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Faith-filled families and Catholic groups fuelling vocations rise

Chai Brady

Youth ministry, Faith-filled families and happy priests are helping fuel priestly vocations for Ireland's dioceses according to vocation directors, with 15 new seminarians entering formation this year *The Irish Catholic* can reveal.

Numbers are up from nine seminarians in 2022 and more than doubled from 2021 when there were six new students. Twelve men are also expected to enter a preparatory pre-seminary year, called a propaedeutic year, up from 10 in 2022.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* about the impetus behind the men's decision, the vocations director for the Diocese of Raphoe Fr Rory Brady stressed that faith and prayer are "the bottom line".

"Outside of that then is the witness of good priests being faithful. A couple of the candidates have been involved with the likes of Net Ministries, where they experienced priests who are happy in the priesthood.

"There is a foundation of faith for them. Sometimes these young men, through Youth 2000 retreats or Net Ministries, they get a different insight into the faith as well," he said.

Raphoe diocese currently has three men

» Continued on Page 2

'All creatures great and small...'



Fr Donie O'Connor greets people and their pets as they arrive to the Church of St Laurence O' Toole Kilmacud for a blessing of animals on Sunday, October 1, ahead of the feast of St Francis of Assisi. Photo: John McElroy. See pages 18-19

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Vocations will arise where Faith flourishes

The number of people coming forward to discern a vocation to the priesthood and religious life in Ireland is showing some signs of steadying, and – dare I say it – even growing. This comes after a period where numbers have been stubbornly low, and non-existent in many dioceses and religious congregations.

This is despite the fact that there is clear evidence that when vocation-promotion is prioritised, interest increases. That's why the current year dedicated to promoting vocations to the diocesan priesthood is so important. A few years ago, after the Church hosted a 'Year of Vocations', Irish dioceses saw the largest number of ordinations in many years. Similarly, religious congregations that have put a lot of energy into vocations ministry usually see their efforts rewarded with a greater number of enquiries from potential recruits.

Push

The hope now is that the new push for vocations – which was launched earlier this year – will focus energy around initiatives to address what we have become used to calling the vocations crisis.

As our research this week points out (see page 14), where energy, prayer and proper discernment takes place dioceses and



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Fr Ruaidhri Grieve OP, a Dungiven native, was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Eamon Martin in St Catherine's Church, Newry on Sunday, October 1. Photo: Bro. Sean Blackwell OP

congregations do see an increase in those wanting to test a vocations. But, vocations can only grow in a community that is self-conscious about Faith, and this is where there is a parallel challenge.

There's a deeper issue that also needs to be addressed, the fact that the vocations crisis really has at its heart a crisis of faith.

Let me explain. We could see the vocations crisis in isolation if, for example, a high proportion of young Catholics were attending Mass regularly and engaging with their faith but simply choosing not to consider a life-encompassing religious vocation. But, the fact is, with some exceptions, very few young Irish adults are engaged with their faith. That's not to say that they are not great people – they usually are. Lively social concern – what we might even call a commitment to Gospel values – is very much part of the lived experience of most young Irish people.

But, from the Church's point of view, they don't translate this into something which leads to a meaningful relationship with Christ.

Practising

So, let's say one in every 100 young practising Catholics might consider a religious vocation, if the overall number of younger Catholics practising their faith is very

low, it follows that vocations will continue to be very low.

“The key concern should be faith formation – helping young people to develop and nurture a personal relationship with Christ by which they know themselves to be loved and called”

This means that the vocations crisis cannot be addressed in isolation. Unless the deeper drift away from the Church amongst young Catholics is addressed, numbers discerning a vocation will always be low. This is why youth ministry must be a priority, and in youth ministry, the key concern should be faith formation – helping young people to develop and nurture a personal relationship with Christ by which they know themselves to be loved and called.

This is not to understand youth ministry solely as a vehicle for promoting vocations to the priesthood or religious life (though we should never shy away from asking young Catholics to consider such a vocation), but more as a way of ensuring that the Church mirrors the wider society.

Only a healthy Church that mirrors the demographics of the wider society will be a place where vocations to the priesthood and religious life can flourish.

Faith-filled families and Catholic groups fuelling vocations

» **Continued from Page 1** entering their propaedeutic year, one man entering seminary and one currently in seminary.

Fr Brady also credited the greater emphasis on personal accompaniment dioceses are undertaking, saying that even before the propaedeutic year “they aren't thrown in head-first”.

“I would be assigning priests that are good and solid and faithful to accompany these young men before they are accepted to do the propaedeutic year. It's not enough for someone to come along and think they have a calling, that's

why the propaedeutic year is good too.

“Before, fellas were taken in too quick. Pope Benedict said that just because there's a shortage of priests you don't take just anyone,” he added.

Vocations director in Killybegs, Fr Ignatius McCormack, highlighted how supportive Catholic families helped the two men who are entering a propaedeutic year and one who entered seminary for the diocese this year.

“The three students we have, one is a qualified primary school teacher, the other is a biochemist and the other is coming from the world of

accountancy, so they all have worked, and they have made this decision now – the teacher is in his mid-30s and the other two are in their early 40s.

“They certainly would have been brought up in families of Faith,” he said, adding they “have all been very well supported from home and from their own family circles”.

He said the propaedeutic year is “very beneficial” as “years ago it could be assumed that people have a certain knowledge of Church, about Church and around Church but that can't be assumed anymore.”

See page 14.

'Confusion' as Pope signals some same-sex unions can receive blessing

Chai Brady

An Irish theologian has raised concerns about Pope Francis' responses to questions from five cardinals, dubbing them "confusing", particularly the Pope's signalling that some same-sex unions can receive blessings.

The Pope said the blessings must not be confused with the sacrament of marriage and may be done

on a "case-by-case" basis.

He gave his response to the five cardinals' *dubia* (doubts) in July, but they were only made public on Monday, October 2. The cardinals, unhappy with the Pope's response, reworded the *dubia* in the hopes to elicit a traditional 'yes' or 'no' response – which is often then followed by an explanation – in August. They made their *dubia* public the

evening before the beginning of the Synod on Synodality in Rome, October 4, after not receiving another response.

Dr John Murray, a theologian based in Dublin City University, questioned the Pope's statement on blessing same-sex unions, believing they would need to be "worded in such a way that it was very clear that the blessing included a call to be chaste, a call to

abstain from sexual conduct outside of marriage".

"I doubt very much that same-sex blessings would include something as explicit and direct as that," he said.

Dr Murray said there seems to have been a U-turn, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ruled in 2021 that the Church couldn't bless same-sex unions because "God cannot bless sin". He said there is a need for

clarity on the issues raised by the cardinals particularly as the current Rome synod is ongoing.

The academic commented the cardinal's revised questions and their push for a 'yes' or 'no' answer, as "the answers the Pope gave are very long, there's some good stuff in there but because they are so long and so complex... they leave open anything almost and that's the problem".

"The cardinals are trying to say certain teachings are not negotiable, they are part of the Faith, they are part of the parameters of the synod, and you're not going to have communion, participation and mission unless the

Faith is clear, unless the Faith is strong."

Dr Murray added: "I think the energy of the synod should go towards reforms that are truly Catholic reforms and that will strengthen the Church for communion, participation and mission, and if it ends up confusing things further, I think it will seriously be to the detriment to the Church," Dr Murray said.

"True pastoral solutions are great, I think we should definitely look into them but they have to be honest and they have to be Catholic and they have to be clear, confusion is not helping anybody. The cardinals are correct to call for clarity."

i See page 27

Rise in calls for assistance to access emergency accommodation 'worrying'

Ruadhán Jones

A sharp rise in the number of people seeking legal assistance to access emergency homeless accommodation in 2022 is "worrying", the Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) has said in their annual report.

The charity, which provides free legal advice and representation to people who are homeless, saw a

250% increase in people struggling to access emergency accommodation, with 54 people seeking their assistance.

"As pressure on the system grew, we observed a notable deterioration in the quality and robustness of decision-making around homeless assessments, with legal intervention increasingly required to secure access to basic shelter for our clients," said managing solicitor

Aoife Kelly-Desmond in an October 3 statement. "This trend has continued into 2023."

Ms Kelly-Desmond called on the Government to ensure local authorities are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of their communities and properly apply fair procedures.

MLRC saw a rising demand for their service overall, with requests for legal assistance up 10% year-on-year.

The charity received over 2,100 phone calls, recorded 560 new requests for legal assistance and supported 54 organisations.

There was a "notable shift" in the geographic spread of MLRC's work, with half of cases in 2022 coming from outside Dublin, up from just one third in 2021. This may reflect rising levels of rural homelessness, the charity warns.

Irish TDs vote through safe access zones bill

Staff reporter

Irish TDs overwhelmingly voted in favour of a draconian bill that will ban pro-life prayer and witness in the vicinity of GPs clinic.

The 'Safe Access Zones Bill', which will institute legal penalties against pro-life witness within 100 metres of a GPs clinic, passed the second stage in the Dáil with 111 TDs voting in favour and just 10 voting against the bill. The bill now moves onto the third of five stages in the Dáil.

Pro-abortion campaigners have pushed for the Government to ban pro-life

witness, despite the lack of evidence of any complaints about so-called 'protests' outside clinics.

According to *Breaking-news.ie*, just 19 complaints have been received regarding pro-life witness since the start of 2022.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris has said the legislation is unnecessary, as the Gardaí already have adequate powers to tackle protests outside healthcare centres that perform abortions.

If the bill becomes law, then pro-life national and regional gatherings such as the Rally for Life and the March for Life could be banned.

A good Catholic Guide...



Members of Catholic Guides of Europe Ireland were among the large congregation who gathered for Mass in Gougane Barra celebrated by Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin to mark the 1,400th anniversary of the death of St Finbarr, patron of the diocese. Photo: Nora Ní Luasa.

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Leaving Cert sex ed draft provides 'vital space' for Catholic schools' ethos

Ruadhán Jones

A new draft curriculum for sexual education for senior cycle students in secondary schools "provides vital space" for Catholic schools to teach the curriculum according to their ethos, a Catholic body has said.

However, the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) criticised the draft for failing to explicitly acknowledge the role ethos plays in social, personal and health education (SPHE), which includes relationship and sex education (RSE).

The CEP welcomed the draft overall saying it makes room for Catholic schools to present Church teaching "with confidence" and "in line with the moral duty owed to parents/guardians", in a submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assess-

ment's (NCCA) consultation process seen by *The Irish Catholic*.

While some will criticise the curriculum for presenting no "overarching ethical perspective", the CEPs believe "this is a strength as it provides a vital space for the ethos of a school, of whatever religion or ethical worldview, to inform the curriculum".

But the curriculum specification needs to be "strengthened" by an "explicit acknowledgement" of the role of ethos, and must provide "in a practical way" for the role of parents as the primary educators of their children.

Alan Hynes CEP CEO, also called for the NCCA to include 'spiritual' in its 'wellbeing section', to encourage discussion of students spirituality.

The absence of a reference to marriage was criticised by the Catholic schools' body, saying the NCCA is "bound by the constitution", which

pledges itself "to guard with special care the institution of marriage".

The CEP's most extensive objection was to the inclusion of 'allyship skills' – a concept drawn from Critical Race Theory – which the body says divides "members of a movement into allies and others" which "undermines the bases of deep solidarity".

"Allyship and privilege are often coupled with other ideas such as intersectionality. Too often, these ideas promote an 'us and them' mentality, with 'victim status' being foregrounded in understanding relationships," writes Mr Hynes in the submission.

He "strongly urged the NCCA to reconsider this aspect of the specification".

Public consultation on the senior cycle proposals is under way, with the aim to have a new programme in place in schools by September 2024.

Church leaders attend seminar in Rome to mark Good Friday anniversary

Staff reporter

The Church Leaders Group Ireland gathered for a seminar in Rome on Thursday, September 30, marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, at a time of "fragile peace" in the North.

The two-day visit began with a joint Church service attended by the five Church leaders, including Primate of

All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, and the Irish and British ambassadors to the Holy See.

The Church leaders thanked the ambassadors for their invitation, welcoming the opportunity to highlight "our common allegiance to Jesus as Lord, and the responsibility of all Christians to work for peace, wherever they may be".

The seminar comes "at a time when we have great concern for the state of our fragile peace".



The Church Leaders Group (Ireland) after the Service to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in the Chiesa Evangelica Valdese, the Waldensian Evangelical Church, in Rome's Piazza Cavour. Pictured (from left) are President of the Irish Council of Churches Rev Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh John McDowell, and Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, the Moderator Rev. Dr Sam Mawhinney and President of the Methodist Church in Ireland Rev. David Turtle.

Trócaire supports 1.6 million in 23 countries – report

Chai Brady

Church-charity Trócaire supported 1.58 million people in 23 countries in 2022/23, according to its annual report, published on Monday.

Caoimhe de Barra, Trócaire CEO, said the past year was dominated by hunger in the Horn of Africa, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a global cost-of-living crisis.

"In the Horn of Africa, years of recurrent droughts fuelled by climate change, has caused extreme, life-threatening hunger for more than 20 million people," Caoimhe de Barra said.

"At a health centre run by Trócaire in Gedo, Somalia, I spoke with a mother who had just arrived with a critically ill baby. The infant girl was given the very best of care by our health team. But she died within two days. I will never forget that mother's grief."

"Unfortunately, this is just one tragic story of many in the past year from Somalia and the Horn of Africa."

Ms de Barra said that other challenges such as the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, and Cyclone Freddy in Malawi happened suddenly and with devastating human impact.

"Despite all of the challenges presented in 2022/2023, Trócaire – with the support of donors such as Irish Aid and with the extraordinary generosity of the public in Ireland – worked with local partners to help change the lives of 1.58 million people in 23 countries. This is something we can all be proud of," Ms de Barra said.

Caoimhe de Barra added that Trócaire also noted some great successes, including Ireland's performance on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aontú hosts Ard Fheis amid poll bounce

Aontú is hosting its Ard Fheis on Saturday, October 7, as recent polls suggest the party is seeing a steady increase in support.

The all-island party will focus on issues in both North and South, with Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín saying "the democratic rights of the people of the north of Ireland have been placed in cold storage by the DUP".

He also highlighted the citizens in the south "struggling under the weight of the housing and cost of living crisis while our public services are corroding each year with devastating consequences".

A poll in the *Sunday Independent* suggests that Aontú's support is up to 3%, level with the Labour party.

Tánaiste defends welcoming Azerbaijan delegation

The Dáil's warm welcome for an Azerbaijani delegation has been defended by Tánaiste Micheál Martin, even as thousands of ethnic Armenians, many Christian, continue to flee the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region following an Azerbaijani assault and blockade.

Azerbaijan has received heavy criticism from the international community in the wake of the assault.

Against this backdrop, Ceann Comhairle Sean Ó Fearghaíl asked members of the Dáil "to join with me in extending a very warm Céad Míle Fáilte – one hundred thousand welcomes – to my counterpart from Azerbaijan".

A private meeting was also held with the delegation from Azerbaijan.

The Journal reported that Minister Martin defended the reception the delegation received at Leinster House, saying, "It's incumbent on the host to meet delegations and to host them basically without fear or favour".

A museum for women must be truly inclusive

The proposed project of a National Women's Museum – announced recently by Culture Minister Catherine Martin – is admirable, in my view. Many reference books, such as national dictionaries of biography, and such publications as *The Times's* 'Great Lives' – have had to update their content by retrospectively including more women.

History

Women were often less visible in the past because their lives were more in the private, rather than the public, sphere. It took a long time to get women into parliament – in France, it didn't happen until 1944.

And there's absolutely no shortage of interesting Irishwomen whose lives could be featured: it could be a very engaging project illuminating history and personalities.

“The museum of Irish women's lives should honestly reflect the values that so many Irishwomen in the past upheld”

But I'd suggest two caveats: first, the candidates should be dead – liv-



Mary Kenny

ing people don't belong in a museum. And secondly, the Minister should ensure that the selection is genuinely inclusive. It really would be untruthful and a disservice to history if the only women represented came from the stable of left-wing feminists or radicals.

“Many Irishwomen who became distinguished in the arts, décor and literature, were also devout Catholics”

And in some quarters, it may be an embarrassing fact that some of the most outstanding Irishwomen in past times were nuns: such as Mother Mary Aikenhead, who virtually founded modern Irish medical care; Mother Catherine McAuley, founder of the Mercy nuns, who built a school for poor children and housing for working women; Nano Nagle, who dedicated her life to the education of poor girls; Mother Mary Martin who launched the Medical Missionaries of Mary, a global health network, or Sr

Genevieve O'Farrell, the pioneering Belfast educationalist.

Many Irishwomen who became distinguished in the arts, décor and literature, were also devout Catholics, such as Sybil Connolly, the fashion designer, the stained-glass artist Evie Hone, the soprano Margaret Burke Sheridan, the ballad singer (and shelterer of Jews in wartime Italy) Delia Murphy, and writers such as Alice Curtayne, Maura Laverty and Annie MP Smithson.

The last is now rather unfashionable, but Smithson's patriotic and romantic novels often went into over 70 reprints in mid-20th Century. She was definitely a significant figure, if not exactly, 'woke', by today's standards.

Of course the female radicals like Anna Parnell, Constance Markievicz, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and the wonderful pioneer for a national children's hospital, Kathleen Lynn, should be prominently featured.

But just as feminism has broad historical roots – ranging from Christian evangelicals to Rosa Luxembourg – so the museum of Irish women's lives should honestly reflect the values that so many Irishwomen in the past upheld.



Statue of Mother Catherine McAuley

'I nicked a book...'

My conscience prompts me to recall that I carried out an episode of shoplifting in my youth. I nicked a book from a bookshop – just to see if I could. Apparently many youngsters try it the once – and the American intellectual Susan Sontag confessed she regularly shoplifted books from a Californian bookstore when she was a poverty-stricken student.

But she did feel guilty about it. Perhaps, later on, she made amends. I can't

remember where I carried out my shoplifting crime, but I did realise afterwards it was wrong, and I've tried to make amends by buying from bookshops ever since – especially independent ones.

There seems to be a craze for shoplifting currently, and it is seriously impacting retail traders – which is unfair and unjust, and eventually penalises other customers too.

But perhaps there is a distinction to be made between shoplifters who do it for the heck of it, and people

who are truly in need. Food prices have risen shockingly recently, and supermarkets are locations of temptation, with their lavish open displays of goods. These stores also save money by such innovations as self-service check-outs – the customer does all the work, basically.

The principle still remains that it is wrong to steal – clearly stated in the Mosaic law – and it diminishes trust in society. But compelling circumstances can be taken into account when it comes to judging cases...

The King of Sweden, Carl Gust XVI, recently celebrated his 50 years on the throne, attended by cheering crowds of Swedes (and his extended family – these royals have large clans.) Also present at the celebrations was the Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, whose wife, Birgitta Ed, is an ordained Lutheran pastor. After seven years of study, Pastor Birgitta

was ordained in January this year.

She wore a very fetching long black taffeta gown, complete with clerical collar, and large crucifix, to the jubilee party, and was escorted by the hereditary Crown Prince of Denmark, Frederik.

In her own way, Pastor Birgitta quite graciously flagged up the continuing presence of Christianity in

Scandinavia. Sweden is often seen as a secularised country, yet it's also quite active theologically.

And the name Birgitta couldn't be more appropriate: St Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) is the leading European saint; she was a formidable holy woman, who travelled to Rome and Jerusalem in her time, advised the Pope, and founded the Brigidine Order.

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Irish Govt reveals €300,000 donation to abortion provider

Jason Osborne

The Department of Foreign Affairs made a €300,000 donation to the largest abortion provider and lobbyist in the world last year as part of its funding for foreign-based NGOs.

In response to a Parliamentary Question from Fine Gael TD, Alan Dillon, who asked for a breakdown of overseas development aid given by the State, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin revealed the International Planned Parenthood Foundation as one of the recipients among others.

Speaking out in condemnation of the move, the Pro-Life Campaign said that Planned Parenthood is a “fervently pro-abortion” NGO based in the United States which has “aggress-

sively pushed for extreme abortion policies globally”.

