west, the increasingly multicultural flavour of societies means it is an issue of pressing importance. This includes Ireland, according to the Irish Province of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA), as the demographics of our country become more multi-cultural.

“We were monocultural, we were effectively mono-religious in this country for a long, long time,” says Sr Kathleen McGarvey, head of the OLA’s in Ireland. “Today we have a richer society in that sense – we have many religions, we have many cultures.”

For Sr McGarvey, this is a great opportunity to learn from one another. But she says that it is not always understood that way – that in Ireland, people of African descent face issues of racism and discrimination. To find these issues, we don’t have to look far, she says: “There are stories of African peoples suffering. Maybe people don’t want to rent a house to them next door because they are African. They’d be afraid of whatever they might be afraid of. Africans have reported being abused on the streets, on the transport.

“We do judge people by their colour, just as we judge people – I would be involved here in the field of interreligious dialogue in Ireland and certainly there would be a lot of Islamophobia. We all know the discrimination suffered by travellers. We all know of the existence of hate speech which is a much stronger crime.”

## Discrimination

Two OLA sisters, Sr Janet Nutakor from Ghana who ministers to African communities in Cork, and Sr Joan Murray, who works with the Lantern Centre in Dublin on intercultural activities, both say that African communities report issues with racial discrimination.

“Definitely people talk about feelings of discrimination, feelings of not being wanted or accepted,” says Sr Nutakor. “Some have



Sr Kathleen McGarvey OLA (left), provincial superior of the OLA’s in Ireland, is pictured with Sr Pazzi de Farrell and Sr Mary Barron for their Jubilees.

qualifications that would qualify them to work in Ireland. But it happens that, once they see your name as a foreign name, you are not even shortlisted for an interview. That’s a worry to a big number of the migrants who are here. A lot of the Africans go into care work and cleaning jobs because that is the only area that is available to them.”

Sr Joan Murray agrees that instances of racism occur, but says the people themselves are reluctant to discuss the issue. Additionally, the racism they face is often covert rather than overt in its expression.

**“Mission ad gentes in the past very clearly meant going from the West to the rest, as it were – from Europe to Africa”**

“In terms of the issue of racism, one of the things I’ve found is that they don’t easily speak about it” Sr Murray says. “This has come to the fore more recently – they don’t easily talk about their racial experience. They experience it, no doubt about it. A lot of it is covert rather than direct experience.

“One example that just comes to my mind is one of the Muslim women. She doesn’t wear a head covering or anything and she has a neighbour who greets her, very friendly and that kind of thing. One day she had a friend in the car with her and was wearing a head covering – and the lassie just passed by and didn’t even greet them. She saw that as a very direct affront.”

As to whether Ireland is a welcoming place for migrants, Sr Murray believes it’s a mixed bag.

“One of the things I did with a community we had in Dublin, we took them for an outing and that kind of thing,” she says. “When they went to one place, there was a good few of the travelling community there. The travelling community hosted their coming and had a lovely morning spread for them. One of the women said to me afterwards that it was her first time being in an Irish home.

“That’s a thing that seems to be very much lacking, when you talk about integration. People might be friendly and say hello and that kind of thing, but bringing it that step further and inviting them into their homes doesn’t seem to happen. Certainly it hit me. This woman was from Lebanon and had been here for many, many years.”

## Multicultural

As we become more multicultural, addressing issues of racism and discrimination is ever more important, Sr McGarvey believes. The OLA sisters see it as part of their charism to the people of Africa, she explains, to raise awareness about the issues and to fight for justice on them.

The OLA’s are missionaries for Africa, following the missionary *ad gentes* path as set out in Vatican II and developed by Pope St John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*. *Mission ad gentes*, meaning ‘to the nations’, was a reaffirmation by the Church of evangelisation as one of fundamental missions of the Church. It also tied evangelisation to the charity for the poor.



Sr Janet Nutakor OLA from Ghana who works with African communities in Cork.

“Mission *ad gentes* in the past very clearly meant going from the West to the rest, as it were – from Europe to Africa,” Sr McGarvey explains. “From Vatican II, that began to change and maybe it became more clear in the 90s when Pope John Paul II made it very clear, it’s not territorial, it’s all the new worlds today that did not exist, those social worlds.

“This includes human rights, migration, refugees, the poor – the new poverties that exist today – and the whole cultural context as well. That understanding of mission *ad gentes* has helped us as OLAs also to develop and grow in our understanding of what we are called to. So working for justice is very much an area and having that particular love and care to Africa, we





Sr Joan Murray OLA, pictured outside the Lantern Centre Dublin, where she works to foster intercultural relations.



OLA Justice office John McGeady, Sr Nora Lucey OLA, and Katherine Dullaghan, SMA Laity outreach officer, meet President Michael D. Higgins at the Cork Conference on Intergenerational Climate Justice, November 2019.

would be particularly concerned for Africans wherever they are.

"Addressing the issue of racism stems from our commitment to the African people in particular. We try to ground all our commitment in the understanding of mission today and Catholic social teaching which would be quite strong as well," Sr McGarvey finishes.

### Cultural

Racism, both as an issue of justice and as "a cultural or social new world", is an issue which the OLA's think it important to address. To that end, they have employed a justice officer and drawn up a strategic plan.

"We said we can't do everything, the whole world of injustice is just too broad," Sr McGarvey says. "We narrowed it down to three. We're a small group, we're not experts in this area so we have to build on it ourselves, often through collaboration with others.

"We are learning and also strengthening the learning of others in three areas: promoting the dignity of the African person, the African culture; two, trafficking and refugees, that whole area; and three care of the earth and care of the poor. The anti-racism campaign enters very much into the first one. Unfortunately, racism is prevalent throughout the world and also here in Ireland."

The OLA sisters are tackling this issue in a number of ways, both institutionally and through different projects. One of these projects was a campaign called Religious against Racism, where the OLA sisters and

a number of other orders recorded videos to raise awareness about racial discrimination in Ireland.

However, one of the most important ways the OLA's can tackle issues of racism is through the witness of its own congregation, Sr McGarvey suggests: "We're in 21 countries now and most of the active sisters, the younger body, would be African," she continues. "In fact a few weekends ago, I was giving a formation program to young women from many countries, 20 of them preparing for final vows.

**“You participate or reach out to the local Church from the organisation. But it's very different here”**

"The congregations are still very alive and active. Certainly mission to Europe would be something that we're emphasising today as well because it's a new world in Europe in terms of those contexts we spoke of, but also in faith and the growing secularism in Europe. Our OLA sisters from Africa, who share the same charism as ourselves to leave their land, have been looking not only to other

African countries, but other new worlds.

"For us as OLA's, one of the aspects we emphasise today is international, intercultural community witness. Because there are still divisions based on culture, based on witness. And I think if we can witness through our own community living as sisters, ministering together as we show the love of God, that is an important witness today. Apart from our advocacy, the witness of our lives speaks louder."

### Supportive

Sr Nutakor and Sr Murray both work with migrant communities, helping them to foster supportive communities and to integrate where possible.

"I am in ministry of outreach to Africans," Sr Nutakor explains. "It's divided into two, a ministry of presence and a ministry of accompanying. Presence in the sense of sorting out different African groups and working in areas of engagement, meetings, weddings – social activities.

"Then there is the other aspect to it. We have the African chaplaincy, there are ten centres in Dublin and we join with the Catholic women's organisation, the men's, the children. It's organised by the chaplaincy in Dublin. Then we attend meetings and celebrate Mass in each of the centres once a month.

"We have Rosary groups and – it's just a kind of support group. It's not creating a Church that is not part of the Irish Church. For me, I see when you put people together and empower them and they are ready to go out and mix. It's to bring them together to build confidence and then you can be productive in your various parishes."

Sr Nutakor says that it's important that the Church in Ireland engages fully with African Christians. Often, they find it difficult to be active in the Church when they arrive in Ireland, as there is a strong tradition of lay organisations in Africa.

"When two cultures meet, the best comes out," she says. "The only thing that we are all working at now is to get the Africans to participate in the Church in Ireland. Back home it's very different. We have the Catholic women's organisation, we have the men's organisation, we have the St Anthony's guild. There are different groups in the Church you can join.

"You participate or reach out to the local church from the organisation. But it's very different here. Many find it very difficult here as to how to participate meaningfully in the Church here in Ireland. They would love to do it, be lay readers and all, but there is also this block that you may not be understood.

**“For us as OLA's, one of the aspects we emphasise today is international, intercultural community witness”**

"On both sides, there should be a willingness on the part of the Africans that are here to participate in the Church and not shy away or think they will be condemned or not be accepted. On the other hand, with their host communities, they must be patient and flexible so that there will be great exchange."

Sr McGarvey agrees that there must be flexibility on both sides so that the Church can benefit

from the different cultural and religious experiences African communities bring.

"We must recognise that we are not only an Irish Catholic Church or an Irish Christian community," she says. "Africa is a big, big continent, 54 countries now. From my experience in Nigeria myself, I found it a very lively Church. I went to Mass, it was very long, but the music – we had three different choirs. People participated very much. The Church there too was not just going to Mass. It was a part of every social aspect. Groups, friendships, as well as reaching out in various forms of ministry."

### Process

But the sisters know that tackling racism is likely to be a long and slow process, without easy answers or fixes.

"I suppose it's a difficult one because it's very hard to deal with directly," Sr Murray says. "You have to find a way around it because nobody likes the word racism or being seen to be complicit with it and yet it's there. I worked in England a good bit and I would have been involved with it there. I have no answers to be honest. It's difficult, it's slow, it's befriending, it's taking time with, it's listening."

One thing Sr Murray is certain of, based on her experience in London, is that efforts to tackle discrimination and racism must be sensitive to the needs of the indigenous population.

"What I perceive happened in England was that Africans – or Asians – came in and often got priority on housing and issues over the local people," she says. "The local people resented that and that sets up the dynamic for antagonism.

"A balance has to be maintained because if people have been on a housing list for years and then come and see somebody else coming in and getting priority and they're still there without having been helped, it creates antagonism. I think addressing the issue in whatever form is vitally important but how to do it is also important".

**“In terms of the issue of racism, one of the things I've found is that they don't easily speak about”**



# Running races in time and eternity



Israel Olatunde of UCD AC, Dublin, reacts after finishing second in the Men's 60m with a Junior and U23 National Record of 6.73 during day two of the Irish Life Health Elite Athlete Indoor Micro Meet at Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena. Photo: Sam Barnes



Israel Olatunde is sprinting ahead as the world stands still, but sees God as the greatest prize, writes Jason Osborne

Few activities are as liberating as running as fast as you can. For some reason as we grow up, we do it less and less, but most of us can remember the ecstatic joy of sprinting across the sports field in school with our friends.

That may be a rose-tinted recollection, as few of us are as fast as we remember ourselves to

have been. However, for 18 year-old Israel Olatunde from Dundalk, it's anything but a dream-like recollection; he's found great success in this most primordial activity.

Momentous success it has been, recently breaking two national indoor records twice in one day. In February of 2021, Israel broke both the U20 and U23 indoor men's 60-metre records two separate times.

An Ad Astra Elite scholar at University College Dublin, Israel secured his first record breaking time of 6.74 seconds when he finished second to Leon Reid in the final race of the event. Israel's second 60-metre run saw him blaze past the line in 6.73 seconds, breaking the record he had set himself just an hour before.

## Achievements

The path to these impressive achievements was born of a simple beginning – noticing he was faster than the other kids he would play with in his youth.

"I used to play football, so I always knew I was faster than the other kids on the football team," he tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"But then when I got to athletics, it's a whole different ball game.

You'd be surprised. You think you're fast in football, then you get to athletics and there's just some crazy kids in that. They're really fast," he laughs.

As he alludes to, competition has really picked up over the years as he's developed in his sport, but Israel's introduction to sprinting in secondary school was a more casual affair. While it offered him a door into serious running, it was more centred on fun than on serious competition.

**“Just growing up, I always said to myself, ‘Oh, there is a good God. I believe in Jesus’”**

"In secondary school it was pretty, in terms of the schools around us, it was more serious than others. It was still pretty chilled though, pretty calm. The coach that was at our school – his name is Gerry McArdle – he was also the coach at my first athletics club, Dúndealgan AC. It was just fun, everyone was having fun, but everyone still had passion for the sport, or at least most people did anyway. Even though

it was fun, we still worked hard. At the competitions, we had some guys medalling at the North Leinster Championships and small championships like that."

Sticking to the 60, 100 and 200-metre sprints, Israel's success began to blossom over time. Running with both his school and his club, he ran in the Louth Championships at the tender age of 14 with Dúndealgan AC, in his first year after taking up sprinting. He went on to win in his category, heralding things to come.

"Obviously the Louth Championships isn't a high level," he says self-effacingly. "I was in the under-17 age category. It's not really a high level, but for me at the time, that was a big accomplishment, so I was pretty proud of that."

## Coach

He offers a word of thanks to his coach, saying that his belief in him helped him to pursue a path with his sprinting that he may not have recognised for himself at the time.

"My coach Gerry McArdle, he always had big aspirations and dreams for me," Israel says, continuing, "He saw I had really good potential from a young age. From there, we were still

progressing, just continuing to train hard and that summer, I came second in the national championships in the under-17 age category in the 200 metres, so just from there, little things just kept happening. I kept getting small achievements. I just kept trying to work off that and get better at each training session, just for the next competition."

**“Momentous success it has been, recently breaking two national indoor records twice in one day”**

As with running, so with life; one foot in front of the other. With Israel focused on simpler steps, he didn't initially consider a future in running. Between the support of his coach and continuous "small achievements," he found his young life taking a decisive shape, one which would lead him to UCD and into European Championships.

"I always had confidence in myself but I never really thought that far ahead when I was in third/fifth year. I didn't really know much about the sport as well, so I didn't really know you





Israel (back right) and his family: brother Gabriel Olatunde (back left), sister Sharon Olatunde (front left), father Isaac Olatunde (front middle) and mother Elizabeth Olatunde (front right).

could get scholarships from it or whatever.

“Maybe towards the end of fifth year, maybe that summer, I got my first international competition. The European under-18 Championships, so just from there, I knew I could go international at the youth level. I knew I had potential to run at a senior level or in college, or just further on down the line.”

**“I always had confidence in myself but I never really thought that far ahead when I was in third/fifth year”**

And that's just what he did – going to university on the aforementioned Ad Astra Elite scholarship to hone his sport and study computer science. Asked about the college experience, he said it's a different atmosphere to the one he encountered in secondary school. While his time in school was foundational, he said he found university life to be pervaded with “an air of excellence”.

“Yeah, like, not even just specifically to my sport, just in general. When I got to UCD from my secondary school, I was a good athlete and people recognised me for my sport, but then when you get to UCD, there's dozens of other international athletes and European champions, world champions. The girls' hockey team as well in UCD – they're really good.”

