

The Irish Catholic

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Just 9% of Mass-goers joined synod process

EXCLUSIVE

Michael Kelly

Fewer than one in ten Mass-going Irish Catholics have participated in the much talked about synod process, according to new research.

When it comes to younger Catholics (those under 35), just 6% of those who say they regularly go to Mass availed of the opportunity to become involved in the process which many Church leaders are pinning their hopes on for a future renewal of the faith.

Some 88% of regular Mass-goers said they had not participated in the synodal process, while 3% said they were unsure or couldn't remember if they had participated.

This is despite the fact that every parish in the country publicised the process and most parishes also had public meetings at which parishioners were encouraged to attend and share their views about the future of the Church.

Participants in the research were not asked the reasons why they chose not to participate in synodality.

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Welcoming a new nun into the fold...



Following her year of postulancy, Sr Laura Cullen receives a blessing from Sr Gertrude Kelly at Glencairn Abbey, Co. Waterford, on her clothing day.

DEACON FRANK BROWNE

Evangelising young families this Easter

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Just 9% of Mass-goers joined synod process

» Continued from Page 1

Forty percent of Mass-goers said they were aware of the synodal process, while 55% of people who said they were frequent Mass-goers reported being unaware of the process.

When it comes to the general population surveyed, including those who are not Mass-goers, nearly one in five (17%) said they were aware of the synodal process. However, 78% of people said they were unaware of the synodal process. When Mass-goers were excluded, just 9% of the wider population said they were aware of synodality.

The survey was carried out by respected pollsters Amárach Research on a representative sample of 1,500 adults across the country.

Participants were also asked if they had a favourable or unfavourable view of Pope Francis. More than half (54%) said they had no opinion either positive or negative on Pope Francis, while 29% of the general population viewed him favourable with 17% of people saying they had an unfavourable view of the Pontiff.

Francis fared considerably better with Mass-goers with 61% of those who attend Mass saying they have a favourable view of the Pope as opposed to just 13% who have an unfavourable view of the Pope. More than a quarter (26%) of Mass-going Catholics said they had no opinion on Pope Francis.

Evident lack of interest in synod process should be a wake-up call

When they addressed the continental phase of the synod process in Prague last month, Julieann Moran and Fr Éamonn Fitzgibbon spoke of the “joy expressed by so many who took part in the synodal process, and their hope that it will continue and become embedded in Church structures, is real”.

No one can doubt the goodwill and genuine feelings of joy articulated by those of whom the Irish delegates spoke while in Prague. But the niggling question I hear repeatedly is: who is being represented?

Well, if the results of new research are to be believed we have an answer of sorts: not very many people.

As part of their regular round of omnibus surveys, Amárach Research asked Irish people about the synod process (see page one). Just shy of one in five people (17%) said they had heard of synodality – which is not bad for a process that can often be cloaked in ecclesiastical jargon.

However, when you exclude Mass-goers from the general population surveyed, just 9% of those who say they don't go to Mass had heard of synodality.

Relief

As one might expect, and what will be somewhat of a relief to the organisers of synodality in Ireland, 45% of Mass-goers said they were aware of synodality. At the same time more than half (55%) of people who said they were regular Mass-goers hadn't even heard about synodality.

Perhaps most surprisingly, 88% of regular Mass-goers chose not to participate in the synodal process. Just 9% of Mass-goers said that they had participated in the process, while fell to just 6% of those under the age of 35 who reported being regular Mass-goers.

The figures should be a wake-up call for the synod organisers and for Church leaders more broadly. They should also prove cautionary for people quick to pain in broad brushstrokes and make claims like ‘Many

“Pope Francis has often warned about the dangers of synodality becoming a project of elites”



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



The official logo for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Mass-going Catholics want x, y or z', when it reality the picture is more akin to 'Many of the fewer than one in ten Mass-going Catholics who offered an opinion want x, y or z'.

“There is much less appetite for the process in the pews than is the case amongst those professionally engaged and employed around synodality”

Pope Francis has often warned about the dangers of synodality becoming a project of elites, or one that is more suited to bureaucrats rather than one that truly engaged with the People of God and helps us all to deepen our relationship with Christ.

It strikes me that, if the results of the Amárach Research polling are accurate, two things are potentially true of the synod process in Ireland:

- 1) It has been poorly communicated, and therefore poorly understood;
- 2) There is much less appetite for the process in the pews than is the case amongst those professionally engaged and employed around synodality and vested interests;

Perhaps it is a combination of both, or there

engaged in the process, or is the case as this evidence (and anecdotal reports) reveal that very few people took the opportunity presented to them.

Wider question

There is a wider question here as well. There is much talk about synodality as being a vehicle to reach those that are often referred to as being on the 'margins'. We might have to collectively face the truth that these people are more than a little less interested in the process than we imagine.

We're not great at facing uncomfortable truths in the Church in Ireland. Often people who raise them are criticised as “just being negative” as if burying one's head in the sand is a strategy. Beside this, Church people can often fall into the trap of naïve - if pleasant - ‘happy talk’ as a kind-of anaesthetic from reality.

We need to be realistic about synodality.

Seriously

What is for sure is that Church leaders need to take the survey results seriously, and ask themselves why such a result could come from a representative sample of Mass-going Catholics.

Could it be that the pollsters were just unlucky to encounter so few Catholics

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Catholic parents needs reassurance over schools – Archbishop Farrell

Staff reporter

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell has insisted that the Government must give assurance to Catholic parents that their right to choose a Catholic school for their children will be fully respected.

He warned that parents' right to choose a school with a Catholic ethos must be an integral part of the discussion around diversity of patronage that is currently underway.

Dr Farrell was speaking after Minister for Education Norma Foley announced this week that St Enda's National School in Dublin 8, is to transfer from Catholic patronage to the local Education and Training Board and become a multi-denominational community national school.

The transfer was agreed as part of a pilot process announced in March 2022 to reconfigure schooling in areas of a number of cities and towns that have no multi-denominational primary schools.

The move had the full backing of Archbishop Farrell as patron.

Archbishop Farrell said: "I wish to express my sincere thanks to all those involved in this consultation process, in particular the school staff, board of management, parents, and the school and parish community who were part of the process.

"A particular word of thanks to the Carmelite Order for the manner in which they have facilitated and provided for primary education in St Enda's over many, many

years," he said.

Dr Farrell expressed his "support for the reconfiguration of patronage within the archdiocese in order to reflect the growing diversity of Irish society. I look forward to continuing cooperation with the Department of Education in order to bring this about".

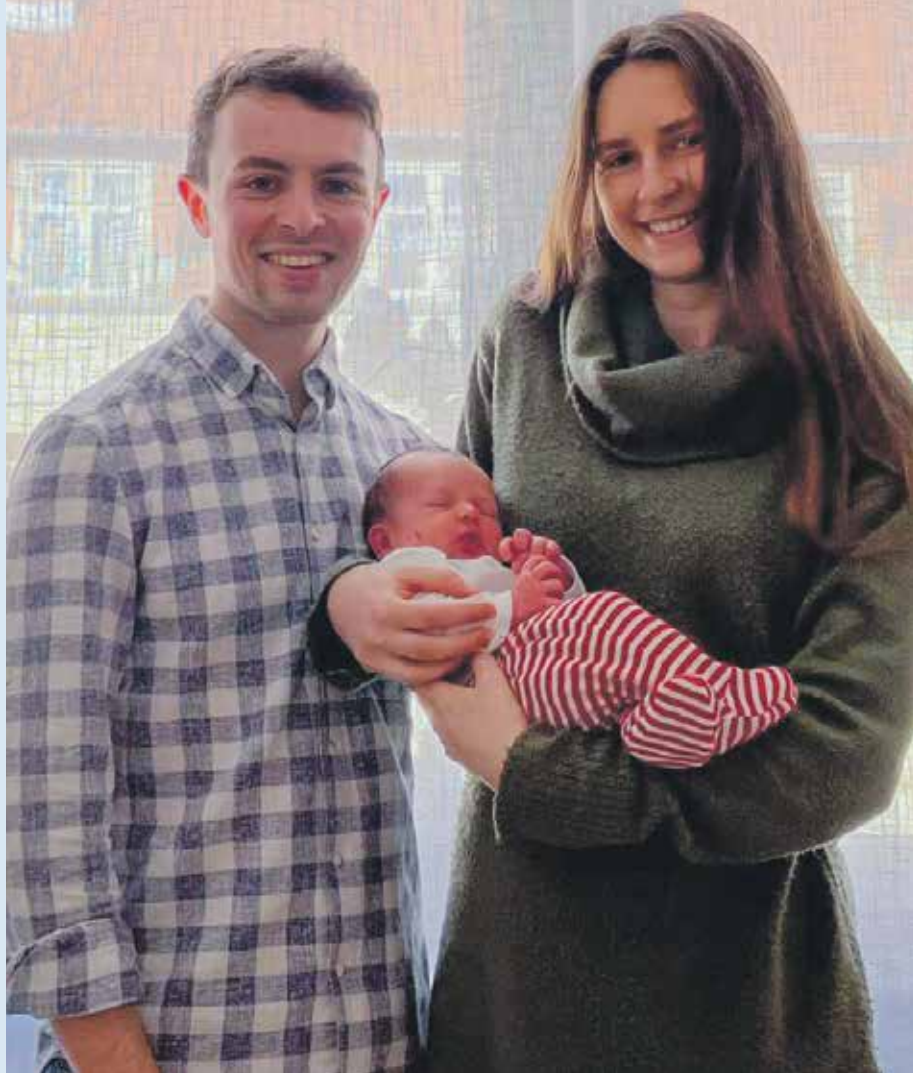
"I, along with the other Catholic patrons, will continue to work with the department to identify remaining barriers to the building of that consensus. This includes reassuring Catholic parents that

their choice of a school with a Catholic patronage and ethos will continue to be secured and facilitated within the education system."

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to provide at least 400 multidenominational primary schools by 2030 so as to improve parental choice.

As well as Dublin, the pilot scheme is also looking at potential transfers of patronage in Arklow, Athlone, Cork, Dundalk, Galway, Limerick and Youghal.

Welcoming the gift of life...



Proud dad Jason Osborne, multimedia journalist with *The Irish Catholic*, and his wife Marta after the birth of their first child, baby Daniel.

Where Grace abounds, and there is still room for Noah on the Ark

Chai Brady

James and Grace were the most popular first names given to babies in the North, for births registered in 2022.

This is one of the findings of the Baby Names 2022 statistics published this week by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

The statistics show Grace has held the top spot as the most popular girls' name since 2018 and has appeared in the top three most popular names for 17 consecutive years. The

apostles also got a nod with James returning to number one after a six-year stretch at the top spot between 2015 and 2020, and placing third in 2021.

In terms of boys' names, Jack was a close second to James, after reaching the top spot last year. Noah returned to third place, where it was in 2019 and 2020, after reaching second place last year.

Oisín entered the boys' top 10 in 2022 for the first time since the recording of first names began in 1997. Thomas re-entered the top 10 after narrowly missing in 2021.



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Pastors reject radical school porn plan

Staff reporter

A group of more than 200 Protestant pastors have written to the Government urging it to stop plans to expose Junior Certificate students to pornographic content and to teach what they describe as “transgender ideology” in primary schools. The pastors warn that the proposals would increase “the numbers of broken and damaged individuals we already see, with damning repercussions for Irish society”.

It comes after the head of the Catholic Education partnership, Alan Hynes, said that a radical

theory of sex and gender should not be crowbarred into Catholic schools.

The letter, seen by *The Irish Catholic*, is addressed to Minister for Education Norma Foley and Minister for Children Roderic O’Gorman.

“As church leaders we represent thousands of Bible-believing Christian parents and grandparents nationwide who find this wholly unacceptable and deeply troubling,” the letter states.

It continues: “as pastors, we are personally aware of the extensive damage pornography does in the lives of people. We deal with

it daily. We know the danger that this material in any form presents to impressionable hearts and minds of children and teens.

Young people

“The fact that some young people may have already been exposed to this content is not the issue, there are many that haven’t, and don’t need to be. This proposal is nothing less than the sexualisation of children by a State body,” the letter warns.

It points out that in Ireland one in four people have been sexually abused by the age of 17 and warns that “exposure to pornography

normalises violent and abusive sex and increases vulnerability amongst children and young people to requests for intimate images and videos”.

The letter, spearheaded by Pastor John Ahern of the All Nations Church in Dublin, says: “As Christians and parents, we believe we have the right to teach our children a Biblical view of gender and sexuality. We believe that it is the sole responsibility and right of parents to choose what and when to teach their children on sexuality and gender, not teachers, politicians, or activists.

“We speak also for many teach-

ers and principals who are deeply uncomfortable at what they are being asked to teach. They also feel themselves pressurised, even bullied, by decisions driven by activists who are interested in pursuing their own agenda rather than the welfare of children,” it says.

Communities

As *The Irish Catholic* went to press this week, the letter was already signed by 205 pastors mostly from Evangelical, Baptist, Pentecostal and other non-denominational Christian communities in the Republic.

TD told abuse inquiry’s only focus is on Catholic schools

Chai Brady

An Irish politician who raised concerns about the extent of the scoping inquiry into abuse at schools has been told the investigation will prioritise just religious-run Catholic schools.

This comes after the Government announced that it appointed a barrister Mary O’Toole SC to investigate recent

allegations of historic abuse made by former students of schools managed by Catholic religious orders this month.

Fine Gael TD Fergus O’Dowd of Louth constituency asked Minister for Education and Skills Norma Foley if she will respond to concerns raised by a person in relation to the scope of enquiry into historical sexual abuse in schools

– someone who was not in a Catholic school.

In response, Minister Foley said that the scoping inquiry was initially focused on the Spiritan order, saying “revelations and allegations in respect of schools run by other religious orders have since come to light. Having regard to this and the importance of meeting the challenging timeframe

which I have set the scoping inquiry, schools run by religious orders will be its priority focus”.

She said: “It is not the role of the scoping inquiry to make findings of fact in respect of individual religious orders or schools. The scoping inquiry will also not be investigating individual allegations of abuse. Instead, the lead of the scoping

inquiry will, having regard to the outcomes sought by survivors, make recommendations to the minister on the scope and breath of the Government response to revelations of historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. “The deputy may wish to note in this regard that it is envisaged the recommended response could also

form a template for Government responses in respect of other settings.

Minister Foley added that elements of the scoping inquiry will “focus more broadly on the school sector as a whole, including an analysis of current child protection systems and frameworks within the primary and post-primary sector”.

Sending hope to Bethlehem...



Michael Kelly, Editor of *The Irish Catholic* and his father Michael Senior after completing the Omagh Half-Marathon on Sunday. Both men raised funds for the Franciscan Boys Home Orphanage in Bethlehem in the Holy Land, and so far donations have amounted to more than €4,000. The Franciscan Boys Home cares for vulnerable children from all over the Holy Land.

Conflict, climate change weakening ‘guardrails’ for vulnerable

Staff reporter

Irish charity Goal reached 14.6 million people with programmes in emergency response, health, nutrition and food security, livelihoods, and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) across the agency’s 14 countries of operation in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Ukraine, according to their impact figures for 2022.

The aid agency reached 3.6 million people in Ethiopia, 2.7 million in Sudan, 2.4 million in Sierra Leone and 2.1 million people in Syria.

Goal also stated they sup-

ported 2.9 million people to survive crises, 8.2 million to have resilient health, 3.6 million to benefit from increased access to safe water and 1.9 million people to have improved food security.

Goal’s Director of International Programmes, Joanna Reid, said that in 2022, the situation deteriorated significantly for millions of people that the aid agency works with.

“The start of 2022 saw the world continue its journey of recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, only for the invasion of Ukraine in late February to bring that

to a halt and global inflation skyrocket. This put already vulnerable communities under extreme pressure. For example, an already critical drought caused by climate change in East Africa was and is exacerbated by rising food prices,” she said.

“We know that man-made crises as a result of conflict and climate change are increasing and the guardrails that once prevented such crises from spiralling out of control, including peace treaties and humanitarian aid access, have weakened. This is making our ability to respond ever more challenging.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nine new apartments made by homelessness charity

A Jesuit-founded housing and homeless charity has delivered nine new social housing apartments at a former Christian Brothers School on Main Street, Charleville, Cork. The project is the latest in a growing list of social housing projects delivered by Peter McVerry Trust, founded by Fr Peter McVerry SJ, that specialises in reusing derelict and empty buildings to create new homes.

The charity secured the project with the support of Cork County Council under the Department for Housing’s Capital Assis-

tance Scheme (CAS).

Launching the new homes, Tánaiste Micheál Martin said: “It is greatly encouraging to see a derelict building brought back into use for social homes, particularly one of such historic importance.

“Peter McVerry Trust is a valued partner in the Government’s efforts to tackle homelessness, and I’ve always been impressed by their ambition and expertise in transforming vacant properties right across the country.”

Use modern means of advertising to bring people back to Mass

I was staying with a friend in London last weekend – and so, on Sunday morning, I attended Mass at a parish church which wasn't much known to me. It's nearly always interesting to visit a church where one is a stranger, and I found the experience rewarding and even congenial.

I wouldn't want to portray myself as a deeply religious person, because that strikes a note of Phariseeism. I am not a 'Holy Joe' (maybe that should be 'Josephine'), and the disparaging phrase 'holier-than-thou' succinctly explains why people who seem ostentatiously



Mary Kenny

religious irritate others. I'm just a fairly normal middle-of-the-road observant Catholic, and within that context I really like attending Sunday Mass. I feel I get a lot from it. I feel refreshed by the experience.

Sacred

Space must be made in everyday life for the sacred and the sacramental, and, for me, this is enhanced and embellished by the congregational aspect of worship.

It is, in short, warming to be part of a congregation.

Habit

I'm sure the 41% of Catholics who have not returned to the habit of weekly Mass post-Covid have their own reasons for abstinence. Some people have developed a fear of being in spaces with others because of the pandemic. (Many health experts now feel the lockdown rules were too strict – and have negatively

impacted the mental health of too many people, and damaged the education of children – who were at very low risk.)

Some Catholics have found that 'streaming' Mass is more convenient than putting on your hat and coat and taking yourself to a physical church. Some Irish people, according to Amárach Research, feel their faith "isn't as strong", as before the pandemic. Perhaps some formerly practicing Catholics are cheesed off with the clergy, or the church in general and are just moving away from the faith.

Consciences

Individuals have to make up their own minds, according to their own consciences.

But an evangelical faith should seek to attract back those who have strayed from the fold. And why not use the techniques of modern advertising and publicity to underline the

benefits of maintaining a regular church-going habit? St Paul would be the first to do so, were he around today!

“Some people have developed a fear of being in spaces with others because of the pandemic”

And apart from the sacramental aspects, why not underline the health benefits? Scores of studies have shown that regular church-goers live longer,

often have healthier immune systems, are more socially connected with others, less lonely and isolated. In a secular age, why not point to the evidence that attending church is psychologically beneficial?

Over the weekend, I also encountered a Buddhist, although a practical person, who sets aside part of each day for transcendental meditation; I passed a hospital room where a Muslim was bowed down on his prayer-mat for session of worship. A sacred space and a time for the sacred compels humankind and we are the lesser without living that practice.

“I wouldn't want to portray myself as a deeply religious person, because that strikes a note of Phariseeism”

Extreme pension protests in France



French President Emmanuel Macron.

The rest of Europe is puzzled that the French protesters have gone to such extremes – rioting in Paris, Bordeaux and elsewhere – over a pension plan. What's the big deal in altering the pension age from 62 to 64? It's 66 in Ireland and Belgium, 67 in Britain (and due to rise) as well as in Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Norway. Yet the French take to the streets in their millions in protest against this minor change.

But, as Bertrand Russell once said: "Everything is really about something else",

and the 'something else' is the personality of President Emmanuel Macron, widely disliked, regarded as an arrogant know-all who pushes his diktats through parliament without democratic support. He even declined to speak to the widely supported trade unions.

It's also true that the French embrace a tradition of *descendre dans la rue* – taking to the streets. I reported the famous Paris 1968 'revolution', and although alarming and turbulent, it was hugely exciting.

Violence, then and now, is deplorable, yet I could scarcely repress a 1968 reflex as I watched live-streaming reportage of the anti-Macron protests. This is a man who also pledged to enshrine abortion in the French Constitution as a 'human right' – again, without any democratic mandate, let alone considering the oxymoron of the phrase.

His pension reforms may have economic logic, but he should learn that a little humility and willingness to listen is vital in a leader.

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Pope's new abuse procedures lack transparency – Marie Collins

Chai Brady

Pope Francis' updated measures for investigating allegations of sexual abuse do not go far enough in terms of transparency, according to an Irish abuse survivor and expert.

Over the weekend the Pope updated *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the light of the world), which expanded the categories of victims covered by the regulations to include vulnerable adults.

However, Marie Collins, who resigned from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors due to alleged resistance

in the Vatican to the commission's recommendations, questioned how the measures will be enforced.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms Collins said the Pope has "given them [the commission] the power to oversee the implementation of the process... But we haven't been told how they're going to do this, and if they're going to do it what powers they have if it's not being implemented – what teeth there will be if it's not being implemented".

"What's in *Vos Estis* is good and the commission is now been given the authority to oversee the implementation and to check on

the implementation but if they find a bishops' conference or a diocese that's not implementing the rules of *Vos Estis*, what action can they take? There's been no clarity around that," she said.

Ms Collins also had concerns around transparency in the new update, saying that bishops will "still be allowed to retire or resign without any explanation if they are found guilty of negligence or abuse or covering for abuse".

"They still won't be known publicly, their parishioners, their flocks, won't be told that they have been found guilty of anything and it's just not right," she said.

"It should be seen to be done, not covered up with resignations or retirements, if someone is being sanctioned then that should be made known, that works as a deterrent to others – if they see sanctions being implemented, but if sanctions are being kept quiet then the deterrent is not obvious."

