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The Irish Catholic

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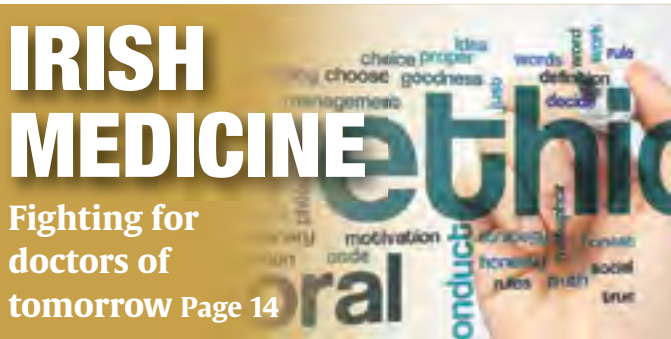
BREDA O'BRIEN

Youth need to know fullness of Church teaching Page 8



IRISH MEDICINE

Fighting for doctors of tomorrow Page 14



JOINING THE DOTS

Connecting parish and youth

Cornerstone: Pages 27-30



Parishes offer 'open door' for victims of domestic violence

Greg Daly

Churches are on the front lines in reaching out to people suffering from violence in the home, priests have said.

"In certain parts of Ireland I'd say it would be a big part of your ministry, and not an easy one," Cork-based Redemptorist Fr Gerry O'Connor told *The Irish Catholic*, explaining that priests are often called to help victims of domestic violence, especially at times when other sources of help may not be available.

"Sometimes as a priest you're called to physically put yourself at risk to deal with a domestic situation that had gone acutely wrong, so often you'd be present as it's happening and you'd be going back the next day or afterwards to try and talk to that family," he said.

In a former parish, he said, at least one weekend a year would be formally devoted to the theme of domestic violence, with support groups being set up for women who suffered from the issue, and also for men inclined towards violence.

He added that this can be an area where a good pastoral team can work well. "Often you'd have a very wise local woman who would have much more confidence about dealing with the issue than I would but we'd try and do it together," he said. "It would be very interesting for pastoral councils to put it as a mainstream agenda item, asking are we doing enough".

The comments come against the background of the UN-led 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, during which one campaigning nun has said the Church should use the Prayers of the Faithful to highlight domestic violence. "Can we as a Church acknowledge this violation of women and children?" Sr

» Continued on Page 4

Students well red for persecuted Christians



Students from St Mary's Grammar School in Magherafelt, Co. Derry, dress in red in solidarity with persecuted Christians around the world.

Archbishop unlikely to get key Vatican invite

Staff reporter

The Vatican is unlikely to invite Archbishop Diarmuid Martin to participate at a key summit on abuse due to be held in the New Year, one of the organisers has indicated.

Pope Francis has called the heads of bishops' conference from around the world – including Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin – to Rome in February for the meeting aimed at coordinating global action on abuse.

While Archbishop Eamon will represent Ireland as president of the bishops' conference, he said last month he thought the presence of the Dublin prelate at the summit would be "hugely positive".

However, Fr Hans Zollner SJ, who the Pope has asked to co-ordinate the gathering, told *The Irish Catholic* that while the

» Continued on Page 2

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Inside this week

Christopher White
Blocking
America's bishops



Page 22

Public conversion
A rational
decision?



Page 15

A youthful mission
Remembering
why we have Faith
at Advent



Page 12

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Advent and the coming of God's Kingdom

'A *dveniat regnum tuum* we pray in the Our Father – may your kingdom come. It is the heart of all Christian prayer since when the disciples pleaded with Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray", this is the prayer that he taught them.

So, what are we praying for when we recite the Our Father? In short, we are praying that the kingdom of God will come. The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us, but Advent is the season when we know acutely that it is brought near in the coming of Christ as the Word incarnate. Christianity is no mere call to the world that is to come. It is a call to live concretely in this world and work to make our society and Church fairer, honest and befitting disciples of Jesus Christ. The mission entrusted to believers on earth is to make the world more just and more peaceful.

There's a beautiful poetry in the rhythms of the Church's liturgical seasons. Advent, at least in the northern hemisphere, is the time of year when the light is dimming. The closer we come to the winter solstice, the greater the Church sets before us out need for hope and reassurance.

In the Jewish tradition, the people God chose as his own, this longing culminates in the lighting of the Hanukkah *menorah*. In Christianity, we mark off the weeks of expectation for Christmas by lighting the candles on our Advent wreaths.

Candle

The Advent wreath – like Holy Water and Rosary beads – is a sacramental and, as such, a pathway to holiness. The light dispelling the darkness is



Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly

symbolic of the coming of Christ as "the light of the world". We light the candle to ward off the darkness, climaxing in the light of Christ himself.

In an age of prosperity where heating and lighting are taken for granted by most people, it can be hard for these symbols to penetrate our technological minds. But, when the electricity goes out in a storm or there is a power-cut how quickly our vulnerability is exposed as we grope around for candles or anxiously fret about the battery running low on our mobile phones.

“Jesus came not among the entrepreneurs and the conquerors...”

Christ comes to tell us not to worry in the midst of the darkness and the Evangelist St John reminds us of the coming of the Saviour as "a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower".

St Luke paints a vivid picture of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth when the Lord reads from the Prophet Isaiah that: "He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and

to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour".

It is what political correspondents might describe as a clear statement of intent. It was Christ proclaiming that things will not be – and cannot be – as they were before.

This is the challenge that is always before the Church: the task of pointing people towards the fullness of life with Christ in the world that is to come while at the same time working tirelessly to make this world a better place, with a particular mind to the poor and the powerless.

For his part, Jesus came not among the entrepreneurs and the conquerors but among the poor. And, by and large, it was the poor and the vulnerable who received his message – not the elites.

Advent is a time to prepare for Christmas – to learn to wait well. To step back from the frenetic pace of life and consuming and concentrate on what really matters and our obligation to those in need.

1 Michael Kelly is co-author of a new book with Austen Ivereigh *How to Defend the Faith – Without Raising Your Voice – it is available from Columba Books* www.columbabooks.com



Vatican invite to Archbishop unlikely

» Continued from Page 1

meeting is still in the planning phase "we need to take into account that we can't invite only speakers who are clergy,

and come from the Western world".

He said that the planning committee – which also includes US Cardinal Blase Cupich, Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias and Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna – "certainly will

take into consideration the participation of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin".

Fr Zollner said there are "already a number of good candidates [to invite]". He also cautioned against too many speakers from the West confirming a prejudice in developing countries that abuse is a Western problem.

According to Fr Zollner, the committee is aware that expectations for the February 21-24 meeting are extremely high. "And it is understandable that this is so, given the gravity of the scandal that has shocked and wounded so many people, believers and non-believers, in so many countries".

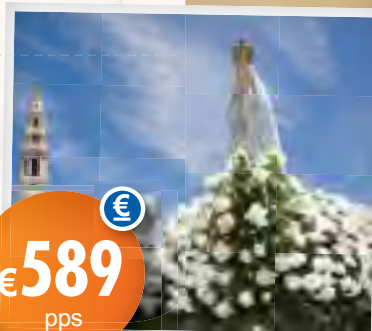
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Maynooth chapel re-opens to the public

Chai Brady

One of Ireland's most iconic churches has re-opened to the public having been closed for visits due to acts of vandalism.

The college chapel of the national seminary at Maynooth will re-open for four hours a week and members of the public are invited to come and pray or visit the historic neo-Gothic structure.

While due to declining numbers of students the building has not been the site for regular worship for the seminary community for more than 10 years, May-

Catholics are invited to visit 'monument of faith'



nouth President Fr Michael Mullaney told *The Irish Catholic* that all residents – both seminarians and priests –

have 24/7 access to the chapel via swipecards.

Fr Mullaney said that "after a number of acts of vandal-

ism and theft" there was only restricted access to the chapel including during public liturgies on special occasions or private tours.

Demand

Fr Mullaney said that due to increased public demand – including after the chapel was featured on a BBC series presented by Michael Portillo – it will now be possible to organise tours on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10.30am and 12.30pm.

Fr Mullaney described the chapel – first opened for

worship in 1891 – as "a great monument of faith to the Irish people".

Some 11,000 priests have been ordained from Maynooth down the years, many of them in the college chapel. At its height, the building was packed to overflowing with young men preparing to be priests.

However, currently just over 20 men are resident seminarians at Maynooth.

Fr John Joe Duffy of Raphoe Diocese said the limited opening hours are "regrettable" since "the chapel is a beauti-

ful place of prayer – probably the most beautiful chapel in the whole world".

Tuam priest Fr Charlie McDonnell told *The Irish Catholic* "it's brilliant that it's opened to the public again, it's a positive step and an awful lot better than having it closed all the time"

Because of the size of the seminary community, he said "I can see why it mightn't be used every Sunday, but it's a pity that it's not."

"I wouldn't like it to become a museum. For generations of people that went to college there it's something that's very significant".



Pictured at the recent lecture by University of Notre Dame Professor Meghan Sullivan are Katherine Dunn, Kelli Doyle and Jenny Hagenauer. The Second Annual Newman Lecture took place at Notre Dame Newman Centre for Faith and Reason at Dublin's University Church on Wednesday November 21. Prof. Sullivan spoke on 'Public Conversion and Personal Reasons', on why faith is a plausible and important part of life. See page 15. Photo: John McElroy

Parish collections go hi-tech

Staff reporter

While parishes might bemoan the fact that some Massgoers pass the collection basket on rather than reaching into their pocket, a church in the Netherlands has come up with a novel way to exist in an increasingly cashless society.

Parishioners in Utrecht can now tap their donation at a contactless payment terminal at the local Church of St Gerard Majella.

"It was very frustrating seeing the collection plate come my way and having nothing to offer," according to 28-year-old Wim Graas

"I know that many young people don't carry cash any-

more. It's a pity really, because they would like to give money to the Church. I knew the technology already existed and thought to myself: Let's just do this."

A total of €220 has been donated in the two weeks since the fixed payment system was installed. But, ambitious plans are now underway to turn the collection basket itself high-tech. "There will also be a solution for the collection plates," according to Mr Graas.

"I found a relatively cheap way to pass around a small handheld terminal during Mass, using Wi-Fi. We still have to fine tune it, though, to make it work."

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Have sympathy for survivors when accused priests die – campaigner

Greg Daly

Care for victims has to be taken into account when priests credibly accused of abuse die, an abuse survivor and child protection campaigner has said.

Speaking against the background of complaints from the Association of Catholic Priests that “proper funerals” are sometimes denied to priests who die while facing allegations of abuse, Mark Vincent Healy said sometimes funerals for such priests can be low-key affairs out of sensitivity to survivors of abuse.

Notices about the funeral might not be publicised, he told *The Irish Catholic*. “because they’re afraid that it may draw attention to the funeral, which then may be protested by survivors who feel very much aggrieved they never had their day of justice”.

Accusations

Acknowledging that aside from cases where there have been criminal convictions, there are cases where priests have been long suspended from ministry following believable accusations, Mr Healy said victims of abuse need to be considered.

“If, however, the issue is that there were very culpable or credible cases which were

never proven in a court of law, but there was sufficient evidence to show the sort of abuse that took place,” there would be a question about how high-profile their funeral should be, he said.

“They may not have had to face the music, but whether they should be recalled and remembered well where there’s such a legacy of harm and shame and hurt left behind by them – then you have to have some sympathy for the victims,” he said.

The Irish Catholic understands that while discretion may be necessary when priests accused of abuse die, there is no question of priests being denied suitable funerals.

“The death of a priest against whom allegations of abuse have been substantiated and his funeral rites can give rise to many different emotions among his family, those he has harmed, his colleagues, and friends,” a spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Dublin said.

“It is the policy of the Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Office that every effort is made in such cases to ensure an appropriate and dignified celebration of the Church’s funeral rites and balance concern for victims of abuse as well as the family of the deceased.”



Bishop John Buckley of Cork and Ross is pictured with Fr Dermot Lynch OFM Cap at the official blessing of the new St Paul VI shrine in the Holy Trinity Church in Cork.

Ossory makes ‘positive’ moves towards lay-led Church

Chai Brady

The diocese of Ossory is determined to move forward with plans to identify, recruit and train lay people to help run the diocese and local parishes according to the Coordinator of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

After a conference of clergy and laity over the weekend Gemma Mulligan said there was a “really positive feeling that we are moving forward”.

Ms Mulligan said the positions would be paid as it is “necessary” and “important

to invest in people”. In regards to pastoral roles, theology graduates and people with a good grounding in theology would be considered.

In his address at the conference Bishop Dermot Farrell said there needs to be a “paradigm shift” on the part of priests and laity, mentioning Pope Francis’ push for a more synodal Church and the declining number of ordained ministers.

“The Church is the People of God. This is sometimes forgotten by the clergy. The laity comprise 99.999% of the

Church’s members. When this is grasped all else changes. Then it is a question of what we do.

“Recognising this fact will require institutional reform, and a sharing of authority at all levels. We need to put in place practical arrangements that shape our response to the pastoral, spiritual and evangelising needs of the parishes in the diocese where the liturgy maintains and nourishes the Christian life.

“A service model will not sustain the Christian life in the parish,” he added.

CHRISTMAS STAMP WINNERS

The winners of the *The Irish Catholic* and An Post Christmas stamp competition are: Pat Naughton from Clondalkin, Dublin 22; John Canty from Kilmeedy, Co. Limerick; Nuala Higgins from Mullingar, Co. Westmeath; Marita Whyte from Salthill, Co. Galway,

Michael Carey from Killaloe, Co. Clare; Sr Agnes Kiely, from Mallow, Co. Cork; K. Kelly from Ballyogan, Dublin 18; Joseph Quinlivan from Quin, Co. Clare; Bridget McCarthy from Goleen, Co. Cork; and Kathleen McDonagh from Navan Road, Dublin 7.

Parish offer an open door

» Continued From Page 1

Fiona Pryle RGS writes in this week’s *The Irish Catholic*. “Can we plan, at least, to have a prayer included in the prayer of the faithful at Sunday Mass during these important days of activism?”

Churches play a key role in directly helping women and children who suffer from domestic violence, Capuchin Fr Bryan Shortall has said.

“Our doors are open, and we would also try to engage on the ground by visiting with them, by remaining in touch,

by trying to be some kind of kind contact and a source of outreach and hope,” he said.

Engagement around this issue with charities, social services and An Garda can help underline the Church’s commitment to this issue, he said.

“People who are looking at us from outside can see we’re people who are on their side, who are on board, who are their friends, who can be trusted to try and help to break the cycle of violence.”

Diocesan training programmes can help priests

and others make themselves available as people victims of violence can turn and talk to in confidence, Belfast’s Fr Michael McGinnity said.

Information

“It’s not counselling or anything like that – it’s simply someone you can talk to and then be referred on,” he said.

“We as clergy have over the years received information from and had awareness-raising events with Women’s Aid, so most clergy would be aware of Women’s Aid as a point of contact for anybody

Abortion law would ‘seriously impact’ pro-life nurses

Almost 370 nurses and midwives have signed a petition calling on Health Minister Simon Harris to consult with them regarding amendments they are calling for to abortion legislation.

Nurses&Midwives4Life Ireland have expressed concerns that their right to conscientious objection will not be respected under the current legislation.

The group said that the participation in termination of a pregnancy as a medical procedure intended to end the life of a foetus is “morally objectionable and conflicts with our conscientious commitment to life”.

“Participation includes any supervision, delegation, planning or supporting of staff involved in termination of pregnancy. We do not want to be discriminated against by our employers or victimised as employees if we exercise our freedom of conscience.”

They said they have written to Mr Harris several times but have not received a response. The new legislation will “seriously impact on our ability to practice” the group added.

Marking Ennis’ vocation tradition

The story of men and women from Ennis, Co. Clare who embarked on the Church’s evangelising mission at home and abroad will be told in a new book due to be launched next month.

Go Make Disciples of All Nations tells the story of the countless men and women from the parish of Ennis who gave their lives in the service of the Gospel as priests and religious at home and throughout the world.

The launch will take place in the Ennis Parish Centre on Thursday December 6 at 8pm, preceded by Mass in honour of these men and women celebrated by Bishop Fintan Monahan in the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul, Ennis at 7.30pm.

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See Pages 31 & 33.

The chivalric ideal...and gender-based violence

President Michael D. Higgins spoke last weekend

about the “scourge” of violence against women – there is a global campaign this week and next to halt this horrible offence. Who would disagree with him, or the purpose of the campaign? Gender-based violence – sometimes called domestic abuse, since it often takes place in the home – is odious, and every possible restraint should be employed to deter it when it occurs, and punish it when it has happened.

But I do wonder, sometimes, if the feminist movement – in which I played a full part as a young woman – should take some responsibility for the way things have panned out.

Derision

One of the objects of our derision, as young feminists, was the outdated concept of chivalry. No, we didn't want men to open doors for us, no, we didn't want men to offer us a seat on a bus, and no, we didn't want men to stand up on being introduced to a 'lady', doff their hats (when they wore hats) or assume, in any way, that we were either the 'weaker' or the



Mary Kenny



● When a couple marries after 32 years together, as Pogues star Shane MacGowan and Victoria Mary Clarke [pictured] have done, you might conclude that wedlock finally triumphs over co-habitation. However, for many such couples, if not for Mr and Mrs MacGowan, I fear that it's the tax and inheritance laws which are the final persuaders!

'fairer' sex. We certainly didn't want to be called 'ladies'.

'Chivalry', with its underlying notion that women needed protection, was seen as men patronising women. We didn't need 'protection' from men! We were equal to men! And so we banished chivalry, a Christian ideal which

gained ground from the 11th Century onwards.

The Irish Protestant historian W.E.H. Lecky wrote in his voluminous history of European morals that the idea that women were to be treated with respect and honour was inextricably linked to the growth in devotion to the Virgin Mary. Marian devotion, wrote

Lecky, “softened” the more brutal side of men's nature.

As a young woman, even in the rough-and-tumble world of Fleet Street, there

remained a residue of this chivalric tradition. I actually heard the words “we don't bandy a lady's name in the mess” spoken – maybe half-ironically, but nonetheless with some impact – when a chap began to disparage a young woman's reputation in the local watering-hole.

“There was, even up to the 1960s, an aspiration towards some kind of chivalric ideal – that women should be respected”

I heard it said that a man who “takes advantage” of a woman who has had too much to drink was “a bounder” who deserved contempt from his peers.

Now, this is not to say that violence against women, or many other offences, didn't take place:

human nature changes little, and people do bad, stupid and wrong things. But there was, even up to the 1960s, an aspiration towards some kind of chivalric ideal – that women should be respected, and yes, protected, precisely because they weren't, physically, the equal of men.

We threw all of that out in our bid to be the equal, in every possible way, to males. As Eric Zemmour, the well-known French commentator wrote recently: “Feminism is based on contradictions: libertinism as well as puritanism, protection as well as equality.”

The scourge of domestic violence needs to be conquered, yes: starting with according women respect and esteem, by valuing women and by honestly acknowledging, too, that women do need protection.

Theresa May – reared for martyrdom!

Theresa May's tenacity in the face of many ordeals – desperately working for a deal with the EU and then desperately struggling to get that accepted by her own parliamentarians come December 11 – has been ascribed to two factors: she is a vicar's daughter and she was an only child.

The vicar's daughter was imbued from an early age with the idea that once your duty becomes evident, you must uphold it doggedly.

Being an only child can build self-reliance: there are no siblings to bail you out, fight

your battles or offer you family solidarity when outside forces oppress.

Being the daughter of an Anglo-Catholic cleric, and having attended a Catholic school for a time, Theresa will also have learned something about the course of martyrdom.