### Atmosphere

“It's a different atmosphere. It's good honestly. It, kind of, took the pressure off you. You can learn from other people. Because of the scholarship programme I was on, I got to rub shoulders with some of these guys. I'd be seeing them, walking past them in the gym, watching them train. Not guys even just from athletics, guys from different sports like cycling, hockey, rugby, so really good in that aspect, it humbles you a bit and motivates you. In their sport they're doing so well, so I can

keep working hard and get to a similar level in my sport as well.”

### Success

Israel's sporting life is secure, but he makes no mistake about where his success comes from.

“I can't help but thank God for his grace,” he posted on Instagram, after his fourth place finish in the 60 metre sprint at the European Indoor Athletics Championship in Poland which took place at the beginning of March.

Israel turned from the temporal racing to the eternal race to tell me about his relationship with God.

“I grew up going to church and everything. I always knew that God was there, but didn't really have a relationship with him growing up. Just like any other kid that grows up.”

“As I got older, I knew he was there, so I was searching for him, trying to grow in that relationship with him – maybe not in the right ways, but as I got older – I'd say he found me, in a sense. As I got older, I started getting closer with him, started growing my relationship with him. I'm still not, obviously, perfect, but it's a journey.”

Israel tells a tale so many young people in today's Ireland could relate to – being aware of God but not knowing who he truly is. Steeped in a deeply Christian culture, there are few on this island who grow up without having heard God's name, few who haven't received his teachings indirectly, at least.

“Most of my challenges were, kind of, internal,” Israel says.

“Most of my friends, they would identify as Christian or Catholic, different denominations, but yeah, just growing up, I always said to myself, ‘Oh, there is a good God. I believe in Jesus,’ but at the same time, I didn't really know him.

“Growing up, when I was pretty young, like 13,14, I used to worry, I used to have feelings of anxiety, I used to worry about things a lot, about my future and just worrying about, how am I going to become successful, how am I going to do this, how am I going to do that? That's all I really thought about as a kid,” he says.

These are struggles every person can relate to – many recent statistics showing that more people are struggling with anxiety, depression and stress than ever before. The pandemic surely has a hand in this, but so too does a lack of relationship with God, and a resulting lack of perspective.

**“When you get to UCD, there's dozens of other international athletes and European champions, world champions”**

“As a kid, you're not meant to be thinking about those things a lot, but I used to put a lot of pressure on myself in that respect and it wasn't until I kind of realised I'm not really in control of all this, there's someone above me that's watching out for me, that's looking after me, that wants to take care of me. But I'm here only worrying about myself, thinking, you know, I'm in control of everything. I think when I realised that there has to be someone above me, watching over me, that's when I tried to develop my relationship with God.

“Obviously it wasn't easy,” he says, “but when I first started taking God seriously, it kind of made me realise that, it sounds weird, but it made me realise how small and insignificant I am. But in those deficiencies, that's where



Israel representing Ireland.

God shows his love, his power, his grace, his mercy.”

### Community

Attending RCGG Miracle Land, a Pentecostal Church in Dundalk (in un-restricted times), Israel says his faith and community mean a lot to him, with family and friends providing a welcome balance when he feels he's lacking.

“With my family, especially like my siblings, I've been able to discuss things with them. Different questions I maybe had or just different worries or concerns, even just to discuss with them. Also, my friends, a lot of my friends are on their own journey with Christ and just being able to talk with them.

“Especially, during lockdown, I was training on my own here in Dundalk, but sometimes I'd link up with one of my friends, Patience, another athlete from Dundalk. Patience Jumbo-Gula. She's on her own journey as well, and when we were training together, just in the parks or whatever, we'd be talking about different Bible verses, different stories that we had, and I don't know why but it really helped so much. It's comforting knowing that there's other people on this journey with God. They have their own issues and problems, and God sometimes speaks through them to you. So I think it's really important to have people to talk to about that.”

His faith has had a real impact on the way he views life, with gratitude

being one of the key characteristics that colours his outlook. He said it'd be the one thing he'd communicate to other young people, given the opportunity.

**“When I first started taking God seriously, it kind of made me realise that, it sounds weird, but it made me realise how small and insignificant I am”**

“I'd say to just, like, try to enjoy things as much as you can. Just little things. Pay attention to little details and try to enjoy as much as you can, because life goes by quick. We're not here for long. This isn't our final destination, but while we're here you might as well try to make the most of it. And that doesn't mean go out and party and do crazy stuff. Just be grateful for things.

“Today, as I was drawing my curtains, I was like, ‘Today's a beautiful day,’ well in Dundalk anyway. The sun's shining, I'm happy for that, I'm grateful for that. I thank God for that. I'm here, I'm talking to you, I'm grateful for that. Every little thing. That's where true joy and happiness comes from, being grateful for the things God has given you. You might not be in the greatest situation. Things could be better, but things also could be worse. No matter what situation you're in, there's always going to be things to thank God for and to be grateful for. I think that's how you improve a situation, by looking for the good things in it.”

Grateful to God and enjoying career-high success, Israel Olatunde is racing into a bright future.

**“I can't help but thank God for his grace,’ he posted on Instagram, after his fourth place finish in the 60 metre sprint at the European Indoor Athletics Championship in Poland”**





# Out&About

## High five for Trócaire's outreach



**SIERRA LEONE:** Ms Ellen Donnelly, Programme Manager for Trócaire in Sierra Leone, joins Trócaire partners and staff to launch Year 5 of their flagship Irish Aid programme for women's social, political and economic empowerment.



**SLIGO:** Bishop Kevin Doran joined General Manager, Grainne McCann at Sligo University Hospital in congratulating Hospital Chaplain Fr Brian Conlon on his conferring with a Doctorate of Theology in Clinical Pastoral Psychotherapy, April 20.



**CORK:** Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross launches the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne's new lotto to fund the Cathedral parish, as well as Blackpool/The Glen and Sundays Well, April 20.

### IN SHORT

#### Violent extremism finds breeding ground in modern throwaway culture – Vatican

Throwaway culture “fuels a distorted view of the person as an individual that can be used and discarded”, feeding violent extremism, a Vatican representative said.

Speaking before the Organisation for Security and Co-operation Europe (OSCE) Counter Terrorism conference, Msgr Janusz Urbanczyk added that the degrading trend has “worsened considerably” during the pandemic.

“[The] Covid-19 pandemic... has provided extremist and terrorist organisations with new avenues, through the exploita-

tion of feelings of vulnerability and isolation, in advancing their goals of intensifying recruitments, and of spreading hatred and violence,” the permanent representative of the Holy See told the OSCE.

Msgr Urbanczyk continued, adding that it is of “serious concern that terrorist organisations misuse, among others, religious narratives” for support.

“Terrorism is not due to religion but to the misuse or misinterpretation of it,” he said. “As Pope Francis recently stated, violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism are grounded in a ‘fundamentalism incapable of accepting the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups, different ideas and cultures.’”

#### Housing with supports offers alternative to nursing homes, says ALONE

The spectrum of housing choices for older people urgently needs to grow from simple traditional independent family homes and/or high dependency nursing homes to a more varied and person-centred approach, the charity Alone said in a statement.

Alone, an organisation that supports older people to age safely and securely at home, commented that the Governments the Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2025 released by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is “a step in the right direction”.

“The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have identified their second objective as supporting the delivery of 50,000 social homes with an emphasis on new builds,” the charity's statement said. “This relates directly to Alone's continued advocacy work towards the delivery of Age-Friendly Housing. These supportive plans will allow for a wider range of residential care choices available to older people.”

Seán Moynihan, CEO of Alone, added that while the Strategy is “a step in the right direction but there is much more to be addressed and developed given the realities that come with an ageing population”.



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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LAOIS:** The John Paul II students at Scoil Christ Ri Portlaoise present PATH with a cheque for funds raised on their Walk to Lourdes campaign, led by Cara Phelan and Sadhbh Dunne but supported by all, April 19.



**ANTRIM:** Fr Dominic McGrattan, Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplain, welcomes the new Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist in advance of Sunday Mass, April 18.

**DERRY:** Some of St Eithne's Primary School students from class three and five help with the planting with new containers at the school's front entrance, April 21.



**CARLOW:** Mrs Smith of Killeshin National School makes the most of the school's black-market hairdressers, April 19.



**CORK:** Caroline O'Sullivan and Diarmuid McSweeney celebrate their marriage at St Joseph's Church, Castletown Kinneigh, Enniskeane, where Caroline has been a Minister of the Eucharist, April 16.

## Events

● In the current Covid-19 crisis, it is clear that most (and perhaps all) Church events, other than some Masses, are suspended. Consequently, we are withholding the popular Events Listing column until normal activities can resume in our parishes. However, please do email us if you know of any parish event planned and we will publish details.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Covid claims Catholic priests in Indian state

● Seven Catholic priests have died of Covid-19 in the space of four days in India's Gujarat state, one of the worst-hit areas where government and private hospitals are adding more beds as infections spiral out of control.

In one day, April 19, Gujarat reported as many as 7,107 fresh coronavirus cases and 177 deaths. The death toll has reached 5,494 since the pandemic hit the western state last year.

Fr Pascal Jacob Ninama of Baroda Diocese is the latest victim. The 56-year-old died on the morning of April 20. Fr Paulraj Napoleon of the same diocese died of the virus on April 17.

The other priests to have died in Gujarat were three Jesuits, a Carmelite and a Divine Word priest.

### Hong Kong Catholic media tycoon jailed for 12 months

● Catholic media tycoon and philanthropist Jimmy Lai has been sentenced to 12 months in jail after being found guilty of unauthorised assembly.

Ucanews.com reported he was among nine activists in court on April 16 who earlier were found guilty of charges relating to pro-democracy demonstrations in the Chinese territory.

Mr Lai, 73, has donated millions of dollars to Catholic causes and has been the biggest financial backer

of Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, retired archbishop of Hong Kong, ucanews.com reported.

He made his fortune through mid-market fashion chain Giordano before putting his wealth into NextDigital and the city's leading anti-Beijing newspaper, *Apple Daily*.

Mr Lai's jailing comes as the Chinese Communist Party intensifies its crackdown on Hong Kong's rights and freedoms.

### Mozambique's bishops speak out against ongoing violence

● Catholic bishops in Mozambique expressed concerns about ongoing violence in the country and increasing food insecurity – especially in the midst of the pandemic.

In the northern province of Cabo Delgado, "defenceless people are killed, injured and abused".

"They see their possessions plundered, the privacy of their homes violated, their homes destroyed and the corpses of their family members desecrated. They are forced to abandon the land that saw them born and where their ancestors are buried," said a statement at the end of the bishops' plenary meeting in mid-April.

In late March, the International Committee of the Red Cross expressed concern about a new surge of violence in the province, where insecurity began in 2017. The United Nations said that up to 1 million people could be displaced by June.

### Bishop urges prayer for Church in Germany

● In response to a planned day of blessings for same-sex partners in Germany, the Bishop of San Sebastián last Wednesday called on Catholics to join in prayer for the Church in Germany to be faithful to the Magisterium and not to fall into rebellion.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said March 15 that the Church hasn't the power to bless same-sex unions.

However, members of the Church in Germany have announced a May 10 event, "Blessings for the unions of people who love each other," with the participation of priests, deacons, and pastoral workers, and supported by some bishops.

Bishop José Ignacio Munilla Aguirre tweeted, April 14: "I invite you to join a chain of prayer and fasting for the unity of the Church in Germany and throughout the world."

## Papal charity sees increased violations of religious freedom globally

The religious persecution exercised by China and North Korea, restrictions on religious freedom in dozens of countries and the continuing threat of violence at the hands of religious fundamentalists belonging to a variety of faiths all have worsened since 2018, said Aid to the Church in Need, a papal foundation and Catholic charity.

The problems "have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. States have used the insecurity to increase control over their citizens, and nonstate actors have taken advantage of the confusion to recruit, expand and provoke wider humanitarian crises," said an analysis published with ACN's annual report, *Religious Freedom in the World*.

The report, released April 20, said outright persecution exists in "26 countries which are home to 3.9 billion people or just over half – 51% – of the world's population". In addition to China, North Korea and Saudi Arabia, the list includes a dozen African countries, such as Somalia, Libya, Nigeria, Congo and Mozambique, as well as Myanmar because of its treatment of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority in the predominantly Buddhist nation.

While the charity found the overall situation worsening globally, it did find a glimmer of hope, saying that from 2018 to 2020 there had been "significant progress, especially in interreligious dialogue, as well as the increasingly important role of religious leaders in the mediation and resolution of



Protesters display signs and carry flags during a 2014 protest in Detroit, calling on the US to intervene in the persecution of Christians in Iraq. Photo: CNS

hostilities and war".

The report praised Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of al-Azhar University in Cairo, an authority among Sunni Muslims, for their 2019 document on human fraternity and their efforts to promote dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect. And, in fact, the report found an improving, although still concerning, religious liberty situation in Egypt.

The report raised alarms about the addition of religion as a factor in increased violence in several sub-Saharan African countries where

"populations have historically been divided between farmers and nomadic cattle herders, occasionally experiencing outbreaks of violence resulting from long-simmering ethnic and resource-based conflicts – more recently exacerbated by climate change, growing poverty and attacks by armed criminal gangs".

Sporadic violence, poverty, corruption and poor educational and work opportunities, it said, have "provided fuel for the rise of armed groups including Islamist militants, both local, and more recently".

The lockdowns and restric-

tions on public gatherings enacted by national, state or local governments also had an impact on citizens' freedom to worship.

"It is difficult to assess to what extent the right to religious freedom was threatened universally because each country, and in some cases each region, responded differently to the global event," the report noted.

And while governments were obliged to act to protect the common good, "it is also clear that there were cases of abuse and attacks on religious freedom".

## Research with abortion foetal tissue called 'deeply offensive'

The chairman of the US bishops' pro-life committee April 20 called on the Biden administration to fund research "that does not rely upon body parts taken from innocent children killed through abortion".

"The bodies of children killed by abortion deserve the same respect as that of any other person," said Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

"Our government has no right to treat innocent abortion victims as a commodity

that can be scavenged for body parts to be used in research," he said.

His remarks were a reaction to a notice the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, posted April 16 in the grants area of its website announcing the end of a Trump administration ban on research involving human foetal tissue acquired from elective abortions.

In addition, NIH and the US Department of Health and Human Services will no longer convene the Human Foetal Tissue Research Ethics Advisory Board.

"It is unethical to promote and subsidise research that can lead to legitimising the violence of abortion," Archbishop Naumann said in his statement.

