

The Irish Catholic




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Pour money into education not wars, Pope pleads

Chai Brady

Governments must pour more money into education and drastically reduce military spending for there to be genuine progress and peace in the world, Pope Francis has warned in his annual message for the World Day of Peace.

"It is high time, then, that governments develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry," the Pope said in his message for January 1.

"The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations, freeing up financial resources better used for healthcare, schools, infrastructure, care of the land and so forth," he said.

The Pope's message, which the Vatican sends to heads of state around the world, invited everyone to "work together to build a more peaceful world, starting from the hearts of individuals and relationships in the family, then within society and with the environment, and all the way up to relationships between peoples and nations."

Pope Francis proposed three paths for building lasting peace: dialogue between generations and concrete projects they

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'Behold your King...'



Altar server Pippa Goff is pictured with her parents Jean and Barry as she places the infant Jesus in the crib in preparation for Christmas Day at Glynn Church, Co. Wexford.

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Synod is a call to co-responsibility for the Church

'Negaholism' is a term that is used to describe the state or condition of being addicted to negative

thinking. Counsellors and therapists more-and-more see it as a psychological addiction that has an impact on a person's overall quality of life.

Of course, it's important to distinguish between negaholism and deep-seated clinical depression which is a serious issue often requiring medical intervention to help people find balance and wellbeing.

The problem with negaholism is the fact that it is masked by the perception that a person is acting nobly and for a righteous reason. Someone who is accused of being overly-negative will often respond that they are simply "telling it like it is" or "confronting reality". Sometimes this is true – there are few things more annoying than a clueless optimist who wants to ignore facts.

We've seen this during the pandemic, some people have been unable to resist the temptation to catastrophise at every turn.

Negativity

But, negativity can often be propelled by a desire



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Pope Francis greets Sister Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, during a meeting with representatives of bishops' conferences from around the world at the Vatican in this file photo. Photo: CNS.

to challenge consensus and what is deemed ethically and morally acceptable. At the height of the madness that was the Celtic Tiger, some economists tried to raise their voices in protest at reckless policies – they were quickly dismissed.

So, we shouldn't be afraid of people expressing negative sentiment. But, we also need to be wary of when people are motivated not so much by a desire to challenge group-think, but instead what might even have become an addiction to negativity.

People who are addicted to negativity – and I fear we have many of them in the Church in Ireland – are generally angry about something and rarely express happiness. They are almost never satisfied, maintaining the appearance of fighting for 'a cause' that gives the impression of being part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

“Negativity can often be propelled by a desire to challenge consensus and what is deemed ethically and morally acceptable”

This is a real and present danger as we approach the New Year and take more tentative steps on the synodal

impression on society and an everlasting impression on the Church. We have to be realistic about the challenges facing Irish Catholicism, but endless naval-gazing leads to paralysis.

Call

The synodal pathway is a call for everyone to let their voices be heard. It is a call for people to be part of shaping what the Church in Ireland will be in the future. We are none of us passengers in the Church, by virtue of Baptism we have a right and a responsibility to speak and reflect on what is for the good of the Church. Don't stand back from the synodal process, embrace it and bring to it your hopes and worries about the future of the Church. Don't let the voices of negativity drown you out.

“At the height of the madness that was the Celtic Tiger, some economists tried to raise their voices in protest at reckless policies – they were quickly dismissed”

So, here's a New Year's resolution for the followers of Christ: hear the naysayers for they are sometimes right about the need for reform. But, remember, they are generally wrong about what form the reform should take. Challenge their negative thinking and their desire to tear things down rather than build things up.

And, rather than tearing up the pages of the Pope's letter, *The Joy of the Gospel*, to put it on the fire for warmth, remind them of the Pontiff's words that "the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus". Happy New Year!

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Pour money into education not wars, Pope pleads

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can share; education aimed at building freedom, responsibility and development; and dignified labour that protects people's rights and the environment.

"Great social challenges and peace processes necessarily call for dialogue between the keepers of memory - the elderly - and those who move history forward - the young," Pope Francis said.

"The global crisis we are experiencing makes it clear that encounter and dialogue between generations should be the driving force behind a healthy politics," one that "is not content to manage the present 'with piecemeal solutions or quick fixes,' but views itself as an outstanding form of love for others, in the search for shared and sustainable projects for the future," he said.

Young people, he added, also should be given respect and encouragement for their

commitment to working for a more just and sustainable world.

Education helps provide the skills and setting for dialogue between generations, cooperation and sharing expertise and experiences for promoting integral human development, he said. However, "there has been a significant reduction worldwide in funding for education and training; these have been seen more as expenditures than investments."

At the same time, he said, military expenditures "have increased beyond the levels at the end of the Cold War and they seem certain to grow exorbitantly."

He called on governments to cut military spending, boost investment in education and do more to "promote the culture of care, which, in the face of social divisions and unresponsive institutions, could become a common language working to break down barriers and build bridges."

Archbishop Eamon supports fresh calls for border poll

Ruadhán Jones

The Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin has said he would back a border poll.

Dr Martin added that he “would like to see a united Ireland”, saying all the political leaders North and south must “open up questions of identity and belonging, and to honestly face them”.

These questions of identity and belonging are “alive and well”, the Archbishop of Armagh told *The Sunday Independent*.

“I would like to see a border poll. I think it would be pointless to have a border poll like Brexit, where nobody really knew what it was they were voting for when they had it,” he said.

New people

There are “a whole bunch of new people living in this island now who have other cultures, other identities and other senses of belonging”, Archbishop Martin continued.

“It is up to all of us who believe in a united Ireland to be able to present to everyone as

to why political unity on this island, of whatever nature, would be, will be more prosperous, more welcoming, more peaceful, more diverse, and more accommodating than our current arrangement is,” he said.

Meanwhile, the archbishop said in the same interview that the possibility that priests could be subject to prosecution for saying Mass during lockdown “really touched a raw nerve”.

“For some reason, in the south, there was a more standoffish approach between Church and State,” Dr Martin said. “You had to contact the Taoiseach, it was all at a very high level.”

This caused tension, he added, which “was there all the time and at times it became extremely difficult”.

He found himself “more exhausted” as a result of what a friend described at one point as life “just full of gloom and Zoom”.

“I have a lot on my plate and sometimes it can seem overwhelming. I would be dishonest not to say that,” Dr Martin said.

Desmond Tutu: ‘A warrior inspired by Christian faith’

Chai Brady

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been described as a “warrior” inspired by his Christian faith who fought against inhumanity and apartheid in South Africa, following his death over the weekend.

Irish missionary Archbishop Liam Slattery OFM told *The Irish Catholic* Archbishop Tutu brought “humanity to what was an inhumane situation”.

“He was one of the great warriors of the fight against the last bastions of apartheid. He played a tremendous role inspired by his Christian faith,” he said.

Archbishop Slattery, originally from Co. Laois, currently serves in South Africa and has been there for half a century. He met Archbishop Tutu on several occasions.

He said: “Tutu was a pain in the side of the apartheid regime but also he was in no way afraid of criticising any corruption and other aspects of the ANC and the new government.”

“In many of the dramatic years in the 1980s particularly when people who were felt to be in favour of the regime were sometimes burnt with a tire around their neck, Tutu rushed in and prevented these sort of things happening.”

Archbishop Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, died aged 90. This was announced by the South African presidency on Sunday. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997.

Archbishop Slattery added: “Being a bishop and a great publicist – he really knew how to utilise media and publicise his actions – it was very difficult for the apartheid regime to move against him with any kind of freedom because they were being observed, so he used his media personality to the advantage of the people who were oppressed, so one must really praise that.”

The CEO of Church-charity Trócaire, Caoimhe de Barra, described Archbishop Tutu as “a true humanitarian and a voice for those who suffered oppression, injustice and violence not just under apartheid, but all over the world”.



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Loving God for life



Sr Eileen O'Connell OP makes her Final Profession in the Dominican Convent Chapel before Christmas, becoming a life-long member of the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary and Saint Catherine of Siena, Cabra, pronouncing a vow of obedience to live as a Dominican Sister 'till death'. Photo: Anne Lonergan.

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Parents owe it to children to pass on the Faith – Mickey Harte

Chai Brady

Renowned GAA manager Mickey Harte has said Irish people owe it to their children to pass on the Faith, or even make them aware of it so they can make up their own minds.

Mr Harte told *The Irish Catholic* there has been extra challenges for people of Faith over the last two years due to the strife caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite this, his hopes for the future lie in the Faith handed down by parents, grandparents

and ancestors who have lived through periods in which it was very dangerous to practice their religion.

He says: "Thankfully in this country people don't come to bad ends because people believe in God, but we need to realise that without a belief in God or if we remove God from the picture then life becomes more of a trivial thing in many ways, it doesn't have meaning.

"The depth of meaning comes from the Faith that we have been handed on under difficult circumstances and the least we could expect to

do for those people who handed on that faith to us is to hand it on to others, especially if we can add value to it."

The current manager of Louth and former manager of the Tyrone GAA team, Mr Harte said young Catholics can also pass the Faith on to their parents.

"Our young people I believe nowadays are very, very well-tuned in to their faith and they are a good example as well and they can actually hand the Faith up the other way. There's so many very committed young Catholics and they have

various groups and organisations and I think they are to be admired because they really do believe, they research it and they find out that it is a great source of value in their spiritual life."

He added: "People owe it today to the next generation to let them be aware of the Faith and to let them make their own minds up... we need to show them that it means something to us, that it's a source of strength to us and that there's something very special about the Faith that we are committed to."

See pages 10-11

Judge dismisses Declan Ganley's challenge over Mass restrictions

Jason Osborne

Businessman Declan Ganley's High Court challenge over the legality of the ban on public worship which has been in place at various stages throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has now been dismissed.

Mr Justice Charles Meenan said that Mr Ganley's challenge was now pointless, as the situation has lapsed.

Mr Ganley argued that although the

regulations in question have lapsed, the case raised critical legal questions about the right to public worship, questions which may become relevant again in the future.

He argued that his case was about the "criminalisation" of leaving one's home to attend public worship.

Mr Ganley said that while he wasn't arguing for an "absolute" right of public worship, he said that any infringement upon the right must be justified.

The case was against the Minister for

Health with Ireland and the Attorney General as notice parties, who disputed his claims.

They also submitted that a hearing on the lawfulness of the regulations would not be an efficient use of court resources.

Mr Ganley argued that, as the Covid-19 pandemic is ongoing, the regulations may be re-imposed in the future, bringing him within the exceptions identified within the authorities he cited for his case.

Respect 'diverging views' in synod process

Brandon Scott

The Faithful should respect everyone's right to share their views as the Church continues on its synodal journey, Bishop Ger Nash of the Diocese of Ferns has said in his Christmas message.

He said that Pope Francis has called for a new conversation to take place within the Catholic Church in order "that we might find new ways of being God's people at this time and place

and into the future".

"I invite you to join in the conversation in whatever form it will take place in your own local community. I urge you to respect the right of everyone to share their views and the right too of expressing diverging views. It is my wish that we speak and listen to one another in a respectful manner so that a new pathway may emerge for us to walk on together as sisters and brothers of Christ," Bishop Nash said.

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Seeking charity at Christmas



A man seeks assistance along a congested main road ahead of Christmas in Dublin, December 19. Photo: CNS

A politician's campaign for apologies...

A former Labour MP, in Britain, Ann Keen, certainly achieved a personal and political goal this past year of 2021. She succeeded in getting the Westminster government to announce an inquiry into forced adoptions in Britain between the 1950s and the 1970s. Mrs Keen, former parliamentary secretary to Gordon Brown, has also called for an official apology to the estimated 250,000 unmarried British mothers who were made to place their babies for adoption.

“She was forced to scrub steps, constantly reminded by staff that she was ‘a bad girl, a bad person’ and denied pain relief when she was in labour”

When Ann Keen was 17 years of age, in 1966, she was sent to a mother and baby home in Swansea in Wales, because she had become pregnant out of wedlock. She was forced to scrub steps, constantly reminded by staff that she was “a bad girl, a bad person” and denied pain

“Mrs Keen, former parliamentary secretary to Gordon Brown, has also called for an official apology to the estimated 250,000 unmarried British mothers who were made to place their babies for adoption”

Scandals and the Duchess of Argyll

The scandalous life (and divorces) of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, is currently being revisited in a BBC drama, with Claire Foy as the said duchess in her 1950s-early-1960s heyday. Divorce cases were often the source of salacious reporting, under the guise of keeping a record of the facts, although the Irish media, on the whole, eschewed the

practice. There wasn't a formal ban, but it was thought unseemly to intrude on private marital bad behaviour.

Good-looking

I met Margaret Argyll, briefly, in the 1980s, when she was in her well-preserved old age. The encounter took place at the Argentine embassy in London. “Such a good-looking

people,” she remarked, a *propos* of Argentines. “I’ve never seen a plain Argentinian.” She disapproved of the Falklands War partly, I got the impression, on grounds that it was regrettable to engage in a conflict against such attractive folk. (Maybe as good a reason as any!)

Perhaps surprisingly – or perhaps not – she had converted to Catholicism.

● I plan to do something very brave on New Year's Day. I shall get on the scales and weigh myself. My position over the matter of weight over the past year or so has been ostrich-like: stick your head in the sand and don't think about it! Hide the weighing-scales. Avoid those clothes which remind you that you could once fasten up the zip on that skirt or pair of trousers. Move towards tent-like dress designs.

I grew up with an aunt who regarded gluttony as a deplorable sin – eating for the sake of eating. She condemned it as selfish, self-centred, indulgent and gross. As I went on feasting greedily through St Stephen's Day – chocolates, German *stollen*-cake, Italian *panettone*, cheese, varieties of left-overs – the thought occurred to me that this really was getting to the point of gluttony. Take out the scales and face the music!



Mary Kenny

relief when she was in labour. Eight days after her son was born, he was taken away from her, without her having any say in the matter. “It was all about shame – real big shame – and so I felt burdened with that and therefore went along with whatever was asked of me.” She felt a “huge stigma” as an unmarried mother.

Commission

The British government's commission is headed by veteran Labour MP Harriet Harman (a niece of the late Lady Longford), and Ann Keen's campaigning vigour has brought it about. And yet, while it will surely highlight the injustice of forcible adoption, I think it unlikely that there will be a full official apology (as there has been in Australia to single mothers).

It's already been indicated by government sources that there were too many agencies involved in the situation to lay the blame on any single organisation: local authorities, social workers, sometimes Churches, medical staff and of course families were all implicated

in the policy. Attitudes were spread right across society.

And although the general apology sought by former unmarried mothers has been reported positively in the British media, it has not taken the kind of central focus that a similar situation has had in Ireland. Perhaps the difference is that in Ireland, there is a more visible organisation to blame – the Church, and to some extent, the State. Whereas, in Britain, it is recognised that it is much more difficult to pin responsibility on one single source, when many policy-makers sincerely believed that young single mothers would be unable to care for their infants alone.

Ann Keen, who is a widow – her late husband was also an MP – was reunited with her son when he was 28, and she has two other children. But she is still driven by the desire to have her name cleared – quashing reports saying she “gave her baby up for adoption” when she didn't do so voluntarily. That is a point that will surely emerge with the findings of this commission.



Former MP Ann Keen.

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Pope's Urbi et Orbi warns against indifference to global tragedies

Jason Osborne

Giving his traditional *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on Christmas Day, Pope Francis warned against the "wall of our indifference", which is leading to "immense" tragedies being passed over in silence.

“Yet only those paths can lead to the resolution of conflicts and to lasting benefits for all”

Speaking from the central balcony overlooking St Peter's Square on December 25, the Pope said that people had become so accustomed to disputes that "by now we hardly even notice them."

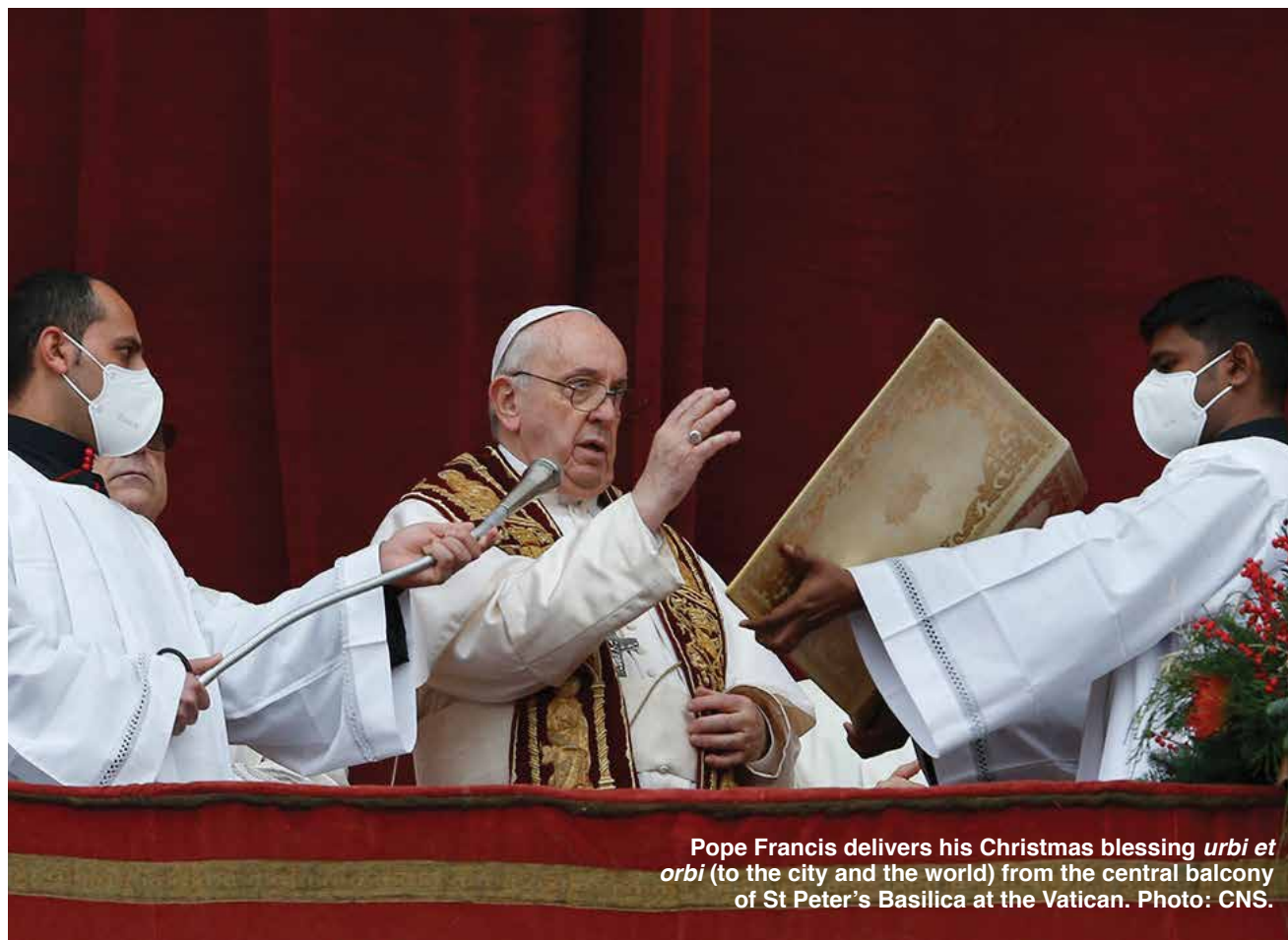
"Our capacity for social relationships is sorely tried; there is a growing tendency to withdraw, to do it all by ourselves, to stop making an effort to encounter others and do things together," Pope Francis said.

Complex crises

On the international level, the Pope said, there is the risk of avoiding dialogue, and the risk that the complex crises the world faces will lead to taking shortcuts rather than walking the longer paths of dialogue.

"Yet only those paths can lead to the resolution of conflicts and to lasting benefits for all," he said.

Special mention was made of the people of Syria, Iraq and Yemen, as well as the ongoing conflicts and tensions around the world, such as between Israelis and Palestinians, in Lebanon, Myanmar, Ukraine, Ethiopia,



Pope Francis delivers his Christmas blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Photo: CNS.

Sudan and the Americas.

The Pope also used the occasion to draw attention to the plight of those suffering violence and abuse, from disease and illness, as well as to that of the world's

migrants.

Referring to the infant Jesus, Pope Francis said: "In the cold of the night, he stretches out his tiny arms towards us: he is in need of everything, yet he comes to

give us everything. Let us ask him for the strength to be open to dialogue.

Dialogue

"The Word became flesh in order to dialogue with

us. God does not desire to carry on a monologue, but a dialogue. For God himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is dialogue, an eternal and infinite communion of love and life," he said.

Catholics should help foster soul of Europe, says Bishop Treanor

Ruadhán Jones

Catholics in Ireland have an important role to play in fostering the "soul of Europe", Bishop Noel Treanor told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fostering this soul is a "challenge and imperative to work for the promotion of the good [via the European project], for the realisation of what's true and global and enhancing", said Bishop Treanor, who is one of the vice-presidents of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE).

"That remains a challenge for every generation," he added. The inspiration for the European project was born from the "cradle" of Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage, Bishop Treanor explained.

While concerns remain for Churches in the EU over attacks on freedom of conscience and a lack of "mutual literacy", he urged Catholics not to "sacrifice the good on the altar of perfection".

"We have the challenges of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the promotion of the Heavenly City," the Bishop of Down and Connor said.

"That always entails drama, it always entails discussion, dialogue and ideally efforts to enlighten and persuade."

Bishop Treanor continued, saying it is also "the task of Churches and faith communities... to critically build up an awareness of the importance of a respect for faith traditions as part of the religious, cultural and historical heritage of Europe".