Humiliated, jeered and mocked at in the House of Commons this past week, and likely to be defeated on December 11, she may come to feel by Christmas that she has more in common, metaphorically, with St Stephen than with her own saintly namesakes of Avila and Lisieux.



Therese May.

Pastoral council launched for K&L

Bishop Denis Nulty has announced the establishment of a diocesan pastoral council in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The announcement was made at a gathering of priests, religious, permanent deacons and lay people that took place in Mount Saint Anne's in Killenard, Co. Laois.

Speaking at the gathering of more than 200 people, Bishop Nulty said it would comprise three laypeople and two priests from each of the dioceses' deanery areas. “Those who serve on it will be carefully

NEWS IN BRIEF

chosen by their peers and supported completely by them. It is not a matter of letting them at it; it's about a deliberate discernment to a preferred model of Church in Kildare & Leighlin, rather than an un-reflected drift into some probable model, that's made up as we stumble along,” Dr Nulty said.

Latin Mass training course

Priests keen to brush up on their Latin language or learn the rubrics of the old Mass

are invited to attend a training course at Knock Shrine on Wednesday, December 5.

Sometimes known as the Tridentine Mass, the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite has been used more widely since Pope Benedict XVI decreed in 2007 that the faithful should have more access to the old pre-Vatican II liturgy. For more information contact John Heneghan john_heneghan@hotmail.com

Meanwhile, the next Mass in the Extraordinary form will be celebrated in Knock parish church on Sunday, December 9 at 5.30pm.

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Ballymurphy Massacre victims endure 'harrowing' inquest

Staff reporter

Families of the Ballymurphy Massacre are reliving the "harrowing" details of the killing of their loved ones as the inquest into their deaths continues, according to the parish priest of Ballymurphy.

Fr Patrick McCafferty said that revisiting the tragedy for the victims' families is "as raw today as it was almost 50 years ago".

This comes as the inquest heard this week that the people shot dead in Ballymurphy, West Belfast, were thrown into the back of an army vehicle "like animals".

Fr McCafferty said the victims were treated in a "disrespectful, disgraceful manner" and that the event "brutally interrupted the family's lives".

"To hear something like that, you can just imagine the impact on the families."

Crossfire

The inquest into the shooting of 10 innocent people began in Belfast on Monday, November 12, in Laganside Court. They were gunned down by members of the 1st Battalion, Parachute Regiment while one person is believed to have had a heart attack as a result of an altercation with soldiers.

Among those killed were a parish priest coming to the aid of a wounded man and a mother of eight. At the time the British army said those who were killed were either IRA gunmen or were caught in the crossfire.

Opening statements were heard followed by personal statements from relatives of the victims. Evidence will then be focused on from November 28.

A special Mass for the families will be held in Fr McCafferty's parish this Sunday.

Port chaplains' 'vital role' in confronting human trafficking

Chai Brady

Priests located near ports play a "vital role" in combating and identifying human trafficking and modern day slavery at sea, according to the Bishop of Ferns.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Denis Brennan said that locally there is an effort made to encourage priests to mention human trafficking in their homilies, on local radio and papers.

This comes as reports of the crime have surged in the Irish fishing industry with gardai now investigating almost two dozen cases.

"The network of port chaplains scattered throughout the world, because of their local knowledge, play a vital role in coordinating efforts to highlight and confront human trafficking, something Pope Francis has described as 'a wound on contemporary society'", said Bishop Brennan.

The bishop is involved with the Santa Marta group, an alliance of bishops and police chiefs established by

Pope Francis to work with civic leaders to prevent trafficking and slavery.

He said: "Many of the delegates attending the Santa Marta Conference in Rome this year stressed the importance of moral values in the fight against human trafficking. This goes to the heart of the matter where the money made is the driving force in the business."

Twenty-three migrant fishermen who were working in Irish trawlers have been granted status as suspected victims of trafficking and are now in direct provision pending

criminal investigations of their cases. Gardai were working on 12 cases last April.

Many migrant fishermen working on Irish trawlers are from Africa and Asia and receive permits from the Department of Justice to work on registered vessels in Ireland.

Physical abuse

The High Court heard claims this month that the fishermen had been subjected to racial and physical abuse. It was also said they worked 116-hour weeks for €2.83 an hour.

Dr Brennan highlighted

that the Church has designated February 8, the Feast of St Bakhita, as an International Day of Prayer and Awareness against human trafficking.

He said on this day Catholics are encouraged to host or attend prayer services to create greater awareness of modern day slavery.

"Through prayer we not only reflect on the experiences of those that have suffered through this affront to human dignity, but also comfort, strengthen and help to empower survivors," he added.

Helping hands for SVP's Christmas appeal



Bishop Denis Brennan stands with Annette Beckett, SVP Waterford and Edmond Roach, SVP Enniscorthy at Bishop's House, Diocese of Ferns, to promote the forthcoming St Vincent de Paul Christmas Church collection from December 1-2.

'Right to die' debate bad for end-of-life care, Senator told

Doctors working in end-of-life care believe the assisted suicide movement is hurting attempts to build a serious palliative care culture, Senator Ronan Mullen has said.

Speaking against the background of the publication of a Council of Europe report entitled 'The Provision of Palliative Care in Europe', for which Senator Mullen acted as rapporteur, Mr Mullen told *The Irish Catholic* that it is crucially important to avoid any confusion between discussions of palliative care and discussions about the 'right to die'.

"Most people in the hospice movement are very against that," he said, with many saying that at the very least the two discussions need to be kept separate.

"Others would say that talking about assisted suicide and euthanasia in that context actually inhibits the ability to spread a good palliative care culture because part of palliative care is about alleviating fear, and assisted suicide demands are often about an inability to cope with fear," he said.

Columbans elect new director

Fr Raymond Husband has been appointed the new regional director of the Columba Missionaries in Ireland. He will be assisted by Fr Gerard Neylon who will serve as the vice-rector. They succeed Fr Pat Raleigh and Fr Padraig O'Donovan.

Fr Raleigh wished both priests "the very best in guiding the region over the next three years. "The region will be in good hands," he said.

Following his election, Fr Husband recalled how 2018 marked the centenary of the foundation of the Columbans. "We had many celebrations throughout the country...it brought home to me how much we the Columbans are held in high regard by the people who attended the various centenary celebrations."

"We are called to step out in faith, to work in partnership to proclaim the Joy of the Gospel wherever we find ourselves be it home or abroad," he said.

Fr Husband returned to Ireland from the Philippines in 2017 where he had served since 1990. Fr Neylon came home to Ireland just before Christmas 2016 after serving 18 years in China, 18 years in Taiwan prior to that and another four in South Korea at the very outset of his missionary life.

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Breda O'Brien

The View



Young Catholics urgently need to know fullness of Church teaching

Being Catholic means being neither right-wing nor left-wing. It means embracing the social teaching on the Church on major issues and using prudential judgement in less important areas.

There is a growing phenomenon of young men and some young women who tend to be right-wing economically but also to oppose abortion. Let's call them the Jordan Peterson generation.

Peterson is a Canadian Professor of Psychology who is not particularly right wing, but came to public attention because he opposed a law concerning

the mandatory use of preferred gender pronouns.

He might best be described as a tough-love Dad-figure. His basic message seems to be that life is suffering, but that if you face up to the challenge and become a person of integrity, it is possible to have a good life. To date, he has not self-described as a practising Christian.

Given the Church's well-known stance against abortion, it is not surprising that a significant minority of the Jordan Peterson generation began to identify as Catholic.

Some religious groups are delighted to welcome any young people who are

interested in Christianity and prefer to ignore the lack of formation that many of these young people have. Many of them have no idea what the Church's teaching on migration is, for example.

Some kind of formation programme is urgently needed for these eager but not particularly well-informed young people. They seem to think that low taxes and small government are Church teachings.

Social justice

On the other hand, there are young people who are attracted to the Church's teaching on social justice but believe that the Church is entirely wrong on the

right to life and gender identity. They, too, have no problem about identifying as Catholic, but it is a Catholicism shaped in the image and likeness of liberal causes.

Again, these young people are welcomed eagerly by a cohort of the Church, and again, their lack of a basic understanding of Church teaching is ignored.

To repeat, the Church is neither left-wing nor right-wing, nor does she support any particular political viewpoint. However, she does offer criticism of political systems that violate the moral law, which in turn is based on the Natural Law.

So the Church has been heavily critical of Communism, because of its attempts to impose an atheistic culture, its lack of respect for human rights and refusal to recognise the right to private property.

“Catholic morality is all of a piece. It is vital to be pro-life – but also vital to treat those who work for you as well as you can”

Equally, the Church has criticised the excesses of capitalism. It is well-expressed in St John Paul's document *Centesimus Annus*. St John Paul says in that document that there is the risk of an “idolatry” of the market, an idolatry which ignores the existence of goods which by their nature are not and cannot be mere commodities.

Take, for example, a company that many of us use regularly – Amazon. In recent times, it has been claimed that their workers operate in very difficult and stressful conditions and that Amazon resists attempts to unionise.

There are many claims that pregnant women are given no quarter, that they have to be on their feet, ‘picking’ for up to 10 hours a day. Picking refers to picking up goods for customers in warehouses, but it has



unfortunate resonances. The cotton picking industry was highly lucrative because it relied on slave labour.

No one is suggesting that Amazon is treating people like slaves but the many complaints from workers suggest that Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, has not become the wealthiest man in history due to his humane and considerate treatment of his warehouse workers.

It is also alleged that workers doing very physical labour are afraid to take breaks in case of being penalised.

If the conditions really are difficult as alleged, then the Catholic response is to take the side of the workers. This is not necessarily an anti-capitalist stance. But there are 120 years of Catholic social teaching designed to protect workers and to allow them to have decent, humane working conditions.

There is also a Catholic approach to immigration, which goes back to our Jewish ancestors in the faith: welcome the stranger. This is not to advocate for

open borders or to suggest that any country should have to be overwhelmed, but it does pre-suppose generosity of spirit.

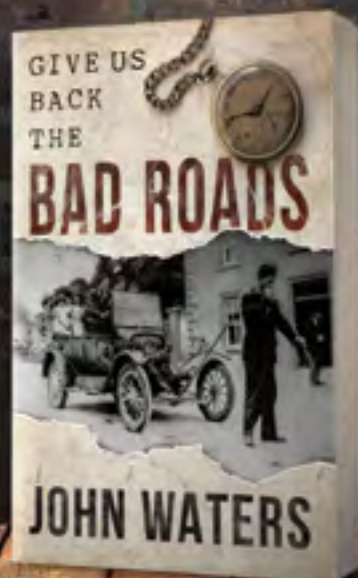
“There are 120 years of Catholic social teaching designed to protect workers”

Catholic morality is all of a piece. It is vital to be pro-life – but also vital to treat those who work for you as well as you can. Catholics new and old, need to realise that the authentic Catholic view does not make an idol out of either profit or the State but wants both to be secondary to human flourishing.

Young converts to Catholicism should be welcome and cherished but they also need to know that being a Catholic is much deeper and more nuanced than simplistic importing of secular economic and political viewpoints into their new faith community.

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Women go 'wild' for packed Dublin retreat

Greg Daly

Ireland's largest women's retreat this year was a "tremendous success", according to organisers delighted by the presence of 250 women from Ireland and across Europe.

Tipperary's Emma Sisk, ground coordinator in Ireland for the US-based Blessed is She ministry, said the retreat at the Emmaus Centre in Swords, Co. Dublin, had exceeded expectations.

"It was so much more than we hoped and prayed it would be," she said. "The women who attended experienced something that is not easily described with words. God moved in powerful and unexpected ways and many women who came experienced deep, inner healing of their hearts."

Entitled 'Wild' and inspired by John 3:8, the retreat featured four major addresses, with Ms Sisk giving the second address on the theme 'Unashamed'.

"I wanted to uncover how sin, fear and insecurity can tame us and shame us as women and I really want to encourage all women to step into the glory of who they were created by God to be," she said.

Thanking Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin for celebrating the retreat's closing Mass, Ms Sisk said she had received feedback speaking to "a huge desire in the hearts of women in Ireland of an authentic Catholic women's ministry".

"The women who came at the weekend absolutely loved it," she said.



Members of the Irish core team and, left, Emma Sisk delivering her keynote address, 'Unashamed'.

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The Stone Age meets the Modern Age

There must be a right to share the Good News in a peaceful way, writes **David Quinn**

Let's suppose for the sake of the argument that somewhere in deepest, darkest Ireland explorers stumbled across an undiscovered tribe of Irish people still living in the Stone Age. The question would immediately arise, what should we do? Should we leave them alone, or share with them the advances (and otherwise) of modern civilisation?

There are, in fact, still Stone Age peoples on the planet today and these same



Some of the inhabitants of the North Sentinel island where American citizen John Allen Chau was killed.

sorts of questions arise. Most of them are deep in the Amazon jungle. Others are to be found in the remoter parts of Papua New Guinea

and a few are on islands in the Indian Ocean and the nearby Bay of Bengal.

Last week, one of those islands came to public

attention when an American would-be missionary, John Allen Chau, was killed after landing ashore on North Sentinel island, which is inhabited by the Sentinelese islanders who live there as they have for tens of thousands of years, their way of life seemingly unchanged in all that time.

The island is supposed to be off-limits to all outsiders, partly to preserve the way of life of the Sentinelese and partly to save them from contracting illnesses against which they have no defence, such as the flu.

Chau (27) was an American Evangelical Christian, educated in Canada, who decided that God had called him to bring the Gospel to the people of North Sentinel island and he paid some fishermen to illegally drop him off on the island. He was shot and killed by an arrow.

No business

For the most part, commentators have said he had no business being there in the first place.

As Janet Street-Porter wrote in the London *Independent*, "why would [the Sentinelese] culture not include a deity, a belief in the afterlife or some sense of fulfilling spirituality? Why would his evangelical creed be superior or necessary?"

Well, we can't know the answer to that question for sure, because we can't be certain what the Sentinelese in fact believe. But we do know that Stone Age religions tended to believe that nature is full of spirits

to be placated and called on in various ways. They have sometimes included cannibalism, and animal and even human sacrifice.

Janet Street-Porter may well think that the teaching and example of Jesus add little or nothing to human existence, but I presume she does not believe that we have experienced no advances at all since the Stone Age, either materially or morally?

Perhaps she, and others like her, believe in the idea of the 'noble savage'? The 'noble savage' was popularised by the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 18th Century. It is based on the notion that we are born good and are corrupted by civilisation. Man, in his primitive state, is supposedly superior to us because he is unspoiled, like Adam and Eve before the Fall. Therefore, we romanticise ancient peoples. We imagine that they are peaceful, happy and live in harmony with nature.

“We do know that Stone Age religions tended to believe that nature is full of spirits to be placated and called on in various ways”

In fact, Stone Age peoples tend to be very violent.

Ancient historians such as Prof. Ian Morris of Stanford University in California estimate that in Stone Age societies you had a 10-20% chance of dying violently. They are often terrified of nature, rather than living in harmony with it, which is why they attempt to placate its spirits.

The history of encounters between different civilisations and cultures has often been a deeply unhappy one which is mostly a reflection on human nature, rather than on any given society. One civilisation tries to conquer another and impose its ways on their ways, and that includes religion.

Catholics are now sometimes deeply conflicted about the arrival of Christianity in the Americas, for example. Christianity came to Central and South America with Spanish and Portuguese conquerors who had anything but the welfare of the native peoples at heart.

But on the other hand, the religion of the likes of the Aztecs was extremely brutal involving huge amounts of human sacrifice in an attempt to placate their Sun god, another spirit of nature, in effect. Should Europeans have allowed industrial levels of human sacrifice to continue?

What would happen today if say, the UN came across a similar religion? Would it stand back and let the killing continue unabated?

Or suppose there was no human sacrifice, but it was clear that the civilisation had an extremely undeveloped notion of human rights and as a result of this, the society was far more unjust than it need be? Should the UN stand back and do nothing at all in this situation?

In fact, as we know, the UN is keen to bring its Gospel of Human Rights to almost every part of the world. Africa, for example, must change its way in order to come into line with international human rights standards, especially in terms of the treatment of women, and aid is sometimes withheld when a given country will not comply.

Is the UN wrong to do this? Well, if we are supposed to leave societies untouched and allow them to develop at their own pace, then the answer has to be that the UN is wrong.

On the other hand, if we wish to increase the amount of justice and prosperity on the planet, then the UN must do what it is doing, even if we can argue about what kind of justice it has in mind, or about the environmental effects of prosperity.

And if the UN has a right to export its vision, its 'gospel', to every part of the world, then why can't Christians?

All societies

It is true that we – that is almost all societies – have often done this brutally and clumsily, but that is only an argument for doing it better.

It can also be argued that the situation of the remaining Stone Age peoples on the planet are a special case, to be handled with extreme care, but it cannot be declared that we have no right to share with others what we believe to be Good News that can change their lives for the better, for this would almost obliterate any idea of progress at all.

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An unscrupulous, ill-timed election

We now know that the armistice of November 11, 1918 marked the end of hostilities of World War I, even if legally the conflict did not end until the ratification of the final peace treaty (which, in the case of the war involving the Ottoman empire, occurred as late as the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne).

For a short time after that date, however, there was an air of uncertainty lest the peace negotiations falter and the fighting re-commence at short notice. A clear sign that this transitional period was coming to a close was contained in the 'Rome letter' column of *The Irish Catholic* of November 30, 1918.

This contained details of a decree issued days before by Pope Benedict XV through the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, the purpose of which was to remedy defects that had become manifest in the condition of the clergy in several of the belligerent nations – most notably those that had forcibly conscripted such clergy into the ranks of their armed forces.

The decree contained a range of measures designed to address the various problems associated with those clergy whose "religious hearts [had] become soiled with the dust of the world" during the conflict, and who, as a consequence, had "not preserved the spirit of their vocation in all its integrity". These irregular situations ranged from the relatively minor to the (literally) deadly serious.

Decorum

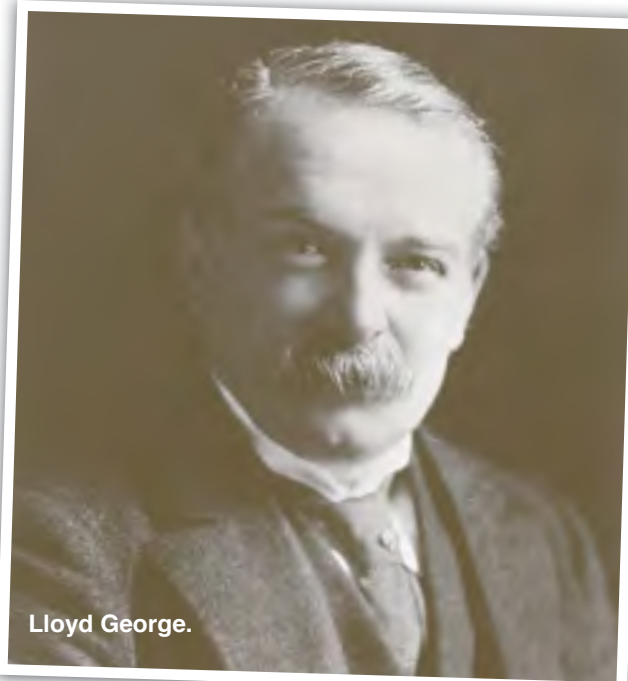
A summary of the relevant provisions will help to indicate the scope of the problem. To begin, those priests who had suffered serious injury during the fighting, and who, as a consequence, were unable to say Mass, or perform their other priestly duties with due "decorum", were (with the permission of their bishop) absolved of their duty to do so.