She added that the Church "don't need any more cover ups, we've had enough of them over the years".

"Protecting the reputation of individuals or the Church itself is what has been the problem all along – why cases were not dealt with properly – and they're still

hanging on to that now, so they've promised over and over 'transparency', but there is no transparency in this area.

"Obviously it is a good step forward... bringing in covering lay people as well as the clerical and religious, they're all good steps forward but it hasn't gone as far as I believe it should and I really am concerned about the commission having the power to oversee the implementation but no clarity about what sanctions they can impose or if they can impose sanctions if they find negligence or ignoring of the processes," she said.

'Justice served' after man convicted of sexual assault in Kerry

Staff reporter

A charity that combats sexual exploitation has praised the conviction of a man in Kerry who assaulted two Brazilian women involved in prostitution.

Following the sentencing of a man for two sexual assaults in Tralee and Kilarney, Policy and Communications Officer Danielle

McLaughlin of Ruhama described the conviction as "important".

Ms McLaughlin said it provided "justice to victims and survivors of prostitution and sexual exploitation".

John Doolan (49) was found guilty of sexual assault on the two women, in separate incidents, at Tralee Circuit Criminal Court earlier this month.

"This case is particularly shocking due to the high level of sexual violence against two individuals. It is vital that these victims and all individuals impacted by prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation receive adequate support and that justice is pursued to prosecute violent perpetrators," Ms McLaughlin told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It is illegal to purchase sex in Ireland. Sex buyers and organisers of prostitution are subject to prosecution," she added.

One of the victims, who was assaulted in Tralee, said in court that she had received assistance from Ruhama, who help people involved in prostitution. "They helped me stay strong," she said.

RTÉ to broadcast Easter Mass from historic Swiss city

Staff reporter

Mass for Easter Sunday will be broadcast live at 10am on RTÉ One television from the Swiss city of Fribourg.

The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Charles Morerod OP in the Church of St Peter, with commentary and translation by Michael Kelly, Editor of The

Irish Catholic.

The Mass will begin at x. The Mass will be followed by the traditional Easter message and blessing *Urbi et Orbi* – to the city and to the world – by Pope Francis, during which the Pontiff is expected to highlight various parts of the world currently enduring conflict including Ukraine and Yemen.

Say it with flowers...



Students from St Macartan's College in Monaghan organise the Irish Cancer Society's Daffodil Day 2023 collection in Monaghan Town.

NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 41% of Faithful not returning after Covid-19

A new poll has found that 41% of Catholics who attended Mass before the pandemic have not returned.

The survey of more than 1,500 adults across Ireland, conducted by Amárach Research, found that of the people who responded 24% were regular Mass attendants.

The reasons given for those who have not returned includes their Faith is not "as strong" since the pandemic – 37% of men and 26% of women felt this.

A quarter of men and 23% of women surveyed said they went to Mass regularly before the pandemic.

Of the 1,500 respondents, 12% of men and 11% of women said they considered themselves religious while 36% of men and 25% of women said they considered themselves neither religious nor spiritual.

Giving a voice to the disabled and neglected for more than 20 years



CBM Ireland continue to grow and take a holistic approach to those who are disabled and marginalised, Chai Brady writes

Proudly founded on Christian values, the charity CBM (Christian Blind Mission) is determined to make sure that worldwide those who are disabled receive the care and the opportunities they deserve. From making sure people with disabilities are provided for after natural disasters, to helping children with cataracts see their parents for the first time, there is huge scope.

“In the charity’s annual report for 2020 they outlined the work they do in some of the world’s poorest countries, including Burkino Faso, Papua New Guinea, Laos and more”

Initially focused on people suffering blindness and various problems with sight, CBM has continued to branch out to include many other conditions that impact a person’s quality of life – as well as the obstacles that impede them fully engaging in society.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, CEO of CBM Sarah O’Toole, who has been leading the charity for almost a decade, said she has witnessed communities transform through their work.

She said: “Where 20 years ago people with disabilities were ignored and treated really badly, now we’re seeing they are playing an active

role in their community and living full lives.

“That’s really thanks to the work of people who have worked with CBM over the years but also mainly our supporters, without them and their encouragement we wouldn’t be here.”

In the charity’s annual report for 2020 they outlined the work they do in some of the world’s poorest countries, including Burkino Faso, Papua New Guinea, Laos and more. Overall, they worked in 20 countries that year.

Asked about the unique challenges people with disabilities face in different parts of the world, Ms O’Toole said that CBM has seen “a stigma around disability, and a belief system around certain cultural taboos etc... but we work very closely with communities to fight that and work with families of people with disabilities and equip them with the tools to understand they do have rights and there is support”.

Speaking about the charity’s current approach, Ms O’Toole said that whereas in the past they might have looked at doing one thing for a child with a disability, perhaps fixing a cataract, now “it’s about looking at whether they’re able to go to school, that they can access what they need”.

“Or someone in a wheelchair, with mobility issues, making sure that they’re able to go to school and live full lives, so it’s the bigger picture – looking beyond the one fix and looking at improving the quality of people’s lives and supporting their rights,” she said.

“That’s really the mantra we have, ‘no one left behind’. We really mean that. We’re looking for an inclusive society so that anyone with a disability enjoys not only their human rights but achieves their full potential.”

Education

In the schools CBM has supported to better cater for children with disabilities, in addition to improving accessibility they also work with other children, with the families of pupils and teachers to talk about disabilities.

“So we have a lot of community supports and that helps change things, that’s how we combat that,” she adds.

In 2020, as part of their ‘Bridge the Gap’ programme CBM renovated six schools and established inclusive resource centres for students with disabilities and their communities. Six special



CBM Ireland CEO Sarah O’Toole with Pascal Bitabe (6) and his mother Riziki Kahindo (35) two days after his club foot surgery in Kirtoshe, Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: CBM/Hayduk

needs education teachers’ committees were formed to support children with disabilities in their schooling. These committees remained active throughout the pandemic, supporting the educational needs of children with disabilities at home.

Disability clubs were established to promote inclusion, with children with and without disabilities coming together for drama, music, and sign-language lessons.

“Throughout the years CBM has witnessed children undergoing cataract surgery, and afterwards opening their eyes and seeing their parents for the first time”

Ms O’Toole spent some time in the Congo to witness the work being done first hand, in a local hospital she met a small six-year-old boy called Pascal Bitabe.

“He had come in to have club foot surgery and his mother had carried him down from the mountains to the hospital. If you can imagine, it’s hard to lift our toddlers,

she carried him his whole life and he had his surgery that day I was there and she was overcome with joy,” Ms O’Toole recalls.

“She said she had kept praying for a miracle and she couldn’t believe the day had come. Paschal was nervous about his surgery, afterwards you could see he was quite hopeful. He was on a crutch, and he was going to learn how to walk again.

“It was really transformational, and his mother was very emotional – a beautiful woman – and she could see now that her life would change as well, not just his. He would be able to go to school and she wouldn’t have to give him full time care and she could then have a livelihood for herself if she needed to work to raise some money,” she said.

Throughout the years CBM has witnessed children undergoing cataract surgery, and afterwards opening their eyes and seeing their parents for the first time.

“There’s lots of those anecdotes there. For many of the parents or family members we speak to, they talk about a sense of hopelessness up to that point. For a lot of them prayer is very important and they feel their prayers have been answered,” Ms O’Toole said.

Disasters

In 2020, CBM Ireland reached more than 61,161 people in their fight against poverty and exclusion.

The biggest challenge CBM has faced is responding as quickly as possible to disasters when they happen, according to Ms O’Toole, such as the recent earthquake that devastated parts of Türkiye and Syria at the beginning of February which killed more than 50,000 people.

CBM focus on identifying the locations people with disabilities are who would need help. In the last 20 years the charity has focused on disaster preparedness and work alongside other organisations for people with disabilities abroad.

Ms O’Toole said: “We also work with mainstream organisations to make sure, in their preparations for times of disaster, that they include people with disabilities so if there’s going to be information given out, that it’s fully accessible for people with disabilities. If there’s temporary shelters people with disabilities can access them etc...”

“I think with climate change we’re seeing increases in those disasters, if you think about a flood or an earthquake if you are

a person that’s blind, in a wheelchair, or deaf, how can you get out yourself? Or for anyone to find you? There are major challenges there.”

“ Oftentimes we can have a them and us approach but really faith is what connects us, that whole sense of faith and hope for the future”

Ms O’Toole said there have also been economic challenges too, but “our donors really step up because they understand what that means for us, trying to raise money to reach as many people as we can”.

However, it is faith that has helped them and the people they work with through thick and thin, according to Ms O’Toole, who adds: “Oftentimes we can have a them and us approach but really faith is what connects us, that whole sense of faith and hope for the future.”

“We get beautiful messages and prayers from our donors that really help and inspire us as well every day, those messages of support are so, so important.”

Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



The 'repeal' Government voted down an eviction ban for pregnant women

Thousands of families across the country are frantic with worry as the end of March approaches and the eviction ban is lifted.

Losing your home, or knowing that you may have to leave rental accommodation despite having nowhere to go must be a genuinely terrifying feeling. In this climate, with acute rental shortages and rocketing housing costs, there are very limited options for anyone who loses the home they may have rented for a long time.

That fear and panic that ensues must surely be heightened if you have children or if you are expecting a baby. One support group said this week that the numbers of women who are pregnant and homeless in Ireland are rising rapidly.

“...imagine being without shelter if you are also trying to manage children or are carrying a baby”

Protection

It's one thing couch surfing or, God forbid, facing the horrors of rough sleeping or the difficulties of emergency accommodation when you have just yourself to look after, but imagine being without shelter if you are also trying to manage children or are carrying a baby.

We're always being told that this shiny, progressive, modern Ireland is a better place for women, especially since we got rid of the 8th amendment. Remember Simon Harris in the Dáil castigating Ireland for our supposedly shameful treatment of pregnant women because we protected both mother and child from abortion?

A new Ireland

Remember Leo Varadkar's claims that this was a new Ireland which would be better for women now that abortion was legal. He talked a lot about “no more shame or lonely jour-



“And it was revealing, last week, to see that the very same people who expressed such concern for pregnant women voted down an amendment which would have ensured that pregnant women could not be evicted from their homes”

neys”, as did the many other newly-minted warriors for the right to end the life of a child.

It seems to me that a pregnant woman who is facing a night on the cold wet streets or is desperately trying to keep her children warm and schooled and fed while in emergency accommodation, is also on a lonely journey – and the likelihood of this happening to women has increased under this repeal Government.

And it was revealing, last week, to see that the very same people who expressed such concern for pregnant women voted down an amendment which would have ensured that pregnant women could not be evicted from their homes.

Aontú leader, Peadar Tóibín, laid amendments before the Dáil which he said offered “specific protections against eviction for people who have a disability, or who are suffering from cancer or another severe illness, and also for tenants who are pregnant or who have given birth to a child within the last three years and people aged over 65 years”.

These were clearly defined protections for vulnerable people, and included the recognition that pregnant women need additional support and should be a priority for any government – especially, you would think, a Government which declared itself as the champion of women in pregnancy.

New day?

But the self-appointed guardians of a bright new day for women in modern Ireland voted that amendment down.

“Once the disgusting cheering and gloating and partying in Dublin Castle was over, it was right back to telling women that they were on their own”

It was yet another reminder, if one were

needed, that this repeal Government, and its abortion allies on the left, have no interest in offering women real choices when it comes to difficult or unexpected pregnancies.

Once the disgusting cheering and gloating and partying in Dublin Castle was over, it was right back to telling women that they were on their own. Because that's what being pro-choice really is: telling women that they are on their own and, in effect, making abortion the only option instead of actually providing real choices.

There's often an unspoken sort of thinking at play here too, where politicians and policymakers see abortion as a means of reducing costs in terms of social welfare and housing and more. They'll never admit to it publicly, but there's a cold and cynical rationale behind much of the rebranding of abortion as 'compassion', when in fact, as everyone really knows, real compassion doesn't kill.

The left

In all of this, of course, many of those on the left are the Government's useful idiots. They endlessly block housing developments, and have utterly abandoned workers' rights in favour of exerting all their energies in shouting for abortion or insisting that Barbie Kardashian is a woman.

“They'll never admit to it publicly, but there's a cold and cynical rationale behind much of the rebranding of abortion as 'compassion', when in fact, as everyone really knows, real compassion doesn't kill”

They'll happily do some marching about homelessness, when they have assisted in creating a culture that sees abortion as a solution to a pregnancy which is complicated by poverty or other factors.

And they endlessly attack and seek to shut down groups like Gianna Care who actually help women with a crisis pregnancy – help that often includes finding housing and other supports.

Referendum

During the referendum in 2018, pro-lifers who said that repeal wouldn't make women's lives any safer or better were shouted down or ignored. Since that time we've had women dying in crowded maternity hospitals, and a rise in pregnant women being homeless, while women who've taken the abortion pill are told to flush their baby's body down the toilet.

The reality of this repeal Government's failures to actually improve the lives of pregnant women is becoming more evident by the day.

Trust in God always, Mickey Harte tells Galway novena

Sean O Domhnaill

With his side in a division two final against Dublin in Croke Park last weekend, a great achievement for Louth at this time, it's clear Mickey Harte and his management team have given the squad hope and confidence. In a sense, he did much the same to the very large crowd that came to hear him as one of the speakers of the annual Galway Novena at Galway Cathedral.

“Through that also they had met a priest called Fr James from Limavady, and his youngest son, Matthew, had travelled to Fatima with a group with Fr James”

It was apt as the talk was about 'sharing faith with those who grieve'. He began by noting his sadness at learning of the sudden death of Offaly manager Liam Kearns the day before, that it was important to pray for him, and to pray for his family and those he left behind, that prayer is powerful in such situations.

Later he emphasised having trust in God, and that it's important to work at such things. "To have that faith you had to be committed, you had to do what you are asked, to pick up your cross daily and follow him, and the crosses are there for us in life and, particularly in the case of bereavements, they are a huge cross. Bereavement comes to all our families at some stage, sometimes it's the natural order so to speak and at other times it's a very acute case, and all of them are so impactful to immediate families, it just changes their lives.

"But it's not necessarily a change that cannot be dealt with and managed, as long as we turn to God. If we're aware that God is there for us, we can work on managing our way through that," he told the attendees.

He noted that God can sometimes help us to draw good out of something very sad that has happened, referring to three people whom he

knew very well: Paul McGirr, who died after playing a minor match for Tyrone in 1997, Cormac McAnallen, the Tyrone senior captain who in 2004 died at home from sudden death syndrome, and his own beloved daughter Michaela, murdered while on her honeymoon in Mauritius in 2011.

Organisations

In all of those cases organisations had been set up which had done a lot of good, for example in Paul McGirr's case a lot of help had been given to a place in Africa, helping with facilities and so on, and "so much good has come out of the darkness and tragedy of Paul's death...people going out there with the attitude 'what can I give', not 'what's in this life for me', they get a lot of fulfillment, as the Gospel has outlined to us would be the case".

One aspect of the Michaela Foundation was that there were many camps for girls, where they enjoyed themselves and where also "they were growing in faith and learning to stand up to what the culture of today would tell them, you know, for example that being a Catholic is uncool. They were able to stand up to that and say 'no, being a Catholic is a great place to be'".

Through that also they

had met a priest called Fr James from Limavady, and his youngest son, Matthew, had travelled to Fatima with a group with Fr James. This had resulted in a profound change in Matthew's life, where he wanted to bring young people to the faith and, as part of that, he was now very happily studying for a PhD in Theology in the United States.

“Become people of hope, that trust in God, that know he has a plan, and his plan is a bigger and better one that we would have”

Referring to the three young people, he said as regards those bereaved: "The only answer is a spiritual one, we have to raise our sights to the new realm where these people are in, and we have to try to take the best of those young people and make it a part of what we are...there are lots of people that can leave a legacy, some in an obvious way, some in quieter ways..."

Mickey Harte went on to encourage people to make



A worshipper at the Galway Cathedral Novena.

the novena transformative in their lives – to allow it help them be better brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, better members of our families and communities, to perhaps attend Mass more devoutly based on a better understanding of the Eucharist.

"It might be something to do with Confession. We don't go to Confession as much now as used to happen. Does that mean we don't sin as much? I don't think so. If our forefathers who handed on the faith to us felt the need to go to Confession to get cleansed of their

sins and get grace that's available there...it's important to consider that I think."

Different paces

"We should be conscious that everyone grieves uniquely, and at different paces, and we should allow for that; it was good when one could reach a time when they could laugh again and enjoy the normal things in life.

"Do know that the cloud of bereavement will lift, God will take it in his own good time and raise it a bit from you so that it doesn't consume you, so

that it's just there and it can be moved to the periphery of your vision. It will always be part of your life and you can engage with it when you want, but it's not dominating your life. Become people of hope, that trust in God, that know he has a plan, and his plan is a bigger and better one that we would have," he said.

Credit must be given to Msgr Peter Rabbitte and Fr Gerard Acton in Galway Cathedral, and the army of volunteers that assisted them in making the novena possible.



Mickey Harte and Msgr Peter Rabbitte.

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Kerry babies' case used again to decry our past



It seems to be a big stretch to claim that the treatment of Joanne Hayes was the result of the social power of the Church, writes **David Quinn**

The so-called 'Kerry babies' case has been very much back in the news again thanks of the arrest and subsequent release of two people by gardaí investigating the murder of 'Baby John', whose body was found washed up on White Strand beach, Caherciveen, Co. Kerry, in 1984. He had been stabbed 28 times.

“On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the ‘Kerry babies’ case, Michael O’Regan reflected on it in *The Irish Times*”

It is a case we keep having to relive because it was never solved and at the time was connected to Joanne Hayes who was wrongly arrested in connection with the murder because she had given birth at around the same time the body of Baby John was found. Her baby had died at birth, and she did not tell the authorities about it. She had buried the baby at the family farm. So, the gardaí jumped to conclusions and decided Baby John was hers.

Then, when it became apparent that she had given birth to a different baby, they decided that she must have been pregnant with two babies at the same time by two different men. Apparently, this can happen in exceptionally rare cases, something known as 'superfecundation'.

But that is not what happened to Joanne Hayes. The gardaí had come up with this explanation in order to fit with



Joanne Hayes and her family.

their theory that she had killed both her own baby and Baby John. She had killed neither and was eventually acquitted. Five years ago, the gardaí formally apologised to her for how appallingly she was treated.

The case caused a huge amount of social commentary. It occurred one year after the passage of the pro-life referendum and the treatment of Joanne Hayes was depicted as a prime example of how a backward, Catholic-dominated and misogynistic Ireland treated women.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the 'Kerry babies' case, Michael O'Regan reflected on it in *The Irish Times*.

He wrote: "Thirty years ago, Ireland was a very different place. Contraceptives were available only on prescription for bona fide family planning and health purposes; there was no divorce; homosexuality was illegal. The Catholic Church was still a powerful institution, the scandals that would erode its authority some years away."

He suggested that such a case could not arise now because the tribunal that was set up to examine the case "would not today be as male-

dominated" as it was in 1984, and "somebody in Hayes's situation would not be subjected to what was criticised at the time as intrusive and detailed questioning about her personal life".

He is certainly correct that a tribunal would not be as male-dominated today, but his second proposition is doubtful. In investigations and trials people are still frequently subjected to extremely intrusive questions. It is something rape crisis groups complain about in rape cases, for example.

Kerry babies

Michael O'Regan is from Kerry. Another Kerryman and veteran journalist, Ger Colleran, has written very extensively about the Kerry babies cases down the years. In fact, he and Mr O'Regan co-authored a book about the cases called *Dark Secrets: The Inside Story of Joanne Hayes and the Kerry Babies*, which came out in 1985.

But Mr Colleran, a frequent critic of the Catholic Church be it noted, seems to have a different take on how the cases should be interpreted from a social point of view.

When the apology to Joanne Hayes was issued in

2018, he wrote about the cases again in a piece for the *Irish Independent*.

He wrote: "They'll be coming out of the woodwork now – those special-pleading campaigners attempting to recruit Joanne Hayes as their poster girl."

“In any event, it seems to be a big stretch to claim that her treatment was the result of the social power of the Catholic Church”

He added: "It's perfectly obvious, they'll insist – a woman destroyed, her privacy invaded, her pleas for justice dismissed, her moral character torn to shreds by men, because she was a woman."

But he dismissed this interpretation as "nonsense".

He said her appalling treatment had nothing to do with the fact that she is a woman. Instead, she was regarded as "a threat to the State", which had decided she was guilty, and then moved heaven and earth to cover up its mistakes, or

more accurately the mistakes of the gardaí investigating the cases who had forced a false confession out of Ms Hayes and her family.

Mr Colleran writes: "It wouldn't have mattered if Joanne was called John, if she was gay, gender fluid, transgender, bisexual or all of the above.

"She was a threat to power. She just happened to be a woman. So they attacked and destroyed her, as a woman. That's how a largely unaccountable State operates." He believes the State is still well capable of this sort of behaviour, although my impression is that it would be much more respectful to a woman today than in 1984.

In any event, it seems to be a big stretch to claim that her treatment was the result of the social power of the Catholic Church.

It is not as though concealed pregnancies no longer exist. In fact, in many cases the pregnancy is ever known only to the woman because abortion has become so commonplace. It is not immediately clear that this is such a big advance on the attitudes of 40 years ago.

We have as yet no idea why Baby John was killed. Hopefully we will find out soon enough.

But as we learnt a long time ago, he was completely unconnected with Joanne Hayes and it is actually now very misleading to refer to the 'Kerry babies' case. This is the 'Baby John case', full stop, and that is how it should be treated from here on in.

Tragically, children today are sometimes murdered, occasionally by their own mothers. Indeed, there seems to be more such cases now than in the past.

Liberal values

Are we supposed to link this with the rise of liberal values? Certainly, we have become a more violent society, but to link child-murder with liberalism per se, is stretching it. That is without mentioning the rise of abortion, of course.