“The minister for foreign affairs and Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, also spoke in the Dáil on September 28 about how the Irish Government works with the Clinton Foundation towards furthering ‘women’s reproductive rights’, which is a mealy-mouth way of talking about abortion,” a spokesperson for the pro-life organisation said.

“Despite lavishly funding the already incredibly wealthy Planned Parenthood Foundation, the Irish Government cannot seem to find the funds to support women in unplanned pregnancies with positive alternatives to abortion. It is clearly a question of what the Government prioritises and what it does not.”

“Serious questions” need

to be raised about the Irish State’s “reckless” funding of NGOs that promote “extreme pro-abortion policies,” the Pro-Life Campaign said.

“This has been particularly evident in African nations, where the US and other Western powers have adopted a policy of offering ‘foreign aid’ in exchange for a liberalisation of these respective countries’ abortion policies.

“A strong opponent to this neo-colonial interference has been Obianuju Ekeocha of Culture of Life Africa, who will be speaking at the PLC’s National Conference in October.”

The Tánaiste’s response also shows that the Government gives tens of million of euro to Christian and Catholic charities, including Trócaire and Misean Cara.

Celebrating creation...



Transition year students from the Intermediate School, Killorglin, volunteer in the Killorglin Laudato Si' Garden, Co. Kerry, as the parish celebrated the season of creation.

Govt called to reach overseas aid commitment in Budget 2024

Chai Brady

Irish international charity Dóchas has said more progress in tackling climate change, conflict and hunger must be the Government’s focus in Budget 2024 next week.

The Irish network of international development and humanitarian NGOs said that with 240 million people in 69 countries requiring urgent humanitarian assistance, the Government should reach its commitment to spend 0.7% of Ireland’s GNI on overseas development assistance.

CEO of Dóchas, Jane-Ann McKenna, said climate change continues to be a huge threat to communities. She said: “Over 70% of the world’s refugees and internally displaced people come from the most climate-vulnerable countries. Additionally, 93% of the country’s

most vulnerable to the climate crisis are in debt distress. Climate change presents the single most existential threat to human life on this planet. We have to act now.”

“For Irish NGOs who are working with local communities and organisations, the magnitude of the multiple crises and the chronic level of underfunding is having real and serious consequences. The gap between rapidly increasing humanitarian need and global funding is widening, forcing impossible choices as to who gets left behind,” she said, adding: “Ireland played a critical leadership role in galvanising energy, optimism and action on the SDGs during the UN General Assembly. We must now demonstrate that same level of determination and ambition in New York back in Ireland in Budget 2024 and beyond.”

Pure in Heart offers ‘alternate vision’ for SPHE changes

Staff reporter

Catholic relationships and sexuality education organisation Pure in Heart is offering an open day in an effort to address parents’ concerns relating to the new SPHE syllabus.

The new syllabus has been criticised for what has been perceived as a wide-ranging

liberalisation of the curriculum, which will see students taught about different gender identities and sexualities.

In response to this, Dublin-based Pure in Heart is organising an open day Sunday, October 15 from 2pm to 6pm at 23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

A spokesperson for the organisation said that parents are “left in the dark” about the

changes being made to the curriculum and that an “alternate vision” is possible.

“Pure Heart will offer an alternative vision of SPHE consistent with God’s plan for sex, love, relationships and marriage, content that Pure in Heart provides across Ireland and has been offering to schools, chaplaincies and parishes for the past 23 years.”

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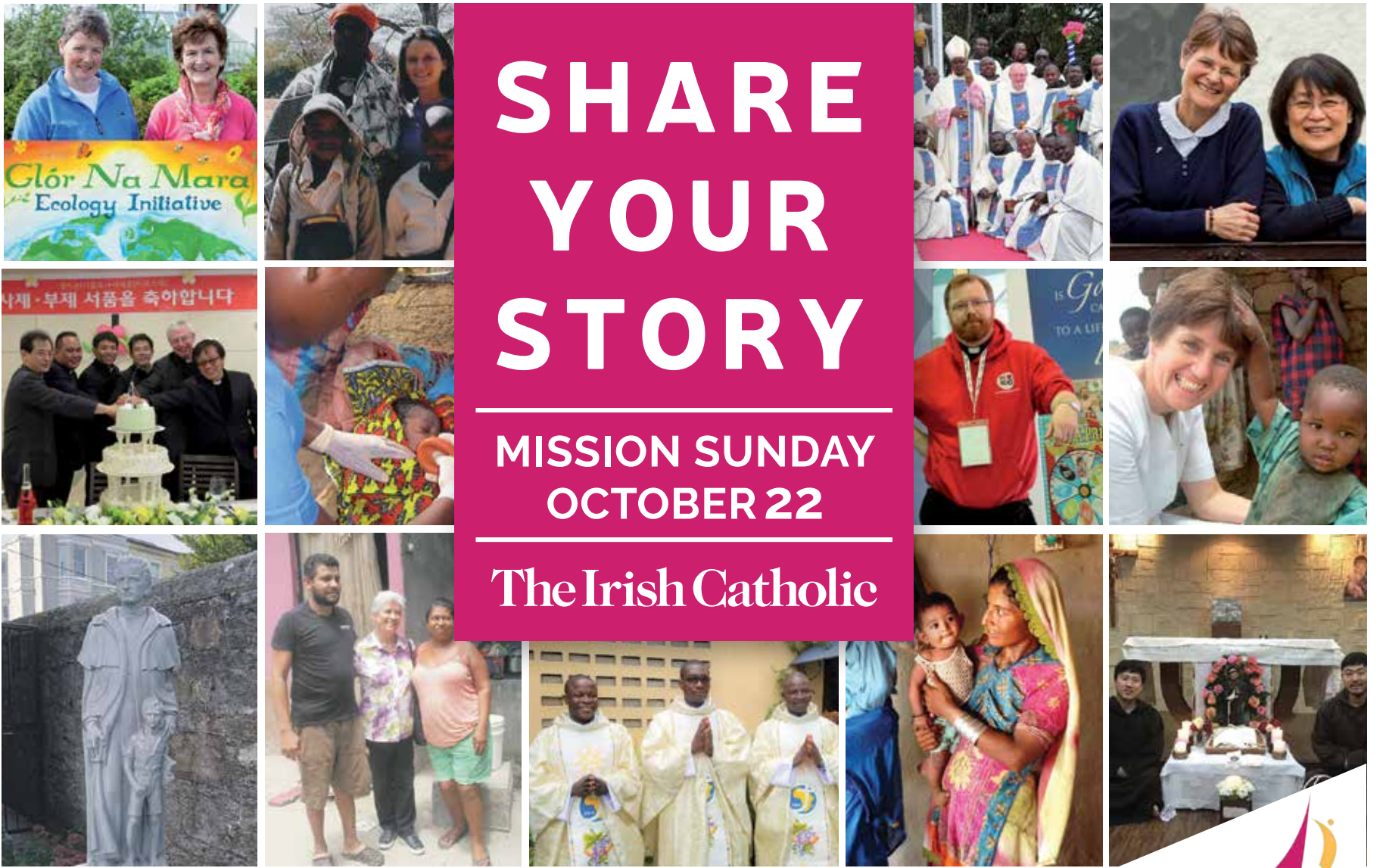


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Christian Blind Mission aims high as it reaches 20 years in Ireland



CBM Ireland's work is more important than ever, new CEO Dualta Roughneen tells
Jason Osborne

Stepping into a new role in any organisation is a tricky prospect, but it's one that's made easier when the organisation boasts an ethos you can fully get behind. Such is the position of Christian Blind Mission (CBM) Ireland's new CEO Dualta Roughneen, who, after almost 20 years' work with a number of NGOs, has set his sights on CBM's efforts throughout the world.

"I've really found it very interesting," Mr Roughneen tells *The Irish Catholic* of his first two months in the job.

One of the appeals for Mr Roughneen of CBM Ireland's mission is the way in which the organisation's ethos is very much bound to Christian values, "values that are very strong across Catholic Social Teaching (CST)," Mr Roughneen says.

"There's the idea of solidarity," he begins, continuing, "I've also got a personal affiliation to the value of subsidiarity. I've written on it previously in terms of the humanitarian action, when you talk about locally-led development, which is a very pertinent theme at the moment in discussions around overseas aid."

Charity and justice

"Those approaches resonate with me, but it's also the very basic principles of the common good that is strong CST. The idea of the inclusion of everybody in their own development as well, there's very strong themes of that in the work of Pope Francis. Also looking back to the writing of Pope Benedict and his encyclicals as well, *Caritas in Veritate* – very strong perspectives and a strong emphasis on the idea of charity and justice being very closely interlinked," Mr Roughneen says.

That appreciation for Christian values and CST found a natural home in CBM Ireland's work, as Mr Roughneen gives me a brief overview of the staggering variety of charitable efforts they make across the globe, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia. They provide concrete medical care to people with disability, but also emphasise the readjustment of attitudes in various national settings to see better inclusion of those with a disability.

"CBM works across 11 countries at the moment: in Bolivia, in



Latin America. Kenya, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, in Africa. Then Bangladesh, Philippines, Laos, in Asia as well, so it's a broad portfolio of work, but the work of CBM is very much focused on the inclusion of people with disabilities and supporting their basic needs and rights as well, so it's a very strong multi-faceted approach that CBM has taken," Mr Roughneen says.

Rights and needs

"We've worked closely with local organisations of people with disabilities, for example in Kenya and Zimbabwe, that had set themselves up as well and are in some ways fighting for their rights as well, but also looking to engage sometimes too in policy discussions and trying to get the rights and needs of people with disabilities on the agenda."

“Even with the best will, the main constraint is often financial”

Resources are often "very constrained" in the countries CBM is operating in, and yet at the same time, people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else and so must be advocated for through thick and thin. This is especially important in countries without strong social protection mechanisms, which happens to be exactly the case in the locations CBM has situated itself.

"When you're subsistence living and you've got a family member with a disability, to be able to provide for them becomes very, very difficult as well, and it's often seen as an extra burden," Mr Roughneen says.

"It's a challenge for any family, even here in Ireland, but the sup-

ports aren't there in some of the places we're working in, so we look to change attitudes sometimes in society towards disability, but then also working with government to change policy and legislation as well, and trying to see a redirection of some of the financial resources towards those services and improving those services, but it's a slow and difficult process.

"Even with the best will, the main constraint is often financial," he says.

In order to make the picture clearer, I ask Mr Roughneen about the conditions on the ground in one of the countries they're working in: Kenya. Weathering a punishing drought for years now, Mr Roughneen says that their work there is more important than ever.

Drought

"The drought is ongoing now for over two years. It's probably in many ways the longest-lasting period of lack or limited rainfall. There has been some rainfall but it's been in the form of downpours which means it causes floods and the water runs off very quickly rather than being slowly absorbed into the soil, so doesn't actually help the process sometimes when you need a much more even distribution of rainfall. It's affecting the country, it's affecting the areas in which we're working.

"The knock-on effect is families don't have access to food, can't make a living, have limited money," Mr Roughneen says, adding that the "priority becomes around accessing food and accessing water in the drought situation."

"Families having to sell off their asset base as well gradually over time – two years is a long time to be food-insecure. We've seen it, families looking at their house, their couple of animals as well and the animals are not just their livelihood

but nearly their mortgage in many ways, and then they have to make very tough decisions sometimes when they need to sell those last remaining animals just to survive for another couple of months, but then they're in a situation where they've nothing to fall back on after that too, so you can appreciate how difficult it can get."

“The many lives changed for the better by CBM Ireland's intervention surely attest to the need for its proper celebration”

In such life or death circumstances, it's little wonder other concerns become secondary. Still, CBM does what it can to ensure that people with a disability aren't left behind, and that their families are empowered to care for them, no matter the situation they might find themselves in nationally.

Asked what he might like to devote some focus to going forward, Mr Roughneen says that, perhaps surprisingly to some, mental health is an issue across their countries of operation that needs increasing attention.

Mental health

"One of the areas we're working on is mental health in Africa," Mr Roughneen says, qualifying that while there's an enormous emphasis on mental health in Ireland, there isn't so much in Africa.

"But then, there's probably a preconception or a bias there, if you think Africa and you think mental health, you go, 'Surely that's not the main concern given all the other challenges there', but it is a real issue as well and it's often exacerbated by



Julius Kamwara, 46, looks at his crop with CBM program manager Kevin Sudi in Tharaka North, Kenya, on May 24, 2022. Kamwara is blind in one eye since childhood and his family is a beneficiary of CBM's drought response in Meru and Tharaka-Nithi, Kenya. Photo: CBM/Hayduk. Below: CEO of CBM, Dualta Roughneen.



poverty, by family circumstances as well.

"It can be a disability that you're not necessarily born with but one that comes from life circumstances as well and we're definitely seeing that the challenges around poverty do push people into difficult situations and that does have an impact on mental health."

The issues that cause and exacerbate the mental health issues they're seeing, are "not always resolvable immediately", but a change in approach towards psychosocial issues is one of the things we're looking at as well," Mr Roughneen says, adding, "it's a difficult area".

Celebrating 20 years since its establishment in Ireland this year, CBM is planning on celebrating in style with an event in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Mr Roughneen says.

20th anniversary

"CBM Ireland is celebrating its 20-year anniversary since it was set up here in Ireland. We're having a small event in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland on the 26th of October at 4 o'clock. There'll be a small photo exhibition by a photojournalist, James Crombie, from when he went out to visit some of our programmes in Kenya last year, and then hopefully we'll have a few speakers there. CBM Global's Executive Director, David Bainbridge, will be over speaking. We have someone from Down Syndrome Ireland as well speaking, so we're looking at progress on disability inclusion from an international perspective but also an Irish perspective as well over the 20 years since CBM has been in Ireland."

The many lives changed for the better by CBM Ireland's intervention surely attest to the need for its proper celebration.

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Rory Fitzgerald

The View



Ireland's Catholic majority is quietly, nervously fading away

It is a great misconception to think that only minority groups can suffer discrimination. In fact, majority groups have often suffered discrimination by powerful minorities. In South Africa, the black majority suffered discrimination at the hands of a minority – as was the case in most colonised African or Asian nations. In Ireland too, the Catholic majority suffered discrimination by a ruling minority during Penal times.

This discrimination took place in the wake of a revolution of religious thought, known as the Protestant Reformation. It's often forgotten that much of the Irish elite embraced the reformation, including bishops and clergy. In 1536, the Irish parliament even formally accepted Henry VIII as head of the Church. However, most ordinary people held stubbornly to the old faith. Centuries of persecution and discrimination followed, as the price of their obstinate refusal to accept the new ideology.

Revolution

Recent decades have brought another revolution in thought and morality to the western world – a sort of secular reformation. This has been embraced by the Irish political class, but somewhat less so by the ordinary people. Once again, as half a millennium ago, those who adhere to the Catholic Faith find themselves particularly out of favour. Their culture and traditional beliefs are increasingly seen as anathema to modern, liberal Ireland.

Laws discriminating against the Catholic majority have once again been passed. In 2018, the Government passed a law forbidding Catholic schools from selecting pupils on the basis of their religion. Yet all other religious groups remain free to do this. Only the Catholic community is denied the right to freedom of association in education.

Yet the most insidious forms of discrimination happen behind closed



doors. For decades now, there have been few, if any, practising Catholics working in the Irish secular media. The media is arguably our most powerful cultural institution, since it shapes the minds of voters who then elect the Government and decide referenda. Culture lies upstream of politics, after all.

“Irish people are generally tolerant, but polls show that many risk being made dissidents for not updating their opinions to the correct ones”

Other key institutions which shape voters' minds are our educational establishments. Irish third level institutions are becoming cold houses for Catholics, Muslims, certain feminists and others. We recently saw Mary Kenny's invitation to speak at the University of Limerick rescinded, due to her unsanctioned opinions on transgender issues. Yet how can Ireland become a truly diverse society, if only one opinion is permitted on controversial issues?

How can Muslims feel comfortable articulating the Islamic perspective on sensitive issues in such a political environment, particularly if the Government's ill-defined

proposed laws restricting speech are passed. Are our politicians simply incapable of defending their ideas in the arena of open debate? Perhaps criminalising the speech of political opponents is simply easier.

Dissident

Such laws echo the treatment of dissident thought in Eastern Europe's communist bloc countries. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, the state sought to restrict the Church and to control religious education. Similarly, the Irish state now wants to mandate what Catholic schools teach as regards contentious moral issues.

Czech writer and dissident Václav Havel wrote how the Communist regimes forced citizens to “live within a lie”. In 1979, he wrote that, “we never decided to become dissidents. We have been transformed into them, without quite knowing how, sometimes we have ended up in prison without precisely knowing how. We simply went ahead and did certain things that we felt we ought to do, and that seemed to us decent to do, nothing more nor less”.

Irish people are generally tolerant, but polls show that many risk being made dissidents for not updating their opinions to the correct ones. There is a gulf opening up between the governed and those who govern on many

clergy and married priests and so forth.

In Ireland, Catholics remain nominally a majority, with 69% of the population ticking the Roman Catholic box in the 2022 census. Yet 66% of the Irish population voted to legalise abortion in 2018. Few self-identified Catholics practice their religion. Of these, an even smaller minority actually believe in Catholic teachings on the hot button issues. Indeed, few seem to know what those Catholic teachings are.

Wholesale

As the Synodal process progresses, wholesale changes of historic teachings are increasingly mooted, to the delight of some, and the dismay of others. Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg is president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the EU, and Relator General of the Synod of Bishops. In a 2022 interview with the German news agency KNA, he expressed the view that contentious Church teachings could change, saying “we cannot give the answers of the past to the questions of tomorrow” and that “the change in civilisation we are witnessing today is the greatest change since the invention of the wheel... The Church has always moved with the times and has always adapted... Today we must be faster”. Yet other Church leaders say core teachings simply cannot be changed. Whatever the theological niceties of such issues, there is certainly confusion and division within the Church at all levels.

What does this mean for a shrinking Catholic community facing a world that is increasingly unfriendly to it? Can a house divided against itself stand? Amidst a wider global revolution – a second reformation – in thought, technology and morality, the greater question is now where the Church stands on this

revolution. That was once crystal clear, but it no longer is.

“Perhaps this future place of minority Catholic communities in Ireland is to become something analogous to the Amish in the United States, who live a simpler, more old-fashioned way of life”

The bishops' crozier symbolises their role as shepherds. They must peer through the theological mists, and tell their flock whether the strange form approaching in the gloaming is a helpful sheepdog, or a deadly wolf. Perhaps the most interesting answer would be ‘both’ – perhaps some current insights can help the Church, while other aspects of the modern world may present obstacles.

Or perhaps a hyper-technological world that changes by the minute is fundamentally incomprehensible to a 2,000-year-old institution which thinks in centuries. Perhaps this is why the Church now seems more a confused observer, rather than an active participant in world events.

Perhaps this future place of minority Catholic communities in Ireland is to become something analogous to the Amish in the United States, who live a simpler, more old-fashioned way of life. Their eccentric contrast to the hectic, modern world can seem a balm to some, and foolish to others. Yet they live decidedly apart from modernity.

By contrast, Catholic leaders say they want the Church to stay engaged with the modern world, and up to speed with it. They don't appear to have considered that the modern world might not want the Church to be part of it at all. No matter how many of its teachings are updated.

“The change in civilisation we are witnessing today is the greatest change since the invention of the wheel”

In England and Wales, Christians are now a minority group, with the 2021 Census showing that just 46.2% of people identify as Christians. This was down from 59.3% of the population in the 2011 census, a remarkable 13-percentage point fall in ten years. In the UK, however, there is little public or official hostility to Christianity. It is regarded as just another eccentric hobby. It probably helps that the mild-mannered Church of England is also more aligned with modern ideas, in terms of having women

Students gather to celebrate new school year

Mass was celebrated in St Patrick's College Drumcondra, Dublin, to mark the opening of the academic year 2023-24. The Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Dermot Farrell and several schools and education representatives attended.



Students Larusa Fox, Molly Dillon and Andrea Collins from Colaiste Mhuire in Cabra.



Students from St Mary's Holy Faith, Glasnevin, sing at the Mass. Photos: John Mc Elroy.



Students from St Paul's College Raheny at the Mass last week to mark the opening of the academic year.



Archbishop Farrell gives the final blessing at the end of the Mass.