More seriously the edict drew a distinction between religious who had violated the commandment not to kill as a result of having been conscripted, and the small number who had volunteered for service – the former could be absolved by their bishop, whereas the latter had to seek a dispensation from Rome (and were also considered to have renounced any ecclesiastical office they had held prior to their enlistment).

The role of bishops, not surprisingly, was central to the process, with all clerics having to report to their ordinary within 10 days of their return from service, or

100 years on

The once dominant home rulers had no answers to the big questions facing Ireland in 1918, writes **Gabriel Doherty**



Lloyd George.

face suspension. They could extend the obligatory eight day's minimum period of retreat for all returnees, and could direct, where necessary, that egregious cases subsequently spend time in a religious house or perform acts of piety.

Bishops were also entitled to temporarily consolidate parishes where, as a result of the war, the number of priests had fallen below that necessary to maintain the requisite level of service.

“The bishop was enjoined to be mindful both of their duty to act as the good shepherd to these lost sheep”

In the case of ordained priests who had "fallen into some greater crime" (such as apostasy) during their military service, the penalties specified within Church law were to be applied consistently, firmly and equitably.

Above all, the bishop was enjoined to be mindful both of their duty to act as the good shepherd to these lost sheep, but also to ensure that such "bad apples" would not become "a source of scandal and ruin for others".

Few of these issues, of course, applied to the Catholic Church in Ireland, as those of its priests who had served in the British Army during the

war had done so voluntarily and solely as chaplains rather than as frontline soldiers (though the British Government had contemplated such service by clerics when the application of conscription to Ireland had been mooted earlier in the year).

A more immediately relevant sign that the problems of conducting a war were about to be replaced by the difficulties of sustaining peace came with the announcement of the dissolution of the Westminster parliament, and the holding of a general election in December.

The newspaper was scathing in its criticism of the decision, which it felt smacked of sharp practice on the part of the Prime Minister David Lloyd George. It suggested that his proposal to continue with the war-time coalition arrangement (with him at its head) was designed to create the impression that peacetime opposition to the Government was as tantamount to treachery as if such criticism had been made public during war.

The editor discerned that Lloyd George's self-centred, "ambitious" and "unscrupulous" nature was driving him to seek a "personal dictatorship", one that would be marked by "a note of arrogant triumph, a suggestion of menace to all who do not see eye to eye with him" – a verdict that few modern historians would dispute.

The one part of the UK

where business was not likely to resume as normal was, of course, Ireland. In May 1915 John Redmond, the now-deceased leader of the Irish party, had turned down the opportunity to join the then newly-formed coalition (ostensibly to maintain faith with party traditions, but more likely because even at that point the war was going very badly), and since the 1916 Rising and the failed conscription scheme of 1918, the cause of home rule had found itself eclipsed by republicanism as embodied in the Sinn Féin party.

While no one at this stage could be sure how many seats this new force would win at the expense of the Irish party, it clearly had the wind in its electoral sails, and this may also have been a factor in the paper's criticism of the decision to call the election at the earliest opportunity.

A measure of *The Irish Catholic's* dilemma can be gauged by the marginal influence exercised by those public figures whose views echoed its own. One such

was Sir Horace Plunkett. A Protestant and member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, he had a well-earned reputation as a champion of Irish interests, and his achievements over the previous quarter of a century in the promotion of both land reform and the co-operative movements could not be gainsaid.

“The cause of home rule had found itself eclipsed by republicanism”

As with so many other home rulers, however, his standing had been waning for some time, and his role as chairman of the failed Irish Convention did not endear him to the younger, radicalised generation about to cast their ballots for the first time.

Plunkett's view was that moderate opinion on the island was being "ground between the millstone" of Ulster unionism and republicanism, with the pre-war fostering of the former by the Conservative party ultimately

to blame for the rise of the latter.

Sceptical as to the merits of abstentionism, he did not address the fundamental flaw in the position of his own party (and of *The Irish Catholic*) that with a satisfactory Home Rule Act supposedly secure on the statute book, and only awaiting the legal end of hostilities to become effective, what function would be served by Irish representatives at Westminster?

And if that Act was not secure, and would not become law (as, in fact, turned out to be the case), on what basis had the party's support for the war been justified? They were questions that admitted of no satisfactory answer, and Plunkett's silence on them spoke volumes as to the growing marginalisation of what had once been the dominant force in Irish politics.

• Gabriel Doherty teaches in the Department of History, UCC, and is a member of the Government's expert advisory group on the Decade of Commemorations.

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NET Ministries – the first in a series of features on one of Ireland's most dynamic Faith groups

A youthful mission



Advent is an ideal time to remember why we have the Faith we do, writes

Tony Foy

Did you ever think that we would get to the stage that Ireland needs missionaries? We all celebrate Christmas but somehow, recently, we have forgotten why.

I am the Director of a Catholic mission of young people from Ireland and around the world working to reach the young people of Ireland. NET (National Evangelisation Teams) is also in America, Canada, Australia, Uganda and Scotland. It started almost 40 years ago and has trained and supported thousands of young missionaries who are on fire for their faith.

The story of how I came to be leading this mission



NET Ministries missionaries with Bishop Alan McGuckian of Raphoe.

in Ireland is very personal. It started when Sheena, my wife, met a young lady who happened to be NET Ireland's first permanent staff member. Sheila felt a call from God to come to Ireland from her job with NET Canada, to open the mission office here.

She was going home for Christmas and was not coming back. My wife told Sheila that we had a big house, and not to let accommodation affect her decision to come back after Christmas. She could stay with us for a couple of weeks until she got herself sorted out.

Five years later Sheila was still living with us! It was a privilege having this holy young woman live with our family. We learned not to shout and scream as a family

because Sheila might hear us! We have seven children - so you can imagine how positive it was.

“NET started almost 40 years ago and has trained and supported thousands of young missionaries”

Sheila brought us into contact with the mission of NET and with the missionaries who often stayed in our home. The impact of having young faith-filled people, who were also great fun, was profound on our family. Sheena and I did the best we could to bring our children up in the Faith, but without the positive peer pressure of having NET

missionaries around, the job would have been much more difficult, or even impossible.

Our older three (now adult children) have been or are missionaries with NET internationally.

I was invited on to the Board of NET Ireland in 2007, and in January 2012 went full time, leaving our still successful family business to my very understanding parents. At the time NET did not have the funds to pay a living salary but Sheena and I felt the Lord would bless us if we were prepared to step out in faith and follow Him. Seven years on, we have never regretted that decision.

So why are we writing a series of articles on the Christmas message? Partly because we feel, as a mis-

sion, very connected to the vulnerability of Jesus when He came to us as a baby with the ultimate view of our salvation. This Advent series has the view of letting folks know about why young people want to tell their peers about Him.

“The Good News is that Jesus is alive and he is raising up a new generation of young people who are on fire for him”

We want to also encourage you, if you are hanging on to your faith as best you can and you are wondering why, when your whole family has abandoned it. Please stay close to Jesus. He is real, and He loves you. Your faith in

Him will be rewarded and He will care for your loved ones.

The Good News is that Jesus is alive and he is raising up a new generation of young people who are on fire for him.

They aren't content with half measures and want to go all out! They know that what the culture offers them is a slow dying to goodness, truth and beauty. They want more and when they hear about Jesus and what he has for them, they are inspired and many want to follow him.

i If you want to know more about NET, check out our website on www.netministries.ie

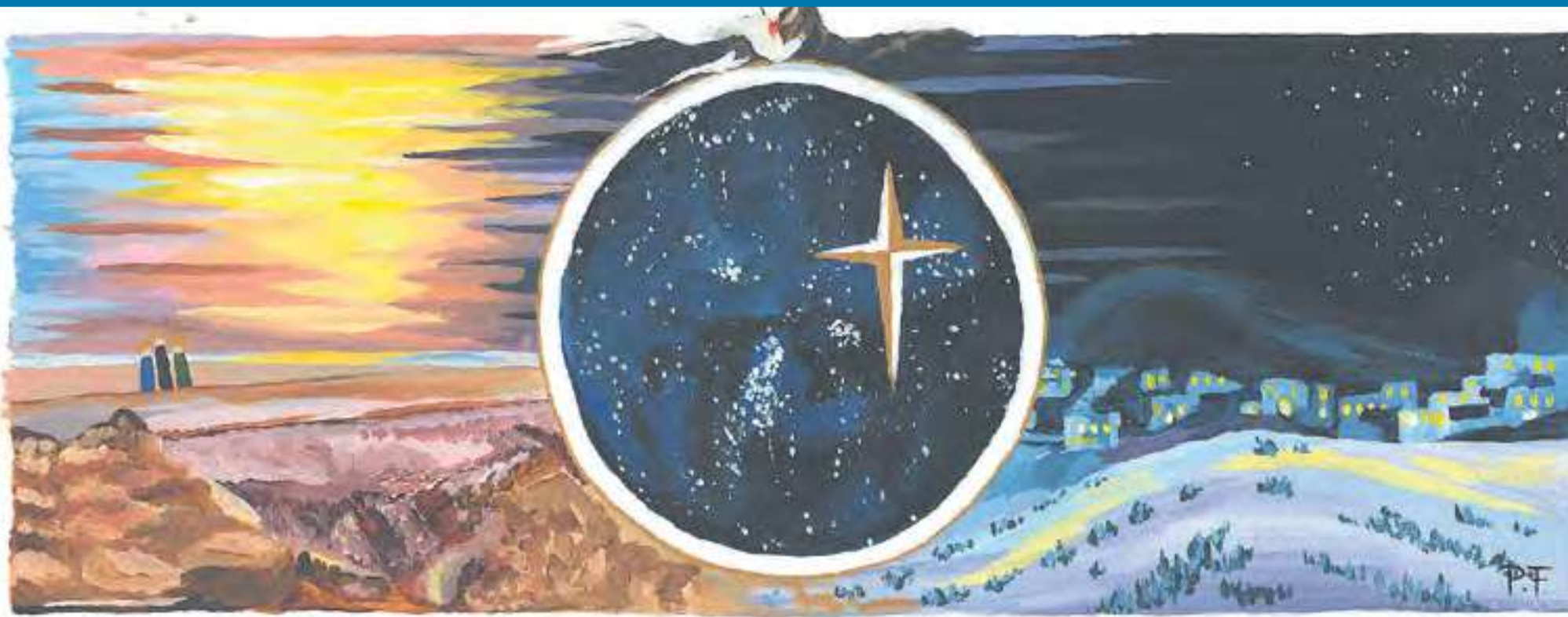
Tony Foy is Executive Director of NET Ministries Ireland.

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Painting by Paula Freney of 'Journey of the Magi', centred on the stars and observed by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.



Journeying to Bethlehem

The star that guided the Magi guides us today, writes Paula Freney

In my family, the Christmas season always began with the crib being taken down from the attic, out of its cardboard box, and placed on the mantelpiece in our front room. It was bought before my parents' first Christmas together, a small, wooden structure with a moss-covered roof and floor, waiting every year to be filled with what's left of the old, faded figures.

Our Advent period was spent playing with the figures, my siblings and I would rearrange them in the limited space and would take turns placing the baby Jesus in each year on Christmas morning.

What has always struck me about this crib scene is not the animals asleep, or the humble shepherds standing before Jesus in awe, or even the figures of the holy family. That all seemed to fit. What stood out were the three figures clothed in rich, colourful garments with crowns on their heads, carrying ornate gifts and seemingly unfazed

by the squalor around them. These three figures are those of the Magi, the Three Wise Men.

Traditionally these men are named Caspar, Malchior and Balthazar – but in reality, we know very little about them. They left their home, most likely in modern day Iran or Iraq, to make the long journey to Bethlehem, to a cave, a poor family, and a new born child, guided by an unusual star in the night sky.

It's an amazing story, and yet, what I find most notable about this journey is the way in which the Holy Spirit is working. He prompts these three pagan men, gentiles who were not part of the 'chosen people', in their search for truth. Ultimately, he brings them to their knees before

the Son of God. It's a story that we can all identify with in one way or another, that feeling of being guided and prompted by something more to something more.

“It was at this point that I began to feel a draw, a draw away from what was comfortable, what was known”

Before I began my journey as a missionary, I had spent two years studying art and design in college. I gave my all to my work and tied my worth to what I made with my hands. I was skilled and talented and had worked hard since I was 13 with this

one goal in mind: to someday make a living from my art.

Eventually, the cracks began to show. It was sparked with the loss of my grandmother, then with the death of a good friend, followed by moving to a new city and being surrounded by new people, all in a short period of time.

It was at this point that I began to feel a draw, a draw away from what was comfortable, what was known. But with no direct end in sight, and only the dim light of this call to follow, I felt frozen. And yet, in this darkness the Lord guided me forward. The call that I felt continued to grow stronger and the desire for more wouldn't leave me. Eventually, with no view of my next step, I blindly walked

forward.

Having taken a leave of absence from college, I was immediately asked: “Have you ever thought about doing NET?”

Even though the woman who asked me this question has no memory of this interaction, it was this prompt that had me think deeper about a year of mission. I decided to apply, and after submitting my application and completing my interview I felt convicted that this was what I was being asked to do. And so, on August 15, 2016, I packed my suitcase and made my way to Donegal the next day to begin my year with NET Ireland.

I was placed on the road team with nine others, travelling and meeting people young and old all around the country, and the even the world. I don't know what I expected, but it certainly wasn't what I got.

I found myself removed from all that I ever knew; from my home, my family and friends, my work. It was in this time, travelling from town to town, never knowing where my next home would be, that I saw that light, that star, even clearer.

I came with the certainty that I would give one year, and no more. I was going to give God everything for the 10 months, and then I would return to what I knew and

what I loved. But I soon found, when I returned to my course and what I had thought to be my *raison d'être*, that what was being asked of me was to sever my relationship with my God in order to achieve success in the world. And so, with no knowledge of where this star would lead me next, I left my course entirely.

Once again, it has led me back to NET, where I currently serve on mission staff as a supervisor of the road team.

“It was in this time...never knowing where my next home would be, that I saw that light, that star, even clearer”

In retrospect, this star, this call, whatever you want to call it, has been a constant in my journey – from childhood until today.

The light that shines through the darkness draws me back, repeatedly, to the path that leads me to Jesus. It has taken me longer than I would like to admit, but I now know that this star is the Holy Spirit, leading me, guiding me and prompting me.

I know he will shine throughout my life, and this time in our Church is a yearly reminder of this reality. There are times of waiting, preparation and times of celebration, but ultimately, he is always guiding us back to the God who knows us, loves us, and has saved us.

i Paula Freney is a member of the NET Ministries Ireland mission staff.

Further articles from the NET Ministries Advent series will be published on irishcatholic.com



Irish medicine: a brave new world

Several generations past in Ireland, the vast majority of doctors were Catholics who came from Catholic families; if, as students, they wished to go to Trinity College, then various ecclesiastical permissions had to be sought. The Constitution upheld the values of the Catholic Church, clericalism was rife and it was far easier for a Catholic doctor to 'practice in accordance with his conscience', because to fail to do so would invite all sorts of consequences.

When the oral contraceptive pill became available, its dual function as a treatment for menstrual irregularities – as well as being a contraceptive – led to something of a grey area which, while creating its own difficulties at the time, now seems almost quaint in hindsight.

Ireland seemed in some ways protected from the hor-

It is essential for the doctors of today to fight for the rights of the doctors of tomorrow, writes
Dr Keith Holmes



rors of abortion and euthanasia which were increasingly prevalent within wider European society and beyond. The phrase "it could surely never happen here" was implicit.

Fast forward to the current day and the vista is changed utterly, with changes so drastic that it is, in many ways, a different country. In particular, the recent overwhelming vote to repeal the Eighth Amendment caught most people by surprise in its scale, and even more so by the triumphalism which greeted the result.

Some years ago, a group

of Irish doctors working in Ireland, who had all worked abroad, came together to set up the Irish Catholic Doctors' Learning Network (ICDLN). Each of these doctors, having worked abroad, was concerned at the role of the doctor where they practiced in these various countries and could see such changes fast approaching in Ireland.

Reassurance

Nonetheless, there was some small reassurance at the fact that that in other countries, all of which were secular, there was a certain recogni-

tion of the belief system of doctors and an acceptance of their conscientious objections.

There was a fear that the creeping secularism within Ireland at the time would result in a "death by a thousand cuts" for the right to practice medicine in line with one's Catholic Faith.

There was also a growing awareness that doctors with conscientious objections would find themselves isolated, without support and without knowing where to go for support. In addition, there was an awareness that our education in bioethical matters, such as it was, was enormously deficient and could not keep pace with the rapidly changing technology, especially regarding creation and destruction of human life, but not restricted to these.

We now find ourselves in a situation where abortion has become legal, and in a far more permissive fashion than could have been imagined, and indeed doctors themselves seemed to have been very much in favour, although there does remain a sizeable number who are keen for abortion to be available but do not wish to be part of its provision themselves.

“There is a wider debate beyond that of being a Catholic doctor”

The next ethical battleground will inevitably be end-of-life issues. We know from the developments in Britain, with the Liverpool Pathway, that decisions can be taken very readily regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of resuscitation, which can rapidly result in the withholding of food and fluids and the 'easing of pain' with morphine which results in a very rapid demise.

While many platitudes are uttered about the importance of end-of-life care, unless it is predicated on an absolute respect for human life, then the slippage, so acutely identified by Pope Benedict as "moral relativism", results in evermore quickly shifting sands.

There is a wider debate beyond that of being a Catholic doctor, relating to what actually defines Catholic healthcare and whether or not the voluntary hospitals – many of whom are Catholic – can in fact uphold their mission statements in the



face of predicted threats of funding cuts.

The role of the voluntary sector within healthcare is currently being examined by an Independent Review Group, which has yet to report, but given the aforementioned level of slippage and the fact that we are currently living in a country which is not merely secular but highly reactionary, one would not be optimistic.

The Consultative Group on Bioethics and the Council for Healthcare of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has recently published the Code of Ethical Standards for Healthcare, outlining the position of the Church on a variety of aspects, seeking to explore the meaning and significance of health and of healthcare, as well as the appropriate goals of medical interventions and how they

senior counsel and medical doctor, Dr Ciaran Craven; the bishop of Paisley, Dr John Keenan; former member of the Irish Medical Council Dr Bairbre Golden; and Dr Aisling Bastible.

“Doctors with conscientious objections would find themselves isolated”

The issues for discussion include the ethics of conscientious objection in healthcare, delivery of medical care to those in disadvantaged circumstances, implications of the new laws on abortion in Irish healthcare, as well as effecting change in a secular society, among other topics.

It is essential for doctors of today to be mindful of doc-



Speakers Bishop John Keenan (left) and John Bruton.

are understood in the Catholic tradition.

This is a most welcome and useful document and hopefully will reach a wide audience who will reflect on its contents and engage in the discussion.

It is in this context that the ICDLN is organising its fourth annual conference which will take place on Saturday, December 8 in the Emmaus Retreat Centre in Swords in Co. Dublin, to bring together medical professionals to discuss many of these issues.

Speakers include: former Taoiseach, John Bruton;

tors of tomorrow. If we give ground and yield, or indeed if we do not make explicit our objections to the current direction of travel, then it will be all the harder for those coming behind us.

For them, for us, for the patients we serve, and indeed for society as a whole, we must continue to uphold our beliefs, to avoid becoming purely defensive, because what we have is worth standing for and protecting.

i Dr Keith Holmes is a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist.

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Public conversion: a rational decision?



The Church needs you as much as you need it, writes Colm Fitzpatrick

If God loves us all of us, why doesn't he explicitly reveal himself to everyone so that there would be no doubt of his existence? Surely, if God can do all logically possible things it would be a piece of cake for him to make his existence evident to all – especially to vociferous and hard-line atheists like Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris?

