

The Irish Catholic

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Collective sigh of relief as 'Eucharistic starvation' ends

Chai Brady, Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osborne

Running the race until the end

Catholics across the Republic are breathing a sigh of relief this weekend with the controversial ban on attending Mass due to be lifted on Monday, senior bishops have told *The Irish Catholic*.

The prelates also praised what they described as the "fantastic work" of the army of volunteers who are working to keep parishes safe.

It comes as the Government has confirmed that in larger churches the number of parishioners will not be capped at 50 (see page 3).

"There was a collective sigh of relief," Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore told *The Irish Catholic*. "I think the Faithful have been starved of the Eucharist since December 26 – that's a long time."

Bishop Tom Deenihan of Meath praised the hard work of volunteers in preparing for the return, adding that the Faithful were "anxious" to get back.

"The indications were that people were anxious to get back and quite a lot of people are prepared and willing and anxious to do what they can and make sure

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The boys of St Malachy's PS, Glencull, Co. Tyrone celebrate their First Holy Communion with a race across the lawns of St Malachy's Church, Ballymacilroy on Saturday afternoon. Photo: Jason McCartan. See pages 8-9.


DAVID MULLINS

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FREE SPEECH

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Return to Mass welcome, but legal situation remains murky

Mercifully, public worship will return in the Republic next week. From May 10, Catholics will be able to attend Mass without fear of prosecution. Priests will be able to leave their homes to celebrate Mass without the fear of up to six months in prison.

It will be a relief for us to get back to Mass. We're not really the Church without gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist – not really. While many people have undoubtedly taken to sitting in their pyjamas having a cup of tea while watching Mass, it's a very poor substitute for being present and a far cry from what Vatican II described as “full and active participation” in the liturgy.

“Ireland laboured under some of the most draconian restrictions on public worship in the world”

Our relief at returning to Mass should not blind us from the reality that only a couple of weeks ago the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly moved to criminalise attendance at Mass – this despite the near-total cooperation of parishes with the regulations.

It's also worth remembering that while Ireland laboured under some of the most draconian restrictions on public worship in the world, Catholics in other European countries were free to attend Mass. Are we expected to believe that the scientists in Ireland knew something



Editor's Comment
Michael Kelly



The Four Courts in Dublin – ultimately the judiciary will have to bring clarity.

that their European counterparts did not? Did the Irish Government believe governments in other countries allowing people to go to Mass were acting recklessly? We don't know – repeated requests to both the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) and the Government for the science behind the ban on Mass yielded nothing.

This is why it is vital that Declan Ganley's challenge in the High Court to the ban goes on. Some will say now that we are free to attend Mass that it is a moot point. It is anything but.

Religious freedom

The Government moved to restrict the precious right to religious freedom without as much as an iota of consultation with faith groups. By contrast, other jurisdictions have acted more prudently, conscious of how big a deal it is to

restrict a fundamental right like the right to worship.

At times of a severe spread of a deadly virus, the Government may indeed be within their rights to restrict public worship. But, the Irish approach has been akin to using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

“Only a couple of weeks ago the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly moved to criminalise attendance at Mass”

We must know – both as citizens and people of faith – under what circumstances the courts think it reasonable to set aside the constitutional right to freedom of worship.

Mr Ganley has been fighting the case for more than six months now. It has been plagued by delays and rescheduled court hearings. In other jurisdictions, these cases have been heard by the courts swiftly given the seriousness of such restrictions. The case now must proceed, for the controversial ban on Masses remains on the statute book and the Government could once again trigger it at any time.

The courts have the responsibility of upholding Bunreacht na hÉireann. They must adjudicate on the lawfulness or otherwise of what the Government has done.

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Collective sigh of relief as 'Eucharistic starvation' ends

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everything is done safely,” he said. “I think the volunteering is in place and people have been offering support.”

He welcomed the increase to 50 in the numbers that can attend funerals, saying that the isolation people have been feeling was “accentuated very much” in the case of bereavement.

Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin said the lockdown had been “tough”, and that “people have a longing because it's not just about feeding the body, it's about feeding the soul. It's not just Eucharist, it's actually gathering with people”.

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross welcomed the return with joy, but said

that it has been “frustrating that we've had to wait so long”.

“We want to do it securely and follow the health measures, but all of that comes at a price,” he said. “If you look at other parts of the world and Europe, they seemed to have managed even through the pandemic in a way that we didn't.”

He added that for priests – whose public ministry has been limited to funerals and the occasional wedding – it means they can “become part of a bigger picture again”.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam said it was important to highlight the work of local volunteers. “I am indebted to pastoral councils for their great work,” he said.

“There is great excitement at the pos-

sibility of attending Mass again from next week. I share that excitement, as do priests everywhere...Now that we can begin to celebrate the Mass together again, there is a palpable air of hope, joy and excitement,” the archbishop told *The Irish Catholic*.

Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry praised what he described as the “tremendous generosity” of people in parishes.