THE SYNODAL TIMES

OCTOBER
2023 ISSUE

For the October issue of The Synodal Times, we ask a wide range of Catholics what they want to see from the upcoming Synod of Bishops meeting. We also break down just exactly who will be in attendance at this all-important event in Rome.

The issue will also feature the big interview with Dr Myriam Wijlens on how 'Synodality also means accountability'. And finally, Professor Serena Noceti will enlighten readers on the topic of laypeople becoming members of a synodal Church.



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Faithful few: Report reveals young Poles abandoning the Church



A new report has revealed a stark generational divide when it comes to Catholicism in Poland today, writes **Jason Osborne**

A press conference in the Polish capital of Warsaw last week unveiled the *Church in Poland 2023* report, which paints a troubling picture for the nation's Catholics. The most prominent finding was a widening gulf between the country's young and old when it comes to religious attitudes, revealing that a famously Catholic people are perhaps not as immune to the forces of secularisation as previously believed.

A summary of the report prepared by the Polish Catholic news agency, *KAI*, thought the disparity wide enough to describe the situation as “two worlds” coming into being in the country: that of Poles under 40 and those over 50, with Poles in their 40s forming something of an “in-between”.

Divided in half

What characterises the younger generation is a “weakening of faith,” *KAI*'s summary of the report said, with the agency's president Marcin Przeworski saying: “We have a big difference when it comes to religious practices. The older generation is faithful to them. Meanwhile, the younger generation is divided almost in half: Those who believe and those who distance themselves from the Church.”

While a weakening of faith is noted among the young, for the older generation, so Poles over 50, there are still high rates of identification with the Church and declarations of faith in God (88%). Despite such high numbers for this societal category, it's clear based on other trends that religious engagement in Poland is only going one way at the moment.

The report revealed that over the last 20 years, the number of people declaring themselves regular practitioners of the Faith has decreased by a third. At the same time, as



The historic centre of Kraków with the Mariacki (St Mary's) Basilica is seen in an undated photo. Photo: OSV News/Pawel Gasior, courtesy St Mary's Basilica

this decline was taking place, Mass attendance fell, too. According to Poland's Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK), the proportion of Poles attending Sunday Mass has fallen from 47% at the start of the millennium to 28% today.

KAI in its summary of the report viewed the decline of the Church in Poland as so serious that “one can even speak of a disruption of the intergenerational transmission of faith, which until now has been one of the hallmarks of Polish identity”.

This “weakening of faith” isn't without its effects, with the report outlining some of the other trends observed in recent decades that speak to the rapidly fading faith landscape among Poland's youths. Foremost among these, as in Ireland, is a large fall in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Vocations

“One of the effects of the weakening religiosity of young people, as well as the pressure of trends unfavourable to the Church, is a decline in priestly and religious vocations – over the last 20 years, the number of stu-

dents in theological seminaries has decreased threefold. In 2000, 6,800 were trained in theological seminaries (diocesan and religious)...and at the beginning of 2023 – 1,900,” the report summary reads.

“On the Church's charitable activity, the Catholic Church is second only to the state in terms of the help it provides those in need”

As seen elsewhere in the western world, the report notes the “distancing” of the “Polish intelligentsia” from the Church – especially in larger cities – which is described as “disturbing”. The Church's image as an authoritative body is weakening, with the report summary saying that in the last decade public trust in the Church has fallen from 65% to 48%.

The report summary describes the Church's difficulties as constituting “an excellent breeding ground for accelerating secularisation trends”. What sociologists once

described as a “creeping secularisation,” it says, might now be more accurately described as “galloping”.

Optimism

Despite all of these concerns and downward trends, many of which have been observed in Ireland, the report outlines a number of reasons for optimism, too. Foremost among these are the “apostolic potential” of the Church in Poland, the Church's extensive work with the needy – especially its work with Ukrainian refugees in recent years – the Church in Poland's missionary outreach to every corner of the world and its contributions to the wider culture in Poland.

On its apostolic potential, the report notes that while the number of seminarians coming forward is plummeting, the total number of priests in Poland is currently at its highest ever level – 34,700 priests – a figure that includes members of religious orders and clergy posted abroad – serve 10,352 parishes in 45 dioceses. At the same time, the number of new communities in the Church has reportedly doubled over

the last 25 years while new evangelisation initiatives have also surged.

The report said that almost 27,000 Poles – 16,100 female and 10,700 male – are members of institutes of consecrated life, and that while the number of people in consecrated life in Poland has fallen by a quarter in 25 years, the number of monastic works has increased eightfold.

“More than once I've turned to my wife to comment in astonishment at being the only man – other than the priest and my six-month-old son – in the church”

On the Church's charitable activity, the Catholic Church is second only to the state in terms of the help it provides those in need. It does so primarily through Caritas Polska, but also extensively at parish level. For example, the report summary



Archbishop Marek Jedraszewski of Krakow, Poland, speaks to Polish pilgrims during World Youth Day Parque de Jogos 1 de Maio in Lisbon, Portugal, August 2, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Bob Roller



Young women sit and chat in Poland's capital, Warsaw. Photo: OSV News/icsilviu, Pixabay

indicates that every single parish in Poland was in some way involved in helping Ukrainians in the wake of Russia's ongoing attacks against the country. Meanwhile, it estimates that Caritas has helped roughly two million Ukrainian refugees.

Finally, the report summary highlights the Church's contribution to Polish culture in a range of areas – from the care of monuments and landmarks, to the provision of education at a number of levels – as strong marks in the Church's favour in Poland.

Having lived in Poland for just over two years, the report's findings gel with my own observations regarding the state of the Catholic Faith in that country.

Catholic identity

Moving in Catholic circles in Ireland and as I travel, people often remark to me in voices of longing how remarkably well Poland is doing to have maintained its Catholic identity amid wider faith breakdown in Europe. I agree – with important qualifications. To have a country at the heart of Europe that still unashamedly wears Catholicism on its sleeve at a diplomatic level is an incredible thing – many of the country's most important politicians are practicing Catholics and attend most of the Church's serious events in a show of support, such as the recent beatification of the Ulma family.

That said, the experience on the ground is somewhat more humbling. Sunday masses and those on holy days are busy without fail – indeed,

busier than they are anywhere else in Europe. However, near every daily Mass I attend reveals quite a different picture. Whereas the days of obligation see pews packed out with people of every age, shape and size, the quiet but essential business of daily Mass-going seems to be the sole domain of elderly women and few others. More than once I've turned to my wife to comment in astonishment at being the only man – other than the priest and my six-month-old son – in the Church, alongside a number of women many years my senior.

Similarly, conversations with friends and family in Poland reveal that children and younger siblings who have been raised practising Catholics find themselves increasingly isolated on the faith front, with the Church playing a minimal role in the lives of their peers.

Of course, my own experiences can only ever be anecdotal, but suffice it to say, I was anything but shocked by the "revelations" the *Church in Poland 2023* report divulged. It's an important reminder that while a Catholic image can be good and nice, the roots must go deeper if the Church is to last.

As the report lays out, the Church in Poland has many things in its favour, and it would be well advised to focus on nurturing those things and worrying itself less about numbers. Unfortunately, the facts of the matter seem to be that the numbers game is a losing one for Catholics in Europe at the moment – Poland included.

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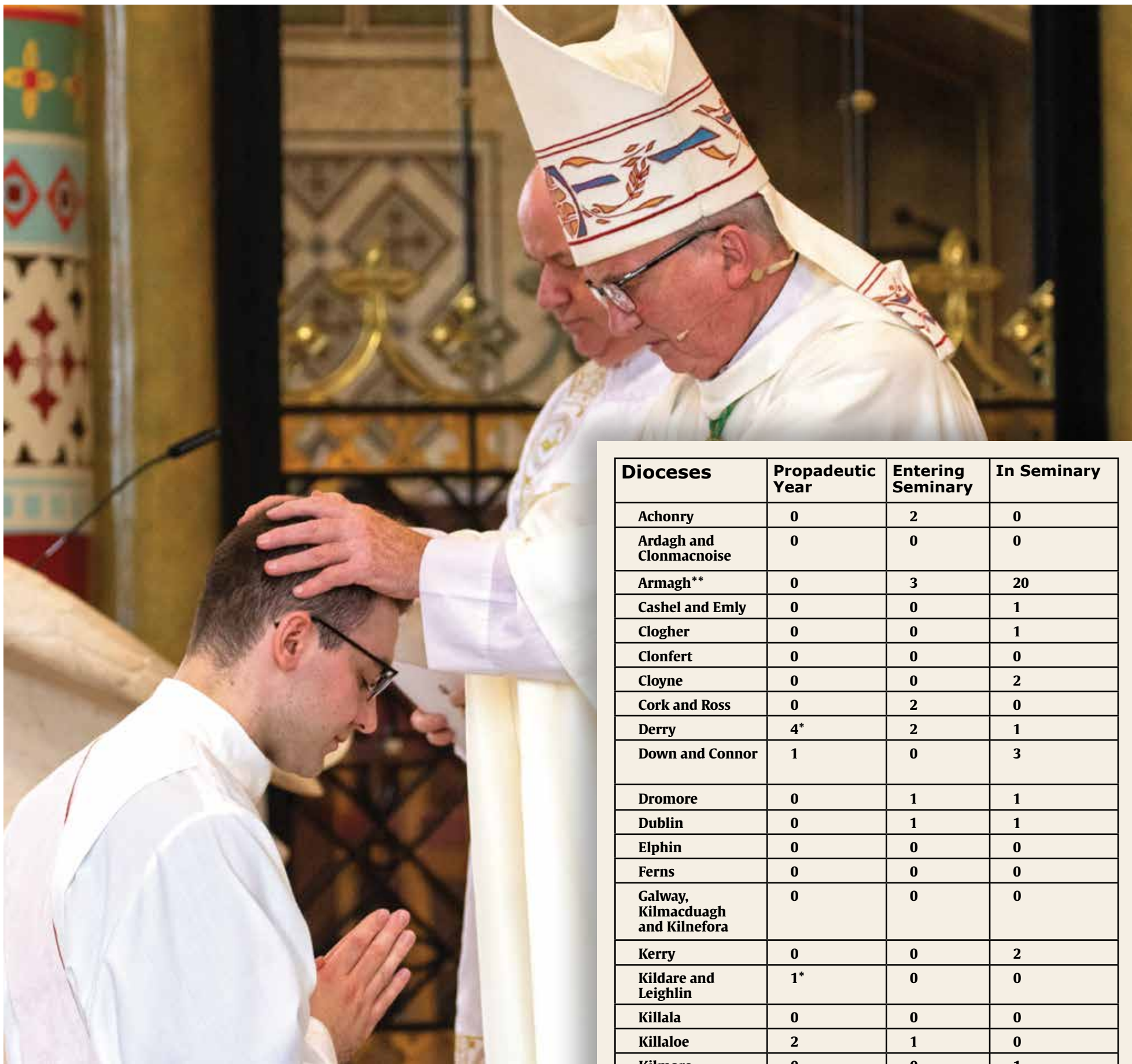
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15 students begin seminary studies



Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

Some 15 students began formal seminary studies for the priesthood for Ireland's 26 diocese in September, almost double the previous year.

Just nine students entered seminary studies in 2022, while just six entered in 2021.

A further 12 men will also begin a preparatory programme – known as a propadeutic year – with the hope of entering seminary proper next year, figures compiled by *The Irish Catholic* reveal.

A total of 27 seminarians will be resident in St Patrick's College Maynooth – 25 of whom are studying for Irish dioceses. This is up from 23 last year.

As of the end of September, there will be 39 men in seminary formation for Irish dioceses.

Ten dioceses have a new candidate entering seminary, a significant increase from four in 2022. Six dioceses have men participating in the propadeutic year.

This year, seven dioceses have no new candidate for either seminary or the preparatory year, while seven dioceses have no candidate at any stage of formation, down from 10 in 2022.

Seminarians are spread across Maynooth and the Beda College in Rome while those participating in the preparatory year are mostly attending the Royal English College in Valladolid in Spain or else in Salamanca.

Dioceses	Propadeutic Year	Entering Seminary	In Seminary
Achonry	0	2	0
Ardagh and Clonmacnoise	0	0	0
Armagh**	0	3	20
Cashel and Emlly	0	0	1
Clogher	0	0	1
Clonfert	0	0	0
Cloyne	0	0	2
Cork and Ross	0	2	0
Derry	4*	2	1
Down and Connor	1	0	3
Dromore	0	1	1
Dublin	0	1	1
Elphin	0	0	0
Ferns	0	0	0
Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilnefora	0	0	0
Kerry	0	0	2
Kildare and Leighlin	1*	0	0
Killala	0	0	0
Killaloe	2	1	0
Kilmore	0	0	1
Limerick	0	0	1
Meath	1	1	2
Ossory	0	0	0
Raphoe	3*	1	1
Tuam	0	1	1
Waterford and Lismore	0	0	1
Total	12	15	39

* Figures are provisional as Salamanca's term begins in January.

**Figures include seminarians at Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Dundalk, Co. Louth.

Raphoe celebrates ordination of new deacon

Ruadhán Jones

The north-western diocese of Raphoe celebrated a new ordination to the diaconate, with Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ ordaining Rev. Anthony Hartnett (28) on Sunday, September 24.

Deacon Hartnett's ordination took place in the Church of Mary Immaculate in Stranorlar in the presence of family and friends, along with Bishop-emeritus of Raphoe Philip Boyce OCD.

After Mass, the congregation joined the new deacon in the parish centre for refreshments and to offer their support as he sets out on the final leg of his journey to the priesthood.



Bishop Emeritus of Raphoe Philip Boyce OCD and Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ.



Rev. Hartnett and Permanent Deacon Gregory McGuigan QC from the Diocese of Down and Connor.



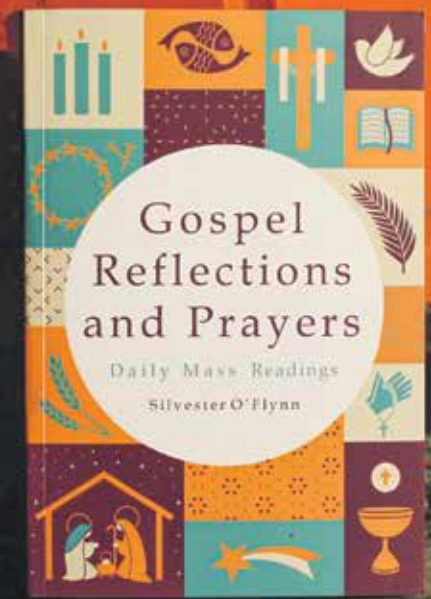
Rev. Hartnett is pictured with his family, including mother Yvonne and father John, and siblings Imelda, Pio and Una.



Rev. Anthony pictured with the Servant Sisters from the Home of the Mother community based in Crossroads, Killygordon. Pictured (from left) are Sr Ruby Molayal HM, Sr Elena Braghin HM, Rev Anthony Hartnett, Sr Mary Donovan HM and Sr Johanna Rower HM.



Rev. Anthony Hartnett pictured in between Bishop Emeritus Philip Boyce OCD and Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, along with the 28 priests and deacons who provided a powerful witness of fraternal support for the young deacon on September 24. Photos: Róisín O'Callaghan.



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The Christian calling toward animals big and small



Chai Brady discusses wild animals, obedient mice, and what it means to be a 'steward of creation'

Ideals regarding the treatment of animals can be controversial particularly when there are so many more vegan and vegetarian Christians today who call for an increased, some would say radical, respect for life in all its forms.

But what is the Church's teaching regarding the treatment of animals, how are they spoken about in the Bible, the catechism and by the saints?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly states that it is "legitimate to use animals for food and clothing", but is this a scenario that is necessary, needed today in the western world when there are many alternatives?

It also states that the seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. "Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation."

This would obviously put limits on humanity's interaction with the animal world, particularly when it comes to cruelty towards animals, which is also clearly stated in the catechism: "Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential



A chihuahua is pictured beside the Grand Canal in Dublin.

care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St Francis of Assisi or St Philip Neri treated animals."

It continues: "It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. It is likewise unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons."

Pet blessing

This week, on October 4, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi the Church's patron saint for animals and the environment was celebrated, and traditionally household pets and other animals receive a blessing across the world.

Fr Billy Hoyne OFM, who is based in the Franciscan friary in Killarney, Co. Kerry, told *The Irish Catholic* he hopes that anyone who regards animals as unimportant, or is even cruel to them, would "eventually undergo a conversion, which Pope Francis asks us all to do in *Laudato Si'*".

"He tells us that this is part of our Christian vocation, to undergo an ecological conversion to care for the creatures of this world, so that would be the prayer that I would have

“At Christmas time a dog is bought as a pet for a child of the family, and at the end of the holidays they discover they are not in a position to look after the pet. So a lot of dogs then end up in the dogs home”

for people like that who may be involved in situations similar," Fr Billy said.

The Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin a few years ago put out a guide to the 'Blessing of Family Pets' and how to do it on or around the feast day, saying: "In their care of the family pet, both adults and children are, in a very real way, practicing for a wider care for and awareness of all God's creation."

Within the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis consistently called for a greater respect for the environment and for the resources subsequent generations have been bequeathed. The Pope established September 1 as an annual 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation', with the 'Season of Creation' being marked throughout the Christian world from September 1 until St Francis' feast day on October 4.

This year's theme was 'Let Justice and Peace Flow' taking inspiration from the Prophet

Amos who declares: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5: 24).

Fr Billy called on people to look at the celebration as an opportunity to support initiatives to help animals, saying: "I would look at it then from a practical point of view, what can I do? What can we do? And there are a couple outstanding things, at least for me, one would be the local donkey shelter, we can support the good work that's been done there, by the good people who care for these donkeys that are stray".

He said: "You'd also have the dog's pound. At Christmas time a dog is bought as a pet for a child of the family, and at the end of the holidays they discover they are not in a position to look after the pet. So a lot of dogs then end up in the dogs home and it would be a very good, practical thing for us to do to give a dog a loving home.

"I would also say I am

aware that hens, when they lay their eggs under free range conditions are much happier than hens which are confined indoors. And say the other animal I would have in mind obviously are the ones that work on the land, say for example horses, hounds, cows, they would be included in the care we should extend as people who are Christians – if we are Christians – we are bringing the whole of creation back to the loving Creator who put them into this world," the friar said.

Meat

In the summer of 2022, in a letter to the EU Youth Conference in Prague, the Pope called on them to consider eating less meat to counter environmental decline, saying: "There is an urgent need to reduce the consumption not only of fossil fuels but also of so many superfluous things. In certain areas of the world, too, it would be appropriate to consume less meat:

this too can help save the environment."

Messages like these, when considered economically in places like Ireland which export huge amounts of beef, won't always be met with applause, there is a lot of money at play and the catechism states animals may legitimately be used for food.

Industry pressure is certainly another factor, with a social media post by the Environmental Protection Agency which urged people to cut back on red meat consumption being deleted in August following complaints from the Irish Farmers' Association

The post, on 'X' (formerly Twitter) urged consumers to "try veggie recipes" and "reduce your red meat consumption slowly: veggie lunches, Meat Free Mondays etc". Catholics would of course be familiar with abstinence from meat on Fridays because of the sacrifice Christ made of his flesh on Good Friday – this of course has changed as the Faithful are now offered other options of fulfilling Friday penance.

However, at a time when meat is now being grown in a lab, due to the use of animal stem cells – a scientific method that has continued to gain ground in the last decade and is becoming increasingly easy to do – how long will it still be necessary to



Aaliyah Dialuce (9) poses with her cat during the blessing of farm animals and pets outside St Peter's Square in 2014.

have huge farms with thousands of animals being bred for slaughter? The amount of land and resources to sustain this method of farming is both costly and takes a larger toll on the environment compared to other food production.

“There’s a huge amount there for us to learn when we just consider the way St Francis eventually arrived at this tremendous insight into the world”

For Fr Billy, regarding reducing meat consumption, he said that “any behaviour which reduces the carbon print of all humanity is to be welcomed”.

In a study published in the journal *The Lancet* in 2022 entitled ‘Ethical and economic implications of the adoption of novel plant-based beef substitutes in the USA: a general equilibrium modelling study’, it states that beef production, while providing an important source of pro-

tein and other nutrients, their results “suggest the adoption of plant-based beef alternatives would reduce the carbon footprint of US food production, which is an ethically important outcome”.