This question – formally known as the problem of divine hiddenness – has historically stumped believers and created many smug unbelievers along the way. Why apparently is God so hidden, quiet and silent? The disciple Thomas got to touch the flesh wounds of the risen Jesus and St Paul converted to Christianity after receiving divine revelation – so why can't we?

This query – the problem of divine hiddenness – was an important subject of the second Annual Newman Lecture which took place at University Church last Wednesday.

Philosophy professor Meghan Sullivan from the University of Notre Dame addressed a captivated audience on the subject 'Public Conversion and Personal Reasons', on why faith is a plausible and important part of life.

Her talk revolved around the relationship between private conversion, a move which is personal to your heart and mind, and public conversion, essentially the social or institutional joining of a church. In other words, as she puts it: "A question that many of us face is 'Why not love God and neighbour and think deeply about the Christian mystery but without the institutional entanglement?'"

Belief

This is a pertinent question to ask in today's world given that Christians who are confident in their belief in God are increasingly avoiding church services, and living out their lives of faith in a way they seem satisfied with. On top of this, Prof. Sullivan suggests that we are at a point in his-



Brigitt Hirsch, Adam O'Neill, Lizzy Henry, Jack O'Riordan and Helen Kelly at the conference. Photos: John McElroy

tory to think more broadly about the "nature and value of the Church" because of some the unique crises it is currently facing such as the clerical abuse scandals and the cultural assumption that knowledge can be both efficient and impersonal – take the mobile phone, for example, if you're in doubt of the latter point. These failures and challenges, she suggests, make the manifest Church seem more "dispensable" than perhaps ever before.

Tackling this problem head on, Prof. Sullivan suggests the way by which most of us are converted is key to understanding the purpose of the Church and why it's anything but dispensable. She points out that the majority of those who turn to the faith are converted in a slow, incremental way – a reorientation which she describes as a "sub-luminous" conversion, as opposed to a luminous conversion which is more direct and compelling.

"The first is the glaring conversion, so this is the blinding light, the fall from the horse, encounters with burning bushes or angels, a sudden healing, a finger stuck into a wound. These are the conversions that we maybe valorise or mythologise. But then there are the conversions that I think happen no less miraculously but in a more quiet, behind-the-scenes kind of way," Prof. Sullivan explains.

This second type of conversion is one that resonated with Prof. Sullivan herself given that she gradually converted to Catholicism as

young adult after facing the existential implications of 9/11 and beginning a spiritual journey of her own.

Starting off by attending Mass on Wednesdays and then coming to the realisation that a Sunday service is probably more formative, she eventually did the RCIA programme during her third year of college and was confirmed into the Church in 2004. From the outside to her close family and friends, this radical shift in her beliefs and practices may have looked like an "early mid-life crisis" but internally it seemed evident to her that God was calling her to transformation in this subtle way.

“We've lost the ability to both love and connect with the divine”

"But from the inside, even from that first day in 2002 of going to Mass, it felt like I had already been headed that direction in a long time without even knowing that it was a direction that someone could be headed in. And I think that a lot of converts share that feeling," she says.

The question she poses – and one that brings the problem of divine hiddenness to the forefront – is why does God call most of us in this impersonal and seemingly indirect way rather than through a luminous conversion?

There have been plenty of interesting answers to this philosophical problem but Prof. Sullivan says we should

turn to the writings of St Augustine to best solve this conundrum. Anticipating the question of why God wouldn't make a clear user manual for understanding the Scriptures, Augustine says this interpretative challenge is one of the ways God loves us.

His point is that as sinners we haven't just lost our capacity to love God properly but also to love each other, and so a process of knowing God that isn't mediated through human agency neglects the vital need to bond with and love one another.

"In our fallen condition we've lost the ability to both love and connect with the divine and also both to love and connect with one another. God can either give us individually a luminous conversion or he could distribute evidence about himself across a group of us in space and in time. We can call this latter option a network model for divine revelation," Prof. Sullivan explains.

This network model points to why the Church is important today because it is in this structure that individu-

als garner a knowledge of God through friendship and love of each other which is a love that intellectually binds together the Church. This type of knowledge of God can only be realised in the community of the Church, which is a kind of "social process by which our collective knowledge of God across space and time is achieved", all the while being networked by love.

Hypothesis

It's a powerful hypothesis which quashes the problem of divine hiddenness and simultaneously points to why it's rational for private converts to become public converts rather than pursuing an individualistic spiritual journey.

Moreover, this isn't a solution that can be proudly placed on a bookshelf to pick up dust, but has practical implications for the Church today.

Firstly, membership in the institutional Church deserves a defence from theologians, philosophers and laity; we all play a role in ensuring that the structures of the Church don't protect and promote

serious sin; the diversity of vocations in the Church needs to be promoted as all of us gain different kinds of knowledge through this diverse network; we need to reinforce the notion that knowledge is a person-to-person enterprise and is built on love; and finally we must challenge a common model of how we understand evangelism by recognising that faith development is a two-way system meaning that the Church should be "open to wisdom from new nodes in the network".

Above all, Prof. Sullivan's talk and ideas are a challenge to all Catholics to live out their faith in a more integrated kind of way in the knowledge that we can learn about God and ourselves through dialogue and interactions with fellow members of the Church community.

If you're having doubts about waking up on Sundays to attend Mass or are thinking about public conversion, this idea will convince that you need the Church as much as it needs you.

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World Report

IN BRIEF

Minnesota diocese files for bankruptcy

• The US Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, has announced that it is to file for bankruptcy following recommendation of several consultative groups.

According to Bishop John Quinn, a legal path to bankruptcy is the “most just and equitable way to hold the diocese accountable for past child sexual abuse by clergy”.

The announcement, which will see Winona-Rochester becoming the state’s fourth diocese to file for bankruptcy, was made with the cooperation of lawyers representing abuse survivors.

Holocaust hero nun dies at 110

• A Polish Dominican, believed to be the world’s oldest nun, has died at the age of 110, the Archdiocese of Krakow has announced. Sr Cecylia Maria Roszak travelled from Krakow to Vilnius in 1938 to help establish another convent, but successive Soviet and Nazi occupations prevented this.

During this time, Sr Roszak and her sisters risked their lives by hiding 17 Jewish resistance members in their community, supporting them further when they returned to the city’s Jewish ghetto. The community’s superior was arrested in 1943, with the community shut down and dispersed. In 1984, the sisters were honoured as ‘Righteous among the Nations’ by Yad Vashem, which recognises non-Jews who risked their lives, freedom or positions to help Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Radical nationalism fuels hatred of Christians – report

Aggressive nationalism is to blame for a rise in violence and other intimidation against religious minorities – and the West is failing to convert words of concern into action, according to a report by the charity Aid to the Church in Need.

Assessing all 196 countries around the globe, the Religious Freedom in the World 2018 Report concluded that “ultra-nationalism” by both government and non-state actors has caused a spike in hatred against faith minorities in countries including leading regional powers such as India, China, Pakistan and Burma.

The report, produced every two years, found that religious illiteracy, including



The Chaldean Catholic Church of St Paul in Mosul, Iraq, is illuminated with red light in protest against the persecution of Christians around the world.

within the media, and a lack of political action in the West had exacerbated the problem, concluding that many faith minority groups suffer behind a “curtain of indifference”.

The report said: “Most Western governments have failed to provide urgently needed assistance to minority faith groups, especially displaced communities wanting to return home.”

It said most governments had failed to offer displaced minority faith groups the help they themselves had requested to enable their return to northern Iraq and elsewhere following the ousting of ISIS and other militant groups.

The investigation by the Catholic charity found that media coverage about militant Islam has focused almost

exclusively on the fight-back against ISIS and affiliate groups during the period under review – 2016-18 – and has largely ignored the relentless spread of militant Islamist movements in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

According to the report, a main driver behind the growth in extremism is the growing clash between Sunni and Shia, rival branches of Islam. It stated that in the 25-month review period, the situation for minority faith groups deteriorated in almost half of the countries classed as having significant violations of religious freedom – 18 out of a total of 38 countries.

Worsening intolerance towards religious minorities meant that for the first time in the report’s 19-year history, two new countries: Russia and Kyrgyzstan – were placed in the “discrimination” category.

Reveal abuse, international group of women’s superiors urge sisters

The International Union of Superiors General has called on women religious who have suffered abuse to come forward and report it to their congregations and Church and state authorities.

“If the UISG receives a report of abuse, we will be a listening presence and help the person to have the courage to bring the complaint to the appropriate organisations,” it added in a statement published on its website November 23.

The group – whose members are 2,000 superiors general of congregations of women religious across the world, representing more

than 500,000 sisters – said it wished to express “deep sorrow and indignation over the pattern of abuse that is prevalent within the Church and society today”.

“Abuse in all forms: sexual, verbal, emotional or any inappropriate use of power within a relationship, diminishes the dignity and healthy development of the person who is victimised,” it added.

“We stand by those courageous women and men who have reported abuse to the authorities.

“We condemn those who support the culture of silence and secrecy, often under the guise of ‘protection’ of an

institution’s reputation or naming it ‘part of one’s culture’.”

“We advocate for transparent civil and criminal reporting of abuse whether within religious congregations, at the parish or diocesan levels, or in any public arena,” it said.

“We commit ourselves to work with the Church and civil authorities to help those abused to heal the past through a process of accompaniment, of seeking justice, and investing in prevention of abuse through collaborative formation and education programmes for children, and for women and men,” it said.

Kenyan priest murdered in Cameroon

A Kenyan priest serving in Cameroon has been shot and killed by soldiers.

Fr Cosmas Omboto Ondari was shot dead in Manyu, Cameroon, just days after the murder of another Kenyan priest, Jesuit Fr Victor-Luke Odhiambo, in South Sudan.

According to the St Joseph Missionary Society Mill Hill Missionary’s Formation Centre in Cameroon, Fr Ondari, who was ordained in March 2017, was killed by Cameroon

military.

“With heavy and broken hearts, the Mill Hill Missionaries in Cameroon confirm the death of our brother and fellow Mill Hill missionary priest from Kenya Fr Cosmas Omboto Ondari,” Fr Richard Njoroge of the Formation Centre said in a statement.

Quoting a source who had requested anonymity, Fr Njoroge said Fr Ondari had been shot twice by soldiers who fled in a speeding mili-

tary vehicle, and died on the spot.

The murder is the latest in a succession of attacks on clerics in the conflict-torn country, with an American missionary and a 19-year-old seminarian being killed in separate incidents last month and a priest, Fr Alexander Sob Nougi, being shot at close-range on July 20 in an attack Church officials have called a targeted assassination.

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If I could just find the loose bulb...



Workers decorate the Christmas tree in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. The tree from the northern Italian region of Veneto will be lit on December 7. Photo: CNS

Greece set to sever ties between church and state

An effort by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece to start severing ties between the state and the Greek Orthodox Church, including taking priests off civil service payrolls, has opened up divisions within the church which has played a dominant role in the country's life for centuries.

Mr Tsipras and the head of the Orthodox Church, Archbishop Ieronymos, announced a tentative deal this month to remove clerics from the state payroll and to resolve a long-standing dispute over church property.

The Holy Synod, the church's governing body, whose approval would be required for the proposal to advance, held an emergency

session on Friday to discuss the matter, rejecting out of hand any changes to priests' pay status and calling for more "dialogue" on the other issues.

Although the proposed deal would not essentially affect the wages of the roughly 9,000 Greek priests – the state would pay an annual lump sum of around €200 million, into a fund to be managed by the church – they would no longer be civil servants.

Prospect

That prospect has stoked fears for job security in the debt-racked country, where most public sector positions remain all but permanent despite a series of cutbacks during the

recent financial crisis.

There are also reservations about the proposal for the church properties, under which the Orthodox Church would not pursue claims against those that have been taken over by the state, but both parties would be able to make use of the properties jointly.

Initiative

The initiative is part of a broader review of the Greek Constitution that Mr Tsipras's leftist-led coalition has long promised, with the aim of making Greek politics "more democratic and progressive".

Midway through November members of the Greek clerics' association met with leaders of political opposition

parties to air their grievances. In a statement, the association said it "cannot be silent faced with the most violent attempt to violate labour rights in the country's modern history".

Many clerics are outraged at the initiative in principle.

Over half of Belgium 'identifies as Catholic'

Just over half of all Belgians (52%) say they are Catholics, according to a survey carried out by the Church for its first-ever annual report, but fewer than one in ten attends Mass a minimum of once a month.

Since it is the first report of its kind in Belgium, it makes no comparison between the figures from the survey, carried out on behalf

of the bishops' conference in 2016, and previous years. "However we mustn't pretend otherwise: many figures are on the decrease, and we're not trying to hide that fact," said Jeroen Moens of the conference. Identifying as Catholic, he said, is a subjective matter.

For the sake of the survey, the category includes anyone who goes to Mass from time

to time. In 2016, there were 50,867 church christenings, and 41,060 confirmations, which suggests a sizeable number of parents lose interest in the Church while their children are still young.

In the same year, 7,858 Church weddings took place. The Church counts 4,979 priests including parish priests, chaplains and priests in schools.



Vatican roundup

Young prisoners not forgotten in World Youth Day plans

Encounters with young people in prison and living with HIV will feature in Pope Francis' itinerary when he visits Panama for World Youth Day, the Vatican has announced.

The January 23-27 visit will be the Pope's 26th trip outside Italy, and will see the Pontiff celebrating two Masses and a penitential liturgy as well as delivering seven speeches, dedicating the altar of Panama's newly-renovated 400-year-old cathedral and meeting with bishops from across Central America.

According to a statement from the World Youth Day organising committee, Francis' meeting with young people unable to take part in the activities is a response to the Gospel's call to clothe the naked, visit the sick and comfort the imprisoned, and will entail a penitential liturgy "in an act of repentance, reconciliation and forgiveness".

World Youth Day 2019's theme is 'I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'

Jewish, Catholic communities issue call to protect children

Leaders from the Jewish and Catholic communities met at the Vatican last week to discuss what their communities can do to ensure the dignity and development of children.

Leaders on both sides said children are the future of society but are still too vulnerable to protect themselves.

The bilateral commission for Jewish-Catholic relations met at the Vatican to discuss the topic: 'The dignity of the human being: Jewish and Catholic teachings on children.'

Delegations from both the Grand Rabbinate of Israel, led by Rabbi Rasson Arusi, and the Holy See, led by Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican department for Integral Human Development, met as the United Nations' Universal Children's Day was celebrated.

In a joint statement after the discussion, participants stressed the importance of recognising "the inviolability of human life and the inalienability of human dignity", which they said are fully expressed in both a person's relationship with God and with others.

Within this, they said, there's a special obligation to care for the most vulnerable in society, especially children.

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Blocking America's bishops



The Pope has raised the stakes for February's Church summit on abuse, writes **Christopher White**

In the Oscar-winning film *Spotlight*, which chronicled the Boston Globe's devastating reporting on the first wave of the clerical sex abuse crisis in the US, one of the reporters remarks that "the Catholic Church thinks in centuries".

When Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), announced at the start of this month's highly anticipated meeting that the Vatican had requested a delay in voting on new proposals for bishop accountability, the room – and by extension, faithful Catholics across America – were left stunned, with many thinking that it was, indeed, taking centuries for the Church to duly respond to the lingering crisis.

For the more than 300 bishops representing the country's 195 Catholic dioceses, this meeting was supposed to serve as a turning point following a "summer of shame", wherein one of the US Church's most senior churchmen, Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, was stripped of his membership in the College of Cardinals after revelations of decades of sexual misconduct and abuse allegations.

The McCarrick gut punch was only compounded by a Pennsylvania grand jury report released in August chronicling seven decades of abuse of over 1,000 victims at the hands of more than 300 priests suspected of abusing.

The Pennsylvania report has triggered more than a dozen other states to announce similar investigations and rumors are swirling that the US soon will face a federal review, similar to that of Australia's Royal Commission or Britain's Independent Inquiry.

Motivations

One of the motivations for enacting new measures for bishop accountability is found in the refrain, "if we don't get this right now, others will do it for us." And while most bishops are sincerely motivated beyond the threat of years of state-led investigation and litigation, the sense that both the



Cardinal Daniel DiNardo (second left), president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced the Vatican-imposed delay

police and those in the pews are demanding action only upped the ante for last week's annual meeting of US bishops.

Why then, so many wondered, did the Vatican put the kibosh on plans to move ahead with plans to establish new codes of bishop conduct and a special commission for investigating such claims?

The stated reason from the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops was that the US needed to wait until after a summit on sex abuse in February in which Francis has summoned the heads of every bishops' conference around the world to Rome so that US procedures can be in harmony with that of the global Church.

The announcement prompted even those considered very much a part of 'Team Francis' among the US bishops to wonder on Monday if, perhaps, the criticism of some of his detractors – that the Pope is tone-deaf on the issue of abuse – had its merits.

Those concerns were punctuated further by the fact that many Catholics are still seeking to understand why Francis had rebuffed the US bishops' request in September for a Vatican-led investigation into McCarrick's rise

and fall from power, leaving many to consider whether Francis was simply out to teach a lesson to the US Catholic Church.

As the leadership of the USCCB began to salvage its agenda – noting they would move forward with an open discussion on the abuse crisis – a clearer picture began to emerge as to why the Vatican came out with such a heavy handed decree.

By the time open discussion began on the floor on Tuesday, what became clear was that the bishops were far from united in the proposals and that the two-thirds majority needed for passage was far from guaranteed.

Language

Concerns from 'inexact' language, to who was going to foot the US\$500,000 bill for the new commission, to fear that bishops were merely outsourcing their responsibility were all raised.

During that same period, reports from Rome began to appear providing some insight into why the Vatican had canonical concerns with the proposals – most notably, that it put the laity on par with the Pope in the task of overseeing bishops.

What also seemed certain was that the Vatican was attempting to nudge the bishops toward some sort of introspective pastoral reflection about the role and responsibility of bishops.

“Many Catholics are still seeking to understand why Francis had rebuffed the US bishops' request in September for a Vatican-led investigation”

When the bishops meet in Chicago this January for a weeklong spiritual retreat, prompted by Francis himself, the theme will be just that – a sign that many observers believe that Francis wants the solution to this crisis not just to come from a new commission or canonical revisions, but a change in culture.

By Wednesday, when the bishops concluded their open discussions, it was clear the two competing proposals had emerged: one which would rely on a new lay commission to investigate bishops and the other which would rely on the metropolitan bishops working

in consultation with the already existing lay review boards to handle such investigations.

When Dr DiNardo summed up the meeting with a vow of "strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment", he did so not fully satisfying any of his constituencies – from the protestors outside demanding immediate action to the bishops heading home to face a restless flock.

Yet zooming out – in an effort to put last week's meeting in a larger context – the very same centuries' long thinking that frustrates so many Catholics over the pace of implementing new measures of accountability and governance, may turn out to also have its advantages.

While the stakes for an already high-pressure February summit have been exponentially heightened, so too are the hopes that it may provide an opportunity for a new global approach to the issue of clerical sexual abuse – one rooted in more than quick stop gap solutions, but one of enduring reform.

Even so, in an era of divisions within and outside of the Church, all parties will be united with eyes on that meeting to see if, in fact, it was worth the wait.

Christopher White is the national correspondent for Crux and The Tablet, the diocesan newspaper of the diocese of Brooklyn. Follow him on Twitter @CWWhite212.

“The very same centuries' long thinking that frustrates so many Catholics over the pace of implementing new measures of accountability and governance, may turn out to also have its advantages”

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Letters

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Letter of the week

Unequal focus of Government's energy

Dear Editor, The Open Adoption Bill 2014 was sponsored by Anne Ferris and initiated on March 11, 2014. That Bill never progressed past stage two and has since lapsed.