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World's richest man argues civilisation needs more kids

Staff reporter

Tech billionaire and *Time's* 2021 Person of the Year Elon Musk has urged people to have more children, saying that low and declining birth rates are "one of the biggest risks to civilisation".

Speaking recently at a *Wall Street Journal* event, Mr Musk said there "are

not enough people".

"I can't emphasise this enough, there are not enough people," he said.

These comments come as increasing numbers of people forego having children, citing concerns over climate change and global instability.

Mr Musk said that too many "good, smart people" think that there are too many people in the world and that the

population is growing out of control as a result.

"It's completely the opposite," he said, adding, "If people don't have more children, civilisation is going to crumble. Mark my words."

Asked whether this is why he has so many children, the father of six said he's trying to set a good example and that he has to practice what he preaches.

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Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



My dad and dementia: Love and tiny miracles

My father always had a merry soul. He still does. And he also had a remarkably prodigious memory. There wasn't a traditional or seannós song he didn't know. It was as if on the first hearing of a song he soaked up and absorbed not just every line, but every nuance, ornamentation, and flourish, of what were often complex and difficult lyrical phrases.

Songs of great loss or of sorrow or defiance. Songs of national pride, or songs which, to paraphrase Kavanagh, made the Iliad of a local battle. The magnificent songs of our rich heritage. *Sliabh na mBan. Tomás Bán. Róisín Dubh. The Boys of Barr na Sráide.* They were the ones he loved to sing the most, and he sang them from the heart, profound and powerful.

Dad famously sang every song with his entire body: his shoulders moving, hands outstretched, feet sometimes breaking into a battering dance. There was heart and soul in every rendition.

People loved to watch him sing, and they loved him too. "He's some man, your dad," they'd say. "And he can set a room on fire." He lit up our music, illuminated it with his passion. And he made it a joyful celebration.

What was remarkable was that he didn't just know the Connemara songs, or the songs from the Déise, or Múscraí, or the Lough shore. He knew them all.

His great friend, the fiddler Antóin Mac Gabhann, spoke about Dad's remarkable memory, and his impressive knowledge of all things musical, at a ceremony where he received an award from Comhaltas at the Fleadh in Sligo one year.

"Séamus always reminded me of the Village School Master in Goldsmith's poem," he said: "And the more we gazed, the more our wonder grew. That one small head could hold all that he knew."

Memory

When Dad's memory started to falter, then, it was an immediate cause for worry. A man who knew even the forgotten verses to the barely-remembered songs was not someone who would forget a name of an old friend – and then increasing amounts of names, and then descriptive words. The man who had hosted a thousand concerts, and delivered a thousand lectures on traditional music, was suddenly finding himself lost in

the middle of a sentence. He knew something wasn't right.

So, we did what everyone does when dementia first creeps in. We attended the clinics and spoke to the specialists and faithfully took the medication and hoped and prayed. But dementia is relentless. It reminds me often of the sea: silent and remorseless and inexorable, wearing even the most resilient minds down.

The changes started to accelerate, and then his confusion grew. Things began to shift faster in the wrong direction.

“People loved to watch him sing, and they loved him too. He's some man, your dad, they'd say. 'And he can set a room on fire'”

It wasn't just his memory: we worried too at how frail he had become, at his loss of mobility. We were advised that his care needs were high and that we might not be able to cope. But maybe love and perseverance can work tiny miracles. Enough of a miracle anyway to recover his strength so we can keep him home where he is happy and loved, and where he can be himself – with family and familiarity, sitting by the fire, or with the sun on his face in the garden. Home where he can have cake and laughter and music and lots of songs.



Where we can bring him for a walk, with the dog running by the chair and a child holding his hand. Where the grandchildren can gather in gangs and play the tunes he likes best. Where we can put the new baby into the bed next to him so that they can admire each other, each at that stage of life where they are most vulnerable and most in need of our care.

He's home where Raidió na Gaeltachta is always on, and where we can pick one of thousands of CDs or books to read or play for him, all inscribed with notes to Séamus: with thanks, or appreciation, or admiration. He was always the musician's friend, the champion of traditional singers, a keeper of the sacred flame.

His friends send videos on WhatsApp saying hello and sending a tune or telling stories from their madcap times. We'll never be able to thank them enough for their kindness. Their affection shines out from the small screen. It's lovely to see, and to see his reaction, all smiles. Family come down from Clare and Cork, decency personified, with fresh veg from their gardens and tales of old times.

In the time before Covid, his old friend, the mighty flute player Mick O'Connor, curated a tribute for Dad at the Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy. The place was thronged. The renowned musician and producer, Tony McMahon, who we sadly lost this year, had a special message for him: "Séamus," he said, "You have a heart as big as County Clare."

Dad is still that person. He claps encouragingly when the children play a tune for him, and laughs when a baby kicks and smiles. He's still my wonderful Dad, changed utterly but still the same. The essence of what he always was is with us still.

Fear

There's a fear of dementia that makes us afraid of what it will bring, not just for the person afflicted but for everyone. People shake their heads in sympathy. "It's terrible," they say. "The person's gone."

In my experience, that's not true. My Dad is not gone. He still has sparkly blue eyes and a smile that would light the room. He is still absolutely mad for music. He still joins in when we sing the songs he loves most, or when his memory sparks into life, like it did last month and he suddenly knew again all the words to *Máirín De Barra*.

I listened some time ago to Dr Des O'Neill, a geriatrician, who explained that in many ways dementia is a limitation of language and memory, and that the person remains, even if we need to find a new way to navigate our communication and our care.

I know that things will deteriorate further. But we'll

manage that when it comes.

One evening coming home, I said to my daughter that I felt people might not understand his life still has meaning, that I'm still as proud of him as I ever was. "He gives us meaning too Mam," she replied. "He shows us what's most important."

It reminded me of what Hopkins wrote in *Felix Randal*: "This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears."

"Us too it endears". That's true. My mother's infinite patience, the gentleness and love she shows him every day, despite her own troubles and being almost blind. Sometimes she sits for hours holding his hand. We always called her the baby whisperer because there wasn't an upset child she couldn't soothe. Now she does the same for Dad.

Love and perseverance and tiny miracles. We'll hold onto that, and onto him, for as long as we can. Until God calls him.

Mo ghra go deo thú, a Dhaid. Love you forever Dad. Dementia won't change that.



Niamh Uí Bhriain's father Seamus.

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When public health becomes a religion substitute



Many people now refuse to accept that a life worth living involves a certain amount of risk, writes **David Quinn**

For almost two years now, and probably for months to come, our lives have been dominated by the pandemic and the restrictions it has placed on us.

It has catapulted doctors, scientists and public health experts generally into positions of pre-eminence where their word can barely be questioned.

Such an eventuality was predicted decades ago by the Austrian priest-philosopher, Ivan Illich, a true eccentric but also probably a genius and certainly a prophet.

Fr Illich foresaw that in a time of medical crisis, doctors would be given the power of generals in war.

He said of doctors: "He who is assigned control over death ceases to be an ordinary human."

Instead, claimed Fr Illich, "They form a charmed borderland not quite of this world", and "the time-span and the community space claimed by the medical enterprise" would become "as sacred as their religious and military counterparts."

Generals are, of course, given great power during wars because we trust them to defeat our enemies.

Priests hold great power when we believe they can show us the way to salvation.

Believe

Doctors are conferred great power when we believe they can save our lives, or give us better health, and that means they are powerful all the time, but especially during a medical crisis like the one we are experiencing.

Generals lose power when a war is over. Priests lose power and influence when we no longer believe we need them in order to be saved, or to help us on that path, or when we don't believe in such a thing as salvation at all anymore.

But can the value of doc-



A frail St John Paul II just six weeks before his death in 2005. His example of enduring suffering inspired many people. Photo: CNS.

tors ever be doubted? In peace or in war, whether we believe in God or not, we all strive after good health and almost everyone wants to live a long life. Doctors can help us to achieve that. To this extent, their efficacy and value can never be questioned.

On the other hand, we have to be awake to the possibility that they can be given too much power and influence, and also too much credit.

“Doctors are conferred great power when we believe they can save our lives”

We often assume, for example, that medicine and doctors are chiefly responsible for the improvements in public health over the past 100-150 years.

But almost certainly, engineering, decent quality housing and improved nutrition have saved far more lives.

Engineering brought clean water to our houses. Damp, cold, draughty, overcrowded accommodation with poor plumbing is notoriously bad for the health, and poor nutrition has a terrible effect on our immune systems and our physical development.

Get these things right, and giant improvements will already have been made to public health, and none of them need doctors.

What medicine has given us is highly effective vaccines, especially against the childhood diseases, and antibiotics, which have saved numerous lives, as well as improved treatments and procedures.

Nonetheless, it remains the case that engineers, better diets, and improved material conditions generally are chiefly responsible for better public health.

Sceptical

Dr Seamus O'Mahony, author of *Can Medicine Be Cured?*, is sceptical of some of the over-inflated claims medicine makes on behalf of itself. He argues that most of the medical breakthroughs that saved lots of lives, such as the aforementioned antibiotics and childhood vaccinations, had been developed before the 1980s, and medical developments since then have been far slower.

If I understand him correctly, like Fr Illich, who he admires, Dr O'Mahony questions the value of many public health campaigns which he thinks can transform very

large numbers of us into the 'worried well'.

We are always anxious that there might be something wrong with us as we are regularly urged to take part in huge screening programmes even though there is only a tiny chance we have what they are looking for.

We make constant visits to the doctor just in case we miss something.

Old age and infirmity come to be seen as things that can be cured, rather than as facts of life to be accepted when they come. This is connected to the growing demand for assisted suicide. If we refuse to accept our condition and can see no point in going on, then we want to be able to turn to the doctor who will have his lethal injection at the ready for us.

Critical

Ivan Illich was particularly critical of the way in which

medicine undermined our ability to accept some things as inevitable and unavoidable making us instead desperate and overanxious about our health.

He said: "The organised pursuit of health has become the principal impediment to suffering experienced as a dignified, meaningful, loving, beautiful, resigned and even joyful embodiment."

“We make constant visits to the doctor just in case we miss something”

In a way, public health is the ultimate expression of materialism. It reduces us to our bodies and makes us think of physical health more than spiritual health.

In old age, a person might still be looking for something that will give them an extra six months of life or go desperately looking for a cure that isn't there rather than accepting that sometimes suffering can only be reduced by accepting it, and in doing so we can become an inspiring example to others.

In fact, past a certain point, the drive to avoid suffering can be deeply counterproductive because a lack of acceptance increases suffering.

Heroic

One reason many people thought John Paul II was heroic is because in his old age he accepted his infirmities and simply kept going, as bad as his illnesses were.

Linked to all this is a refusal to accept that a life worth living involves a certain amount of risk. Over-emphasising public health makes us reduce risk more and more and therefore we might end up only half living our lives.

The pursuit of health is obviously a good thing and Christians have always believed in looking after the sick and treating the body as a 'temple'. But an overemphasis on health is a different thing entirely and can lead us down pathways that are actually bad for us spiritually, psychologically, and possibly even physically.

Taken too far, an obsession with health, encouraged by the State and overweening experts can become a religion substitute, a type of idolatry that religious leaders have a duty to challenge where necessary.



Medicine has given us highly effective vaccines. Photo: CNS.

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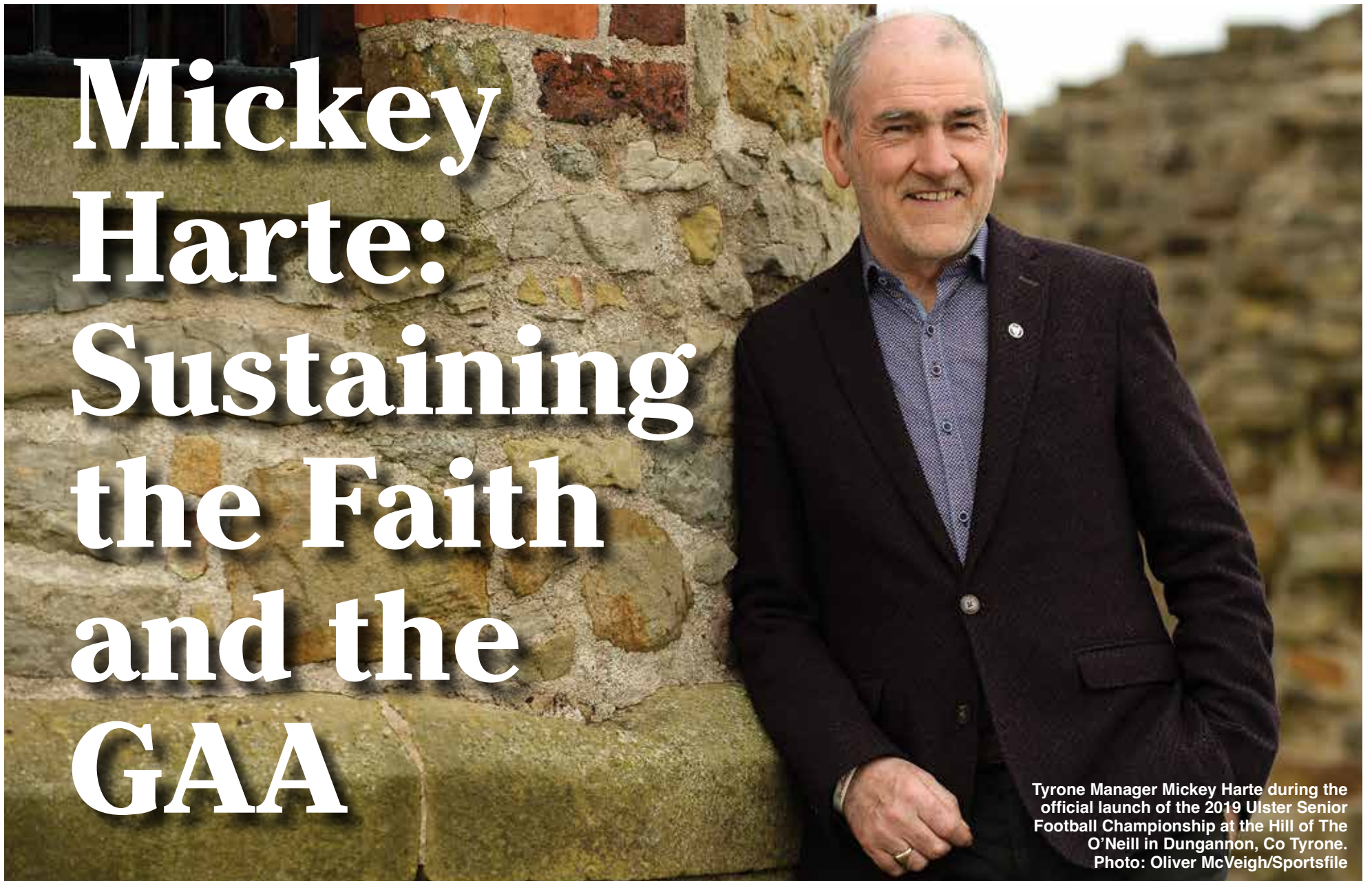


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Mickey Harte: Sustaining the Faith and the GAA



Tyrone Manager Mickey Harte during the official launch of the 2019 Ulster Senior Football Championship at the Hill of The O'Neill in Dungannon, Co Tyrone. Photo: Oliver McVeigh/Sportsfile



Renowned GAA manager Mickey Harte tells Chai Brady about his faith, family, grief and his new book

The faith-filled behemoth of the GAA world Mickey Harte has always been open about the importance of religion in his life and how it has helped him through his darkest moments. As the New Year approaches, he spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about his hopes and new memoir *Devotion*.

The Christmas and New Year period can be a difficult time of year for many as the absence of a loved one can be more acutely felt, but with God's grace, prayer and friends learning to deal with loss becomes more manageable, according to Mr Harte.

"It is a time of the year when people feel emotional because peo-

ple that may have been with them aren't there anymore. In the early stages of having to deal with that it is very challenging," he says.

Referring to the murder of his daughter Michaela McAreavey in Mauritius on January 10, 2011, he explained that in the early years of dealing with the grief "all I can say is that with the grace of God and with prayer and help from your friends it becomes something you can manage better each time it comes along".

He stresses, however, that this did not mean getting over it, "you just manage the emotions, they're always there, they can come and creep in on you at times you don't expect, never mind Christmas".

"I suppose they become acute for some at Christmas if it's early in the stage of them dealing with a very important loss in their lives. I would only give them the hope to say that with God's grace you can learn to deal with that better each time," he says.

Mr Harte's memoir details the ups and downs of his life, with his strong faith reflected throughout.

It goes through his seven years leading Tyrone to four Ulster Championships and three All-Irelands and much more. His approach was extremely influential in how the game is played, and is sure to cement his reputation as one of the most transformative figures in GAA history.

The book also focuses on the shocking tragedy of Michaela's murder during her honeymoon. It was a time when the grief-stricken

“All of us baptised Catholics have the Holy Spirit within us and any good we may do or any good message that we might bring to people is really the Holy Spirit at work through us”

Harte family awoke to find themselves at the centre of an international news story.

“You see what's happening with the players and you know that the crowd are very happy but when you're in the midst of people you realise just how much it means to them”

Asked about his hopes for the book, particularly for those who have also struggled with loss, Mr Harte says: "My hopes are that people realise that things happen in life, traumatic things happen, and everyone has their own degrees of challenges and crosses, it's just to help people believe that there is hope, there's light at the end of the tunnel. You might find yourself in a very difficult place, sometimes we just have to honour that place and pray for the grace to lead us to another and better place; that we are continuing to live life and enjoy the good things in life.

"Hopefully people will know that you can learn to live again and be in a good place, a very good place. Not

where you probably would choose and prefer to be but in a place that's still very good. Every day we get is a gift from God and we should treasure that even though in our own way we would write the script differently when things happen that we don't want to happen – but ultimately his script is the best one for us in the long term."

Value of Faith

Regarding whether people might better understand the value of faith and the Church after reading his memoir, he explains that he has always been a believer that no one can do anything because of their own abilities. All that can be done is to act as people who have the Holy Spirit within them.

"All of us baptised Catholics have the Holy Spirit within us and any good we may do or any good message that we might bring to people is really the Holy Spirit at work through us," he says, "if he works through this particular production and finds a way to help others because of that then that's what the Holy Spirit wants to do and I hope that is the case for some people who read this."

Due to the content of the book, Mr Harte says working on it was

"extremely difficult and extremely emotional" as going back to dark places in life resurrects those emotions again. This meant that even reading it after the memoir was completed was challenging.

Returning to those memories now later in life, it's easier to "lay them down".

He explains: "In the worst times of it, you can't lay them down almost, it almost consumes your day, consumes your thought process, consumes your thinking but I think with time and prayer you learn to redress that balance and find some comfort and consoling from people around you, a support mechanism that brings you through the worst of it so that you can live again a life that isn't what it used to be – maybe that's one of the hardest things to do.

"We wish that we were back where life was, which we thought was ideal and the dream world and it was, but God chooses a different path for us and his choice on the different path is for the greater good: I'm convinced of that."

GAA

It would be impossible to discuss Mickey Harte's memoir without speaking about the GAA and its power



not only in his life but all those who take part as spectators or players.

Undoubtedly one of the most successful Gaelic football managers of the modern era, during his 18-year tenure with Tyrone (2002-2020) the county won 12 Dr McKenna Cups, six Ulster Football Championships, one National League, and three All-Ireland Championships. After parting ways with Tyrone after the end of the Covid-affected 2020 season, he accepted the post of manager with the Louth senior football team.

Mr Harte cheered on as a supporter during Tyrone's fourth Sam Maguire Cup win on September 21 this year after defeating Mayo, with the match finishing 2-14 to 0-15. It is a moment that will live long in the minds of Tyrone supporters. The last time they won the Sam Maguire Cup was 13 years ago.

“We’re lucky in the GAA fraternity where there’s great support from local GAA communities”

Describing the moment, Mr Harte says: “It gave me another insight into how it was for the people who were watching on in the years gone by, you don’t really get the full impact of that when you’re down in the field.

“You see what’s happening with the players and you know that the crowd are very happy but when you’re in the midst of people you realise just how much it means to them and how much they feel part of this success. It means that anyone with Tyrone connections at all feel like they have won and achieved something very special and so it’s an experience like none other in sport.”

Asked whether he felt like he had missed out after stepping down as Tyrone’s manager one year ago, he says he doesn’t look at life that way, “I

have been very blessed with what I’ve had in life and what I’ve had in sport, I’ve been more than blessed”.

“It’s great that it’s continuing on and yes I was there for part of the journey that those young men were on who won that last All-Ireland. I was with them for a number of years so I know who they are, I know what they’re like, I know what they’re made of and I know how much this means to them so I’m thrilled for them,” he continues. “It is very special when you’re with the team on the line, contributing in some very practical way but you do contribute from the side lines as well and I suppose this is work that has been going on for a number of years and there are so many people throughout all of our county and all of our clubs who can feel a little bit like that was their All-Ireland too so we can all feel that.”

Mr Harte set out on a new journey with Louth and as manager he hopes he can help them be the best they can be, saying “there are really good footballers in Louth too”.

“They have the will and the desire to get better and we, myself and Gavin Devlin [assistant manager], want to try and help them to be the best they can be and they have the desire, the county board is there behind them and we’re there to give whatever experience and knowledge we have. We believe they will get better but we don’t talk about how far that goes, we talk about trying to make every player that we come into contact with the best of themselves and if they do that collectively then they will be decent.”