In Killaloe, Bishop Fintan Monahan said that: “Fantastic work was done by the Covid committees in each parish and we are appealing to that generous effort and expertise once again.”

The Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy welcomed the return cautiously but warned that “complacency will be the enemy and we must not allow it to undo the good work”.



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*Names changed to protect identities.

ENDING EXTREME POVERTY WHATEVER IT TAKES

Ganley vows to fight on as Mass returns in pods

Jason Osborne

Galway-based businessman Declan Ganley has said he intends to “press on” with his challenge to the restrictions on public worship, despite the return to public Mass on May 10.

Mr Ganley’s case was postponed again at its last hearing until May 18.

“The bans that were put in place were in our view unconstitutional and disproportionate,” Mr Ganley told *The Irish Catholic*.

Even though the citizens of Ireland are expected to be allowed to return to Mass on May 10, Mr Ganley said the grounds beneath of his case haven’t changed, and that there is the potential that “the same ban could be imposed later on this year”.

“That hasn’t changed,” Mr Ganley said, “We intend to pursue the case as its important from a legal standpoint.”

Meanwhile, Mass is expected to return on May 10 with the ‘pod-system’ that was in place at Christmas and

last summer which allows for more than 50 people in the church.

Responding to a query from *The Irish Catholic*, the Department of the Taoiseach confirmed the system by which public worship would work upon its return.

“Pods of 50” are to be allowed, and greater than 50 may only be permitted under special circumstances.

Where the size of the premises or the place of worship allows for a capacity of greater than 50, this is to be allowed, provided “social distancing guidelines are adhered to”.

As well as this, the premises must be subdivided into distinct sections, which must be “cordoned or marked appropriately”, with a minimum of 4 metres between each section, and each section must have its own entrance and exit route.

There must also be separate arrangements for the elements of the service involving close contact, such as the distribution of Holy Communion.

Katie Taylor thanks God after retaining world titles

Chai Brady

Irish boxing champion Katie Taylor thanked God after she retained her WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO light-weight titles after her victory over Natasha Jones at the Manchester Arena.

After the win on social media, Katie said: “Thanking God for a hard fought victory. Thank you all for the support!”

The star has always been very vocal about her Christian faith and its importance to her as a sports person.

It was a close call in the 10-round match, with unbeaten Taylor claiming the tight victory.

Just more than a year ago, speaking on RTÉ Radio One Extra, the world champion said that growing up

in a Christian household and going to church every Sunday helped her understand “that if you surrendered your life to the Lord, there’s no limits to what God can actually do”.

“Every time I step into the ring, I’m obviously just focused on the fight itself but I feel like I definitely honour and glorify God every time I step into the ring, it’s like an act of worship and even every day in the gym when I’m training so hard, beating my body into submission, that’s an act of worship,” she said.

“Ultimately I know my career is in God’s hands, my destiny is in God’s hands, he makes a way for me and I get great confidence every time I step into the ring knowing that.”



Have your say SYNOD SOAPBOX

The Church in Ireland is moving towards holding a national synod in the next five years. It is part of the vision of Pope Francis of laypeople, religious, priests and bishops working together to discern where God is leading the Church and charting a future vision for Irish Catholicism.

As part of the process, The Irish Catholic wants to give a space for readers to share hopes and dreams for the future of the Church and what they would like to see as part of the synod process. The ‘synod soapbox’ will appear regularly in the paper as a space for dialogue and discernment.

If you would like to be part of the conversation, please send a submission of no more than 300 words to editor@irishcatholic.ie

The Irish Catholic

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'Inept and weak' Govt failing to protect fishing industry

Ruadhán Jones

Following a European Commission (EC) ruling that Ireland can't be trusted to police its own fishing quotas, a Donegal-based priest criticised the Irish Government for failing to defend the fishing sector.

The ruling comes as a blow after the Irish fishing sector had already lost €43 million following Brexit negotiations.

Fr John Joe Duffy said EU states fight "tooth and nail" to protect their fishing

sectors, "while the inept and weak Irish Government, Department of Marine and their Sea Fisheries Protection Authorities SFPAs do everything to frustrate, criminalise and destroy Irish fishermen".

Fish catches in Ireland must be weighed at landing instead of in factories after the EC's audit revealed "manipulation of weighing systems" and under-declaration by operators.

"Spurious allegations without foundation have been made against Irish fishermen in a leaked document and

leaked comments to the media," the Donegal-based priest told *The Irish Catholic*. "The fishing sector has called for the Government to display and make available evidence of any fishing infringements but to no avail."

Comparing the situation of the fishing industry to the banking crisis and collapse of 2008, Fr Duffy said we are seeing a scenario "whereby the Sea Fisheries Protection Authorities SFPAs and the Government are failing in their duty to protect the fishing sector and attempting to blame Irish fishermen for

failures that truly lie at the door of the SFPAs, the Irish Government and Department of Marine".