"Researchers have demonstrated that we can do effective scientific research and develop efficacious clinical treatments without harvesting tissue from aborted babies. It is also deeply offensive," he added, "to millions of Americans for our tax dollars to be used for research that collaborates with an industry built on the taking of innocent lives".

## Extremism condemned at Sri Lankan Easter bombing anniversary

Numerous religious leaders gathered in Sri Lanka to mark the second anniversary of the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings and to pray for an end to religious extremism.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the archbishop of Colombo, spoke at St Anthony's Shrine,

along with Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim leaders. The service included prayers and two minutes of silence in remembrance of the dead.

Cardinal Ranjith challenged the country's Muslim communities to reject extremism and help Catho-

lics identify those behind the 2019 bombings, which killed 269 people at two Catholic churches, a protestant church, and three hotels.

"[B]e brave enough to reject extremism. You fully understand that there is no connection with religion and

teachings to murder," he said, according to the Associated Press.

"We are surprised that even after two years, answers to the questions of who and why and what of these attacks have not been found by the relevant authorities."





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## Vaccines for the poor as Pope invokes namesake



Pope Francis visits people who came to the Vatican for the second dose of their Covid-19 vaccinations in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican April 23, 2021. Photo: CNS

## 'Cleanse our land': US bishops call for prayer, action to end racism after Chauvin verdict

Bishops across the United States on April 20 and 21 responded to the guilty verdict for former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, in the trial for the murder of George Floyd.

Two chairs of committees at the US bishops' conference (USCCB) issued a joint statement last Tuesday evening, after a jury found Chauvin guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter.

"The death of George Floyd highlighted and amplified the deep need to see the sacredness in

all people, but especially those who have been historically oppressed," read a statement by Bishop Shelton Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, chair of the USCCB's anti-racism committee, and Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, chair of the USCCB's domestic justice and human development committee. "Whatever the stage of human life, it not only matters, it is sacred," the bishops said.

The trial of Derek Chauvin began on March 8. He was arrested on May 29, 2020, and charged with third-degree murder for the killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man.

After an ambulance arrived and transported Mr Floyd to the hospital, he was declared dead. The killing sparked mass protests and riots around the United States against racism and police brutality.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda of St Paul-Minneapolis, joined by bishops of the five other Minnesota dioceses, called for civility and prayer on April 20 afternoon before the verdict was announced.

In the wake of the verdict April 20, the first African-American cardinal called for Catholics to fight racism without violence.

"As the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us and the

life example of the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. showed us, it is the virtue of charity, non-violence, prayer, and working together that moves us toward reconciliation and true healing from trauma we have experienced," stated Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington, DC last Wednesday.

"May we choose to respond with civility and respect for the dignity of all of our brothers and sisters, as we continue the work of rooting out all injustices and systemic racism in our society," Cardinal Gregory stated.

## Thai Catholics assist Myanmar's Karen refugees

Catholics in a northern Thai province have been supporting thousands of displaced Karen refugees from Myanmar – in stark contrast to the Thai government's unwelcoming policy regarding refugees and migrants from the military-ruled neighbouring country.

Church leaders joined by Catholics in Chiang Mai have welcomed and supported thousands of Karen refugees with aid after they fled their homes in Myanmar's Kayin state and hid in the

forest near the Thanlyin River on the Thai-Myanmar border.

Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arprondratana of Chiang Mai told *Agenzia Fides* that the diocesan team of lay volunteers, priests and nuns has been providing aid to Karen people in two locations south of Salawin National Park near the border.

Bishop Vira also appealed to Church groups in Thailand to assist the refugees with aid including money, water, food, medicine and daily essentials.

Sr Aranya Kitbunchu, president of the Federation of Religious Superiors in Thailand, has joined with Ching Mai Diocese and Caritas Thailand in the rescue operation for refugees.

"The refugees are in a desperate situation: they need food, water, medicine and other basic services to survive these difficult times," said Sr Aranya, who acts as the coordinator of volunteers and representatives of religious orders responding to the refugee emergency since late March.

## Newly beatified martyrs can inspire fidelity to God, says Pope

● The Catholic Church's newest blessed are six "meek disciples of Christ", who showed heroic courage defending the Eucharist from profanation when French troops sacked their Italian monastery in 1799 and scattered the Blessed Sacrament on the floor while searching for any valuables they could carry away, Pope Francis said.

"May their example spur us to a greater commitment to fidelity to God, one capable also of transforming society and making it more just and fraternal," the Pope said April 18, the day after the Cistercian monks of Casamari Abbey were beatified.

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, who was named prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes in October, presided over the Mass and beatification at the abbey, about 60 miles southeast of Rome.

The French troops shot Fr Siméon Cardon, who was the prior, and five other Cistercians who scrambled to recover consecrated hosts after the invaders broke open the tabernacle and scattered them on the floor.

"These martyrs were not comic book heroes, but normal people," Cardinal Semeraro said in his homily. "They were fearful men just like all of us."

## Ukrainian Catholics grateful for Pope's support amid tension

● The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church thanked Pope Francis for publicly voicing concern about the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine and the increased presence of Russian troops on the border.

In an interview with *Vatican News* April 20, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, major archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, said he wanted to express "profound gratitude for the Holy Father for his prayer and for his support to the suffering people of Ukraine".

"We are truly grateful to the Holy Father above all for his empathy and

his prayer for Ukraine, for our people who are in such sorrow because once again, we are living in a moment of great fear," he said.

After praying the Regina Coeli prayer April 18, the Pope expressed his "deep concern" about violations of the cease-fire and about increased military activity in the region.

"Please, I firmly hope that the increase of tensions may be avoided and, on the contrary, gestures may be made that are capable of promoting mutual trust and fostering reconciliation and peace, so necessary and so desired," the Pope said.

## Christians, Muslims must spread hope, says Vatican

● Christians and Muslims share a conviction that God calls them to be "witnesses, restorers and builders of hope" both in this life and for the life to come, said the leaders of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

In a message wishing Muslims a peaceful and fruitful month as they fast during Ramadan and a joyful celebration of Id al-Fitr when Ramadan is over, the officials focused on the religious value of hope and its importance today amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The message was signed March 29, before Ramadan began, by Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso, council president, and Msgr Indunil Janakarathne Kankanamalage, council secretary.

The Vatican released the message April 16, three days after the Ramadan fast began. For believers, they said, "hope arises from our belief that all our problems and trials have a meaning, a value and a purpose, however difficult or impossible it may be for us to understand the reason for them or to find a way out of them." In addition, they wrote, "hope also carries with it belief in the goodness present in the heart of every person".





# LetterfromRome



John L. Allen Jr

Here's a brief sampling of news stories that have moved across the Vatican wire in recent days.

- The Pontifical Council for Culture, under the ever-idiosyncratic Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, raised eyebrows anew with its announcement of a forthcoming May 6-8 conference on health care, cosponsored with the Cura Foundation, which, among other speakers, will feature Aerosmith's Joe Perry, Deepak Chopra, Anthony Fauci, and Chelsea Clinton.

- Pope Francis once again weighed into battles over climate change, this time offering a brief video message for US President Joe Biden's April 22-23 Earth Day summit, intended to mark the re-emergence of the United States as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

- Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana, who heads the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and who's considered a key Pope Francis ally, sponsored a webinar on biodiversity April 20. A highlight came with remarks by British scientist Jane Goodall, known around the world for her studies of chimpanzees and her advocacy of species conservation. Goodall called Pope Francis a "reason for hope" in her efforts.

- Last Thursday Pope Francis met Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri of Lebanon, using the occasion to once again urge the international community to do more to bring stability to the Middle Eastern nation. The Pontiff also expressed his desire to visit Lebanon as soon as possible.

To recap, these stories touch on health care systems and delivery in the 21st century, climate change, biodiversity, the tension between protecting public health and individual freedom in the Covid era, and the politics of the Middle East.

Is there a common denominator? Yes: In today's world, the Pope is expected to have something to say about all of them.

We live in a time of instant opinion, in which perspective is generally the first casualty of war. Nevertheless, here's a bit of perspective anyone who follows Vatican news and the Catholic scene ought to try to keep in mind: The papacy, as it's come to be understood, is an impossible gig.

I'm not talking about how the papacy is defined in, say, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or the Code of Canon Law. Those formula are time-honoured, immutable, and, honestly, elastic enough to accommodate all manner of con-

## Let's face it: The modern papacy is an impossible gig



Pope Francis lies prostrate as he leads the Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord's Passion April 2, 2021, at the Altar of the Chair in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

**“The Pope is supposed to act as the CEO of a major multi-national religious corporation, policing financial systems and rooting out corruption and mismanagement”**

crete applications.

I'm talking about the expectations in the popular mind – in the street, around water coolers, on TV and in newspapers, on social media, and so on.

Consider what we expect – demand, really – modern popes to be:

**Political Chess Masters:** From Ukraine to the Middle East, from sub-Saharan Africa to East Asia, if there's a conflict brewing or unfolding somewhere on the planet, we expect popes not only to talk about it but to do something – take a trip, send an envoy, hold a summit, but something. If a country is a bad actor with respect to human rights, we want the Pope to scold them; if a president or prime minister isn't consistent with Catholic social teaching in some area, we want the Pope to express displeasure. If a given Pope doesn't do something, or tries but stumbles, he's styled a coward or a failure.

**Intellectual Giants:** Whether it's philosophy, the arts, literature, cinema, or whatever, if there's

a trend developing, we expect the Pope to engage it. We expect them to publish detailed, virtually book-length documents called “encyclicals” from time to time, and then subject these documents to withering criticism if they're not completely cogent or persuasive in every detail. If a particular Pope turns out not to be a latter-day Thomas Aquinas, we're disappointed.

**Fortune 500 CEOs:** The Pope is supposed to act as the CEO of a major multi-national religious corporation, policing financial systems and rooting out corruption and mismanagement. Despite the fact there is no such thing as “Catholicism Inc.,” and that dioceses around the world are legally and financially independent of the Vatican, we hold the Pope personally responsible for meltdowns anywhere.

**Media Superstars:** People expect popes now to give interviews, to star in made-for-TV specials, to issue books and CDs, and to travel the world and wow crowds.

When Pope Francis visited Brazil in 2013 for World Youth Day, much was made of the fact that when he appeared on Copacabana Beach, he outdrew the Rolling Stones. If those TV specials, books and big events don't go well, then people start talking about the papacy as a flop.

**Oh, and let's not forget ...**

**Living Saints:** We expect popes to be personal role models of holiness, radiating spirituality and projecting super-human virtue. If a Pope ever seems even a touch irritable, or grumpy, or bored, or sad, or haughty, or displays any other emotion inconsistent with a Hallmark movie version of the spiritual life, it somehow seems a chink in his armour.

**“This bit of perspective doesn't mean popes aren't subject to legitimate criticism”**

The truth is that doing any one of those things well is a life's work, and fairly rare. Rolling them all up into one colossal job description is a prescription for perpetual heartburn.

One could, of course, argue that popes shouldn't cater to these expectations, that they should just stick to preaching the Gospel and saving souls. The ship on that idea sailed a long time ago, however, and it's not coming back to port.

This bit of perspective doesn't mean popes aren't subject to legitimate criticism.

Maybe St John Paul II shouldn't have recognised Slovenia and Croatia so fast after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, for instance, and perhaps, as Francois Mitterrand once claimed, that haste helped trigger the Balkan War. Perhaps Benedict XVI should have been much quicker to respond to the clerical abuse scandals in Ireland and across Europe in 2009-2010. Perhaps Francis should be more outspoken about China's religious freedom policies, or more cautious in his support of sweeping new government powers justified by the Covid crisis.

**Fair game**

All that's fair game. What perspective does suggest, however, is leavening such criticism with a hermeneutic of generosity, since the occasional failure or blind spot is pretty much inevitable when you elect someone to do the impossible.

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



# US withdrawal from Afghanistan leads to questions about renewed violence



A boy on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan, runs during a dust storm at Qargha Lake April 20, 2021. Photo:CNS



Dennis Sandowski

President Joe Biden's plan to withdraw US armed forces from Afghanistan by September 11 is leading observers to renew concerns about continued progress on human rights, the status of democratic reforms and whether a resurgence of violence will set back the war-beleaguered country.

**“When leaving without a peace accord and peacekeeping forces, we are leaving a colossal disaster in Afghanistan”**

The looming concern expressed to *Catholic News Service* by those observers focuses on civilians, who have borne the brunt of violence for decades.

The pull-out, while welcomed by the observers, is worrisome to them because they are unaware of steps to prevent a recurrence of fighting among Afghan government forces and the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamist movement that ruled the country until its ousting by the US-led coalition in 2001.

“The US policy has had diminishing returns and has not been able to

achieve any significant goal over the last decade or more. The goal was to create a more secure, stable Afghanistan and that certainly has not happened,” said David Cortright, director of the Global Policy Initiative at the University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs.

The plan, which Biden announced April 14, calls for the remaining 3,500 troops to redeploy by September 11, the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaida-led jetliner attacks on the United States.

Shukria Dellawar, an Afghanistan native who is policy director of the Washington-based Afghanistan Peace Campaign, said the US-led war “never focused on peace”, but was fought solely to achieve a military victory.

## Military goals

The emphasis on meeting military goals rather than wide-scale humanitarian and political achievements poses future dangers for Afghan civilians, said Ms Dellawar, who last visited her homeland in 2019.

“You owe it to people to leave this conflict on peaceful means,” she said. “When leaving without a peace accord and peacekeeping forces, we are leaving a colossal disaster in Afghanistan.”

The pull-out from Afghanistan originally was to be completed by May 1 under an agreement negotiated in February 2020 by President Donald Trump's administration and the Taliban. The deal called for the Taliban to stop attacking US forces, sever ties with terrorist organisations, including al-Qaida, and begin negotiations with the Afghan government toward a cease-fire and peace accord.

Inter-Afghan talks began in September, but no progress has been reported.

But the observers said the 2020 agreement was hardly one that will secure peace. “It's just a troop withdrawal agreement,” said Kathy Kelly, a Christian faith-based peace activist

who has visited Afghanistan numerous times during the last two decades to promote peace and reconciliation.

She feared that humanitarian efforts to address hunger, education, health care, job creation and environmental concerns will suffer without a peace accord in place.

The observers acknowledged the work ahead is long and difficult and must expand beyond US interests.

Mr Cortright, who has written extensively about Afghanistan for 20 years, suggested that establishing an interim transitional authority that includes Taliban representation becomes the first step toward a modern Afghanistan. He said he believed neither the fragile government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani nor the insurgent Taliban can oversee the entire country and its diverse factions alone.

**“Dellawar called for young people and women particularly to ‘be front and centre and meaningfully included’ in any peace talks”**

“It's clear that the Afghan government cannot defeat the Taliban and it's a problem for the Taliban that it cannot defeat the Afghan government. The Taliban doesn't really have the support across the whole country to really win. I'm sceptical they can just fight their way into Kabul and take over,” he said.