The Adoption (Identity and Information) Bill 2014 was sponsored by Fidelma Healy Eames, Jillian van Turnhout and Averil Power. It was initiated some four years ago on November 11, 2014, and passed the Seanad on February 18, 2015. That Bill never progressed past stage four and has since lapsed.

The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill, 2018 was sponsored by the Minister for Children and Youth

Affairs two years ago this week, November 23, 2016. It is currently at second stage, having passed the Seanad. It has not progressed past second stage.

The Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Bill 2018, was sponsored by the Minister for Health and initiated on September 27, 2018 and is currently at stage three, having progressed much faster than any of the three mentioned Adoption Bills. It is expected that abortion will be available in this country as early as January.

The enthusiasm with which Simon Harris is attempting to rail-road his

abortion Bill through the House is odd, given that a bill which enhances modern, holistic adoption, proposed by the Minister for Children, seems to be sidelined and largely ignored by the mainstream media.

Surely a bill which isn't near as controversial as the abortion bill, one which, if enacted, would help women in crisis pregnancies and offer a positive alternative to abortion, should be supported with at least an equal amount of energy by the government?

*Yours etc.,
Luke Silke,
Tuam, Co. Galway.*

Charity should be given without being asked for

Dear Editor, As the Christmas season descends the Irish human welfare charity industry cranks up production. In the run-in to Christmas day sob stories will be issued and heart-strings plucked all aimed at financial extraction from your purse.

Implied in the charity message is that somehow it is your responsibility that your fellow human cannot

get their act together. This guilt-tripping is aimed at those who just get on with life and orient to self-help themselves to overcome life's difficulties.

As a nation we enjoy suckling the teat of human misery. Irish people seem to be at their happiest helping those who wallow in the milk of 'oh-woe is me'.

High profile human welfare charities are

addicted to their public self-importance image and numerous opportunities to pontificate as a pompous windbag on the fragility of the human condition. Not for them the aim of every charity which is to disband having achieved what they were set up in the first place for.

To solve a recognised human need and then to put in place a support structure

before closing down. The Irish charity industry needs downsizing alongside a realignment of personnel and resources.

There will always be those in an eleemosynary state within our society. But we must never forget the adage; charity should be given without being asked for.

*Yours etc.,
John Tierney,
Fews, Co. Waterford.*

No Irish Church hostility to suffrage

Dear Editor, In his most recent column (IC 22/11/2018) Gabriel Doherty notes that the paper's coverage of women's enfranchisement in 1918 is "a corrective to those who suggest that the Church was uniformly hostile to the cause of female suffrage".

In many European countries, priests and bishops supported giving their female parishioners a voice in the future, so it is good to know Ireland was no exception.

These columns are a wonderful antidote to the lazy 'bad old days' guessing that passes for much of modern Ireland's understanding of its past.

*Yours etc.,
Lisa Byrne,
Lucan, Co. Dublin.*



People pulling together

Dear Editor, We visited some friends in a town where a recent typhoon gave rise to extensive landslides on the mountain roads and many deaths as a result.

The biggest loss was when over 30 people ran into a five-storey concrete government building, ironically for safety, and the whole mountainside slid off, destroying the structure and bringing it down on top of them. The townsfolk were in shock and many in mourning.

Where nature's fury had done its worst, the gentle hand of God was there in its wake. Only a few days had passed and most of the townsfolk were involved in helping to find the dead and cleaning up the town. The

men dug, the women brought them food and water. There were Novena prayers in the homes of the dead in the evenings attended by many; and there was no recrimination; there was worship and praise, thanksgiving and prayers for mercy for their loved ones.

As they pulled together in necessity, the mercy of God soothed the weariness of their hearts.

It is a praying community, used to clinging to God in good times and bad and this is their anchor and strength. It was quite a privilege to be present to witness this.

*Yours etc.,
Stephen A Clark,
Manila, Philippines.*

Dear Editor, With reference to Colm Fitzpatrick's article on Limbo and the last line therein (IC 15/11/2018). Far be it from me to take issue with The International Theological Commission in regard to their grounds for the hopes, that unbaptised infants will be saved. How comforting! There perhaps but for the grace of God goes God.

Jesus asked that the children be brought unto him. Would such a loving God punish infants for sins they had not yet committed, or for choices with regard to salvation, that they never had the opportunity to make? That this sort of nonsense is still out there, makes me glad for one that God is above all these petty and pointless human considerations.

*Yours etc.,
Marie-Therese Cryan,
Ballygall, Dublin 11.*

facebook community

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

What does the story of St Nicholas bring to the experience of Christmas?

When I think of St Nicholas, I think of giving a gift with love. I also think of receiving with love, no matter what that gift is. In these days of 'mass consumerism' we need to remember what Christmas is all about and to be grateful for whatever we do receive. St Nicholas nudges us in that direction. Perhaps we need to stop and think about that!

– **Alyson Meadowcroft**

Will the Vatican's February summit be the decisive move many Catholics have been waiting for to help restore the Church's credibility on the issue of abuse?

Of course it should be an important meeting but grossly undermined by the refusal to allow the US bishops vote on their proposals and by appointing Cupich to the organising team. Also by the Pope's continued failure to address the allegations made about him and Cardinal McCarrick.

– **Christopher McCamley**

It is vital that Archbishop Diarmuid Martin be given a major role given his clear no nonsense reputation on Safeguarding...there are few if any that could match his record.

– **Alan Whelan**

If the bishops had handled it correctly in the first place we would have avoided about 40 years worth of problems.

– **Tom Gallagher**

Our lack of welcome

I think these lines in the article sum it up: This is the tradition that Jesus inherits. What does he do with it? He ratifies all three. For Jesus, true religiosity asks for all of these: faithful religious practice, outreach to the poor and a wise and compassionate heart. For Jesus, you don't pick between these, you do them all.

– **Maria Byrne**

A hard border between North and South will give 'oxygen' to dissident groups

The GFA was all about all sides turning down the volume on their different allegiances and parking them under the aegis of EU membership. No one foresaw how vulnerable this idea was to an English nationalist uprising. In the course of time an Irish nationalist reaction is more likely than not as people realise that the Britain they thought they would be dealing with in the long term has likely gone for good (if it ever really existed).

– **Charles Glenn**

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

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



USA: US Customs and Border Protection officers stand in the vehicle lanes during a show of force exercise to secure the San Ysidro Port of Entry in San Diego in response to the presence of a large caravan of mainly Honduran migrants that recently arrived in neighbouring Tijuana, Mexico. Photos: CNS



SOUTH SUDAN: A man carries South Sudanese flags near John Garang's mausoleum in Juba. Catholic bishops in South Sudan and Sudan appealed to the citizens of the two countries to work harder for peace.



LONDON: Visitors view a holiday light installation at Kew Gardens.



THAILAND: People in Bangkok visit the country's first skywalk.



VATICAN: Pope Francis tries a zucchetto presented by a man in the crowd as he leaves his General Audience in St Peter's Square.



USA: Deacon Ken Henning, right, leads the choir in prayer before a Mass for Jamie Schmidt at St Anthony of Padua Church in High Ridge, Missouri. Schmidt died on November 19 after being shot while shopping earlier that day at the Catholic Supply store in west St Louis County.



A lesson in a parking lot



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Our natural instincts serve us well, to a point. They're self-protective and that's healthy too, to a point. Let me explain.

Recently I was at a football game with a number of friends. We arrived at the game in two cars and parked in the stadium's underground parking lot. Our tickets were in different parts of the stadium and so we separated for the game, each of us finding our own seats.

When the game ended, I arrived at the cars with one of our party about 10 minutes before the others showed up. During that wait, my friend and I scanned the crowd, looking for members of our party. But our scanning eyes drew some unwelcome attention. Two women approached us and, angrily, demanded why we had been looking at them: "Why were you looking at us? Are you trying to pick us up?"

Reflection

That's when natural instinct cuts in. Immediately, before any rational reflection had a chance to mitigate my thoughts and feelings, there was an automatic flash of anger, of indignation, of injustice, of coldness, of shame and, yes, of hatred. Those feelings weren't asked for; they simply flooded in. And, with them, came the concomitant accusatory thoughts: "If this is the 'Me Too' movement; I'm against it! This is

unfair!"

Fortunately, none of this was expressed. I apologised politely and explained that we were scanning the crowd for our lost party. The women passed on, no harm done, but the feelings lingered, lingered until I had a chance to process them, set them into perspective, and honour them for precisely what they are, instinctual, self-protective, feelings that are meant eventually to be replaced by something else, namely, by an understanding that goes beyond reflexive reaction.

On reflection, I didn't see this incident as an aberration of the 'Me Too' movement or as something to be indignant about. Rather, it helped me realise why there is a 'Me Too' movement to begin with.

The reaction of these two women no doubt was triggered by a history of injustice that they themselves (or other women they've known) have experienced in terms of sexual

harassment, unwanted solicitation, and gender violence – injustices that absolutely dwarf the minimosquito bite of "injustice" that I experienced by their gratuitous remark.

It's not without reason that this kind of exchange occurs in parking lots.

Surprise

Recently, I read statistics from a study that concluded that more than 80% of women in America have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lifetime. In my naiveté, that figure seemed high, so I asked several women colleagues for their reaction to that statistic. Their reaction caught both me and my naiveté by surprise. Their reaction: "80% is far too low; it's everyone! Rare is the woman who goes through life without experiencing some form of sexual harassment in her life."

“Natural instinct can be quite empathic when it is not threatened in any way. But the situation changes, and very quickly, when any kind of threat is perceived; when, to put it metaphorically, something or somebody ‘is in your face’”

Given that perspective, the paranoia expressed in the parking lot no longer seemed out of order.

Something else too: reflecting further on this, I began to see more clearly the distance between natural instinct and mature empathy. Nature gives us powerful instincts that serve us well, to a point. They are inherently self-protective, selfish, even as they contain within them a certain amount of natural empathy. Instinct can sometimes be wonderfully sympathetic.

“I began to see more clearly the distance between natural instinct and mature empathy. Nature gives us powerful instincts that serve us well, to a point”

For example, we are naturally drawn to reach out to a helpless child, a wounded bird, or a lost kitten. But what draws us to these is still, however subtle, self-interest. At the end of the day, our reaching out to them makes us feel better and their helplessness poses

absolutely no threat to us.

Natural instinct can be quite empathic when it is not threatened in any way.

But the situation changes, and very quickly, when any kind of threat is perceived; when, to put it metaphorically, something or somebody 'is in your face'. Then our natural empathy slams shut like a trap door, our warmth turns cold, and every instinct inside us raises its self-interested head and voice. That's what I felt in the parking lot at the football game.

And the danger then is to confuse those feelings with the bigger truth of the situation and with who we really are and what we really believe in. At that point, natural instinct no longer serves us well and, indeed, is no longer protective of our long-term good.

What's good for us long-term is, at that moment, hidden from our instincts. At moments like this we are called to an empathy beyond any feelings of having been slighted and beyond the ideologies we can lean on to justify our indignation: "This is political correctness (of the right or the left) gone amuck! This is an aberration!"

Our feelings are important and need to be acknowledged and honoured, but we're always more than our feelings. We're called beyond instinct to empathy, to pray that the day will soon come when these two women, and their daughters and granddaughters, will no longer need to feel any threat in a parking lot.

Cornerstone

Building tomorrow's parish today

Let's use
Experiencing
Advent:

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your parish

Page 28



Connecting parish and young people



As the Pope John Paul II Award welcomes its twelfth year of participants, it is vital to reflect on the opportunities the Award creates. Starting in 2006 in the Diocese of Derry, the Award was spearheaded by Fr. Paul Farren, Director of the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre. The Award quickly established itself in several schools in the diocese. Since then, it has flourished throughout Ireland and Britain. Now running in 23 dioceses in Ireland and two in

Britain, dioceses recognise the potential of the Award to engage 16 - 18 year olds in their faith at a critical juncture in their lives.

The Pope John Paul II Award is a faith achievement award for young people between the age of 16 and 18. It is non-competitive, inclusive, flexible and voluntary.

It enables participants to take an active part in the life of their Church - in the life of their community and society. It enables young people become more aware of the teaching and

role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ.

From the outset, the vision of the Award was clear - to recognise and empower young people to be actively involved in their parish and community. With over 3,500 now enrolling each year and over 25,000 having completed the Award since 2006, the energy generated by the Award is easily discernible.

» Continued on Page 28

Editor's Note by Eoin Walshe



Welcome to this week's Cornerstone

“There are no young people in the church” or “the young people don't go to mass” - the amount of times that I have heard similar statements all the while sitting in a pew with school or later college friends, often in a youth music group. While it is unhelpful to label any entire age range singularly, it is harmful to ignore the young people that are at mass and that do wish to engage with their parish. Two words

that are of particular importance for local parishes today are authenticity and intentionality. Authenticity is required in all aspects of parish life, none more so than intentional “outreach and inreach” with parishioners of a younger age. The USP (unique selling point) of every parish is the Gospel - at the core of which is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Meaningful engagement with all parishioners of any age should be authentic and relational, not just isolated projects, but rather with an aim of community and relationship building - with Jesus primarily and also

with the parish community. Authenticity is essential in order to achieve a familial community of faith, fostering intentional discipleship. To be authentic, there needs to be clarity and understanding regarding the intent of any community. This week's Cornerstone features the Pope John Paul II Award which now has a proven track record of intentionally and successfully connecting parish, school and young people. The Award is in its twelfth year and is a great opportunity for secondary school students, schools and parishes to engage meaningfully.

Spotlight

This week also includes an insightful guide to journeying through the liturgical year, with parish catechist Natalie Doherty focusing on Advent which is also upon us. Furthermore, the Christmas season offers unique opportunities for reconnection within parishes: a piece by Donal Harrington this week presents a challenge to engage in a deeper, newer faith - one that reaches in and out.

Each parish faces many challenges, but for every challenge, there's a parish that has an answer. Let's avoid reinventing the wheel and share our ideas, resources and insights. If your parish has an answer, please do share it with us so we can share it with other parishes. For example, how does your parish enable and encourage belonging and believing?

Also this week: Dr Fáinche Ryan continues her series on the Eucharist, the weekly 'People of God' profile to hear a little bit about one of our sisters or brothers in Christ and, this week's 'Fish & Tips.' Once again, we have next Sunday's Second Reading - reading what was being said to encourage and challenge early Christian communities in order to hear what is being said to us today.

Please spread the word and join us on the journey of the building tomorrow's parish today - a familial community of faith, fostering authentic, intentional discipleship. If your parish is engaged in something exciting or innovative, contact us and let us know! Email me on eoin@irishcatholic.ie

PARISH INITIATIVES

Connecting parish and young people

» Continued from Page 27

The Pope John Paul II Award must not be seen in isolation, but as a key instrument in opening up broader conversations on the importance of the role of young people in the Church today.

Two Award participants, Maebhe McMullan and Padraig Delargy each achieved their Pope John Paul II Award in 2014 giving them the opportunity to become involved in their parishes. This led them on to leadership roles today.

“Maebhe is currently the Pope John Paul II Award Leader in her parish of Cappagh, Omagh.”

Maebhe is currently the Pope John Paul II Award Leader in her parish of Cappagh, Omagh. Padraig is now the Derry Diocesan Youth Coordinator with responsibility for managing the Award in the diocese. In their roles, both have a unique and advantageous understanding of how the Award works and appeals to young people.

Padraig explains “As the Derry Diocesan Youth Coordinator the enthusiasm I see in schools and parishes is palpable. What creates this passion and makes the Pope John Paul II Award unique is its focus on

participant-led activities and its ability to rhapsodise faith and fun.

Padraig’s family has always been active within St. Eugene’s Cathedral, Derry and from a young age this is a tradition he has carried on. “Collecting baskets and later altar serving was a staple part of my Sunday until the age of 10/11” he says.

“For several years I shied away from various programmes which the parish ran to attract young teenagers. In October 2012 the Pope John Paul II Award was launched to my school year group. I had been aware of John Paul students in the Cathedral, who often read at Mass or sang in the choir, but never fully understood what the Award entailed. The launch helped me to appreciate the duality of the Award, and how, supported by my school community, I could renew my commitment to volunteering in my parish.”

“Padraig points out that ‘An essential component of the Award is the links between school and parish.’”

Padraig points out that “An essential component of the Award is the links between school and parish. These



links help young people to be part of two faith communities which are different, but intertwined. I was gifted with two very capable Award leaders, who ensured that I had access to an abundance of volunteering opportunities in both spheres”.

When asked if anything in particular stands out for him, Padraig says “Since taking up the role of Diocesan Youth Coordinator, I have been struck by how dynamic the Award is. My enduring experience of the Award, and one I promote when launching the Award in schools and parishes, is to embrace the range of opportunities working in a parish presents. The Award succeeds because it has strong leaders. It succeeds because it merges school and parish. But, above all, it succeeds because it listens to

young people. In schools and parishes the message is clear - young people are not just participants but leaders. The Award gives young people the tools to identify what areas of youth ministry they would like to see developed in their parish, and allows them to make these a reality”.

Maebhe adds “Throughout my time participating in the Award, I made so many new friendships and memories to last a lifetime. I loved participating in the Award when I was younger and I want other young people in my communities to have the same oppor-

tunities as I did. Parishioners get so much out of organised liturgies, retreats and parish events but most importantly,

so too do the young people who are participating in the Award. Pope St John Paul invested so much in youth. I see it as my duty to help enlighten people the same way I was”.

Since 2006, the Pope John Paul II Award has acted as a pioneering instrument which has led the metamorphosis of Youth Ministry across Ireland. It has held two pilgrimages to Knock Shrine where over 1,000 young people attended

on both occasions. In 2017, Award patron, Bishop Donal McKeown led 180 Award participants and leaders on pilgrimage to Rome accumulating in a special Mass at the Altar of St Peter in St Peter’s Basilica and prayers at the tomb of Pope St John Paul II who was so committed to young people and who had such belief and confidence in them.

Most recently it mobilised 178 young people and their leaders to serve as Ministers of Holy Communion at the World Meeting of Families closing Mass with Pope Francis in the Phoenix Park, Dublin.

[More information about the award and the latest news is available at www.thepope-johnpauliiaward.com]



Scripture

Reflecting on Scripture is an important part of the Christian faith. Often, however, we Catholics do not allow ourselves the time to really reflect on the Word of God. This weekly series will explore the Second Reading from the coming Sunday’s Mass. While originally written to the early church communities, Scripture is the living Word of God, so each week we can read what was being said to encourage and challenge early Christian communities in order to hear what is being said to us today.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints. Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus to make more and more progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live: the life that God wants, as you learnt from us, and as you are already living it. You have not forgotten the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Spend some time in prayer with the reading.

1. Find a quiet place, and give yourself fifteen minutes without distractions. Read the section once, and then pause for reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and response to the passage.
2. Read the passage a second time. Ask yourself: What do I find challenging about this reading? Is there anything that I can try to do differently in my life as a response to it? What is the message in this reading for our parish? Write down anything that comes to your head.
3. Pause in silent reflection, and then read the passage a third time.



Outreach and inreach



Donal Harrington focuses on finding the right balance for a parish

Tomorrow's parish is one that appreciates the challenges of both outreach and inreach. The following image may clarify how the two are linked together. Imagine a book lying on the table. Some of it is sticking out over the edge. If you push the book out a little, and then further again, it will wobble and eventually topple and fall. There is no longer enough of the book on the table to balance it and support it stretching out further.

The book on the table stands for tomorrow's parish. We talk a lot about the need to reach out. But, as depicted in the image, we must think in terms of both reaching out and reaching in. We reach out to engage with people out there. We reach in to deepen our sense of who we are as a faith community. As with

the book, the parish can only reach out insofar as it is reaching in. There has to be a depth of inreach in order to support outreach.