The latest ruling will cause "chaos" for Irish fishermen, including lengthy time delays for boats to land their fish and damaging the quality of fish.

"It is very frustrating to stand in Irish ports and see French, Spanish and other European boats land fish they catch in Irish waters as they wish and off load the fish onto lorries without weighing, queuing or inspection," Fr Duffy said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Death occurs of Tom Mullen, father of Senator Rónán Mullen

The death has occurred of Tom Mullen of Ahascragh, Co. Galway, father of Senator Rónán Mullen. Mr Mullen died Wednesday, April 28. He had been ill for the last number of years.

Senator Mullen revealed in 2016 that his father had been suffering from dementia.

Taking to social media, Senator Mullen said, "He was easy to love, and it was a privilege to help care for him through the long twilight of his Alzheimer's disease which began over ten years ago".

"We will miss Dad deeply," he added.

The Irish Catholic would like to extend our sympathy to the Mullen family at this sad time.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dhílis.

'Tragic' Westminster abortion vote empowers North's Secretary of State to 'run roughshod' over devolution

Chai Brady

Westminster's approval of regulations giving the North's Secretary of State Brandon Lewis power to direct the commissioning of abortion has been dubbed "outrageous" and should be "challenged".

Precious Life said it should not be up to pro-life groups to defend devolution after the Abortion (Northern Ireland)

Regulations 2021 were approved by MPs in Westminster in a 431-89 vote last week.

Westminster's abortion regulations came into operation a year ago through Section 9 of the 'NI Executive Formation Act'. However, Northern Ireland's Department of Health has not yet centrally commissioned the services on a region-wide basis.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, direc-

tor of Precious Life Bernadette Smyth said: "It is outrageous that Stormont is not speaking out against this government [in Westminster] who have run roughshod over the Assembly here.

"It shouldn't be for the pro-life movement to be trying to defend devolution, we elected politicians at Stormont, we went to the polls, we voted for these politicians but they don't seem to be outraged enough - there's no chal-

lenge to Westminster bar the fact that the executive at this moment so far is unwilling to implement the commissioning of more abortion 'services'. That's all we have at this point in time."

She added: "We call on all our Assembly members - if they sincerely believe in devolution - to oppose this move by Brandon Lewis. Those who don't and continue to sit in the NI Assembly are hypocrites."

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President Higgins apologises if offence caused by education comments

Jason Osborne

President Higgins has responded to criticism of his recent comments about education in the North, saying that the position was taken "out of context", rejecting the idea that he had insulted anybody.

Mr Higgins told The Late Late Show that separating children in the North according to their religious denomi-

nations is to abandon them "to parcels of hate and memory that others are manipulating".

Speaking to the *Irish News*, President Higgins defended his comments and position.

"I wasn't interested in insulting anyone," he said, "And I am sorry if they were, but they shouldn't (be)," President Higgins said.

He insisted that he isn't against the right of parents to choose their children's

education, but that he wants "parents to choose to educate their children together".

President Higgins comments drew criticism from Catholic commentators, including Baroness Nuala O'Loan who told this paper that she doesn't "know of any Catholic - or indeed any Protestant - who has ever told me that they were taught to hate the other people - the other side if you like - in school".

Scaling the mountain of the Lord



The Knights of Columbanus in Queen's University Belfast (QUB) had a wonderful day with QUB's Catholic Chaplaincy as they scaled Slieve Binnian of the Mourne Mountains, May 2.

The 'Nordies' and the 'Free Staters'

A hundred years after Northern Ireland was established by an act of partition is a timely moment to look back over that historical development.

And I think, if we are being honest, we on the southern side of the border had an ambivalent attitude over many decades. We deplored partition – naturally – and it was a point of national honour to denounce it and blame the British. As Dominic Behan's poignant ballad *The Patriot Game* says: "I've learned all my life/Cruel England to blame."

Free Staters

And yet, we 'Free Staters' – as the 'Nordies' called us – weren't always that positive about the North. In Dublin, the six counties were often called 'the black North', and many southern Catholics regarded northern Catholics as a different category – smarter, maybe, like Corkonians! Yes, there was sympathy when Catholics were under attack – as they had been in 1921-22, and later, when the civil rights marches



Mary Kenny



began. But in between, I think there was some quite passive indifference, or at least acceptance of the status quo.

My mother's best friend was a woman dentist in Banbridge, Co. Down. She was the only Catholic dentist in the town, and when another Papist proposed to drill local teeth, he was told: "There's already one Catholic dentist here – there can't be two."

The situation was more or less accepted, and only in

recent years have I come to realise that Catholics in Northern Ireland often felt abandoned by the 'Free Staters'.

A fragile entity

Looking at the bigger picture, I suppose it is to some degree understandable. The Free State only survived by the skin of its teeth. It really was a fragile entity and could have collapsed – the IRA's avowed intent in the 1920s and 1930s was to de-stabilise it. So, peo-

ple may have felt they couldn't afford to 'rock the boat'.