“I think we should return to the rosary. It was a really strong prayer in my life growing up and I’m so grateful that I was in a family where it did matter”

Community

With a sense of community certainly being lost in some of Ireland’s big cities, Mr Harte said “we’re lucky in the GAA fraternity where there’s great support from local GAA communities”.

“It is a time of the year when people feel emotional because people that may have been with them aren’t there anymore”

“But I think it shouldn’t be confined to that. I think community is about people, we were built for community, we weren’t built to be individuals or islands or anything else, we were built to be people who work with each other. The support of people in times of trouble is invaluable,” he says.

“We all know that at some stage or other people who are supporting us will need support so it is a very mutual exchange of support. I think that is one of the traditional ways of the Irish Catholic Church, doing wakes and funerals and all of that, which is really good and very supportive. Without those things I think it would be much more difficult to come through difficult times.”

Future Church

“You know the story about the pessimist who doesn’t care about tomorrow? He knows it’s going to be bad anyway,” Mr Harte says when asked

whether he is pessimistic about the future of the Church in Ireland due to issues such as falling Mass attendance and the decline of priestly vocations.

Mr Harte would rather look at the optimistic elements of the Church’s future. One of these being the fact many people who have lived their lives in many ways, who have gone searching solely for satisfaction, but the contentment they were hoping to discover never materialises – this is where the Church can step in.

“I think there’s no better place to search than in the church before the Blessed Sacrament and there you will find all the peace and calm state of mind that you really want. People are looking and searching for something and maybe they’re searching in the wrong places, it’s really there in front of us,” he says.

“And of course, the rosary always sustained the Irish Catholic faith in times when Mass wasn’t available or it was too dangerous to go to Mass or there wasn’t a priest to say it, the rosary was the thing that kept our faith alive and the rosary is very simple to have in every home.

“I think we should return to the rosary. It was a really strong prayer in my life growing up and I’m so grateful that I was in a family where it did matter and I think we should encourage all people of all ages to return to the rosary and it will keep the faith strong in this country.”

Christmas traditions

Speaking of Christmas, Mr Harte says his tradition is to have a meal with family but this has changed somewhat now that his children

have grown up and have families to go to as well.

“It used to be everybody came to us, but we might share St Stephens Day here in our house but we would go to some of our family on the other days. We would go to one this year, we’d go to another the other year, we would just have places to go to share the Christmas meal and share the festivities in the company that is best for all of us: our family,” he says.

However, Jesus’ birth must be the focal point of Christmas celebrations he says, as people “always get sucked up” into the commercial aspect of the holiday.

Mr Harte says: “We shouldn’t lose focus on what it’s all about. It’s about the birth of Jesus, it’s about what is central to our faith and if we look on the spiritual side of it and prepare spiritually then the commercial side will take care of itself as well.

“Maybe we spend too much time on the commercial side and to me I think it should be a mini version of Lent where you are preparing for something special, like we prepare during Lent for Easter and the rising of Christ again, at Christmas we are preparing for the birth.”

“His tradition is to have a meal with family but this has changed somewhat now that his children have grown up and have families to go to as well”

As the world approaches the year 2022 and the Covid-19 pandemic continues to cause strife, Mr Harte says it has been challenging for people of faith not being able to attend Mass in person when facing the worst stages of infection.

Despite the challenges, his hopes for the future lie in the Faith handed down by parents, grandparents and ancestors who have lived through periods in which it was very dangerous to practice their religion.

He says: “Thankfully in this country people don’t come to bad ends because people believe in God, but we need to realise that without a belief in God or if we remove God from the picture then life becomes more of a trivial thing in many ways, it doesn’t have meaning.

“The depth of meaning comes from the Faith that we have been handed on under difficult circumstances and the least we could expect to do for those people who handed on that faith to us is to hand it on to others, especially if we can add value to it.

“Our young people I believe nowadays are very, very well-tuned in to their faith and they are a good example as well and they can actually hand the Faith up the other way. There’s so many very committed young Catholics and they have various groups and organisations and I think they are to be admired because they really do believe, they research it and they find out that it is a great source of value to their spiritual life.”

People owe it today to the next generation to let them be aware of the Faith and to let them make their own minds up, he adds, saying “we need to show them that it means something to us, that it’s a source of strength to us and that there’s something very special about the Faith that we are committed to”.

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True Christianity in action



QUB Catholic chaplain Fr Dominic McGrattan and QUB Pastoral manager Shannon Campbell drop off more than 300 shoeboxes to Belfast Homeless Services.



Ruadhán Jones

The Catholic chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast delivered over 300 shoeboxes containing essentials and Christmas treats to Belfast Homeless Services during the festive season.

QUB students, their families and friends "have been incredibly generous in their support of this worthwhile cause", the chaplaincy said in a post on Facebook.

Significant donations came from the Ards Peninsula, Downpatrick, Saintfield, Belfast, Portadown and Cushendall.

Liz Rocks from Belfast Homeless Services commented: "You blew us away this morning when you arrived. Just as we thought that kindness, help and support could not get any greater, you all just excelled and went way beyond the call of duty.

"True Christianity in action. Your generosity means we can give more shoeboxes out to more vulnerable groups."

The initiative was coordinated by the Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB and the Order of Malta, while L'Arche Belfast helped to provide transport.



Shannon Campbell squeezes into a car laden with essentials and Christmas treats.



The important role of the Church in the EU



The Church can be a co-guardian of the European project, Bishop Noel Treanor tells Ruadhán Jones

At a time when the European Union is facing pressure from Brexit in the west and debates regarding the EU's fundamental values in the East, the Church has an important role to play in promoting the European project, Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor tells *The Irish Catholic*.

The inspiration for the European project was born from the cradle of Christianity, Bishop Treanor explains: "It's clear I think that in the post-war Europe, those who dared to imagine and to shape the embryonic EEC or European project, were inspired by the desire 'War never again; never again war'. Many of them were driven and inspired by their Christian faith. Many of them indeed by their Catholic identity.

"There's no doubt about it, the Christian heritage and specifically the Judeo-Christian heritage, with input from Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, was a cradle and source of inspiration for the shaping of the European Union."

He points to the example of Venerable Robert Schuman – one of the European Union's co-founders, who was declared venerable by Pope Francis this year – while adding that "many others were inspired by the different Christian traditions with the same drive to ensure that reconciliation would be promoted, by developing institutions of governance that would enable peoples with an embattled history of internecine war to find a radically and completely new way of managing power, of building a future".

Gathering

Bishop Treanor, who is also vice-president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), was one of a number of religious leaders gathering online for a conference organised by Dublin City University earlier this month. The purpose of their meeting was to discuss the important role religions play in protecting and fostering 'the soul of Europe'.

"It really was to harness and focus the interests of faith communities in an inter-disciplinary and inter-faith dialogue – both those words are important because we had university people there, people from different religions, people with different personal and professional experiences," Bishop Treanor says. "Pope Francis talks about all things being interconnected and I think this was an exem-



A man carries a European Union flag in London June 24, a day after voters in the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU in 2016. Photo: CNS.

plary and modular, inter-connected exchange of ideas."

Fostering this soul is a "challenge and imperative to work for the promotion of the good [via the European project], for the realisation of what's true and global and enhancing", Bishop Treanor says.

"That remains a challenge for every generation. I think we need to avoid the idea that the European Union is the realisation of a perfection for once and for all – no. It remains, as Schumann talks about it, a process taken step-by-step and that every generation has to put its shoulder to."

Challenges

From the point of view of the Church, the challenges include addressing issues like the erosion of freedom of conscience, the rise in the persecution of Christians and religious minorities in the EU and an overall concern for dialogue and religious literacy on the part of the EU's Commission and Parliament.

For example, the DCU conference was held not long after an internal

European Commission document caused upset when it proposed the neutralisation of Christian language during Christmas. No longer would it be called the "Christmas period", but the "holiday period", in an effort to use more inclusive language.

Advised

The European Commission guide also advised officials to "avoid assuming that everyone is Christian". The guidelines were withdrawn in response to widespread criticism, a decision welcomed by COMECE. The bishops' conference said they could not "help being concerned about the impression that an anti-religious bias characterised some passages of the draft document". They warned that attempts to suppress religion damage the image of the EU and its institutions, and support for the "European project in the member states".

Bishop Treanor welcomed the immediate withdrawal of the document, and reiterated the bishops' concern that "this kind of document does damage publicly the image of

the commission itself, of the European project itself, in the minds of many citizens".

"It points to the fact that even in these modern times, attempts are still made to privatise the religious dimension of life," Bishop Treanor said. Further to this, he continued, it shows the importance of developing "a reciprocal and mutual literacy in matters religious" in significant arenas for politics and public policy.

“It really was to harness and focus the interests of faith communities in an inter-disciplinary and inter-faith dialogue”

"No one person can be a specialist in every single field which flows into the processes of good government and political policy making," Dr Treanor said. "All of these things require that the different currents of awareness in human society engage with each other in discussion, listen to each other respectfully, and knead all of these dimensions together, without excluding arenas of profound human significance."

Bishop Treanor points out that there is always the possibility of enhancing the EU's protection of the rights of religious communities to freedom of conscience and also freedom from harm, as per the very treaties and guidelines on which the EU was founded. However, for this to happen, Catholics and Christians must be proactive, Bishop Treanor stresses, urging them not to "sacrifice the good on the altar of perfection", even if valid concerns around freedom of conscience and religion emerge in the EU.

"We have to recognise that in all of life, and the mystery of the Incarnation teaches us this, that God became incarnate and enfolded in an imperfect human theatre, in a theatre of contradictory forces," he says. "And that the Good News that we have to present is to activate and to champion, to live the integrity and values of the Gospel, which are consonant with the core human values."

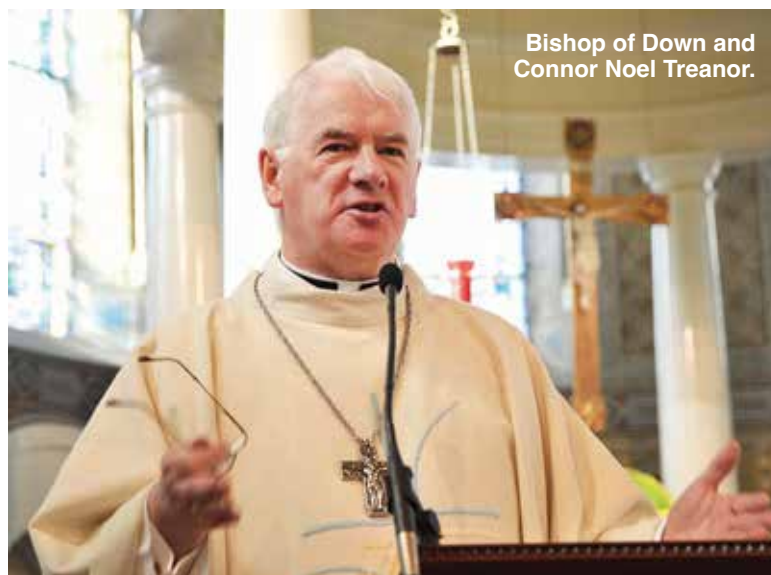
Forgiveness

"We have the challenges of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the promotion of the Heavenly City. That always entails drama, it always entails discussion, dialogue and ideally efforts to enlighten and persuade. We have to promote the understanding of the Gospel and of the Christian tradition in its achievements and also of course in its failures."

While championing for the Gospel values, we can't forget that it is not the purpose of the European Union to evangelise, the bishop of Down and Connor says. Nonetheless, it is important that the EU and its institutions "foster frameworks and an ethos which is respectful of the role of faiths and faith communities, religions, Churches, in the member states of the union".

"It's the task then of the Churches and faith communities in their respective states and in the Union to critically build up an awareness of the importance of a respect for faith traditions as part of the heritage, religious, cultural and historical, of Europe."

The Catholic Church continues to work "day-in, day-out" with the EU on the "current focal issues", including migration and asylum, climate change and more, Bishop Treanor says, before concluding: "It's there, in that sort of policy related input exchange and dialogue, that the soul of Europe is kept alive, is nourished."



Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor.

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Ireland's ambassador to the Vatican Derek Hannon has enjoyed a glimpse behind the curtain in Rome that few ever get, writes **Jason Osborne**

The Vatican is one of the most interesting postings in the world that a diplomat can receive. A city-state, country and headquarters of the largest religion in the world, it defies easy definition. Despite these complexities, strong diplomatic ties with the Holy See are eagerly sought by nations all over the world, which means that the diplomats they send must be up to the task of navigating an utterly unique environment.

Ireland's current Ambassador, a veteran of the Vatican, is Derek Hannon. Serving as deputy to Ireland's mission to the Holy See from 1988 to 1992, Ambassador Hannon returned in 2018 to serve as Ireland's Ambassador to the Holy See, making him Ireland's longest serving diplomat to the Holy See in the 92 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Ambassador Hannon spoke to *The Irish Catholic* in the run-up to what is likely to be his last Christmas in the Vatican – at least, in this posting. Despite a number of Christmases spent there, he says it's no less special this time around.



Christmas at the Vatican, 2019. Photo: CNS.

One foot in Ireland, the other in the eternal city

Feeling

"I think there's a special feeling for Christmas almost everywhere where Christians are present, and I think Rome is no different. The centre of Western Christianity... this is my second tour of duty here. I was here also between '88 and '92, so I've spent many Christmases here, and I think it's very special," he tells this paper.

"First of all, this year, having skipped last year, we had some beautiful religious services in the Vatican which I genuinely love attending. They're very special. The 24th, Christmas Eve, will be one, and New Year's Day will be the other one. You have the religious ceremony obviously, but you also have the Sistine Chapel, choir-singing and all the rest, and I genuinely feel extremely fortunate, you know?"

"When you see hundreds, if not thousands of pilgrims packed into – I don't know how packed it'll be now this time because of Covid, but in general – packed in, I'm in the very privileged position of having, if not a front row seat, well a second or a third row seat. That's extremely special, and I love that. It'll be my last Christmas as well in Rome, so my last opportunity. It'll be all the sweeter," he says.

It's not just the man-made features that make it such a pleasant place to be at Christmas though, but the aspects that, as we'd say in Ireland, are in God's hands.

"The weather is kind of predictable in Rome in a way, in a way it isn't predictable in somewhere like Ireland where it changes every day. It tends to be dry and sunny, not especially warm, but because

it's still and blue skies, it's perfect, you might call it, sunglasses weather," he laughs.

The streets of Rome beneath still blue skies make for the perfect setting to "sit out and have a coffee, a cappuccino, or something stronger if you're so minded," he says, continuing, "and maybe a slice of panettone, which is this cake that the Italians eat at Christmas, a sponge cake with candied peel in it". A world apart from the Christmas trappings in Ireland, but that should be no surprise, Ambassador Hannon says, as Christmas is received in a different way in Italy.

“It's not just the man-made features that make it such a pleasant place to be at Christmas though, but the aspects that, as we'd say in Ireland, are in God's hands”

"Christmas doesn't go on for as long as it does in Ireland. There's nothing closed down for, you know, into the New Year. It's a religious festival, and things get back to normal pretty quickly, and then they stop again for the New Year. It's very special and like in Ireland and other places, it's very much a family occasion and an occasion for friends and for gift-giving," he says, noting, "It's not as commercialised as it traditionally is in Ireland. I don't think that frenetic, last-minute buying goes on."

"I think it's a bit more relaxed and also after Christmas here one of the traditions is that people visit various cribs and there are hundreds of churches in Rome, and each of them has a different style of crib, so that's a great tradition where the people walk in and out of the various

churches to see what's this year's offering. It's a lovely time, a very special time, a very joyous time, and a relaxing time."

Peace

As lovely as the setting is, he's made peace with the fact that this is likely to be his last time in Rome as the Irish ambassador to the Holy See.

"I think having spent eight years collectively at the Holy See, it's probably – I haven't studied it – but I suspect with caution, that I'm probably the Irish diplomat who has spent more years in the Vatican than anyone else in the history of Irish diplomacy," Ambassador Hannon tentatively says.

"I suspect, now. By the time next September comes when I'm due to leave, I think I can say I've given it everything I can. These things are cyclical, and you can't be too greedy and want to stay in the lovely posts all the time. You do become stale as well. I've really enjoyed it here, and I did lobby to come here and I hope I've made a significant contribution. I hope I have, but that's for others to decide. I think when next year comes, I'll be ready to go."

Such a wealth of experience at the Vatican has given the ambassador an insight into its workings that few people can hope to reach. When asked just what it is that the Holy See brings to the diplomatic table, which makes it such a desirable partner at an international level, Ambassador Hannon has a couple of ideas as to what it is.

"I suppose the Vatican is in the world and of the world, and the Pope tries to, obviously, set out the broad Christian principles of love God and love your neighbour as yourself and that obviously has to be applied in various global situations, including on issues like migration... The Holy See is also actively involved behind the scenes in so many of the world's trouble spots, trying to do what it



Pope Francis accepts a gift from President Higgins during their September 2021 meeting.



Pope Francis accepting Irish Ambassador to the Vatican Derek Hannon's letter of credentials in 2018.

can to resolve very thorny issues, but of course it always does those very much behind the scenes," he says.

"In general, we won't be aware of those until they're over, but we'll hear it as it has done what it can in places like South Sudan for example, or perhaps somewhere like Venezuela. Places like those, which are open to the help of the Holy See. Every place isn't open to, and doesn't want, the Holy See, but other places will actively seek Holy See mediation or Holy See intervention or Holy See advice or whatever you like, so that's a constant in the background as well."

“I'm not surprised Pope Francis said he was a wise man because their thinking, on so many issues, it appears to me anyway, are very similar”

If that's the current state of play, I ask him how things have changed since his first mission to the Holy See, between 1988 and 1992. The global situation has surely changed since the late '80s and early '90s – has the Vatican?

"There's at least two answers to that. In many ways, the Vatican on the outside doesn't change at all. If I go into the secretariat of state, I still go to the Cortile del Belvedere and go up to...the third floor in the secretariat of state. It's the same rhythm of life, if you like, that goes on there," he says.

"But obviously, each pope brings new emphasis and a new style, for want of a better word, to the papacy. When I was there for the first posting, it was John Paul II, and the whole focus was on Europe and the Berlin Wall coming down and solidarity – you remember the Solidarnosc trade union in Poland and all of that kind of stuff," he says, continu-

ing, "Whereas obviously, with Pope Francis being from Argentina...when he speaks about Europe, he speaks about the need for Europe to have a more forward position internationally on things like the migration crisis and perhaps on climate change and things like that.

"Obviously as I said, the Pope is also focusing on things like reform of the Vatican, reform of its finances and I suppose moulding the Church in his own image of humility and, 'How can we serve you?' rather than what we expect you to do for us. I find that very refreshing and exciting. As I often tell people, Pope Francis is not just talking the talk, but he's walking the walk as well. He drives around in his modest little car. He's so generous in giving to the poor and inoculating people with Covid and with migrants, bringing them from various trips he's gone on and accommodating them in Italy. It's a privilege to be here when you have a Pope who's so obviously, I mean, it sounds like stating the obvious, but such a Christian person in the way he operates. It's fantastic."

Relationship

It sounds like the ambassador's relationship with the Vatican is warm, but how is Ireland's, in his opinion? On an international, diplomatic level, how is cooperation between the two states?

"Our relations with the Holy See are excellent now, I have to say. I've had a very warm welcome and very positive engagement from everybody I have met with here, as had my predecessor, and I'm sure the same thing will apply to my successor," he says, proceeding to compliment the

Holy See on its unique diplomatic position, which Ireland certainly seems keen to engage with through Ambassador Hannon.

"The Holy See is a global player. It's representing in one form or another 1.3 billion people. It's a participant in so many international organisations, either being a member, like with the World Health Organisation during Covid, or an observer at the UN, or involved in the OSCE in Vienna, or disarmament issues is another example of something the Holy See is very active on.

“The Pope is also focusing on things like reform of the Vatican, reform of its finances and I suppose moulding the Church in his own image of humility”

"So, it is a global player and it is a player of influence and it's a player that's hugely respected because it doesn't have a hidden agenda. It's not pushing some particular line and doesn't want to gain power or finance from something it's doing," he says.

"I mean, the Holy See has diplomatic relations with every country in the world apart from a handful, so I think there's no argument that the Holy See isn't a player internationally and states want to be engaged with the Holy See to influence it, perhaps, and to also hear from it on its assessment of problems facing the world. Because one thing the Holy See does have is 2000 years of experience

of humanity and the world, which no civil government obviously can have. It's like an old person who's lived through so much and has seen so much, and is able to bring that wisdom to bear in tackling modern challenges."

Sum up

The current relationship between Ireland and the Holy See at a diplomatic level very much seems to be summed up in the relationship between Pope Francis and President Michael D. Higgins. Present during their recent meeting, Ambassador Hannon says it went "extremely well", and that it brought many of their similarities to the fore.

"I think it [the meeting between Pope Francis and President Higgins] went extremely well, and I was there in the papal library when Pope Francis said those words [calling President Higgins "a wise man of today"]," Ambassador Hannon says, continuing, "I know President Higgins was quite touched, perhaps even slightly emotional at hearing the Pope say those words."

Believing there to be some overlap between the thought of Pope Francis and President Higgins on some of the global issues, the ambassador says reading some of the president's more recent speeches, they sound as though they could be coming from Pope Francis.

"If you read the collection of speeches that President Higgins published earlier on this year, some of them sound like the Pope could be speaking to you on things like universal basic income. Both the Pope and President Higgins, it seems to me, have identical views on issues

like social justice, on poverty, on the need to look after migrants, on care for the environment, climate change. There's enormous amounts of overlap," he says.