Further, Mr Cortright and others said, a United Nations peacekeeping mission, led by Muslim countries, must be in place to prevent potential violence as long as necessary until a

wide-ranging peace accord can be negotiated.

Ms Dellawar called for young people and women particularly to “be front and centre and meaningfully included” in any peace talks.

For negotiations to be successful, neighbouring countries that depend on a political stability in Afghanistan must be involved, including China, Russia, India, Pakistan and Iran, explained Lisa Schirch, senior research fellow at the Tokyo-based Toda Peace Institute, who teaches at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Such talks would better be conducted under auspices of the United Nations, she told CNS, because the US, as a party to the conflict through its long presence in the country, has “not been able to do the mediation that is needed”.

“Afghanistan is at the crossroads of so many powers,” Ms Schirch said. “We have always needed a regional solution. Part of the problem that the peace talks (since September) haven't been successful is it goes beyond just the parties in Afghanistan.”

UN involvement, Ms Dellawar said, would better ensure continued success in broadening human rights, particularly for women; boosting education, especially for girls; instituting democratic reforms; accessing health care; and diversifying employment.

## Catholic Relief Services

A renewal of violence also would endanger the work of nongovernment organizations, such as Catholic Relief Services, in providing humanitarian and development assistance. CRS has operated community-based education programs since 2003. The programs have taught more than 36,000 students, 50% of them girls.

The Catholic Church, in the person of Pope Francis, may also be able to influence the peace process, the observers said.

Citing the trust and respect Pope

Francis has gained throughout the Muslim world for his interfaith outreach efforts, they said his encouragement to work for peace would likely be heard.

“I support anything he does in terms of using his voice for peace,” Ms Dellawar said.

**“I can see how there can be some form of dialogue the Church could help lead to facilitate the coming together of this broken society”**

The Pope met in Iraq March 6 with Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of Shiite Islam's most authoritative leaders. While the Taliban preach a hard-line form of Sunni Islam and hold deep disagreements with Shiites, they have reached out to some Shiite communities in an effort to build a coalition in Afghanistan.

The Pope's continuing emphasis on integral human development and the importance of protecting human dignity resonates across the Muslim world and may open channels of communication and possibilities of cooperation, Mr Cortright told CNS.

“I can see how there can be some form of dialogue the Church could help lead to facilitate the coming together of this broken society,” he said.

In Washington, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace declined comment on the US withdrawal.

**i** Dennis Sandowski, staff writer and editor for Catholic News Service



# Letters

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

## Letter of the week

### Government must answer for dangerous precedent of penal laws

**Dear Editor,** I wish to congratulate you and your team for your excellent and thorough coverage of the appalling restrictions placed on religious worship throughout this pandemic. Despite assurances from the Health Minister Stephen Donnelly last year that there would be no penal provisions put in place to deter people attending Mass and other religious services at which people may gather, it has become clear to me that either he didn't understand the legislation produced by his department or was being disingenuous, any other reason eludes me but I would be delighted with some clarification.

This pandemic has shown me that our Government does not respect religious people. Their policy of obfuscating whether religious services were illegal or not under the Covid legislation during the last year – with the minister saying

one thing and the police treating religious gatherings as illegal with priests being threatened, and one that we know of in Cavan receiving a fine – can be described as nothing but a travesty.

As pressure piled on the State – due to Declan Ganley's case in the High Court and your newspaper – to clarify their legal position, Mr Donnelly signed a new statutory instrument which unequivocally makes religious gatherings indoors and outdoors subject to a substantial fine or even six months imprisonment. It was obviously aimed at religious gatherings. We live in a country which has banned Mass; banned the sacraments. They have even bizarrely banned one person meeting their priest outdoors for confession – according to an interpretation by Trinity College law professor, Prof. Oran Doyle as reported in your paper [IC 22/04/2021] – despite

people being allowed to meet one person from another household outdoors for non-religious purposes under relaxed restrictions.

Although I am glad the Government have clarified their position, religious gatherings are most certainly illegal, it is the strangest time to do so. Vaccines are on stream and it seems restrictions on religious worship could be lifted as early as May 4: so why this move by Government despite wholehearted buy-in and support for public health messaging by Church leadership and the majority of the Faithful? We must find answers, even if we must pursue them after the harshest part of the pandemic is finished because it sets a dangerous precedent.

*Yours etc.,  
Donal Ryan  
Cork City, Cork.*

### 'Pro-life' people spreading anti-vax myths

**Dear Editor,** It is a remarkable thing to witness online the spectacle of self-proclaimed 'pro-life' people spreading myths and anti-vaccination propaganda.

How can someone who is passionate about defending life in the womb be so ignorantly and recklessly disregarding of the lives that have been lost to Covid-19?

Pope Francis and other Church leaders have shown tremendous leadership and powerful courage in facing down these people who seek to spread misinformation about the vaccines.

Yes, as pro-life people we have an obligation to make known our displeasure at the fact that embryonic stem-lines have been used in the production of some vaccines. This is morally unacceptable, but we also have a moral duty to do everything we can to preserve and protect life. That is why I will be at the beginning of the queue when it comes to my turn for the vaccine.

*Yours etc.,  
Declan Browne  
Kilmainham, Dublin 8*



## God is waiting with open arms

**Dear Editor,** I wish to write out of concern, depression and the experience of 82 years. Concerning Covid-19, are we reaping what we sowed with sin and to save us from worse in future, because sin is legalised all over the world?

Our Lady of Fatima told the world to avoid war, famine, exile or plague, they would

have to turn back from sin and go back to God and prayer. Also God warned through the prophets. Jesus died on the cross to make it possible for us to get forgiveness of sin.

Sin exists in large amounts and Jesus tells us in Mark's gospel that it is from our hearts that evil intentions emerge. Fornication, theft,

murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make one unclean.

All sin is self-destructive. Sin blocks the Holy Spirit getting through to us and opens doors for Satan to enter and wreck everything, and God can't give us forever to repent.

God is always waiting for us to come back with prayer and repentance, and then he will be able to save us from onslaught after onslaught.

We will all see the light of Christ. Nothing to hide, nothing to fear.

*Yours etc.,  
Bridget Sherlock,  
Mitchelstown, Co. Cork*

## School must give preference to marginalised children

**Dear Editor,** I salute the Bishop of Ferns [IC 22/04/2021] and his call, on behalf of the Irish Bishops' Council for Immigrants, for the Government to honour its commitment to resettle 28 children from a refugee camp in Greece.

Meanwhile I am saddened by the apparent lack of expressions of concern from our bishops, our social justice advocates and our Catholic education

authorities in respect of the thousands of Irish children deprived of the special needs schools and classes that they so urgently need.

In common with all English Catholic schools, including the two that I had the privilege to lead, the first two admission criteria were always (1) children in the care of the State and (2) children with Statements of Special

Education Need. Our Irish Catholic schools could well copy the English Catholic authorities and show a preferential option for the disadvantaged and marginalised.

*Yours etc.,  
Alan Whelan  
Vice President, Catholic Secondary  
School Parents Association  
Killarney, Co Kerry*

## facebook community

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

### 'We don't teach hate, Mr President' – Higgins' comments on Catholic schools rejected

Another Irish president attacking Catholicism. No wonder our chapels are closed for services. – **Gerry O'Neill**

We are taught to love in our catholic faith and schools. – **Jacinta Newell**

I went to a Convent school both primary and secondary (until 4th year then we had a new mixed school) which was excellent we certainly weren't taught hate it was love, we even had Church of Ireland pupils in my secondary school so that proves that point, I have nothing but happy memories of my school years. – **Margaret Kenny**

Outrageous comments for a president to make. There are faith-based schools and parental choice in many countries and it is and should be the right of a parent to choose to send their child to one. Many of us choose to send our children to Catholic schools precisely because we want to reinforce the importance of love, not hate. It is the Christian ethos which is important to us. I was never taught to hate in my Catholic education. I never taught anyone to hate when I taught in Catholic schools and my children are not learning to hate at school. – **Caren Collins**

Catholic schools in Northern Ireland are centres of excellence, with outstanding pastoral care. That is conveniently ignored by the liberal elite. Also, the right to parental choice in education is guaranteed in international law. The North has a lot of integrated schools. It also has a vast number of non-denominational state schools. Parents have plenty of choice. All of the schools promote and encourage tolerance and understanding. To suggest otherwise is a great disservice to them all, Catholic and others. President Higgins is wrong. – **Eamonn McGrady**

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

## One would be forgiven for thinking Govt anti-religious

**Dear Editor,** Thank you for the courageous stance *The Irish Catholic* has taken on challenging the length of the unjust ban on Mass and the Government's stubborn resistance to our pleas.

It is patently obvious – given how unrestricted Mass is in the rest of Europe – that public worship can continue safely. I attended Mass in the North on Easter Sunday morning and was greeted by members of the local GAA club who were responsible for the stewarding and showing people to their seats.

There was an "abundance of caution" on display (to borrow a phrase from NPHET) and the sense of paschal joy was palpable and yet people kept their distance and did not gather together outside afterwards.

The stance of the Government in the Republic is particularly outrageous given how safe things are North of the border. Micheál Martin claims that his coalition is not anti-religious. One would surely be forgiven for concluding otherwise.

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Brady  
Dundalk, Co. Louth*

## 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.

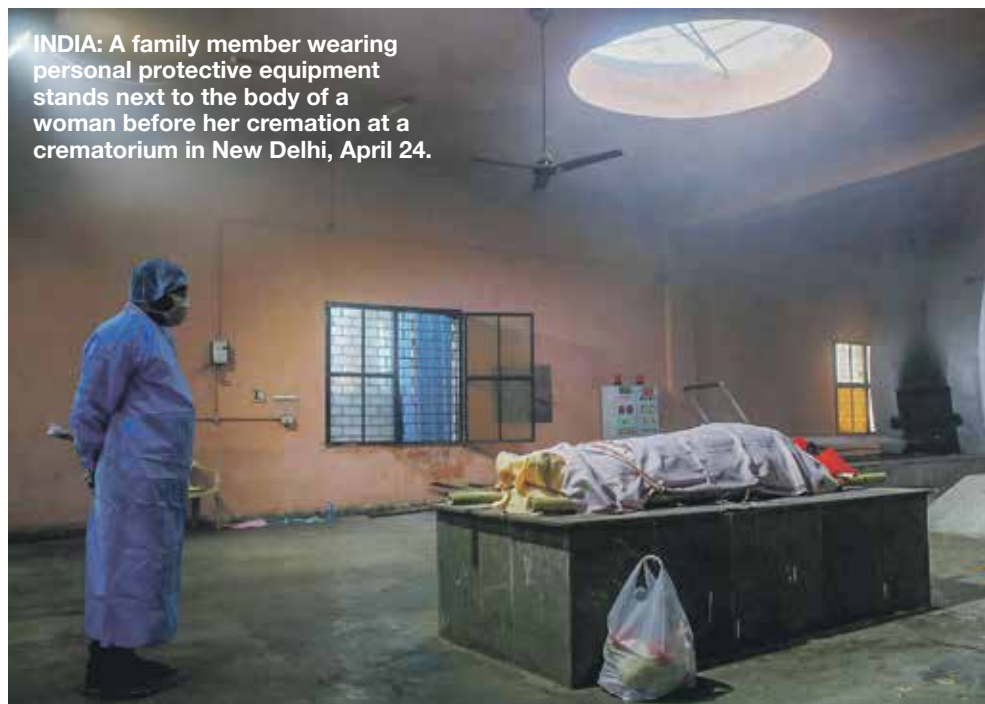


# Around the world



▲ **HOLY LAND:** Palestinian men pray in front of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem's Old City on the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN CITY:** Nine men lie prostrate in St Peter's Basilica before being ordained to the priesthood by Pope Francis during a Mass at the Vatican, April 25.



**INDIA:** A family member wearing personal protective equipment stands next to the body of a woman before her cremation at a crematorium in New Delhi, April 24.



**SOUTH AFRICA:** Flames and smoke are seen April 19, after a wildfire broke out on the slopes of Table Mountain National Park in Cape Town, South Africa.



**USA:** People in Morrison, Colorado, enjoy live music at Red Rocks Amphitheatre for its opening night, April 22, during the coronavirus pandemic.



**BRAZIL:** A child from the Indigenous Munduruku ethnic group, wearing a protective mask, takes part in a demonstration in Brasilia, April 20.



# Our heart is stronger than our wounds



Ten years before his death in 1996, Henri Nouwen was beset by a depression that nearly broke him. While in treatment, he wrote a very powerful book, *The Inner Voice of Love*, in which he humbly and candidly shared his struggles and the efforts it took to overcome them. At times, he felt completely overwhelmed by his wounds and obsessions and was on the edge of drowning, of collapse, when the only thing he could do was cry. Eventually though he found again his inner strength and emerged resilient, ready to re-enter his life with renewed energy. Remarking on what he learned from this inner collapse and his eventual return to health, he writes that, in the end, our hearts are stronger than our wounds.

## Hard-earned truth

That's a powerful affirmation of a hard-earned truth; but is it always true? Are our hearts always stronger than our wounds? Do we always have the resources deep down to overcome our wounds?

Sometimes yes, as in the case of Nouwen; but sometimes no, as we see in the broken lives of so many. Sometimes, it seems wounds overpower the heart. Perhaps one poignant example can serve to illustrate this. There is a sad, tragic, haunting line in the well-known song, *I Dreamed a Dream*, from the popular musical, *Les Miserables*. The story told in *Les*



Fr Rolheiser

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

*Miserables*, as we know, is based on Victor Hugo's classic book by that title which tells a series of stories about how poverty and oppression can break the hearts, backs, and lives of the poor. One of Hugo's characters, Fantine, is a single mother, abandoned by the man she loves and nursing a broken heart. She is also struggling to provide her daughter with the basic needs of life, struggling with a job and working conditions that are ruining her health, and struggling with sexual harassment from her boss that culminates in her unfair dismissal from her job. At a certain point, it's too much, her health breaks, she collapses, and in her dying farewell sings out a lament that suggests that our hearts aren't always stronger than

**“The story told in *Les Miserables*, as we know, is based on Victor Hugo's classic book by that title which tells a series of stories about how poverty and oppression can break the hearts, backs, and lives of the poor”**

our wounds; but sometimes there are storms we cannot weather. Sometimes the heart cannot weather the storm and collapses under the weight of its wounds.

Who's right – Nouwen or Fantine? I suspect they both are, depending on one's circumstance, inner health, and emotional resources. An old adage says, whatever doesn't kill you, makes you stronger! True enough, providing it doesn't kill you. Sadly, sometimes it does. Sometimes what weighs us down does kill us. I suspect that everyone reading this has had a first-hand experience of someone you knew and loved breaking down and dying, either by suicide or some other collapse of this sort, due to a broken life, a broken heart,

a broken psyche, a wound that overpowered his or her heart.