In the late 1950s, my uncle and aunt decided – greatly daring – to spend their summer holidays driving around the northern coast, and

venturing inland, too, at many points. They returned exhilarated. "Do you know," they said, "they are very, very nice people. All over!" Perhaps a few more folk might have made that discovery earlier!

The brilliant baroness

Detta O'Cathain was a pupil at Laurel Hill Convent in Limerick, and then went on to do economics at UCD. She started her working life as an accounts clerk at Aer Lingus. After moving to England with her husband William Bishop, she became a successful economic adviser to a string of major British companies.

Baroness O'Cathain, as she became, was a very big cheese in the London business world, and the City of London appointed her to head up the £150 million Barbican Arts Centre. She did wonders for the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Shakespeare Company, but struck terror into her staff for her 'Thatcherite' tough approach to

management. Detta didn't suffer fools gladly. But she had a caring side – she cared for her husband for many years when he became paralysed by a stroke.

Raised a Catholic, Lady O'Cathain became a strong Evangelical Christian, and in the House of Lords, was a decisive social conservative. She tabled a motion to allow blood relatives to benefit from the civil partnerships bill introduced for gay couples.

Detta O'Cathain died in April, aged 83. When she became a peer in 1991, I had to ring Laurel Hill to ask the nuns about Detta as a pupil. They were bursting with pride about the brilliant schoolgirl they had taught.

● For years, Gráinne Kenny (no relation, by the way) has campaigned against the dangers of cannabis as a recreational drug. As sometime president of EURAD, the European agency combating drug addiction, she has deservedly received many honours – from Sweden, the Netherlands, Brazil, the Philippines and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, among others. Gráinne has warned of the mental health problems associated with cannabis, now a recognised factor by agencies dealing with conditions such as schizophrenia and depression.

But the message is, apparently, not getting through to younger people, according to the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland. One in three use cannabis recreationally on a weekly basis. A lot of youngsters try it out at between the ages of 12 to 14. There is still a "general feeling" among the public that the drug use is mostly harmless, according to college president Dr William Flannery.

Kids will always try risky behaviour, but the knowledge should be out there about the mental impact of weed. But until this knowledge is transmitted through mainstream culture, in films, stories, broadcast discussions and electronic media, it won't be made known. Unfortunately, the big battalions seem to be on the side of marketing cannabis. But psychiatrists are coming to recognise the problem and Gráinne's pioneering work will stand.

Advertorial

Pope Francis: Climate change 'causing immense hardship for the most vulnerable among us'

Extreme weather destroying crops and food supplies in world's most vulnerable countries.



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2.7 million people are now projected to urgently need food if they are to survive.

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What Concern's help looks like

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'hunger gap'.

Causing untold suffering, the annual hunger gap runs from April to September – with people spending almost half their year struggling to stay alive. It's a desperate period where food from the last harvest has run out and it will be months until more is available.

During this time, normal life grinds to a halt. Children leave education to help with agricultural chores at home. Adults travel anywhere to earn even the smallest amount to support their families

And Covid-19 has further exacerbated an already dreadful situation. Local markets have less food to sell so prices have risen. And there's a shortage of seeds for next season's crops – the pandemic's deadly effects will be felt next year too.

Vulnerable families, who already have little to eat, are in grave danger.

But thanks to gifts in Wills, Concern is providing food for families in desperate need. And equipping communities to support themselves long into the future. This is achieved by providing drought-resistant seeds – proven to yield more food – along with the tools and training needed to adopt climate-smart techniques.

Chawada Aboubacar is a mother of five. Her family own a small piece of land where they grow the grain, millet. When it runs out between harvests, it used to be a struggle to provide the food they needed to survive.



Photo: Apsatou Bagaya / Concern Worldwide

With Concern worker Mounkaïla's help, Chawada can now grow food to help her family survive.

But thanks to support from Concern, she now has a thriving kitchen garden and grows a variety of vegetables. This will provide nutritious food for her family this year and for years to come. Keeping her children safe from hunger so they can thrive.

"We will start eating cabbage, carrot and lettuce in one month and then the onion in about six weeks. This garden helps me and my family. It makes me happy."

– Chawada Aboubacar

Chawada is ensuring they will be self-sufficient in the future; able to provide for both their own families and the wider community – helping to pull everyone out of poverty.

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**ENDING EXTREME POVERTY
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Inevitable backlash to standard Catholic sex-ed teachings



The backlash to the bishops' sexual education programme was eminently predictable, writes Ruadhán Jones

Back in 2015, shortly before the passing of the Marriage Referendum which legalised gay marriage in Ireland, then Education Minister Jan O'Sullivan promised school curriculum would not be changed in the event of the Constitutional redefinition of marriage. She said: "Currently we have legislation that protects the ethos of religious schools, and they are allowed under the law to protect that ethos in their schools. Now, there is no intention of changing any curriculum."