"I'm not surprised Pope Francis said he was a wise man because their thinking, on so many issues, it appears to me anyway, are very similar and clearly there's a great chemistry between them. The Pope in my view, as somebody I have seen upfront for a few years now, wears no false faces. You see on his face what he's feeling. Again – I don't want to be an amateur psychoanalyst – when he sees President Higgins, his face is always lit up and he's smiling and he's looking at the president and they're engaged, so from my point of view, I don't think the visit could have gone better, to be quite honest."

“The current relationship between Ireland and the Holy See at a diplomatic level very much seems to be summed up in the relationship between Pope Francis and President Michael D. Higgins”

Satisfied with the level of diplomacy between Ireland and the Holy See, I ask Ambassador Hannon if there are any personal goals to tick off the list before he departs from the Vatican this time around. In a city and region so packed with history and culture, the checklist could be endless. Fortunately, his lengthy missions to the Holy See have allowed him to see and do many of the scenes and sites of significance, but not all of them.

"There's a train that runs from the Vatican to Castel Gandolfo which I've never been on, I don't think it's running at the moment, but that's something I definitely want to do. I would like a tour of the Vatican gardens, which I have never done. When I was presenting my credentials in November 2018, they were killing a bit of time, or maybe it was part of the ceremony, I don't know, but they drove me up into the Vatican gardens and it's just such an enchanted kind of a place.

"Again, one of the things I feel is, so many people only have their noses against the pane of the window, if you like, they're looking into the Vatican, and I've had the privilege of seeing all the internal little medieval courtyards and got a real, privileged access to the internal recesses of the Vatican, which very few people have had the chance to do.

"I hope to be on the train, I hope to get a tour of the Vatican gardens, and maybe go down and see the Scavi again, the excavations under St Peter's, which I don't recall. I'm sure I was down there, I'm positive, but as I said, 30 years is a lot of water under the bridge, so it's hard to remember everything."

Speaking to the ambassador, you get a sense he's someone truly grateful for the opportunity he's been given in his diplomatic postings to the Holy See. One prays that Ireland's diplomatic relationship continues to be as warm with the Vatican as his is.

“Each pope brings new emphasis and a new style, for want of a better word, to the papacy”

'I want to put the soul back into film'



Harry Lennix

altar boy from the time they let me start doing that when I was in fifth grade. I was a pretty good altar boy, you know. In my view, I was one of the better altar boys probably in the whole city. I knew all of them," he jokes.

"I would get to do the weddings and the funerals and the things like that, in addition to novenas. I always grew up loving the tradition and we would have assemblies and we would learn about the patron saints. So for me it was this very dignified, solemn place that I would go."

Mr Lennix attended St Bride's primary school, which gave to him an appreciation "of order and respect for tradition and service". After St Bride's, he attended Quigley Preparatory Seminary South, which was then the largest pre-seminary in the world, he says.

“My father was Creole. I didn't really know him, he died when I was two years old, but he came from Louisiana not far from New Orleans and insisted that we be Catholic”

"Of course, that presupposes a preparatory seminary North, which there was, and it was perhaps better endowed," he adds. "But we had the more robust student population and always a friendly rivalry. Both those institutions are gone. What was Quigley North is now the archdiocese headquarters for the city of Chicago.

"We studied under a Dominican order. There were lots of Jesuits about, but we were making a pretty big name for ourselves. As I said, it was the largest high-school seminary in the world, Pope John Paul II came and visited us in 1979, it was the first papal visit to the city... he was a very interesting man. We were mightily honoured that he came up there."

From Quigley South, Mr Lennix moved onto the Dominican seminary, discerning a call to the priesthood. What prompted this discernment, he reflects, "was perhaps the fact that I grew up without a father".

"We called the men in the schools and so forth who had a certain amount of training and who had been ordained, we called them father," he continues. "And I thought that was a neat thing, that in the absence of a biological father, that if you were the right type of man you could be a father surrogate, a proxy, a conduit. That appealed to me and I thought that since I had that, perhaps I could be that for someone else – or for several someone's."

It wasn't to be, however, and ultimately acting became Mr Lennix's career. It wasn't a direct transition from one thing to the other, he says: "I had always been acting at the schools and I've never been uninterested in faith in whatever form and to whatever degree while I am pursuing this career."

He had already begun to act in

an amateur context through school plays in St Bride's and Quigley South, where he "did little plays and performances, even in elementary school we would have a spring play or musical".

Artistic school

Mr Lennix continues: "It was a very artistic school, the kids were talented, some of them. The nuns were certainly talented, who used to put these presentations on. We were always doing something dramatic. Then in high school, I started doing it in my second year there. I wasn't always convinced that I would remain an actor. But I went to North Western, where I started acting as a pro after my second year."

Asked when the final moment of realisation came that he wanted to remain an actor, Mr Lennix laughs and replies: "As I like to say sometimes, I'll let you know when I decide! I've never been able to just be an actor. I was a school teacher for several years on the South side of Chicago, I owned a grocery store, I've done all kinds of jobs and things, but I've always been an actor."

"Like I said, it's one of the many things that I'm interested in. Perhaps I've been able to get more work in this than other things I'm interested in. But I've always been interested in scholarship of a kind, theology of a kind, music, entrepreneurship, philosophy. These are pursuits that I've never really gotten away from. I guess I knew that I didn't have to be a teacher any more when I turned 30."

He adds that studying the Faith is something he will "always have a thirst for" because of the "deeper meaning and significance" it conveys. This feeds into Mr Lennix's chief interest at the moment, which is creating and promoting good, popular, Christian films, especially for a black American audience.

“I had always been acting at the schools and I've never been uninterested in faith in whatever form and to whatever degree”

"My chief interest, though not my sole interest, is what I refer to as theological aesthetics, the ability to combine these two great drives," he says. "In so far as we know it, acting and plays were parts of religious festivals at least in the west and I'm sure in the east as well. There was a divine aspect to it and it turned into popular entertainment."

"Bread and circuses, you know, making it more profane than it's original sacred form and I think I'm really seeing if those two things can be conjoined as they once were. You know, you would bring your highest technique and achievement in study to praise the divine."

Modern superhero movies that come from Marvel and DC are "a kind of *in loco Dei* (in place of God)", Mr Lennix believes. "These cartoon figures come in the place of a God. I think that rather than find surrogates to God, or at least what I believe to be the one true God, we can do that



It is important to have popular, Catholic films, American actor Harry Lennix tells Ruadhán Jones

"I sometimes see people wearing shirts that say ex-Catholic or something," Harry Lennix tells me over Zoom, taking a break from filming season nine of the exceptionally popular TV-thriller *The Blacklist*. "But I don't see how that's possible in my own life. Even though I have from time to time

studied other religions, I could never disavow my inherent Catholicism."

Mr Lennix's Catholic Faith comes both from his DNA, as he puts it, and from his schooling. Before he became an actor, and co-starred in films such as *The Matrix* series and *Ray*, he spent almost five years in a Dominican seminary in Chicago. Now, he hopes to be able to bring his

art and his Faith together by "putting the soul" back into popular entertainment.

Catholic Faith

The American actor was born in Chicago to Lillian C. and Harry Lennix Jr, a machinist. His father died while he was young, but Mr Lennix says that Harry Lennix Jr. ensured his Catholic Faith was passed on to his children.

"Faith was steeped in my DNA," Mr Lennix explains. "My father was Creole. I didn't really know him, he died when I was two years old, but he came from Louisiana not far from New Orleans and insisted that we be Catholic. We were all baptised, I was the youngest of four."

"Even though my mother was not born a Catholic, she made sure we went to Catholic schools. I was an



American actor Harry Lennix at the premiere of his Jesus-movie *Revival* in the Museum of the Bible.

directly in this form [film].”

He particularly sees an opportunity in popular entertainment as produced by black Americans, saying they have created “the only original, indigenous forms to this United States”.

“The other stuff is from Europe, is from Asia or from other places,” Mr Lennix says. “But in terms of performing art, the music, the dance forms, all of those things, to some extent the forms of rap, the blues – these are the really only original forms of art, inherent to the soil of the United States.”

“Combine that [black American] sacred experience, which again is a very unique thing unto itself, the black worship experience. It has its own structure, its own doxology, its own rituals. They have created their own thing, and to this day it is the most robust demographic of faith people in the United States. They have created a form of its own and it needs to be chronicled and standardised in some form and then captured and perpetuated. And what better means to do that than on film?”

Revival

Mr Lennix is not only talking about this either, he has already produced and starred in a film – *Revival* – which attempts to bring the aesthetics and spirit of black American worship to the screen. Released in 2018, the film seeks to combine elements from Easter pageants, Gospel music, stage and more to tell the life of Jesus.

“My great partner in this endeavour is Dr Holly Carter. It’s really her idea, she has this idea of Faith without walls or bringing the Faith to the unchurched”

“I tried to give it a form where I combined a lot of faith experiences unique to the black church, dance ministry for example, Gospel music, language, phrases, personal expressions of faith that are unique to it. In so doing, I don’t think it’s the only standard or form. But I think it’s a solid approximation of the black church, using the Gospel itself.”

“Jesus’ miracles included an element of performance, Mr Lennix believes, adding that Jesus was aware of the attention they would bring”

Watching the film, it becomes clear that passion plays are also a major influence, with traditional figures and tropes – such as the march to Golgotha – brought to life.

“They [passion plays] happen everywhere,” Mr Lennix says. “In the streets of Italy, they have them. We were just in Mexico and saw a march to the cross over the summer. It was a very interesting procession. I wanted to take some of those elements and combine it with the actual story.”

“How do you tempt Jesus in the wilderness, shooting it on the screen? What might that look like? But you’re also combining the traditional stage, as it were, machinery – trap doors, curtains opening and

closing, the presentation of this as a play, a meta-theatre. But also, the actual story itself.”

Jesus’ miracles included an element of performance, Mr Lennix believes, adding that Jesus was aware of the attention they would bring: “He knew he would have to explain at some level to people in wonderment of his techniques. He was a great performer. Turning water into wine, as somebody once described it, that’s dinner and a show!

“We wanted to capture some of that, and of course the magnificent sacred music – Gospel music – of

that [black American] experience. We got some very old, traditional spirituals, *Old Mary Don’t You Weep* for example, *Down by the Riverside*. And then the new forms... we have the cream of the crop.”

Projects

Mr Lennix isn’t resting on his laurels, with many more projects planned. He and his colleagues want to try “to create a cottage industry of it”.

“My great partner in this endeavour is Dr Holly Carter. It’s really her idea, she has this idea of Faith without walls or bringing the Faith to the



Mr Lennix with his wife Djena Graves.

unchurched. The believers already believe, but it’s the purpose of the evangelism, that we are to go out in the world and bring this message to those who have not heard it. What better means than the electronic media now.

“You can’t turn on the TV right now and find a black Christian film. I don’t know of many. It may be faith-adjacent, it may have a scene in a church. But there’s nothing on the level of *The Passion of the Christ* or *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *Godspell*. I can’t remember all these Pure Flix movies, but they have a whole industry of – for want of a better term – white, evangelical Christianity, with which I have zero problem.

“I think that’s an obligation that somebody should undertake, to put content that is actually restorative that I know and I’ve seen it work in churches all over the US”

“But we have a lot of black entertainment that celebrates a kind of secularism and other things than the Faith. If we had that option, it would do well, just from a bottom-line point of view. I think that what that signals to me is that you can do well and still do good. You can spread the Faith and still do well.”

Spread Faith

In fact, not only does he think the Faith can be spread through popular entertainment, Mr Lennix believes it is “an obligation that somebody should undertake”.

This comment is prompted by his recalling the story of St Genesius, patron saint of actors and lawyers: “Genesius was an actor and he was doing a burlesque, which was actually ridiculing the rite of Baptism, in front of the [Roman] emperor Diocletian, who was a virulent anti-Christian,” he begins. “During the performance, he had a conversion experience, and he began to proselytise to Diocletian. And Diocletian was like, hey, stop, take all of that back right now. And he wouldn’t, and so they sent him to get his head chopped off and he was proclaiming the Faith the whole time!

“I think that’s an obligation that somebody should undertake, to put content that is actually restorative that I know and I’ve seen it work in churches all over the US. There’s not a whole lot of black people going to the shrink and getting medication. For hundreds of years, this content, these forms, this music, this word, this faith has been an elixir, a tonic, a cure and a fuel spiritually for a people who on the face of logic have no reason to have survived this. To see it abandoned in some measure is quite alarming to me, so I want to put it back. I want to put it back, man.

“In addition to all this stuff you hear about people waking up and ‘woke’ and these things. If we lose our souls, it will all blow away. Jesus said it very beautifully: ‘What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul.’ I just want to keep the soul in it. I didn’t invent it, I didn’t put it there, but I’m trying to draw attention to it and put back what I can,” Mr Lennix finishes.



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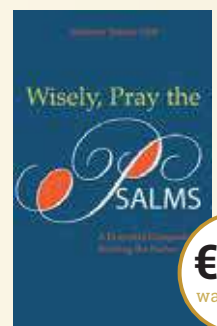


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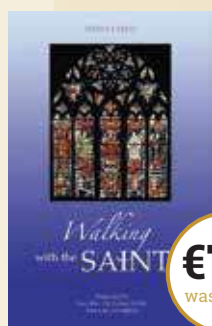
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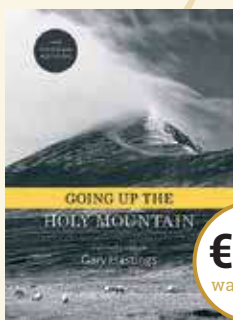
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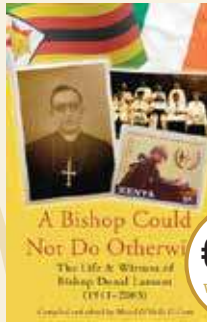
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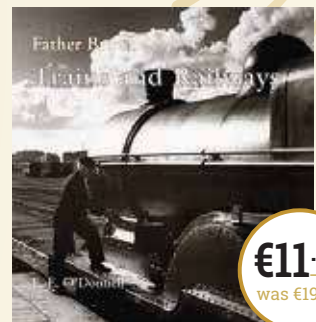
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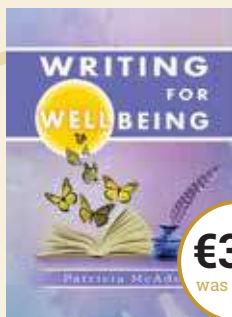
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The Word was made flesh



A girl holds baby Jesus figurines for Pope Francis to bless in St Peter's Square. Photo: CNS.

The Gospel for this Sunday is the prologue of the Gospel of John. For the past week we have had the stories of the birth of Jesus and the events of his early life. But John begins with a vast timescale of God's action, going back to the eons before creation and then advances through creation of the universe, revelation to people, his coming in human flesh and his invitation to us to become children of God. John is different from the other evangelists in the way he taps into the mentality of Greek philosophy, beginning with the concept of Logos, translated as the Word. The prologue develops the coming of the Word in five stages.

The Eternal Word

In the inner depth of the Blessed Trinity, the Father expresses total fullness in the Son, here called the Word. In the perfection of divine expression, one Word expresses all.

"In the beginning was the Word:

and the Word was with God

and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

Jesus is eternal in terms of time since he is before all ages. And he is eternal in terms of the fullness of grace and truth, being the perfect and complete expression of the Father.

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



The creating Word

He is the Word through whom all things are created. In the Bible's first account of creation, God did not so much make things but said them into life. "God said 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). The Word of God creates life. "All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be." This is not a scientific explanation of the origin of the universe but a sacred text. According to Pope St John Paul II, "The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise but in order to state the correct relationship of humanity with God and the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by God."

Everything in creation is sacred since it originated in God's Word. The sensitive soul is aware of God in all the wonders of creation, great and small. Shakespeare wrote that there are "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Pope Francis chose St Francis of Assisi as his guide and inspiration. His contribution to the meetings on climate change, in Paris six years ago

and recently in Glasgow, were hugely significant. Experts in fossil fuel, rising seas, economics etc. needed a transcendent vision to unify the various fields of knowledge, and Pope Francis supplied it. Treat yourself for the new year by reading his Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'*, On care for our common home. St Francis saw the hand of the divine artist in all the artistry of nature. To him everything was a brother or a sister. Inspired by his patron saint, Pope Francis writes: "The universe unfolds in God who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things" (*Laudato Si'*, 233).

The revealing Word

The third stage of John's prologue brings us into human history. "What has come into being was life, life that was the light of people; and light shines in the darkness, and darkness could not overpower

Prayer

O Jesus, you are the sacred Word of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made.

Through you all things were made. Open up our sensitivity to your presence in all of your creation. May our hearts expand in won-

der and praise. You came into our world. You lived among us. You humbled yourself to share in our humanity so that we might share in your divinity. Grant us the grace to follow your way, to believe in your truth and to share in your life.

The Word in human flesh

The fourth stage of the prologue is the incarnation, the coming of the Word in a human body, born in Bethlehem. "The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The evangelist John is depicted in art as an eagle, deemed to be the only creature that can look directly

into the light of the sun without damaging its eyes. John's writing sees the glory of God filtered to the limitations of the human mind in the human life of Jesus. If you want to know about God, the surest way is to study Jesus every day ... what he said, how he acted, what he stood for. Towards the end of his life, he assured the apostle, Philip, "To have seen me is to have seen the Father." He was the Word made flesh.

The inviting Word

Jesus respected human freedom. He did not force himself on people. His life was an invitation to people to respond to his way, his truth

and his life. Throughout this Gospel we are told how people reacted to Jesus. Some rejected him, others accepted. "He came to his own and his own people did not accept him. But to those who accepted him, he gave power to become children of God to those who believed in his name" (John 1:11-12). In this Gospel, belief is never a noun but always a verb. Believing is more than the intellectual acceptance of doctrines: it is the power of becoming children of God. The Latin verb *credo* literally means I give my heart to God's invitation.

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2021 Review of the Year

Priests urge boycott of RTÉ licence fee



Govt 'see reason' over 'sneaky tax on prayer'



Help me revitalise the Church says new Archbishop of Dublin

Vulnerable may die if people refuse vaccine – Bishop Doran



JANUARY

The year began with disbelief for many Catholics in Ireland as public broadcaster RTÉ aired a “scurrilous” satirical sketch depicting God as a rapist. The sketch was part of RTÉ’s New Year’s Eve celebrations, and its content subsequently led to thousands of complaints. Fr Gerry Kane PP of Booterstown in Dublin vowed that he would break the law and not pay his television license due to the broadcast.

Amid the Covid pandemic’s most acute period in the year, Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran stressed that society’s most vulnerable may be potentially at risk of dying if people did not avail of the Covid vaccine. Writing in *The Irish Catholic*, Dr Doran reassured the Faithful that there was nothing in Church teaching to prevent them from taking the vaccine. The Government’s controversial levy on candles – which had been called “sneaky” and described as “a tax on prayer” – was deferred until at least 2022. Fr John Carroll, who criticised the move and compared it to taxing counselling sessions, welcomed the deferral, saying the decision makers should be “commended for their sensitivity to such a matter at this particular time when so many seek hope and comfort and draw it from prayer moments at churches”.

Young Catholics were called upon to assist in the revitalisation of the Church by the new Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell, during an extensive interview with *The Irish Catholic*. Archbishop Farrell urged Catholics to bring their ideas to the fore rather than waiting to be led by bishops and priests when wishing to interact with the Church in Dublin – the country’s largest diocese.

‘All I wanted to do was cry’ Myanmar missionary warns poor will suffer most

FEBRUARY

A missionary, who was forced to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal from the regime in Myanmar, spoke of the sudden political instability in the state and warned of imminent “disaster” after the military seized power in a coup. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the missionary revealed how they anticipated conflict in the wake of the coup. “One fear is that those groups now wrack up violence against the military, some of them have promised to do it”.

Bishop Tom Deenihan reflected on the Easter worship restrictions imposed by the Government, declaring that the constraints on Mass attendances during Holy Week and Easter were “difficult to justify”.

The Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association (CSSPA) decried how they were excluded from key discussions between the Department of Education and other stakeholders about issues as vital as getting children back to school. President of the CSSPA, Mr Sean O’Riordan, explained that their exclusion from the administrative process of Irish education had unfortunately become an all too familiar occurrence. “We have written to the minister [for education] on numerous occasions and are very disappointed that our letters have not been acknowledged,” he said.

A Dublin-based deacon who recovered from Covid was fully supportive of potential measures which allowed an Easter return to Mass for Catholics. Deacon Don Devaney, who spent six weeks in a hospital’s ICU fighting for his life after being diagnosed with Covid, remained undeterred in his convictions in spite of his own personal experience with the virus owing to the “well managed and organised” nature of churches in the Republic.

Easter ban ‘difficult to justify’ – Bishop Tom Deenihan



Deacon who battled Covid in ICU backs call for Easter return to Mass



Catholic parents voice anger at exclusion from school talks



2021 Review of the Year

MARCH

The Minister for Mental Health, Mary Butler, issued a warning about the stark consequences that prolonged restrictions on Mass and other religious ceremonies can have on Irish people's mental health. Discussing the topic with *The Irish Catholic*, Minister Butler explained that as a weekly Mass-goer she eagerly awaited the re-commencement of Mass, but could not officially provide an Easter deadline for a return to Mass as it was contingent on a number of factors.

All is not so bleak for the future of Christianity in the Middle-East according to an Iraqi prelate, who found solace in Pope Francis' historic Papal visit to the country. Viewing it as a symbolic message which signified that a future can be cultivated for the nation's Christians, Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda expressed how proud he was that the Pope visited.

Ireland's parishes began to prepare for the synodal process, with Bishop Michael Ruter explaining that it enabled people to "let off steam". The bishops announced the objective of hosting a national synod within the next five years after its spring meeting. The process began in October later that year.