EXPLORE

Tomorrow's parish reaches out and it reaches in. It holds a balance. But not all responses to the situation achieve this balance. Let us describe four options. One is to ignore. Another is to deplore. A third is to restore. And the final one is to explore. Each represents a different balance between outreach and inreach.

“In both these options, to ignore or to deplore, there is little inclination to reach out.”

There are some who are not thinking about outreach at all. They choose to go on as before. They choose to circle the wagons, as it were. They aspire to no more than an oasis of comfort for themselves. 'It will see us out,' they may think. This is where people choose to ignore what is going on.

Then there are those who choose to deplore. They deplore what is happening out there. They deplore the materialism in today's world. They deplore how people have abandoned their religious practice. And they deplore what

is happening within. They deplore the changes in the church. This is all they see.

In both these options, to ignore or to deplore, there is little inclination to reach out. But there is no inreach either. It is complacent – 'as you were'. The problems are seen largely to lie out there. If there were a real interest in reaching in, it would generate a desire to reach out as well. As it is, these two options are heading for slow but sure extinction.

There are also those who do think about outreach, but who think that outreach on its own is enough. It is outreach without inreach.

It sees only one-way traffic. It thinks simply of 'bringing them back' – sometimes for self-centred motives, to make ourselves feel better. It does not see what is spiritually rich in people's lives out there. And it fails to ask, 'back to what?' It fails to see what is deficient or lifeless in here. This option naively wants to restore.

“The point is that reaching out and reaching in belong together.”

The point is that reaching out and reaching in belong together. Somewhere I came across a piece of research about parishes that reach out. It found that the parishes which were

most successful in reaching out were the ones that demanded high standards of themselves. This captures it perfectly. Reaching in is itself an outreach. It becomes a witness. We reach out first of all by challenging ourselves. We cannot truly reach out without reaching in.

“Tomorrow's faith community is a place of exploration.”

When inreach and outreach go together, we are no longer trying to restore, or to ignore, or to deplore. We are ready to explore. Tomorrow's faith community is a place of exploration. Reaching out and reaching in explores new depths. It explores new ways of being church. It explores new ways of engaging with others out there. There is a sense of hope in this, a sense of possibility. There is a sense of the creative God, the God who is doing a new thing.

Exploring is unfamiliar. As a faith community, we are not used to having to reach out, especially in a way that is not patronising or condescending, appreciating the spiritual depth already out there without trying to proselytise. Equally, we are not used to having to reach in. We take our beliefs and roots for granted. We must challenge ourselves to engage in a deeper, newer faith.

Fish & Tips

Daily Ideas for Disciples

Recommended book: Tomorrow's Parish
Donal Harrington
(Columba Books)



Today's parish is entering a time of both challenge and opportunity. Churchgoers and priests are growing older and fewer, and the Church itself has lost much of its credibility. It needs a new vision, one which will imbue the parish with a revitalised energy and hope.

Pope Francis is offering us a new direction as a missionary church and the challenge now is not about how we can restructure our parishes, but how we can restructure our minds. It is about thinking of thriving, not surviving.

Tomorrow's Parish sets out the priorities for the parish as the Church enters a new phase, particularly highlighting the role of the family with the celebration of the World Meeting of Families in Ireland. This book is for anyone who has an interest in the future of the Church. It will be of

particular importance to those involved in parish ministry and parish pastoral councils, offering a fundamental resource for their formation and organisation in a new context.

Donal Harrington is the author of a number of books, including *The Welcoming Parish* and *Christianity at its Best*. He works with the Dublin Archdiocese as Coordinator of Catechetical Formation. He is also a regular contributor to Cornerstone.

People of God

Therese Flynn

Parish: Parish of St Thomas The Apostle, Laurel Lodge, Dublin 15.

Describe your faith in 7 words: Assurance, Hope, Trust, Support, Belief, Peace, Journey.

What ministry/service/role do you have in your parish? Choir Member (folk group), Occasional choir director (teen choir) and Minister of the Eucharist

What helps keep you connected to your parish?

I feel connected to my parish when singing in the choir. I am also very thankful for the amazing people that I have been connected to, and that are now part of my life, having met them through various church music courses, events and projects. They have had a big influence on my faith journey.

Biggest influences on your faith journey?

Family - I was brought up in a family where being involved in every church activity was the norm. We went to pretty much every liturgy in the local parish church and were encouraged to participate in the liturgies by reading and singing. In 2012, while leading the local Teen choir, we joined a project called Teen Spirit. Teen Spirit's motto was "A Celebration of Teen Talent & Christian Faith". This was the start of an exciting series of musical adventures



for our teen choir which included performing at the International Eucharistic Congress, RIO in Dublin, Carols in the Castle, The John Paul II awards and Faithfest.

These experiences of teaching music and choosing new music made me reflect more on the meanings behind the lyrics. Soon, singing wasn't just about using the words on the page. I started to reflect more on the lyrics and to remember them. This is how I discovered that music is a ministry.

Favourite ways to nourish your faith

Participating in good liturgies. I am particularly fond of Night Prayer of the Church and asking God to Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

EVANGELISATION

Journeying Through the Liturgical Year – Advent

Natalie Doherty

In parishes all over the country, packages of Advent candles will be arriving over these coming days, while someone is trying to remember “where is that safe place we put the Advent wreath stand?”, and all purple cloths are being prepared for the changeover. The preparation in our churches aids in preparing our home and heart to welcome the Light of the World and the beginning of the new liturgical year, starting with the First Sunday of Advent on the weekend December 1st/2nd. What can we do to help and support everyone in our faith community in their preparation and to consciously journey with the person of Jesus throughout the year? Below are some ideas for families and parishioners in the Family Notice Board and the Faith Support space of the church. Many items are out on display and available to take home to help begin this great journey.

Liturgical Calendar

A Liturgical Calendar has been added to the wall in a very simple way. Squares of purple, white, green and red, have been placed in a circle in the order of the colours trac-

ing them through the year. An arrow is easily moved around each week and the different colour sections have been labelled ‘Advent’, ‘Lent’, ‘Ordinary Time’ etc. As each week goes on an image will be printed and added to the outside of the circle. These images will show symbols of that time of year or feast day for that week. Over the year a visual representation of the church year will be built up.

Travelling Crib

A simple wooden crib (easy for children to play with) is placed in a decorative box, along with a notebook and some simple family prayers. The idea is that families would sign-up to host the



Parish Travelling Crib for a night or two during Advent and then pass it on to another family. Each family would keep a diary of what happened during their care of the crib. The crib would make its way back to the parish at the Family Mass on Christmas Eve. The crib moves from house to house and, more importantly, the families get to connect with one another.

Advent Wreath

Along with the regular Advent Wreath in the church, there is a child-friendly version in the family space. The candles are wooden and the wreath is made from green card cut-outs of handprints. The candles and wreath all have tags with one side saying ‘Wreath’ or ‘First Candle’. On the other side, the meaning is explained, such as wreath as being circular and evergreen. This is to help children understand the meaning of the symbolism of the wreath and prompts for parents to explain when they stop by the designated space.

Nativity Story

Like the wreath, small wooden figures of the Nativity story are out on display. Each is labelled with the character’s name. A short and simple text of the Nativity story is placed beside the figures to be read. The figures are durable for children of

all ages to play with, and the labels and the text will help parents/guardians through the story with the child.

10 Ways of Advent

The 10 Ways of Advent is a miniature version of an Advent Calendar. The idea is to have 10 practical ways for families and parishioners to prepare as Families and People of Faith for Advent. Some of the suggestions are to visit a live crib together; to take the Travelling Crib for a night or 2; to attend the parish carol service together; to give a donation to a local charity, and to create some decorations or print and assemble a crib together.

Purple

A basket/box is on display that contains strips of purple ribbon and material. A sign beside the container explains the meaning/symbolism of the colour purple during Advent. Parishioners are invited to take a piece of

purple, along with an Advent prayer, and place the two items in a prominent place in the house to remind them that they are preparing their house and heart to welcome Jesus at Christmas.

Jesse Tree

The symbols of the Jesse tree are added every week to the branch that is on display at the side of the Sanctuary. Four symbols are added every week and a sheet with the meaning of the symbols for the week is available to take away.

Weekly Reflections

A sheet is put out every week with a short reflection for each day. There is a mixture of scripture passages from the day; poems; prayers for Advent; reflections and prayers for the different Advent candles; along with questions to reflect with and prompt to pray.



Sacraments

From meal to formal gathering

Dr Fáinche Ryan

Sometime during the first one hundred years of Christianity, while the practice of having a meal continued, it became clearly separated from the bread and the wine ritual. The liturgy, as it developed, seemed to have allowed for a good deal of flexibility. While the core remained constant – readings, a sermon, prayers, then blessing and distribution of bread and wine – it appears that there were a great deal of regional variations in the



celebrations. The question of who would preside, lead the gathering, seems to have been fluid and is a matter of some debate. People gathered in houses, and some scholarship suggests that it was the owner of the house who led

the commemorative rite. Gradually the freedom, spontaneity and fluidity disappear, and the organisational structures of surrounding cultures were adopted. Justyn Martyr (c. AD 100-165) provides an interesting account of

the Eucharistic gathering in Rome around the year AD 150. We can recognise a familiar shape to the celebration:

“On Sunday we have a common assembly of all our members, whether they live in the city or the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray.

On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The president offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people give assent by saying, ‘Amen’. The Eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent.

The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution, and they themselves decide the amount. The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who for any reason are in distress, whether because they are sick, in prison, or away from home. In a word, he takes care of all who are in need.”

A clear theological reason for their practice is articulated:

“We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the first day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world, and because on that same day our saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For he was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration” (First Apology of St Justyn Martyr, chapter 67).

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, November 29, 2018

Youth Space

Taking a break for God

Page 34



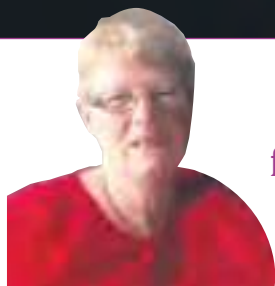
Domestic violence... it's no private matter



After the murder of Garda Tony Golden in Omeath, Co. Louth in October 2015, it was widely reported in the media that he lost his life keeping the peace. The reality is that he was, in fact, trying to protect a young woman from the serious crime of domestic violence.

The case and the reporting highlight the depressing fact that domestic violence is often a hidden crime that takes place behind closed doors. People are too often unaware, or choose to turn a blind eye.

This is the genesis of the days of activism to highlight this pervasive issue. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international



Abuse in the home is a reality that must be faced and it is happening in our communities, writes Sr Fiona Pryle

campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, World Human Rights Day. Currently, more than 3,700 organisations from approximately 164 countries participate in the campaign annually.

One of the world's most

persistent violations of human rights is violence against women.

As the case of Siobhan Philips and Garda Golden highlight, one of the aims of the days of activism is to draw attention to the fact that the scale and true nature of the issue is often hidden.

The incident was reported as 'keeping the peace'. But, that is a term usually reserved for dealing with drunken revellers in town

centres rather than the fact that women are victims of violence in their own homes.

According to Women's Aid, one-in-five women experience some form of domestic violence in Ireland.

They want to challenge what they describe as pervasive myths in society which minimise women's experience of abuse and blames the victim. Communities across the country are coming together to raise awareness with more than 100 events taking place over the next two weeks.

Activists

Historically, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is based on the date of the 1960 assassination of

the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic; the killings were ordered by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

These days are a vital time for us as a country to ask ourselves to what extent do we understand what domestic violence is and do we really believe that it is happening in our own neighbourhoods and parishes.

It is also time to shine a light on the fact that domestic violence requires a more robust and clear response from society and the criminal justice system.

Take the 2017 case, for example, of a 31-year-old fitness instructor who was convicted of punching his ex-partner. He

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

Lighting up Christmas

To celebrate community, creativity and Christmas, check out the Festival of Light in Kilkenny's Castlecomer which is sure to be a hit with whole family.

Beginning on November 30 and running straight up to December 24, you and your kids will get to make your own lanterns, participate in The Parade of Light and watch Santa Claus as he lights up the Square. As part of Yulefest Kilkenny, you can also experience a winter wonderland located in the heart of The Discovery Park woodlands.

Alongside meeting the talented makers at the Craft Yard Castlecomer estate and sourcing gifts for your loved ones, you can treat yourself to some delicious hot chocolate or tasty sausage rolls all the while enjoying the Magical Silhouettes in the windows.

Be sure to wrap up warmly, as this is sure to be an unforgettable experience!



FLASK MITTENS: At Christmas, we usually receive some quirky or bizarre gifts that make us wonder who came up with the idea in the first place. Well, Flask Mittens certainly fit into this category, because as the name suggests – these mittens also act a flask.

While some presents only have novelty value, these gloves are actually practical and keep your hands warm. Each snug pair has a flexible plastic 4-ounce container hidden inside the left-hand glove, so that you can enjoy a quick sip of coffee, tea or eggnog.

The liquid will stay warm for hours and keep your hands toasty at the same time. This is an ideal gift for those that like 'out-there' presents or for a practical person who wants to kill two birds with one stone by not having to carry a flask in the cold weather.

Peanut power

Around 1% of people suffer from peanut allergies which can cause an incredible strain not only on their culinary lives, but also their normal, everyday interactions. However, a new treatment developed by experts across the world is hoping to tackle this problem. The study tested the effectiveness of a new oral immunotherapy for peanut allergy that delivers a target daily maintenance dose of 300mg of peanut protein.

The results revealed that participants saw a significant increase in their tolerance to peanuts. Study author Dr Stephen Tilles said: "We were pleased to find that two-thirds of the people in the study were able to tolerate the equivalent of two peanuts per day after nine to 12 months of treatment, and half the patients tolerated the equivalent of four peanuts."

Despite the positive results, it does not mean that people with a peanut allergy can eat peanuts whenever they want.



Aspirin: pros and cons of an ancient wonderdrug

Aspirin remains one of the most widely used drugs globally, yet its use as a medicinal agent can be traced to as far back as the ancient Greeks who realised its anti-inflammatory properties.

In fact, they used the bark of the willow tree from which it derives. Today, Acetylsalicylic acid or the modern version of aspirin has been available since about 1900 as a painkiller and for treating high temperatures. Indeed, aspirin was used extensively to treat fever and rheumatic pain during the Spanish flu pandemic.

Over the last century the role for aspirin changed significantly after groundbreaking studies in the 1970s showed it reduced the risk of further heart attacks by 25% and stroke by 31% in those who already suffered same.

Indeed, low dose aspirin became a 'life safer' and emerged as an important drug in the treatment of heart and stroke disease. This is as a result of its effect on inhibiting platelets in our blood that normally help with clotting and so aspirin also functions as an anti-thrombotic.

So who should take aspirin? If you have suffered a heart attack, have significant coronary artery disease or have a previous (non-haemorrhagic) stroke then you will usually be put on aspirin. In fact, numerous studies over decades have consistently shown the benefits of aspirin when used for this indication.

Less clear

What is less clear are the benefits of aspirin when used as a preventative in those with no known heart or stroke disease with studies providing mixed messages. Furthermore, guidelines from professional bodies vary though in general, in those at higher risk of having

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



a stroke or heart attack (up to 10% risk in 10 years) due to a combination of risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes or smoking it may be considered.

In particular, although a low dose or what has been called 'baby' aspirin (75mg) is about a quarter of the effective amount needed as a painkiller, it can cause peptic ulcers and increase the risk of bleeding.

“Unless you have a good reason to be on aspirin, it probably confers little or no benefit”

A review of studies in 2012 involving over 100,000 patients on aspirin as a preventative in otherwise well people confirms that it reduced the risk of nonfatal heart attacks in males but overall increased harm through risk of bleeding. In fact, good control of blood pressure and cholesterol and addressing other risk factors is more beneficial.

This year large studies on aspirin used by older adults also shed further light on the matter. In one involving about 19,000 apparently healthier, older adults (aged 65-70+) aspirin did not reduce the rate of cardiovascular events, dementia or physical disability after an average follow up of nearly

five years. However, the rate of major bleeding did increase.

In a further analysis of the same study, aspirin was unexpectedly associated with a small increase in cancer mortality. While the results were surprising and must be interpreted with caution, ultimately aspirin didn't reduce the death rate from any cause. In essence, the findings show that in a typical older person aged over 70 with no known heart or stroke disease there



seems no benefit from aspirin.

Finally, a further study of aspirin use (over about seven years) in about 15,000 adults who had diabetes but no overt cardiovascular disease resulted in a reduction in cardiac, stroke and other vascular events by an average of about 12% but increased major bleeding by about 29% offsetting the benefits for many.

Unless you have a good reason to be on aspirin, it probably confers little or no benefit. In those who are younger (under 70) with multiple risk factors including diabetes but also have a low likelihood of bleeding it may be considered but it is crucial to address all factors including

high cholesterol and blood pressure.

Interestingly, treatment with aspirin has been associated with a reduction in the incidence of colorectal cancer by over 20%, a finding that is fairly consistent in most studies. A small study in the *Lancet* this month also showed that aspirin was linked to a decrease in the development of colonic polyps (pre-malignant bowel growths) in patients getting screened for bowel cancer. A probable mechanism is the aspirin inhibition of the enzyme COX-2 that is synthesised by many bowel tumours.

“It shouldn't be used in those aged under 16 where it may cause the rare but potentially fatal Reyes syndrome”

Finally, aspirin is a very affective painkiller (that is sold over the counter) though has been very much superseded by safer analgesics like ibuprofen that have less risk of stomach upset, ulcers and bleeding. It is also useful for lowering a high temperature and when gargled provides relief for a sore throat.

However, a word of caution, it shouldn't be used in those aged under 16 where it may cause the rare but potentially fatal Reyes syndrome. It can exacerbate asthma and gout and for pain relief should generally only be taken for short periods. It is also usually avoided in those with stomach or bleeding problems.

To conclude, the message of taking "an aspirin a day to keep the doctor away" is not so accurate as it once seemed!

Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

» Continued from Page 31



received only 100 hours community service for the violent action.

His victim made headlines when she posted an online video displaying her injuries and describing her attack. In court the attackers' lawyer characterised this as an attempt to destroy him. The lawyer went on to tell the sentence hearing it was different to a 'normal' domestic assault in that the perpetrator had been confronted by the victim earlier at a shopping centre and she had thrown a phone at him during another confrontation outside his work place, and as a result of that she was struck a blow.

Control

Domestic abuse and violence is different from other forms of violence because it is about power and maintaining control over spouses and partners. The power element means all domestic violence situations are potentially and extremely dangerous. Anyone who tries to help the victim – usually a woman – is also at risk. This is particularly so if the woman is planning to leave the relationship.

The statistics state one in four women in Ireland experience some form of abuse in their lives and that 79% of women who experience violence do not report it.

In 2017, Women's Aid had 21,451 contacts and reported 19,385 disclosures of domestic violence against women and children. This is a snapshot of what is happening in the country as nearly every town and district has a domestic violence service. Hence pointing to the high figures of domestic violence in Ireland.

Women's Aid reported just last week that seven women have died in violent circumstances so far this year, according to Women's Aid. The charity is calling for formal reviews of domestic killings as a matter of urgency.

Since 1996, 225 women have died violently in Ireland – with 16 children being killed alongside their mothers. The vast majority of women knew their killers and more than half were, or had been, in a relationship

with them.

After many years of agencies campaigning, important progress was made in 2017, with the development of a legislative framework that will provide greater safety for women and children and move Ireland closer to ratifying the so-called 'Istanbul Convention' – a Council of Europe measure against violence against women.