“Mr Varadkar’s statements were vague, to say the least, but a warning nonetheless”

At the time, the Iona Institute released a statement that the minister’s promise was “almost worthless”. Now, we know that it was absolutely worthless, as first opposition TDs and now Tánaiste Leo Varadkar have suggested Catholic teaching regarding marriage will no longer be welcome in schools. This was all part of a backlash to a new Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) programme for primary schools from the Irish Catholic bishops, entitled *Flourish*.

Statements

Mr Varadkar’s statements were vague, to say the least, but a warning nonetheless. Responding to a question from Social Democrat TD Róisín Shorthall, on the Church and sexual educa-

tion in schools, he said: “We need to make a statement on it because the programme for Government is very clear that when it comes to this matter it has to be inclusive of LGBTI relationships.”

Fact-based

It is not as though the Flourish programme is the “full, unexpurgated” total of Catholic teaching, as David Quinn has pointed out in this paper (April 29). But any opportunity is a good one when it comes to driving the Church out of education. The Social Democrats have been especially vocal in this regard, arguing that sexual education should be fact-based – and that “facts don’t have an ethos”.

This is obvious nonsense, as was proved when their press release then went on to propose how neatly the facts matched their own ethos, but it does show the blindness of those who shape our education policies. They do not realise, or at least do not admit, that they are seeking to replace the Church’s ethos with another.

“However, a sacramental marriage is different to a legal marriage”

That ethos is one many parents still desire. Clár Ní Cheallacháin, a Catholic teacher and parent, told *The Irish Catholic* that “as a parent, I chose a Catholic school for my children to attend and I want their RSE education to be in line with the school’s Catholic ethos”. She compared it to “parents who choose, say, a French school would want/expect the school to teach all things French, while respecting other languages and cultures”.

Respect

She added that “all LGBTQI+ persons should be treated with respect and we should actively work to prevent all forms of unjust discrimination against them”, but also that Catholic teaching on the nature of marriage as a heterosexual union is fundamental. “Legally a person may marry another person of the same sex,” she said. “However, a sacramental marriage is different to a legal marriage. It is a union between two baptised people, one man and one woman, for life.”

For how much longer will the Government allow such teachings to remain in schools?

Legislative vacuum remains around human-animal hybrids in Ireland – TD

Jason Osborne

The generation of human-animal embryos exists in a “legislative vacuum”, a TD has discovered on the back of a parliamentary question concerning the procedure.

This comes as a team of American and Chinese scientists recently created a human-monkey embryo by injecting human stem cells into monkey blastocytes, some of which were kept alive for up to 20 days.

Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Health if “chimeric” human-animal hybrid embryos are subject to regulation in Ireland and heard that currently there is no specific legislation regulating

this practice.

Deputy Nolan said she finds it “incomprehensible” that such a practice could be without regulation and said it “must be addressed as a matter of urgency”.

“I asked the question because I think it is important to highlight existing or potential threats to human dignity at all stages of human development, including at the embryonic stage,” Ms Nolan said, continuing, “And, perhaps more importantly, what are we doing as a legislative body to protect human dignity in terms of regulation”.

The issue is of cause for “ethical concerns” at the “existential level”, said bioethicist David Mullins, but clarified that “not all mixtures of human and animal cell

types ought to be prohibited”.

“In fact there are perhaps thousands of existing procedures which mix human and animal biological material that give rise to only limited ethical concern,” he said.

Mr Mullins offered Pope Pius XII’s guidance on the matter, which said that animal organ transplants into a human body are acceptable on three conditions, one of which being that “the transplanted organ does not impair the integrity of the genetic or psychological identity of the recipient”.

Ensuring the dignity of the human person is safeguarded is the “aspect of the debate that we urgently need to engage in here in Ireland,” Mr Mullins said.

See page 20.

Joy for Irish priests as ‘prophet of communion’ Blessed Charles de Foucauld to be canonised

Ruadhán Jones

Pope Francis confirmed that the French hermit and martyr will be canonised, sparking joy among his followers, who see him as a “prophet of communion” for the modern world.

Fr Niall Ahern, who is responsible for the Jesus Caritas fraternity in Ireland, said the community are “overjoyed” at the announcement, which came Monday May 3.

Fr Ahern believes Blessed Charles de

Foucauld – who lived as a hermit among Islamic peoples in North Africa – can be a “sign for our times”

“Blessed Charles embodied in every way the aspiration and concrete expression of what universal brotherhood signifies,” Fr Ahern said.

“He was committed to the culture of encounter – listening to the other at a new depth so that one’s own way of living may be challenged and made new,” he continued. “He promoted dialogue, non-violence and solidarity as the effec-

tive way to respect the common good.”

His canonisation will encourage people to follow his example, Fr Ahern believes, adding that at the end of Blessed Charles’ life, not one person followed him.

“But people began to see he had something tremendously beautiful to offer the world,” Fr Ahern said.

His followers today number priests, religious and laity across the world. For more information, contact frniallahern@gmail.com.