Schools across Ireland grew increasingly frustrated about the lack of Government clarity surrounding key issues such as supports to teachers and principals during the lockdown. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* about the issue, Alan Hynes of St Senan's Education Office stated that the majority of people wanted to keep schools open, but "principals need to be able to access advice in a timely manner so they're not left hanging".

Minister warns of toll on mental health due to continued ban on public worship

'Persecuted but not forgotten' Iraqi archbishop tells of hope after 'miraculous' Papal visit



Bishops say synod process will allow people to 'let off steam'

Schools feel let down by Govt 9-5 approach to Covid



APRIL

Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan spoke out against laws preventing Mass-goers in the Republic from actively worshipping in their parish church, remarking that the laws set a "worrying precedent" in a country that "has suffered such restrictions on religious worship for so long". His comments came after *The Irish Catholic* revealed that the Government considered either a priest celebrating Mass at which parishioners can attend or worshippers are present to be committing an offence punishable by the law.

Figures involved in Ireland's youth ministry spoke of how Ireland's synodal process acted as the perfect opportunity to listen to the voices of the country's young Catholics in an increasing period of Church-youth disconnect.

A deceased Derry nun's "saintly" disposition merited canonisation, according to Fr Stephen Quinn OCD of Termonbacca, Derry. Sr Clare Crockett, who passed away in 2016 whilst attempting to carry orphans to safety during an earthquake in Ecuador, has continued to influence the lives of those who posthumously call upon her to intercede during periods of ill health.

Catholic voices mobilised to respond to President Michael D. Higgins' description of Catholic schooling in the North. Responding after President Higgins equated a parent's decision to send their child to a Catholic school to abandoning them "to parcels of hate and memory", Baroness Nuala O'Loan categorically rejected the president's accusation.

In an exclusive story, *The Irish Catholic* reported that Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell insisted that parishes in Dublin must cease plans to hold First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies due to Covid concerns.

Bishop warns criminalising Mass-goers and priests sets a 'dangerous precedent'

'Clerical' Church must learn from young Catholics

Devotion to Irish nun thrives as hopes rise for canonisation cause

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

Archbishop calls halt to First Communion plans - Theologians criticise Government over-reach



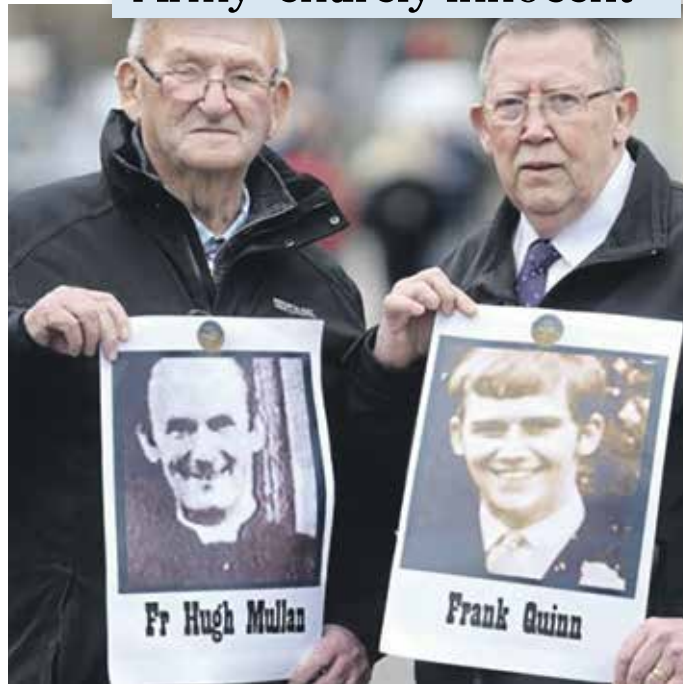
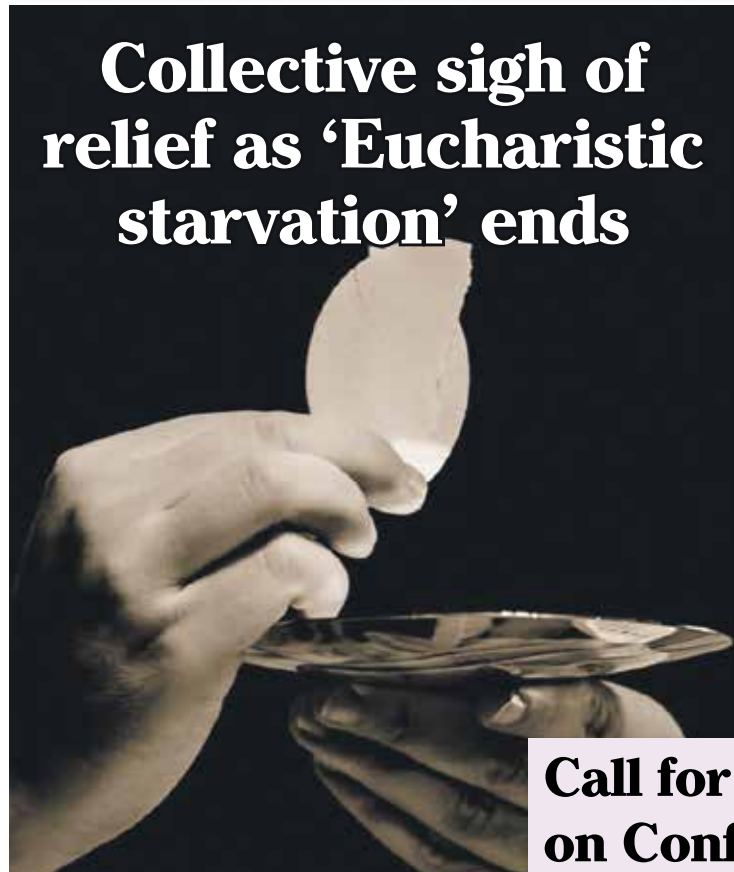


Religious illiteracy ‘one of the challenges of our times’, says Bishop Noel Treanor

Irish Gaza nun calls on Govt to help restart stalled peace process

Tears and relief – Catholics killed by British Army ‘entirely innocent’

Collective sigh of relief as ‘Eucharistic starvation’ ends



Call for bishops to trust parishes on Confirmation and Communion

MAY

Irish parishes collectively rejoiced at the news that the controversial ban on attending Mass was due to be removed after senior bishops informed *The Irish Catholic* about the course of action that churches were set to take after the Government approved the reopening of places of worship. “There was a collective sigh of relief,” Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore told *The Irish Catholic*. “I think the Faithful have been starved of the Eucharist.”

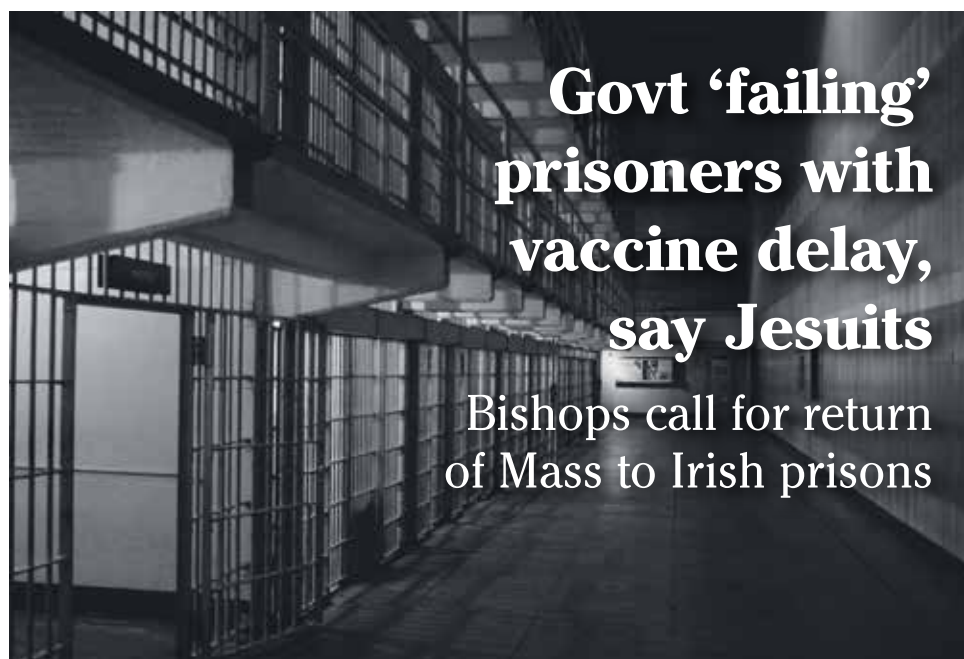
Innocent Catholic civilians who were shot dead by the British Army in Belfast in 1971 were fully exonerated of “any wrongdoings” and killed “without justification,” as per the findings of a fresh inquest. The coroner described the use of force by the troops as “disproportionate” and there were emotional scenes as families reacted to the vindication of their loved ones.

Amid exacerbated tensions between Israel and Palestine, an Irish nun in the Holy Land called on the Irish Government to use its influence to help restart the stalled peace process between the two states. Sligo-born Sr Bridget Tighe told *The Irish Catholic* that the topic should resonate with Irish people given “its own history”.

Responding to the Government’s letter to the bishops requesting that Communion and Confirmation ceremonies be postponed, Fr Ted Sheehan of Glounthaune, Co. Cork, attempted to reassure the bishops by stressing that he “thinks that individual priests should be able to, in conjunction with the school, organise safe gatherings of a certain number”, while Fr Tom Walsh PP of Guranabraher, Co. Cork said he believed that it was “wrong” of the bishops not to trust their priests to organise the sacraments safely.

Govt ‘failing’ prisoners with vaccine delay, say Jesuits

Bishops call for return of Mass to Irish prisons



Relief as Government gives the green light for July First Holy Communions

JUNE

The availability of vaccines for prisoners was criticised by Irish bishops and the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice (JCFJ). Bishop Kevin Doran spoke against the fact that despite the May return to Mass for Catholics in the Republic, communal worship did not return in Irish penal institutions. Underlining the prisoners’ inalienable constitutional right to be allowed to practice their Faith, Bishop Doran, who has responsibility for Castlerea Prison, maintained that this right “should not be denied to them except for very grave reasons”.

Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan welcomed the announcement of concrete dates for First Holy Communion and Confirmation ceremonies as a crucial step forward for both parish communities and families. “I welcomed it,” he told *The Irish Catholic*. “It was much anticipated and the diocesan office phone has been hopping with people looking for dates.”

The plight of Ireland’s fishing industry and those involved was summarised by a number of rural priests, with one of the most vocal on the issue, Fr John Joe Duffy of the Dunfanaghy/Creeslough parish Co. Donegal, telling *The Irish Catholic* that the communities feel “betrayed and abandoned” over the inaction of the Department of Agriculture and Marine and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

A baseless claim that implicated a Catholic school in Carlow and inflicted severe reputational damage was formally confirmed by The Press Ombudsman as being entirely false in nature. The announcement came after Presentation College Carlow was at the centre of a social media furor caused by false allegations that female students at the school had been told not to wear clothing that made male teachers uncomfortable.

‘Betrayed and abandoned’ – Priests speak out for fishing communities



Vindication for Catholic college after ‘fake news’ slur about body shaming

2021 Review of the Year

JULY

Bishop Tom Deenihan of the hierarchy's Council for Education said that in a 'post-divestment' context, where an increasing number of schools begin to divest and no longer have a Catholic ethos, current legislation preventing schools prioritising Catholic children will cause "a difficulty".

In the fallout from the neglect and subsequent death of Fr Stan Swamy at the hands of Indian authorities, the head of Irish Jesuits International condemned the Indian government's role in Fr Swamy's death. Fr Swamy (84) died while awaiting bail in an Indian prison where he was being held on charges of sedition, believed by many to be politically motivated claims.

A new chapter beckoned in the relationship between Ireland's Government and the Vatican, as plans to foster a major diplomatic engagement with the Vatican was touted as an event that could potentially usher in a new era in relations between Ireland and the Holy See Minister for Europe Thomas Byrne told this paper.

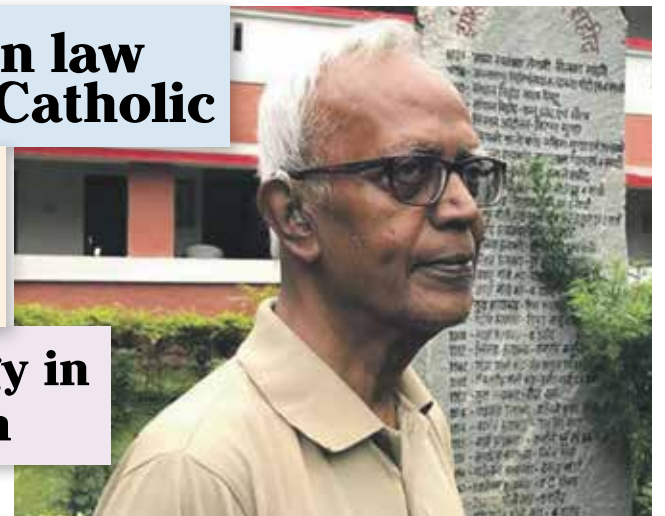
Irish clergy members were divided in their response to Pope Francis' restrictions to the Latin Mass. In the announcement, the Pope stipulated that if a priest wishes to perform a Latin Mass according to the pre-Vatican II missal, he must now get permission from his bishop and that the Traditional Latin Mass can no longer be celebrated in parishes. Fr Liam Tracey, professor of Liturgy at Maynooth University told *The Irish Catholic* the Pope "has acted to defend the unity of the Body of Christ".

Church-goers pipped any other sector to return when restrictions were lifted according to Government research, a revelation that was dubbed "a hopeful sign" by people in frontline ministry.

Call to scrap school admission law stopping schools being truly Catholic

Priest's blood on Indian govt hands, says Irish Jesuit

Government pledges fresh energy in diplomatic relations with Vatican



Pope's Latin Mass restrictions promote Church unity, says Maynooth professor – Traditionalist communities 'shocked' at new measures

Church return faster than gyms, pubs and restaurants, says ESRI

AUGUST

Schoolchildren were called upon to receive the sacraments after Bishop Donal McKewon, Bishop Michael Ruter, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan, Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop Tom Deenihan and Bishop Larry Duffy all confirmed that they would be proceeding with the ceremonies in their respective dioceses.

As the news broke that without urgent action to tackle dangerous gases every country on the planet will be victim to the disastrous environmental consequences, Jane Mellett of Trócaire said parishes across Ireland can "lead the way" in tackling the climate emergency with Catholic activists pleading for the same energy that went into fighting Covid-19 to tackle the crisis facing the planet.

The exploits of a heroic priest from Tipperary, Fr Patrick Ryan, who ministered to those suffering with yellow fever in the US state of Tennessee in the late 19th century, were becoming increasingly noticed by Church authorities as they began investigating a potential miracle attributed to Fr Ryan's intercession.

A leading support organisation for pregnant women launched a campaign to promote more positive reactions around pregnancy after clients reported experiencing negative reactions. Crisis pregnancy organisation Gianna Care decided to launch the initiative following reports from clients of off-putting and derogatory comments from family members, friends and work colleagues. Gianna Care Director Carolyn O'Meara told *The Irish Catholic* that her clients "often say to us that they dread telling certain people or they dread the reactions and the negative comments from certain people".

Call for parishes to lead the way on 'red alert' climate crisis



Irish priest's canonisation inches closer following potential miracle

Seven bishops give green light for Holy Communion ceremonies – Move comes as Croke Park set to host 40,000 for final

Campaign hopes to overcome negative reactions to pregnancy





Church leaders urge Government to fully redress those affected by pyrite and mica scandals

'Do they want the Church to run the country for them' – Bro. Kevin



Reject 'fashionable' urge to knock the Church, pleads former minister

Homeless campaigners question why State won't build on existing land

Legion hopes high for centenary year as 'prophetic' Frank Duff cause nears Rome



Opportunity for parishes as survey reveals youth 'hunger for prayer'

SEPTEMBER

In the aftermath of the Government's leaked letter in which Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien wrote to Archbishop Eamon Martin asking the Church to identify vacant land and buildings that could be used to build housing, prominent homeless campaigner Bro. Kevin Crowley spoke to *The Irish Catholic* and insisted that the Church and faith-inspired agencies have always played and will continue to play their part in helping tackle the housing crisis, while asking if the Government "wanted the Church to run the country for them?"

The pioneering life and times of Frank Duff were recalled by numerous members of the Church as the Legion of Mary prepared for its centenary celebrations. Speaking on the lasting legacy of Mr Duff, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell described him as "a man ahead of his time" because of his clear focus on an articulate laity stepping up to leadership within the Church decades before Vatican II.

The former Minister of Justice, Charlie Flanagan, stated that he firmly believes that fellow politicians should resist the temptation to demonise the huge contribution of Catholic education simply because it has become fashionable to criticise the Church.

After President Michael D. Higgins refused to attend an ecumenical service to mark partition in Armagh, prominent historian Dr Eamon Phoenix said that the service, which was organised by the main Christian Churches, was primarily about building bridges and insisted that the event was part of a framework based on "respectful and ethical" remembrance, and that such events are designed to be "inclusive to the maximum".

Missionary pleads for vaccine unity – 'I wouldn't want any other parent to feel the way I did'



Call for Catholic schools to ditch 'occult' Halloween celebrations

ACP's comparison of Church to Taliban 'stomach churning'



'New Irish' will transform and renew Church here – missionaries

OCTOBER

A lay-missionary who was hospitalised with Covid expressed how he now had retrospective thoughts about his choice not to avail of the Covid vaccine as he appealed for Catholics to set aside divisions over vaccines and stand with the Pope. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* from his hospital bed, Tony Foy, Executive Director of NET Ministries Ireland admitted that looking into his children's eyes as he was rushed to hospital led him to serious soul searching about his own stance during the pandemic.

Fr Roy Donovan, one of the clerics of the Association of Catholic Priests, compared the Church's treatment of women to the extremists of the Taliban. Calling the comparison both "offensive" and "stomach-turning", radio host and Catholic commentator Wendy Grace, said that she found it "hard to identify in any way with Fr Roy's comments" while Baroness Nuala O'Loan described the comments as "misconceived, misleading and very offensive".

Pondering the future of Ireland's Catholic landscape, Sr Kathleen McGarvey of the Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Apostles told *The Irish Catholic* that she is confident that Catholics from abroad who are making their homes here will have a positive influence on their peers. Sr McGarvey predicted they will help "transform" the Church in Ireland.

Catholic schools should focus on celebrating the saints "instead of the demons" during Halloween parties Fr Richard O'Connor, a priest of the Diocese of Kerry who teaches in the Pontifical Angelicum University, told *The Irish Catholic* ahead of the holiday.

2021 Review of the Year

NOVEMBER

Rising energy costs had a dramatic impact on parishes' ability to heat churches, with some forced to resort to rationing and leaving it off for large parts of the week. Fr Martin Graham of St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast said that costs "are rocketing to the point that even for us we put the heating on at the weekends, but we won't be able to afford it during the week".

The conviction of three men for abducting and torturing businessman Kevin Lunney sent a "very strong message" to criminals who have been intimidating people for decades in the border region, a Cavan-based priest told *The Irish Catholic*. Fr Oliver O'Reilly PP of Ballyconnell, who received threats for condemning the attack from the pulpit, said the conviction in the Special Criminal Court was positive for "the harmony of the region".

Labour's education spokesman Aodhán Ó Ríordáin was greeted with sustained applause after he shouted "let's get them out" in relation to parish-owned Catholic schools during the party's annual conference. Bishops, politicians and Catholic schools' groups hit back, with Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Associations calling the comments "an insult to the more than 23,000 people who serve as voluntary members of boards of management" in Catholic schools.

Energy and fuel prices continued to rise during November, prompting parishes and parish-based organisations to warn that the soaring cost of living and job losses due to the pandemic are "tipping people into poverty". The Saint Vincent de Paul Society said it was bracing itself for record demand ahead of Christmas.

Parishes feel the pinch from 'rocketing' heating costs

You can't turn a blind eye to hate, says brave Cavan priest

'Get Catholics out' Labour Party insult to parents and volunteers



Parishes warn of 'perfect storm' as Covid and cost of living cause poverty crisis

DECEMBER

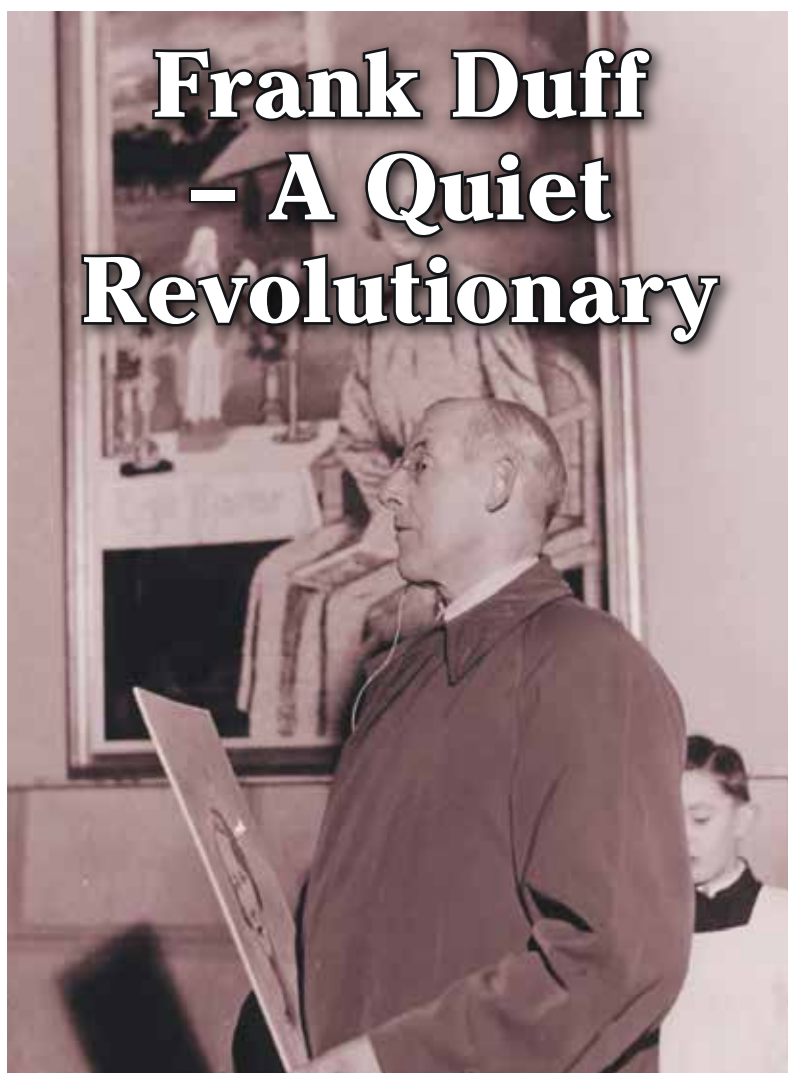
As the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 created fear across the world, missionaries in Africa called on Ireland to give vaccine booster doses to developing nations "as a matter of justice". The missionaries warned of a "greater disaster" with just 6% of adults in Africa fully vaccinated at the time.