## God's grace

Thus, when we look at the truth of Nouwen's affirmation that our hearts are stronger than our wounds and the (seeming) antithetical truth that sometimes our wounds can kill the heart, we need to add a further truth which embraces both sides of this: God's grace, forgiveness, and love are stronger than our wounds, our collapses, our failures, and seeming despairs.

**“As Christians, we don't have to save ourselves, don't have to get our lives right all on our own”**

Sometimes in our struggles we can access the inner strength buried below our wounds which will enable us to rise above them and walk again in health, strength, and enthusiasm. However, sometimes our wounds so paralyse the heart that we can no longer access the strength that lies deep within us. In this life, that kind of brokenness can look and feel like a terminal collapse, a sadness for which there is no healing, a

despair, a wasted life. However, whenever a collusion of bitter circumstance and mental fragility break someone, when a person's heart is no longer stronger than his or her wounds, we can take refuge in a deeper truth and consolation, namely, the strength that lies within God's heart: God's grace, understanding, and love are stronger than our wounds, our collapses, our failures, and seeming despairs.

## Christian faith

What sets Christian faith apart from most other religions (as well as from all prosperity gospels) is that Christianity is a religion of grace and not primarily of self-effort (important though that is). As Christians, we don't have to save ourselves, don't have to get our lives right all on our own. Indeed, nobody ever does. As St Paul says so clearly in his farewell message in Romans 1-8, none of us ever get our lives right on the basis of our own strength. That's also true in terms of overcoming our wounds. All of us are weak and break down sometimes. However, and this is the point, when the storms of life overpower us, when we reach down for strength to withstand the storm only to find out that the storm is stronger than we are, we need then to reach still deeper and there we will find that God's heart is stronger than our brokenness.



# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 29, 2021

## Personal Profile

Leading the full life  
of a Pioneer

Page 34



# Sustainability in the home



**I**t's interesting that caring for the environment is such a contentious issue in many Catholic circles these days – although I think it's often the condescending manner in which the message is sometimes communicated that people find off-putting. I've met few people, if any, who think the environment is something we have a right to plunder and destroy to our heart's content.

As is so often the way, the path forward lies in calm conversation and rational dissection of the issue. Caring for our immediate environment is a good thing, because if we all did it, it'd solve many problems the created world



**Implementing sustainable practices at home is tricky, but the increased time we spend there now is an incentive, writes Jason Osborne**

currently faces, such as unprecedented levels of pollution and resource consumption (so much of which go to waste).

On a spiritual level it should be of concern to us, because the attitudes we take often shape our hearts. Put very simply, if we buy a lot, go through a lot and consume a lot at a faster and faster rate (as we seem to be doing), it should

come as no surprise if we start to approach the created world with ever-greater ingratitude and indifference.

As such, if for no other reason than the spiritual fruits, a more sustainable and minimalistic approach to living is something to consider implementing in our lives, in our own homes, to whatever degree we can manage. And

there is no better opportunity, with the vast majority of us still confined to our homes and localities most of the time.

It doesn't have to be about buying more expensive alternatives or taking on inconvenient habits – it can be as simple as changing an attitude. With the remainder of this article, I'll go through some simple habits and tips that will make big changes to both God's creation and our hearts.

### Buy locally

A simple step that makes a big difference – and that many people homed in on very early in the pandemic – is buying locally, or 'Buy Irish', as the slogan puts it.

This works on a number of levels. It supports the local community and the economy, which is a key step in fostering a healthier local environment. People can only worry about the environment after they've put food on the table for their family, so choosing to shop in your region or to order from Irish businesses around the country does play a role in enabling healthier communities, right down to the individual employees small and medium Irish enterprises are responsible for.

On a larger scale, relegating your purchasing habits to your area or our island cuts down on

» Continued on Page 33



## Family News



### AND EVENTS

#### CARPHONE WAREHOUSE CLOSES IRISH OPERATIONS

Dixons Carphone announced its decision to close the Irish Carphone Warehouse business last week.

The closure is expected to lead to nearly 500 job losses.

All 69 of its stores will close, as well as its 12 outlets within stores.

Dixons Carphone confirmed that the move won't affect Currys PC World Ireland.

It said that Carphone Warehouse Ireland had seen a decrease in footfall in excess of 40% over the last year.

This was coupled with the fact that customers are increasingly choosing to shop through the retailer's online business or through Currys PC World stores.

"Although these changes in behaviour were anticipated, they were expected to occur over a longer period of time," it said.

"However, the change in shopping behaviours has been accelerated by the pandemic."

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar took to Twitter to say that the news will come as a "major blow" to Carphone Warehouse employees and their families.

#### NASA CELEBRATES FIRST CONTROLLED FLIGHT ON ANOTHER PLANET

The American space agency, Nasa, has successfully flown a small helicopter on Mars.

The drone, which is called Ingenuity, was airborne for less than a minute, but represents a huge leap forward in terms of technological capability.

Nasa has been celebrating what represents the first powered, controlled flight by an aircraft on another planet.

Confirmation arrived at Earth of the mission's success via a satellite at Mars which relayed the miniature helicopter's data.

Nasa is promising more adventurous flights in the coming days, with the drone expected to be commanded to fly higher and further as engineers seek to test the limits of their technology.

The small helicopter was carried to Mars along with Nasa's Perseverance Rover, which landed on the Red Planet in February.

"We can now say that human beings have flown a rotorcraft on another planet," the BBC reported MiMi Aung as saying, project manager for Ingenuity at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California.

#### SCIENTISTS UNEARTH NEW SPECIES OF DINOSAUR IN CHILE

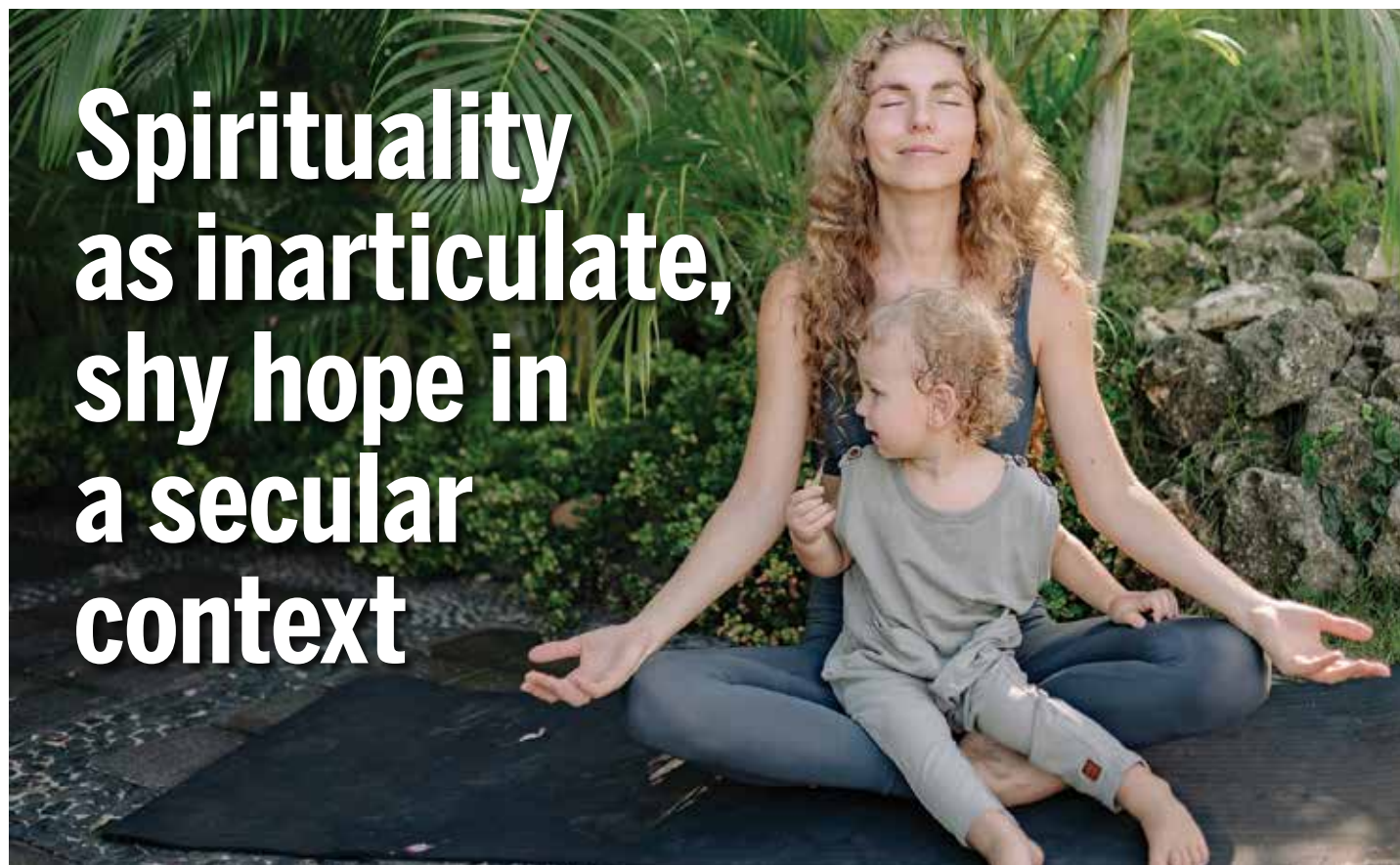
The BBC reported that a new species of dinosaur has been unearthed in Chile's Atacama desert.

The scientists identified the new species from parts of a skeleton which were found in the world's driest desert near the city of Copiapó. Experts say that the herbivore 'titanosaur' had a small head, long neck and unusually flat back. Studies suggest the creature lived in what would then have been a lush landscape of flowering plants, ferns and palm trees.

A team led by Chilean geologist Carlos Arévalo unearthed the remains in the 1990s and carried out research in the 2000s. The findings were made public last Monday for the first time.

The remains included parts of a humerus, a femur and the ischium, and vertebral elements of the neck and back. They represent a small sub-adult individual, with an estimated length of 6.3m (20ft).

# Spirituality as inarticulate, shy hope in a secular context



This monthly column explores the nature of mindfulness and meditation practices in light of human spirituality. A recurring theme has been the need to encourage individuals and families to develop a greater awareness of the innate spirituality of the human person and to discover how meditation awakens and nourishes it. However, it is important to understand that, in doing so, we do not seek to develop our spirituality for personal gain but for the good of all.

**“The experiential core of any religion as opposed to its doctrinal-dogmatic clothing”**

Spiritual consciousness is in slow decline in what has become an increasingly secular world. While Ireland may have come late to the secular table, it is beyond doubt that Irish society has become increasingly secular in recent decades. Typically, spirituality finds expression through religion and consequently the decline in religious practice is leading to a decline in spiritual awareness. But I believe that, while many have moved away from organised religion, most people retain an appreciation that there is more to human consciousness, to human life, than the culture of secular society allows. Some suggest that part of the reason for the decline of religion in recent decades arises from its failure to promote meaningful personal spiritual experience, emphasising instead an over-rigid focus on proscribed doctrine and dogma. Harald Walach, author of 'Secular Spirituality' defines spirituality as "the experiential core of any religion as opposed to its doctrinal-dogmatic clothing".

Writing about religion and

## Mindful living

Dr Noel Keating



spirituality in the 21st Century, Gary Bouma describes spiritual consciousness in secular Australian society as a "shy hope in the heart". I think that phrase captures very well what very many people today experience in their lives yet find great difficulty in giving expression to it. And, if one can't name it, it is almost impossible to develop it. It is urgent, therefore, in modern secular society to find ways of giving expression to this vital and innate human characteristic. While great strides have been made in recent years in exploring spirituality through secular as well as religious language, to date such developments have been limited primarily to the world of academia. From a secular perspective spirituality can be regarded as that inner drive in the human person which guides one to live life authentically; for many, but not all, that inner dynamism will have a transcendent dimension.

Lisa Miller, director of clinical psychology at Columbia University, is one of many people engaged in the study of spirituality and psychology, mental health, and thriving. Her work has focused in particular on researching spiritual development in children, adolescents and families. She describes childhood spirituality as "a powerful truth that is incontrovertible yet strangely absent from our mainstream culture". For Miller,

spirituality is an inborn capacity of the human being, a central and integrating aspect of the self which is foundational to mental health and wellbeing, especially in the first 20 years of life. Her research suggests that awareness of spiritual development creates opportunities to prepare adolescents "for the important inner work required for individuation, identity development, emotional resilience, character, meaningful work, and healthy relationships". She believes that "spirituality is the central organising principle of inner life" especially in the teenage years and that it helps young people grow into "an adulthood of meaning and purpose, thriving, and awareness".

When my granddaughter, who is just over three and a half years old, goes out into the garden on a sunny day she looks up at the sky and says "Hi, sister sun; hi, brother wind". She is somehow deeply attuned to her connection with all that is and her capacity for relational



consciousness is an expression of her innate spirituality. Miller states that all children "have an inborn spirituality that is the greatest source of resilience they have as human beings" and that "parenting choices in the first two decades radically affect... children's spiritual

development in ways that last their entire lives". She cautions that children's development suffers when their spiritual development is neglected or when a child's spiritual curiosity and exploration are denied.

There is an urgent need then to find ways of talking about spirituality in a secular context; to find ways of speaking about and engaging with this vital aspect of our humanity in ways that deepen our awareness of who we are at the deepest levels of our being. We need to find ways of speaking about spirituality that transcend explicit religious language, especially for those who are not affiliated with any religion; when young people begin to explore their own spirituality, they will be drawn to discover how spirituality has found expression in the religions of the world, especially those most associated with their own culture.

Meditation is a powerful way of awakening our spiritual sensibilities. Because it is a universal practice which is widely promoted in both secular society and almost all world religions, it has great potential as a means of engaging with people of all faiths and none about finding ways of giving expression to that "inarticulate shy hope" at the heart of their being.

**i** After 40 years in the education sector Noel Keating was awarded a PhD for his research into the child's experience of meditation and its spiritual fruits. Noel now leads, in a voluntary capacity, a project which offers free in-service to primary schools who may wish to consider introducing meditation as a whole-school practice. Noel is author of *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*.



» Continued from Page 31



our contribution to the vast transport networks that circumscribe the globe. Planes, trains and ships are responsible for moving the world's goods to and fro, and by shopping here, you reduce the effect you're having.

A common objection to this is that Ireland is such a small country – particularly when placed in comparison to the US and China – surely it doesn't matter what we do in the grand scheme of things? There's some truth to this in terms of our material contribution, but as I said above, this is where attitude comes in (and the concomitant spiritual fruits).