NI adopts IHRA definition of antisemitism

Chai Brady

The Northern Ireland Assembly has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism despite opposition from Sinn Féin and People Before Profit.

The DUP’s motion to adopt the definition was backed by members of the Assembly last week, a move which brings them in line with dozens of

other countries.

Sinn Féin proposed an amendment which would have removed all references to the IHRA and its examples of antisemitism, with West Belfast MLA Pat Sheehan saying if it was codified in law it would prevent “legitimate criticism of the State of Israel”.

Sinn Féin’s amendment was rejected by the SDLP with MLA Matthew O’Toole saying legitimate criticism of Israel could

happen within the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism. He said characterising antisemitism was important and the IHRA definition was a “useful tool”.

The Alliance Party’s Andrew Muir backed the DUP’s motion and spoke of the recent attack on Jewish graves in Belfast City Cemetery. He said this was proof antisemitism exists in Northern Ireland.

See pages 16-17.

Red nuns enjoy a special treat after hard work



The Redemptoristine nuns in Dublin celebrate the feast of St Joseph the Worker, May 1, with a special treat of waffles and chocolate spread. Pictured are (from left) Sr Magdalena, Sr Maura and Sr Máire Bríd.

Breda O'Brien

The View



We can no longer ignore the declining numbers attending Mass

As churches begin to re-open, we are full of anxious questions. Will people come back? Will we have to close again? How are we going to live in a post-pandemic world, which has changed utterly?

“Everything that is revealed was always there but is only now fully visible”

The greatest danger is that we see this simply as an interruption, after which normal service will be resumed. Instead, we need to see it as a disruption, with the potential to be a holy disruption, something which opens us up to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Crises act as revealers and accelerators. An evangelical megachurch pastor, Carey Nieuwhof, used the metaphor of a lake being drained to describe the impact of Covid-19. Everything that is revealed was always there but is only now fully visible. People were uneasily aware of trends but unsure how to tackle them and often defaulted to the idea, as one priest put it to me, that “the Church will see me out”. The priest meant it in the sense that there would be enough of a recognisable Church around for him to minister to and he could leave the really big problems to whoever comes after him.

Mass

Covid-19 stepped on the accelerator and that option of deferring the facing of problems has been taken away from us. We can no longer ignore the declining numbers attending Mass. Some of our most stalwart attendees may never return, partly because they have discovered that, in the words of a title of an online talk given by Fr John Harris OP, “I enjoy watching Mass with a cup of tea.” Even the vaccinated may be wary of returning to large gatherings for a long time and each delay weakens the habit of Mass going.



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell sits alone in Dublin's pro-cathedral ahead of his installation in February. Photo: John McElroy

Catholicism has been described as a religion of habit. Sometimes this is said disparagingly, as though the word ‘empty’ can always be understood before the word habit. But human beings have been designed to develop habits, to automate everything that can be automated and to reserve costly energy for things that need specific responses.

“The ritual embeds values and shapes beliefs even though it is entirely secular”

If we are not developing Christian habits, we are developing something else. The Presbyterian, James KA Smith, in his trilogy of books on liturgy, says that we are constantly being shaped by

liturgies, but today, they are mostly secular liturgies.

I live near Dundrum Town Centre in Dublin. In pre-coronavirus times, I was fascinated by young families who had a Sunday ritual. Up early, get the kids ready, into the car and head to Dundrum Town Centre for breakfast, followed by some therapeutic shopping. The ritual embeds values and shapes beliefs even though it is entirely secular.

However, essential as the Eucharist is to Catholics, it alone cannot create faithful, informed Catholics. Recently, in a book by Australian evangelical Mark Sayers, I came across a fascinating account of a British communist called Douglas Hyde.

He was an English political journalist and writer - no relation, to our first president, so far as I know.

Mr Hyde was converted to communism in 1928. Ten years later, he became editor of the Daily Worker. He became disillusioned with communism, specifically the Soviet Union, and became a Catholic in 1948. He wrote a book about his conversion called *I believed* which sold a million copies and then a book called *Dedication and Leadership* in 1956 which described the small cell methods of the Communist Party.

Dedication and Leadership

He said in *Dedication and Leadership* that “coming straight, as it were, from one world to another, it astounded me that there should be people [Catholics]

with such numbers at their disposal and with the truth on their side, going around weighed down by the thought that they were a small, beleaguered minority carrying on some sort of impossible fight against a big majority. The very concept was wrong. Psychologically, it was calamitous.”

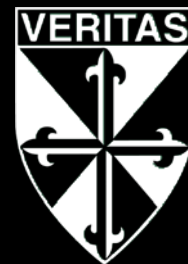
In the book, he describes how small cells of three to 14 were organised among those eager to learn. Each week they had a few pages of communist theory to prepare. Any member could be called upon to present it to the others. More importantly, each meeting began with the question: How did you put this into practice last week? It ended with another question: How will you put this into practice

next week?