But now that two people have been arrested in connection with the killing of Baby John, we are being treated once again to commentary on the 'dark' place Ireland was in 1984.

Ger Colleran words of five years ago still apply today: "They'll be coming out of the woodwork now – those special-pleading campaigners attempting to recruit Joanne Hayes as their poster girl."

Confirmation delight in Cavan parish



Bishop Tom Deenihan celebrates Confirmations in Kingscourt parish, from Corlea Carrickleck, Muff and St Joseph's Kingscourt school.



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Church must speak to a world riven with grief and anxiety



The profound call of Vatican II not only still rings true, but is even more needed today, says **Archbishop Dermot Farrell**

The human path that we walk with its difficulties is the way to God. Our pilgrimage through time is God's way of shaping us from within and without, by the events of history – which does not and will not stand still – as we participate in them and contribute to them.

In celebrating the Solemnity of the Annunciation, what strikes me is Mary's courage, and her trust in the word addressed to her. She is perplexed: she wonders what this greeting might mean (Luke 1:29), and yet somehow trusts in the goodness and providence of God who reaches right into her life. Almost startling herself, she steps into the unknown. She places her life in God's hands. Her world changes, almost imperceptibly, but such is the character of much real change: quiet, hidden, silent.

God's glory

As you have discovered in living out your own vocations, these qualities are also the marks of God. This is how the Lord is: God does not have to shout, God's glory is there for all to see, but has to be recognised. Silence, after all, is the language of God (St John of the Cross).

Like Mary's decision, and most major decisions in life, our own response to the call of God was a step into the unknown. It was and remains a call to trust in the Lord, and in God's providence. But there is more: our response is also a response to the cry of the poor. The opening lines of *Gaudium et Spes* – Vatican II's *Pastoral*



Members of religious communities in the Archdiocese of Dublin celebrate consecrated life with Archbishop Dermot Farrell in Holy Cross Church, Dundrum.

“Our world is no longer the confident world of the mid-1960s which opened the doors of renewal on so many fronts.”

Constitution on the Church in the World expressed better than we could ourselves what we were doing with our lives. It said: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (GS 1).

Change

Our world is no longer the confident world of the mid-1960s which opened the doors of renewal on so many fronts. That said, the profound call of the Second Vatican Council, and its hope-filled faith, not only still rings true, but is even more needed today. For all its wealth and technological progress, our world is deeply riven with “grief and anxiety.” The world

has changed, but the underlying needs have not disappeared. We have changed, our horizons have shifted, but our mission remains. To turn again to *Gaudium et Spes*: for the Church, “beneath all changes, there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, and forever.” (n. 10)

Our call and our mission go hand-in-hand. As Pope Francis never tires of underlining, our mission “gives us the opportunity to return to God's style that is closeness, compassion and tenderness... we cannot separate ourselves from life; it is necessary for someone to care for the frailties and poverties of our time, healing wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God” (Francis, *Beginning of the Synodal Journey*, October 9, 2021).

The opening lines of *Gaudium et Spes* bear repeating: “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers.” (GS no. 1)

Human weakness and the inexcusable scandals notwithstanding, this is where you have been, and this is

where you have remained. In ways not always seen, you have stayed with people, “especially the poor and the afflicted, in their hopes and their joys,” and in “their griefs, worries,” and losses. Like Christ himself, you have remained among God's people. Let no one undermine that contribution.

“Unless we are sustained by God, we cannot be ministers of the living God.”

Mystery

Without being empowered by Christ, without realising that he is the one who enables us not only to follow him, but embrace the mystery of our lives, what have we to offer?

Unless we are sustained by God, we cannot be ministers of the living God. If we are not sustained by the Lord, we can certainly proclaim ‘a god’, but that ‘god’ will most likely be a god of our own making. As it says in the psalm, “They have mouths but they cannot speak; they have eyes but they cannot see. They have ears but they cannot hear;... they have feet but they can-

not walk. Their makers will come to be like them, as will all who trust in them.” (Psalm 115:5–8)

In this perspective then, we may ask what it means to be minister of God in the Ireland of today?

Witness

Our call is to witness to the closeness of the *living God* to all God's creatures. The Holy Father sums up the challenge: “Our first duty is not to be a Church that is perfectly organised, any company can do this, but a Church that, in the name of Christ, stands in the midst of people's troubled lives, a Church that is willing to dirty its hands for people... walking in the midst of, and alongside, our people, learning to listen and to dialogue, cooperating as ministers with one another and with the laity.

“Let me repeat this important word: together. Let us never forget it: together. Bishops and priests, deacons, pastors, seminarians, ordained ministers and religious – always showing respect for the marvellous specificity of religious life” (Pope Francis' address to the bishops and clergy, Saint Theresa's Cathedral, Juba, South Sudan, February 4, 2023).

We are blessed in our diocese to have over 1,700

consecrated women, living out a diversity of charisms and ministries, sharing their dreams and hopes for the Church and our world, forming generous, imaginative, liberated, and liberating initiatives in response to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Our synodal journey – this way of being Church together – is enriched by the contribution of consecrated men and women.

Thanks

As religious life has long been an instrument of synodality, striving to involve all the members in the decision-making and decision-taking (see Working Document Continental Stage), religious are “teachers of synodality.” On my own behalf, as

“I wish to acknowledge all this Spirit-filled work and give thanks.”

the bishop of this Diocese of Dublin, and on behalf of the many people who benefit from your service, I wish to acknowledge all this Spirit-filled work and give thanks. This is much more than ‘managing decline’. It is creating an environment – a framework – in which religious, priests and people together in the archdiocese can respond to and draw strength for the life-transforming call the Lord puts before us.

Finally, I am very much aware that you are people who pray for me daily and support me in the knowledge that it is not an easy mission to be the archbishop. In a particular way, I want to acknowledge the contribution of the enclosed religious orders. You bear witness to humanity's radical thirst for God (see Psalm 63), to our faith in God's tight embrace of all that he has created. The breadth, depth, and constancy of your intercession puts flesh on goodness of the Shepherd who ‘leads us to restful waters, to revive our drooping spirit’ (Psalm 23:2–3).

i This is an abridged text of a homily given by Archbishop Farrell on the Feastday of the Annunciation in Holy Cross Church, Dundrum to celebrate consecrated life in the archdiocese.



First and second year students of Glenstal Abbey school, Co. Limerick, with some senior students, teachers, and monks plant 200 trees.

Biodiversity is a buzz word in Ireland today. In response, to the dramatic decline in the population of many species and the accompanying climate change, the spring general meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference put forward the goal to provide 30% of parish grounds by 2030 over to biodiversity.

Glenstal Abbey School, Co. Limerick, is fortunate to be situated in a haven of biodiversity with several protected species within or adjacent to the grounds such as the hen harrier, the red squirrel, the pine martin, nine bat species including the rare lesser horseshoe winged bat, and the Killarney Fern.

The woodland which supports this biodiversity is held in trust for future generations of students, staff, and monks. The first and second year students of the school with some senior students, teachers, and monks planted 200 trees on Thursday, March 23. The trees planted included 50 sessile Oaks, 50 Rowan, 30 Crab Apple and 30 Cherry Trees, and 40 Birch. A small number of specimen trees, four Himalayan and four Lebanese cedars, will be planted to maintain the lines of cedars on the avenue. A further 30 trees (Oak/Birch/Alder) will arrive shortly through the 'Trees for Schools' scheme of the Native Woodland Trust and further spontaneous donations are scheduled to arrive shortly.



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Sacraments are an opportunity to evangelise young families during Easter



Deacon Frank Browne

Easter is almost in view, and it is the time of year that parishes are beginning to prepare our young people for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation. I believe it is an opportunity for all of us who minister within our parish communities, to reflect upon how we can make the different sacramental ceremonies meaningful for children but also an opportunity to evangelise their parents too.

As one of over 30 permanent deacons within the Archdiocese of Dublin, I have the privilege of celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism for most of the children within

my parish cluster of Rathfarnham and Churchtown parishes. Post Covid-19, there was a significant waiting list of several months, and even up to recently there can be up to six families celebrating their child's baptism at each of our ceremonies. I am not sure what motivates the young parents to seek to have their child baptised, but I am clear that it is not because of family pressure to do so. The many families that I engage with still have a sense of the mystery about life and a belief in a God, even if they do not articulate it in the language of our Church. Most of the parents may only attend Mass on special occasions, such as Christmas, a memorial Mass for a deceased family member or to celebrate the other sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Special sacrament

Baptism has become a special sacrament for me. Of course, the theology and catechism of baptism is rich with symbolism and meaning, particularly the relationship to



the Paschal mysteries we celebrate during the Easter season. The Good News that Jesus died and was resurrected because of God's love for all of us, is something special to celebrate. But the reason why baptism means so much to me is because of how important it was in the life of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus is mentioned in all the four Gospels, so it was very

important for the early Christian Church. Spanish biblical scholar Fr Jose A. Pagola writes that Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist was a turning point in his life, he had left the safety of his home in Nazareth, to go into the Jordan desert area, spending time with the followers of John the Baptist, until the execution of John by Herod Antipas. Pagola argues that

Jesus began to have a new perspective and an awareness of God's salvation and compassion for all people. Jesus began his mission to share this Good News that the Kingdom of God is here and now and there is an invitation for all people.

Understanding

Through my diaconate formation, I have grown in my understanding of my faith

but especially in developing my relationship to the person of Jesus. Central to this was getting to know the humanity of Jesus, the struggles he went through and his realisation of his divinity and mission to do the will of his father. I am aware of my vocational call as a deacon, when celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism, to try to create a prayerful space within the ceremonies for all those present; parents, godparents, and extended family so they can be open to the loving presence of the spirit of God.

Ceremony

At the beginning of the baptism ceremony after all have been welcomed, I play a short piece of music, 'Spirit of the living God' and I pray that the spirit of the living God will fall afresh on the children present. As I begin my baptism homily, I ask the parents to hold up their child, so that everyone can look in silence and wonder at each beautiful child. I remind them that while we

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APRIL
2023 ISSUE

In April, The Synodal Times will be featuring coverage from the Continental Assemblies taking place across the world, including those being held in Asia and Africa, and analysing the final reports they send to Rome.

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Deacon Frank Browne celebrates the Sacrament of Baptism in the Church of the Annunciation in Rathfarnham, Dublin.

cannot see God, touch God, or hear God, we may at times in our life experience a loving God, but usually when we have slowed down a little, and are able to really look at the beauty of creation, especially the gift of a child. As a parent of three children, I share my experience of saying prayers at bedtime with them. I invite the parents to consider saying the traditional Our Father and Hail Mary prayers and as their child grows older, to encourage their child to speak with God, as a friend, thanking God for the good things, maybe praying for those who are sick or who have died, and sharing

any worries by placing their trust in God's hands.

Preparation

During my parish team's preparation meetings with parents for our Holy Communion 'In Memory of Me' Masses, we took time out to reflect that it was not just about arranging a task for every child, or organising a parent to volunteer for a job, but rather it was a spiritual moment for all of us to reflect on what the sacrament means. We have now started to include a few minutes of silence, as we pray for our young people that they may experience the love of God in their lives. Before we begin the actual ceremonies of Holy

Communion and Confirmation, we take time not only to outline the practicalities of the ceremonies, but to have a moment of silence in which we pray for the Holy Spirit to fall afresh on our young people.

Future

The future of our parish communities can cause those of us in ministry anxiety, as few younger families are engaging regularly with our Church, and we are witnessing the aging profile of most Mass congregations. We are looking around at our committed volunteers and those in ministry and few are under 65 years. But when we engage with younger people, by shar-

ing our understanding of faith and what the person of Jesus means to us, we can see the flicker of interest in the eyes of many. Opportunities to reach out and engage with younger families are limited, but the sacramental celebrations are moments when their attention is focussed on faith and what it might mean for them. A door is opened and those of us who really want to share the Good News of Easter have an opportunity to enter their lives and evangelise from our hearts.

Deacon Frank Browne ministers in the parishes of Ballyroan, Churchtown and Rathfarnham in Dublin



Sixth class pupils from Scoil Naomh Pádraig who celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation in Ballyroan parish.

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A blessed journey in the Holy Land...

To walk in the footsteps of Jesus is quite simply breath-taking, writes **Elaine Noonan**

A trip to the Holy Land had been on my mind for some time. I had hoped to be able to go during the year of my 40th birthday, but then lockdowns happened and that birthday came and went. So when life finally started returning to normal, it felt that this was the time. I was delighted that my Dad was very enthusiastic about being my travel partner when I asked him (it was funny how a lot of people on our pilgrimage assumed that he had persuaded me to go along – when in fact, it was the other way around!) Things really seemed to fall into place when we heard about The Irish Catholic pilgrimage with Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown. And not only that, but the dates fell during mid-term, when my children would be off school and could go to stay with my mum. It seemed meant to be.

So we set off, not really knowing what to expect, last month. And it certainly was an experience of a lifetime. I am sure that we could all write a book about the things we saw, the places we visited and the things that touched our hearts and souls; but I will pick out a few of the ones that stand out most in my memory.

Sea of Galilee

We began our trip in Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee area. We had the privilege of taking a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee (actually a lake, which we all realised was about the size of Lough Neagh – that was a surprise!) There was a moment in the middle of the lake when the bishop was saying some prayers and reminding us of Jesus' miracles on the lake, such as when he walked on the

water towards the disciples in their boat. And when Bishop McKeown had finished speaking and praying, the boat engines were turned off, and the most peaceful and intense silence descended. To be on the very lake where Our Lord performed such miracles, beside where He multiplied the loaves and fish, looking at the villages from where he gathered many of His disciples and where he himself lived during his ministry, was really breath-taking.

Another beautiful experience in that area were our trips to the excavated towns of Capernaum and then Magdala. In Capernaum, we saw the ruins of the house of St Peter's mother-in-law, where Our Lord ate and slept and prayed and performed miracles. And in Magdala, we were reminded of all the strong women in the Bible and in the Church. A special moment was when my Dad and I were allowed to touch a beautiful mosaic of Jesus curing Jairus' daughter, and the photographs really make it seem as though my hand was in Jesus' hand, as he reached out with my father behind me (below right). What a lovely moment for a father and daughter to share!

“Looking at the olive trees which were standing there over 2,000 years ago, it made everything that Our Lord suffered so real, as He took all of our sins on his shoulders”

From Nazareth, we moved on to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. For me, the most moving experience of the entire trip was stepping into the garden of Gethsemane. A profound sadness came over me in that place, and looking at the olive trees which were standing there over 2,000 years ago, it made everything that Our Lord suffered so real, as He took all of our sins on his shoulders. Built into the beautiful Church of All Nations is the



Elaine with her father Brendan on the Mount of Olives

rock where he lay prostrate as he wept and asked the Father to “take this cup from me...but not my will but yours be done?” And all this on the Mount of Olives, overlooking his beloved city of Jerusalem, where his own people rejected him and put him to death. To then also move on to see the places where He was imprisoned, where Peter rejected him, where he was scourged, and to walk the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross) in his footsteps was just a surreal experience. I must say I was surprised by the mad hustle and bustle of market stalls and people all along the Way of the Cross – we could barely get space to stop at each station – but we all supposed that it was probably an accurate reflection of what it was like when Our Lord carried his cross along that route, bruised and beaten, through the crowds who mocked and jeered and humiliated Him at every step. It was not a quiet prayerful journey for Our Lord, and neither was it for us. We ended the Way of the Cross at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we waited in a very

long (and not very orderly!) queue to enter the tomb of Our Lord, where we could imagine the angel saying to the women of Jerusalem “He is not here, He is risen!”. We were also able to visit the spot where his cross stood on Calvary and the stone slab where He was laid when he was taken down from the cross – all three of these surprisingly very close to each other.

“To sing Silent Night inside the grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem; these were incredible privileges that I will never forget”

I was blessed to be able to sing my heart out all week, along with a great group of pilgrims, all in fine voice! To sing Jerusalem in the church at our Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; to sing Silent Night inside the grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem; these were incredible privileges that I will never forget. Another beautiful

moment for me personally was during our visit to The Shepherd's Fields, where the angel announced to the shepherds that the Saviour had been born. In the small church there, I sang Gloria in Excelsis Deo at the top of my voice, and it really felt like such a joyful moment in a joyful place. Praise God!

Wonderful people

It would be remiss not to mention the absolutely wonderful people we met along the way. Among over 100 pilgrims, we found so many genuine friendships and shared so many prayers and joys. I feel truly blessed to have been able to go on this amazing journey, and sharing it with my Dad was the icing on the cake.

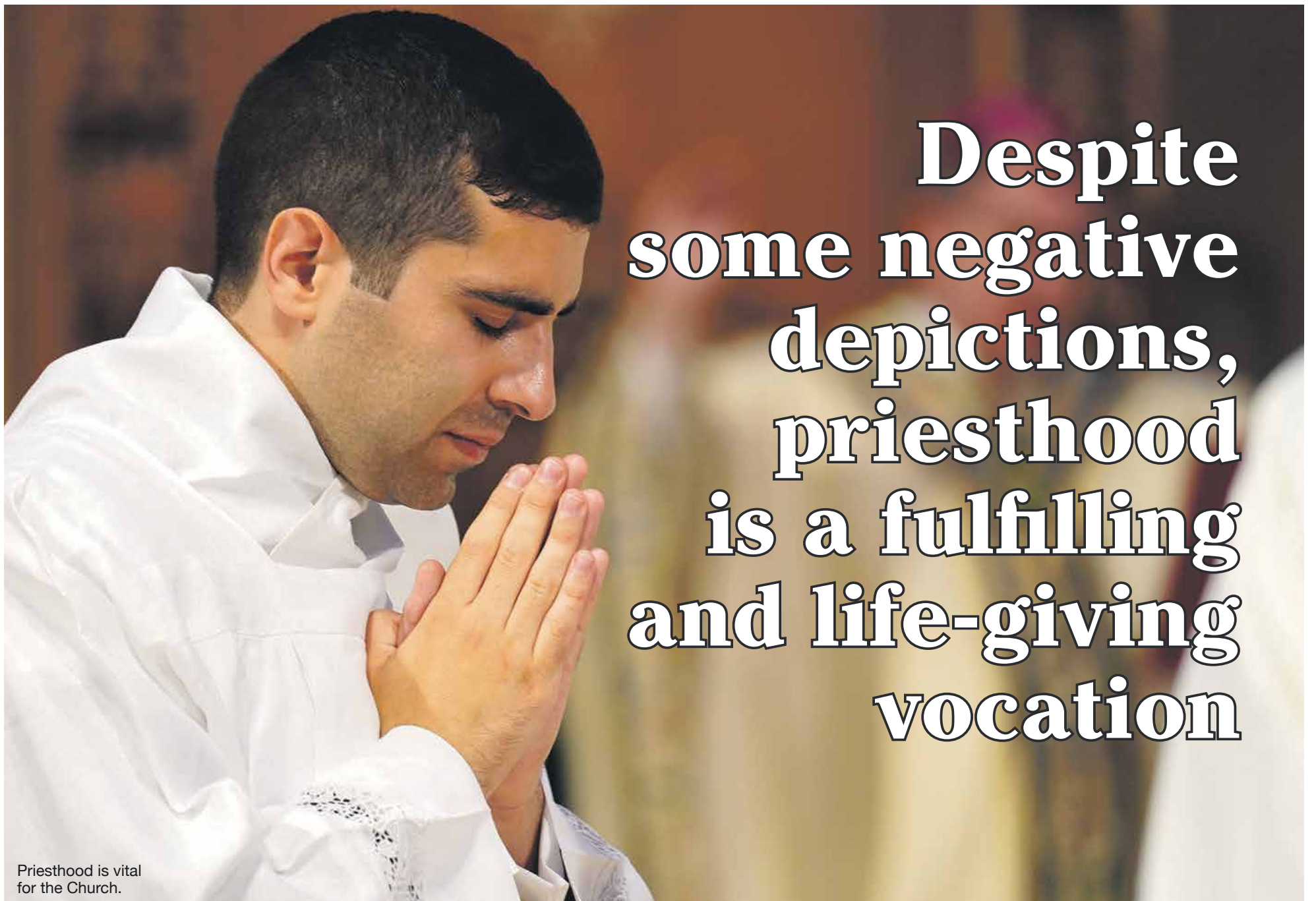
Of course, arriving home just at the beginning of Lent must have been God's perfect timing – the Gospels have a whole new perspective now; the mysteries of the rosary have a whole new context as real events that happened in real places.

The only question now: when can I go back?



At the Sea of Galilee





Despite some negative depictions, priesthood is a fulfilling and life-giving vocation

Priesthood is vital for the Church.



As faith communities we need to support those who feel afraid to express their faith writes Fr Barry Matthews

As an eight-year-old celebrating pretend Mass in the sitting room of our Dundalk home I understood something of the importance of the role God played in my life. The innocence of childhood mixed with the innate love for God and the traditions handed down through the family generations before me truly collided in an indescribable formation of faith.

Of course our family like all families went through its ups and downs and really my teenage years were moments where the path ahead was less clear - the material world around me often got in the way of God's plan for my life but I always live by my aunt's great saying "What's for you won't pass you".

I recall in my leaving certificate year making contact with the vocations director at the time 'Monsignor McEntegart' who invited me on a 'come and see' weekend. However, the Church was going through a lot at the time and my parents wise advice was to perhaps follow a career and if priesthood remains a strong calling then go in my 20s.

Accountancy

Deciding to follow the path of accountancy - study, work and social activities played a big part in my early 20s. But it was while working in Chicago that I truly knew God was calling me to priesthood. The first weekend there I went looking for a church for Mass - when others might have been experiencing the sights and sounds of a big city I knew what was important, to connect with God and the community of faith, our family when family are not near.

And so continued the jour-

ney - at the age of 29 I entered seminary.

People often ask me whether I regret not entering seminary earlier - the truth is that I am a believer that we often tend to regret the things we don't do rather than the things we do.