### Justbuyirish.com is a useful directory of 864 Irish producers who deliver right to your door”

If everyone adopted the attitude that their contribution didn't matter, we'd very quickly end up in a disastrous situation. God created a community; a vibrant, interdependent world. Even if our physical contribution is but a footnote, the spiritual sign is equally important and equally real.

Justbuyirish.com is a useful directory of 864 Irish producers who deliver right to your door. Covering books, food, alcohol, home products, arts and crafts, tea, coffee and more, this directory is very useful if you do choose to search for local sources for your needs and desires.

### Turn off your electronics

Perhaps a reminder more than anything, but a timely one when more of our time is spent at home than ever before. Many of us fall into the habit of switching on the tv, radio or laptop and leaving them streaming shows out into the house as we bustle about.

Or because so much of my time is spent in and around my house these days, when I leave my room, I'm much more likely to leave the lamp on, knowing I'll be “in the area” and so won't be long.

It's important to remember that the same rules apply now as before – if we're not actively using it, we should turn it off. Whether it's the heat as we enter into what is hopefully a beautiful summer, or whether it's the omnipresent electronics, if we don't need it, don't use it.

### Invest in green technology if you can

Many of the people around our estate have been using the past year to invest in their homes more than usual. The home-improvement sentiment must have been shared by many around the country, as some of the first places opened up upon the relaxation of the first lockdown last year were garden centres.

If you're in a position to do so, why not make some of those improvements green? Grants are available for some of these – solar panels for instance. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) offer support to all owners of dwellings built and occupied before 2011, where SEAI haven't previously provided support for solar systems at that address.

Perhaps more suitable for the Irish climate than solar panels is insulation. Homes without insulation take longer to heat up, using more fuel in the pro-

cess, and take longer to cool down. Getting the house properly insulated saves money in the long run.

Alternatively, grants are available for both private and commercial electric vehicles, as well as towards the purchase and installation of charging points for them. Money is tight at the moment, but if you're in a position to make changes, it is something to consider.

### Simpler upgrades

Not all change for the greener need be so lofty, however – a compost bin, window boxes, LED lightbulbs, and bicycles are all relatively simple things to bring into home life and each moves you towards a more sustainable way of life.

### Store and donate rather than dump

There's been a big push in recent years in an attempt to help people see just how much they throw away, from food, to clothes, to furniture.

In recent months, I've taken to storing more food than ever before. Whereas once I'd have thrown it away, if a slight amount is left over from a meal or a takeaway, I store it in the fridge and finish it off the next day or add something else to it for a more rounded meal.

In the realm of clothes and other household items, donation is the way to go – to family members, friends, or charity shops. It's an environmentally conscious move, but also a powerful antidote to the “throwaway” attitude that Pope Francis speaks of so regularly, teaching us to value what we have a little more. It also helps us to see that even if we have no more use for something, someone else might.

These are a few simple steps, but some of them have changed my own attitudes for the better throughout the past year. While there are more spiritually immanent issues than our treatment of the environment (our treatment of our closest loved ones for one), it is an issue that we can't afford to neglect. If we don't address it now, when?



## Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

It is probably the dread of every Catholic parent that some day their child will say: “I do not believe what you believe.” As a result, we may be reluctant to get into conversations about faith because at some level we feel it is better not to enquire too deeply, to open up too challenging a conversation, to encourage too much honesty. Instead we can choose to live in a comfortable, if dubious state of unknowing and game-playing.

It strikes me that the same could be said of attitudes towards the upcoming synod. I have heard the view expressed that this is a ‘dangerous venture’, one that should not be undertaken, that we cannot know what Pandora's box we will open. I understand the concerns but surely we have to consider where the Holy Spirit is in all of this. My sense is that we are being invited into a dynamic of renewal and even if it may carry echoes of cross bearing and times of tomb-darkness it is ultimately about resurrection.

I can honestly say that over recent years I have grown in faith and understanding through conversations I have had with my children. These conversations are challenging, robust and hugely thought-provoking. My children have not ‘lost’ their faith but their relationship with the institution can be fraught and they have a lot of very legitimate questions about their faith and about the Church. I am aware that if I want my children and in time, my grandchildren, to have faith then I need to have the courage to enter into these conversations. In the same way, if we want the Church in Ireland to have vitality and authenticity for future generations we need to have the courage now to open up those conversations about faith, church, mission, life and more.

We cannot possibly look at the Church in Ireland and insist that all is well. The brokenness and dysfunctionality of the Church has been revealed by many scandals. Added to that, the past year has been hugely challenging and many people may not return. For others the question is “What is there to return to?” where we have failed to build nurturing faith-filled communities. Sacramental

preparation is in crisis, there are questions to be asked of our Catholic schools and the lack of adult faith development has left parents utterly ill-equipped. We cannot go forward with a notion that if people would just get back to practising their faith we would be all right. In reality we need to explore those big questions about what it means to live lives energised and directed by faith.



In order to have an honest and fruitful conversation perhaps first we need to explore what it means to listen – within families, within parish, within the Church. How

do we listen to those who have different and challenging opinions? How do we discern the truth which lies within the complex weave of our shared and disparate experience? What would happen if we really listened to each other, with mutual respect?

Ignatius of Loyola and his early companions struggled with the idea of forming a religious order. They gathered to explore their options and Ignatius in his wisdom instructed the group to spend the full day speaking about all that would be positive in choosing a formal religious structure and constitution. The next day they were all to speak about the drawbacks or challenges of such a choice. Ignatius had developed a process of communal discernment so that together the group could seek the will of God without being adversarial, without getting involved in debates and indeed rows. Perhaps we need something similar. It would certainly be useful within family life never mind a synod!

Because the reality is, if we are going to be transformed we need to be challenged, we need to articulate our strengths and our weaknesses as a Church. We need to listen to each other, whether we stand on the margins of the Church or comfortably at its centre. Perhaps in preparation we should begin at home, sit down with members of our own families and with open hearts and open minds open up that conversation. Honest conversations are hard work but they can build authentic relationships which are resilient and life-giving – the stuff of resurrection.



# Leading the full life of a Pioneer

## Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Lockdown has left many people, businesses and organisations struggling and the Pioneer Association – a Catholic movement against alcohol abuse – is no different. Knowing this, for life-long member and activist Mary Brady it was a no-brainer to put her recovery from a hip operation to good use. She has raised more than €1,000 through her walk for the pioneers.

**“In donating the proceeds of her walk to the Pioneer Association, Mrs Brady is continuing a connection with the organisation that stretches back to the 1973”**

“We’d lost most of our fundraising as a result of Covid,” Mrs Brady tells *The Irish Catholic*. “We would get funds coming in from our Church gate collections. But with all Masses off, that’s all gone. Even when they do go back, you’ve fewer people attending. Church gate collections, you wouldn’t get an awful lot. Presentation of gold and silver and diamond emblems, young pioneers joining at confirmation – we lost all those sales as well.

“I had to do the walk anyway, the exercise and the walks are vital.



Mrs Mary Brady pictured at a Pioneer exhibition in Duleek, Co. Meath. Photo: Colin Bell

Before I went in for my first operation back in November, I barely could walk 200 yards. I could only go out a little bit on the roads and I would struggle to get back. Now I can do 2km and I’ve no problem.”

Mrs Brady committed to walking 50km before May 31. At the time of interviewing, she had 36kms done, but with a second operation in a week, she knows she has to put the pedal to the metal.

“I have until the 31 May, but my biggest thing now is to get it done before I’m called in,” she says. “But that doesn’t mean when I’m home that I don’t have to go out walking again. But I wouldn’t be doing a kilometre straight off, I’d have to build it back up again.”

In donating the proceeds of her walk to the Pioneer Association, Mrs Brady is continuing a connection with the organisation that stretches back to 1973.

“I joined when I was 16 in my local centre in Duleek,” she tells *The Irish Catholic*. “I became actively involved with them then in 1973. It was in that year then that the East Meath region was formed of which Duleek was one of the centres. I’ve been actively involved in that region ever since. I’ve been chair, secretary, treasurer, PRO. You’re talking about 48 years in that. From that then I became involved in the diocese and the provincial councils.

**“Though she retired from the office in 2017, Mrs Brady continues to do work behind the scenes for the pioneers, whose work she considers to be very important”**

“When I got involved with the pioneers, I became very involved with it at many levels. And here I am today, still involved and busier than ever. For the centenary year 1999, for celebrations to mark the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the association, I was invited onto the centenary committee and I became vice-chair of that.

“I worked alongside Fr Micheál Mac Gréil in preparing Croke Park for the big rally that was there in May 1999. From that then, in September I ended up working three days a week in the office and in 2013 I became the office manager.”

Though she retired from the office in 2017, Mrs Brady continues to do work behind the scenes for the pioneers, whose work she considers to be very important.

“Oh it’s a vital organisation to have,” she says. “If you take it that the Pioneer Association wasn’t there,

where would we be where alcohol is concerned? And the Pioneers is not against alcohol, it’s the over-indulgence and abuse of alcohol that really is the problem. Bearing in mind we have in and around 120,000 full members and we have teetotalers and people who are moderate drinkers.

“We have a lot of support and the association is badly needed. I think you can lead by example as well, it’s a good way of doing it. You can preach as much as you like to people, but sometimes that can go over their heads and it’s what you do yourself that can make the difference.”

Mrs Brady never felt like she wanted to drink, which was part of the reason for her joining the Pioneers she explains. But the other reason was for the social aspect, one which Covid has put a hold on.

“Covid really has caused us a lot of hardship,” Mrs Brady says. “We can’t be out and have meetings, people are afraid to go out to meetings and things like that. When this happened we realised how important the pioneers was to everybody, meeting up. We haven’t seen each other face-to-face for a long time either.”

### Association

“For me, for someone who had been very quiet, I became very much part of the association. There’s not really a part of the country that I wouldn’t know somebody. Travelling with the Gradam Awards, the quiz competitions, when those events were in full flow – you were up and down the country, you were meeting people, they were fantastic. I met my late husband in the pioneers as well, actually.

“It was great, because in the earlier days when I started with them, every week there’d be some presentation with them, some social event organised in one or other of the centres in the region. You got to know people, up and down the country. It was a great way to get to know people.”

## Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



## Creating an unbeatable carrot cake

Carrot cake is an essential springtime treat, this recipe gives a delicious, moist cake with the perfect balance of nuttiness and spice. If you’re not a fan of walnuts, pecans could be used instead. Or if you’re a lover of raisins in your carrot cake feel free to add them in when adding the carrot.

### Ingredients

For the cake:

- 275g plain flour
- 360g caster sugar
- 100g finely ground walnuts
- 1.5 tsp cinnamon
- ¼ of a whole nutmeg, ground
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda/bread soda
- 4 eggs
- 300ml vegetable oil – like sunflower oil
- 300g finely grated carrots

For the cream cheese icing:

- 300g icing sugar, sifted

- 240g cream cheese, at room temperature
- 60g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Walnuts, to decorate

Preheat the oven to 175°C/160°

Fan/Gas mark 3. Grease and line two 9 inch/23cm loose bottomed tins. Start by preparing the dry ingredients. Sieve the flour into a bowl along with the baking powder and bread soda. Add the cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and walnuts and stir gently to combine. Next, in a separate bowl using an electric whisk beat the eggs and sugar together for about a minute until pale and fluffy. Then keeping the speed on low, add in the oil. Once all oil has been added, increase speed and beat until fully incorporated, this takes about half a minute. Next, gently fold in the grated carrot. Now for the final step, folding in all the dry ingredients from earlier. Do this until everything has

just combined. Distribute this mixture evenly between the prepared tins. Bake in the oven for 42-45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tins for about 15 minutes before transferring onto a wire rack to cool fully. It is important that the cakes are completely cool before you attempt to ice them!



While the cakes are cooling you can prepare the icing by beating the butter until it’s pale and fluffy. Then add the cream cheese and vanilla extract and beat until combined, this shouldn’t take long. Finally, slowly add the icing sugar and beat until you have a spreadable, smooth, shiny frosting. If the icing is too loose, add a little more icing sugar, just a spoon at a time to thicken it up. Use half the icing to sandwich the two layers and the rest on the top and sides. Don’t worry about being very neat, carrot cake looks best when rustic. Press walnuts gently around the edge to finish and chill for half an hour before serving.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## The fear of being 'cancelled' stifles debate

**Y**ou would think that during times of national crisis we'd be concentrating on the basics, the crucially important stuff of life.

And yet quite a lot of media time was taken up last week with the issue of gender-neutral bathrooms – a reflection perhaps of 'woke' obsessions and so many hours of broadcasting to fill. This was prompted by the Department of Education guidelines about provision of gender-neutral bathrooms in new school builds and refurbishments. One of the most noteworthy discussions was on **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio One, Thursday). It was the day Joe lost the rag.

The show started with a caller Laoise expressing her unease at the proposal. Another caller, Lisa, was quite dismissive of the opposition to the proposals, but when she started throwing around accusations of homophobia (as you do) presenter Joe Duffy got really cross with her and said he wasn't going to have any of that kind of language. She was bumped off the programme. His annoyance came across as genuine and heartfelt rather than being just a concern about possible legal action. Random accusations of homophobia have landed RTÉ in hot water before.

After that I felt the tide turned on the programme



Andrea Gilligan on Newstalk expressed discomfort about gender-neutral bathrooms.

with several callers (some being sure to stress their liberal credentials, just in case) expressing discomfort at the idea, in particular showing understanding of the problems if would create for young girls. One caller called it an 'experiment' on children and suggested it be tried on adults first, for example in Leinster House. I heard no evidence at any stage of any consultation, even the illu-

sion of it, from the department.

Earlier on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk) presenter Andrea Gilligan expressed her discomfort with the idea, arguing for choice – let there be gender-neutral bathrooms in addition to the standard set up. Rightly or wrongly she expressed a fear of being 'cancelled' on Twitter for her views, but she stuck with them: "Am I not allowed to

feel a bit uncomfortable as well?"

I suspect another round of controversies is brewing after the latest recommendations of the citizens' assembly. On **Saturday with Katie Hannon** (RTÉ Radio One) the issues were teased out with Catherine Day, chair of the assembly. I am still not convinced that there's anything democratic or representative about this unelected group. Nuala O'Connor of the National Women's Council was enthusiastic – but she kept referring to what "the citizens" have said, though more accurately it was the members of the citizens' assembly – not the same thing. The citizens will have their say in any resulting referendum. There seemed to be little evidence of divergent viewpoints in those deliberations of the assembly, either because, as Katie Hannon suggested, it was all motherhood (!) and apple stuff that no-one could object to, or because this was, as one texter suggested, a liberal elite talking to themselves.