The final instalment of the 6th assessment report by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was released in March of this year by the world’s leading climate scientists, created a comprehensive review of global knowledge regarding future impacts and necessary actions regarding the climate.

The report includes three other shorter IPCC reports published since 2018.

The synthesis report included a recap of their main findings over the years which includes warnings that the world is approaching irreversible levels of global heating with inevitable catastrophic impacts and that drastic actions are needed to avoid disaster.

But what are Christians called to do in the maelstrom of information around climate change, impacts on the environment and the ethical treatment of animals?

Speaking of St Francis, Fr Billy said: “St Francis was a person who had this great

sense of fraternity, of brotherhood, sisterhood, with all creation – all the creatures – and for that reason then certainly I would try to live that way, because it helps us regain a sense of union and unity in the world, between ourselves as human beings, and the animals, ourselves and nature.

“There’s a huge amount there for us to learn when we just consider the way St Francis eventually arrived at this tremendous insight into the world,” he added.

Mercy

A Benedictine scholar Dom Ambrose Agius, who was later appointed apostolic delegate to the Philippines by Pope Pius X in 1904, wrote: “The Bible... tells us that cruelty to animals is wicked and that it is opposed to God’s will and intention... The duty of all Christians (is) to emulate God’s attributes, especially that of mercy, in regard to animals. To be kind to animals is to emulate the loving kindness of God.

He also said: “If our ambition is to be able to say with St Paul, ‘I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me’ (Gal. 2: 20), consideration for animals will be one sign of the indwelling Christ.”

Saints and beasts

In the book *Beasts and Saints* by Helen Waddell, published in 1934, the scholar outlines several tales translated from Greek to Latin in the 5th and 6th Centuries that express the relationships between animals and saints.

St Isaac the Syrian (613-700) was a scholarly monastic who was at one time Bishop of Nineveh. He wrote: “What is a merciful heart? It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals... and for all that exists. By the recollection of them the eyes of a merciful person pour forth tears in abundance. By the strong and vehement mercy that grips such a person’s heart, and by such great compassion, the heart is humbled and one cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in any in creation.”

Another saint, St Gerasimus, who lived during the 5th Century, was an abbot who lived near the Jordan river. He is said to have removed a thorn from the paw of a lion he had come across which was in extreme pain. It is said that the lion proceeded to follow the saint everywhere. The lion was tasked with defending a donkey that fetched water, but was accused

of eating the donkey after it was stolen. It is said that years later the lion found the donkey and returned him to the monastery. When St Gerasimus died, the lion searched everywhere for him, roaring his sorrow. Finally, the new abbot took him to where Gerasimus had been buried and explained that he had died. The lion lay down on the grave, beat his head on the earth and died.

St Cuthbert, a well-known English saint who became Prior of Lindisfarne on the coast of Northumberland is said to have spent most nights standing in the sea, praying and chanting. One night a fellow monk followed him and described how two sea otters followed St Cuthbert back to the shore and would rub their fur on his feet to dry them. He retired after a decade to the Inner Farne island and, living as a hermit, sang and played a stringed lute-type instrument to the seals, who would come up on the rocks to listen to him. He died in 687 AD and is credited with establishing the first animal welfare rule in England. He forbade the killing and eating of the many Eider ducks who lived close to his island hermitage.

More familiar to Irish people is St Kevin of Glendalough

in Wicklow who lived as a hermit and is known for his affinity with animals. One of the most famous stories associated with him is that of a blackbird that landed on his hand – which was outstretched in prayer – and laid its eggs. It is said St Kevin waited until all the eggs had hatched and the fledgelings had flown before he retracted his hand. Poet Seamus Heaney later wrote a poem about the story entitled *St Kevin and the Blackbird*.

One other saint whose life mirrors that of Francis in many ways is St Martin de Porres (1579-1639) who lived in Peru. The son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed slave of African and native Peruvian origin, he served as a lay brother in the Dominican order of friars, doing menial work. Although he is famed for his care of the sick and dying, his intense devotion and his associated healing miracles, he was known to avoid eating meat and to care for all stray animals. When the monastery was plagued by mice, who were about to be exterminated, Martin asked them to leave, promising that he would feed them at the kitchen door every night. The mice left. Pope John XXIII canonised him in 1962.

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Pooches and rabbits blessed in spirit of St Francis



Fr O'Connor greeting people and the animals after the blessing last Sunday. Photos: John McElroy.

Ruadhán Jones

A blessing of pets ceremony was held in the Church of St Laurence O'Toole, Kilmacud, Dublin, on Sunday, October 1, ahead of the feast of St Francis of Assisi. Fr Donie O'Connor offered the blessing to the dozens of pets, including a variety of dog breeds and even a rabbit.



Jane and Roisin McCormack wait to get Twister blessed on Sunday, October 1.



A young girl holds on tight to her dog at the blessing.



JG Mascolo brings his rabbit, Strawberry, to the blessing



Anne Sheehy is pictured with Mossy at the blessing.



Ailbhe Coughlan (8) comes to get her beloved dog Casper blessed.



Pat Harley Stead with her dog, Bob, at the blessing on Sunday.



Rev. Kevin Conroy from St Brigid's and All Saints Church of Ireland with his dog, Buddy, at the blessing last Sunday.



Fr O'Connor blessing the animals last Sunday.



Fr Donie O' Connor, who performed the blessing of pets, greets Jacinta and Liam Ryan with Gemma Hayden and dogs, Tallulah and Toby.



Joanna, Etain, Eimear and Ferdia Colfer with their dog Con.

Cork parishioners make trip to Knock

Ruadhán Jones

Parishioners from Grenagh and Courtbrack, Co. Cork, as well as neighbouring parishes, braved the elements to make pilgrimage to Knock International Marian Shrine on Saturday, September 23.



Christina O'Keeffe is pictured with her sister Joan outside Knock basilica.



Noreen O'Connor, Tina Murphy, Margaret Barry, Catherine Vaughan, Ann Curtin and Eleanor O'Neill are pictured before Knock Shrine's mosaic.



Catherine O'Callaghan, Bertha Walsh and Noreen Keneally



Rachel Corcoran is pictured in front of the mosaic depicting the apparition of Our Lady.



Julia Buckley and Margaret Barry take in the sights of Ireland's Marian shrine.



Teresa Keating and her sister Frances (front) are pictured with Mary Jones before Mass.



Denise Barry is pictured with her mother Mary Forde.



Agnes Collins, Fr Micheál O'Loinsigh PP Grenagh and Courtbrack and Mary O'Mahony enjoy the pilgrimage.

Out&About

Catholics caring for creation



KERRY: On Tuesday, September 12, the parish of Our Lady and St Brendan, Tralee launched their 30/30 Vision Project in the grounds of the church, in which they hope to rewild 30% of their parish lands over the course of seven years. They are pictured with Fr Padraig Walsh PP. Photo: John Cleary.



MAYO: Members of the Apostolic Work are pictured at the tree planting in Knock Shrine.



MAYO: The Elphin Diocese's members organising group for the branch of the Apostolic Work are pictured in Knock.

IN SHORT

Introduction to the Bible at Kells

Fr John Byrne PP's popular Scripture course, delivered via Kells parish webcam, is set to return this October.

He will introduce the Gospel of St John on Mondays at 12 noon, in sessions last approximately 25 minutes.

You can access the talks on www.kellsparish.ie or contact Fr Byrne by email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com.

'Pray for success of COP28'

Laudato Si' officer with Trócaire Jane Mellet has called for parishioners in Ireland to pray for the upcoming UN talks on climate change at COP28, which takes place next

month.

"I encourage all to support the online campaign, organised by the Laudato Si' Movement, to #PrayForCOP28, so that world leaders will make the urgent changes needed to safeguard our common home," she said in a statement.

Ms Mellet also encouraged parishioners to express their concerns about climate change to their local politicians.

In addition to prayer, "Pope Francis also encourages us never to underestimate the power of small actions in our daily lives at home, school and in our parishes, to try to live more sustainably from recycling to tree planting," Ms Mellet said.

"Each of us can resolve to do one small thing."

Catenian Association in Cork holds 600th meeting

The Catenian Association in Cork will hold its 600th Meeting in the Clayton Hotel, Cork City, on October 14.

The Catenians are a network of Catholic men who meet regularly to enjoy each other's company and to help and support each other and their families throughout the world.

Founded in Manchester in 1908, Catenians can now be found in many countries and today are active throughout Britain, Ireland, Australia, Malta, India, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, South Africa and the Holy Land.

The Dublin Circle was formed in 1968 and the Cork Circle was started in April 1970.

The meeting will be followed by a gala dinner which will be attended by the Deputy

Lord Mayor of Cork City, by Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin and by the Great Britain National President Bro. Mark Conroy and his wife Maxine.

Catenian brothers from Dublin and across Britain will be descending on Cork to help the local brothers celebrate this very significant event.

The Cork Circle is currently running a major membership recruitment drive which is presently under way in Cork City and suburbs.

The Cork Circle meets on the first Thursday of each month at 11.30am in the SMA Parish Hall, Wilton, usually followed by lunch in the Wilton Pub and Restaurant.

Further information on the Catenians can be accessed on www.thecatenians.com or by contacting corkcatenians@gmail.com



MAYO: Margaret Haughey and Mary Lee are pictured in Knock Shrine's basilica with an altar cloth embroidered by the Cavan branch of Apostolic work.



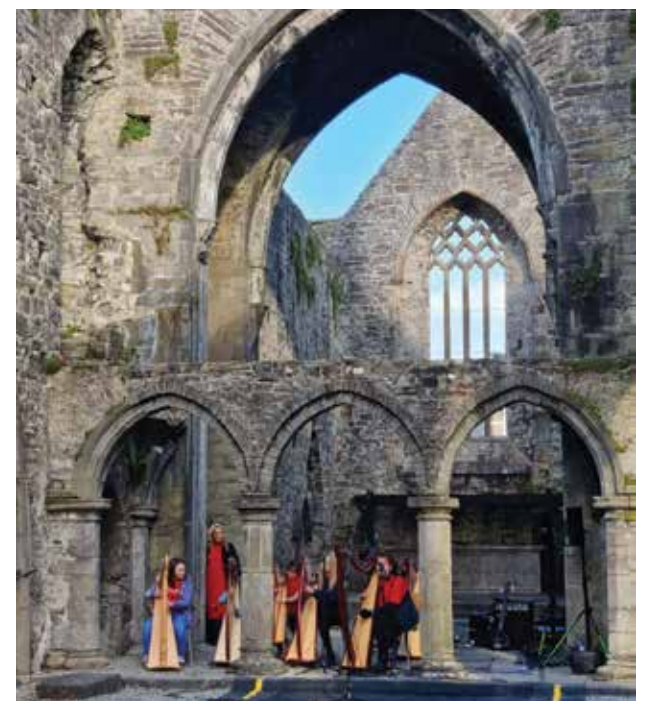
MAYO: Mary O'Connor is pictured with her daughters from Longford who attended the tree planting in Knock on September 16 to mark 100 years of the Apostolic Work in Elphin Diocese.



DOWN: Music legend Dana Rosemary Scallon takes part in a pilgrimage along St Patrick's Way, led by Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly.



CLARE: Pictured during the launch of a new vocations drive at St Flannan's College, Ennis is the Diocese of Killaloe's Vocations Director Fr Iggy McCormack and Mark Nestor of Ennis, who entered the National seminary of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, in September 2023. Photo: Eamon Ward.



SLIGO: Music Generation Sligo perform at Sligo Abbey during Culture Night on September 22.



MAYO: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey greets members of the Holy Cross Family Missionaries who attended the global conference in Knock. Bishop Dempsey celebrated Mass for the missionaries on September 16.



CORK: Carmel Drinan and Michael Galvin were presented with their Benemerenti Papal Medals by Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin on Sunday, September 17. Also pictured are Fr John Collins AP, Fr Jack Twomey OFM Cap. Chaplain to the Bons Secours Hospital and Fr Alan O'Leary Co-PP.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DERRY: The newly commissioned missionaries for Net Ministry Ireland are pictured after their commissioning Mass in Galliaugh Church, Derry.



DUBLIN: Pictured are just some of the more than 200 cyclists who took part in the Peter McVerry Trust's annual cycle on Saturday, September 16, which started and finished in Leopardstown.



CLARE: Mary Crotty and Sarah O'Dea each serving 50 years each in the St Senan's Branch of the Kilrush St Vincent de Paul, are pictured with Mrs Teresa Ryan SVP Regional President, Mr Denis Carty Area President and Bishop Fintan Monahan.



DUBLIN: To mark Trócaire's 50th anniversary, leading climate and civil society space experts from across the globe attend Trócaire's international conference 'Local Power, Global Justice'. Pictured are leading international environmental experts Tasneem Essop, Executive Director of Climate Action Network International, Dr Sinead Walsh, Climate Director Irish Aid, Caoimhe de Barra, CEO of Trócaire, Ineza Umuhoza Grace, Founder and CEO of the Green Protector, Julius Ng'oma, National Coordinator for Civil Society Network on Climate Change (CISONECC) in Malawi. Photo: Mark Stedman.

ANTRIM

Beginning experience is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on two Saturdays, October 28 and November 25. Booking essential. Contact Marie at belfastbe@yahoo.com.

BELFAST

The 20th annual rosary procession takes place Sunday, October 8, at 2.30pm. Processing from St John's parish to St Peter's Cathedral.

CAVAN

Cavan Town Mens Shed meet at rear of Cana House, Farnham St. Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am-1pm. New members always welcome.

CORK

New Youth 2000 prayer group (18-35) meets in St Patrick's Church, Fermoy, on the second and fourth Friday of each month at 8pm.

Vocations weekend October 28-29 for the Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of Montmartre, Order of St Benedict. Takes place in St Benedict's Priory, Cobh. Contact cobhtyburnconvent@gmail.com.

DONEGAL

Rosary on the coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3pm.

DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral has restarted after the summer break and takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10:30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11:15am.

DUBLIN

Dublin Bay North young group to host an 11-week Alpha programme to explore the Christian faith every Thursday from 7.30-9pm in St Anthony's House behind St Anthony's Church. Contact parishyouthgroup@gmail.com for more information.

Free day long conference for 18-35 year-olds titled

'Catholics in a Woke World' takes place on Saturday, October 7 from 10am-4.30pm in the Iona Institute. To book, contact info@ionainstitute.ie.

Pure in Heart to host open day for parents, teachers, chaplains and priests on the charity's mission and RSE on October 15 from 2-6pm in 23 Merrion Sq. Rsvp by October 13 to info@pureinheart.ie

FERMANAGH

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

GALWAY

Monthly first Saturday Fatima devotions led by Eddie Stones and team in Emmanuel House Clonfert, October 7 at 11am with talks, adoration, Confession, music, Mass and healing service. Please bring a packed lunch.

KILDARE

A Medjugorje Prayer Group meets every Monday at 7pm for 40 minutes in the Dominican Oratory, Newbridge.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LIMERICK

Young adult study group takes place every second Sunday 6.30-8.30 in St Saviours Dominicans parish hall. Meetings will focus on the human person and our call to love, according to the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas and St John Paul II.

LOUTH

'Does God exist? Are you happy?' Talks on faith for young and adults by the Neocatechumenal Way take place in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda; Mondays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, come and listen!

MAYO

Taize Music in Candlelight: a relaxing time of peace and silent prayer in candlelight with the music of Taize on Friday, October 6 from 8-9pm, followed by tea and coffee, at "Bethany" 34 Point Road, Dundalk A91 W0C 9.

MEATH

Fr John Byrne to continue his introduction to the Bible on Mondays at 12 noon via the Kells webcam, accessible on www.kellsparish.ie. This year he will introduce the St. John's Gospel and each session will last 25 minutes. For queries, you may contact Fr. John on email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

MONAGHAN

During the month of October the rosary will be recited at Our Lady's Shrine, Kednaminsha, Inniskeen, each Sunday at 8pm. The rosaries will be offered to ask Our Lady to increase vocations to the diocesan priesthood and to ask God's blessings on those serving as priests and religious.

ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

SLIGO

There will be Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction after the 7pm Mass every Tuesday in Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church, Dromow West and after the 10am Mass every Wednesday in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Rathlee. Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction also takes place after the 10am Mass every Thursday in St James's Church, Easkey.

WEXFORD

Taize prayer services return to Good Counsel College Church, New Ross, on October 6, taking place first and third Fridays of each month from 8-9pm.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Church in Mexico to fight dynamics of violence

● The Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM) announced the launch of a 'Citizen Accord for Peace', which aims to "overcome the dynamics of violence and destruction of the social fabric" in the country.

"Peace is a joint effort at different levels and with all social sectors. It implies the joining together of wills, the coordination of efforts, and the generosity of all to overcome the fear that affects us due to the indolence and ineffectiveness of the authorities, who have not attended to their main task of seeking unity, security, justice, and peace in the country," says a statement signed by representatives of the CEM, the Jesuits, and the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious of Mexico.

Catholics must combat 'anti-faith' forces

● An imam urged Canada's Catholic bishops at their annual plenary assembly to speak out for "moral rights".

Imam Abdul Hai Patel used brief remarks during a September 26 session on interreligious dialogue to laud the "historic moment" of a new formal working relationship between Catholic and Muslim leaders.

But Imam Patel told the assembled bishops a key aspect of moving forward in good faith is asserting common moral positions in the face of "anti-faith" forces. Mosque-Church dialogue, he said, can be a means to counterbalance those whose assertion of human rights seek to override the moral foundations of both faiths.

Cameroon bishop: No room for distraction at synod

● Delegates to the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, also referred to as the Synod on Synodality, are not to allow "room for distractions" during the meeting which began on October 4, an archbishop in Cameroon has said.

Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of the Archdiocese of Bamenda in Cameroon said deliberations during the synod, which will conclude with a second assembly in 2024, will focus on the working document for the synod.

"We are not going to allow ourselves to be distracted by the social media antics; there will be no room for distraction," said Archbishop Nkea.

'Biden doesn't take my calls' – Cardinal Dolan

● Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, said in an interview that President Joe Biden is ignoring his calls about the "tragic, broken" migrant system in the US, which has landed tens of thousands of migrants and refugees in New York City, filling shelters to capacity.

"He doesn't take my calls or answer my letters," the cardinal told the *New York Post*.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams said last week that 60,000 migrants who crossed the southern border are in New York City, while 10,000 more are expected to come each month.

'You can't silence the Gospel' in Nicaragua

● At least 31 women religious have been expelled or left Nicaragua in the last 15 months.

Following their forced exodus, their properties, including places that used to serve the poor, have been confiscated, renamed and put to the use of the Ortega-Murillo government.

Discussing justice and truth is dangerous in Nicaragua's current landscape because "you know you're touching the wound of an unfair structure", a religious sister who was expelled told Global Sisters Report.

Trying to put "a stop to critical thinking" is what's behind seizing Catholic-owned property, she said, adding, "You can silence people but you can't silence the Gospel".

Alleged Rupnik victim: Many abused women never received help

Italian professor Fabrizia Raguso, one of the original members of the Loyola Community and an alleged victim of Fr Marko Rupnik, whom she met in 1990, has explained the reasons that led her and the other signatories to publish an open letter following a report by the Diocese of Rome on the Aletti Center, founded by the Slovenian priest in the Eternal City.

"I personally cannot sit still and wait for everything to be decided behind our backs, without being informed of anything and without being allowed to participate in [how things turn out for us]," Prof. Raguso said in an interview with *La Nueva Brújula Cotidiana*.

"Although I have already requested and received the indulgent [to leave] and therefore I am completely freed from the community [Loyola], I nevertheless feel a responsibility, both civil and ecclesial, so that everything that has happened in these 30 years comes to light and justice is done," she explained.

"Many of the sisters are still in quite bad shape and have never received any help, neither material nor psychological. The others who signed with me, in some way, with certainly personal nuances, feel the same," she said.

Fr Rupnik, who has been in charge of Lenten meditations for the Vatican Curia, is co-founder of the Loyola Com-



Pope Francis greets Fr Marko Rupnik during a private audience at the Vatican in this January 3, 2022, file photo. Photo: CNS.

munity with Ivanka Hosta in Slovenia in the 1980s and where he allegedly abused adult nuns.