“As faith communities we need to pray for those who feel isolated in faith and those who are afraid to express their faith”

My study and work as an accountant were wonderful opportunities to broaden my experience of the world and to develop skills that will stand the test of time. Formation to priesthood is really a lifelong journey and I believe that my formation included the earliest moments serving Mass in the Redemptorist Church, saying pretend Mass in our sitting room and all the moments of family and work life that make me who I am.

At a recent gathering of youth in the Armagh Archdiocese the

question of 'stigma' was raised - young people feel a stigma around being part of a faith community, young people feel a stigma around expressing the values of the Gospel, young people feel a stigma around the possibility of being called by God to serve as a priest.

I believe that as faith communities we need to provide safe places for all, especially those young people who are deeply connected to God but who feel stigmatised - not necessarily by their peers but by the growing sense of individualism that exists in the world today. As faith communities we need to pray for those who feel isolated in faith and those who are afraid to express their faith.

I recall the awareness and support I received as a child saying 'pretend mass', in fact a local sacristan gave me a chalice that had broken from the church and we had it welded together. Not only did I cherish this in my childhood, but it became of great significance at the time of my own ordination when the reality of the prayers for the eight-year-old me by those praying for vocations really stuck. Many people who prayed for me then possibly have gone to God since but their prayers made an impact, the chalice while a simple gesture nurtured within me the sense of tradition being passed on.

I am sure that there were many young men who feel called by God towards priesthood who fear the 'stigma'. Many who feel unworthy, many who are trapped by the material world and fear the 'leap of faith' needed to contact their vocations director.

“A timely opportunity to do what we do as a faith community, pray and trust that God will do the rest”

To coin a slogan from the Nike brand 'Just Do It' - the upcoming 'Year of Prayer for Diocesan Vocations' is a moment to pray that young men will 'take the risk for Christ'. It is a timely opportunity to see priesthood as a fulfilling, life-giving vocation where the biggest risk is not doing it. A timely opportunity to do what we do as a faith community, pray and trust that God will do the rest.

i Fr Barry Matthews is vocations director of the Archdiocese of Armagh.

Out&About

From Africa to Ireland – celebrating mother’s day



LOUTH: Bishop Michael Router joins the African community in the Archdiocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Meath in St Nicholas’ Church, Dundalk as they celebrate mother’s day.



CLARE: Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan blesses shamrock for St Patrick’s day, with Cha Reynolds of the 22nd Infantry Battalion Association and Fr Tom Ryan VF Abbey Pastoral Area.



HOLY LAND: The Irish Defence Forces 66th Infantry Group parade wearing shamrock for St Patrick’s day in Camp Faouar, Golan Heights.

IN SHORT

New cookbook launched to help homeless

Homelessness and housing charity Peter McVerry Trust have endorsed a cookbook with 55 recipes from across Ireland. All proceeds of the book *The Gathered Table: A Taste of Home*, priced at €30, will go towards the charity. There are contributions from bakers, butchers, farmers, producers, shopkeepers and

chefs. Each contributor has supplied their favourite recipe to cook at home – the one that celebrates the relationship between food and home. The book was originated and compiled by long standing supporters of Peter McVerry trust, Gather & Gather Ireland. Recipes include a classic beef and Guinness pie, comforting stews and casseroles, a sticky coffee pudding, and a simple but delicious mac ‘n’ cheese. The book also features stories from those

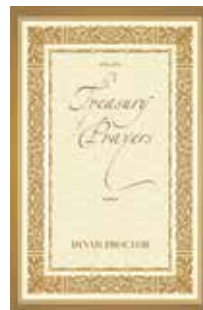
who Peter McVerry Trust has helped out of homelessness and coincides with the 40th anniversary of the charity. Pat Doyle, CEO of Peter McVerry Trust, said: “Peter McVerry Trust is honoured to be part of this fantastic project. Gather & Gather are long standing supporters of our organisation and we cannot thank them enough. “Home means something special to many of us. For the people we work with in Peter McVerry Trust, home means safety, security and independence. Included in this book,

alongside the wonderful recipes, are stories from some of the people we have supported out of homelessness – what their new home means to them and how it has changed their lives. Buying this book – for yourself or as a gift – is a fantastic way to help people impacted by homelessness across Ireland,” he said. The book is available from March 30 from bookshops and independent retailers across the country and online from Nine Bean Rows Books.

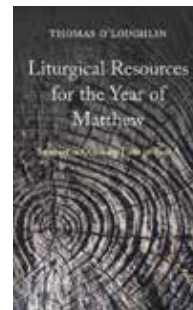
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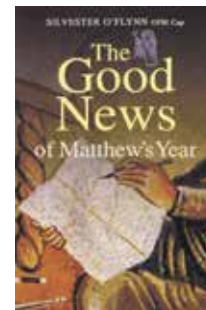
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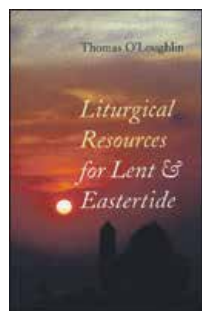
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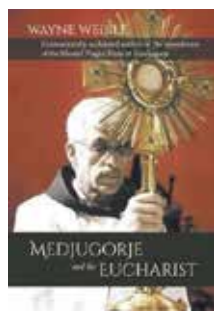
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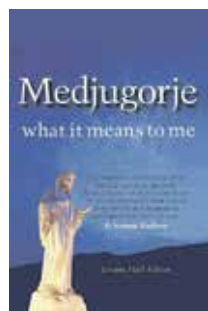
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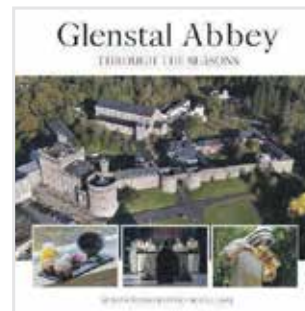
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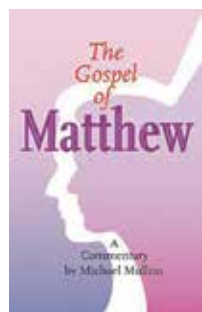
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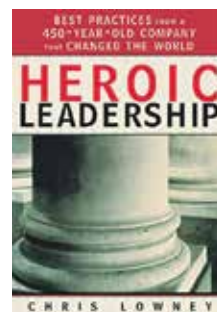
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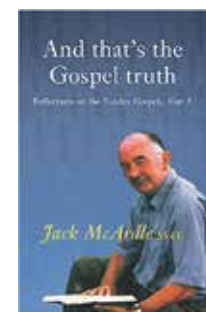
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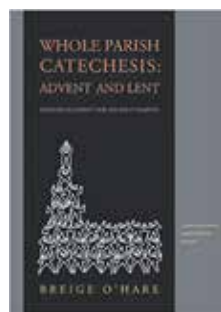
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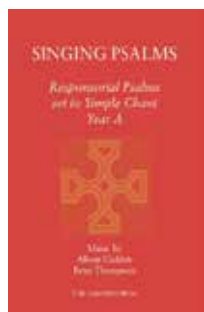
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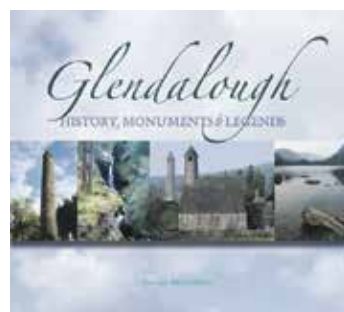
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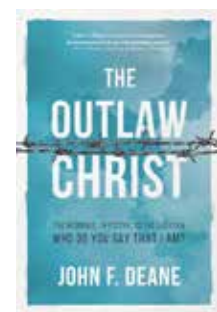
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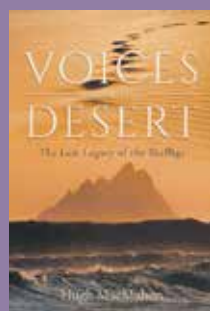


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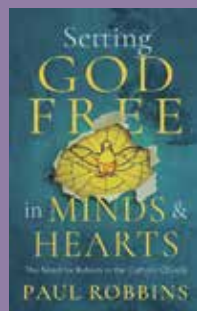


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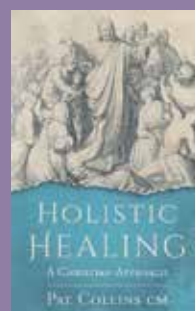
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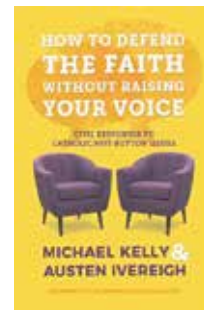
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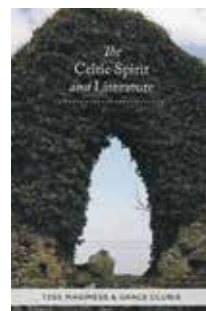
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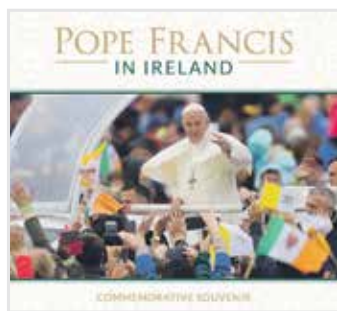
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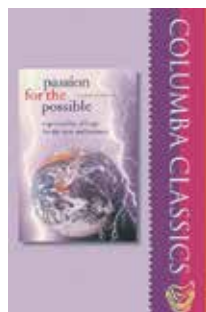
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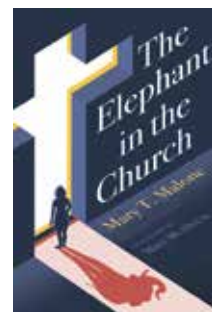
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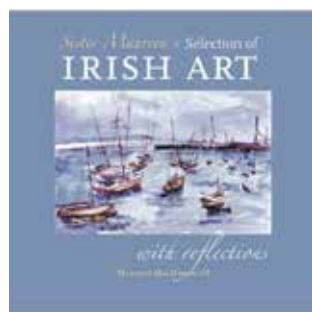
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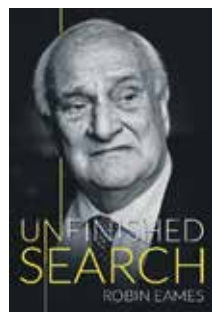
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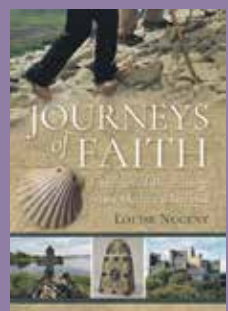
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DONEGAL: Faustina Gibson and Sadie McClean, who took the relic into St Marys Church.



DONEGAL: Fr Eamonn Kelly PP is pictured with the relic of St Faustina, which is to be housed in the Divine Mercy alcove in St Mary's Church, Convoiy.



DONEGAL: Breidge McLaughlin and Anne Conlon receive the first class relic of St Faustina from Sr Norbeta of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Krakow Poland on March 19.



DONEGAL: Pictured are Mickey Bradley, Breidge McLaughlin, Anne Conlon and Danielle, Liam Tiernan who travelled to Poland to collect the relic with Fr Eamonn Kelly



SYDNEY: Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney speaks with Bishop-emeritus Terry Brady, both of whose parents came from Co. Cavan, following Mass for St Patrick's day in Sydney Cathedral. Photos: Giovanni Portelli.



SYDNEY: Irish priests and professors Fr Eamonn Conway and Fr Brendan Purcell are pictured beside Irish-born Bishop David Cremin. Fr Conway preached at the Mass



SYDNEY: Bishop Terry Brady receives gifts of a bodhran and hurley during the Mass on St Patrick's Day.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DOWN: Members of the Knights of St Columbanus Council 12 Downpatrick place a wreath at St Patrick's grave to mark his feast day after a prayer service. The wreath is being placed by Bro. Jackie Breen.



SLIGO: Fr Towey is pictured with friends, family and parishioners.



SLIGO: Fr Tommy Towey PP of Ballisodare is pictured with Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey as he celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination in 1973.



DUBLIN: Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. is pictured in Veritas bookstore signing copies of his new book, *The Stations of the Cross*.

ANTRIM

Fr Stephen Langridge will lead a time of discernment for men considering a call to Priesthood at Drumalis Retreat and Conference Centre, Larne, Friday April 21 at 6pm to Sunday 23 at 3pm. Visit Eventbrite.ie for more information. Lectio Divina takes place each Friday in St Joseph's church after 7pm Mass and on Monday in St Comgall's church after 10am Mass in Antrim parish.

ARMAGH

Mass will be celebrated in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Tullysaran with pupils from the local Primary School on Wednesday April 5.

CARLOW

Holy hour takes each Monday in Lent at 7pm in St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen, while Stations of the Cross take place at 10am on Mondays followed by Mass.

CAVAN

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

CLARE

The Annual Matt Talbot Novena, praying for all suffering or sharing in the life of addictions, continues each Wednesday during Lent at 7pm in Ss Peter and Paul Church, Tulla.

CORK

Lenten talks on prayer take place Wednesdays at 7.30pm in St Finbarr's South Church. Final talk April 5 on prayer during Holy Week. Way of the Cross takes place on Fridays during Lent at 7pm in St Peter and Paul's Church in Cork City.

Cobh Cathedral's Adoration Chapel is open each week, on Wednesdays from 11am until 9pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays from 11am until 6pm. A Medjugorje prayer meeting takes place every Wednesday night at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Third Order chapel, Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay.

DONEGAL

Lenten 'Sycamore' programme, an informal course about the Faith and its relevance, takes place in Stranolar Parish centre from 8-9pm each Thursday in March.

DUBLIN

The Feast of the Divine Mercy will be celebrated on Sunday, April 16, in Corpus Christi Church, Drumcondra, with Holy Hour at 3pm followed by Mass at 4pm.

GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (18-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral. An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact youth@galwaycathedral.ie for more information.

KERRY

Castleisland Parish are celebrating a dawn Mass at 6am on Easter Sunday Morning, March 9, in Tobar na bhFionn Cemetery, Cordal.

KILDARE

The Legion of Mary will lead the Stations of the Cross on Friday's during Lent at 3pm in the Church of Our Lady and St David, Naas.

LAOIS

The rosary will be prayed for Lent Monday to Saturday at 6.30pm and at 3pm on Sunday in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish.

LIMERICK

Adoration will be held every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during Lent in the Adoration Chapel, Abbeyfeale from 10am-8pm.

LOUTH

Join the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal from 7-8pm on Saturday, April 1 in St Mary's Church, Drogheda, for a holy hour including vespers, Scripture, meditations and music. Refreshments follow in the Pastoral Centre. For more information contact the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal at 041 983 0441.

MAYO

Castlebar Easter programme for secondary school students pre-

sented by the Legion of Mary April 11-14, 10am-1.30pm. Meet 10am for Mass in the Church of the Holy Rosary, Castlebar. To register contact legionofmarycastlebar@gmail.com or 087 9216572 on WhatsApp.

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting takes place in Knock Shrine every Thursday at 8pm in The Hub, St Joseph's Chapel, for prayer, adoration, Lectio Divina, friendship and a cup of tea.

TIPPERARY

Easter retreat in Glencomeragh House Saturday, April 1, on the theme 'Doubt no longer but believe'. Arriving at 10:30am for refreshments, reflection on the word of God, talk by Fr Patrick Cahill, healing service, lunch, candle service, concluding with Holy Mass at 3pm.

Morning prayer takes place after 10am Mass in St Mary's church, Clonmel parish. For the duration of Lent, an evening Mass is on at 7pm, Monday-Friday, excluding Tuesday when a Station of the Cross takes place at 7pm.

TYRONE

The Seven Joys of Our Lady fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order meets each second Tuesday of the month in St Brigid's chapel, Brocagh, Clonoe Parish, at 7pm followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8-9pm.

WESTMEATH

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

WEXFORD

Divine Mercy devotions take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in Wexford Friary, including blessing with the relic of St Faustina.

Rosary and devotions at the shrine at Rocklands Wexford take place on Tuesdays at 2.30pm.

World Report

IN BRIEF

'Nation of immigrants' should identify with migrants – cardinal

● A political climate hostile to the needs and existence of immigrants is not only morally wrong, it also weakens the structures of democratic governments, said Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston.

"As a nation of immigrants, we should seek a sense of identification with other immigrants trying to enter the country," Cardinal O'Malley reminded his audience on March 22 in delivering the James H. Provost lecture at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

For the cardinal, this identification began in 1973 when he founded Centro Católico Hispano (Hispanic Catholic Centre) in Washington, an organisation providing assistance, including legal help, to immigrants.

"Our immigrant population contributes mightily to the economy and the well-being of this country," he said.

South Korean youth Mass attendance plummets

● The number of young Catholics at Sunday Mass in South Korea dropped by 17% compared to years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new survey.

The survey by the Korean Catholic Research Institute of the Catholic Bishops' Conference found that 36.1% of Catholic youth in their 20s join Sunday Mass in 2023 compared to 53.2% before the pandemic, Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation (CPBC) reported on March 23.

The online survey was conducted from January 10-16 among 1,063 Catholics over the age of 19.

Among the respondents in their 20s, one out of four said they only participate in Mass on special occasions or do not participate at all.

"I'm used to not attending Sunday mass" occupied the top spot with a majority of 58% of respondents choosing it as a reason for skipping Mass on Sundays.

Among other multiple choices selected by the respondents, lack of confession, fear of Covid-19 infection, and "participation in Mass is no longer an important criterion for the faith" each accounted for 30% of the responses.

Catholics must help people with gender dysphoria says academic

● Amid society's push for medical intervention to resolve gender "discordance", there is a strong need for "charitable, substantive conversations" on gender because it is "affecting real people", a professor from the University of Notre Dame told a Washington audience on March 21.

"I have a real heart for people who really struggle with what it means to be a man, to be a woman," said Abigail Favale, a professor of the practice at Notre Dame's McGrath Institute for Church Life. Drawing on the Church's teaching on the sacramentality of the human body and the body "as a gift" from God provides a deeper understanding on the issue to bring to the conversation, she said.

Myanmar military target Christian Kayah State

● Three civilians were killed and six others wounded after Myanmar's military stepped up attacks on several villages in the predominantly Christian Kayah state.

The army bombed Wan Pala village in Bawlake township on March 23, according to the Karenni Human Rights Group, which tracks violence in the civil war-stricken southeast Asian nation.

"There was no fighting taking place in the area when the deadly aerial bombing happened," the group tweeted on March 24.

But the predominantly Christian Kayah State has seen the deployment of more troops after fighting between the military and rebel groups intensified in recent days.

The fresh round of human casualties and the attacks have prompted thousands of people, mostly Christians, to flee their homes and take shelter in churches, convents and jungles.

A Church source from Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State said: "Hundreds of people have taken refuge in churches in recent

Pope issues updated 'Vos Estis' text for handling abuse cases

Pope Francis has updated the procedures for investigating allegations of sexual abuse or the cover up of abuse, specifying that the leaders of Vatican-recognised international Catholic lay associations and movements have the same responsibilities over their members that a bishop has over the priests of his diocese.

The updated version of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the light of the world), published March 25, also expanded the categories of victims covered by the regulations to include vulnerable adults.

The original text spoke of the crime of "sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person". The updated text reads, "a crime against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue committed with a minor, or with a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason, or with a vulnerable adult".

"Anything that expands the categories of those who should be protected is to be welcomed," Oblate Fr Andrew Small, secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, said.

Fr Small also pointed to the updated document's insistence that not only must dioceses and bishops' conferences have a "system" for reporting abuse or its cover up, they also must have "organisms or offices easily accessible to the pub-



Archbishop Filippo Iannone, prefect of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts, speaks to reporters in the Vatican press office on March 25, after Pope Francis issued an updated text of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*.

lic" to accept reports.

Making the procedures "well known and publicly accessible is part of justice", he said.

Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Legislative Texts, said the updated document was based on four years of experience operating under the previous version, but the update also was needed to incorporate changes Pope Francis made in 2021 to the Code of Canon Law's *Book VI: Penal Sanctions in the Church*.

The new rules come into

effect on April 30.

Boston Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, said in a statement that with the updated text, "the Church's ongoing work of preventing sexual abuse by ministers of the Church received a further boost".

Updating the norms, "Pope Francis has reconfirmed the serious responsibilities on bishops and others in leadership positions to ensure robust safeguarding policies and procedures are

in place and are effective," the cardinal said.

One thing the updated version did not do, however, was provide mandatory and explicit steps for revealing publicly when a bishop has been asked to or forced to resign because of abuse or covering up abuse allegations.

Many Catholics, including bishops, have called for such public notification after news reports revealed that a bishop who "resigned" had been sanctioned by the Vatican.

Human composting not acceptable for burial – US bishops

Two new alternatives to burial and cremation fail to comply with the Catholic Church's teaching on respect for the bodies of the dead, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine said. In a March 23 statement, the committee said it had evaluated human composting and alkaline hydrolysis, and concluded that both "fail to satisfy the Church's requirements for proper respect for the bodies of the dead." The methods, which rapidly accel-

erate decomposition, have gained support in recent years as "eco-friendly" forms of treating human remains. In human composting, the body of the departed is placed in a metal bin with plant material to enable microbes and bacteria, along with heat and oxygen, to break down bones and tissues. The resulting mixture is then offered for lawn or garden use. Alkaline hydrolysis dissolves the body in some 100 gallons of water and alkali under high temperature

and pressure. Within hours, the body is dissolved, except for some bone material which is then dried and pulverized. Unlike flame-based cremation, which uses intense heat to reduce human remains to ashes, human composting and alkaline hydrolysis do not "show adequate respect for the human body, nor express hope in the resurrection," said the bishops in the seven-page document that accompanied their statement.