Imagine if a similar structure were implemented in our parishes?

Online world

This crisis has presented opportunities as well as terrors. The online world has become part of parishes and the potential to use it for small groups is enormous. We need to move from a model of online activities that focuses on passive consumption to one that focuses on active connection. Most of all, we need to recognise that the Holy Spirit has not abandoned us. We need to actively follow his promptings and do the practical things that will allow His vision to flourish.



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- Pope St. John Paul II

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Joy at First Holy Communion in Co. Tyrone



Ladies of St Malachy's PS, received their First Holy Communion in the finest conditions on Saturday afternoon.



The pupils of St Malachy's PS, Glencull with Fr O'Dwyer and class teacher Mrs Mc Veigh. Photos: Jason McCartan Photography.



Darragh and the Somerville family.



The Armstrong family arrive at St Malachy's Church for Finnian's big day.



Aoibhinn Canavan with parents Joe and Nicola, brothers Fenan and Conan and grandparents Gloria and Willie Scott.



The Harte twins Anna and Sophie with parents Jarlath and Emma and brothers Niall and Conor.





Three generations of the Gormley family join Hugh as he celebrates his First Holy Communion.



Olivia McGinley with parents Anne and Cormac, brother Peter and baby brother Jack.



Liam Askin and his sister Mia celebrate his special day with an ice cream, along with dad Eamon and mum Sinead.



The Harte twins Anna and Sophie enjoy an ice-cream as Fr O'Dwyer enjoys his coffee on their very special day at St Malachy's Church, Ballymacilroy.



The young ladies of St Malachy's PS, Glencull received their First Holy Communion in the finest conditions at their neighbouring St Malachy's Church, Ballymacilroy on Saturday afternoon.



Kayla Magill with dad Kieran, mum Lisa and brothers Cahir and Paudi.



It was a double celebration for class teacher Fiona and the McVeigh family as daughter Aoife makes her First Holy Communion.



Eilish Kelly, brother Niall, mum Marion and dad Noel.

Wreaking havoc with Ireland's weddings



The landscape remains grim for those hoping to tie the knot with what remains of 2021, writes Jason Osborne

Come Monday, 50 guests will be allowed to attend weddings, but indoor receptions will remain capped at six guests while 15 will be permitted for outdoor celebrations.

It's been alluded to that numbers for receptions will be raised to 25 come June, but that's subject to the fluctuating situation, as everything else is. For those with their hearts set on the big, Hollywood-style wedding, postponement is inevitable.

Speaking of the wedding situation on *Morning Ireland* last week, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said it's "very, very tough".

Asked about the brutal process of telling 25 guests from the ceremony that they're not invited to the reception, the Taoiseach said, "I hate using the phrase, who makes the cut, who doesn't make the cut. It's fairly stressful in itself...I just don't understand how people are doing it at the moment".

“The pandemic and the ensuing restrictions have had grievous effects on so many areas deemed non-essential”

And yet that's exactly what's being asked of hopeful – but weary – couples right now by the Government. They're being asked to do something the Taoiseach himself doesn't know if he could do. Matthew 23:4 comes to mind: "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger."

Objection

The obvious objection has been raised on a number of occasions: "Why not just postpone until you can have the day you're dreaming of?" Obviously, everyone's answer will be different, with some couples choosing to do just that.

It's a little trickier from the perspective of a young Catholic, however. Those who take their Faith seriously also take marriage seriously. They understand that marriage is about more than the wedding itself – it's about devoting

yourself to another person come rain, hail or shine. It's about encouraging each other towards heaven, and if God grants it, raising and educating children towards the same end, too. It's something that cannot wait.

With their eyes on this prize and aware of the likely-false hope waiting offers them, I've seen a number of young couples step into married life under pandemic conditions. They've embarked on their voyage together accompanied only by those closest to them, but sometimes without even this consolation. One couple I know were joined only by their priest and two nuns for witnesses. Another saw the husband-to-be cross the Atlantic to be joined to his wife without anyone in tow.

“Those who take their Faith seriously also take marriage seriously. They understand that marriage is about more than the wedding itself”

Speaking to each of the people involved afterwards, they all affirm they wouldn't have had it any other way. The joy of marriage effaced all the difficulties they encountered as they made their way to the sacred moment. Still, difficulties they were, and it's quite the wringer they were put through.

Difficulties

My fiancée and I aren't unaware of these difficulties either. The wedding was initially intended to be in her native Poland, earlier by a couple of weeks, and more guests were due to be in attendance (although it still wasn't to be a large wedding by any stretch of the imagination). We made all of these decisions as summer 2020 drew to a close, confident that with vaccines on the horizon at that point and the summer lull in cases in recent memory, the following summer would be a safe bet.