After a preliminary investigation entrusted to the Society of Jesus, the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) "determined that the incidents in question should be considered beyond the statute of limitations and therefore closed the case at the beginning of October of this year 2022," according to a statement from the Jesuits dated December 2, 2022.

A group of alleged victims of Rupnik, who has been expelled from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), published an

open letter September 19 in which they expressed their outrage and consternation following the report of the Diocese of Rome on the Aletti Center.

The letter, published in seven languages, is signed by several women who were part of the Loyola Community, such as Raguso, who is an assistant professor of psychology at the Portuguese Catholic University of Braga; Mira Stare, doctor in theology from the University of Innsbruck; Gloria Branciani, graduate in philosophy; Vida Bernard, graduate in theology; Mirjam Kovac, doctor in canon law; and Jožica Zupan-

ic, doctor in missiology.

"The events and communications that have taken place in recent days: the private audience, later made public through images that appeared on the web, granted by the Pope to Maria Campatelli, former nun of the Loyola Community and current president of the Aletti Center; and the statement made public today with the final report of the canonical visit made to the community of the Aletti Center, leave us speechless, without a voice to shout our consternation, our outrage," says the letter, whose first addressee is the Holy Father.

New study shows positive signs of Catholic belief in Eucharist

Almost two-thirds of Catholics believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist according to a newly published survey from Georgetown University's Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

The survey also revealed a high correlation between belief in the Eucharist and weekly or even monthly Mass attendance.

The 2022 survey of self-identified Catholics published September 26 and titled *Eucharist Beliefs: A National Survey of Adult Catholics* found 64% of respondents provided responses that indicate they believe in the Real Presence.

That conclusion was drawn from both open-ended and closed-ended questions respondents were asked about their understanding of Church teaching about the Eucharist and additional questions to clarify their beliefs.

According to the CARA study, 49% of respondents correctly identified that the Church teaches that "Jesus Christ is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine".

The other 51% incorrectly identified the church's teaching as "Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus' actions at the Last Supper, meaning that Jesus is only symbolically present in the consecrated

bread and wine".

"Results of this question indicate that there is substantial confusion about what the Church teaches about the Eucharist with slightly more adult Catholics not knowing this correctly than those correctly identifying the teachings," the report stated.

The survey report noted the data from the responses to the questions indicated "most who do not believe in the Real Presence are not rejecting the teaching, as they do not know this is what the Church teaches".

UN peacekeeping shows weak results for Congo – bishop

Even though the UN troops have been in the country for more than two decades aiming to bring peace and stability, a Congolese archbishop said the mission's results are "too weak and too little".

His remarks come amid rising calls for an accelerated

departure of the stabilisation force.

Archbishop Marcel Utambi Tapa of Kisangani, president of the bishops' conference of Congo, said the eastern parts of the country were still yearning for peace and security, despite the troop's pres-

ence in the region for more than two decades as part of MONUSCO – the United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"MONUSCO has spent more than 20 years in Congo, but the result of their work

is so weak, so little. It has not brought security in the region," Archbishop Tapa told OSV News.

"Partners have to respect their commitment... The best result remains (unresolved) – peace in that part of the country."



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Congratulations reverend!



The newly ordained deacon David Thomas Lee of the Diocese of Nashville, receives congratulations from a fellow seminarian during Mass in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican September 28. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

'Not clear' India govt serious about tackling Christian persecution

Christian leaders in India said that a September 21 meeting with the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) did little to reassure them that the administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is serious about addressing the ongoing persecution of Christians in the country.

"While the positive is that there is some conversation, I do not set hopes very high," said John Dayal, an outspoken Catholic activist and spokesperson for the United Christian Forum (UCF), a human rights organisation.

Iqbal Singh Lalpura, chairman of the NCM, met last week with Mr Dayal and a delegation that included UCF president Michael Williams, coordinator A.C. Michael, Tehmina Arora of Alliance Defending Freedom, and Siju Thomas, a lawyer.

The commission, which acts as the watchdog of minority rights in the country, "has asked us to submit more details of the issues we have raised in the letter to the prime minister", the UCF said in a press release following the meeting.

The UCF press statement

also noted that commission chairman Lalpura, a former leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), assured the delegation that the commission will work to address cases of persecution of Christians and proposed that a "joint team to tour some of the areas where such communal issues are regularly occurring".

Mr Dayal told *CNA* Sunday that it is not clear that the government is serious about pursuing cases of violence against Christians.

"The chair wants the Christians to do the work and

then police will investigate. He did not explain how communal violence data will be collected if government agencies do not," said Mr Dayal of the meeting that was organised in response to a UCF letter to Prime Minister Modi shortly after Easter.

The NCM chairman, Mr Dayal noted, "also confessed that Prime Minister [Modi] himself had removed the 15-point programme" for the welfare of religious minorities saying, "all development is for everyone without bias. So why special reservations"?

100 dead in Iraq wedding fire

A Christian wedding party meant to celebrate the joining of young lives turned into a nightmare when a lit flare set the packed hall in northern Iraq on fire. More than 120 people were killed and 250 injured others as authorities warned the death toll is expected to rise with many more people still missing.

The devastating blaze on September 26 in Qaraqosh located in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province is the latest tragedy to befall Iraq's dwindling Christian minority

population suffering from sectarian violence.

Upon hearing about the tragedy, Chaldean Catholic Cardinal Louis Sako travelled to the destroyed hall to minister to traumatised survivors.

Celebratory gunfire and fireworks or flares often accompany weddings and other festivities in the Middle East.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the fire. Flares may have set alight cladding, or a chandelier, initial reports said, leaving the building

ablaze within two minutes.

Some 1,000 guests attended the celebration. Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil confirmed to *OSV News* the newlyweds managed to escape the fire and are alive.

The funerals of the victims brought together hundreds of family members, friends and neighbours on September 27 in Hamdaniya.

"We were just there. We attended the funeral. It's really tragic what we've seen," Archbishop Warda told *OSV News* on September 27.



Vatican: Risk of nuclear war 'highest in generations'

● The international community must cooperate to advance disarmament rather than embrace the "false security" offered by nuclear weapons, the Vatican's foreign minister said.

Speaking on September 26 during a high-level meeting on the elimination of nuclear weapons at the UN General Assembly in New York, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican foreign minister, called eliminating nuclear weapons a "moral imperative".

He said that "Regrettably, the risk of nuclear war is at its highest in generations, featuring unconscionable threats of nuclear use, while an arms race runs unabated".

The archbishop lamented how countries "squander resources needed for pressing development concerns on nuclear weapons," and said countries have "abandoned much of the arms control and disarmament structure that underpins international security".

Archbishop Gallagher called for states to adopt disarmament measures including no-first-use policies, treaties managing materials that can undergo fission and assurances that nuclear-weapon states will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that do not possess them.

Synod must address abuse in 'comprehensive way'

● The synod on synodality should dedicate substantial discussion to addressing sexual abuse in the Church and include the voices of survivors, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors said.

"We ask that sexual abuse in the Church permeate your discussions as they address teaching, ministry, formation and governance," the commission said in a written 'Call to Action' released on September 27.

"While at times it may seem like a daunting set of questions to face, please rise to the challenge so that you may address, in a comprehensive way, the threat posed by sexual

abuse to (the) Church's credibility in announcing the Gospel," it added.

The 19-member international papal commission, led by Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, released the call to action on occasion of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops October 4-29 at the Vatican and the consistory for the creation of new cardinals September 30.

"The reality of sexual abuse in our Church goes to the heart of the synod's agenda," it said. "It permeates discussions on leadership models, ministry roles, professional standards of behavior and of being in right relationship with one another and all of creation."

Britain gets first co-cathedral in history

● Pope Francis has awarded a UK church "co-cathedral status," making it the first of its kind in the history of the British Isles.

The Church of St Mary of the Isle, located in Douglas on the Isle of Man, has achieved this rare status after Douglas was formally recognised as a city during the late Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations in June 2022.

St Mary of the Isle will be co-cathedral along with Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King. The two cathedrals are 80 miles apart and are separated by the Irish Sea, but both fall within the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Co-cathedrals are a rarity in the Church and often exist when two dioceses, each with its own cathedral, are merged, or when one diocese spans two different civil jurisdictions, as in the case of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Msr John Devine, who is parish priest of St Mary of the Isle, said the process of being granted co-cathedral recognition had lasted a whole year but expressed his delight that it had finally happened.

Letter from Armenia

Nagorno-Karabakh exodus marks 'very sad and dark days', says Armenian bishop



Gina Christian

More than 66,000 people – most of them Christian – have fled Nagorno-Karabakh as of September 27, abandoning the historic, Christian-majority Armenian enclave (known in Armenian by its ancient name, Artsakh) located in south-western Azerbaijan and internationally recognised as part of that nation.

"History is repeating itself," Bishop Mikael Mouradian of the California-based Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg told *OSV News*. He said the exodus of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh marks "very sad and dark days for Armenians".

The outflow comes after a September 20 ceasefire following a September 19 offensive launched by Azerbaijan troops against Nagorno-Karabakh.

As part of the Russian-brokered ceasefire, Nagorno-Karabakh forces acceded to Azerbaijan's demands for complete disarmament.

The attacks, which Azerbaijani forces called an "anti-terror" operation, killed at least 32 people, including seven civilians, and wounded another 200. Karabakh officials said they recovered an additional 100 bodies, including those of two children and an elderly couple, in the rubble.

Those casualties were compounded by a September 25 explosion at a fuel station near the enclave's capital, Stepanakert, as residents prepared to drive to Armenia. The blast killed at least 68 and injured 290, while over 100 are still missing, according to the enclave's authorities.

The rapid exodus has shown that few of the enclave's residents have confidence in Azerbaijan's announcement that it planned to "reintegrate" the enclave's residents into Azerbaijani society.

Bishop Mouradian told *OSV News* that he has received reports of "persecution and torture of civilians".

He pointed to "a very disturbing video" he had received September 27 showing an Azeri soldier "literally slaughtering like a butcher an old and defenceless Armenian man".

In recent interviews with *OSV News* and other media, Bishop Mouradian has repeatedly stressed that Azerbaijan intends to conduct "ethnic cleansing" among the enclave's residents.

Bishop Mouradian also expressed



Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh region ride in a truck upon their arrival at the border village of Kornidzor, Armenia, September 27. Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians, most of them Christian, are fleeing the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh following a defeat by surrounding Azerbaijan forces, with Armenia's president saying that "ethnic cleansing" is taking place. Photo: *OSV News/Irakli Gedenidze, Reuters*.

concerns over a report in the Armenian newspaper *Hraparak* that Azerbaijani authorities had given Nagorno-Karabakh representatives a list of people to be handed over – among them, former leaders of the enclave, as well as state and military figures.

On September 27, Azerbaijan announced it had arrested Nagorno-Karabakh's former state minister, Ruben Vardanyan, as he attempted to cross into Armenia.

The enclave's government announced it will dissolve itself.

Blockade

The attacks and ceasefire were preceded by a months-long blockade of critical supplies to the enclave, resulting in what US Agency for International Development chief Samantha Power called "severe malnutrition" among residents.

Since December 2022, the three-mile corridor – the only road leading from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh – had been closed by Azerbaijan, depriving the enclave's residents of food, baby formula, oil, medication, hygienic products and fuel.

Ms Power and the US State Department's acting assistant secretary, Yuri Kim, met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan September 25, assuring that

nation of US support.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev September 26, urging "no further hostilities ... unconditional protections and freedom of movement for civilians (and) ... unhindered humanitarian access to Nagorno Karabakh," said State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller at a press briefing.

“Azerbaijan's actions evoked the 1915-1916 Armenian Genocide, when up to 1.2 million Armenians were slaughtered and starved under the Ottoman Empire”

Rep. Chris Smith, R-NJ, a Catholic lawmaker who authored the Azerbaijan Democracy Act in 2015, issued a September 25 statement announcing legislation to "avert further atrocities and prevent ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh".

The Preventing Ethnic Cleansing and Atrocities in Nagorno-Karabakh Act of 2023 calls for US diplomatic monitoring of the region, humanitar-

ian aid, 24-hour video monitoring of Armenian cultural sites, foreign military aid to Armenia while ending such aid to Azerbaijan, and new sanctions on those responsible for the Lachin Corridor blockade.

Violated

Testifying at a September 6 emergency hearing chaired by Rep. Smith, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, who served as the first chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court from 2003-2012, stated the blockade had violated Article II(c) of the 1948 Genocide Convention by "creating conditions to destroy people".

Bishop Mouradian told *OSV News* September 27 that Azerbaijan's actions evoked the 1915-1916 Armenian Genocide, when up to 1.2 million Armenians were slaughtered and starved under the Ottoman Empire. The atrocities were the basis for lawyer Raphael Lemkin's development of the term "genocide".

Both Christian Armenians and Turkic Azeris lived for centuries in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which became part of the Russian empire during the 19th Century. After World War I, the region became an autonomous part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azer-

baijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself independent in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union, and quickly became the focus of a 1992-1994 struggle between Armenia and Azerbaijan for control of the region, with some 30,000 killed and more than one million displaced. Russia brokered a 1994 ceasefire, and in a 2017 referendum, voters approved a new constitution and a change in name to the Republic of Artsakh (although "Nagorno Karabakh Republic" also remains an official name).

A second war broke out in 2020 when Azerbaijan launched an offensive to reclaim territory, with 3,000 of Azerbaijani and 4,000 Armenian soldiers killed. Russian peacekeepers were stationed to monitor a renewed ceasefire and to guard the Lachin Corridor, but fighting erupted again in 2022.

The current crisis, in the context of the historical cycle of violence, "is much more painful when the so-called superpowers and democratic governments are doing nothing," said Bishop Mouradian. "Yes, they are deploring the situation, but concretely, no one is helping on the ground. I don't know what to say."

i Gina Christian is a national reporter for *OSV News*.

Pope offers cautious 'yes' on blessing some same-sex unions



Elise Ann Allen

Responding to a group of five conservative cardinals who posed critical questions about his upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality, Pope Francis largely upheld the Church's ban on women priests, while suggesting the doctrine can still be studied, but signalled openness to giving blessings to same-sex couples provided that doing so is not confused with the sacrament of marriage.

The Pope issued his replies in July, but they were made public only Monday.

On Friday, the five conservative cardinals published what are technically known as *dubia*, or 'doubts', which they said they had submitted to the pontiff over the summer, and which focus on women's ordination, the blessing of same-sex unions and the authority of the synod to issue binding teaching.

In their announcement, the cardinals said they had submitted the questions to the Pope on July 10 and received a response the next day, on July 11. However, since Pope Francis did not respond in the traditional 'yes or no' formula, they reworded the *dubia* and submitted them again August 21.

After receiving no response, the cardinals made the *dubia* public on the eve of the October 4-29 Synod of Bishops on Synodality.

A September 25 letter to Pope Francis from new Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, was published Monday which included the Pope's responses to the original set of *dubia* presented in July.

Revelation

On whether the practice of blessing same-sex unions is in keeping with Catholic revelation and the Church's magisterium, Francis said "the Church has a very clear concept on marriage: An exclusive, stable and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to begetting children.

"Only this union is called 'marriage'. Other forms of union are only realised 'in a partial and analogous way', which is why they cannot strictly be called 'marriage'," the Pope said.

Sacramental marriage "is much more than a mere 'ideal'," he said, adding this is why the Church "avoids every type of rite or sacrament that can contradict this conviction and imply that something is recognised as marriage which is not".

However, Pope Francis stressed



Pope Francis talks to visitors during his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, September 27. Photo: CNS.

the need for compassion in the Church's pastoral care of homosexual individuals, and signalled an openness to blessing same-sex unions on a case-by-case basis.

"In dealing with people we must not lose pastoral charity, which must pass through all of our decisions and attitudes," he said, saying "the defence of the objective truth is not the only expression of this charity, which is also made of kindness, patience, understanding, tenderness, and encouragement.

"Consequently, we cannot become judges who only reject, deny and exclude," he said.

"The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood differ essentially"

For this reason, the Pope said, "pastoral prudence must adequately discern if there are forms of blessing, requested by one or various people, which do not convey a wrong concept of marriage".

This, he said, is because "when we ask for a blessing, we are expressing a request for help from God, a prayer to be able to live better, a trust in a Father who can help us to live better".

However, he cautioned against making any norms to this effect, saying, "Decisions which, in certain circumstances may be part of pastoral prudence, do not necessarily have to become a norm".

In what could be interpreted as a message to the German Church's controversial 'Synodal Path', he said "it is not appropriate for a diocese, an episcopal conference or any other ecclesial structure to

constantly and officially enable procedures or rites for every type of issue, since everything 'that is part of a practical discernment in the face of a particular situation cannot be elevated at the level of a norm,' because this 'would give rise to unbearable casuistry'."

Canon Law, the Pope said, "must not and cannot cover everything, and not even the episcopal conferences with their varied documents and protocols can claim to do so, because the life of the Church flows through many channels in addition to the normative ones".

On whether women are able to be ordained priests, Pope Francis responded quoting the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium*, which states, "The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood differ essentially".

Appropriate

"It is not appropriate to support a difference in degree that implies considering the common priesthood of the faithful as something of 'second category' or of lesser value ('a lower degree')," he said, insisting that "both forms of priesthood illuminate and support one another".

As he has in the past, Francis referred to St Pope John Paul II's position "definitively" affirming "the impossibility of conferring priestly ordination on women".

However, in saying this, John Paul "was in no way denigrating women and conferring supreme power on men," he said, saying John Paul spoke of priestly power "in the context of function, not of dignity and sanctity."

"These are words that we have not sufficiently accepted," Francis said, and pointed to further

remarks from John Paul II stating that priestly tasks "do not give rise to the superiority of some over others," and that "if the priestly function is 'hierarchical,' it must not be understood as a form of domination, but 'is totally ordered to the sanctity of the members of Christ'."

"Cultural changes and new historical challenges do not modify revelation, but they can stimulate us to make more explicit some aspects of its overflowing wealth that always offers more"

Pope Francis insisted that "if is not understood and the practical consequences of these distinctions are not drawn, it will be difficult to accept that the priesthood is reserved only for men and we will not be able to recognise the rights of women or the need for them to participate, in various ways, in the leadership of the Church".

On whether divine revelation ought to be reinterpreted on the basis of cultural changes, the Pope said, the answer "depends on the meaning you give to the word 'reinterpret.' If it is understood as 'interpret better,'" he said, "the expression is valid."

"Although it is true that divine revelation is immutable and always binding, the Church must be humble and recognise that she never exhausts her unfathomable wealth and needs to grow in her understanding," he said, saying the Church's understanding of herself and its magisterium "matures"

over time.

Therefore, "cultural changes and new historical challenges do not modify revelation, but they can stimulate us to make more explicit some aspects of its overflowing wealth that always offers more," he said.

On whether synodality is a "constitutive dimension of the Church," meaning the Church by its nature is synodal, Pope Francis said that "the Church is a 'mystery of missionary communion,' but this communion is not only affective or ethereal, but rather necessarily implies real participation."

"Both the hierarchy, and the entire People of God in different ways and at different levels can make their voice heard and feel like part of the Church's journey. In this sense we can say that yes, synodality, as style and dynamism, is an essential dimension of the life of the Church," he said.

He cautioned against any attempt to "sacralise or impose a certain synodal methodology that pleases one group, transforming it into a norm and an obligatory path for everyone, because this would only lead to 'freezing' the synodal path" by ignoring the diversity of local Churches.

On whether repentance is a necessary condition for a penitent to receive absolution in the sacrament of confession, given his repeated insistence that "forgiveness is a human right", Francis said the answer is yes.

Repentance

"Repentance is necessary for the validity of sacramental absolution, and implies the intention not to sin," however, he insisted that "there is no mathematics here, and I must remind once again that the confessional is not a customs office."

"We are not masters, but humble administrators of the sacraments that nourish the faithful, because these gifts of the Lord, more than relics to be preserved, are aides of the Holy Spirit for people's lives," he said, noting that there are many ways to express repentance.

For people with "very wounded self-esteem," admitting guilt or wrongdoing "is a cruel torture, but the mere act of approaching confession is a symbolic expression of repentance and the search for divine help," he said.