But on this show we got some opposing ideas from Caitríona Lynch of Cúram, an organisation for stay-at-home parents. She said their views were not sought by the assembly, even though they were the only Government-recognised group with a very specific interest in the relevant articles of the Constitu-

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC One, Sunday May 2 1.15pm**

Claire McCollum marks the partition of Ireland and formation of Northern Ireland 100 years ago, meeting Christians from across the denominations to discuss the past and their hopes for the future.

#### CATHOLIC VIEW FOR WOMEN

**EWTN Monday May 3, 8am and Wednesday May 5, 10.30pm**

Chuck Konzelman and the ladies of the Catholic View discuss recent high-profile examples of people being denied their constitutional right of free speech.

#### THE LEAP OF FAITH

**RTÉ Radio One, Friday May 7, 10.05pm**

Topical religious and ethical matters with Michael Comyn.

tion. She thought broadening the constitutional definition to 'carers' was too broad, that there needed to be the current reference to actual parents in the home, and in this context it didn't matter to her group whether it was father or mother. These recommendations if accepted will lead to referenda, but no one was arguing for these to take place during a pandemic.

But it's good to get away from the controversies. Last week I had a listen to some contributions to **A Word in Edgeways** (RTÉ Radio One) a relatively recent addition to very early morning radio. On the Wednesday, novelist Cathy Kelly praised "humanistic kindness", said that "formal religions" can "sometimes" teach kindness, and yet can have rules that are "cruel".

This felt to me like a dig, and felt jarring for this kind of programme. On the Thursday, Mary Wall from Castleknock reflected on pandemic times from her back garden and saw hope for the future, while last Friday Roger Childs, Head of Religious Programmes at RTÉ, told us lots of interesting information about St George, patron saint of England (he displaced Edward the Confessor). The influence of his name spread to two US presidents (in the Bushes), the Pope (Jorge Bergoglio), a few Kings of England and George Floyd – comprehensive or what!

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# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## The remarkable life of Veronica Dunne

Last time round we left the late Veronica Dunne about to audition at Covent Garden. She was accepted at once. Interestingly around the same time, Australian soprano Joan Sutherland (1926-2010), who would have a brilliant international career, had four auditions before being accepted as a 'utility soprano'. She and Ronnie became lifelong friends.

Ronnie made her Royal Opera House debut as Sophie in Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* on October 29, 1952. Her success was followed by Mimi (*La bohème*), under John Barbirolli's baton on November 19.

*The Daily Telegraph* was enthusiastic: "An out-



Ronnie in later life.

standing Mimi in Veronica Dunne...Her voice, which she uses with taste and intelligence, has a charming lyrical freshness and, in the top register, a generous dramatic quality".

The influential *Musical Opinion* wrote, "It is seldom indeed, that we have a performance of *La bohème* in which the Mimi is so ideally cast...In Veronica Dunne the character is personified...

It is a shy, yet curiously authoritative, reliving of the fragile role...I do not recollect this [final] scene having a sharper poignancy".

*The Times* was less enamoured: "Although her voice was pleasant in quality, it was not big enough for this theatre even for one simulating an affliction of the lungs. Her intonation was not impeccable and neither her dress nor her manner was endearing enough to justify Rudolph's love at first sight".

The *La bohème* run ended on December 22 but in between Ronnie was toing and froing between London and Dublin fulfilling DGOS engagements as Suzel in Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* at the Gaiety.

Over the Christmas recess Ronnie became engaged to her sweetheart Peter McCarthy. The elation was somewhat deflated as her mother felt Ronnie was "making the biggest mistake of her life". Covent Garden's general administrator David Webster was furious. He had hoped she would be "a box office star, a real asset to the company, and here she was, putting it all in jeopardy". Ronnie was resolute.

Back in the Royal Opera there were revivals of *La bohème* and in February 1953 Ronnie was part of a specially-mounted production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* with the great Lancastrian contralto, Kathleen Ferrier (1912-1953), as Orfeo. With Ronnie as Euridice and Adele Leigh as Amor, Barbirolli was in the Covent Garden pit.

Not many knew that Fer-

rier was seriously ill. On the second night Ronnie realised something was wrong when Ferrier clutched a piece of scenery. Ronnie moved to her side and held her arm. Ferrier sang magnificently to the end but collapsed in agony off-stage. Aided by Ronnie and Adele she managed to take her curtain calls.

The audience had no idea of the off-stage tragedy or that during the performance a fragment of bone had splintered from her femur causing excruciating pain. Ferrier never sang in public again and died in October 1953.

On a happier note that year Ronnie and Peter McCarthy married on July 1 in Dublin's Marino Church. The couple honeymooned in Italy where they met up with Msgr Hugh O'Flaherty – Ronnie's guardian when she studied in Rome. More later.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The eminence grise behind Prince Philip

**The Mountbattens**  
by Andrew Lownie  
(Blink Publishing, £20.00; 490 pages, 32 unnumbered pages of plates)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Lord Louis Mountbatten was assassinated by members of the Provisional IRA at Mullaghmore, Co Sligo, on August 27, 1979. This is recorded in considerable detail in one of the 29 chapters of this comprehensive biography.

Dickie, as he was known from his earliest years, was born into the princely Battenberg family on June 25, 1900. He began his education in a prep-boarding school in London. On joining the Royal Navy he attended a number of naval colleges and schools. He was an undergraduate at Cambridge University and throughout his naval career attended numerous in-training courses. His rise through the ranks of the navy was rapid. He achieved his first command in 1934 and was promoted captain in 1937. Eventually he realised his foremost ambition when he was appointed First Sea Lord and head of the Royal Navy in August 1955.

### Outbreak

Before the outbreak of the war in 1939, Mountbatten was given the command of HMS *Kelly*, a destroyer. It was soon engaged in chasing-down U-boats and, though torpedoed, managed to limp back to port. After it returned to active service it was sunk in the Mediterranean, capsizing with only half the crew, including Mountbatten, surviving. On his return to port Mountbatten was given the command of HMS *Illustrious*, an aircraft carrier.

Mountbatten was appointed Chief of Combined Operations in Europe in 1942 and presided at the planning for the incursion at St Nazaire and the unmitigated disaster at Dieppe. Next, in 1943, he was Supreme Allied Commander East Asia and under his aegis the Japanese march across Asia was turned back near the border between Burma and the Indian province of Bengal and subsequently Burma and Singapore were recaptured from the Japanese. Following the world war his capacity for leadership continued to be widely appreciated and in the 1950s he held some of the highest appointments in the British and NATO fleets.

Mountbatten will always be associated with India. He was its last viceroy and first governor general. In 1947 the post-war Labour government and especially its prime minister Clement Atlee were keen to quickly hand over India to those demanding its independence. They appointed Mountbatten to oversee the transition. It was a poisoned chalice. Adequate preparations had not been made for such a gargantuan task. The result was epic communal violence between the Hindus and Muslims which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

### Instrumental

Mountbatten was a great-grandson and godson of Queen Victoria. He was instrumental in having his nephew, Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark marry Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth in 1947. By this time the Battenbergs had become the Mountbattens, owing to anti-German feeling in the country. A key figure in the extended royal family, he was always present on the family's important occasions. He was the mentor of Prince Philip.

Prince Charles on numerous occasions claimed that he was his closest confidant. Mountbatten's affection for and closeness to the royal family remained a central feature of his life.

Mountbatten married Edwina Ashley on July 18, 1922. Time and time again he indicated his indebtedness to her for her support and encouragement. She was highly commended for her work with the Red Cross and Order of St John in London during the Blitz.

“A key figure in the extended royal family, he was always present on the family's important occasions”

Mountbatten was to aver that he would have had difficulty surviving in New Delhi in the difficult period prior to the declaration of India's independence had Edwina not been at his side. However, neither she nor her husband escape unscathed from Andrew Lownie's 'warts and all' approach to the writing of biography.

Mountbatten was, it seems, an immensely vain person who liked to flaunt his numerous awards, decorations and honours to draw attention to his remarkable civil and military service. However, his neighbours at Classiebawn – the castle he made his Irish holiday home – always found him to be friendly, kind and a pleasure to meet. Hence, the cloud of despondency and grief which hung over the area for quite some time following his appalling murder.



Lord Louis Mountbatten

## The complications intertwining religion and history

### How the Irish Saved Civilisation and The Gifts of the Jews (The Hinges of History Series),

by Thomas Cahill  
(Sceptre, £9.99 paperback each)

Ruadhán Jones

Thomas Cahill's strength is not his historical accuracy, nor the depth and perceptiveness of his theories. Perhaps this is curious, given he is an American scholar of history and philosophy. Born in New York to Irish-American parents, he received a BA in classical literature and philosophy, as well as a pontifical degree for philosophy, from the prestigious Fordham University.

He is best known for his 'Hinges of History' saga of books – six in all – of which I am reviewing the first two. *How the Irish Saved Civilisation* is the first, provocatively titled account of the rise of Irish

Christianity. Its thesis is that without the efforts of Irish monks, none of the works of antiquity would have made their way to us.

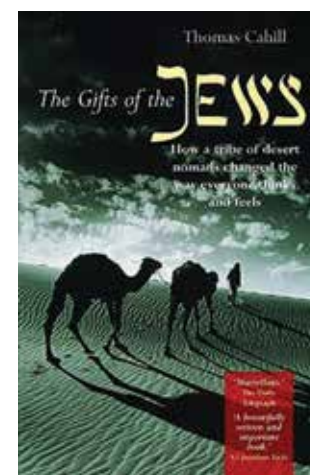
### Supported

While this claim is never adequately supported, the book is an engaging read all the same. Dr Cahill's writing is polemical, but by nature or instinct, it appears he is a writer. What is most striking about this

book is its identification of St Patrick's unique achievement – converting the first peoples outside the Roman Empire.

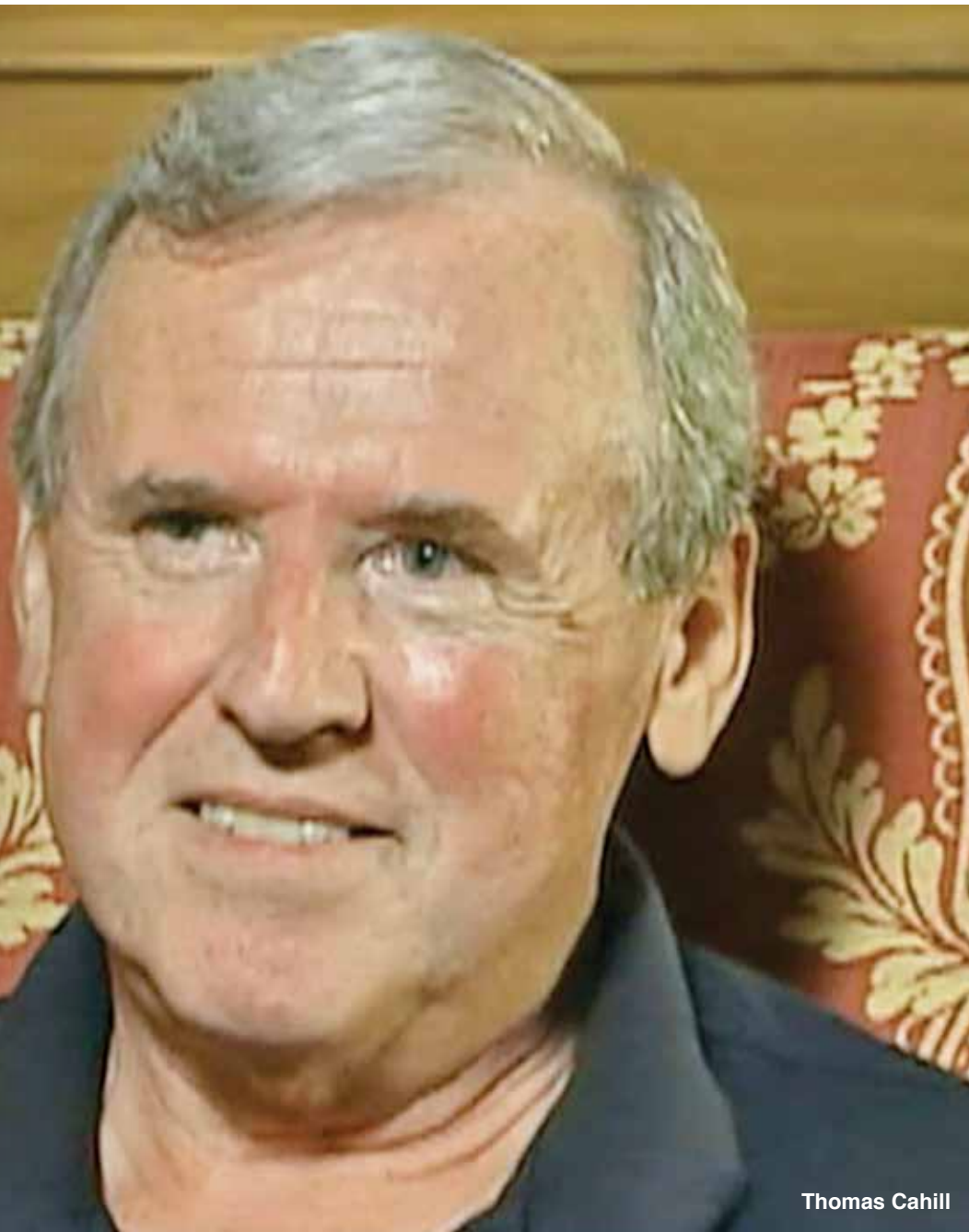
“Its thesis is that without the efforts of Irish monks, none of the works of antiquity would have made their way to us”

With punchy prose and provocative statements, it is likely this book will get under your skin. His account of Celtic Ireland is as vivid as it is speculative. His St Patrick is a charismatic figure, convincing the proud, warrior-clans to give up their ancient traditions and unite with the Church. He incorporated the latent religious spirit and allowed it to flourish. As an engaging cultural history, it is good and worth the while.





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.



Thomas Cahill

The second book in the series, *The Gifts of the Jews*, is a more complete, if still frustrating account of the unique achievements of the Jews. For this book, Dr Cahill spent two years as a visiting scholar at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Partly as a result of this, he is on much firmer ground.

### Engaging

It is, mostly, a faithful and engaging account of the great influence the development of Jewish culture, philosophy and religion has had on the west. The gifts of the Jews are manifold, ranging from the concept of history itself, to a profound monotheism at odds with the polytheism

of the majority of religions. The fact that Dr Cahill is even able to write such a book is a gift of the Jews.

The book begins in pre-history, speculating on the life and rituals of the people of Sumaria, the plain of Ur where Abraham came from. Following the path of the Bible chronologically, it finishes shortly before the birth of Christ. Largely, it is about the awakening of individual human consciousness and how that is interrelated with a perception of God which is significantly different from the surrounding religions.