Chinese bishop wants Catholics to abandon 'underground' Church

A Chinese bishop, recognised by both state and the Vatican, says all Catholic clergy in China should register with the government to end the division among them as state-sanctioned and underground churches.

"What hurts and torments us the most are the situations of disunity and heartbreak

Bishop Joseph Han Zhi-hai of Lanzhou in the province of Gansu in north-central China.

Han made the remarks in a letter he sent to the Vatican Fides agency, on the 20th anniversary of his ordination as the bishop. Fides published the letter on March 20. Han was ordained with a Vatican mandate in 2003, but in 2017,

ognition from the Chinese political apparatus.

The recognition came a year before the 2018 China-Vatican secretive deal was signed, reportedly agreeing on terms for both parties to jointly appoint bishops in the communist nation.

The 57-year-old Han regretted some bishops did

the state.

During his installation as state-approved bishop in 2017, an official "celebration" was organised in the diocese. Some brothers did not accept it and there was still no path of reconciliation", he recalled.

Catholics Lanzhou Diocese faced state persecution for years before Bishop Han was



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Cyclone Freddie: the terrible aftermath



Locals cross a flooded area in Muloza, Malawi, in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddie.

Dire consequences for Malawi and Mozambique after Cyclone Freddie

Malawi is still reeling from the consequences of Cyclone Freddie that hit the southeastern African country on March 12. The storm system caused flooding and mudslides that have resulted in the deaths of about 500 people, according to Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA) earlier this month.

More than 490,000 people have been displaced and are sheltering in over 500 sites across flood-affected areas of Malawi, as communities begin to reckon with the damage wrought by the Tropical Cyclone Freddie

weather system, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"Many parts of the infrastructure, such as schools, health facilities, bridges have been damaged. Hospitals are overwhelmed, and they have limited supplies," Chimwemwe Sakunda, national coordinator of the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi, told OSV News.

She said the lives of many children have been upended by the disaster, many of whom are now left without parents or guardians. Chil-

dren are also deprived of education – more than 437 schools have been destroyed or damaged, while 242 others are now being used as sites for displaced people.

The United Nations said there is a risk of a cholera spike in a country already reeling from the water-borne disease. According to UNICEF, this may affect millions of children in Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique.

Cholera cases have almost quadrupled – to almost 10,700 – since early February and more than 2,300 cases have been reported in

Mozambique in the past week alone, the agency said.

The floods have swept away toilets and rendered thousands without access to safe drinking water, therefore the country faces an "immediate danger" of a surge in cholera cases, Storn Kabuluzi, Malawi's health services director, warned.

"The magnitude of this cyclone is that every Malawian knows someone who has been directly affected. All this also poses a threat on mental health as most people are traumatised," Ms Sakunda said.

Catholic persecution in Nicaragua denounced in US

A US House hearing last week examined what it called Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's 'anti-Catholic persecution', and called for action, just days after the Vatican said it closed its embassy in Nicaragua.

Ortega's regime has persecuted the Catholic Church in the country, lawmakers said, targeting Church leaders who have criticised the regime, including Bishop Rolando Álvarez.

The bishop was sentenced in February to 26 years in prison just one day after he

refused to be deported to the US, with more than 200 other Nicaraguan political prisoners.

Pope Francis publicly denounced Bishop Álvarez's sentence and the deportation of Nicaraguans from their homeland. The Vatican, March 18, shuttered its nunciature in the country after Ortega's government proposed suspending diplomatic relations with the Holy See. At the US House Foreign Affairs joint subcommittee hearing chaired by Rep. Chris Smith, R.-N.J., the Catholic lawmaker

said, "We all need to up our game, we all need to do more, and we need to do it immediately." In comments to OSV News, Mr Smith cited sanctions or action by the Human Rights Council, an intergovernmental body within the United Nations, as among the steps the US should pursue in response to Ortega's actions. He said, "Shame on us if in the free parts of the world like the United States of America, we don't use every lever – economic, political, diplomatic – every pressure we could bring to bear."

Vatican roundup

Vatican envoy warns UN of global 're-emerging' racism

● The "distorted" thought that one person is better than another goes against Catholic teachings and flies in the face of universal principles laid out in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Holy See's United Nations envoy told a UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

The theme of the March 21 meeting at UN headquarters was the urgency of combating racism and racial discrimination 75 years after the adoption of that declaration by the UN General Assembly.

Despite the commitment of the international community to eradicate it, racism was continuing "to reemerge," warned Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Vatican's permanent observer to the U.N.

"It is as if it were 'a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding and lurks in waiting,'" the archbishop said, quoting from Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti'.

Pontifical university now requires safeguarding course

● Beginning with the 2023-24 academic year, all students working on degrees at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome will be required to take a three-hour course on "safeguarding and care for human dignity", the university announced.

The course will be "a necessary requirement for the completion of the baccalaureate, licentiate and doctorate academic degrees, according to the university.

"The university intends to promote a formation that takes into account the intrinsic relationship between faith, reason and

culture, and cares that students, in the course of their studies, acquire the tools that will allow them to be responsible and mature participants of their own formation," Jesuit Fr Mark Lewis, rector of the university, said in a statement.

Founded in 1551, the Jesuit-run Gregorian is the oldest and largest of the pontifical universities in Rome. In the 2021-22 school year, according to statistics published in January, it had 2,844 students – mostly priests, seminarians and religious – from 125 countries and awarded 633 degrees.

Avoid polarising debate, promote scientific discussion – Pope

● When presenting its moral teachings on bioethics, the Church needs to avoid falling into the "extremist dynamics of polarisation" seen in media debates, Pope Francis said. "Every theological-moral proposal ultimately has this foundation: it is God's love that is our guide," he said during an audience at the Vatican, March 23, with people who attended a conference hosted by the Alphonsian Academy in Rome. The academy, founded and run by the Redemptorists, offers advanced studies in moral theology. It held a conference March 21-22 on modern-day practical applications of St Alphonsus' theological-moral proposals, especially in the field of bioethics and social justice.

When it comes to bioethical issues, the Pope said, moral proposals "must be attentive to the real ordeals of people, who are often confused when faced with the moral dilemmas of life". The Church needs to "shy away from the extremist dynamics of polarisation, which are more characteristic of media debate than of healthy and fruitful scientific and theological research," Pope Francis said. "Let us then seek to enter humbly and wisely into the complex fabric of the society in which we live, to know well how it works and to propose to the men and women of our time appropriate paths toward greater maturity," he said.

LetterfromRome



Justin McLellan

AI and the meaning of life: Tech industry turns to religious leaders

The people behind chatbots are asking questions of priests and ethicists rather than turning to their artificially intelligent creations. They want to know: What is consciousness? What is the nature of humanity? What is the purpose of life?

According to Fr Phillip Larrey, dean of the philosophy department at the Rome's Pontifical Lateran University, Silicon Valley techies are posing those questions to ethicists and religious leaders as artificial intelligence develops rapidly and is used in myriad ways impacting people's daily lives.

In a conversation with Catholic News Service, Fr Larrey, a native of California, and author of two books on the rise of AI, reflected on how society should engage with AI as it becomes increasingly embedded in the lives of ordinary people through accessible technologies.

Fear of the unknown

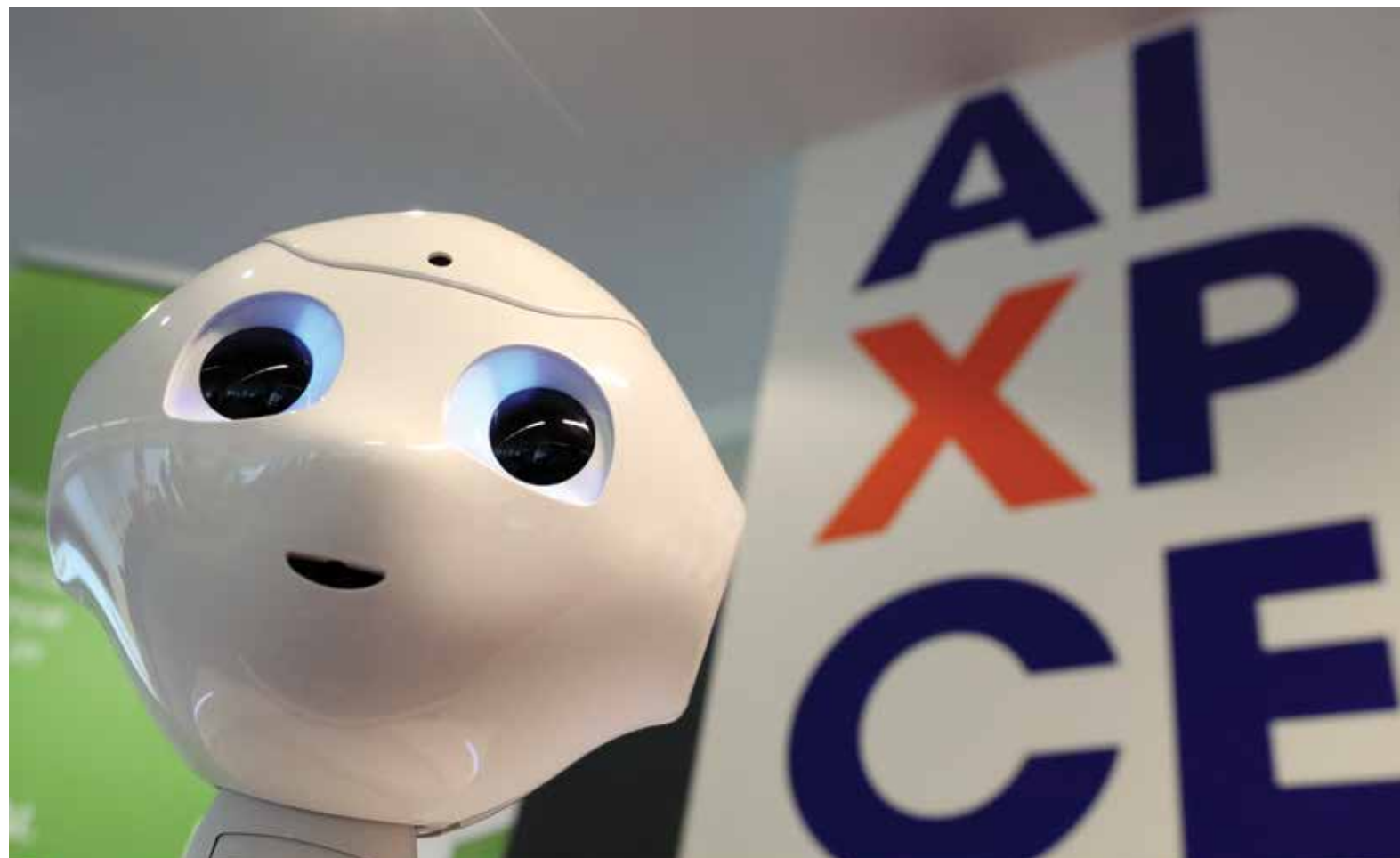
AI-operated programs such as ChatGPT, a popular software created by the software company OpenAI, "can access data to an enormous extent that for human beings is no longer possible," said Fr Larrey. "That is why as a species we tend to look at AI with a certain fear, because we fear the unknown." An artificially intelligent chatbot, ChatGPT uses learning algorithms to consume, produce and infer information for human users. The software is intended to mimic human conversation and can instantaneously produce essays and articles, write programming code and give people advice based on information input by users.

Its most sophisticated model, GPT4, was released for public use on March 14.

Fr Larrey said there are several "catastrophic risks" to unchecked and widespread AI use, such as its potential for spreading disinformation and creating code that can be used by hackers.

"A major downside of AI, he said, is that 'we become dependent on the software, and we become lazy'."

He also identified potential adverse effects of AI for everyday users, noting that minors can ask chatbots for advice in committing illicit activities and students can use them to complete their assignments without performing the work of learning.



"I don't think you can put the genie back in the bottle...The market motivation is so strong that you're not going to stop it."

A major downside of AI, he said, is that "we become dependent on the software, and we become lazy. We no longer think things out for ourselves, we turn to the machine."

Yet Fr Larrey said that rejecting AI technology is a mistake. In particular, he pointed to the decision of some universities to ban the use of ChatGPT, noting that educators "are going to have to learn how to incorporate this into how they teach, what they test for, and how we can use these tools to our advantage."

"I don't think you can put the genie back in the bottle," he said. "The market motivation is so strong that you're not going to stop it."

In January, Microsoft announced a multiyear investment in OpenAI, which *The New York Times* and other media reported would total \$10 billion. Other tech companies, including Google and Amazon, are testing their own AI-powered products to compete with existing software on the market.

That's why Fr Larrey said con-

versations on AI must shift to what Pope Francis calls "person-centred AI." The Pope, he said, "is insisting that you need to put the human person at the centre of this technology."

In January, Pope Francis addressed tech-industry leaders from companies such as Microsoft and IBM as well as members of the Jewish and Muslim communities during a conference on ethics in AI at the Vatican.

AI visa decisions

The Pope urged them to "ensure that the discriminatory use of these instruments does not take root at the expense of the most fragile and excluded" and gave an example of AI making visa decisions for asylum-seekers based on generalised data.

"It is not acceptable that the decision about someone's life and future be entrusted to an algorithm," said the Pope.

At the end of the conference, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim representatives signed a declaration calling on AI researchers to engage with ethicists and religious leaders to develop a framework for the ethical use of AI.

"On social media and other technologies that came very quickly, we were trying to catch up and we weren't exactly sure how to do this," said Fr Larrey.

But with AI, he said, the tech companies themselves are "beginning to think about how to structure some guidelines and some concerns so that this technology will be used for human well-being and human flourishing."

Looking for guidance

Tech companies such as Microsoft are "looking for philosophers and theologians" to respond to those questions, he said. "They are looking for people who know how to think."

"These people, who are really changing the future of humanity, they want to talk with us, they want to talk with priests, they especially want to talk with Pope Francis," he said. "They're looking for guidance and they're looking for support. They're looking for some way to

"Some of those guidelines, he noted, include adding parental controls to technology so that parents can monitor how their children are using AI-powered devices..."

make this help people and not harm people."

Some of those guidelines, he noted, include adding parental controls to technology so that parents can monitor how their children are using AI-powered devices, or establishing structures so that human decision-making is not cut out of the equation when AI is also used, such as when making a legal decision using generalised data.

Aware of the challenges AI poses to society, Fr Larrey said he is still optimistic people can use AI responsibly and for the betterment of humanity if it is developed properly.

"I think that people will win over the technology," he said. "It's not without perils, it's not without difficulties."

And within the Church, Fr Larrey said he thinks "priests will be one of the last to be substituted [by AI], even though they have AI's that will hear your confession and celebrate Mass."

"People want to talk with a priest or a sister, they want the experience of the religious person that they can't get in an AI," he said.

i Contributing to this story was Robert Duncan in Rome.

Have Europe's bishops followed the American path in choosing a leader?



John Allen

When the US bishops elected a centre-right prelate and protégé of an influential conservative Italian cardinal as their president last November, it was framed in much reporting and commentary as a protest vote against Pope Francis.

'Bishops elect anti-Francis archbishop as president,' was how the National Catholic Reporter headlined an editorial blasting the choice of Archbishop Timothy Broglio, while Patheos asked, 'Did the Bishops Just Stick Their Collective Thumb in the Pope's Eye?'

“Coverage at the time also noted Archbishop Broglio's background as a former aide to Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's long-time Secretary of State under Pope John Paul II.”

Coverage at the time also noted Archbishop Broglio's background as a former aide to Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's long-time Secretary of State under Pope John Paul II.

Yet after the European bishops did more or less the same thing – to wit, elect a moderate-to-conservative figure who rose through the ranks under the patronage of a well-known conservative Italian cardinal – there's been no such spin.

That's despite the fact that the contrast between the outgoing president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, and the new leader is especially dramatic.

Course change

In choosing Italian Bishop Mariano Crociata of the small Diocese of Latina, the European bishops, whether intentionally or not, have opted for a seemingly significant course change after five years of Cardinal Hollerich, a Jesuit and a key Pope Francis ally.

Bishop Crociata, 70, a native of Sicily, was appointed a bishop by the late Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. A year later, Benedict XVI made Dr Crociata the secretary general of the powerful Italian bishops' conference, known by its acronym CEI. In that role, he was known as a loyal lieutenant of the powerful Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco of Genoa, the president of CEI and a figure gener-



Pope Francis greets Bishop Mariano Crociata of Latina, Italy, newly elected president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, during an audience at the Vatican March 23, 2023, with members attending the commission's plenary meeting. (CNS photos/Vatican Media)

ally seen as on the conservative side of most Catholic debates.

Famously, it was Bishop Crociata who signed an email from CEI in March 2013 erroneously congratulating Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan on his election to the papacy: "The secretary general expresses the sentiments of the entire Italian Church in welcoming the news of the election of Cardinal Angelo Scola as the Successor of Peter," it read.

Though a corrected version was dispatched moments later, the gaffe was widely perceived as reflecting an expectation in the circles in which Bishop Crociata moved that the more conservative Cardinal Scola would be chosen rather than a maverick Latin American.

When Bishop Crociata's term as secretary general was up in September 2013, it was originally rumoured that he would become archbishop of the Military Ordinariate. In the end, Francis tapped him to Latina, a mid-sized town of roughly 125,000 people about two hours south of Rome by car.

Italian observers took the move as a way to get rid of Bishop Crociata so Francis could impose his own leadership at CEI. Playing with the time-honoured Latin expression *promoveatur ut amoveatur*, 'to promote in order to remove,' some wags opined the transfer to Latina was a case of *amoveatur* without *promoveatur*.

Low profile

In the decade since, Bishop Crociata for the most part has maintained a low profile. Nothing has really changed his basic reputation, but neither has he ever associated



Pope Francis listens to Bishop Mariano Crociata.

“Part of it may simply be that despite his last name...the new COMECE leader is not seen as an especially strong personality who creates divisions...”

himself with overt resistance to the Francis papacy. He's even engaged in a few Francis flourishes, such as eliminating a requirement in the Latina Diocese that sponsors for baptisms and confirmations must have a 'certificate of worthiness,' and opening those roles to Catholics who've been divorced.

In 2015, Bishop Crociata was quietly elected president of a CEI commission for Catholic education. In

2017 he was named the Italian delegate to COMECE, and a year later he became one of the group's vice-presidents.

High profile

The contrast with the high-profile Cardinal Hollerich is sharp, since the cardinal is a member of the Pope's council of cardinal advisors who's also been tapped by Francis to oversee his all-important Synod of Bishops on synodality.

How to explain the result?

Part of it may simply be that, despite his last name (crociata in Italian means 'crusade'), the new COMECE leader is not seen as an especially strong personality who creates divisions, but a relatively quiet figure unlikely to generate drama.

Beyond that, some observers detect a statement in the choice of

Bishop Crociata, perhaps one quietly encouraged by influential conservative European prelates such as Cardinals Péter Erdo of Hungary, Wim Eijk of the Netherlands and Gerhard Müller of Germany.

According to this reading, the election of Bishop Crociata would serve a dual purpose – first, to take a firmer stance now against an EU moving in an increasingly secular direction on matters such as gender and gay rights, and, second, to help position the European positions in a more conservative stance vis-à-vis the next conclave.

In any event, the relatively blasé media reaction to Bishop Crociata's election, in contrast to that of Archbishop Broglio in the US five months ago, is also a lesson in the power of narrative.

Among pundits and reporters, the American bishops typically are seen as a bastion of resistance to the progressive reform agenda of Pope Francis, so virtually anything they do will be spun as a major act of defiance. The Europeans, by way of contrast, generally are seen as allies of the Pope – or, if anything, even more liberal than he is, as reflected in the results of the recent German 'synodal path.'

It does not come naturally, therefore, to many Church-watchers to conclude that the Europeans may just have followed the American path – to the extent, that is, that either Archbishop Broglio or Bishop Crociata genuinely represent a challenge to the Francis papacy, as opposed to simply being expressions of the unity-in-diversity that's always been part of the Catholic story.

Letters

Letter of the week

Mary Kenny's UL disininvitation a 'damning indictment'

Dear Editor, The decision to stop Mary Kenny speaking at an event in the University of Limerick on the topic of feminism because of alleged 'transphobia' is a damning indictment on the health of our society [*The Irish Catholic* – March 16, 2023].

Mrs Kenny is a renowned author and journalist, with a huge wealth of experience and knowledge, and a university should be honoured to have her speak. Yet, cowed by protests pushing for her disininvitation, the university – for their shame – relented. There was a time

when universities were bastions of knowledge and the search for knowledge, now it seems only 'acceptable' opinions are allowed to enter the halls of our third level institutions. This does no favours for students and reflects very poorly on the administration who should be striving to open minds and encourage people with strongly held beliefs to challenge themselves with contrary opinions, otherwise an echo chamber develops. This echo chamber is leaking into society and we can see in the Dáil a reflection of this malady.

If the end goal is to teach young people to think in a certain way, third level institutes become no better than one of China's 're-education' camps that spew out self-confessed lovers of the status quo. Of course this is just a form of brainwashing that is perpetuated by academics that refuse to challenge themselves and their poorly researched theses – having drunk the Kool-Aid of the times.