"I also want to remember that 'sometimes it costs us a lot to give space to the unconditional love of God in our pastoral work', but we must learn," he said, saying, "we must not ask the faithful for correction resolutions that are too precise and certain, which in the end, end up being abstract or even narcissistic."

"Even the predictability of a new fall 'does not prejudice the authenticity of the resolution,'" he said, quoting a 1996 letter from John Paul II to the late American Cardinal William Baum.

Letters

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

Letter of the week

Speak about appreciating your priestly vocation

Dear Editor, Michael Kelly wrote in the Editor's Comment [*The Irish Catholic* – September 21, 2023]: "Healthy and committed vocations only come from healthy and committed communities which can only be formed by healthy and committed families."

This reminds me of the mission of the Venerable Fr Peyton who urged families to pray the rosary saying "A family that prays together stays together". Michael Kelly went on to explain that when religious freedom was

restored in Japan a certain Fr Bernard Petitjean discovered there were 30,000 Christians in Japan, and that people in Nagasaki welcomed him as one of their own when he unveiled a statue of Our Lady. They obviously remained loyal to their faith throughout 250 years of religious persecution, just as the Irish remained loyal throughout the penal laws. In both instances, their devotion to Mary played a large role in their adherence to the Faith. As we pray for vocations let us ask Mary to

intercede for us.

In the same issue, Sr Brieghe McKenna told Chai Brady that she heard Irish mothers discouraging their sons from joining the priesthood. This is no surprise considering the bad press the Church received recently. It is all very fine to ask people to pray for vocations but I believe priests need to counteract the negative press. How often do we hear priests talking publicly about how they appreciate their vocations and their ministry? I believe that by

speaking at Sunday Mass, or writing in *The Irish Catholic* describing their experience of the priesthood, they can show the priesthood is a ministry worth choosing. People need to know their priests actually find the priesthood meaningful, of value, and a source of joy for them. As Brieghe McKenna said: "Happy priests attract people to the Church and to vocations."

Yours etc.,
Brendan Kennedy
Belfast, Co. Antrim

Care and support after divorce remains pastorally important

Dear Editor, In a letter to paper [*The Irish Catholic* – February 2, 2023] the words of the Gospel, "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except on grounds of unchastity makes her an adulteress" (Matthew 5:32), were used to make a case for the innocent party of a divorce to be permitted to receive Holy Communion after remarriage.

This brought a response by AP. Breen [*The Irish Catholic* – March 9, 2023] stating that Biblical scholars believe Our Lord was making a limited exception for divorce for marriages between blood relations where these marriages were considered invalid under Jewish Law. So, it is important to be clear about which is correct as the Oxford dictionary definition of 'chaste' reads "not having sex except with the person to whom one is married".

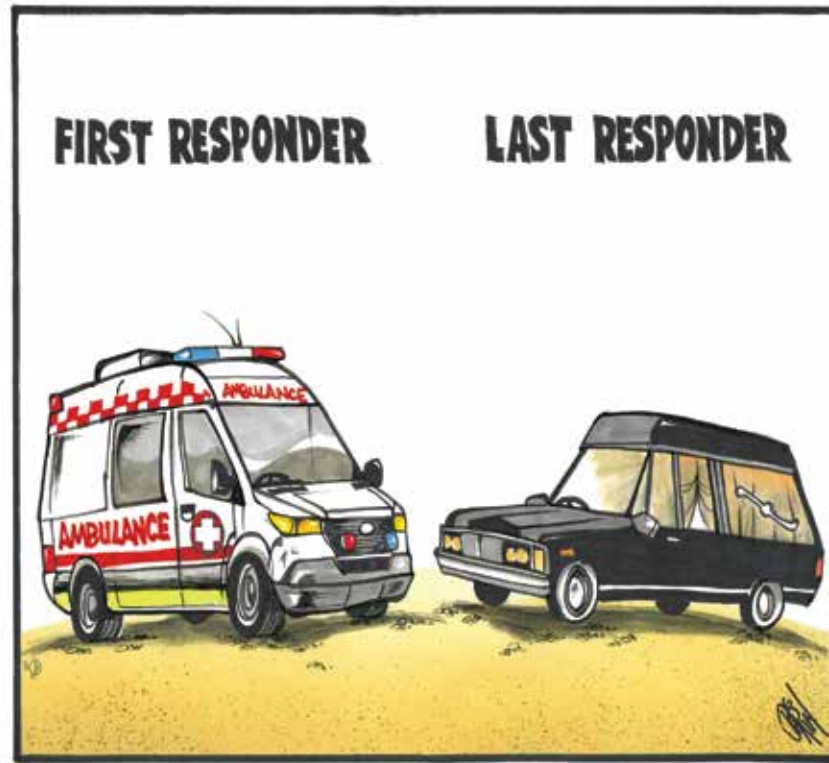
In the 16th Century the Roman Catholic Douay Bible does not use the word 'unchastity' but 'fornication' as does the Anglican King James Bible.

The Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition) of the Bible also uses the word 'unchastity'. However, at the back of the Bible is a section of explanatory notes. In relation to Matthew chapter 5 verse 32 there is the following note: "Unchastity: The Greek word used here appears to refer to marriages which were not legally marriages, because they were either within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity or contracted with a gentile."

In all the times I have listened to sermons on Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, as far as I can recall, I never heard the information contained in this explanatory note mentioned. It would have been an easy task to place the explanatory note on the foot of the relevant page in the Gospel. This would have prevented any misunderstanding.

Nevertheless, the care and support of the innocent partner in a divorce remains pastorally important.

Yours etc.,
Daithi O'Muirneachain,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9



Heresy of universalism is gaining ground

Dear Editor, Fr Eamonn Conway presents a very realistic view of our recent past and our present situation in the Church in Ireland and offers a good insight into a possible future along the lines of Pope Francis and the direction he wishes for the Church. In this vision for the Church, Baptism is to replace ordination as the Sacrament of engagement in the mission of the Church. That's all very fine, if not a tad unrealistic, but what worries me is that Fr Conway doesn't mention what the mission of the Church is. Furthermore, he avoids mentioning what is the goal or purpose of its mission. The living tradition of the Church and the scriptures tell us that Christ created the Church to continue his work of salvation. The Church is the Sacrament of salvation for in the Church we encounter the crucified and risen Christ and sharing his life we are saved.

Fr Conway says we shouldn't be disturbed when our families and friends don't take part in the life of the Church for they will find their own way to salvation. If Fr Conway is correct then the mission of the Church is not vital and if it is not essential to their lives it will not engage people. The heresy of universalism, the belief that Christ has saved everyone regardless of how they live their lives, is the heresy of our time. It has coloured the thinking of many in the Church, neutralising its mission, and reducing the Church to a community desperately seeking relevance with nothing of substance to offer society. Unfortunately it seems to be gaining ground in the Church today.

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

Looking for a properly examined viewpoint

Dear editor, Felix Larkin's concise summation of the book: *France on Trial*, is a cause of introspection with which we in Ireland have been having for the past 25 years [*The Irish Catholic* – September 21, 2023]. Petain was the hero of Verdun, the father of the nation and yet stated, in the same vein as Collins over the treaty, that it was the best we could do and gave us the means to pause and plan for the future.

The toxic history between the two states emerged through four centuries of growing antagonism that eventually reached a hiatus with defeat in 1870-71, victory in 1918 and defeat again, in 1940. I believe that Petain, along with many others saw, that to prolong resistance to the all-conquering Wehrmacht was futile in lives and material property.

Like Ireland in 1922-23, a poisoned hatred manifested in summary executions or death sentences in absentia along with name calling amongst spilt families permeated the national and local narrative.

The Gaullist victory with US help vindicate a public wiping of the slate of treason and collaboration and that is why Petain had to suffer. Here, a similar purification took place over the state's collaboration with religion and while much has been found true, nevertheless a mythology prevails to remind how right we now are in our secular idyll. But to ever think the unthinkable and try to rehabilitate the past, we get caustic reminders from media to deal a blow to a properly examined viewpoint ruled by historical truth and not ideological basis.

Yours etc.,
Fr John McCallion
Coalisland, Co. Tyrone

Atheism as a 'death cult'

Dear Editor, The forthcoming debate concerning euthanasia legislation being discussed raises a question as to the influences driving it. I believe that it is, like abortion and eugenics, an offshoot of atheism. It makes sense when you think about it: Their morals are completely materialist. So, there are no consequences to die before their time. There is no necessity to live out their natural life when suffering gets too difficult. As they can only see the difficulties that ill health can bring, they have no spiritual comfort or way of dealing with material illness.

With their attitude to abortion running on similar lines it could be said that atheism is a 'death cult'.

Yours etc.,
Brid Fitzpatrick
Terenure, Dublin 6W

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, October 5, 2023

Questions of Faith

Does insufficient faith keep us from being healed?

Page 32



Synodality can help us fulfil the Church's mission – evangelisation

“Evangelising,” Pope Francis has said, “is the Church’s mission. It is not the mission of only a few, but it is mine, yours and our mission.”

How the Church equips Catholics to carry out this mission to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ is a concern for the October 4-29 gathering of bishops convened by Pope Francis in Rome – often called the ‘synod on synodality’.

Shared mission

Among the discussion questions for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops are: “How can preaching, catechesis and pastoral work promote a shared awareness of the meaning and content of mission? How can

Synod on Synodality faces task of helping Catholics evangelise effectively, writes Kimberley Heatherington

it convey that mission constitutes a real and concrete call for every Baptised person?”

In short, the baptised are called not to be simply passive members of a parish. However, the synod faces the task of effectively mapping out how to form and deploy clergy and faithful to be energetic disciples in the Church’s mission fields all around them.

“At a deep level, a lot of Catholics picked up a strong sense that

they were ordinary people who were not supposed to be active,” says Sherry Weddell, author of *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* and co-founder and executive director of the Colorado Springs, Colorado-based Catherine of Siena Institute.

“Their job was to be obediently present and receptive to what the active people – which would be the priests and reli-

gious – were offering them.”

That dynamic, Ms Weddell added, has changed in recent decades.

“Now we’re all talking about Jesus, and our relationship with Jesus and discipleship – and this language has become normative. It was not normative for years,” she told *OSV News*. “So the conversation has changed. But what we’re now wrestling with is realising where most of our people really are.”

And where Catholics are right now may not, observed Ms Weddell, fully prepare them for an evangelical role.

“One of the things that impedes the possibility of synodality having the kind of impact on mission that obviously is desired, is that most of our people are still spir-

itual preschoolers, not adults,” she said.

“So when I talk about evangelisation and discipleship, emerging discipleship is like emerging spiritual adulthood for a Christian.”

This stunted spiritual growth is not, Ms Weddell emphasised, the fault of those laity who are uncomfortable evangelising.

Responsibility

“The Church is responsible for calling forth all the personal charisms of all the baptised, as well as all the vocations of all the baptised,” said Ms Weddell. “And we have almost zero formation, vision and structures in that area.”

“That is what fundamentally undermines co-responsibility, governance, and in a lot of ways,

the actual expression of the pastoral office," she said. "And especially, of course, the impact on the world and the mission of the church to bring Christ and his love to the world."

While the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults – formerly referred to as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults or RCIA – would ideally form grownup disciples, Ms Weddell finds in her work that "most of the time it's still, 'Here's a bunch of information. Do you want to be Catholic?'"

She qualified that "it varies from place to place, to be sure. But the vast majority of clergy are not used to collaborating with each other – much less with their lay co-workers or even their leaders in their parishes."

In part, Ms Weddell believes that's because there's no seminary instruction in collaboration with the laity.

"I've gone over this hundreds of times with clergy," Ms Weddell said. "Everywhere I go, I ask, 'Were you formed in this in seminary? Did you get a class? Did you have a book; article; anything?' And I have never yet had a 'yes'."

Common mission

True collaboration occurs, Ms Weddell explained, when "we see each other as peers on a common mission. We have different vocations; we have different charisms; we have different backgrounds," she said. "But you have to trust each other – you have to be disciples together. You have to both see and be really committed to the common vision."

The result, Weddell said, is that the members of the Church then "bring all (their) uniquenesses to that process," which then "makes it more effective – instead of making it divisive".

“Our presence is evangelising; our good works out in the community is evangelising; our ministry to those at the margins is evangelising”

Ms Weddell shared that, "I know dioceses where this is actually happening. And so when you see that – you see the fruit of it; you see it living – you go, 'Oh, now I get it; now it all makes sense'."

Michael Sanem, author of *Your Church Wants to Hear from You: What Is the Synod on Synodality?* and minister of evangelisation at Church of the Nativity in Leawood, Kansas, had a similar message about evangelical co-responsibility.

Vatican II

"This synod on synodality I see as really a much-needed complement to the Second Vatican Council – which did call for active, full, conscious participation of the laity in the liturgy. But it wasn't just the liturgy – it was active, full, conscious participation in the life of the church, and the mission of the church," Mr Sanem told *OSV News*.

"We don't just want the laity active in the liturgy and then passive in everything else. We need a



Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, Northern Ireland, leads delegates on a prayer walk at a pre-synodal assembly in the sixth-century monastic site of Clonmacnoise, Ireland, in June 18, 2022. It was in preparation for the universal synod convened by Pope Francis for 2021-2023. (CNS photo/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters)

robust, active laity carrying out the mission of the Church," he urged.

"It's not just the work of the ordained or religious – it's the work of everybody. The synod is us coming together for the sake of mission."

Nor, explained Mr Sanem, is effective preparation for evangelisation as simple as a few classes; rather, it's a continuous process of both education and mission.

According to the synod's working document, "A synodal culture and spirituality are needed animated by a desire for conversion and sustained by adequate formation."

It advises, "We need integral formation, initial and ongoing, for all members of the people of God."

Mr Sanem emphasised that "evangelisation is not a programme", noting the Church already has "a ton" of programs for evangelisation, including evangelisation teams in parishes and directors of evangelisation for dioceses.

"I'm a minister of evangelisation. But I think the shift I had is, 'I'm not directing anything with evangelisation. This has got to be the whole Church working together on this,'" Mr Sanem said, emphasising this mission cannot be relegated to an "evangelisation team" or "evangelisation programme".

"Because our presence is evangelising; our good works out in the community is evangelising; our ministry to those at the margins is evan-

gelising," Mr Sanem said.

"The first step has got to be dialogue. What else would it be? Even more old-school models – missionary models – always started with dialogue."

Tom Corcoran, who with Fr Michael White co-wrote *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter*, told *OSV News* the first concrete step a Church can take in forming disciples is the creation of a welcoming worship experience.

The initial environment for that welcome is the weekend Mass and "that's where there really is a partnership between clergy, Church staff and people in the pews," Mr Corcoran said. "Kind of the analogy of being fishing partners together. And the whole community seeing itself in that work – that we're working together to reach the lost."

Once more, the theme of collaboration emerged.

“I think more people leave just out of boredom, or out of not seeing the relevance, or not being welcomed, than leave because of the hot-button issues”

“Evangelisation in the spirit of synodality really is a partnership between clergy and lay, working together”

"I think evangelisation is too often seen as a solitary exercise," Corcoran said. "That you go out there, and you make somebody a Christian; and then when you've made them a Christian, bring them in."

Instead, Mr Corcoran said, "evangelisation in the spirit of synodality really is a partnership between clergy and lay, working together."

"I do hope that can come out of this conversation," he said. "And the clergy can see their role as kind of mobilising the people in the pews – and working with the people in the pews to create environments where people will be drawn back into the life of the Church."

That can often start, Mr Corcoran said, with Catholics' own families.

"Everyone knows friends, family members, co-workers who are not going to Church," noted Mr Corcoran. "Eventually though, we need to bring them into a community."

As to why they walk away, Mr Corcoran focuses on the collaborative triad of vigorous hospitality;

excellent preaching; and quality music.

"If our parishes were doing those things, people would come back," Mr Corcoran believes.

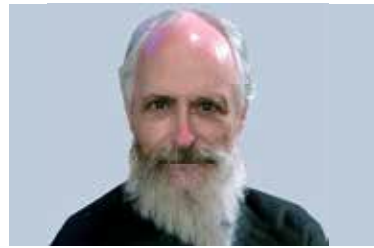
"I think more people leave just out of boredom, or out of not seeing the relevance, or not being welcomed, than leave because of the hot-button issues," he said. "We don't need to change our doctrine or teaching at all; I don't really think that's the problem."

This back-to-basics approach, Mr Corcoran emphasised, can segue to active discipleship.

"Evangelisation is about hungry people sharing where they found some food with other hungry people, and that relationship with Jesus," Mr Corcoran said. "Our mission field is now all around us. Our mission field is at work; our families; our neighbourhood."

i Kimberley Heatherington writes for *OSV News* from Virginia.

So much of evangelisation depends on how we sow



David Mills

A writer and I were going back and forth about how the best devotional article won't get as many readers as a political article by the same writer. Publish a wild rant claiming that God hates Biden or that God hates Trump and the numbers shoot up. Publish a deep meditation on God's infinite love and they drop through the floor.

"It's not about the numbers, is it?" she said. "We plant seeds as faithfully as we can. The growth and the harvest is up to him." She was right, but with a wise qualification Christians don't always seem to see.

It is true that we can only plant the seed and must leave the germination and the harvest to God. People offer that as wisdom, and it mostly is. The message liberates us from the fear that we must accomplish what we can't on our own.

But it also misses something important. People who say that we must plant and leave the harvest to God too often assume that planting is simple. (Writers I've edited, for example.) Whatever you do, God will fix it. It's his job.

How we plant

That's not true, though. As my friend said, we must plant faithfully, and that means with thought, care and effort. God doing the hard work of growing and harvesting doesn't free us from the responsibility of doing our part as well as we can.

“In most of the writing a Catholic writer does, the writer must stay rigorously on target. Writers have only so much space to use and their readers have only so much attention to give”

In the parable, the seed lands on the hard path, in the rocks, and in the thorn bushes, as well as landing in the good soil. Jesus explains that we are the seeds and the ground we've fallen onto are different ways of responding to him and his message about the kingdom. The seed that falls on rocky ground, for example, represents people



“What God has to grow and harvest depends, as far as we know, on how well we plant. So plant well”

who love the message when they hear it but drop it when the world threatens them because they haven't grown roots.

An apprentice

The metaphor has another aspect, though. We are also a sower – an apprentice or assistant to the Sower, if you want. We can sow badly or well. The parable's sower threw seed on the path, the rocks and the thorn bushes, and none of it grew. It couldn't.

The lesson this reading of the parable gives us is: Aim more carefully when you throw the seed. Learn the craft of sowing. Put in the work to plant better.

A practical example

Here's a practical example. In my work as an editor, I encounter Christians who want to sow, that is

to say write, who don't know – and sometimes don't want to know – how to write for their readers.

Where we write and when, how we open our articles, what language we use – how complicated the vocabulary, how long and complex the sentences – and what kind of arguments we employ, whether or not we tell stories, how many words we write, what voice we use, personal or impersonal, and a lot of other things go into the work of writing to be read and understood well enough to affect readers' lives.

You have to think about these things and work at writing – unless you're the rare genius, and even geniuses can learn to do it better. Planting may be very difficult indeed. It looks simple – throw the seed! write the words! – but it isn't.

Simple

In most of the writing a Catholic writer does, the writer must stay rigorously on target. Writers have only so much space to use and their readers have only so much attention to give. They can't take any detours and can't throw extra things at their readers. The ideal article is almost always like a simple map, not a *Where's Wally?* cartoon.

Some won't write that way. They want to say more than they can, about more subjects than they should take up, often in more complicated language than they need to use. They often want to jam a pet idea into the article, like a father who pulls out pictures of his children when everyone's talking about the war in Ukraine.

They're like a sower who tosses

seed on rocky ground because he wants to, maybe because he likes the feeling of slinging his arm round and watching the seed fly. At best, he can't be bothered to learn how to sow properly.