Once again, Dr Cahill's great strength is his vivid prose and eye for character, approaching it as a narrative populated with very human cultures and characters. He

follows this Semitic tribe as it moves from family to people to nation and then, from this purely communal conception to the idea of personal, human relations. Abraham becomes a subtle schemer, who uses his wiles to forge a good life for himself and his wife Sara. David a pugnacious and cheeky bard and politician, a composer of beautiful poetry and also a brave and worthy king.

As with *How the Irish Saved Civilisation*, the orthodoxy and scope of Dr Cahill's claims require interrogating. But as introductions to topics which, to some, may seem boring, they are accessible, enjoyable – and make you want to know more.

**“With punchy prose and provocative statements, it is likely this book will get under your skin”**

## Are these the last days of life on earth?



Greta Thunberg

### A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future

by David Attenborough  
(Witness Books/Ebury Press, £20.00)

**W**hen this latest title from Sir David Attenborough arrived, quite by chance, I had been reading in my relaxation time some of his very first books. They recount his adventures in making the *Zoo Quest* series for BBC television back in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I found these books – to which the title is an afterword – were very interesting, but were like messages from a lost world, which indeed is what they are.

Those familiar with his most recent films will have seen the high production values that go into them. Back when he was a younger man than we might imagine, there was just himself on camera (silent), with cameraman Charles Lagus. Just two men with a camera and a tape recorder. These days it must take about 50 people to make the modern films, a huge team descending on some remote and fragile environment. “Every contact leaves a trace” the eminent French criminologist Prof. Locard proclaimed – a mantra that every modern detective repeats. Yet it is hard for most people to believe that every programme made about the world, every tourist cruise excursion to the South Pole leaves a mark, and is in fact evidence in a way of a confirmation of a crime against nature.

### Explorers

The world young David Attenborough reported on was still much as it had been when the first explorers arrived. It was not the old colonists that destroyed the wild world, but the influence of the US by abolishing the old empire

and making way for the penetration of big business that began the wreck of the world that Sir David records and comments on.

This is the problem that this book explores in delicate observation and sensitive prose. He makes his witness statement, discusses what lies ahead and proposes a vision of how the world might be ‘rewilded’.

**“The world young David Attenborough reported on was still much as it had been when the first explorers arrived”**

This moment in time is, he concludes, our great opportunity. He is optimistic, but the day after beginning this book I was not so sure and I lay awake all night in despair. In the news it was being reported that the US and China with others were ramping up the increased use of fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Powerful and wealthy interests support this, in both commerce, politics and sad to say among prelates of the churches. (There is no need to name names: in their heart of hearts the guilty know who they are.)

But then the next day it was reported that in Thailand a huge floating sun power generator will, for

that country at least, reverse the trend suggested by the actions of the great powers.

This is a book all should read. Regard it if you like as a sort of secular companion to Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*.

### Climate

Later this year there will be an important and possibly historic climate conference in Glasgow. But already Greta Thunberg says she for one will not be going, for she thinks cleansing the world of Covid-19 comes first. Of course she is right. That would be a present day action in which all can play their part. Glasgow may yet be a hot air occasion. Or not. Up to us.

For it is not really all down to governments: it is down to all of us, you, me and every private person. We can call on governments to change. But in our lives we can change at once. But, calls to re-open pubs and hairdressers hardly suggest that all of us are ready to make that change. David Attenborough knows what must be done; but with millions dying around us, people like President Jair Bolsonaro says it is merely “a bit of flu”, and making the 2% who really own Brazil wealthier is more important. Does it matter if the poor die? The rich have never thought is did, or does.

This is book to read before the end of the year, or the end of world: whichever comes first.



Sir David Attenborough



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# Leisure time

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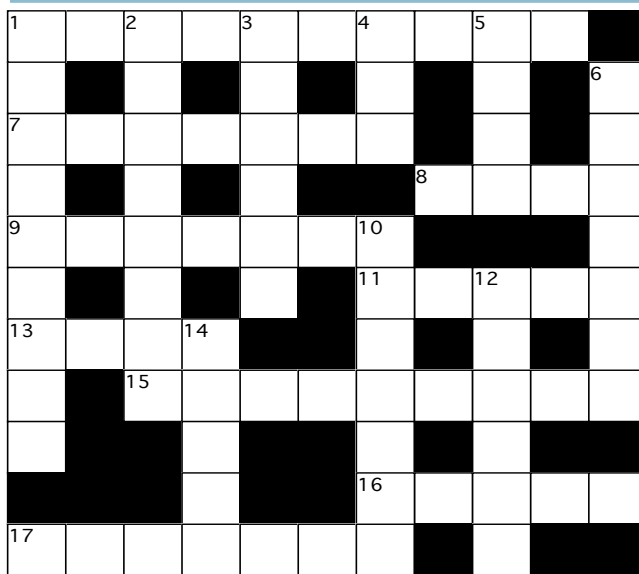


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### Crossword Junior

Gordius 380



#### Across

- 1 The person who put the ball in the net (10)
- 7 Planet that gets its name from a Roman sea-god (7)
- 8 A thought (4)
- 9 Going away (7)
- 11 House made of snow and ice (5)
- 13 'A rolling stone gathers no \_\_\_\_\_' (4)
- 15 What Americans call lifts (9)
- 16 The opposite of stale (5)
- 17 Get ready (8)

#### Down

- 1 'Ladies and \_\_\_\_\_' (9)
- 2 When you clap, you give someone a round of \_\_\_\_\_ (8)
- 3 Where a film is made (6)
- 4 Number that means a single thing (3)
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Blyton wrote the Famous Five and Noddy books (4)
- 6 Grassy fields (7)
- 10 African animal with a long neck (7)
- 12 Had a peep (6)
- 14 Slumber (5)

### SOLUTIONS, APRIL 22

GORDIUS NO. 504

**Across** – 1 Prepayment 6 Bomb 10 Lough Erne 11 San Marino 12 Maestro 15 Benin 17 Prie-dieu 18 Omit 19 Tiber 21 Goliath 23 Fonda 25 Zulu 26 Rhode 28 Man-made 33 Nightmare 34 Loans 36 Cartwheels

**Down** – 1 Pale 2 Education 3 Ashes 4 Miser 5 Nine 7 Onion 8 Brown trout 9 Lambeth Conference 13 Taco 14 Optimum 20 Blind date 21 Gazette 22 Twin 27 Organ 29 Avert 30 Mulch 31 Tara 32 Asps

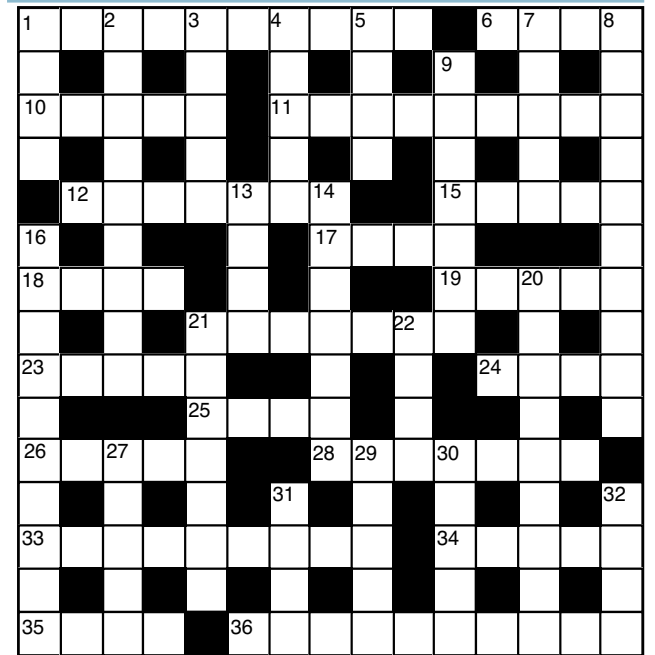
CHILDREN'S No. 379

**Across** – 1 Tablecloth 7 Apologise 8 Elm 9 Earthworm 12 Ouch 14 Kangaroo 15 Foal 16 Tissue 17 Diving

**Down** – 1 Tea-break 2 Boomerangs 3 Enough 4 Laid 5 Tie 6 Plum 8 Emu 10 Warned 11 Roof 13 Chain

### Crossword

Gordius 505



#### Across

- 1 Honestly, sincerely (10)
- 6 Skin complaint characterised by pimples (4)
- 10 & 11 Ample librarian moving to become the star of the Bolshoi (5,9)
- 12 Prohibit Rosemary Scalton from wearing this (7)
- 15 Piece of shamrock, perhaps (5)
- 17 Composer of the Brandenburg Concertos (4)
- 18 Egyptian goddess or militant Islamic group (4)
- 19 Animal innards (5)
- 21 Tomato sauce (7)
- 23 Uptight (5)
- 24 Grows older, chopping sage (4)
- 25 & 7d The herald is a source of 4 down tears, it seems (4,5)
- 26 Use it to secure one plate of metal to another (5)
- 28 This shop sells material per yard ordered (7)
- 33 This is no angelic way to be pleasant! (9)
- 34 Salivate (5)
- 35 Lantern (4)
- 36 Ernest, historic explorer of the Antarctic (10)

#### Down

- 1 Use a keyboard (4)
- 2 Aran Inuit converted to one who denies the Holy Trinity (9)
- 3 Stockpile (5)
- 4 A name for eight popes - none of them rural? (5)
- 5 Flower you may find in a pond (4)
- 7 See 25 across
- 8 Writer of a gospel (10)
- 9 Where to be served a nice cuppa - to shape up (7)
- 13 Confidential assistant (4)
- 14 Run away to avoid capture (7)
- 16 What is rich in heritage might make an ostrich ail (10)
- 20 Solve why the number is not acceptable (6,3)
- 21 Boil water in them (7)
- 22 The larger bone in the forearm (4)
- 27 Snake poison (5)
- 29 Holy artefact (5)
- 30 Lever worked by the foot (5)
- 31 At altitude (4)
- 32 It's usually topped with cream and fruit (4)

## Sudoku Corner

380

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 379

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

### Last week's Hard 379

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





Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter

# Wishing our Eastern brethren a happy Easter



**WHAT LINKS THE START** of the tax year in the UK with the feast of the Annunciation? “Nothing” might be the instinctive reaction, but it would be incorrect. Once upon a time in mediaeval England, the New Year (and the start of the tax year) coincided with feast of the Annunciation on March 25. But the Gregorian reform adopted in the UK in 1752 resulted in 11 days being dropped from the calendar, bringing the tax year start-date to April 5. In 1800 this unusual ‘New Year’s Day’ moved forward another day to make up for the lack of a leap year day in 1800. Thus the start of the UK tax year was eventually set at April 6. (The Irish tax year followed suit until 2001.) So, remarkably, only in Britain is a link to the Lord’s conception preserved by the revenue authorities!

**Calendar**

You might wonder how the calendar managed to lose 11 days a few centuries ago. The reason is fascinating. The original calendar was devised by Julius Casesar in the year 45 BC and christened the Julian calendar after him. Under this arrangement, a solar year (the time it takes for the earth to move around the sun) was

reckoned to be 365.25 days long, so to keep the calendar year on track with the solar year, a leap year day was added every time the year was divisible by four.

Unfortunately by the 16th Century it had been discovered that this arrangement was not quite right; the calendar year had drifted from the solar year. This had an effect on the date of Easter, which was supposed to be linked to the Spring equinox on March 21 and should occur after the equinox, when day is longer than night. The difference between calendars meant the date sometimes fell before the equinox, which had to be corrected.

Pope Gregory XIII proposed a solution in 1582: instead of the year being 365.25 days long, he pro-

posed it be measured as 365.2425 days long, just slightly less than the Julian calendar measurement. He put this into practice by ordering that in the years starting a century, only those where the first two digits are divisible by four would be leap years. So by Gregory’s calcula-

tions, the year AD 1500 was not a leap year, but AD 1600 was.

**Upshot**

The upshot of all this was that days had to be dropped from the calendar to put the calendar year back in line with the solar year. So in the countries where the Pope’s word help sway, ten days were dropped from the year 1582: Thursday October 4 was immediately followed by Friday October 15. It took longer for every country to adopt this new ‘Gregorian’ calendar, with the UK only adopting it in 1752 and Russia in 1918. To this day, the Eastern Church still follows the Julian Calendar to set its date of Easter, which in 2021 falls on this Sunday, May 2. (Happy Easter to Eastern Orthodox brethren!)

**A host of new designated ministers**

In the past, I struggled to persuade parishioners to take on the ministry of Holy Communion. People felt unworthy or unsuited and often suggested other, equally hesitant, people for the role. Then, during the pandemic, the parish where I serve made a dramatic change: every person who received Communion at Sunday Mass was designated a minister. Each got the facility to bring Communion to those at home – and many availed of it. As a result, vulnerable or housebound people received Communion regularly, when otherwise they couldn’t. I hope this continues to be the case – another positive outcome of these times.

**A positive live-streaming legacy**

May I make a post-pandemic prediction? I predict that live-streamed Masses will be a part of parish life from now on. Perhaps they should always have been, as a means of keeping housebound people in touch with Church life. Up to this, though, many would not have had the necessary equipment. But now (almost) everyone has.

In addition, I predict that many funerals will continue to be live-streamed in the future, as a means of including family members who are abroad and unable to travel home in time.

These possibilities might well be one positive legacy of these strange times.



## HELP TRAIN A YOUNG MAN FOR THE MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD

YOUR EASTER GIFT TO OUR RISEN SAVIOUR



Each year THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION receives numerous requests from Religious Orders in mission lands for help to train their seminarians.

**It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood**

The great majority of young men who come forward to offer their lives to God, and His people, come from poor families. Their parents do not have the means to support them financially. The cost of educating and maintaining seminarians is often a heavy burden on the Religious Orders. It costs approximately €100 a month (€1,200 a year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood. We appeal wholeheartedly, this Easter/Pentecost, to all readers to help train and support a candidate for the priesthood.

**Any donation you can send will be most gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction, to help to train a young man for the priesthood.**

**EVERY EURO YOU SEND WILL BE VERY GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AND FORWARDED WITHOUT DEDUCTION.**



*We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and blessed Easter.*

**A NOVENA OF MASSES FOR YOUR INTENTIONS**

We are arranging for a Novena of Masses to be offered for your intentions during Easter as a mark of gratitude for your kindness and support throughout the year.

*May Our Risen Saviour bring you His richest blessings, peace and happiness.*

**MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS**

In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas. We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:  
€..... **TRAINING YOUNG MEN FOR THE PRIESTHOOD**  
€..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**  
€..... **MASS OFFERINGS**  
(Please state no. of Masses \_\_\_\_\_)  
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

Address

To donate online go to [www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**