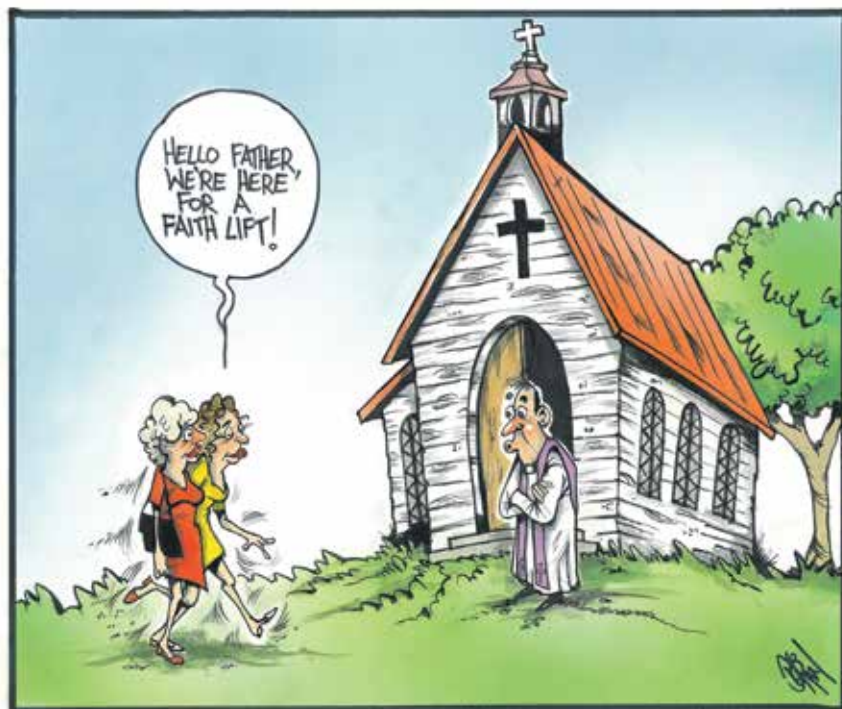
Yours etc.,
Damian Lynch
Bray, Co. Wicklow

Once and for all, pray and vote for change

Dear Editor, As Dáil unrest increases and an election looms it is imperative that we know what the various political ideologies are about. Property rights and our very identity as a Christian nation are being eroded each day that passes, by liberalism, left-wing socialism, the neo-communist politics of the Republican movement, political correctness and Freemason-led capitalism.

It is time to make a difference, let's enshrine Our Lady as Queen of Ireland, and ban divorce and abortion. Let us, once and for all, pray and vote for change. Then this country will have a future once more.

Yours etc.,
Bernard Isaac
Turner's Cross, Cork City



Difficulties Catholics have with Pope Francis

Dear Editor, In Editor's Comment [*The Irish Catholic*, March 16, 2023] your description of those who oppose Pope Francis as "coming from elite groups invested in particular pre-determined answers to narrow questions" is a caricature of ordinary Catholics who find the Pope's attitude to the teaching of the Church disconcerting.

Later in the editorial mention is made of "remaining faithful to the unchanging truths of the Church". Isn't this the precise area where

practicing Catholics have difficulty with Pope Francis. "Synodality is the big project of this papacy" is probably an accurate description of the Pope's work but some fear it is a genuflecting to the dominant secular culture of our time as is evident in the German Church which because of it is now heading for schism.

The presentation of Christian doctrine as something negative and even a barrier to people's faith is a travesty. The development of what Christ has revealed

into Christian doctrine is the most liberating and enlightening of all knowledge since it has an eternal significance. I'm reminded of David Cameron when prime minister of the UK lecturing the Church of England to "get with the programme", of course he was referring to the programme for government not the Gospel.

From the time of the emperor's, dominant cultures have tried to use the Church for their own purposes. Resisting the temptation to be accepted,

relevant and popular is how the Catholic Church has survived intact for 2,000 years. Your accolade to the Pope, "that no Pope in the modern era has enjoyed the positive media coverage that Francis has" loses some of its power when the media is secular and only supports those who promote its agenda. The Catholic Church will survive Pope Francis but not without loss and damage.

Yours etc.,
Fr Gregory O'Brien PP
Leixlip, Co. Kildare.

A new hymnal will help Mass participation

Dear Editor, A very simple idea to increase people's participation and fervour in the Sunday Mass would be for the bishops as a group to ask Veritas to produce an all-Ireland hymnal that would be available to all parish priests to purchase in bulk at near cost price, and for them to make them available at the Sunday Masses to help and encourage people to sing along.

Most people like singing but if they are not encouraged, or they don't know the words, they won't participate. There would be a sticker on the

front cover saying something like, "this is the property of the Church".

Naturally some are going to go missing, lost, damaged, or stolen over time, so it would be a good idea for each church to have many extra copies in storage for the future.

More than 40 years ago, Veritas did produce a hymnal. I suggest this new one would be the same size but have over twice the amount of hymns in it. All hymns should be the most popular and appeal to the Irish mind and heart. There should be none of the unneces-

sary musical notation that was in the original, and the print size should be a little bit bigger. Each hymn would be numbered in big bold print so that the priest or some lay person could call aloud the number of the hymn that is going to be sung. On average five or six hymns should be sung at each Sunday Mass.

Yours etc.,
Declan Condren
Navan Road, Dublin 7

facebook community

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

Survivors of abuse in non-Catholic schools feel marginalised by inquiry

There's no mileage in it for some people. I heard Sean O'Rourke attempt to raise these cases with a very active 'human rights' personage on radio and the reply was, "I'm not here to talk about those". – **Charles Glenn**

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

Some women with theology degrees have knowledge, not heart

Dear Editor, I was dismayed when I read an article in the February edition of *The Synodal Times* where women were angry and frustrated because they wanted to be ordained priests. Indeed it was also mentioned in *The Irish Catholic* in some of the feedback from different parishes as a result of the synod gatherings.

Firstly through our baptism we all share in Christ's ministry as priest, profit and king. My simple understanding of the Eucharist is that at the Holy Mass during the consecration when the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ the priest is 'in persona Christi'.

Also in the Sacrament of Reconciliation only God has the authority to forgive sins, so when the priest says "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven", he is *in persona Christi*, so therefore a woman cannot be ordained.

Women are very much involved in the Church today in many different ministries and with the shortage of priests in our parishes there will be plenty more opportunities for lay involvement in the Church.

While it may be good for women to study theology and obtain degrees, I sometimes feel that some of these women have too much head knowledge and need a conversion of heart and then through prayer the Holy Spirit will guide them into whatever ministry the good Lord wills for them.

I recommend they read Isaiah 44:18 and Jeremiah 29:11.

Pope Francis says the question the synod is asking is: What does God want for the Church in Ireland today? Not what we want.

Yours etc.,
Monica Flood
Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, March 30, 2023

Saint of the week
St Peter Regalado
– a reformer of his day
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The Way of Holy Week

We are people of the Way, an ancient term for the first Christians which is found in the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus showed us that way throughout his whole life on earth, but this way becomes particularly clear and calls to us most profoundly in the events of Holy Week, not only by Jesus' words, however striking they are, but by his actions and what he suffered, beyond words. Those events invite us to enter upon this way interiorly, through the words, actions and silences of the liturgy. Through that liturgy we make a commitment of faith to know Jesus more clearly, as individuals, but also as pilgrims together. We are drawn into ancient tradi-



The liturgies of Holy Week invite us to engage with the words, actions and experiences that constituted Jesus's way to the Father writes Fr Tony Nye SJ

tions of contemplating these events.

We begin with the Palm Sunday procession, to re-enact the journey of Jesus with his disciples and those who followed him from Bethany to Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11). We follow him as our king, but one riding on a donkey in humility and in obedience to the Father's word through the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9). As we proceed

into the Mass the readings prepare us to focus on this obedience. From the Third Servant Song of Second Isaiah (Isaiah 50:4-7), we hear that the Servant has been given, "a disciple's tongue...Each morning [the Lord] wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple." The second reading, from the kenosis hymn used by St Paul in his Letter to the Philippians (Philippians 2:6-11), tells us that Jesus "emptied

himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross".

This leads us into the dramatic account of the Passion. This year it is according to Matthew, which, as in the infancy narrative and other places in the Gospel, focuses on fulfilment and obedience to God's plan as the evangelist conceives it.

Just as in the Mass of Palm Sunday, so in the following days of Holy Week we prepare to hear about the events leading to the Passion by listening to the Servant Songs in Second Isaiah (42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9 – the latter repeating the Palm Sun-

day reading). On Good Friday we hear the Suffering Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) after the prostration of the celebrants in silence and the opening prayer. It serves as a meditation on the Passion according to John.

Humanity

The self-giving of Jesus and the sharing in our humanity, and we with him, is very dramatically yet simply portrayed by the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday. This follows John's account (John 13:1-15), which is a sort of prologue to the Passion. It can be viewed as an insight into the self-emptying of the cross and the giving of the Eucharist. Bare feet make us aware of human vulner-



Nuns pray during the Mass of the Lord's Supper in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City on Holy Thursday. Photo: CNS

ability. Stooping to wash and dry them carefully is a sign of delicate respect for our neighbour, especially in that neighbour's weakness and poverty. "If I, then, the Lord and master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet." In its place in the Mass of the Lord's Supper, this surely points to the self-giving and sharing of Jesus in the Eucharist.

“After the ancient prayers, which encompass the needs of the Church and the world, there is adoration of a large cross, gradually unveiled”

The liturgy of Good Friday is embraced by deep silence, at the beginning and at the end. The cross is beyond words. We begin with the silence of the congregation; on Good Friday, the congregation is usually large, so the silence is particularly moving. The opening silence in which the

celebrants prostrate is underlined by the bareness of the altar and the open, empty tabernacle. After the readings and the enacting of the Passion according to John, in which we all take our parts, the best response is silence, perhaps preceded by just a few brief words to present one aspect of the story we have just heard for some minutes of quiet reflection, to let it sink in. After the ancient prayers, which encompass the needs of the Church and the world, there is adoration of a large cross, gradually unveiled. Our response is to file up and show our commitment to the Saviour with a wordless kiss, a very personal act which speaks for itself. The service is completed with a very simple reception of Holy Communion without a Mass, like the way we receive when we are sick or bedridden or approaching death. In all this, silence is our most fitting response to a death by crucifixion. The nature of that intense pain and increasing difficulty of breathing allowed very few words to be uttered.

The long and complex liturgy of Holy Saturday begins with a very basic symbol of promised

light, the Paschal Candle, lit from a blessed fire and illuminating the darkness of the Church. Our own individual candles are lit from the great candle and light is passed from person to person, a simple action of solidarity. The promise of new life in Christ is rooted in the Covenant, and the readings, responses and prayers are staging posts on the journey of God's relations with his people.

“We receive the Easter sacrament with alleluias”

The promise is realised in Baptism and the renewal of our baptismal promises, through which we are engaged in the risen life of the One whose journey we have been following throughout this solemn week. We receive the Easter sacrament with alleluias.

We have been shown the way to the Father. We are invited to continue to walk in that way.

i Fr Tony Nye SJ was a member of the parish team at Farm Street Church, Central London. He died on April 19, 2022 aged 89.



‘Remember you will die’

Faith in art



Michael Kelly

One of the starkest images around the funeral rites for Pope Benedict XVI was the moment when his mortal remains were transferred from his residence at the Mater Ecclesia Monastery within the grounds of Vatican City State to the majestic St Peter's Basilica.

His cortege entered the basilica through a door that perhaps many tourists and pilgrims to the vast basilica don't notice, so overcome are they with the sheer scale of the church and the precious artwork there.

The gentlemen of the Papal Household carried the late Pontiff through a small door in the south transept of St Peter's Basilica which is topped by a sculptural monument known as *The Tomb of Pope Alexander VII*.

Pope Alexander VII

The monument was designed and partially executed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and was commissioned by Pope Alexander VII himself. However, construction of the monument didn't start until 1671 and was completed in 1678, eleven years after the Pope's death.



A side view of the tomb.

Alexander VII (February 13, 1599–May 22, 1667), was born Fabio Chigi, and reigned from April 7, 1655 to his death in May 1667.

Born in Siena, he was a member of the illustrious banking family of Chigi – who give their name to the Palazzo Chigi where the Italian prime minister lives today – and was a great-nephew of Pope Paul V (1605–1621).

At the age of 81, *The Tomb of Pope Alexander VII* would be Bernini's last major sculptural commission before his death in 1680.

There are six significant figures in the monument. At the apex is Alexander kneeling in prayer. Below him are

four female statues representing virtues practiced by the Pontiff. On the foreground is 'charity' with a child in her arms. To the right of that is 'truth', whose foot rests on a globe. More precisely, truth's foot is placed directly over England, where Pope Alexander had striven to subdue the growth of Anglicanism. On the second level are 'prudence' and 'justice'. These statues were carved in white marble.



Pope Alexander VII

But, what made the juxtaposition of Benedict's cortege and the monument all the more dramatic is the fact that below Alexander, the figure of death is represented in gilded bronze, shrouded in a billow-

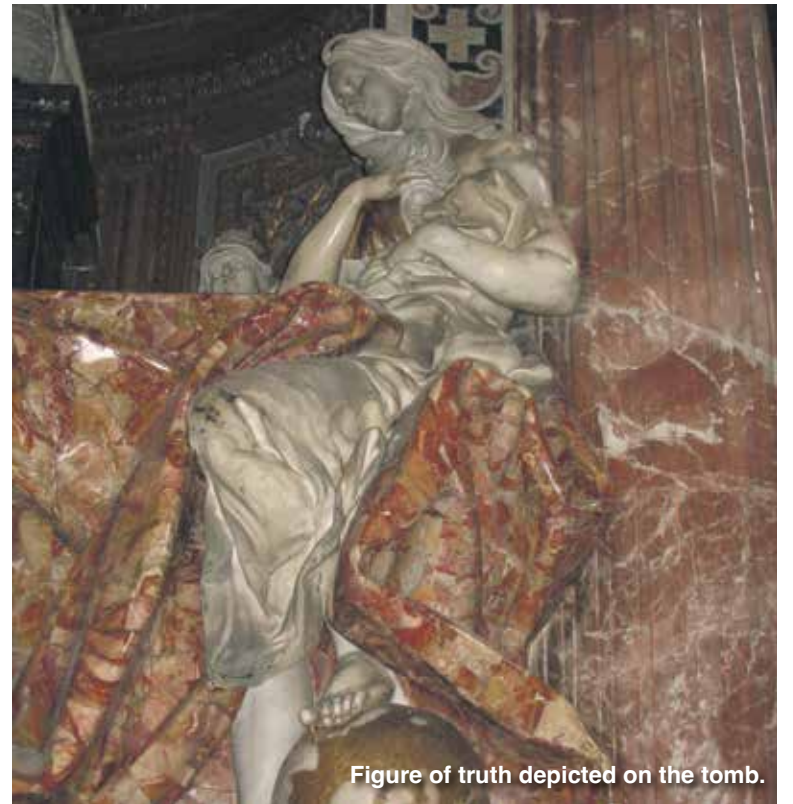


Figure of truth depicted on the tomb.

ing drapery of Sicilian jasper. Death raises an hourglass to symbolise that time has passed. The hourglass is also an artistic symbol of 'memento mori' which translates from Latin to 'remember you will die'. The plinth is in black, as a sign of mourning for the Pope.

Construction

In December 1671, the actual construction of the tomb began with wooden and clay framework or the full-scale model of the tomb. The last payment to Bernini is recorded

on April 9, 1672. After receiving his payment, Bernini had drawings sent out to the quarry specifying the size of the marble blocks on July 23 of that same year. The tomb was almost finished but there was another pope who had something to say about it. Pope Innocent XI, once the tomb was unveiled, had objected to not only the nudity of 'truth' but also the bare breasts of 'charity'. Thus Bernini was forced to dress the figures. The last commissioned piece of Gian Lorenzo Bernini was finally finished and unveiled in 1678.

Saint — of the — week



St Peter Regalado

St Peter Regalado – a reformer of his day

The life of this great servant of God appeared to be merely the unfolding and an ever-stronger exemplification of the virtues which he received in holy baptism. Born in 1390 of wealthy and devout parents at Valladolid in Spain, he lost his father at an early age; but he himself became the comfort of his pious mother, who with joy and gratitude to God recognised in her little son distinct signs of future holiness.

One could notice nothing childish in him. He loved places of retirement, where he would sit for hours in deepest devotion. Not only did the saintly child meditate upon the sufferings of Christ, but he wished also to have a share in them by inflicting pain on his tender body.

Franciscan Order

When he was ten years old, he importuned his mother to permit him to consecrate himself entirely to God in the Franciscan Order. The prudent woman first tried his vocation for a long time; but after three years, when she could no longer doubt that the call came from God, she gave her consent despite his youthful age; and thirteen-year-old Peter was also granted admittance into the convent, a thing frequently done in those days. Although he was a child, he practiced all the austeri-

ties and virtues of a perfect religious.

Just at that time there was being introduced into Spain a stricter observance of the rule, and Peter attached himself to it with lively zeal. From Valladolid he travelled with his teacher and superior, Fr Peter of Villagarcia, to the quiet little convent of Aguilar in the diocese of Osma, where he prepared himself for the priesthood by earnest study and still more earnest prayer. He had been a priest but a short time when his teacher, who had set out on a journey to establish new friaries of this reform movement, believed that he could find no one in Aguilar better fitted for the superiority than his pupil, Peter Regalado. In this position he proved himself so efficient that, after the death of Fr Pr of Villagarcia in the year 1442, he was appointed head of all the friaries of the movement in Spain. Whatever he, as superior, taught the brethren, they saw him observe most perfectly in his own life. Perhaps to enable him to better supervise the communities, Peter had the ability to bilocate, as he was often known to be at two different convents at exactly the same time taking care of important matters.

St Peter Regalado kept almost continuous silence; the greater part of the night he devoted to prayer; Mass he celebrated with such devotion that often he was not able to refrain from

tears. He scourged his body sometimes even until he bled; his bed was the bare floor or a little straw; nine times a year he kept a 40-fast, mostly on bread and water. Religious poverty he observed most rigorously, for which reason he had to suffer much opposition and even persecution. He accepted that, however, in patience and meekness out of love for God.

The poor and the sick

His love of neighbour was so great that he often brought the poor and the sick with him into the community and cared for them with great love. God rewarded his faithful service with most extraordinary graces. At prayer he was so filled with seraphic ardour that he was seen raised above the ground, with flames radiating from his body. On occasion there occurred a prodigy such as was once observed in the life of St Francis: the flames rose above the roof of the community though not damaging it. The Bishop of Osma, who saw this prodigy himself, cried out:

“Truly, that is the abode of God.”

It seemed that the body of the holy man possessed the agility and ease which our glorified bodies will one day have, because he crossed over rivers as though they were solid ground; and often he was found at the same

hour at convents far distant from one another, transacting business pertaining to his office.

The mouths of babes

God announced the praises of his servant through the mouths of babes. On one occasion, Peter said to a babe in the arms of his mother: “May the Lord bless you, my dear child! Oh, what a beautiful and brilliant soul you have!” At this the babe turned to him and said to the amazement of its mother: “But still more beautiful is your soul, which God has adorned with so many graces.”

Soon, however, the great mass of the people was to praise him.

St Peter Regalado died in the 66th year of his life, on March 31, 1456, and immediately the veneration of the people began. His grave was glorified by innumerable miracles.

In 1492, Queen Isabella the Catholic requested to have several fingers taken from the saint as relics. This was done, and the amputation of the fingers caused blood to flow from the wounds for some time, as if the saint were still alive. This took place 36 years after the death of the saint.

Pope Innocent XI beatified him, and Pope Benedict XIV solemnly enrolled St Peter Regalado among the saints.

i From The Franciscan Book Of Saints, edited by Marion Habig, OFM.

Six ways I can make my parish better



**Lorene Hanley
Duquin**

Today, parishioners are expected to feel a true sense of ownership in their parish. That means looking at your parish as more than just a place where you go to Mass. A parish can be a sacred place where the human and the divine meet, where people of all ages grow in the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It can be a place where people receive spiritual nourishment, guidance, inspiration and strength – not just from the priests but from other members of the parish as well. It can be a spiritual home where people share in each other's joys, support each other in times of sorrow, offer encouragement to those who are struggling, and help to heal anyone who feels battered or broken by life's trials and tragedies. Or it can be a social place where people make new friends, reach out to those less fortunate, and invite others to become part of a community of believers who try their best to live the Gospel message.

“Family members don't always agree, but they do feel a strong commitment to one another and to the family as a whole”

Maybe your parish is already all of this and more, but even the best parishes can become even better when parishioners take an active interest in making the parish grow and prosper. Here are six ways to do just that.

1. Think of yourself as part of a parish family. Family members share a common heritage and history. They are grounded in the same beliefs, values, and traditions. They embrace new members of the family with a spirit of love and acceptance. Family members don't always agree, but they do feel a strong commitment to one another and to the family as a whole.

2. Be welcoming. When you come together on the weekend for Mass, think of it as a large family reunion -- with people you know well, know slightly, and don't know at all. Introduce yourself to people you don't know, especially if they are sitting alone in church or standing by themselves at the coffee-and-donut hour. If they're new to the parish, offer to give



them a tour, introduce them to other parishioners, or simply tell them why you love the parish. Enthusiasm is catching! Watch your nonverbal communication, too. If you're sitting on the end of a pew, for example, don't make others crawl over you to get to middle seats. Remember to smile; take the time to compliment the people sitting around you on everything from their singing ability to the cuteness of their kids.

3. Use your gifts and talents for the good of the parish. God has given each person unique gifts and talents that are intended to be shared. Like public speaking? You might get involved as a lector. If you're friendly and outgoing, you could be an usher or a greeter. You can share your deep devotion to the Eucharist by becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or an adult altar server. If you play an instrument or sing, the music ministry might be the place for you. Maybe you're a teacher and could help in religious education; if you love children, you could assist in the babysitting room. Any expertise -- business, finance, public relations, photography, grant writing, engineering, carpentry, building maintenance, or even such skills as cooking, baking, cleaning, or gardening -- can find a place in the parish.

Maybe your greatest gift is time; if you're already an extraordinary minister or instituted acolyte, you can take Communion to the sick

“Once you recognize that everything you have is a gift from God, you see that giving generously to continue God's work in the parish is an essential part of your spirituality”

and homebound. Or you can help with your parish outreach ministry to the poor. You might even have an idea for a new ministry, support group, organization, or event, and your enthusiasm and energy can help other people get excited and involved.