As people like to say, paraphrasing St Paul in First Corinthians, "We plant, but God gives the increase". He does, of course. He makes up for our failings. But for his own mysterious reasons, he gives us a big part in his work and he works with what we've done. What God has to grow and harvest depends, as far as we know, on how well we plant. So plant well.

i David Mills writes from Pennsylvania

Five reasons why St Francis is a model of synodality



Fr Patrick Briscoe OP

Chesterton once wrote, “Newspapers not only deal with news, but they deal with everything as if it were entirely new”. There’s a lot of new talk surrounding synodality. But, insofar as synods have been an ancient model for Church governance, there’s something quite old there.

Which is why I propose an old model for us to emulate: St Francis of Assisi. The October Synod of Bishops will open on St Francis’ feast and there’s much from the life of this beloved man of God that can inspire how we approach the synod.

Humility and charity

First, consider St Francis’ humility. At the heart of synodality is the recognition that our traveling together in faith requires putting up with one another as we carry our raggedy faults and dear sins in our slouch toward the Truth we seek. St Francis epitomised humility, stripping away worldly attachments to embrace a life of poverty. In his *Admonitions*, he writes, “Blessed is the servant who does not regard himself as better when he is esteemed and extolled by men than when he is reputed as mean, simple, and despicable: for what a man is in the sight of God, so much he is, and no more.” In a synodal Church, humility opens the door to genuine dialogue, with preconceived notions and politics being cast aside.

St Francis also has a remarkable vision of fraternal charity. He writes, “Blessed the servant who



loves and respects his brother as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him, and who would not say anything behind his back that he would not say with charity in his presence.” A synodal Church acknowledges the struggles and joys of our fellow Christians, recognising their unique perspectives. With respect and charity, we move as brothers pursuing the Lord’s will; if we can remember that none of us are getting it all just right, humility and charity are with us.

St Francis was humble and charitable because of his vision of Christ. St Francis taught, “Let all of us, brothers, consider the Good Shepherd Who bore the suffering of the cross to save His sheep.” St Francis’ life was entirely centred on following Jesus Christ. The synodal way must be the way of Christo-centric discipleship. We should be disciples like St Francis, striving our best to imitate our master, he who was poor and

willing to lay down his life in reparation for our sins. And who loved the people we’d probably dislike.

Conversion

St Francis’ spirituality was fundamentally Eucharistic. St Francis says: “As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread.” By embracing the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Jesus, St Francis emphasised not symbolic ritual but an encounter with the living Christ. This is what it means to be a synodal Church: to have met the living Christ and fervently long to share that experience with others.

Finally, having met the Risen Christ, St Francis underwent an extraordinary conversion. Conversion means ‘to turn’. Francis himself modelled what it meant to continually turn. Conversion is circular in that respect, and never ending. Most people think they’ve turned and that’s that. But it’s more like ascending in concentric circles, because we have to keep turning. We turn and turn in the hopes that – as with encircling a mountain – each turn brings us closer to the goal. St Francis’ radical transformation of life reminds us that synodality calls us to ongoing conversion (ongoing ‘turning,’ ongoing surrender) and growth in faith.

“But as St Francis did not love humanity but men, so he did not love Christianity but Christ,” writes Chesterton. In the end, the most important consideration for synodality is that it would help us become saints: men and women who love not their own ideas, but the Lord Jesus.

Fr Patrick Briscoe, OP, is a Dominican friar and editor of Our Sunday Visitor.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Does insufficient faith keep us from being healed?

Q: When I was Evangelical, we were told Jesus wanted to heal us, every time; we need only ask “in his name”. If we weren’t healed it was because we lacked sufficient faith to “claim it”. I remember my Catholic Grandma saying though, that sometimes God heals and sometimes not, and that the best thing to do is “offer it up” to God, just asking for the strength to bear it. What does the Catholic Church actually say about all this, especially ‘healings’?

A: While your question involves many layers, the short answer is no, Catholics don’t believe that a lack of physical healing is due to some fault in the faith of the one suffering, nor can it be attributed to a lack of faith on the part of that person’s loved ones.

For millennia, philosophers and theologians have reflected on the ‘problem of evil,’ or how a good and loving God could create a world with so much suffering in it. Looking through the eyes of faith, though, we know that physical illness, infirmity and death were not part of God’s original plan; as we read in Wisdom: “God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being” (Wis 1:13-14). Suffering entered the world because of original sin, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, and in doing so set the world on a course that was not in harmony with God’s will.

Jesus came into this world to accept suffering and death on the cross in order to free us from the ultimate consequences of original sin. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, we are able to enter into eternal life in heaven. Still, we are all stuck living in a fallen world in the meantime, and physical illness and pain are unavoidable parts of this – for everyone, eventually.

To be sure, Catholicism certainly recognises the possibility of miraculous healings. Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels as having healed a great many people from their illness as a sign of

his redeeming mission. At the same time, Jesus also makes it clear that he wasn’t just a “miracle dispenser”. For example, in Mark’s Gospel, when “the Pharisees came forward and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him,” Jesus “sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation” (Mk 8:11-12).

God is still at work in the world today, and so miraculous healings can still happen. But miracles, by definition, are extraordinary and not to be counted on in a presumptuous way. So an illness taking its natural course despite our prayers is not a sign of God’s indifference towards us – and it certainly doesn’t indicate a defect in anyone’s faith. Many of our most beloved saints, like St Therese the “Little Flower,” and St Francis of Assisi, endured tremendous bodily sufferings even amidst their heroic faith and trust in God.

Your grandmother’s expression “offer it up” is a very traditional Catholic phrase that often gets a bad reputation for sounding flippant or dismissive but references a real truth: that we can join our sufferings to Christ’s on the cross, “offering them up” for the sake of others just as Paul teaches in 1 Col:24, when he writes: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.” We also believe – again thanks to Paul, “God works all things for the good of those who love him” (Rom 8:28).

We can trust that whatever suffering God permits to befall us – because God will only ever allow suffering to happen; he does not actively will it – will ultimately be for our good, even if we never clearly see how in this life.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.

Our deepest loneliness



Harvard psychologist Robert Coles, in describing the French mystic Simone Weil, once suggested that what she really suffered from and what motivated her life was her moral loneliness. What is that?

Moral loneliness is what we experience when we ache for moral affinity, that is, for a soulmate, for someone who meets us, understands, and honours all that's deepest and most precious inside us.

We are lonely in different ways. We feel restlessness despite experiencing intimacy, and we feel a nostalgia for a home we can never quite find. There's loneliness, a restlessness, an aching, a yearning, a longing, an appetite, a disquiet, a nostalgia, a timelessness inside us that never quite feels consummated.

Dis-ease

Moreover, this dis-ease lies at the centre of our experience, not at its edges. We are not restful people who sometimes get restless, serene people who sometimes experience disquiet, or fulfilled people who occasionally get frustrated. Rather we are restless beings who sometimes find rest, disquieted persons who sometimes find solitude, and dissatisfied men and women who sometimes find satisfaction.

And, among all these many yearnings, one is deeper than the others. What we ultimately long for beneath everything else is moral affinity, for a soul partner, for someone to meet us in the depth of our soul, for someone



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

who honours all that's most precious in us. More than we long for someone to sleep with sexually, we long for someone to sleep with in this way, morally.

What does this mean?

It might be expressed this way: Each of us nurses a dark memory of once having been touched and caressed by hands far gentler than our own. That caress has left a permanent mark, an imprint in us of a love so tender, good, and pure that its memory is a prism through which we see everything else. The old myths express it well when they tell that, before we were born, God kissed our souls and we go through life always remembering, in some intuitive way, that kiss and measur-

ing everything else in relation to it and its original purity, tenderness, and unconditionality.

This unconscious memory of once having been touched and caressed by God creates the deepest place inside of us, the place where we hold all that's most precious and sacred to us. When we say that something "rings true", what we are really saying is that it honours that deep place in our hearts, that it coincides with a deep truth, tenderness and purity that we have already experienced.

Deepest and truest

From this place issues forth all that is deepest and truest inside us – both our kisses and our tears. Paradoxically this is the place that we most

guard from others, even as it is the place that we would most like someone to enter, providing that entry respects the purity, tenderness, and unconditionality of the original caress of God which formed that tender cavity in the first place.

This is the place of deep intimacy and deep loneliness, the place where we are innocent and the place where we are violated, the place where we are holy, temples of God, sacred churches of reverence, and the place we corrupt when we act against truth. This is our moral centre and the aching we feel there is aptly called moral loneliness. It's here that we long for a soulmate.

Driven outward

And it's in this longing, in this unyielding ache, that we are driven outward where, like the biblical woman in the Song of Songs, we achingly search for someone to sleep with morally.

Sometimes that longing is fixed on a certain person, and that fixation

can be so obsessive that we lose all emotional freedom. As well, we can conclude, as does our culture, that this at its root is a longing for sexual union. There's some truth in that, despite its one-sidedness. Sexual union, in its true form, is indeed the "one-flesh" consummation decreed by the Creator after the condemnation of loneliness – "it is not good for the man to be alone". Outside of sexual union, in the end, one is always somewhat alone, single, separate, cut off, a minority of one.

But, ultimately, we are lonely at a level that sex alone cannot satisfy. More deeply than we long for a sexual partner, we long for moral affinity. Our deepest longing is for a partner to sleep with morally, a kindred spirit, a soulmate in the truest meaning of that phrase. Great friendships and great marriages invariably have this at their root, namely, deep moral affinity. The persons in these relationships are "lovers" in the deep sense because they sleep with each other at that deep level, irrespective of whether or not there is sexual union. At the level of feeling, this type of love is experienced as a "coming home". Therese of Lisieux once suggested that, as humans, we are "exiles of the heart" and we can only overcome this by moral communion with each other, that is, through sleeping with each other in charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, longsuffering and faith.

“This unconscious memory of once having been touched and caressed by God creates the deepest place inside of us, the place where we hold all that is most precious and sacred to us”

Will I bear fruit in my life?



Sunday October 8

Is 5:1-7

Ps 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

Phil 4:6-9

Mt 21:33-43

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



“Jesus tells us that if we fail to bear the fruit of faith, God’s love and peace will be harvested by those who do”

Scripture is filled with almost lyrical images for the divine human relationship. The first reading offers one such poetic passage as the prophet Isaiah uses the image of a grape harvest.

“Few of us will be expected to give our lives for faith. But we are called to witness to Jesus”

In vine growing areas, the grape harvest is a time of rejoicing – especially when the harvest is good. When the crop fails, harvest day is a time of anxiety and frustration.

Perhaps the memory of a disappointing harvest inspired Isaiah’s words.

Baptism

The vineyard is a biblical image for the people of Israel. It is also an image of the Church to which we each belong, by virtue of our Baptism. And like the vine-keeper, the Lord plants choice vines that are tended with care. From time to time though, instead of a good harvest, the vine produces wild grapes. The Israelites were chosen to bear good fruit. Isaiah’s words serve as a challenge to them, and to us, to persevere daily in making the fruits of justice, compassion and love of God a reality.

In the same way, Saint Paul

encourages the Philippians with words that still speak to us today. “In everything, by prayer and petition and thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.” In so doing, the Philippians will experience the peace of God that passes all understanding, particularly in times of trouble.

Martyrdom

We live in an age of Christian martyrdom. That may surprise us if we think the word “martyr” refers only to Christians in the early centuries. It is a historical fact that in the last century, and into our own day, Christians have been, and continue to be, persecuted violently to the point of martyrdom for faith in Jesus Christ.

Followers of Jesus who willingly

die for their faith are a powerful witness to Christian discipleship. They follow the example of Jesus himself who loved each one of us to the point of death on the cross. Christian martyrs sow seeds of faith and bear good and abundant fruit in lives of faith, hope and love of God in their witness.

Few of us will be expected to give our lives for faith. But we are called to witness to Jesus. We may not face the threat of violent martyrdom, but we are called to follow the example of Jesus’ selfless love to bear fruit that will last forever.

The world tells us to “be successful”. In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us to bear fruit that will last forever. The fruitfulness of love is the heart of the divine human rela-

tionship. Will we accept God’s gracious invitation to let God’s word bear fruit in our lives? Jesus tells us that if we fail to bear the fruit of faith, God’s love and peace will be harvested by those who do. To bear good fruit that lasts for eternity we rely on God’s grace and pray in faith, “speak to me, Lord”.

Question: How am I called to witness my faith in Jesus in my daily surroundings?

i Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



'Safer' suicide...would be funny if it wasn't so sad

Further discussions on suicide last week were prompted by a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying. The debate is riddled with euphemism – maybe killing would be a better description, and intentional killing at that.

As is often the case, when Newstalk deals with the issue you get a variety of voices. On **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Monday) Philip Ryan of the Irish Independent group spoke to host Kieran Cuddihy about the next day's committee hearings which would feature representatives from the euthanasia facilitating group Dignitas from Switzerland. Mr Ryan described them as a group that "helps people commit suicide" – the blunt and disturbing truth – no euphemism there. He seemed bemused by the way they made out that having assisted suicide made legal would reduce the suicide rate! Somebody laughed in the studio when their opening statement, released in advance, talked about their facilitating a "safer method" of suicide – seriously?

On the **Six-One News** (RTÉ One, Tuesday) the committee hearings got brief coverage. We heard from two people who favoured decriminalising assisted suicide – Theo Boer, Professor of Healthcare ethics at a Protestant Theological College and Silvan Luley of



Dignitas. Prof. Boer, reported elsewhere as having 'misgivings', didn't think it should be illegal as long as there were safeguards around consent. Senator Fiona O'Loughlin (Fianna Fáil) was 'shocked' at the idea of young children as young as 12 being euthanised in the Netherlands. I've heard of the slippery slope, but this was over the edge altogether. On **It Says in the Papers** (RTÉ Radio 1, Wednesday) Ronan Kelly (my favourite presenter of this slot) referred to an item portraying the practice negatively. The same Prof. Boer mentioned earlier was reported as being one who "used to" support the Dutch laws but now feels death is being seen as remedy "for all

kinds of unbearable suffering" – initially used by those who feared living their final days in pain, but now used by those who fear years of loneliness or "care dependency".

Another kind of 'assisted dying' is, in fact, murder, which was the focus of the new drama series **Obituary** (RTÉ One, Tuesdays). It's a black comedy about an obituary writer who eventually creates more business for herself by murdering the locals in her small town. Unfortunately, it's more black than comedy – the laughs are there but scarce (I liked the scenes with her dismissive editor). Apart from the usual crudeness and foul language the whole thing is in extremely bad taste. I suspect

the recently bereaved won't be watching. The journalist has had an unhealthy obsession with death since she was young and has stopped taking her medication. She actually enjoys the murdering, but in a sop to the twisted morality, concentrates so far on killing ill or unpleasant people. Looking at the hundreds of people listed in the credits I thought it seemed such a waste of money and talent.

The show might be accused of 'giving people ideas'. One of the deaths in the show was drug-switch related, and drugs have been back in the news thanks to the citizens' assembly on that topic. On **Newstalk Breakfast** last Monday the presenters

PICK OF THE WEEK

1531 – A STORY THAT IS NOT FINISHED YET

EWTV Sunday October 8, 9pm

See what really happened before and after the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe as told through the actual testimonies of St Juan Diego, Bishop Zumárraga and the people who witnessed the miraculous image.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

RTÉ One Sunday October 8, 10.30pm

Joe Duffy meets the former presidential candidate and founder and CEO of Chernobyl Children's International, Adi Roche.

TARRTHÁLAI THE NA hÉIREANN

TG 4 Thursday October 12, 8pm

Series following the brave people of the Irish coastguard, mountain rescue teams and community rescue boats. This week the focus is on the rescue teams on Croagh Patrick for Reek Sunday.

felt that the assembly was moving towards recommending some form of liberalisation, surprise, surprise! Both presenters were concerned about the harm it would do. Ciara Kelly, a former GP, was concerned about the health fallout and feared drug use would become more widespread as a result. Shane Coleman was concerned it would normalise drug use, though he wasn't convinced by the 'war on drugs' either. The war on murder and robbery hasn't succeeded either, but do we liberalise, decriminalise, legalise? There was negative reaction from listeners – one texter said "shame on the citizens' assembly".

I've never been impressed

with the concept or practice of the citizens' assembly. It has too often seemed like a ploy of the Oireachtas (the real citizens' assembly) to kick the can down the road or to pass the buck, but ultimately to come up with the predictable recommendations desired by those in power. Like Pontius Pilate they can then wash their hands of responsibility. The final recommendations follow months or years of softening up by the activists and their media sympathisers or partners.

If any of these assemblies were to come up with politically incorrect recommendations, I'd suspect they'd be shut down promptly and shelved into obscurity.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Sometimes pieces are noticeable by their absence

While the NSO's season at the National Concert Hall began early last month, the Hall's own International Series commenced on September 19 with the Concerto Budapest Symphony Orchestra conducted by fellow Hungarian András Keller.

Renowned French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard was the soloist in Bartók's soulful 3rd Piano Concerto written shortly before the composer's death in 1945. The expressively played centrepiece was preceded by Mozart's G minor Symphony No 40 and followed by Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony No 3.

The performances were

really quite splendid with the orchestral playing in the Beethoven as monumental as the symphony itself.

Mozart's 40th, comes in the middle of his last three great symphonies, which the composer never heard performed. The distinguished Austrian conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt (1929-2016) argued that these three masterpieces may be regarded as a triptych – a kind of an 'orchestral oratorio'.

Harnoncourt pointed to the imposing introduction to No39 with its relatively insubstantial fourth movement leading straight into the start of the 'minor mode central episode' provided by Symphony No 40 but leaving

the listener with an unhappy tension that is only resolved by the triumphant C major *Jupiter* Symphony No41.

Keller's approach to the *Eroica* was magisterial. The opening Allegro was certainly con brio as Beethoven demanded. The Funeral March called to mind a kind of threnody following some catastrophic phenomenon. The Allegro vivace scherzo was wild and somewhat frightening while the Finale brought powerful intensity fired with heroic energy.

Going back a little in time, the first opera I saw as a callow youth was Gounod's *Faust*. Having queued with my mother for hours outside the Gaiety Theatre we

galloped up the stairs to the gallery and its 'woodenness' – rows of fixed benches that I don't think had any backs to them. I didn't mind as I was soon caught up in the mystery of it all. The 'woodenness' disappeared with the theatre's refurbishment.

Sung in English, the cast included Ulsterman James Johnston in the title role, Dublin soprano Veronica Dunne as Marguerite and Welsh bass-baritone Howell Glynne as Mephistopheles. The conductor was Col Jim Doyle, whose baton led many a DGOS production.

Faust is at the Gaiety again this week with its remaining Irish National Opera performances tonight Thursday 5th



Renowned French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard

and Saturday October 7th. This time the opera is being sung in its original French with English surtitles.

American tenor Duke Kim undertakes the title role with our own Jennifer Davis as Marguerite and US Nicholas Brownlee as devil incarnate Mephistopheles. Directed

by Jack Furness, the opera is being conducted by Elaine Kelly.

Vivaldi's evergreen *The Seasons* forms part of the next in the NCH's International Series on Saturday week October 14. Fabio Biondi conducts his period instrument baroque ensemble – Europa Galante.

Recent events at the NCH included a commanding performance of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto by Barry Douglas and a brilliant account of the composer's First Symphony *Winter Dreams* under conductor Lio Kuokman. It made me wonder why this striking piece is such a relative stranger in our concert programmes.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



St Ignatius 'the everyday mystic'



St Ignatius as a spiritual pilgrim, a model for all ages

**Ignatius Loyola
Christian Mystic,**
by Brian O'Leary
(Messenger Books
€19.95/ £18.95)

Peter Costello

Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises have been explored by readers since they were written, and have proved over the centuries to be immensely influential. The idea of 'composition of place' can even be traced, so I believe, in the earliest impulses to write in the case of many writers, but especially James Joyce. But this book suggests there is far more to Ignatius than that.

He has not been seen in the past as a mystic in the ordinary understanding of the term. Indeed Brian O'Leary in sitting

tells us that there is only one other on the same theme.

"Only one English-language work comes to mind. In 1987 the North American theologian Harvey Egan SJ, published *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* as volume five in the series 'The Ways of the Christian Mystics'."

This is of great value, he adds, especially because of Egan's deep knowledge and understanding of Karl Rahner.

But O'Leary intends his book not for a well-informed reader deeply imbued already with the literature of mysticism, but for a wide general readership (which ought to be, in every case, the ultimate audience that a scholar sees for his work).