Bishop John A. Ryan SMA, an Irishman based in Mzuzu, Malawi, said Ireland should "definitely" give its booster shots to developing nations once vulnerable and older people here were boosted. "The current vaccine distribution is not equitable at all," he told *The Irish Catholic*, with many wealthy western countries at the time rolling out plans to offer a third dose to all adults. Bishop Ryan insisted that "no one is safe until everyone is", adding that "the fear is that after Christmas there is the potential for greater disaster".

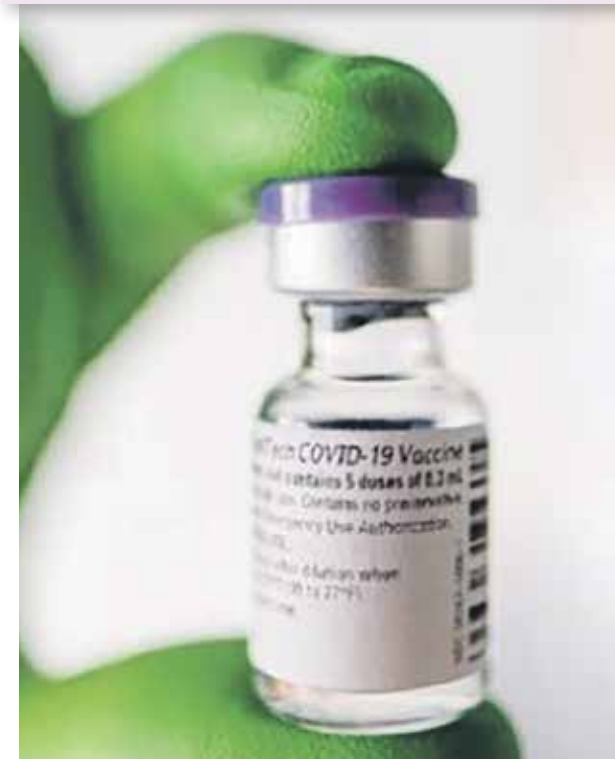
The December 9 edition of *The Irish Catholic* was dedicated to celebrating the Legion of Mary's centenary, as well as the life and legacy of its founder Frank Duff. Many paid tribute to Duff's manifold talents, his character and his achievements.

Meanwhile, the European bishops warned Europe that 'PC' culture is turning people away from the EU. Attempts to suppress religion damage the image of the EU and its institutions, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) said. The report came after an internal European Commission document was picked up by Italian newspaper *Il Giornale*, which showed guidelines that proposed replacing "Christmas period" with "holiday period" in an effort to use more inclusive language.

**Frank Duff
– A Quiet
Revolutionary**



Irish missionaries plead for us to share booster shots with poorer countries



📷 Around the world



▲ **USA:** A billboard in New York's Times Square spotlighting 'The Bible in a Year' is seen. It will be in place until January 9, 2022, to celebrate the size of the audience for the daily podcast, which leads listeners through the Bible's narrative. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis delivers Christmas blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican December 25.



PHILIPPINES: Residents clean their clothes near a river near Surigao City in the aftermath of Typhoon Rai.



GERMANY: People maintaining social distancing wait in pews to get vaccinated at a church in Berlin.



HOLY LAND: Palestinians walk through an empty Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank.



ETHIOPIA: A farmer walks past an abandoned military tank in Ethiopia's Tigray region.

My top 10 books for 2021



I'm not a literary critic, nor pretend to be. Simple fact, I don't read enough. A busy, pressured life affords me only some smaller windows of time within which to read anything that's not directly related to my ministry. Nonetheless, I try to be faithful to a discipline I set for myself years ago, namely, to read eight to ten pages every day from a book (magazines and newspapers don't count). In a normal year that adds up to some 3,000 pages.

Among the books I read this past year, which would I most recommend? What's my list for 2021?

Among non-fiction books, books on spirituality, human growth, and personal transformation, I recommend the following books:

Dorothy Day, On Pilgrimage, The Sixties – A Chronicle of faith and action through a decade of protest, idealism, and change
by Robert Ellsberg.

In recent generations, we haven't produced many Dorothy Days, namely, spiritual writers who have stood out so singularly for their personal engagement in both social justice and personal piety. Saints aren't always activists and activists aren't always saints. Dorothy Day was both. Robert Ellsberg lived with her during the last years of her life, is her literary executor, and has put together this wonderful collection of articles Dorothy wrote during the turbulent 1960's, a decade that spawned one of the most massive social and religious revolutions ever.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Human(Kind) – How Reclaiming Human Worth and Embracing Radical Kindness Will Bring Us Back Together
by Ashlee Eiland.

I bought this book as a gift for someone else and had the good sense of reading it first to see if it was true to its glowing reviews. It was, and more. This is a series of autobiographical essays by a young Afro-American woman who, for me, helps explicate how the Sermon on the Mount might be lived today. An exceptional book! Struggling to be kind in an unkind world.

Elderhood, Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life,
by Louise Aronson.

The title is a good synopsis of the book. A medical doctor working with elderly persons, Aronson

challenges our health care system towards a deeper compassion and each of us towards a better understanding of aging.

Still Christian, Following Jesus out of American Evangelicalism
by David Gushee.

This is an autobiographical account of Gushee's religious and academic journey, from an early (deep and authentic) conversion to Evangelicalism to how the voice of his own conscience eventually strained his relationship to that expression of Christianity, though not his relationship to Jesus. Anyone, of any denomination, who is struggling with his or her Church, will profit from reading this book.

Living Between Worlds – Finding Personal Resilience in Changing Times

by James Hollis.

Psychology with a soul. No therapist can solve your problems, but he or she can help you find a bigger story that can give more meaning and dignity to your misery. This book does that.

Among fiction books, here are the books that touched me in 2021.

Oscar and the Lady in Pink
by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt.

This is an older book (c2002), a short book, and a translation (from French). It's a collection of fictional letters that a dying young boy writes to God. Deceptive in simplicity and deceptive in depth. A worthwhile read.

Payback
by Mary Gordon.

On principle, I read anything Mary Gordon publishes. She always has something important to share. This book measures up. *Payback* is Mary Gordon writing about the cancer we call revenge and the consequences we pay for confusing catharsis with closure.

Whereabouts
by Jhumpa Lahire.

Again, given her previous works, Lahire is an author I read on principle. This book is somewhat different in genre from her other works, but it doesn't disappoint. Someone once said that wisdom is distinct from knowledge in that wisdom is intelligence fused with understanding. That's Lahire's signature trait, and this book bears that signature.

Miss Garnet's Angel
by Salley Vickers.

Someone sent me this book while I was in recovery from a major surgery. It's a book about 'miracles', not the kind where you walk on water, but the kind that is just as real, more meaningful, and more hidden within our normal lives.

The Forest of Vanishing Stars
by Kristen Harmel.

A fictional account about a number of Jewish families trying to escape the Nazis by hiding in a deep forest. This story can seem a bit fantastical initially; but, though it's fictional, it's actually a composite account of the flight from the Nazis through this particular forest by a number of actual historical families.

The book you need to read finds you, and finds you at the time when you most need to read it. That's been true in my life. I'm not sure why these particular books found me this year, but they're the ones that I needed at this time in my life. Admittedly, they may not speak to you in the same way.

But, happy reading! Of these books, or of others!

“Among the books I read this past year, which would I most recommend? What's my list for 2021?”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, December 30, 2021

Personal Profile

A round about route to the priesthood

Page 34



Co-opting consumerism to Catholic advantage

While Christmas Day may be behind us, for us Catholics, Christmas has just begun. Many of us mutter and grumble about the overwhelming commercialisation of the Christmas season in Ireland today, and often with good reason. It does seem as though Christ has been lost in the frenzied rush of buying, wrapping, partying and eating before Christmas Day, and then most definitely afterwards, in the blur of the “sales season”. While these things are pleasant diversions, they aren’t what Christmas is about, and focusing solely on these earthly concerns is to the detriment of both the season and ourselves.

We’re called as Catholics to rise above our complaints and “grumble” as C.S. Lewis put it, lest we become a “grumble” itself. Cathol-



Gifts are often a distraction from the reason for the season, but they need not be so, writes Jason Osborne

icism has always successfully co-opted the ways of the world to the glory of God, and the commercialisation of the Christmas season is no different.

So, rather than complaining about losing Christ in the midst of shopping, presents and toys this year, why not sneak God in (or present him openly) to others with quality Catholic gifts? Bibles, rosary beads, clothing and more are available now, of a hitherto-unknown quality, such that the wise men wouldn’t have gone

amiss if they’d included them in the gifts they presented to Our Lord at his birth.

So while, as I say, Christmas Day is behind us, and money is tight for many these days, a gift that speaks to others of God while they’re caught up in sales and shopping might be just what they need to set their sights a little higher. Presented below are a number of Catholic outlets and items which offer gifts, the value of which may last beyond this life and into eternity.

Rugged Rosaries

A safe starting point for any Irish man, woman or child, a rosary always makes for an important and symbolic gift. However, most rosaries fall apart when subjected to the stresses and strains of repeated use over months and years.

To nip that in the bud, I availed of the products of US company Rugged Rosaries. Based in Texas, their artisans “prayerfully and thoughtfully” create rosaries using a variety of materials, but held together by military-grade paracord (a nearly-unbreakable type of rope).

The result is a beautiful range of durable rosaries for both men and women. My own rosary from their website is “ashes to ashes” themed (inspired by the Lenten

time of year in which I bought it), and it’s composed of light grey paracord, steel beads and a beautifully crafted crucifix. Alongside this, they offer rosaries created in “Marian” styles, such as Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe, monk-style rosaries, devotional-themed rosaries and more.

A more novel item they produce, however, are their World War One ‘Battle Beads’, which are replicas of the 1916 government-issued rosaries that were given to soldiers, sailors and pilots during the first world war. Of course, any rosary does the trick in bringing you closer to God if prayed regularly and devoutly, but if you know someone in need of an eye-catching intervention, you should look no further.

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

USING MECHANICAL TOOLS IMPROVES OUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

Our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences is one of the most difficult language skills to acquire. In 2019, research had revealed a correlation between being particularly proficient in tool use and having good syntactic ability.

A new study, by researchers from Inserm, CNRS, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 and Université Lumière Lyon 2 in collaboration with Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, has now shown that both skills rely on the same neurological resources, which are located in the same brain region.

Furthermore, motor training using a tool improves our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences and – vice-versa – syntactic training improves our proficiency in using tools. These findings could be applied clinically to support the rehabilitation of patients having lost some of their language skills.

VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS 'LINKED TO DYNASTIC COLLAPSE IN CHINA'S PAST

Volcanic eruptions may have triggered abrupt climate changes contributing to the repeated collapse of Chinese dynasties over the past 2,000 years, according to new research published recently.

The study also illustrates how volcanic eruptions can profoundly impact vulnerable or unstable regions and highlights the need to prepare for future eruptions.

The research, which combines historical evidence with polar ice-core records of volcanic eruptions, was led jointly by historians and environmental scientists from Trinity College Dublin and Zhejiang University, China. It was recently published in *Communications Earth & Environment*, a new high-profile journal from Nature Portfolio.

Scientists have identified explosive volcanic eruptions as one of the most important drivers of dramatic changes in climate, often triggering sudden cooling and drying that can cause livestock death and crop damage. However, our understanding of the role played by such abrupt climate shocks in state or societal collapse has been limited by the precision and accuracy of dating of available historical and climate evidence.

KIDS WHO EAT FRUIT AND VEGETABLES HAVE BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

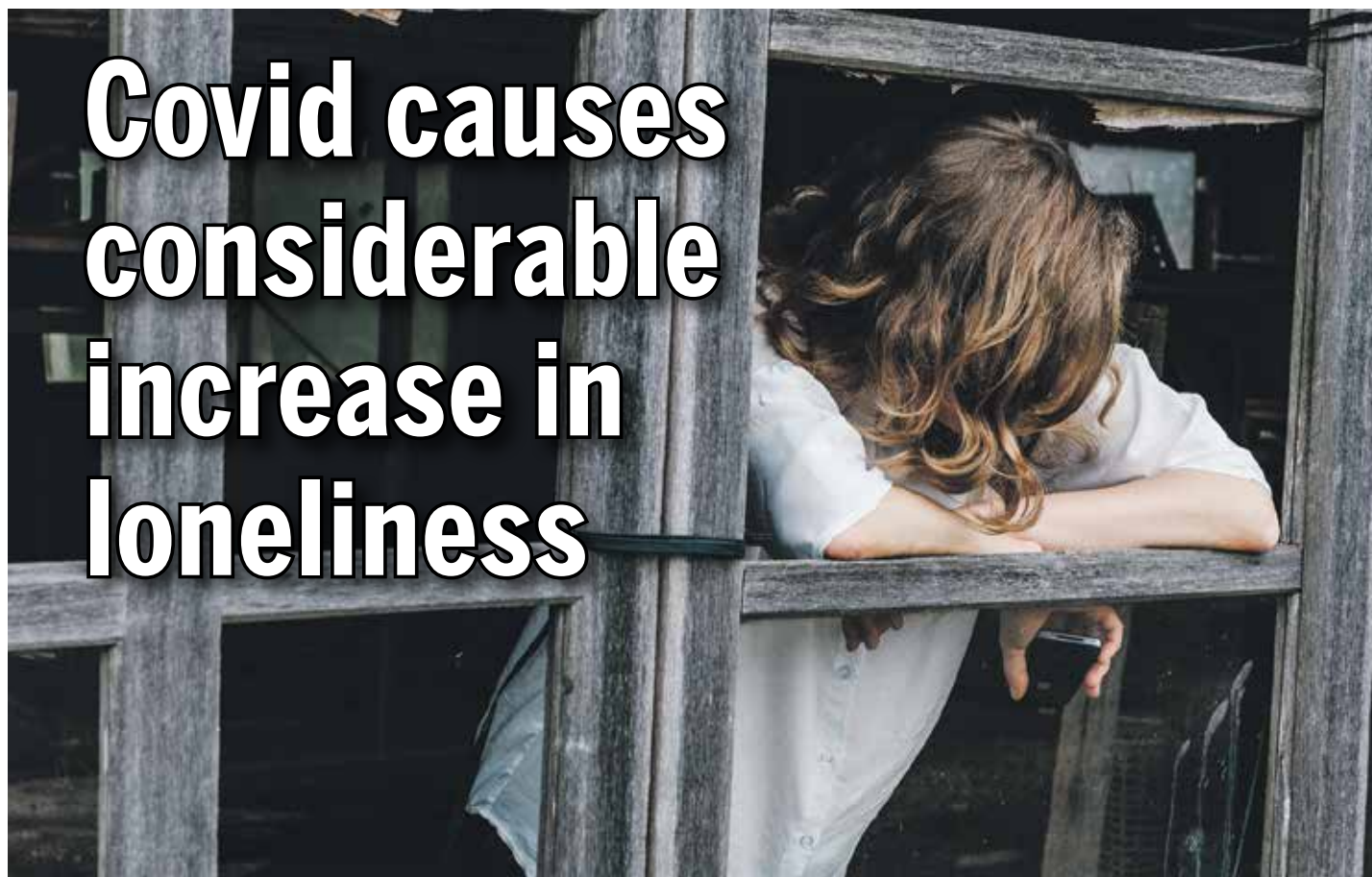
Children who eat a better diet, packed with fruit and vegetables, have better mental wellbeing – according to new research from the University of East Anglia.

A new study is the first to investigate the association between fruit and vegetable intakes, breakfast and lunch choices, and mental wellbeing in UK school children.

It shows how eating more fruit and vegetables is linked with better wellbeing among secondary school pupils in particular. Children who consumed five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day had the highest scores for mental wellbeing.

The study was led by UEA Health and Social Care Partners in collaboration with Norfolk County Council.

Covid causes considerable increase in loneliness



The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health has been considerable with a marked rise in loneliness and social isolation over the past 18 months. While studies show that all ages of the population have been affected, it points to a disproportionate impact on younger adults who have felt the brunt of Covid restrictions. Research from the Institute of Public Health in Ireland showed that by November 2020, one quarter (26%) of those aged 18-34 years reported feeling lonely 'all or most' of the time which compares to a figure of only 3% in 2018. Furthermore, when also including those in the same age category who felt lonely 'some of the time', the figure rises to 80% representing a 2.5-fold increase. The overall prevalence of loneliness also doubled in the population during the period April to November last year.

“That loneliness is bad for us will not come as any surprise”

While no age is immune from loneliness, older adults have also been impacted by 'cocooning' guidelines and restrictions. Indeed, the charity Alone which supports older adults provided aid to nearly twice as many last year compared to 2019, with a 6-fold increase in telephone support and seven times rise in the use of its befriending services.

That loneliness is bad for us will not come as any surprise. As well as being associated with a poorer quality of life, disrupted sleep and anxiety, it is a big risk factor for depression. But recent studies also show that it is associated with an increased likelihood

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



of physical ill health including cardiac disease and premature mortality. Indeed, loneliness has been described as a “public health problem” given the significant impact it has on wellbeing. The UK in 2018 became the first country to appoint a 'loneliness minister' and Japan has followed suit this year.

In gauging the effects of loneliness, studies suggest it may confer a negative health risk equivalent to obesity, as well as life shortening effects comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. There are biological reasons that may underpin adverse health effects, including heightened cortisol responses to stress and potential effects on immunity. However, there are many factors that contribute to loneliness that are independently associated with poorer health making the relationship complex. The main factors associated with loneliness during Covid are female gender, unemployment or still in education and higher alcohol consumption. In general, lower education and socioeconomic status, living alone, being widowed or having no children, reduced social networks and physical disability are all strongly associated with loneliness.

Whether people feel lonely

also depends on personality type and other factors. For example, while social isolation is a major factor in loneliness, there are some people who live alone and have little social contact but don't feel lonely. On the other hand, some people who have good social networks feel 'emotionally' lonely due to the lack of close personal relationships with others. However, studies suggest that 'emotional' loneliness is equally if not more harmful as 'social loneliness'.

Research from the Irish TILDA study shows that the effect of living alone on loneliness was stronger for men than women. Interestingly, between the ages of 50-67 years, loneliness decreased before rising in



prevalence in later life. It also found no difference in the level of emotional loneliness experienced by rural versus urban dwellers. In fact, those living in rural areas were more likely to be the most socially integrated and least likely to be very isolated. This finding may be due to more traditional family social networks in rural areas and possibly greater involvement in church.

Of course, loneliness can be a particular issue during the Christmas period. Indeed, in a survey in Northern Ireland this year, 17% of older adults reported that they expect to feel lonely this Christmas with

6% citing that they had no one to celebrate with.

But what can be done to help combat against loneliness? Well, studies point to the importance of a multi-pronged approach focusing on several factors but people's perception of loneliness can be complex in origin, and there's no one size fits all intervention. As well as enhancing social support and increasing opportunities for social contact, improving social skills is important in promoting better engagement. During Covid, a study involving a programme of phone calls focused on empathic conversation over a four week period saw a reduction in loneliness, depression, and anxiety in those aged 27-101 years.

“It's important too that we all keep an eye out for others and take time to make that social contact, even if brief”

While sometimes people may feel shy about contacting others, do try and keep in touch even by phone. Try also and get involved in community activities and think about putting things to do in your diary every week. It's important too that we all keep an eye out for others and take time to make that social contact, even if brief.

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

» Continued from Page 31



The Great Adventure Bible

Produced by Ascension Press, Jeff Cavins' Great Adventure Bible makes parsing the dense scriptures easier than ever before. If you're at all like me, despite reading and rereading sections of the Bible, some of it remains unintelligible to you, and there's a good chance this is the case for those around you, too.

The Great Adventure Bible seeks to rectify this by offering a comprehensive study bible that is designed to be 'user friendly'. It does this through:

- Commentary written by committed, Catholic Scripture scholars;
- Seventy 'Key Event call-outs', which are brief descriptions of key moments in salvation history;
- Twelve timeline charts, which provide a visual overview of the Bible, including elements such as key figures, geography, major covenants, world rulers and contemporary events in 'secular' history;
- Twelve articles, which provide summaries of the different time periods of salvation history
- Seven different articles which introduce and explain the major covenants of salvation history.