“Pray also for the return of Catholics who have strayed from the practice of the faith, people raised with no faith, and people searching for meaning and purpose in life”

4. Attend parish events. Although Mass is our central focus, other parish ministries, activities, and events help to increase spirituality and build community as well. Whether it's a mission, a lecture, a lawn fête or a spaghetti dinner, take advantage of opportunities to meet new people, feel more

connected, and affirm your fellow parishioners who work hard to plan and execute these events. Invite family members, friends, neighbours, and co-workers to join you -- especially those who are not Catholic or may have stopped practicing their faith. These folks may not be ready to attend Mass, but they might enjoy coming to a parish event, meeting other parishioners, and seeing some of the good things that the Catholic Church has to offer.

5. Support your parish financially. You know how expensive it is to run your own home. Parishes face even higher costs -- and depend on parishioners to help meet them. Take a serious look at the money you give to your parish each week. Do you increase your contributions each year as the cost of living rises? Giving to the Church is more than just a financial obligation. Once you recognize that everything you have is a gift from God, you see that giving generously to continue God's work in the parish is an essential part of your spirituality.

6. Pray for your parish. Keep your pastor, parish staff and

fellow parishioners in your daily prayers. Praying a rosary, spending time in Eucharistic adoration, fasting or offering up any suffering, annoyance or inconvenience you experience for the well-being of your parish will bring rewards not just for the parish but for you personally. You will begin to see yourself as spiritual support for all the good work being done in and through your parish. Pray also for the return of Catholics who have strayed from the practice of the faith, people raised with no faith, and people searching for meaning and purpose in life.

No parish is perfect, and even the best parishes can improve. Imagine what would happen if every person in your parish did one little thing to make the parish better!

i Lorene Hanley Duquin is the author of Catholic books, pamphlets, and articles on a variety of evangelisation and ministry topics. She has conducted workshops in parishes and at diocesan conferences in the United States and Canada.

Choosing our own storm



“We only live, only
aspire, con-
sumed by either
fire or fire.”

T.S. Eliot wrote those words and, with them, suggests that our choice in this life is not between calm and storm, but between two kinds of storms.

He is right, of course, but sometimes it is good to vary the metaphor: We live in this world caught between two great gods, very different from each other: chaos and order.

Chaos is the god of fire, of fertility, of risk, of creativity, of novelty, of letting go. Chaos is the god of wildness, the god who brings disorder and mess. Most artists worship at his shrine. He is also the god of sleeplessness, of restlessness, and disintegration. In fact, chaos works precisely by disintegration of what is stable. Chaos is the god more worshipped by those of a liberal temperament.

Order

Order is the god of water, of prudence, of chastity, of common sense, of stability, of hanging on. He is the god of pragmatism. He likes systems, clarity, and a roof that doesn't leak. He is more worshipped by those of a conservative temperament. Few artists pay him homage, but the corporate and ecclesiastical worlds more than compensate for this. By and large, he is their God. He can also be the god of boredom, timidity, and rigidity. With him, you will never disintegrate, but you might



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

suffocate. However, while he does not generate a lot of excitement, this god keeps a lot of people sane and alive.

“When order totally dispels chaos, a certain self-annihilating virtue, posturing as God, begins to drain life of delight and possibility”

Chaos and order, fire and water, don't much like each other. However, both demand the respect accorded a deity. Unfortunately, like all one-sided deities, each wants all of us, but to give that submission is dangerous.

Allegiance to either, to the exclusion of the other, not infrequently leads to a self-destruction. When chaos reigns

unchecked by order, moral and emotional disintegration soon enough unleash a darkness from which there is often no recovery. That's what it means to fall apart, to become unglued. Conversely, when order totally dispels chaos, a certain self-annihilating virtue, posturing as God, begins to drain life of delight and possibility.

Worship

It is dangerous to worship at only the shrine. Both gods are needed. The soul, the Church, practical life, the structures of society, and love itself need the tempering that comes from both fire and water, order and chaos. Too much fire and things just burn up, disintegrate. Too much water and nothing ever changes, petrification sets in. Too much letting go and the sublimity of love lies prostituted; too much timidity

and love shrivels up like a dried prune. No, both gods are needed — in practical life, in romantic life, in ecclesiology, in morality, in business and in government. Risk and prudence, rock music and Gregorian chant, both contain some whisperings of God. It is not by blind chance that we are caught between the two.

This should not be surprising because God, the God of Jesus Christ, is the God of both — fire and water, chaos and order, liberal and conservative, chastity and prodigal love. God is the great stillpoint and God is also the principle of novelty, freshness, and resurrection.

“God is love, and love wants and needs both order and chaos.”

Thomas Aquinas once defined the human soul as made up of two principles, the principle of energy and the principle of integration. One principle keeps us alive and the other keeps us glued together. These two principles, while in tension with each other, desperately need each other. A healthy soul

keeps us energised, eager for life, but a healthy soul also keeps us solidly glued together, knowing who we are when we look at ourselves in a mirror. Our souls need to provide us with both energy and integrity, fire and glue.

God is love, and love wants and needs both order and chaos. Love wants always to build a home, to settle down, to create a calm, stable and chaste place. Something inside us wants the calm of paradise and thus love is about order. It wants to avoid emotional and moral disintegration. But love is also about chaos. There is something in love that wants to let go, that wants to be taken, that wants to surrender its boundaries, that wants the new, the foreign, and that wants to let go of its old self. That's a fertile principle within love that has kept the human race going!

Healthy tension

Our God hallows both of these gods, chaos and order, and that is why it is healthy that both be kept in a healthy tension. To be healthy, we need to bring them together within ourselves and we need to bring them together not as we would bring two parties to meet at a negotiating table, but as a high and a low pressure system meet to produce a storm. After a storm, the weather is clear.

In the tempest there is life and there is God. In it we are initiated, initiated through immersion into the intense fires of desire and the ecstatic waters of surrender.

“A healthy soul keeps us energised, eager for life, but a healthy soul also keeps us solidly glued together, knowing who we are when we look at ourselves in a mirror”

With 'The Journey' Bocelli gives us a Holy Week treat



Renowned performer Andrea Bocelli invites us to join him on a unique pilgrimage, writes Andrew Petiprin

In recent years, the Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli has enjoyed international success while frequently offering traditional Christian songs to a mass audience. Blind since the age of 12 and experiencing significant success as a singer while only in his 30s, Mr Bocelli has known hardship in his life, but his art and faith are nonetheless rooted in gratitude. His spiritual life has been heavily influenced by the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, and in the 1990s, Mr Bocelli reembraced the Catholic faith of his youth. Following in the long tradition of the people of God offering beautiful music in expressions of joy and sorrow, gratitude and distress, Mr Bocelli's music is appreciated by many as a gifted and graceful source of hope.

Pilgrimage

In celebration of his faith, family, friends, and homeland, Mr Bocelli recently embarked on a 200-mile pilgrimage - on

horseback - along the Via Francigena, from Rome to his provincial Italian estate. The result is the new film *The Journey: A Musical Special from Andrea Bocelli*, directed by Gaetano Morbioli and Paolo Sodi for the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

For established fans of Mr Bocelli and the artists with whom he travels and performs, the film will be a welcome treat for Holy Week.

Pope Francis

The Journey begins with a delightful, but all-too-brief cameo from Pope Francis, who blesses Mr Bocelli and his fellow travellers as they set out in dramatic fashion on horseback from St Peter's Basilica. Chief among Mr Bocelli's riding companions is his wife, Veronica, who also is one of the film's executive producers. One scene features the couple's young daughter, Virginia, whom Mr Bocelli serenades in an empty church with a version of Ave Maria that he had written for her a few years earlier. In another scene, Mr Bocelli performs Schubert's familiar version of the same sacred text in a picturesque landscape.

“The film concludes with an outdoor celebration at Mr Bocelli's home, with spontaneous music, wine and conversation - the epitome of the art of living Italians are famous for”

The film alternates between stunning drone shots of the Italian countryside, conversations on horseback between Mr Bocelli and his friends, and dramatically staged performances in a variety of outdoor and indoor settings along the route.



This is a scene from 'The Journey: A Musical Special from Andrea Bocelli'. (OSV News photo/courtesy TBN)

Given the number of contemporary Christian artists who appear with Mr Bocelli in this project, some Catholic viewers may find themselves encountering artists such as Tori Kelly, Michael W. Smith, Tauren Wells and Hillsong United's Taya Gaukrodgers for the very first time. Classical music fans may enjoy seeing and hearing from the world-famous Welsh crossover singer Katherine Jenkins, Bach specialist Ramin Bahrami, conductor Beatrice Venezi, and the Croatian cel-

list duo, 2CELLOS, who have become a YouTube sensation.

Reflects

Along the way, Mr Bocelli reflects on his disability, his career and most of all his family. Toward the end of the film, he meets up with his adult son, Matteo, who reads his father a letter of appreciation while Mr Bocelli strums a Spanish guitar. The film concludes with an outdoor celebration at Mr Bocelli's home, with spontaneous music, wine and conversation - the epitome of the art of

living Italians are famous for.

From a strictly faith-filled perspective, *The Journey* might have been more spiritually enriching had Mr Bocelli and his companions spoken more about the holy sites along the route. Mr Bocelli barely mentions his own devoutness, although it may be clear enough from his encounter with the Pope and his choice of Catholic devotional anthems. And while many of the songs from the evangelical performers might not resonate with all Catholics, we can all appreciate

the ecumenical spirit of the whole group's performance of *Amazing Grace* at the end of the film.

Catholics may hope that *The Journey* may stir the hearts of all viewers for Christ, his Church, and the Kingdom of Heaven - the last of which feels at times to be very near in the beauty of Bocelli's native soil.

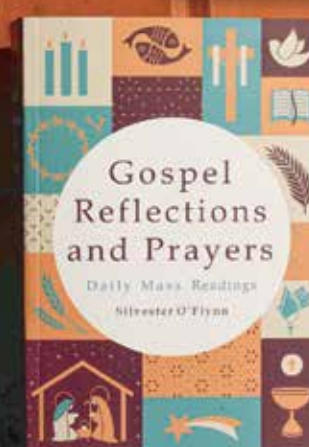
Andrew Petiprin writes about Catholicism and popular culture for various publications.



A scene from 'The Journey: A Musical Special from Andrea Bocelli'. (OSV News photo/courtesy TBN)

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Going the extra mile to make a difference

RTÉ sure knows how to make excellent one-off documentaries – last week we had a good one!

In the Name of the Son (RTÉ One, Thursday) was the aptly-named story of Mags Riordan from Dingle. She had suffered the loss of three of her children – a baby that didn't survive an accident that saw her car going off a pier, a cot death and the death by drowning of her son Billy at the age of 25. Though she came through this to do amazing humanitarian work in Africa, she was under no illusion about the effect of the tragedies – she said losing children like this is “a life changing experience” that changes you irrevocably.

Billy had died in a drowning accident in Malawi, and several times I was struck by the similarities between the Dingle and Malawi coasts – sometimes I wasn't too sure which location was in shot. One strand in the film was showing what an enthusiastic, life-loving, young man he was. He died in 1999 but family and friends still cried as they spoke of him. Mags headed to Malawi and wanted to create a tribute to him over there, but she did much more than erecting a modest stone monument. She set up a medical clinic in Maclear, a village



Mags Riordan.

in the area that was hugely afflicted by malaria, HIV and eye diseases – one building led to another and lives were changed and even saved. It became known affectionately as ‘The Billy’s’ and we heard glowing tributes for the clinic and for Mags herself from local patients and staff, as well as volunteers from abroad. Volunteer Irish builders and medical students generously contributed their time, energy and skills.

The documentary was moving, but not in the least

sentimental. Apart from the tragedies, there were some issues with the clinic as it developed to run more smoothly. Strategic partnerships were made with Church bodies to take funding pressure off the initiative, and funding was raised by a partner group in Boston. Some of the locals were unhappy with the changes, though it wasn't fully clear why – perhaps because they preferred when it was more low-key and local, and there was one reference to pricing, but Mags

reckoned that as the changes bedded in, local understanding grew.

In reflective mode Mags believed that volunteers were ‘sent’ her way, that “someone or something” was pulling strings, but she didn't want to question it too closely. She didn't believe in co-incidence, and said her values were broadly Christian – that was her upbringing.

Love and understanding for humanity are also evident in the crime drama series **Unforgotten** (UTV, Mondays). Back for a fifth series the character Cassie (Nicola Walker) is no longer in the frame and her replacement, DCI James, played so well by Sinead Keenan, is a different character altogether, more prickly and abrupt. Cassie's former work partner DCI Khan (Sanjeev Bhaskar) has trouble adjusting. The plot, involving the unravelling of a historical unsolved crime, follows the familiar pattern of this series – in particular there's high impact in those scenes where a compromised character, up to now getting away with it, sees the police arrive and knows the past is finally catching up. Though the plot follows familiar patterns the characterisation is excellent, across – police, perpetrators and victims.

There was one outstand-

PICK OF THE WEEK

SERVICE FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

RTÉ One, Holy Thursday April 6, 4.40pm

A multi-denominational Service on Holy Thursday, marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

MY LIFE AT EASTER WITH SALLY PHILLIPS

BBC One, Good Friday, 11.15am

Sally Phillips meets writer and broadcaster Gyles Brandreth to discover how Easter has informed a life filled with love, faith, politics and pantomime.

PILGRIMAGE: THE ROAD THROUGH PORTUGAL

BBC Two, Good Friday April 7, 9pm

Seven well-known personalities, with differing faiths and beliefs, meet in northern Portugal to tackle a modern Catholic pilgrimage: the famous sanctuary in the city of Fatima.

ing scene in last week's episode, when Khan and James finally cleared the air – he tells her about his fiancée having a miscarriage, and she reveals why her focus has not been firmly on the case – 54 minutes before she started her new job, she learned her husband had been having an affair, and it turned out it was with her sister. It was a tense conversation and the acting deserves a BAFTA for sure.

I'm not so enthusiastic about **The Bay** (UTV, Wednesdays). The plot, about a woman who dies in a deliberate house fire, is okay, some of the police characters are well

developed (especially Daniel Ryan as ‘the Boss’) but I'm not impressed by Marsha Thomason's cop character. And it's a bit too agenda- and message-driven, with a few same-sex relationships, including among schoolchildren, that seem merely tokenistic – ticking the diversity box. Amy, the Downs Syndrome child is much better integrated into the story and no big deal is made of her condition – she's as well rounded as any of the child characters and that's welcome.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



When cellists do actually draw

Recently reminiscing on my time on the council of the now defunct Music Association of Ireland, I recalled qualms being raised about engaging cellists for the association's members' meetings and country tours. A cry would go up “cellists don't draw”.

However, two recent events at the National Concert Hall proved otherwise. A solo recital by young English artist Sheku Kanneh-Mason and a new concerto by Shaun Davey, played by Cork's Sinéad O'Halloran, drew ‘full houses’.

Coming from Nottingham, Sheku Kanneh-Mason (24) is third in line in an extraordinary family of seven musicians. Winner of the BBC's



Sheku Kanneh-Mason.

Young Musician Award when he was 16, after which his home city named a bus in his honour, he played at the wed-

ding of Britain's Prince Harry to American Megan Markle in 2018. He was also the subject of a BBC 4 documentary – publicity that stood him in good stead.

His generous NCH programme opened with Bach's second Cello Suite and included Britten's first Suite, written for the Russian master Mstislav Rostropovich in 1964. There were sonatas by Cuba's Leo Brouwer (b. 1939), dedicated to Kanneh-Mason, and Spain's Casper Cassadó (1897-1966) as well as pieces celebrating the 200th anniversary in 2022 of London's Royal Academy of Music, the cello's alma mater, by Welshman Gwilym Simcock and Oxonian Edmund Finnis.

While there was much to admire in Mr Kanneh-Mason's playing and I particularly liked the Bach to which he brought even-flowing momentum throughout its six dancing movements, however, elsewhere I felt his performances were somewhat introverted leaving me somewhere out in the cold.

Belfast-born (1948) and Dublin-domiciled Shaun Davey may well be called an ‘elder statesman’ among our respected composers. His Cello Concerto *Refuge*, written in 2020 but only now (St Patrick's Day, 2023) receiving its première, showed the composer's consistently expressive writing for the instrument.

Soloist Sinéad O'Halloran responded with sensitive beauty and dramatic impulse when required while the NSO, under David Brophy, was no less committed to Mr Davey's score. With uilleann piper Mark Redmond as the sympathetic and beguiling soloist, Mr Davey's established ten-movement suite *The Brendan Voyage* seemed the perfect escort for the fledgling five-movement concerto.

Rakhmaninov's sesquicentenary celebrations continue at the NCH and elsewhere. Earlier this month his Third Piano Concerto brought Russian/American virtuoso, and Rakhmaninov devotee, Olga Kern to the NCH with the NSO under Leonard Slatkin. Her all-embracing performance conveyed the music's seductive charm as well as its dramatic ebullience. Powerful

stuff, I loved it.

Chamber Choir Ireland, under Paul Hillier, brings the composer's *All Night Vigil*, or *Vespers*, to Belfast's Clonard Monastery on Friday March 31 and Dublin's ChristChurch Cathedral on Saturday April 1.

The 1915 piece is a setting of the Russian Orthodox Church's psalms and prayers for the eve of important festivals.

Rakhmaninov based ten of its 15 sections on traditional chants but provided them with his own characteristic harmonies and variation treatment. The remaining five are the composer's own interpretations of motifs particular to Russian church music. The ninth of the fifteen, dealing with the Resurrection, is regarded as the *Vespers* commanding centrepiece. Happy Easter.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Unthinking vandalism at Tara



The Hill of Tara

Peter Costello

The news the other day from the Office of Public Works, that some vandal had scrawled the word 'fraud' across the standing stone on the Hill of Tara was dismayed.

There is a programme underway to increase the visitor interest in the place, which decades ago lost out in popularity to Newgrange and the other Boyne monuments.

The culprit was trying to imply (or so I suppose) that this monument was not the Lia Fáil, or inauguration stone of the ancient High Kings of Ireland, as the publicity information now put about is a fake.

It is certainly an ancient moment of some great age dating I suppose from the centuries just before Christianity in Ireland, or even earlier.

Such stupid and petty vandalism is always to be decried, though in the case of the standing stone at Tara the case is complicated.

The stone is certainly not the Lia Fáil, the ancient inauguration stone of the High Kings of Ireland. The hill itself is of far greater antiquity, predating the arrival of the 'the Celts' in the 400s BC. Its ritual associations can really only be guessed at. All the other surviving and suggested inauguration stones in Ireland are blocks that can be sat or stood upon. They are not pillar stones.

Let me explain what I think. The stone originally lay at the foot of the Hill of the Hostages. (All the names at Tara are derived from ancient sources, but they are applied by different scholars over the past two hundred years, to different sites.

There it lay prone. From that site, in the mid-Nineteenth Century it was moved by local people some yards across to the height of the Rath-na-Riogh, the central site, where it was erected standing upright.

The claim that it is was the inauguration stone of the High Kings was made by archaeologists of the Petrie era because there seemed to be no other stone on the site that fill the role.

John O'Donovan, however, when he was conducting his place name survey for the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s, a task to which he devoted immense amounts of time, thought and scholarship, with his reports being composed in his lodgings as he travelled from place to place. He was of the opinion, which he felt well founded, that the Lia Fáil (if it still existed in Ireland) was quite another stone that lay in the Church of Ireland graveyard surrounding the little church which is now the visitor centre.

So a well-founded argument based on archaeological authority can be made that the standing stone is not indeed the Lia Fáil.

But those who re-erected it did not claim it to be. They intended it to be a monument to the rebels of 1798 who died there in the bloody Battle of Tara during the Rebellion of that year.

So though it is not the Lia Fáil it is still an ancient stone, and a national memorial to Ireland's revolutionary tradition.

What the Lia Fáil really was, and what became of it, and the role Irish lore and legend play in the tale, is a large matter which I will address in an extended article in May at the time when our neighbours crown Charles III as their monarch.

One man's crusade to save the relics of our ancient landscapes



A patch of Irish Rain Forest (Irish Wildlife Trust)

An Irish Atlantic Rainforest: A personal journey into the magic of rewilding, by Eoghan Daltun (Hachette Books, €19.99/£16.99)

Christopher Moriarty

Rainforest is a word all too familiar to conservationists. The context is usually the forlorn one of the replacement of tropical rainforest by intensive cattle grazing for the ultimate production of beefburgers. With this background, the concept of a book on an Irish rainforest brings one up rather sharply, even MR Daltun, though the inclusion of the word 'Irish' introduces an element of local – if surprising – interest.

This book whose full title is *An Irish Atlantic rainforest: A personal journey into the magic of rewilding* is substantially autobiographical and introduces a very remarkable man of many talents, not least amongst them an impressive ability to write and describe people, places and, perhaps above all, the evolution of the Irish landscape in the course of the past five thousand years or so.

Beauty

The beauty and importance of this same landscape provides the main thrust for the book, bringing the reader to

the realisation of the value to humanity itself of the wilderness.

“He lived and studied amongst the marble quarries of Carrara, a place of inspiration for European sculpture since Classical times”

The book begins with comments on a location far from any rainforest but with a surprising account of the regular early morning communication of monkeys – a parallel with their habit throughout the world. The difference is that this particular community lives in cages in the zoo in Dublin's Phoenix Park. The zoo is within hearing range of Kilmainham, an ancient region of the city of Dublin where the author discovered the last traces of an 18th Century stone-built cottage, purchased the property and set to work by hand to restore it to its equivalent state as a modern dwelling and adopt it as his home.

This chapter establishes the credential of Eoghan Daltun as no ordinary man. We learn that he is a highly qualified sculptor, employed by various public authorities throughout the land as a restorer of monuments large and small. A subsequent chapter describes

with a wealth of detail how he leaves Ireland to live for seven years in Italy. But it is far from being the Italy familiar to most of us. He lived and studied amongst the marble quarries of Carrara, a place of inspiration for European sculpture since Classical times.