Important to an understanding of O'Leary's work and to an understanding of what

the seventh and final chapter of this book, "As Seen by His Critics; Melchor Cano and the Inquisition", which is quite absorbing.

After his return from Jerusalem in 1523 the opinions of Ignatius brought him to the attention of the Spanish Inquisition. His especial critic was a Dominican named Melchor Cano.

The point seems to be that the Dominican believed that mystical experiences were only open to those in orders; they were a reserved activity. Ignatius felt that they were open to all.

Cano thought that seeking after the mystical enticed a person away from his true God-ordained station in life. This brings to mind the thought that David the shepherd boy

worldly vocation to answer a very different call as an elected King. Sometimes we cannot at first discern the true vocation of an individual.

In the previous six chapters O'Leary explored the tradition of Christian mysticism, before turning to Loyola's story of his own life, to the early mystical experiences at Loyola and later at Manresa.

He suggests that his readers will find it useful and insightful to read, alongside his own perhaps, Brendan Comerford's earlier book *The Pilgrim's Story*, in which the account of Ignatius's life in the first part is separated conveniently from the discussion of the Spiritual Exercises in the second part. From there the reader can move almost in a natural sequence into what is explored in his own book.

are aroused by the thought of Ignatius as a mystic, will have to bear in mind that this book represents the initial stages of a multifaceted exploration which will go on over a long time. The great mystics of earlier times, say Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Hildegard of Bingen, loom over the landscape. So inevitably the first tentative efforts in this new field must take on the accumulated density of what has been written and debated about Ignatius' predecessors.

But the book conveys something of the excitement the writer feels on having taken the first steps in what will undoubtedly be a long pilgrimage towards understanding. To share something of that feeling readers have only to 'take

after all intended and crafted for a general readership.

At the heart of it is the fact that the aptitude for mystical experiences falls upon people in divergent and curious ways. Mystical experiences do not, in Ignatius's view, depend on a special vocation only open to the clergy. They were an everyday experience, and that will be a strangely thrilling thought to many. A matter, indeed, a Teresa of Ávila remarked, of finding God among the pots and pans.

Of all the books that have poured from the presses in this Ignatian year of celebration, Brian O'Leary's may come to be seen (as least for the ordinary reader), one of the most interesting and important contributions.

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.

A visit to the Palace of Westminster



The Victorian splendour of the House of Lords Dining Room

A further recollection from an active literary life

J. Anthony Gaughan

A most memorable day in my life as a writer was my visit to the Palace of Westminster, the home of the British Parliament.

This was occasioned by the publication in 1973 of my book *Listowel and its Vicinity*, which included an account of the Hare family, later ennobled as the Lords Listowel, who at one time were the proprietors of 30,000 acres of North Kerry.

Before setting out to write about the Hare Listowel family I had contacted the chief of the family at that time, its most distinguished and talented member to date.

The Right Honourable William Francis Hare, 5th Earl of Listowel, was born on September 28, 1906. After Eton, he went to Oxford and later to Cambridge where, becoming a convinced socialist, he joined the Labour Party and on inheriting the title in 1931, announced that, disapproving of titles, he wished in future to be known as Mr Hare.

Graduating from Cambridge, he took a PhD at London. A formidable philosopher, he published the *Values of Life* in 1931 and *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics* in 1933.

In 1937 he entered public

life as a county councillor for London. Having kept his seat in the Upper House, he was Lord Chairman of committees and deputy speaker of the House of Lords from 1965 onwards.

Not only because of his undoubted ability, but also because he was one of the few socialist hereditary peers, he filled an extraordinary number of responsible positions.

Lord Listowel's response to my letter was most encouraging. He expressed his interest in the forthcoming history and promised to assist me. He was true to his word, pointing me to important sources and reading and commenting on a number of the early drafts. He was so enamoured of the finished book that he presented copies to the House of Lords Library and to the London Library.

His letter to me after he later read the book indicates his enthusiasm for the project:

"Dear Fr Gaughan,

I have read your book about Listowel with very great interest and pleasure, and I would like to thank you for this valuable contribution to Irish local history. I was fascinated by your account of the people of Listowel. Their appetite for knowledge overcame their poverty in the days of the native schools, and now they have produced many talented writers and poets. I hope one day to travel to Ireland to make your acquaintance, unless you can be persuaded to come to London."

I did not need a second

invitation to go to London to meet him. A day was arranged. I took an early morning flight to London.

At the entrance to the Palace of Westminster I was met and escorted to Listowel's large office at the heart of the administrative, bureaucratic and legislative behemoth that is 'Westminster'.

Listowel introduced me to his office staff. He then took me on a guided tour of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. His commentary indicated his pride in the contribution which those institutions had made to the spread of democracy throughout the world.

We stopped at a number of the statues of legendary figures who had major roles in the Houses of Parliament. Here his commentary was not always complimentary.

As we strolled through the House of Lords we met two of its distinguished members. On a staircase we met Baron George Brown. It was clear that he and Listowel were close friends. Brown was a handsome man and over six feet tall. He had been deputy prime minister in the Harold Wilson Labour government and had also been in charge of the huge department of economic affairs. Listowel introduced me to Brown.

When he heard I had written a book about Kerry he exclaimed that he was a Cork man and in the banter that followed showed that he was aware that at times there could be tension between Cork men and Kerry men.

Further on we met a smil-

ing Captain Terence O'Neill, former prime minister of Northern Ireland, then Lord O'Neill of the Maine. It was clear that he and Listowel were also valued friends. He introduced me to Lord O'Neill. The contrast between O'Neill and Brown was palpable: the one so stilted, the other so relaxed. As we walked on from O'Neill, Listowel surprised me saying: "A charming man, but not very able"!

At the end of the tour Listowel took me out to the veranda between the palace and the Thames. There were groups of people enjoying a tea-break under sun-canopies.

Listowel led me to one of them. At the centre of it

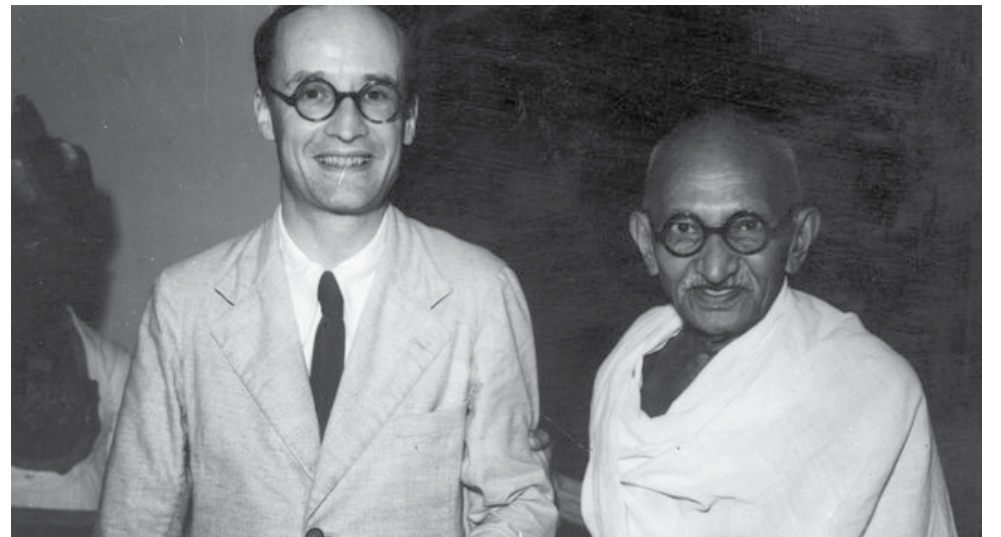
was Mrs Pandit Nehru, sister of Nehru, prime minister of India. She was then retired from public life, but formerly had been the representative of India to the UK and later was first woman to be president of the UN. Listowel introduced me to her and I clumsily attempted to imitate the polite gesture she made to me.

Listowel then told me we would be having lunch in the members dining-room. He also told me we would be joined by his then wife – a distinguished person in her own right – as she was also keen to meet me. She was from Northern Ireland and was pleasant and chatty.

During the lunch Listowel had a member of the

staff fetch my book from the 'Lord's library'. It arrived without the dust-jacket. Listowel pointed to it and said he wished to show me the excellent binding which the in-house book-binders had put on my book. In fact, the binding on it was the binding which had left the hands of Tommy Duffy and his staff at the North Strand in Dublin. However, I had not the courage to appraise Listowel of this.

During my return flight I struggled to place in context the wonderful kindness I received and the remarkable experiences I had had, and I fully realised that I would never again have a day such as I had at the palace of Westminster.



Will Francis, 5th Lord of Listowel, pictured with Mahatma Gandhi

A place in which to care for yourself and your spirit

A Quiet Space: A short history of the Sanctuary, by Sr Stan Kennedy and Sr Síle Wall (Veritas), €16.99/ £14.90)

Peter Costello

This little book is a short history guide to the Sanctuary, founded by the redoubtable Sr Stan and her associates.

She herself writes: "Over 23 years ago, we had a vision for the Sanctuary. That it would be a place of stillness that would speak to the stillness in everyone. That it would be a place of beauty that would speak to the beauty in everyone. That it would be a place where people would thrive. Where they would grow in

self-awareness. And in social awareness. A place of personal growth and development."

The book describes how over those long years things went in developing this ambition. Over that time many ideas were tried, changed, and others maintained. Certainly the places offers a rich variety of ways to access healing, mental calm, and reach towards inner understanding and to spiritual growth.

Its rooms and gardens lie in a fairly hectic part of the city, with heavy traffic and great activity. But the as the name implies the Sanctuary offers time out from that rush and bustle, to help focus, or even refocus, one's body, mind and spirit in all kinds of ways, new and traditional.

Indeed in a short review it

impossible to fill out the richness of new experiences that are of offer.

The resourceful team working there have been able to draw on the goodwill, physical aid and financial support of a wide variety of agencies civil and social. The whole scheme is a lesson in what can be achieved by love, energy and kindness. Long may it flourish, a lovely flower in the stony heart of the old Dublin.

The book itself is a little shy about providing exact contacts details, but these are easily found online with details of the courses and facilities.

Contact: *The Sanctuary, Stanhope Green, Stanhope St, off Grangeegorman Lower, Dublin 7 DO7 H290; enquiries@sanctuary.ie; tel: 01-670-5419.*

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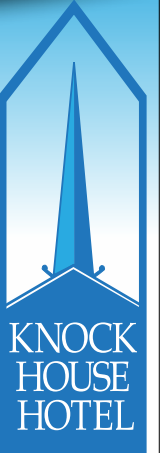


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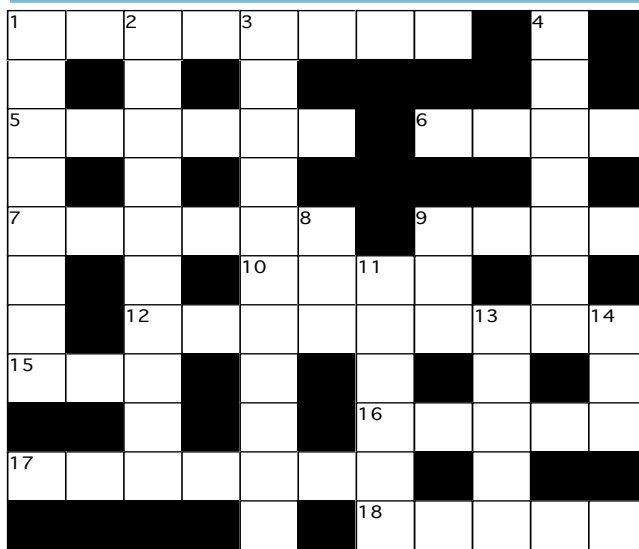
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 503



Across

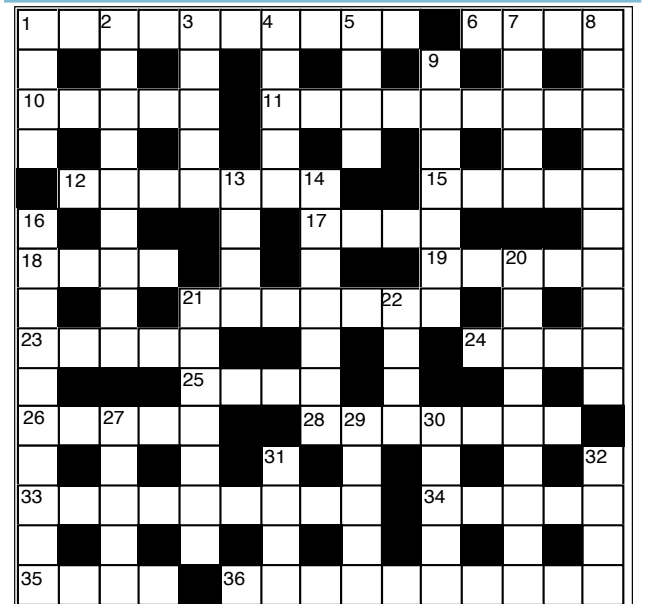
- 1 Bring back to your mind a thought from the past (8)
- 5 This huge European river flows through Vienna and Budapest (6)
- 6 The coming and going of the sea (4)
- 7 Large island off the coast of Mayo (6)
- 9 A slightly cheeky smile (4)
- 10 This word appears on Irish stamps (4)
- 12 The ninth month of the year (9)
- 15 Creature that followed the Pied Piper (3)
- 16 Happening every twenty-four hours (5)
- 17 Weird (7)
- 18 A huge cattle farm (5)

Down

- 1 There's one in each room as part of central heating (8)
- 2 English city (10)
- 3 You can carry this around and make calls on it (6,5)
- 4 The hour in the evening when you're ready to sleep (7)
- 8 Started a fire (3)
- 9 Jewel (3)
- 11 The person who is enjoying the book (6)
- 13 Former rugby player O'Driscoll has this first name (5)
- 14 A beam of sunlight (3)

Crossword

Gordius 631



Across

- 1 Idol created by Aaron to offer to a pagan god (10)
- 6 Cage for birds (7)
- 10 Entice (5)
- 11 Statement of the aims of a political party (9)
- 12 Midlands town on the Shannon (7)
- 15 Central walkway in a church (5)
- 17 Short skirt (4)
- 18 Colours, shades (4)
- 19 & 36a Shakespeare play about a Roman general (5,10)
- 21 The world's largest bird (7)
- 23 Powerful light beam that upsets earls (5)
- 24 County in Connacht (4)
- 25 Troubles (4)
- 26 Cut of mutton or lamb taken from the neck (5)
- 28 Nickname of Louis Armstrong (7)
- 33 Item of headgear named for a Central American country (6,3)
- 34 Sacrificial table in a church (5)
- 35 Toy on a string (4)
- 36 See 19 across

Down

- 1 Portal at the entrance to a field (4)
- 2 Infinite (9)
- 3 Praise highly (5)
- 4 Seasoning used in many Asian dishes (5)
- 5 Furnish a loan (4)
- 7 Fertile spot in a desert (5)
- 8 & 9 The saying of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed, for example (10,2,5)
- 13 Is in debt (4)
- 14 Female ruler (7)
- 16 The study of knowledge, or one's overall guiding set of principles (10)
- 20 Deeply distressing (9)
- 21 The Japanese art of paper folding (7)
- 22 Informal conversation (4)
- 27 More liquid than usual (5)
- 29 Michaelmas daisy that may dispel tears (5)
- 30 It is made of links (5)
- 31 Ostracise (4)
- 32 Furnishes with weapons (4)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 28

GORDIUS NO. 630

Across - 1 Downstairs 6 Trod 10 Motte and bailey 12 Shakier 15 Terra firma 17 Etna 18 Rave 19 Resat 21 Revenge 24 Vein 25 Woks 26 Rigid 28 Episode 33 Barbarian 34 Azure 35 Ewer 36 Lady chapel

Down - 1 Dime 2 Watch over 3 Steak tartare 4 Amaze 5 Rode 7 Ruler 8 Dry martini 13 Idle 14 Reverse 16 Preferable 20 Speed bump 21 Raw deal 22 Gobi 27 Gorse 29 Pansy 30 Slash 31 Pisa 32 Fell

CHILDREN'S No. 502

Across - 1 Roscommon 6 Cardigan 7 Reign 9 Heart 11 Note 13 Gel 14 Pals 17 Simple 18 Race 19 Best 20 Hat-trick

Down - 1 Record 2 Sardines 3 Orient 4 Meath 5 Barrel 8 Goliath 10 Emperor 12 Expert 15 Steak 16 Tuba

Sudoku Corner

503

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 502

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

Last week's Hard 502

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

Notebook

Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap



Reflecting on World Youth Day's renewal of mission

World Youth Day (WYD) was the idea of St John Paul II more than 30 years ago. It was a chance for the pope to have a meaningful encounter with young people and more importantly, for the young people to meet Jesus Christ in the midst of the Church.

All his life, St John Paul II had a powerful ministry to young people; when he taught in university, and when he was in parish ministry. In the summertime, he would take them kayaking in the Polish countryside. Each morning he would turn the boat upside-down and make a cross with the paddles and offer Mass with the young people at the shore of the lake with the Tatra Mountains as a backdrop. Here he would learn about their challenges, and their hopes and dreams and little by little, Fr Wojtyla was developing a powerful youth ministry which later he would see as vital to the life of the Church.

Since the inception of WYD, the international meetings have been all over the world; USA, Europe, and Asia and most recently in Portugal, where millions of young people gathered with the Pope.

My first WYD was in Cologne, Germany, in 2005. Beneath the



Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. pictured with young pilgrims during World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal.

mighty cathedral we prayed, sang, and shared our faith. We saw Pope Benedict XVI on the banks of the Rhine, like John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, he called us to follow Christ who loves us and as he said to the million strong young people at Mass in Marenfeld: "who

gives us everything and takes nothing from us..."

Long in the planning, in the first week of August 2023, we travelled with AMRI and other young religious and their groups. Together, we found ourselves in Lisbon with our Holy Father, Pope Francis. He

too loves World Youth Day and calls young people to, like Mary, arise and go. The theme was 'Mary arose and went in haste'. And with this theme, never has the Gospel of Jesus Christ been more urgent for our world.

Pope Francis counts on young

people to be vehicles of mercy and ministers of Jesus Christ. He reminds us that "those who don't feel capable, don't worry, he makes capable". And he says we are "called by God and are loved by God". The Pope powerfully reminded us that "the Church has room for everyone..." In his own simple style, he got the half million young people in Parque Eduardo VII to repeat this three times!

Pope Francis like his predecessors, Benedict XVI and St John Paul II counts on young people. He believes in the energy and honesty of youth.

We left Lisbon and returned to our parishes fortified and with a renewed sense of mission. Let us arise and make haste and be confident in the unconditional love of Jesus who said, "Make your home in me, as I make mine in you." (John 15:4)



Please help The Little Way to bring clean water to remote villages

Bishop Barthelemy Yaouda has written to The Little Way Association from Cameroon telling us that the far north of his country is the driest and poorest area: "Women and children have to walk miles each day to collect clean water, sometimes making the journey several times a day." The bishop continues: "This has a bad effect on the children's education and is a severe burden for their mothers. Many villages use unsafe water from ponds and poorly-maintained wells for domestic purposes. These waters are teeming with bacteria, parasites and mosquito larvae which are propagators of several waterborne diseases. A well-constructed borewell will improve the health of the whole population. The village of Konkorong has 1,012 inhabitants and its current water point is used for both human and animal use."

The Little Way Association receives many requests for help with the cost of digging borewells to bring clean drinking water to remote villages. Any donation you can send us "for clean water projects" will be forwarded without deduction and will help to make one village's dream, of clean water, a reality.



PLEASE HELP FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN

Fr Eamonn Gowling is a Redemptorist priest working in a favela/shanty town in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He reports of the great poverty there and how more than 200 children benefit from a feeding programme he has started which provides a nutritious meal each day. For many of the children it is the only regular meal they receive. Fr Eamonn is one of the many missionaries The Little Way Association supports with funds to feed hungry children.

Can you spare a donation, large or small, to feed a hungry child?

Every euro you send to our fund for Needy Children will be used, without deduction, to provide food, health-supplies and basic necessities for deprived children.

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