“Over the last number of years women have been bravely coming forward to share their experiences and telling their stories”

The Domestic Violence Bill (2017) which was meant to be enacted in the summer, will see real improvements for victims of domestic violence, including the extension and protection of safety orders to couples in intimate relationships without any requirement for cohabitation. Measures will also include the introduction of guidelines for the granting of protective orders, the inclusion of the intimate relationship between perpetrator and victim as an aggravating factor and the new crime of coercive control.

Any domestic assault ought to

Testimonies

“It is not your fault, you are not to blame and you are not responsible. You have a right to life in peace”.

“I cannot believe what it's like to wake up and not to lose my breath from fear of what was going to happen to me once I opened my mouth”.

“My life is now full of wonder, peace and love. My children are happy and contented”.

“I think we are getting nearer to the day when we will dance, ten years later”.

be a source of shame to the country and to the law. No-one should be trying to characterise any type of violence like this as 'normal'.

If as a society we want to eradicate domestic violence, we need to talk about it. We must address it and, as people of faith, pray for both the victims and the perpetrators. We also need to raise awareness in our parishes of the seriousness of domestic violence in current families and the impact for future generations.

Can we look with honesty as a Christian community at this horror in so many homes that are meant to be havens of peace? Can we as a Church, acknowledge this violation of women and children? Can we plan, at least, to have a prayer included in the prayer of the faithful at Sunday Mass during these important days of activism?

“Any domestic assault ought to be a source of shame to the country and to the law”

Over the last number of years women have been bravely coming forward to share their experiences and telling their stories. Their testimonies have brought about an increased number of calls to helplines for support. Just last year, three courageous women telling their story in the media showed a ten-fold increase in calls to the Women's Aid national helpline. The broadcast and testimony bravely shared by businesswoman Norah Casey on the *Late Late Show* earlier this year also allowed women to identify with the real lived experiences of those extraordinary women.

From my experience of working with women in domestic violence since 2002, I have seen hundreds of lives being changed when women can speak of their experiences and get the help they need.

❶ Sr Fiona Pryle is a Good Shepherd sister and social worker currently journeying with women seeking justice in the courts.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

I recently organised some training to run parenting programmes. I also took part in the training myself and I am looking forward to getting out around the county and running these groups with parents.

As part of my job I coordinate a lot of the parenting programmes that happen in Donegal and parents contact me to ask when there will be a parenting programme running in their area. Often, parents feel that a parenting course will help them develop and strengthen their skills and that there will be benefits for the whole family. Sometimes though parents want to do it because they are finding their child's behaviour challenging and they want a solution.

This is something that came up with our trainer on the first day of the programme. The input for each session of the programme is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on developing positive parenting skills – so a lot about listening, paying attention to our children, making time to play with them, reading to them and having fun together, encouraging good behaviour by giving it lots of positive attention.

The second part of the session works on positive discipline – ways to deal with challenging or difficult behaviour in a constructive and positive way often through noticing what is causing the behaviour.

What many parents who do the programme find is that if they are working on the positive parenting skills at home many of the difficult behaviours begin to settle down and there is actually less need for the positive discipline skills.

“The reality is that faith cannot be learned like an academic subject at school”

In parenting, as in everything else, it is the relationship which is key. I have been getting ready for some work with the parents in a neighbouring parish whose children are preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Again, I find that it is the theme of relationship that comes to the fore.

I want the parents to reflect a little on their own relationship with God and how that comes through in family life. I'm going to be asking them to explore what they think the role of the school and the parish is in sacramental preparation. No matter how engaged and vibrant the school and parish are it is building on shaky foundations if a child is coming from a home environment where faith is absent.

The reality is that faith cannot be learned like an academic subject at school. Yes, we can come away with ideas about religion, opinions about what people believe, awareness of feast days and festivals but, without a relationship to God, that just adds up to 'book learning'.



As parents we have a key role in helping our children to develop a relationship with God. That happens in the day-to-day business of family life – learning to pray, thanking God for the food before us, for the fun we have had, for the blessings in our lives. It is that awareness of God, woven into our lives, which builds relationship and nurtures faith. School and parish can strengthen this but it needs to put down its roots at home.

The challenge with the parenting programme is that it asks parents to step back and think about their own way of being, how they interact with their children, how their behaviour influences their child's behaviour.

Instead of just focusing on 'sorting out' the child's behaviour it becomes about building a strong, positive way of parenting. Perhaps in our sacramental preparation we need to shift the focus from the child onto the whole family and how we can nurture strong, life-giving relationships with God.

We are entering into Advent. This beautiful season is all about relationship – Gabriel and Mary, Mary and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary and at the heart of it all, God present, revealed in relationship.

Youth Space



Retreats give us time to stop and think about ourselves and God, writes James McNamara

For most teenagers, the prospect of a class outing creates a sense of anticipation, excitement, adventure and fun. A break from school, an opportunity to relax, but Ms Ronan's next two words rang alarm bells: 'Lough Derg.'

I had vague recollections of my mother visiting there in the not-so-distant past and none of them equated with my definition of a class outing. But before my doubts could cloud my judgment, Ms Ronan had convinced both my friends and I to try something different – to reflect on our lives, to take time for ourselves, to stop and think.

As a result of this and in celebration of the Year of the Family and of the Pope's visit to Ireland, 32 of Ennis' Rice College fifth year students signed up for the following week's Two-Day Youth Retreat to Lough Derg. On October 10, accompanied by Mr Bermingham, Ms Chambers, Ms Ronan and our school chaplain Fr Joy Njarakattuvu we set out for Donegal.

Apprehension

Our initial apprehension about the retreat and what it would entail quickly evaporated as on our arrival to the island we were warmly welcomed by our retreat team led

Taking a break for God



Rice College, Ennis School Retreat on Lough Derg 2018.

by Bosco McShane and Eadaoin O'Kane from Sólta Retreats and of course the staff made us feel right at home.

“At the start of day two, the focus was on bonding activities”

Within a matter of moments, we were participating in various games and activities in order to allow us to connect more closely as a group. These activities consisted of team building exercises, icebreaking games and reflection on our lives. We learnt that as young Catholics in today's society we face many difficulties in our lives, but if we continue to value our faith and follow its guidelines, we can get through these difficult times by supporting each other and with God by our sides.

After a busy afternoon of bonding and deepening our faith, we made paper boats containing

all our worries and concerns which we symbolically floated across the lake, a very worthwhile experience.

That evening we wrote readings and prayers in preparation for evening Mass which was to be celebrated by Fr La Flynn (the Prior of Lough Derg) and Fr Joy. This candlelit Mass took place in the Basilica and had a profound effect on all present. Throughout the Mass, candles were lit, songs were sung and prayers were offered for our loved ones who had died.

During the Eucharist we were invited to join Fr Flynn and Fr Joy on the altar for prayer. The day concluded with a sing-song and the toasting of marshmallows on an open campfire. The absence of our phones, was no longer of any consequence (a profound change in our attitude in a very short period of time).

At the start of day two, the focus was on bonding activities and we were split up into teams and had to cross the hall balancing only on

thin planks of wood. This exercise helped us to realise that even when it gets tough and we fall, it's always important to get back up again. It also helped us to connect more as a group, encouraging us to work together as a team and help each other out in order to successfully achieve our goals.

“The visit to Knock really was the icing on the cake to a great retreat”

Later we made our way to the Basilica where we wrote our private letters to God and silently reflected on all that we had learned about our faith and each other throughout our wonderful time at Lough Derg. We were very thankful of the opportunity presented to us and we hope that many more of our peers will be able to avail of similar experiences in the future. This short break from a

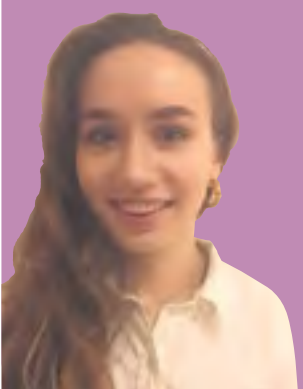
very demanding modern society has provided us with necessary supports and coping mechanisms for our future lives.

While returning to the mainland, we were informed by Mr Bermingham that we would be visiting Knock on the journey home. Here we visited the Shrine and spent some quality time in the Apparition Chapel which still contained the flowers and decorations from the Pope's visit. This experience really was the icing on the cake to a great retreat and made us realise how fortunate we are to have teachers who are focused on our holistic development as young adults.

Like all trips the purchase of memorabilia adds to the occasion. My grandmother's appreciation of a beautiful pair of Rosary beads (each decade symbolised by a red rose) and a bottle of Lough Derg Holy Water, was priceless and has reinforced her faith in the youth of today.

Sweet Treats

Laura Anderson



Homemade honeycomb for a crunchy Christmas

Although there are very few ingredients to this recipe it makes the tastiest treat! The key to success here is the preparation beforehand as the formation of the honeycomb happens quite quickly. Be sure to have all utensils to hand and read through the method a few times before you begin.

As the baking soda is the transformative ingredient it is important that it is fresh to achieve that bubbly honeycomb texture. Wrapped in some brown paper and tied up with pretty ribbon, this makes the perfect Christmas gift for loved ones. Or alternatively, it is a delicious dessert crumbled into vanilla ice cream!

Ingredients

- 100g caster sugar
- 4 tbsps golden syrup
- 1½ tpsps bicarbonate of soda (AKA baking soda/ bread soda)
- 1 large bar good quality milk chocolate (optional)

Method

Line a baking tray about 12cm x 6cm with

greaseproof paper. Of course, the depth and size of the baking tray is a personal preference as to how thick you would like your honeycomb pieces to be.

Add the sugar and golden syrup to a deep saucepan, as the sugar mixture will greatly expand in size later, and give it a mix together. Place the pan on a low heat and let the sugar melt. Be patient, try not to stir the mixture too much and do not increase the heat!

Once the sugar grains have disappeared turn the heat up to medium and let the mixture bubble for about three minutes (or until it reaches 154°C, if you have a sugar thermometer).

It should be the colour of maple syrup. Now is the time to move fast as the sugar will continue to cook and can burn at this point.

Taking the pan off the heat, whisk in the baking soda until it has all been incorporated.

The mixture should expand and take on a golden foamy texture. Quickly pour the mixture into your prepared tray using a spatula to get it all out.

Be careful with this step as the mixture is still extremely hot! It is a good idea to wash the pan soon after with hot water to dissolve any residue.

Shards

Leave the honeycomb to set at room temperature for an hour and a half, then using the end of a wooden spoon break it into medium-size shards. The honeycomb can of course be eaten like this and will keep for two or three days in an airtight container.

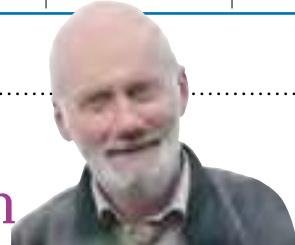
To make it last longer and make it even tastier, melt some milk chocolate and dip the honeycomb in the chocolate using a fork to cover it completely.

Let excess chocolate drip off and place on a wire rack to set. This will keep for about three or four days at room temperature in a sealed container.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Glass ceiling scratched from many angles

Listen with interest to debates about gender, sexism and political correctness, and often these are interrelated.

On **Prime Time** (RTÉ1) on Tuesday of last week, Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor defended her creation of women-only professorships – it's a "positive discrimination" measure that has met with everything from whole-hearted support to derision.

Prof. Patricia Casey thought jobs should be given on merit, and that blaming sexism for imbalances at third level was too glib and simplistic. She instanced other countries, like Norway, where, despite female-friendly work environments, the imbalance was still there. I would have liked to hear her speaking of the other reasons for this but the discussion was quite short – presenter Miriam O'Callaghan was conscious of this and promised a return to the topic.

Minister O'Connor claimed she had third-level bodies on her side, but official and supposedly representative bodies often fall in rather easily behind government policies, fearing perhaps for future funding, or driven by the ideologies of those in high positions.

Miriam did make some challenging points – suggesting to the Minister that a person in one these new jobs might as well have "token



Miriam O'Callaghan, presenter of RTÉ's *Prime Time*.

woman" written on her door, and to Prof. Casey that something radical needed to be done to redress the imbalance.

Speaking of positive discrimination or affirmation action, a guest on the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk) that morning suggested tongue in cheek that Irish people be given such favoured treatment on American campuses as they had a sense of humour and in their resilience could withstand the mollycoddling that goes on in these institutions (I'm not so sure!).

Jonathan Haidt, co-author, with Greg Lukianoff, of the book *The Coddling of the American Mind*, introduced us to the world of trigger

warnings, safe spaces and identity politics. He wasn't so much attacking political correctness of this type but seeking to understand and explain it.

He identified 2014 as the year when this "increase in fragility" showed up in American college campuses – the students were of the 'iGen' or 'GenZ', the first generation that had grown up with social media, the first generation that had been overprotected, e.g. not allowed out unsupervised from fear of abduction – an ungrounded fear whipped up by media panics even though crime figures were dropping.

He saw a generation being

set up for failure, with the disempowering of young people, who were deprived of resilience, independence and the skills of conflict resolution. He linked it all to increases among young people especially teenage girls, of depression, self-harm and suicide.

Declaring himself a fan of "viewpoint diversity", he identified colleges moving from leaning left, to extreme left, with the creating of sacred victim groups and a new orthodoxy, with almost no presence of viewpoints from the right.

Campaigns

After recent referendum campaigns here it rang a bell when he identified a new vindictiveness – people showing how aggressive they could be in defence of alleged victims. Haidt saw President Trump as a symptom of this "gigantic polarisation", where we vote against what we hate instead



Caroline Slocock.

PICK OF THE WEEK

MICHAEL, THEY'VE SHOT THEM

RTÉ1, Saturday, December 1, 7.25am

During World War One, the executions of the leaders of Ireland's Easter Rising influenced the Irish Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, to take a public stance against conscription facing Australians.

CONVINCED

EWTN, Saturday, December 1, 8pm

While discerning his own conversion, Donald Johnson met people who overcame obstacles and opposition to fully embrace their Catholic faith.

WALKING THE WALK

RTÉ1, Thursday, December 6, 10.15pm

The walk of Fr Tony Coote to raise awareness and funds for sufferers of Motor Neurone disease.

of for what we believe in, and saw him as a "disaster for political civility". I find it hard to disagree with that.

The whole women and glass ceiling stuff came up on **The Late Debate** (RTÉ Radio 1) last Thursday. One of the guests was Caroline Slocock, author and former private secretary to Margaret Thatcher. I'm not a fan of Thatcher and neither was Slocock, at least not a fan of her political views or her legacy.

Slocock did seem to admire her work ethic – she was powerful enough to change the world – and humanised her to some extent. Comparisons were made with current PM Theresa May, and the latter came out better from the comparison. Presenter Katie Hannon acknowledged the resilience May has shown of

late – "you can only look on in some awe at the fact that she's still standing".

It struck me that when women in politics are admired in the media the adulation is mostly for those who are left leaning or liberal – so, Hilary Clinton becomes a media darling, while the likes of Thatcher, May and Condoleezza Rice (Secretary of State during the Presidency of George W. Bush) get little credit for breaking through the glass ceiling. In fact they often get abuse, but funny enough the abusers rarely if ever get called out for misogyny. Sauce for the goose.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Prodigal daughter returns to world that spurned her

Disobedience (15A)

Head Orthodox rabbi Rav Krushka (Anton Lesser) stands on the altar of his London synagogue speaking about "the beasts of the flesh". Then he collapses and dies. His estranged daughter Ronit (Rachel Weisz), a photographer living in New York, is informed of the news by her friend Esti (Rachel McAdams). She had an affair with her as a teenager.

Esti is now a teacher. She's married to Ronit's cousin Dovid Kuperman (Alessandro Nivola). He's set to take over as head rabbi now that Rav has died.



Alessandro Nivola (left) and Rachel McAdams star in *Disobedience*.

Fair

★★

Ronit left London under a cloud. Rav banished her after hearing about her fling with Esti. Ronit receives a chilly welcome from the community that disowned her when she comes home for the funeral.

She stays with Dovid and Esti. Dovid is awkward with

her. He thinks she still has feelings for Esti. He fears she'll draw her away from him. We sense the marriage isn't happy despite his protestations to the contrary.

Ronit is shocked to learn her father left all his money to the synagogue in his will. Her name is also missing from

his death notice. It isn't long before she and Esti re-ignite their romance, the "beasts of the flesh" rising up within them.

Banishment

Everyone is talking about the lesbian sex scene in this film, but there's more to it than that. It's also a story of banishment and reconciliation. Chilean director Sebastian Lelio has made a critique of patriarchal fundamentalism which is thought-provoking, though I found Dovid's decision to renounce his rabbinical post out of character.

Lelio is also vague on the motif of the sheitel (wig-wearing) custom of the Jewish community. Esti has to

observe this for marital formality but why does Ronit do so? Is it for mischief?

The film has lots of lingering silences, poignant stares. It often seems like something dramatic is going to happen but it rarely does. There's less to these scenes than meets the eye.

The bleakness of the London winter underscores the cold world the film depicts. Everyone seems to be dressed in black – and repressing their emotions.

The issue of freedom is a major motif in it, the kind of freedom Ronit takes for granted in her New York life. We see little evidence of this. I thought it was conveyed better in Naomi Alderman's

novel of the same name.

Disobedience is a fuzzy film. Dovid's 'conversion' to the liberal ethos is too instant to convince.

His commitment to his religion is deep; there's no way he would give it up as suddenly as he does.

Sidney Lumet handled this theme much more realistically in *A Stranger Among Us*. Melanie Griffith failed to wean Eric Thal away from his religious convictions in that film.

Ronit's posthumous reconciliation with her father is also too pat. Can alienation be patched up in seconds by the snapping of a camera lens? Hardly.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Seeking a new relationship, not with the globe, but the Earth

Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime

by Bruno Latour
(Polity Press, £12.99 pb)

Frank Litton

It was not so long ago that the path of history was clear. It was a story of progress towards more liberal, secular, democracies. Europe and the US where the modern world had been invented and from where it was exported to (imposed on?) the rest of the world was the model.

Now 'progress' has stalled. Responses to climate change fall far short of what is required if disaster is to be avoided. Immigrants, 'the modernised' of the what was once called 'the third world', seeking to escape the costs of globalisation to share its benefits, surge towards the lands of the modernisers, threatening the stability of their societies and dislocating their politics.

Britain Brexits. Donald Trump, with considerable support, gives up the US' aspiration to be a world leader. He promises to make "America great again" behind a wall and tariffs, all-the-while invading our atmosphere with his unrestricted CO₂ emissions.



It is tempting to suppose that the problem is the success of the 'bad guys' and the ineptitude of the 'good guys'. If only the enlightened would get their act together and mobilise.

Bad guys

Certainly, the bad guys are disconcertingly successful in promoting climate denial and blocking solutions. Certainly, this is a huge problem, now

that they have the support of the US President. Certainly the European Union is shaky. But are the failures of the good guys the problem and they trying harder the solution?

A map underpins our politics. It guides us in identifying issues, finding friends, recognising enemies. It marks out the terrain on which interests conflict, compromises are sought, policies are formulated and implemented.

The problem, Bruno Latour argues, is the map.

Prof. Latour is one of the world's leading academics. The author of many books, he is now Vice-President for Research at Institut d' Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po). He brings his work in sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy "down to earth" in a clear and lively manner to argue the need for a new way of imagining politics.

As Latour observes the trajectory of modernisation traces a path from the local to the global. We followed it when we joined the EEC and its development into the European Union. As elsewhere the path was, and is, contested, by both left and right. The local was, and remains, a counter-attraction to the global. Our identity as Irish seems safer there, our freedom to control our destiny more secure.