West Cork

But, however interesting, this is all diversion, a prelude that leads to his central theme, which begins on a summer's day in 2008. The family embarks on a trip to West Cork, to the hills, woodland, seaside and rocky landscape of Beara.

There the author fixes his eye on a property, which includes sheep pasture and a pocket of ancient and seriously deteriorated woodland – technically speaking a specimen of Irish Atlantic Forest. He sets to work on managing this plot to restore its 'wildness'. Involving fencing out cattle and goats, this meets with a

very remarkable and rapid transformation with the growth of sapling trees and the appearance of an abundance of wild flowers.

His description of the new landscape that he has produced is a sheer pleasure to read – but one which leads to very serious conclusions. Our Irish countryside is, ecologically, a sadly depleted entity. Thousands of years of human influence, mostly in the shape of chance discoveries, rather than knowledge-based management, have led to this state.

Eoghan Daltun has shown by his own achievement the way in which corrective measures can be successfully applied and makes this a basis for the consideration of his great aim of the 'regreening' of Ireland, to say nothing of a very much greater area of land worldwide.

The Lost Rain forests of Britain, by Guy Shrubshole (William Collins, £20.00/€24.99)

Peter Costello

This book, which has received a lot of notice on television, gives a contrasting overview with the rain forests in our neighbouring island, and

the efforts to explore, protect, and to preserve other threatened tracts of similar ancient growth. Readers will find that it places Eoghan Daltun's activities in a larger context. To see our situation in Ireland in a broader view is very helpful, suggesting such efforts will become more commonplace, and so even more acceptable.

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

The Return of the Irish wolf



One of the newly rewilded wolves of Belgium

Peter Costello

Hand in hand with the preservation of the ancient 'rainforest' woods and the creation of new stretches of proper woodlands (not the poisonous pine forest that pass for forestry in Ireland - goes the promotions of schemes for the reintroduction of Ireland's 'lost beasts'. But the manner in which eagles and others are poisoned by farmers makes this a slow task.

One recent scheme was to replant the wolf into Donegal and Tyrone. This was no more popular around Letterkenny than the wolves are in the Pyrenees or Alps.

Wild

But the idea was that Donegal was the ideal place for them, historically speaking. It was obviously 'wild'. But this is to ignore two things in ancient and medieval history these bare mountain crags which city dwellers, not having to live among them, so much admire in summer, were

covered in natural deciduous forest – the sort of things we can still see fragments of in such places as Epping, the New Forest or Sherwood.

“Wild life is indeed returning to an area that has not been rural since about 1745”

They were not what they are today, nor were they the preferred habitat of wolves. Wolves are like foxes. They like places where the living is easy – how very human of them. So just as foxes like nice suburban areas where they can raid the bins of restaurants and hotels, tear open at their leisure plastic bin bags with discarded takeaways, and most delightful of all, devour all those pet cats put out at night. Cats like being out as they can eat at their pleasure song birds, but for the foxes the cats are a gourmet dinner on four paws. This is the explanation of the pathetic homemade

posters that are pinned up all over south Dublin appealing for information of little Tabby Tom who is lost. Just this morning our local fox crossed our back garden, with a lean and hungry look, mooching from garden to garden on the prowl. He will find something, and his leftovers will be cleaned by the sparrow hawk who takes care of the sea gulls. Wild life is indeed returning to an area that has not been rural since about 1745.

Folklore

But as regards the wolves, their location in ancient days seems to have been in central Leinster. That at least is where the folklore recorded by Gerald de Barri in his *Topography of Ireland* (first read to the learned world at Oxford in 1187) places them.

It will be recalled that English soldiers and mercenaries in Elizabeth I's Irish wars hated the country: the woods of oak beech and birch were so extensive and so full of what they deigned to call Irish rebels and indeed of wolves. Rebels and wolves could almost have

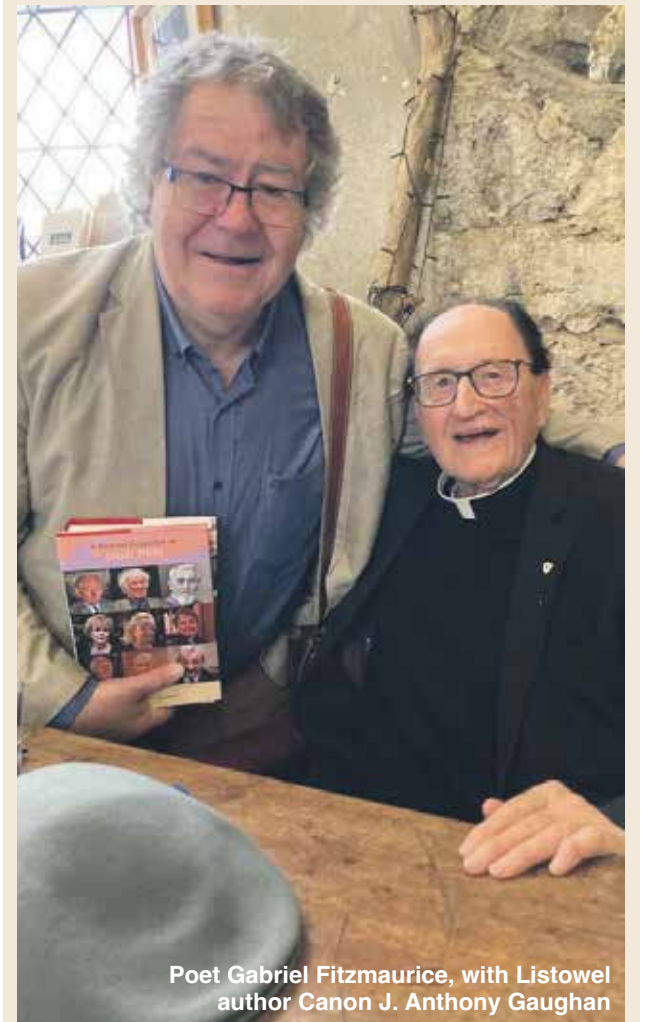
been symbols of the country.

Many years ago, I planned a novel. I discovered that according to one tradition the last wolf in Ireland was killed in the area of Mount Leinster in 1798. The coincidence of the Rebellion with the death of the wolf seemed to provide a fruitful theme. But further research led me into the quagmire of conflicting dates and places that so often besets the Irish historical writers, I gave it up. The topic is a complicated one and cannot be gone into shortly; but it seems certain enough that wolves still haunted the woods of Glendalough down at least 1710. The other dates of extinction cluster in the end of the 18th century.

Serious thought

But if serious thought is to be given to reintroduce wolves into Ireland – and it seems to many a good idea – they would be better planted not in remote Donegal, which I suspect they would not care for, but into the fields and woods of Kilkenny. Now there is a thought.

Gabriel Fitzmaurice's poems for two cultures - or one?



Poet Gabriel Fitzmaurice, with Listowel author Canon J. Anthony Gaughan

Gan Focal/Frugal Speech,

poems by Gabriel Fitzmaurice, illustrated with paintings by Brenda Fitzmaurice (Arlen House, €15.00/£13.50)

Peter Costello

Gabriel Fitzmaurice published his first book of poetry back in 1981, and he then combined his own writing with translations of other poets from the Irish. Eventually he was challenged to write himself in Irish.

He published a bilingual collection of children's poems in 2010. This new bilingual edition for adults combines some 20 poems in English with his own Irish translations.

This is an interesting idea. But I wonder can the verses that a poet produces as translations of his own poems really be translations? Surely they are new poems on the same theme by the same poet. They cannot be the same class of things as translations of another poet's poems.

In a personal afterword he discusses his relationship since childhood with the language. He was born in 1952 in Moyvane, where he still lives and where he taught school for his career. The last native Irish speaker in Moyvane died in the village back in 1927. So he says he lived between Irish and English since the age of four

and another local language in between echoes of which can be heard in George Fitzmaurice and John B. Keane. He later studied other languages at St Michael's in Listowel, as well as a full chorus of classical languages – “the same education that John Milton had in his time”, which is a striking thought.

This inter-linguistic rearing must now in some places be gaining yet more languages – will we soon have Irish/Polish, Irish/Igbo, Irish/Ukrainian poets?

But as I say, these are his poems, and they will make his readers alert to the interactions between the two languages he loves.

“I love and have a kindred feeling with the Irish language. I love to be in the Gaeltacht talking to my friends, particularly in Corca Dhuibhne. Irish is with me night and night. I often dream in Irish while I am sleeping. I speak Irish only to my friends. Because, to steal a phrase from the song, Irish is the loving language.”

This is a little volume that will delight and move its readers. Yet at the same time it has many insightful and revealing poems on human nature, faith, and love. It will also perhaps encourage those who have no Irish to explore the nature of these languages a little more closely for themselves.

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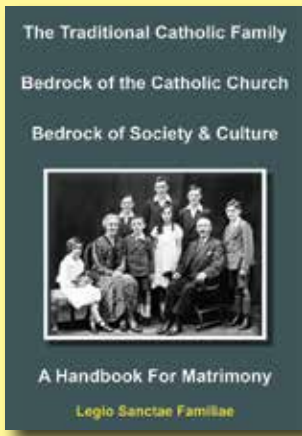


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"THEY HAVE NO MORE WINE" Young man in Sweden seeks a wife, spiritual companion and partner in healing-work in service to Jesus & Maria. (I dreamt she is Irish.) Holistic and esoteric interests. Contact: nordlys7.blogspot.com

ST CLAIRE

THANKS ST CLAIRE FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED AND FAVOURS TO COME (9 Hail Marys for 9 days. On last day, say a second set of Hail Marys & ask for 3 requests, personal, professional, impossible)

HEAVEN MESSAGE

BISHOP JUAN GUEVARRA approved their divine revelations to Luz de Maria at <https://revelaciones-marianas.com/> an important message given on 17th March 2023. Do read footnote no.1.

The Irish Catholic

PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

STATE UNDER WHICH HEADING YOUR AD IS TO APPEAR: _____

Minimum charge of €24.60 (inc. VAT) for 5 lines (25 words). Extra lines €4.92 each.

No. of insertions: _____ weeks
Miracle Prayer €40

Please print your advertisement in the coupon, placing ONE word in each space. Below, please print your name and address. Do you require a Box Number? YES NO (Please tick ✓) Box Number €6 extra.

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7					€34.44

Name and contact detail form **MUST** be filled out

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I enclose Cheque/PO: €..... I wish to pay by Visa Mastercard Laser
My Visa/Mastercard/Lasercard number is: _____
Expiry Date: Signature

The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277. Phone: 01 687 4094

Leisure time

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

You're Invited

Come for a FREE, behind-the-scenes tour of Merchants Quay Ireland's homeless drop-in centre.

See first-hand how your kind donations and legacy bequests work to bring hope and relief to people who've slept rough overnight.

To find out more please ring Shauna at 01 524 0139.

We'd love to meet you

A hot meal. A helping hand. A fresh start.

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model!"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmissions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

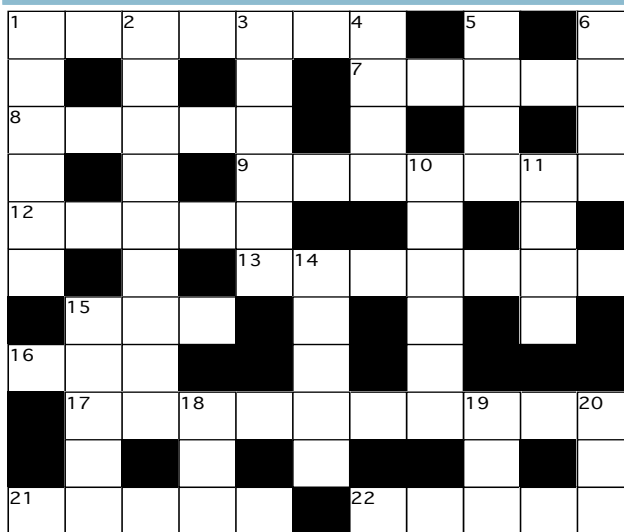
Trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 476



Across

- 1 After the news, we often see the _____ forecast (7)
- 7 Below (5)
- 8 Days in the calendar (5)
- 9 You might wear them on your feet in the summer (7)
- 12 Big (5)
- 13 Pupil, person learning (7)
- 15 Chunk of wood for the fire (3)
- 16 Where you'll see animals in captivity (3)
- 17 The total you get by adding sixty and forty (3,7)
- 21 Donkeys (5)
- 22 Yellow citrus fruit (5)

Down

- 1 Walk like a duck (6)

- 2 This part of the day follows midday (9)

- 3 Makes the sound of a snake (6)
- 4 What's left of an old building (4)
- 5 A thought (4)
- 6 Parts of the body between your shoulders and your wrists (4)
- 10 Avoided (6)
- 11 Move this part of the camera to get the focus right (4)
- 14 Fish you'll find in many rivers (5)
- 15 Has a peep (5)
- 18 What you see with (3)
- 19 Male sheep (3)
- 20 A fox's home (3)

SOLUTIONS, MARCH 23

GORDIUS NO. 603

Across – 1 Little finger 7 Ava 9 Stag 10 Wooing 11 Whin 14 Perth 15 Avoid 16 Spun 18 Added 21 Erode 22 Rabbit 23 Denim 24 Uses 25 Veldt 26 Saucy 29 Baby boomer 34 Horn 36 Ram 37 Participated

Down – 1 Lot 2 Togo 3 Lewd 4 Froze 5 Nonet 6 Rath 8 Annunciation 9 Square number 12 Morose 13 Idled 14 Prawn 17 Pebble 19 Dummy 20 Drive 27 Adopt 28 Comic 30 Bump 31 Drop shot 35 Red

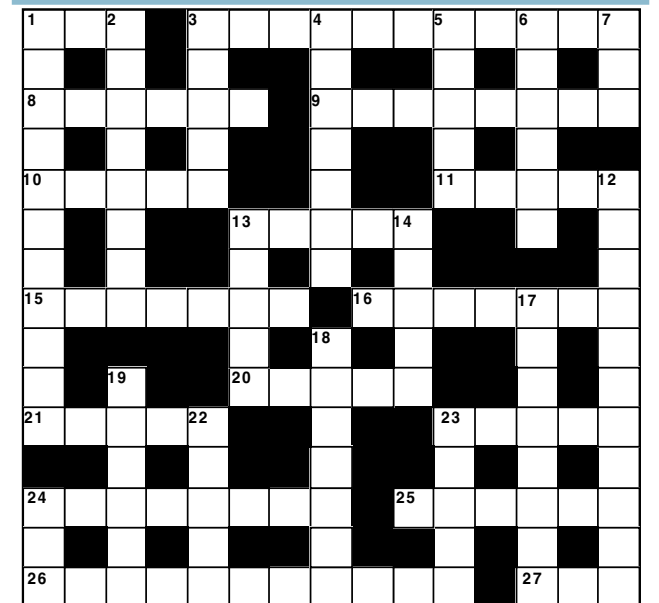
CHILDREN'S No. 475

Across – 1 Water-skiing 6 Terrible 7 Elk 9 Introduce 12 Ewe 14 Golf 16 Street 17 Use 18 Result 19 Repeat

Down – 1 Watching 2 Target 3 Rainbow 4 Kill 5 Nails 8 Actress 10 Refuse 11 Desert 13 Dealt 15 Once

Crossword

Gordius 604



Across

- 1 Equip with weapons (3)
- 3 Town that was destroyed as well as Pompeii in the eruption of 79 AD (11)
- 8 Part of the body often called the voice box (6)
- 9 Prior (8)
- 10 Extreme pain (5)
- 11 Ireland's smallest county (5)
- 13 Made a witty remark (5)
- 15 Seafish of the cod family (7)
- 16, 20a & 26a Poem by Joseph Mary Plunkett about the fact that Jesus is ever-present to those who look for Him (1,3,3,5,4,3,4)
- 20 See 16 across
- 21 One part of a game of whist or bridge (5)
- 23 Brownish-yellow (5)
- 24 Elegant in movement or form (8)
- 25 Remove the paper surrounding a present (6)
- 26 See 16 across
- 27 Belonging to us (3)

Down

- 1 What a goalkeeper

- achieves if the opponents fail to score (1,5,5)
- 2 Stranded (8)
- 3 Sweetness from bees (5)
- 4 Bun (7)
- 5 Blacksmith's block (5)
- 6 The second book of the Old Testament (6)
- 7 Married lady's title (3)
- 12 One employed to keep a residence clean (11)
- 13 Esau's brother (5)
- 14 Given medicine in prescribed amounts (5)
- 17 Up until now, it's their hot concoction (8)
- 18 A child just learning to walk (7)
- 19 Gilbert and Sullivan operetta set in Japan (6)
- 22 Got to one's knees (5)
- 23 Imperial weight measure (5)
- 24 Wildebeest (3)

Sudoku Corner

476

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 475

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

Last week's Hard 475

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Are we a morally superior society today?

I learned a new word this week and it is 'presentism'. Basically presentism is the use of present-day standards to impose judgements upon historical figures and practices in the sometimes-misguided belief that the standards of our contemporary world are morally superior. I realised that this new word names and describes a trend which I have been uncomfortable with for a very long time.

When the late Queen Elizabeth II visited Ireland in 2011, she gave a memorable speech in Dublin Castle where she said among other things: "With the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all."

In the context of our relationship with our nearest neighbour that line was so significant, but it is a sentiment which can apply across our society and particularly in our Catholic Church. Much of the recent history of the Catholic Church in Ireland and perhaps more specifically, commentary on the Church, has been some form of looking back with historical hindsight. Very little if any of what emerges from that lens of historical hindsight presents the



Queen Elizabeth II on her visit to Ireland.

Church in a positive light. The enormous positive legacy of the Church's involvement in education, the development of hospitals and so much of our social care infrastructure is almost completely obliterated and overshadowed by the harrowing accounts of abuse in church run institutions and numerous cases of individual church personnel who preyed on vulnerable young people.

As someone who by virtue of almost 37 years of priesthood represents the Catholic Church, I have no difficulty acknowledging and owning up to the troubled aspects

and the far from benign role which the Church has played in the lives of individuals and society at large. But surely one of the main reasons for critically looking back at the past is to ensure that we don't make the same mistakes again. A central question for all of us must be: has the almost relentless exposure of our past sins made our current society safer for all vulnerable people today? Many of the scandals related to how our society dealt with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. Certainly, our attitude to young women who become pregnant has changed for

the better but what of the children of those pregnancies? Evidence would suggest that need for the mother and baby homes and Magdalen Laundries of the past has been replaced by the demand for abortion clinics today.

Safer

Back in the mid 1990's there was a relentless exposure of priests who had sexually abused children and jibes like the Irish word for abuser being 'sagart' were part of the daily diet. There were days when I and many of my colleagues were afraid to put our heads outside the door

let alone face our congregations. However, at some point I can remember coming to the conclusion that I would put up with this torrent of negative, angry missiles if in some way the exposure of what had gone on in one sector of society would somehow create a safer place for all children today and into the future. Has that turned out to be the case? Recent statistics show that upwards of 70,000 referrals of some form of child abuse are made in Ireland each year.

Going back to that concept of 'presentism', having castigated and ditched many of the historical figures, institutions and practices of the past can we honestly say that we have created a morally superior set of standards and practices to guide our society today?

Gender differences

Frank the farmer had a nagging wife. She made his life miserable. The only real peace he got was when he was out in the field ploughing. One day while in the field, Frank's wife brought him his lunch. Then while he quietly ate she berated him with a constant stream of nagging and complaining. Suddenly, Frank's old donkey kicked up his back legs, struck her in the head killing her instantly. At the funeral, the priest noticed that when the women offered their sympathy, Frank would nod his head up and down. But when the men came up and spoke quietly to him, he would shake his head from side to side. After the mourners left, the priest approached Frank and asked, "Why did you nod your head up and down to all the women and shook from side to side to all the men?" Well, Frank replied, "The women all said how nice she looked, and her dress was so pretty, so I agreed by nodding my head up and down. And all the men asked, "Is that donkey for sale?"



A PLEA FROM HONDURAS:

PLEASE HELP PROVIDE FOOD FOR FAMILIES AND THE ABANDONED LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

The Missionary Sisters of Christ the Master in Comayagua, Honduras are counting on our help to bring vital food, medicine and other assistance to more than 800 people. Sister Alba Moreles Galvez has written to THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION: "We have been working in this extremely impoverished area for ten years, where families live in wooden shacks in very basic conditions. I hope that the Little Way will assist us with five programs. These are: 1) Comprehensive Nutrition. We need to provide food to three groups, as well as training in gospel values and the development of agricultural projects. 2) A group of girls live and are educated at a Home run by our Sisters. They have nowhere else to go. 3) We wish to provide food and medical aid to older adults, who are often abandoned. 4) Provisions are needed by extremely poor families, as well as training in literacy, to give the young especially a better chance in life. 5) At San Isidro Farm we hope to expand self-sustaining agricultural projects, such as egg production."

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez recommends that we help the Sisters, whom he knows well. He asks for as much as we can send these communities living in extreme poverty.

This Lent, we urge you to give alms to our fund for the hungry, sick and deprived. Without any kind of deduction for administration, this fund is used to support missionaries providing life-sustaining assistance to destitute families and individuals.



Sr Alba writes: "We provide education, complete formation, to children and young people in situations of extreme poverty, we take care of the abandoned sick and we go where no one wants to go to evangelize."



"We can never have too much confidence in our God Who is so mighty and so merciful."
- St Therese

LENT WITH ST THERESE

In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine: "Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: "Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries repeatedly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean, safe water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

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

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

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **HUNGRY, SICK AND DEPRIVED**
€..... **TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL**
€..... **WELLS AND WATER**
€..... **MASSES** (please state no.)
We ask for a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass
€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) _____ (Block letters please)

Address _____

IC/03/30

To donate online go to tinyurl.com/lwadonations

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

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and forwarded without deduction.

Little Way benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions in the Missions.