A lot to be packed into a Bible, but it's done so in a very attractive and accessible way, making it an ideal gift for someone who knows nothing about our Faith, or someone who knows a little and wants to know more.

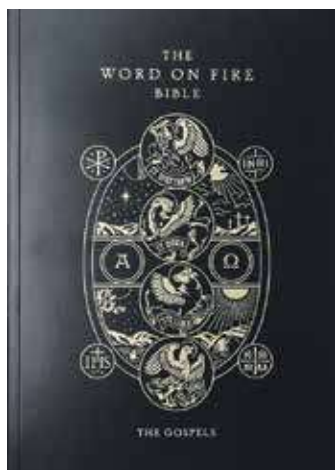
The Word on Fire Bible

Bishop Robert Barron's sensationally popular Word on Fire Ministries has taken its task in a new direction: the

production of a Bible for evangelistic purposes. The Word on Fire Bible (Volume 1): The Gospels, released earlier this year, and to widespread acclaim.

“The Word on Fire Bible isn't intended solely as a study Bible, so much as an evangelistic work of art”

Surrounding the Gospel texts with commentary from Bishop Barron, the Church Fathers, and an array of saints, mystics and scholars throughout the Church's history, it's intended to aid those who have little to no experience of the Gospels. Modern writers like G.K. Chesterton, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Flannery O'Connor, and each of the last three popes are fea-



tured, so as to present the Gospels in their fulness to the reader.

The Bible also features many of the great, western works of art throughout its pages, in an attempt to appeal to scriptural beginners via what Pope Francis refers to as the 'way of beauty'. The Word on Fire Bible isn't intended solely as a study Bible, so much as an evangelistic work of art.

The Chosen merchandise

Oftentimes, TV or movie merchandise is cheap and tacky, with little thought or design put into them. Fortunately, hit-streaming series *The Chosen's* merchandise is at the opposite end of the spectrum and, in my opinion, highly likely to well-serve an evangelistic purpose.

Their webstore features a wide-range of appealing items, from the series itself on DVD and Blu-ray, through to eye-catching clothing which, fortunately, doesn't look outdated or unfashionable alongside the trends of today. Many of the key themes and quotes from the show, and sometimes from Scripture, have been captured and set down on hats, hoodies, t-shirts and more, making them useful conversation starters and question-raisers.

There are far, far more quality Catholic and Christian items out there to be put to use serving God's purpose, but these outlets and items are just a few ideas to keep in mind, should you plan on making use of January's shopping blitz to slip God into a family or friend's home.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



2021 is not a year that we will look back upon fondly in our family, for it is the year inscribed on my mother's headstone. It is the year when, in the depths of winter, in a country fearfully locked down, I went in to say a final goodbye to her in hospital, before the coronavirus took her from us. We all still grieve for her daily, but we can also look back on a life well lived, and her luminous example of love and kindness which inspires us all, even in our sorrow. The children continue to grieve for her, each in their own way. Yet the overwhelming feeling we get when remembering her is not sadness, but love.

During a hard year, we managed to be inspired by her example of looking on the bright side, and always finding joy in life. Despite an echoing grief, our summer was also filled with happiness and adventure, as we spent time on the islands off the south and west coasts of Ireland, swimming, sailing and exploring. We found happiness, and freedom, despite the strange restrictions imposed on ordinary life.

Hope is a virtue which we had to lean upon during this trying year. Most of us have always seen the Irish State as distant, relatively benevolent and reassuringly incompetent. It soon came to be increasingly seen as a hostile, interfering and authoritarian. It became for a time the sort of State which would interfere with families merely walking on an empty beach. There were unduly harsh restrictions on churchgoers, on First Holy Communion and we all became used to encountering roadblocks where you had to explain your movements. There was even a recent edict that 9-year-olds should be refused their constitutional right to education if not wearing a mask.

There was a reasonable rationale for some of these restrictions, many of which I agreed with fully. However, what saddened me most was the move from a collaborative and advisory approach, to an authoritarian one, which saw the State threaten its own citizens, instead of appealing to

their better nature, in a spirit of community.

Many have now shifted their perceptions of the Irish State. At times, such as when it misled the over-70s into believing they were legally required to stay indoors, it seemed less like a protector, and more like an enemy. This unsettling feeling may grow in the years ahead, if the State's new authoritarian approach becomes normalised. This could be especially so for Christians,

who now live in a State which is increasingly hostile to Christianity. The Government is drafting regulations as to what the Catholic community can teach in their own schools. The State funds activist groups which are ardently hostile to traditional values, and it sends their propaganda into places of education. The traditional Irish rural way of life is under strain from restrictions on fishing, farming, housebuilding and even cutting and burning turf. In rural Ireland, planning permission always seems available for holiday homes and hotels, but not for those who actually wish to live there.

Thanks to the pandemic, our children, like so many others around the world, missed out on many of those events which are so important in childhood.

There were many birthday parties forgone, school tours cancelled and we've had no holidays overseas since 2019. We've tentatively booked a holiday in France this coming year, in the hope that no new variant will come along to scupper our plans.

Despite a strange couple of years, there is still plenty to hope for in 2022. Perhaps the pandemic will abate, and the freedoms we once took for granted will return in full. Perhaps the loss of civil liberties during the pandemic will see people re-embrace them with renewed vigour. The past couple of years have upended life as we know it. Looking back on that strange time, the thing I am happiest about is that – despite the wider world going mad – the little world of our family remained a happy place for our children. They continued to grow and thrive, in spite of it all. Their smiles give me cause to hope for a happy New Year.



A round about route to the priesthood

Personal Profile



Brandon Scott

Massachusetts native Fr Gary Chamberland CSC has been rector of the Notre-Dame Centre for Faith and Reason in Dublin at University Church, St Stephen's Green for a little over a year-and-a-half. Undertaking the role in July 2020, Fr Chamberland has already faced unprecedented challenges during his ministry in Ireland, with Covid dampening the priest's ambitious plans. But as Fr Chamberland's pathway to priesthood illustrates, perseverance is paramount to success and this is something he possesses in abundance.

“I remember when I was in third grade my public school teacher telling my mom that I was going to be a priest and I overheard it”

Fr Chamberland's faith is the product of a what he calls a “typical” Catholic upbringing, in which he went to Mass every Sunday and was active in the Church as an altar boy. His formal grounding in the Faith came by virtue of a 10am Saturday morning class, as there were no Catholic schools in the area. The class was something Fr Chamberland said “he dared not miss”.

“Can you imagine telling anyone today that you had to get up every Saturday morning? There would be riots,” he jokes. “But it never dawned on us.”

Fr Chamberland's vocation was

apparent from an early age, so much so that his primary school teacher mentioned it in a conversation with his mother: “I remember when I was in third grade my public school teacher telling my mom that I was going to be a priest and I overheard it,” he says. “I remember thinking, ‘how does she know? I've never told anyone.’”

But although Fr Chamberland had a “typical” Catholic upbringing, his journey towards ordination was long and hard.

“All throughout secondary school and university I fought it; I didn't

want it,” he says. “I was hoping to find something else, I thought I was going to be a lawyer. I am a Canon lawyer now. I went to Catholic university in Washington DC and they offered a JUD, which is both a civil law and a law degree. I told my provincial when I was allowed to go that I really want that and he said ‘oh, no we don't need any more lawyers ... We have enough lawyers.’ I finished my three-year license and I started to work on the doctorate and the new provincial then asked me why I didn't get that unified degree and that it would've been so much more helpful. I had

to tell him because his predecessor wouldn't let me!”

Torn between fulfilling the path he was drawn to and suppressing his inclination to it, Fr Chamberland eventually decided that it was best to pursue his vocation.

“I went to the University of Notre Dame and that's where I met Holy Cross fathers,” he says. “There were seven priests and brothers that lived in my residents' hall, when I was a first year. I remained in these halls for four years except for a semester when I was in London. The youngest guy was 24 and the oldest guy was 80. They liked each other and all got along. We're not all peas in a pod at Holy Cross. If you have four people at a table, you have six different opinions and approaches to everything. It makes it more interesting and fun.

“After college I joined a volunteer programme called Holy Cross Associates, which is a little like a Jesuit volunteer core. It's since been disbanded. I was teaching inner-city kids in Portland and I met Holy Cross fathers there and realised that they're the same happy, prayerful, normal guys that I met at Notre Dame. I decided the hounds of heaven had chased me enough, that I should pop into the seminary, so that I could leave, quite frankly.”

Fr Chamberland began to self-doubt his calling and qualms plagued his general state of mind in formation. “I ended up doing my pre-theology and novitiate at Notre Dame and then I did my theology at Berkeley,” he says. “I lived in this massive secular environment, almost a festival of secularism. The schools were amazing. The Jesuits were some of the best teachers I ever had. They really helped us get it. At the end of five years in the seminary I left for five years. I really wasn't ready. I would've had a horrible run of years as a priest.”

In the subsequent months after his decision, Fr Chamberland sought direction through prayer, a decision which reinvigorated his commitment to re-entering the seminary.

“After praying to God for guidance, I swear that I heard a voice

saying ‘you know what you're supposed to do’. I threw the prayer book across the room and said ‘no way, we have gone down this road. It's not happening’. About six months later I called the seminary and said that I'm supposed to come back.”

“We're serving a parish in Ireland and our old parishioners are just delightful and make the day”

Fr Chamberland's journey has led him to Ireland's capital as a rector of University Church, a decision he says was made casually during a conversation with Fr Gerry Olinger, current vice-president for student affairs at the University of Notre Dame. With this appointment came a new mission spearheaded by Fr Chamberland and one that he sought to execute from the moment he entered the St Stephen's Green church.

“As a world Church, we have so much to give thanks to the Church in Ireland for the number of missionaries both sisters and priests they sent out to evangelise the world,” Fr Chamberland says. “We're serving a parish in Ireland and our old parishioners are just delightful and make the day. But the real goal is to reach out to the young professionals of the area and I think we can do it.”

“My goal is to say what can we offer that might be interesting to someone who would not otherwise darken our doors? Someone who is an educated, non-practicing Catholic ... very much your typical 20-something-year-old who might come for a talk and then get interested and come back for something else. Getting that magic formula is hard.”



Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



Offering hope and light for the earth in the new year

At COP26 in Glasgow there were many disappointments especially in the failure of our world leaders to act with the urgency that is needed to respond to the ecological crises we face. Many people came away disappointed, frightened and in despair. However, there was another COP26 story which I witnessed and that was the power and determination of those who gathered on the ‘outside’ of the negotiation halls, particularly faith communities. One of the people I met was Dr Rajwant Singh, the founder of an organisation in India called Eco-Sikh (www.ecosikh.org). At an inter-faith event in Glasgow, Dr Rajwant reminded us: “The time to act is now. Jesus Christ did not wait for the Roman emperor, he just got on with it.”

And Dr Singh is walking the talk as his organisation aims to plant one million native trees in India by 2030. So far, they have planted almost 400,000 trees simply by asking local Sikh communities to

plant 550 trees per community. It is an example of what can be achieved locally with creative leadership. With 220,000 Catholic parishes in the world, imagine what could be achieved at the grassroots in addressing biodiversity loss or embracing more sustainable ways of ‘being parish’. As faith communities we can respond, in great numbers.

Pope Francis is leading the way. In November he launched the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, a seven-year programme for the Church to embrace ecological sustainability by 2030, to really live out *Laudato Si'*. The platform is based around achieving seven ‘*Laudato Si'* Goals’ which include ‘Adopting More Sustainable Lifestyles’, ‘Ecological Economics’ and ‘Ecological Education and Spirituality’. It is aimed at seven Church ‘institutions’: Parishes and dioceses; educational institutions; healthcare institutions; organisations and groups; businesses and religious orders. The challenge is for these seven

Laudato Si' Goals to be achieved across these seven sectors over seven years – a jubilee for the earth. The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform is a way forward. We don't have time to wait. So one thing each of us can do this new year is discern where we are called to act to respond to the cry of the earth, using our unique gifts and talents to care more deeply for our common home. Where are we called to be in this *Laudato Si'* Action Platform?

We can begin by becoming familiar with this platform and going to www.laudatosiactionplatform.org

Over the coming months I will be exploring the *Laudato Si'* Goals and how a parish or family might respond. As we enter this New Year and the season of spring, the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform is one way that we can offer hope and light and be part of the solution.

“Discerning a response to the ecological crisis is a profound act of care. At this Kairos moment, action is needed. The *Laudato Si'* Goals guide our actions.” – *Laudato Si'* Action Platform.

Jane Mellett is the *Laudato Si'* Officer with Trócaire



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



An uplifting insight in to monastic life

There's usually a glut of programmes with religious elements in the media over the Christmas period, and I'm usually on the lookout for something distinctive or shows that stand out for a variety of reasons.

Heaven Made at Christmas (BBC One and Two) was particularly engaging. Over two episodes on Christmas week (on repeat from the previous Sundays) we got to explore the Christmas preparations of three Benedictine abbeys – Kylemore in Connemara, Quarr on the Isle of Wight and St Augustine's, Chilworth, in Surrey. Much of the emphasis was on the hand craft work done by the sisters and brothers as they stocked up their shops for the season. In Kylemore the emphasis was primarily on soap and chocolate. Sr Genevieve was a master chocolatier and the products were surely appetising. She regarded chocolate as a gift from God, and I won't argue with that. She worked in the soaperie as well, experiments with various perfumes, in particular scents that came from their own gardens – the walled garden was truly amazing, one of the biggest in Europe, with its flower adorned and distinctive slopes.

In the magnificent Quarr Abbey there was much brewing, whether craft ale or cider made from the abbey's own



Kylemore Abbey in Co. Galway.

apples. Their craft shop also featured Christmas items made by local workers. In Chilworth one of the monks showed us the colourful rosary beads he had made for their shop.

Involvement

Common to all abbeys was an involvement with the local community. Kylemore was described as one of the biggest employers in the area, and we saw the relevant skills being nurtured and passed on. A local tenant farmer rented land from the abbey, and of course farming has often gone hand in hand with monastery work.

The spiritual side of things was central to the lives of the

Benedictines and the work was an integral part of this – it was described as being good for souls and the bills! We also saw the monks and sisters in prayer and singing Gregorian chant as they practiced the various age-old rituals of the order. With the postulants the concept of discernment was front and centre. In Chilworth Bro. Simon said, with a dry kind of humour that it was less stressful to give in to the will of God than to fight against it! The numbers of religious had gone down in the abbeys, though perhaps these programmes will help. Nevertheless, the work will continue because of the involvement of locals in the mission.

Niall Carroll's Classical Daytime (RTÉ Lyric FM) also

caught my attention leading up to Christmas Day – it featured *The Universal Mass*, a new setting of the sung parts of the mass by J.J. O'Shea which was given two outings. On the Wednesday the Irish-based African Gospel Choir, led by Tomilola Allen-Taylor, got to perform these new pieces in the Yoruba language. The singing was beautiful as they gave their interpretation of the medieval chants, though in marrying the styles we didn't get the usual infectious rhythms you'd expect from a gospel choir.

Singer-songwriter

On the Thursday it was the turn of Cork singer-songwriter Emma Langford and her inter-

PICK OF THE WEEK

NEW! CATHOLIC VIEW FOR WOMEN

EWTN Monday January 3, 8am

Domestic violence among church goers is a very real problem that gets little attention. Today's panel examines the causes and effects, and exposes the shame many women feel when trapped in an abusive relationship.

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

EWTN Thursday January 6, 9am

Mass of the Epiphany with Pope Francis, from St Peter's Basilica.

MASS

RTÉ News Now Thursday January 6, 10.30am

Mass for the feast of the Epiphany.

pretation was very different, featuring an arrangement by guitarist Paul de Grae, with a string quartet. Ms Langford's vocals soared as she committed wholeheartedly to the pieces. For the composer's vision for this imaginative venture see the article on the RTE website – just search 'Universal Mass Lyric FM'.

Finally, one of my regular Christmas time favourites was **A Christmas Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio One) with Michael Comyn. While the regular Friday night *Leap of Faith* can deal with thorny topics this was a relaxed exploration of some seasonal themes, but also touching on deep and challenging human issues. There was a diverse group of guests – clerics, poets, musicians and writers. There were Christmas memories, an awareness of gifted-

ness, an appreciation that Christmas can be difficult for some people, a consciousness of the empty places around the Christmas table, whether from bereavement or varying degrees of isolation. Musically we had Blanaid Murphy and the Palestrina Choir, along with Angela O'Floinn's songs from a new album of carols in Irish, *Glór na nAingeal* – what we heard was beautiful (check it out at irishcarols.ie and the Bandcamp website). Covid did cast a shadow for the second year running, but the concluding song, *Joy to the World*, was the perfect song to finish the programme.

Happy New Year!

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
@boreganmedia

Music

Pat O'Kelly



A difficult year to celebrate the NCH

Seasonably festooned with Christmas trees and wreaths, the National Concert Hall was in celebratory mode earlier this month. And why not? After all, it was marking its 40th anniversary with an RTÉ NSO gala under principal conductor Jaime Martín.

The music brought the première of an NCH/NSO commissioned work, *The Treaty Debates* by Brian Byrne, movements from Anne-Marie O'Farrell's relatively recent *Eitilt* and Dvorák's ever-popular Ninth Symphony, *From the New World*.

There had been a somewhat low-key, but nonetheless significant, commemoration on the actual anniversary day – September



Conductor Jaime Martín

9 – with pianist Finghin Collins and the strings of the Irish Chamber Orchestra heard in

Mozart's A major Concerto K 414, when I described Collins' interpretation as "heroic yet playful, sturdy yet elegant".

Through the nature of its music, the NSO concert was a more robust affair that had the orchestra in top form. Brian Byrne's *The Treaty Debates* reminded us that these historical sessions actually took place when Dáil Éireann sat in what is now the NCH but, in 1921, was the Great Hall of University College, Dublin.

Mr Byrne's piece opens softly but a sharply intruding timpani motif indicates all may not be what it seems. There is a gradual build of tension until the music assumes an explosive character that

eventually changes to a sense of celebration with the timpani's opening phrases now more festive than frightening.

Movements

Four movements (1,2,3 and 5) from Anne-Marie O'Farrell's five-section *Eitilt* (Flight or airborne) were receiving their first public performances at this concert. The complete work, composed during lockdown, was intended for this year's abandoned Dublin Festival of New Music. The composer, on stage to introduce the pieces, told us they contained quotes from traditional airs combined with other tunes and motifs associated with RTÉ. I have to say I didn't readily recognise these connections.

After a discordant clash, the opening movement finds melodic elements emerging through galloping strings and woodwind twirls while clarinet and flute interweave engagingly. There is a brief spotlight on timpani to add a slightly disruptive challenge. *Eitilt's* second section is solemn and somewhat mysterious with a feeling of *Caoine* expressed by solo violin as well as haunting writing for solo flute and cello.

With interjections from oboe and brass, the third movement resembles a scherzo with scampering flute over pizzicato strings and certainly I can identify with a traditional refrain moving stealthily through

the imaginative scoring. With its several instrumental solos written specifically 'to showcase the individual artistry of the NSO's musicians', the bristling finale brings *Eitilt* to an affirmative conclusion.

The Dvorák Symphony provides the programmed ending to this ruby anniversary celebration with the NSO responding enthusiastically and sympathetically to Señor Martín's unflagging direction.

However, not surprisingly, encores to suit the occasion follow. The first is *Happy Birthday* while the second is AJ Potter's effervescent arrangement of the traditional *Finnegan's Wake*. It brings the house down and deservedly so, as it shows Potter's mastery of orchestration to the full with the NSO's playing simply dazzling. Happy and peaceful New Year.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



How we come to know so much about

Peter Costello

The story is told, by the Victorian writer H.C. Adams, of a student in the 1870s who was asked by an academic in an early exam in divinity at Oxford, "What is the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem?"

"A mile and a half," was the immediate reply.

"I think not sir," re-joined the examiner: "the best authorities do not make it that distance."

"I beg your pardon," said the examinee, "but I have walked it too often myself to be mistaken on the point!"

“From the first century onwards the earliest Christians had taken the keenest interest in the places associated with Jesus”

Now the authors of the Gospel according to John (11:18) say that Bethany was "near Jerusalem, about 15 stadia", which would be about 1.72 kilometres, or two miles. The doubt about the distance still continues, as a comparison of modern translations of the passage quickly reveals. But the modern roads may now not quite follow the route a walker would have taken in the old days.

We all know that the academic view, as from the height of an ivory tower in Oxford, may not always agree with what the person on the ground can see. And what the man on the ground could reveal about the background to the history of the Bible as a whole depended at that time on three things.

These were the study of place names, old and new: on increasingly accurate maps, depending on the latest techniques of surveying, and not archaic guess work; and eventually on the excavations and insights of archaeologists, then a new discipline.

Close study of the Bible and other ancient manuscript records, as well as inscriptions and other written texts on buildings and monuments were clarified by looking over the ground, what St Ignatius would later call "Seeing the place".

In the Victorian times, all of these systems were not as developed as they are today; but they were developed enough to reveal many interesting things about the Levant, the Holy Land, and about Jerusalem itself. Disputes still rage though, and about more than the distance from Bethany.

We can see all three of these methods displayed in a very primitive form in the efforts of St Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, in the last years of her life, say about 325AD. But from the first century onwards the earliest Christians had taken the keenest interest in the places associated with Jesus, especially the scenes of his birth, childhood and death, that is to say Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the city of Jerusalem.

But the Roman conquest and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70AD, as a consequence of the Jewish Revolt, had altered many of those places that through depopulation, rebuilding and repopulation — that process with which all modern urban dwellers across the world are now intimately acquainted.