“The ‘nations’ to which left and right populists retreat are a mirage”

The move towards the global comes at the cost of collusion with military adventures and capitalist depredations. The price is too high. And so the debates proceed. Latour surveys western politics and finds the arguments in these terms dysfunctional. They hold no prospect of addressing our plight.

The 'nations' to which left and right populists retreat are a mirage. They provide neither the security nor the recovery of control that they promise. The global conceived simply as a 'global economy' offers little security and less justice. We must reorientate

our politics.

It is impossible not to see the chasm between our politics and the problems with which we contend.

What is the alternative? How can we combine the human need for rootedness and the necessary global perspective? How can we escape the economisation of everything that devalues everything? How can we recognise ourselves as participants in nature rather than observers? Exploiters? Manipulators?

Latour observes that people "dissatisfied with the ideal of modernity are turning back to the protection of national or even ethnic borders". This is why, he says, that it is urgent to shift sideways and to define politics as what leads toward the Earth and not toward the global or the national.

"Belonging to a territory is the phenomenon most in need of rethinking and careful redescription; learning new ways to inhabit the Earth is our biggest challenge."

Bringing us down to earth is the task of politics today. Latour sketches these possible answers with clarity and wit.

The enigma of ace code-breaker Richard Hayes

Codebreaker: The untold story of Richard Hayes, the Dublin librarian who helped turn the tide of World War II
by Marc McMenemy
(Gill Books, €16.99)

Felix M. Larkin

"Ghosts hover / Lyster, Hayes, Henchy, / And those who served them": thus in 2007 did Gerard Lyne, formerly Keeper of Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, recall in a delightful little poem some of the former directors of the National Library and their staffs.

Of the former directors, Richard Hayes is the pre-eminent – not least because of his editorship of the multi-volume *Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, an indispensable tool for researchers in the field of Irish studies in the pre-digital age.

Marc McMenemy's book, however, is not concerned with Hayes the librarian and his great



Captain Richard Hayes.

contribution to Irish scholarship – for he has another, and arguably more important, claim to fame.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Hayes was seconded to work as a code-breaker with the Irish army. His work in that

capacity, McMenemy argues, "helped turn the tide of the Second World War".

His achievements included breaking the so-called "Görtz cipher" – the code used by Hermann Görtz, the most significant German agent sent to Ireland during the war – which had defeated the British wartime code-breakers at Bletchley Park. Bletchley Park famously cracked the German "Enigma" code.

Plaudits

Hayes also discovered the secrets of the German microdot encryption method, which won him the plaudits of the American wartime intelligence agency, the OSS – as well as the admiration of the British. Guy Liddell, Britain's director of counter-espionage during the war, described Hayes as having "gifts...that amounted almost to genius".

Hayes was a modest man. McMenemy writes of his "discreet

nature and reserved manner" – typical, perhaps, of a librarian. When interrogating captured German agents in search of clues for his code-breaking, he was given the *nom de guerre* "Captain Grey" – reflecting his undemonstrative demeanour. At the end of this book he remains an enigmatic figure, despite his remarkable achievements.

“Hayes also discovered the secrets of the German microdot encryption method”

Apart from his obvious intellect, he was proficient in several languages – including German – and was also a highly skilled mathematician. So, as McMenemy notes, "he uniquely possessed all the talents needed for the job that was at hand".

The fruits of his work were shared with British counter-

espionage and later with the US as part of Ireland's policy – notwithstanding our neutrality – of giving covert assistance to the Allies wherever possible. De Valera's dexterity in balancing his relations with the British and American governments with the continued presence of the German legation in Dublin during the war is one of many interesting details in this book.

Another is the support given to the various German agents operating in Ireland by Nazi sympathisers here and by the IRA. One of the reasons why German agents were sent to Ireland was to link up with the IRA and to assess its "suitability as an asset to the Nazi regime", to quote Mulholland.

The IRA was, however, by then a faction-ridden organisation in disarray – and, while still a threat to the British and Irish states, was incapable of giving any meaningful assistance to the German war effort.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

The fearful delusions of modern life

Disordered Minds: How Dangerous Personalities Are Destroying Democracy by Ian Hughes (Zero Books / John Hunt Publishing, €14.50)

Peter Hegarty

Do we have a right to know something about the mental health of prominent people? Ian Hughes, a research fellow at UCC's Environmental Research Institute, suggests that we do: if, as psychiatrists believe, one in twenty people suffers from a potentially dangerous personality disorder, then it follows that many disordered people wield power.

Among those taking decisions that affect us are psychopaths, narcissists, and paranoids. Psychopaths cannot empathise, cannot imagine how others might feel or suffer as a consequence of their actions.

Narcissists can empathise, but are convinced of their superiority: to them the idea of equality "is literally inconceivable".

The paranoid lives in a state of heightened wariness, convinced that dangers and threats are all around him. In times of civil unrest paranoids foment hatred against enemies, real or imagined.

Disorders

People suffering from one or more of these dangerous personality disorders often come across as confident and imperturbable. They can be convincing to the point of being charismatic. These

perceived characteristics reflect what Hughes calls "rigidity": people with personality disorders tend to have a fixed attitude to the world, something others interpret as steadfastness, as an ability to overcome the vicissitudes of life.

A personality disorder can 'predispose an individual to violent or excessively selfish



behaviour'. Disordered individuals are dangerous when they attain positions of power and influence, dangerous even if they don't: we read here about the depredations of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and the rest of them, but also about a woman who encouraged her partner to rape her five-year-old daughter when she herself wasn't in the mood for sex with him.

Hughes describes the "toxic triangle" that assists the rise of disordered leaders: destructive personalities interacting with susceptible, vulnerable people in a "conducive" environment. "Toxic triangles" have been in place in many countries in recent times.

After the crash of 1929, bewildered Germans, drowning in their misery, looked to the Nazis for deliverance. The people of

China, a country ruined and brutalised by the Japanese occupiers, were willing to take a chance on Mao and his circle of psychopaths.

Germany and China exemplify a general rule: "...instances of mass political violence typically occur when psychopaths, narcissists, and paranoids co-operate. In fact, when the ruthlessness of psychopaths combines with the arrogance of narcissists, and the fear-mongering of paranoids, society often has little defence."

More often than not disordered rulers are wedded to an ideology. They persist with their grandiose projects in the face of mounting evidence that these are failed or flawed.

When they were no longer able to ignore the facts they identify scapegoats and turn on them. They have accounted for the deaths of tens of millions of people.

Charlatans

Hughes warns that financial capitalism creates toxic triangles. Risk-taking and speculation lead to downturns and create circumstances that favour the rise of disordered charlatans.

The narcissist in power in Washington exploited the anger stoked by the crash of 2008. Trump may have achieved little else, but as this compelling book notes, he has certainly stirred interest in the mental health of people with power and influence.

Changing the way we live, an hour at a time

Awakening Inner Peace: A Little Books of Hours by Sister Stan (Columba Books, €12.99 / £10.99)

Peter Costello

This little book, harking back to the pre-Reformation books of hours, though it lacks illustrations, might be called 'the very rich hours' of Sr Stanislaus. Certainly her intention, like those ancient books, is to enrich the daily prayer life of her readers, refocusing them into not only developing spiritual awareness, but an awareness that connects with daily life, hour by hour.

Her regular books have always been popular, especially at Christmas time. This is due partly to her own admirable character, but also to the ideas, prayers and

readings she brings before her numerous readers.

This is a book for quiet hours as well. How well some will recall our teachers of old seizing those moments between classes to read their breviary.

This provides the same small passages to mark the canonical hours, followed by a reflection. It will not take as long as the breviary did; but it will give to the passing day its little moments of benign sanctification.

This is an ideal companion to Sr Stan's earlier books, *Mindful Meditations for Every Day* and *Sr Stan's Book of Inspiration*.

She is an amazing woman. One has to ask where does she find the time; but she does, and makes every moment of her day and night count for something.



Web Watch

Greg Daly

An urgent call for the courage to reveal and face our past

"Church archives and the records of ecclesiastical bodies such as religious orders of priests, nuns and brothers are what stitches together the rent and ragged fabric of Irish history," says UCD's Prof. John McCafferty, beginning an enthralling podcast on the Royal Irish Academy website, ria.ie.

"In time of inquisition: preserving and using the archives of the Irish Catholic Church' is a particularly important episode in the academy's current series of podcasts, 'To Preserve and Protect: Contemporary Issues in Irish Cultural Heritage', detailing as it does the threats posed to and the opportunities posed by Ireland's Church archives.

"Their importance is accentuated by the hole burnt in the collective memory of the inhabitants of this island during the holocaust of the Four Courts site in 1922," Prof. McCafferty continues. "They are for the most part uncharted, uncatalogued and highly vulnerable.

"At the same time they represent the best chance for Irish historians to break free from the intellectual and evidential bindings created by decades and decades of obsessive concentration on the past as merely past politics or as a vehicle for a poorly articulated heritage industry."

Powerful

It's a powerful opening, and one developed and supported in impressive fashion by the historian as he explains how all manner of fears and suspicions have conspired and continue to conspire to keep from public sight what many archives might tell us about our ancestors and ourselves, with time running out in terms of how we might engage with them now as their owners age and die out.

"Immense tasks lie ahead. These are tasks which everyone interested in Ireland's past must take on. Otherwise there is a risk of imperilling or losing entirely the cultural



Irish Franciscans in their library depicted on a fresco at St Isidore's in Rome.

patrimony of Ireland's largest and most influential Church," he says.

This requires real, honest, informed engagement, he stresses, one that gets beyond mental pictures of Ireland as a society dominated by the Church and that recognises Irish Catholics as simply one subset of a far larger global Church.



Prof. John McCafferty.

A failure to grasp this may not even be the worst failing of some historians, he suggests, observing that "most markedly there is a profound and – to be totally honest – vast disregard for the intellectual expressions and traditions of Christianity".

Pointing out that just as to work in Parisian archives one should learn French, so one should know something of canon law and theology if one is to work in Church archives, he makes a damning observation.

"Here lurks what has been a corrosive self-infantilisation. So many historians of Ireland are cradle Catholics. They assume that because they attended Mass, whispered their childish confessions or served at the altar, that they actually know this Church and this religion," he says.

"I can think of no other

field of enquiry where the practitioners are happy to take 12-year-old understandings of the subject into the laboratory or library or – as in this instance – into the laboratory of history, the archive," he adds, noting that his academic peers are by no means the sole offenders in this regard when it comes to modern Ireland.

“One should know something of canon law and theology if one is to work in Church archives”

"Such reflexively anti-intellectual inculcated views of Catholicism are not present among historians alone. They are just as easily detected among politicians and journalists – as well as clerics and even some theologians."

Urging the owners of the archives to have the courage to open them to historians and urging historians to engage with the archives honestly and with informed and open minds, he says that "for once it's time to set aside moralising discourse in favour of acknowledging the incalculable value of these materials for understanding of the Irish experience in the past and in the present".

The podcast will take just over 20 minutes of your time. You'll not find them wasted.

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Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

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C.M.

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Crossword Junior Gordius 260



- ACROSS**
- 1 Little John and Friar Tuck were two of his Merry Men (5,4)
 - 7 Number that means a single thing (3)
 - 8 Building someone lives in (5)
 - 9 Copenhagen is the capital of this country in Europe (7)
 - 11 Late part of the day (7)
 - 15 It's usually the last word of a prayer (4)
 - 16 Dangerous liquid (4)
 - 17 Glue (5)
 - 18 The main meal of the day (6)
- DOWN**
- 1 A practice session before staging a play (9)
 - 2 Rebound, like a ball (6)
 - 3 You use it when sewing (6)
 - 4 You bake bread in this (4)
 - 5 There is a TV show called "____ the Explorer" (4)
 - 6 You wear a scarf around it (4)
 - 10 This type of orange is easy to peel (8)
 - 12 Disappear (6)
 - 13 Signalled 'yes' with your head (6)
 - 14 Neater (6)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.378

Across – 1 Chamber music 7 Ant 9 Sear 10 Thirst 11 Jane Eyre 14 Heats 15 Niece 16 Hasp 18 Vodka 21 Vials 22 Canal 23 Ousel 24 Nile 25 Toxic 26 Scuba 33 Prince 34 Loft 36 The Divine Comedy

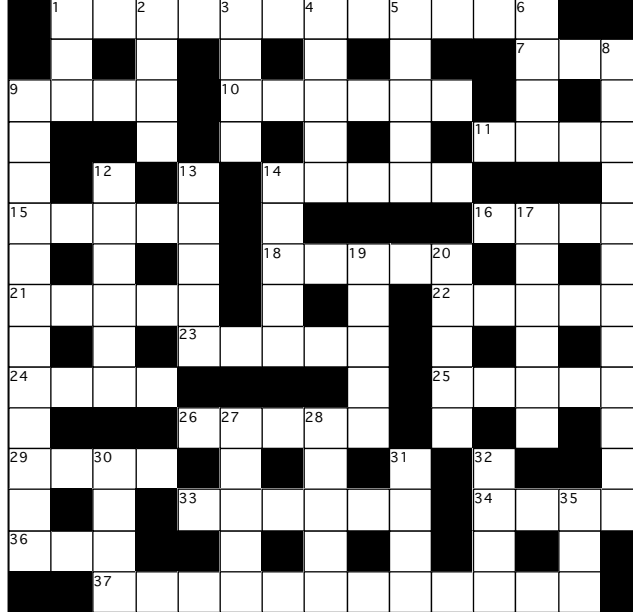
Down – 1 Cue 2 Awry 3 Bets 4 Raise 5 Upset the apple cart 6 Cana 9 Saint Vincent de Paul 13 Verso 14 Hives 17 Annexe 19 Delta 20 Acute 27 Corgi 28 Binge 30 Rued 31 Zero 32 Glue 35 Fry

CHILDREN'S No.259

Across – 1 Switch 5 Dream 7 Looks 8 Terrier 9 Nonsense 15 Age 16 Alphabet 18 Olive 19 Barn 20 Reel

Down – 1 Salmon 2 Ironing 3 Castle 4 Devil 5 Darts 6 Mars 10 Oak 11 Season 12 Napkin 13 Eraser 14 Breeze 17 Rib

Crossword Gordius 379



- ACROSS**
- 1 Mingle in order to provide physical therapy (3,9)
 - 7 Statute (3)
 - 9 & 29a A character gets just a single identification to the French How lazy is that? (4,4)
 - 10 A country and its people (6)
 - 11 We will shortly get water here (4)
 - 14 Many dance in the basket (5)
 - 15 & 33a Needlework with links to a pain in the side? (5,6)
 - 16 This Briton finds the cardinal a bed (4)
 - 18 It's fired from a bow (5)
 - 21 How to steal - or cook - salmon (5)
 - 22 This get-up is essential to a pharisee (5)
 - 23 Mr John is in the hotel, Tony (5)
 - 24 Dip a biscuit into a drink (4)
 - 25 Animal innards (5)
 - 26 Icon or picture (5)
 - 29 See 9 across
 - 33 See 15 across
 - 34 Lose moisture (4)
 - 36 See 6 down
 - 37 In touch with the Almighty? Not a word! (6,6)
- DOWN**
- 1 That Greek character has literally started the Royalist
 - 2 Root crop used in the production of sugar (4)
 - 3 Suspend (4)
 - 4 Complete? Just say the word! (5)
 - 5 Motored (5)
 - 6 & 36a It takes legions, literally, to make this drink (4,3)
 - 8 Exercise the Board to exercise the pirates' deadly wish (4,3,5)
 - 9 Duck bland pig; prepare this tasty food (5,7)
 - 12 Can two articles depict a Biblical land? (6)
 - 13 & 20d Upset one town hag by staying dry here (2,3,5)
 - 14 Intone (5)
 - 17 Mr Richard's coastal features? (6)
 - 19 Indian princess upset near a cardinal (5)
 - 20 See 13 down
 - 27 A bishop might let this go to his head (5)
 - 28 Travel with a bird? I know what you mean! (3,2)
 - 30 Part of an eye or camera (4)
 - 31 Scorch (4)
 - 32 Earth (4)
 - 35 Melody is regularly inspired (3)

Sudoku Corner 260

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 259

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

Last week's Hard 259

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



Fr Vincent Sherlock

Notebook

All things considered, aren't we blessed to be alive?

IT WAS ONE of those celebrity interviews. The interviewee was speaking about social media, his own use of it and value it has for him. He spoke too about the fears he has in maybe mistakenly using it and sending out a message that might be stupid, insensitive, misjudged or hurtful. He went on to say his parents are alive and he dreads the thought of ever saying or doing anything that might cause them hurt or embarrassment.

The interviewer enquired if this was linked with guilt and I'm not sure if the guest had a chance to respond before the 'host' chided: "You should try being an Irish Catholic!"

I wanted to scream but nobody would have heard me.

This paper is called *The Irish Catholic* and maybe we could do worse than reflect a little on how potentially wonderful it is to be either, never mind both.

Kind-hearted

To be Irish is in many ways a blessing. Generally, we are perceived to be kind-hearted and good-natured. Where there is crisis in the world, we have been known to be generous in response to appeals for help and, more often



than not, some of our own are found in the midst of whatever rescue and recovery work is taking place. We are good-humoured and have an ability to laugh when it might be easier and more

understandable to cry.

Though a relatively small nation, we are globally recognised as 'decent people'. There's a lot to be proud of in being Irish. Of course, like all humanity, we are open to chinks and flaws but, all things considered, being Irish is a very good thing and a badge we can wear with honour.

Universal

Catholic? Not a bad badge either! At its best and most basic, it speaks to the universal and to being willing to go beyond boundaries that may well seek to fence us in. I love the name of the charity that sees doctors bring medical assistance to the world's most vulnerable and isolated: *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors without borders).

Borders and divisions seem

very small when viewed from space. Nanci Griffith's song 'From a Distance' spoke of this. God watching us 'from a distance' because from that distance the world is at peace, people do not hurt or mistrust each other and we are seen as friends. It is the way God intended and Catholics, alongside all denominations of faith and peoples of decent intent, have a place in working towards making peace real.

I like being Irish, being Catholic – an Irish Catholic. I'm happy to be both and whatever guilt I might feel is more to do with the mistakes I make, the opportunities to be better that I miss, the words I thoughtlessly speak than with the Church of my baptism or the country of my birth.

I didn't scream but I switched channels! Within seconds I was singing along with Big Tom – "going out the same way we came in"!

The answer is found somewhere in conviction, struggle and seeking to understand that despite the ups and downs of our history, the errors of our ways, both as nation and Church, we are still blessed to be alive and to have in us a sense of purpose and value.

As Advent draws near

We have a few weeks to prepare for Christmas. These really should not be confused with 'shopping days' but maybe they could be 'Stopping Days'!

John Healy once wrote of the decline of a town in the West in a book called *No One Shouted Stop*.

It was a wonderful title and message rooted in reality. Let us stop a little then, from time to time, in the weeks to come.

Stop to reflect, notice, pray, enjoy, share...stop to be...a people who can stop, reflect, notice, pray, enjoy and share.



THIS ADVENT CAN YOU HELP A POOR RURAL COMMUNITY IN PERU INAUGURATE THEIR NEW CHURCH IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS?

Father David, an Irish priest working in south-east Peru, has contacted The Little Way Association for financial aid. "This small town has a population of only 1,500, but they are a very active and faith-filled community," he writes. "Their church is old, dilapidated and does not accommodate the people for liturgical celebrations so the local community has taken the initiative to build a larger church. Each family has promised to contribute a small amount of money towards the cost, but they need help for the roofing." Father tells us of the local traditional custom of gathering eucalyptus and fresh flowers on Christmas Eve to take to the main parish church, which is two hours' walk away, to help build the crib. They long to be able to celebrate the inauguration of their own church too as they make that journey this Christmas.

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