To record the place names was all very well. Better still, was to map their locations clearly, much as the captain of a ship would work his locations by the bearings of the sun and the stars. This was the work (as in Ireland) of the engineers making the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem in the 1870s, clearly revealing all those narrow back streets

as well as the open public spaces.

Their charts, of course, were not of the historical city, but of the rebuilt city after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the changes made by the Muslims, Crusaders, and Ottomans. This, however, was of great importance, and their maps, plans and exploration remain important now.

“What the mother of the emperor began in her very amateur way still continues to this day”

The explorations later moved beyond the city into Judea, Galilee and the other districts of the Holy Land familiar from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

Take for instance the seasonal interest of Bethlehem.

For William Smith in the 1860s, Bethlehem was "one of the oldest in Palestine, already in existence at the time of Jacob's return to the country" from Haran — an

The painting by Agnolo Gaddi, *The Invention of the True Cross* (In Church of Santa Croce), Florence, (see illustration) portrays the stages of the discovery, first the excavation of the wooden beams, and then their verification through two miracles.

Over the centuries, sceptics have found this legend an unlikely story. Dr Kathleen Kenyon, the distinguished expert on Jericho and Jerusalem, who died in 1978, in the last book she published, discussed the matter: she felt that St Helena was guided by very strong local traditions about the site and its past uses. An earlier Christian shrine had been replaced by Julian the Apostate with a Temple of Aphrodite. This in turn was demolished by Constantine and the present church built. Dr Kenyon felt it a pity that what Helena heard was not properly recorded.

event he did not date in real time, but which is in fact far from the earliest horizon of culture in the region, as we now know. But the modern town of Beit-lama lay just east of the main road from Jerusalem to Hebron, and was far from Nazareth in the north where it seems Jesus grew up.

St Helena can in a way be seen as the first archaeologist of the Holy Land. Her ambition was that by inquiry and excavation she would try and recover relics of Jesus and his mission.

The 'Invention of the True Cross' was her great achievement; though in modern English 'invention' needs to read in its original Latin meaning. The term comes from invention, the rhetorical term for the systematic search for arguments. To find the cross 'on which the Saviour died' would indeed have been an argument against all those who said the Passion narratives were a fiction, or at least a much embroidered account of the execution of a common criminal.

What the mother of the emperor began in her very amateur way still continues



Bethany

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.

ancient Palestine



Agnolo Gaddi, *The Invention of the True Cross* (12th century, Church of the Santa Croce, Florence)

to this day, but in an increasing scientific and methodical way which began in the mid-1800s.

“It was a find at Luxor in Egypt, where Petrie worked in 1896, that provided an exciting insight”

The unveiling of the past of Palestine was the work of scholars from many nations, France, Germany, Austria, Russia, Britain, North America, with very varied views of Christian heritage. One important factor however, was the Palestinian Exploration Fund, which enabled the work of many of these people to be supported. (The fund still exists, and recently moved to new quarters in the Thames-side town of Greenwich which provides better study space for their archives, which are open to all.)

But beyond place names and cartography came the real revelations of archaeology, with which many

important names are connected, such as Matthew Flinders Petrie.

In 1890 Dr Petrie, already a noted Egyptologist, made his first expedition into Palestine. He excavated at Tell-el-Hesi, which he erroneously identified as the Biblical town of Lachish. This was challenged by F.W. Albright, but his suggestion was later challenged too, and the prehistoric identity of the place is not settled even today. All of which illustrates the difficulties over places in Palestine.

But what Petrie brought to bear on Palestinian archaeology was his system of dating levels in a site based on pottery and ceramic findings. Broken pots and pans, the rubbish which earlier workers had thrown away, now became central to all archaeological work down to today.

Stratigraphy

But as aside from establishing the stratigraphy, these items when found on other sites in other countries, provided a datable relationship to amend dates, allowing connections to be made across space as well as time, revealing ancient cultural and trading connections. This archaeological work in Palestine could now advance with a certainty it had not really had before.

But it was a find at Luxor in Egypt, where Petrie worked in 1896, that provided an exciting insight.

Two splendid stelae or standing stones were found. One of black granite displayed an inscription of Merneptah recording his victories over the Libyans to the west and, to the north, over ‘the peoples of the sea’ (perhaps the Cretans).

A German scholar named Spiegelberg came to read it. Near the end of the text he was puzzled by one name, that of a people or tribe whom Merneptah had also smitten - the ‘l.si.ri.ar’?

It was the quick connectivity of Petrie’s mind that saw at once the solution: ‘Israel’.

Spiegelberg agreed that it must be so. “Won’t the reverends be pleased?” was his comment. This was, almost unbelievably, was the first mention of the word ‘Israel’ found in any Egyptian text.

Later that evening Petrie remarked: “This stelle will be better known in the world than anything else I have found.” This find made news in Europe and North

America, for ‘the reverends’ and their disciples were indeed very excited: the new science of archaeology could prove “the Bible was true”.

“I believe the true line of research lies in the noting and comparison of the smallest details,” was, however, a perennial dictum of Petrie. In those days archaeology was a largely destructive process: once a site was dug out it could not be effectively revisited outside of the digger’s original notebooks.

This was an important rule: but it was and is not always followed by later workers, such as Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos (about whom distressing evidence of carelessness was revealed in the 1960s). It was all too easy for archaeologists to impose on their reports preconceived ideas.

Establishing the past history and religious life of Palestine is a matter of making use of all kinds of information. The sites are complex ones, with cultures ranging back in time from the 19th Century of the Ottoman Empire (say) to the Palaeolithic.

“Beyond place names and cartography came the real revelations of archaeology, with which many important names are connected”

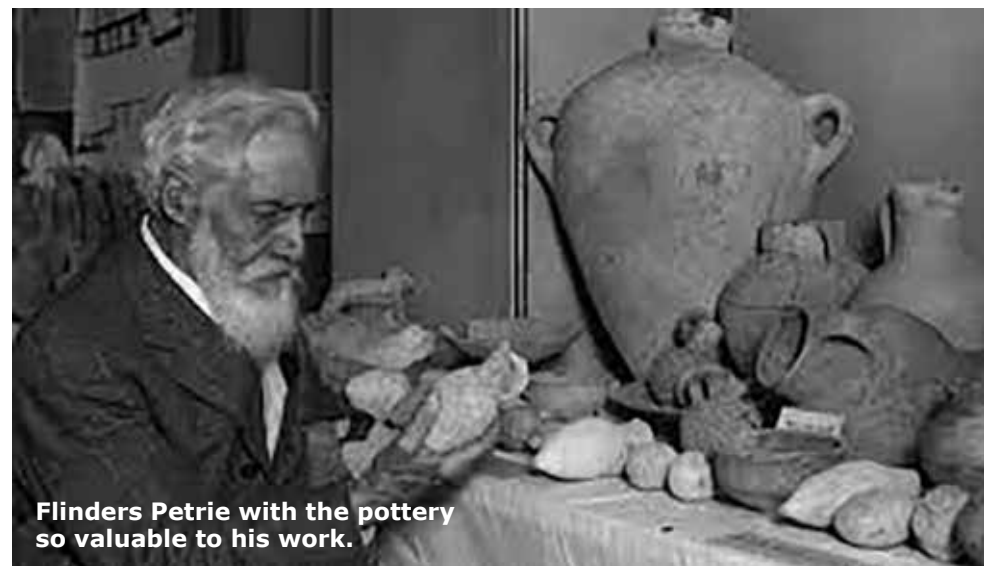
Indeed *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore MD, 1940; new edition 1957) was the very title of an important book by William Foxwell Albright, the doyen of Palestinian studies in the first half of the 20th Century.

Factor

It was subtitled ‘Monotheism and the Historical Process’. He saw the central factor in the long history of the territory of Palestine in the slow development from earliest times of the exceptional concept of monotheism, from ancient Egypt through the Old Testament prophets culminating in the mission of Jesus. That the Holy Land was holy to three of the world’s greatest religions is indeed thought-provoking, and makes the often bitter divisions between them a sad thing to observe, especially at this time of the year.



Bethel in the late 19th Century.



Flinders Petrie with the pottery so valuable to his work.



Bethany

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Great War, Britain and France were given mandates by international agreement to rule Syria, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine. New political entities came into existence, which last down to today, though claims by other peoples for recognition, such as the Armenians, the Druze, the Kurds and others; and most signifi-

cantly, the unfulfilled British promise in the Balfour Declaration of “a national home for the Jews in Palestine”.

These arrangements lasted down to the middle of the century. And under them archaeology continued, but often in new directions. Though most of the excavators came from Europe and North America, their results became entangled in the local political conflicts.

This continued after 1950.

New methods, new interpretations, new dates, and new styles of analysis, all brought their own disputes that often seemed to outsiders* to overthrow what they thought were long-settled matters, even though there are in reality no settled matters in history or archaeology.

But the story of archaeology of the Holy Land in the first half of the 20th Century is a tale for another day, perhaps at Easter time.

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ACROSS

- 1 Greens may be taken from the gable, Steve (10)
- 6 Limestone column that rises from the floor (11)
- 11 Make taut (7)
- 14 Olympic prize (5)
- 15 Capsize (8)
- 17 Pure clan pride could give you the right angle here (13)
- 19 & 20 Our wish for 2022 to all our readers (5,3,4)
- 23 Enjoyment (3)
- 24 Going to the greatest possible lengths is part of the next remedy (7)
- 25 Lyric poem (3)
- 26 Make your choice (3)
- 28 One who takes your side in conflict (4)
- 30 Type of song (6)
- 33 Town in Kildare (4)
- 36 Racquet sport (6)
- 37 The name of the first cloned sheep (5)
- 38 Liberated (5)
- 39 Dusk (8)
- 40 White fur (6)
- 43 Extraterrestrials found in a saline mixture (6)
- 45 Pigpen (3)
- 46 Hunting with birds makes an acorn fly around (8)
- 48 Red hair-dye (5)
- 49 One's partner in marriage (6)
- 50 The fools moved the sofa (4)
- 51 Sour or resentful (6)
- 54 & 100a It may be granted to someone who is unlikely to be able to live safely in their home country (9,6)
- 56 Heart condition (6)
- 57 Restaurant worker (6)
- 58 Excursion (4)
- 59 The Eastern mystic displays potassium in the market (5)
- 61 In psychology, the Self (3)
- 62 Detestation (5)
- 65 Pointed tool for making holes (3)
- 66 Arid (3)
- 67 Imperial weight measure (5)
- 68 This music maker gives a cardinal a kiss (3)
- 70 Mallards, for example (5)
- 74 Statue that is adored by heathens (4)
- 75 Part of the foot (6)
- 77 Medical centre (6)
- 78 A car's front lights (9)
- 79 Pope AI goes around to Syria's second largest city (6)
- 80 Young sheep (4)
- 83 Here, the feeble may be found in company (6)
- 84 Fast and manoeuvrable; cold (5)
- 86 A calling to the religious life (8)
- 88 Carton (3)
- 89 Consequence of a cause (6)
- 93 Say or do again (6)
- 95 Tavern (8)
- 97 Magistrate (5)
- 98 Doctrine (5)
- 100 See 54 across

- 101 Funeral fire (4)
- 103 Type of jacket (6)
- 105 Diagnostic examination (4)
- 106 Unit of electrical current, in short (3)
- 108 By way of (3)
- 110 Got out of remaking a video ad (7)
- 111 Unitary number (3)
- 112 Glowing, beaming (7)
- 113 Fit out (5)
- 116 While testing one's fitness, does it also educate one on violent crime? (7,6)
- 117 Virtue (8)
- 118 Attempts (5)
- 119 Impaired as the hydroelectric structure got older (7)
- 120 Specific aims or goals (10)
- 121 A New Year's resolution for dieters (4,6)

DOWN

- 2 Infant one sponsors at Baptism (8)
- 3 Flowers we associate with the Netherlands (6)
- 4 Plunder (5)
- 5 Everlasting (7)
- 7 Con game sometimes called 'Find the Lady' (5,4,5)
- 8 European mountain range (4)
- 9 Blemish caused by an evangelist? (4)
- 10 The name of this weather phenomenon is Spanish for 'the boy-child' (2,4)
- 11 Lavatory (6)
- 12 Large glove (8)
- 13 Workers' organization (5,5)
- 14 Unnecessary fuss identifying a Shakespeare play (4,3,5,7)
- 16 Pulled along - to get married? (5)
- 18 Smaller or fewer (4)
- 21 Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in this French city (5)
- 22 Female bird (3)
- 23 Defect (4)
- 27 Abbot's deputy (5)
- 29 Wooden harness borne by oxen (4)
- 30 Benediction (8)
- 31 The Scottish Grand National is traditionally run on this racecourse (3)
- 32 One can't remember what this means! (7)
- 34 Ring-shaped coral formation (5)
- 35 Original name of St Peter (5)
- 36 & 71d South African headland (3,4,2,4,4)
- 41 Near-sightedness (6)
- 42 Renowned touring basketball exhibition team (6,13)
- 44 Ailment that could affect a nun if zeal is misplaced (9)
- 46 Travelled by air (4)
- 47 The colour of custard (6)
- 48 Traditional dish from Lancashire (6)
- 52 Uncooked (3)
- 53 Breeding farms found on football boots? (5)

Christmas Crossword No. 1

Marian Pilgrimages, Ireland's group pilgrimage specialists to shrines throughout the world for over 30 years, are delighted to offer readers of *The Irish Catholic* the opportunity to win a pilgrimage for two to Lourdes during 2022.

Along with Lourdes, Marian Pilgrimages also offer pilgrimages to Medjugorje, the Holy Land, Italy, Fatima and Camino de Santiago, all available to view on www.marian.ie. For more information, please call them on 01 878 8159 or email info@marian.ie.



How to enter the competition

The competition consists of **TWO** crosswords. Crossword No.1 which was published in last week's edition and Crossword No.2 which is published this week. All you have to do is answer all the crossword questions correctly on **BOTH** crosswords and your name will be entered in a draw for the pilgrimage. Remember, even if you don't manage to complete the crosswords correctly you will be entered in the draw to win one of the three runner-up prizes of an **Olive Wood Crib from Bethlehem**. When you have completed the crosswords send **CROSSWORD No.1 and CROSSWORD No.2** before **Friday, January 14, 2022** to: **LOURDES COMPETITION Marian Pilgrimages, 19 Eden Quay, Dublin 1.**



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- 54 It's hunted by a predator (4)
- 69 Vegetable found in a pod (3)
- Omagh, perhaps (5)
- 103 A Van Dyke or goatee, for example (5)
- 55 The minding of one's offspring while one is working (9)
- 71 See 36 down
- 90 Twelve-inch parts of the body? (4)
- 104 Design style from the 1920's the cad tore asunder (3,4)
- 59 How does it know what to keep hot and what to keep cold? (5)
- 72 Limited (6)
- 91 Deciduous tree (3)
- 106 Confused (6)
- 60 Angling stick (3)
- 73 The longest chord in a circle (8)
- 92 Natural sweetener (5)
- 63 A sequence or mixture of songs (6)
- 76 Stratagem; map-like layout (4)
- 94 Dined (3)
- 64 O Mavis! Upset by a sci-fi author? (6)
- 77 Hide (7)
- 52 Uncooked (3)
- 65 Mathematical line (4)
- 81 Shell out - eventually (3,2)
- 79 Pope AI goes around to Syria's second largest city (6)
- 82 Striped predator (5)
- 85 Soapy plums might be made to feign death (4,6)
- 87 An ancient way to write
- 99 Enticing (8)
- 100 Slightly open (4)
- 102 Ms Herzigova is seen in Nevada (3)
- 99 Enticing (8)
- 100 Slightly open (4)
- 102 Ms Herzigova is seen in Nevada (3)
- 107 Latin American blanket-like garment (6)
- 109 Not obvious in meaning, nuanced (6)
- 113 Follow on from (5)
- 114 Verifiable (4)
- 115 Turf (4)

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Hopes for bountiful blessings, not fear for New Year

EVERY YEAR at this time I find myself returning to a beautiful reflection by Joyce Rupp titled 'Welcoming the New Year':



"A new year stands on my doorstep ready to enter my life's journey. Something in me welcomes this visitor:
the hope of bountiful blessings
the joy of a new beginning
the freshness of unclaimed surprises".

Pandemic

After two years of pandemic and the difficult restrictions, cancelled events and being deprived of creating memories, of course I welcome the visit of a brand new year. The hope that Covid might finally be behind us allows me to believe in the 'joy of a new beginning' and the 'bountiful blessings' which this new beginning will surely bring. Yes, in so many ways I'm very happy to say goodbye to the year that is ending in these days, but, as the reflection continues:

"something in me fears this visitor
the unnamed events of future days
the wisdom needed to walk love well
the demands of giving away and growing".

What do I fear about this new year? I have a milestone birthday coming up

in 2022 so yes, I fear the 'demands of giving away and growing'. 'Roundy' birthdays force us into a reflective space and particularly when you are fairly sure that there are now many more years behind you than in front of you! More than half my life has been spent as a priest and while for the most part that has been and continues to be, very happy and fulfilled, every year brings new challenges. The pastoral demands in the modern Church in Ireland's context and how they impact on the life of a priest become more acute. Do I continue to have "the wisdom needed to walk love well"? While it may not exactly be termed a 'fear', one significant event in this new year will be the appointment of a new bishop in our diocese. Whether we like it or not, the relationship of bishop and priest together with the kind of leadership the shepherd gives his flock, does have a significant

impact on the life and ministry of us priests. I hope and pray that this new appointment which we eagerly await, will be less in the 'fear' category and much more a 'bountiful blessing' and 'the joy of a new beginning'.

Consoled

Whatever this new year brings I will always be consoled and reassured by the final lines of Joyce Rupp's reflection:

"a new year stands on my doorstep.

With fragile caution I move to open the door for its entrance. My heart leaps with surprise, joy jumps in my eyes, for there beside this brand new year stands my God with outstretched hand!

He smiles and gently asks of me: can we walk this year together? And I, so overwhelmed with goodness, can barely whisper my reply: Welcome in!"

Stereotypes!

One day in the Garden of Eden, Eve calls out to God, "Lord, I have a problem!"

"What's the problem, Eve?"
"Lord, I know you've created me and have provided this beautiful garden and all of these wonderful animals, and that hilarious comedy snake, but I'm just not happy."
"Why is that, Eve?" came the reply from above. "Lord, I am lonely. And I'm sick to death of apples."

"Well, Eve, in that case, I have a solution. I shall create a man for you."

"What's a 'man', Lord?"
"This man will be a flawed creature, with aggressive tendencies, an enormous ego and an

inability to empathise or listen to you properly. All in all, he'll give you a hard time. But, he'll be bigger and faster and more muscular than you and therefore be able to help you out around the garden. He'll be really good at fighting and kicking a ball about and hunting fleet-footed ruminants."

"OK, if that's the best you can do," replied Eve. Somewhat irritated by her lack of enthusiasm God chided, "Yeah, well. He's better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick. But, you can have him on one condition."

"What's that, Lord?"
"You'll have to let him believe that I made him first."

A prayer at the beginning of a New Year

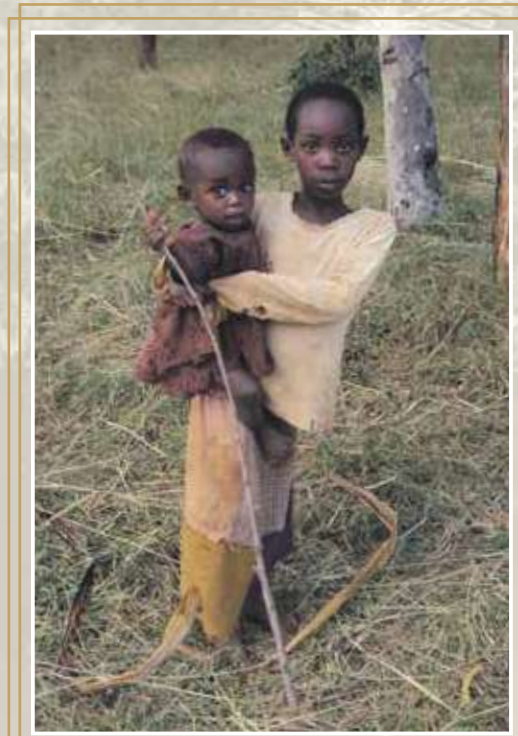
God of this New Year, we are walking into mystery. We face the future, not knowing what the days and months will bring to us or how we will respond. Be love in us as we journey. May we welcome all who come our way. Deepen our faith to see all of life through your eyes. Fill us with hope and an abiding trust that you dwell in us amid our joys and sorrows. Thank you for the treasure of our faith life. Thank you for the gift of being able to rise each day with the assurance of your walking through the day with us. God of this new year, we praise you. Amen. (Joyce Rupp)



COULD YOU HELP TO SAVE A POOR HELPLESS CHILD

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. Due to COVID-19 they are faced with many sufferings. They tell us of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.

Your New Year's gift will mean a chance of health and happiness for a deprived child.



It was St Therese's vocation to be **"love in the heart of the Church, and to assist priests, missionaries and the entire Church"**, and this has been the continuing inspiration of The Little Way Association. Ever since St Therese's death on 30th September 1897, countless priests and missionaries have given witness to the extraordinary way in which she has helped them. Let us pray for the fulfilment of her desire that the Gospel message would be spread throughout the world.

We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain all the blessings and graces you need for 2022.

Daily Mass for your intentions

You and your intentions are remembered in a special Mass offered in the Missions for all Little Way benefactors and friends.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

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DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

As 2022 begins, please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.