We were far off the mark, with Ireland arguably a stricter place now than this time last year. This year has proven harsher than anyone could have anticipated, and anyone trying to take this most important step forward has been strongly discouraged from doing so. We were forced to bring the wedding to Ireland – a far more expensive affair – as a result of the travel restrictions our island has imposed. We were forced to postpone because the virtual queues for the registry offices (an essential part of the process in order to procure the marriage licence) were clogged with people whose weddings had also been postponed. We're also currently trying to figure out which of our family and friends will occupy the precious 50 seats at the ceremony and 25 at the reception.

The pandemic and the ensuing restrictions have had grievous effects on so many areas deemed non-essential. Non-essential for who?

It shouldn't be this hard to do the right thing.

Gianna Care sees surge in people seeking post-abortion assistance

Staff reporter

Crisis pregnancy organisation Gianna Care has reported an increase in clients looking for post-abortion care, with some describing the experience as "very, very traumatic".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Gianna Care director Carolyn O'Meara said that they recently received 10 contacts in one week from clients who found the experience more difficult than "they expected or were told".

"They're women who have gone through mainly the medical abortion, which is where they've taken the pill and they've had a medical abortion, usually at home," Ms O'Meara said.

She said the women who came to them found the physical suffering from abortion "lasted longer than expected," and that the graphic nature of the procedure took the women by surprise.

The trauma or suffering can include nightmares, an inability to look at new babies and difficulty walking down aisles with baby products in shops, with Ms O'Meara saying

they've seen instances of each of these with clients.

In terms of support, Gianna Care has continued to receive contacts by helpline, email and live chat throughout the pandemic, with many of those getting in contact finding it difficult to explain why they're reaching out.

"At first, women find it difficult to tell us why they're contacting. It might take two or three messages before they'll tell us why they're contacting," Ms O'Meara said.

"We just very gently from the get-go reassure them that we're there to listen and help, but that we understand.

"We understand that they're suffering. I think that's the number one thing to say to women from the very beginning when they contact you with post-abortion suffering or trauma, is to say we understand that this was probably really upsetting for you."

Prior to the pandemic, Gianna Care ran a monthly "peer-support" post-abortion support group, both men and women attending, with Ms O'Meara saying that most people did manage to find some level of relief.

A trio tackling homelessness



Homelessness charity Merchants Quay Ireland gratefully receive a donation of supplies from Brendan Gallagher of Focolare of MQI's Assertive Outreach Team, who bring hygiene/comfort kits to people who are sleeping rough. To learn more about Merchants Quay Ireland, call Emma Murphy at 01-5240965.

Dún Laoghaire plans criticised by Church for blocking housing

Chai Brady

The Archdiocese of Dublin and religious orders have criticised Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown council regarding a new plan which would limit the development of housing in the local authority area.

The Dominican Sisters said the new zoning "discriminates against religious" and was "unacceptable" in a submission to the council.

"There are 4,500 people on the housing list in this area – how can it be just or reasonable to prevent housing development on any avail-

able land," they said.

While the sites are currently zoned for housing, this would change under the Sustainable Development Infrastructure (SNI) zoning proposed for the 2022 development plan. Under the plans, residential development would not be allowed but could be considered by the council, who would have to be satisfied there would be no "undesirable effects" as a result of construction.

According to *The Irish Times*, the Archdiocese of Dublin told the council: "It is possible that there

Political silence on false diagnosis abortion case unjust, says Tóibín

Ruadhán Jones

Government inaction over what may be the first illegal abortion in Ireland since the abortion legislation was introduced is "deeply concerning", said the Aontú leader.

The Government is to carry out a review on abortion legislation soon, and yet the political establishment are staying silent about a "glaring injustice" within the legislation, TD Peadar Tóibín told *The Irish Catholic*.

"I think that is very worrisome," he continued. "If ever there was a need for a case to be reviewed as part of the legislation, this is it."

Mr Tóibín's comments came after he questioned the Taoiseach in the Dáil over the Holles Street abortion scandal, when baby Christopher was aborted in the National Maternity Hospital following a misdiagnosis that indicated he had a life-limiting condition.

"Twenty-five months ago, baby Christopher's life was ended by individuals within the National Maternity Hospital in an alleged illegal abortion," Mr Tóibín said in the Dáil.

"A large number of elements of the law were broken, not least that a senior practitioner signed off on the abortion but never met or examined the mother... However, 25 months later, the family still has not had justice for what happened to Christopher."

may be a requirement to amalgamate parishes and close a number of churches in the future due to declining attendances and a shortage of priests," it said. "This proposed rezoning of Roman Catholic Church sites and school land would result in considerable restrictions on permitted uses and a negative imposition on property values."



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South Sudanese will overcome evil with good, say Irish Missionaries



Irish missionaries in South Sudan reflect on the first few days following the shocking attack on Rumbek's bishop-elect, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

There is a mixture of fear and hope in the diocese of Rumbek, South Sudan, after the shooting of Bishop-designate Christian Carlassare, according to Irish missionaries in the region. As the police work for justice, medical missionary Noeleen Loughran and missionary priest Fr Alan Neville MSC believe that the bishop's commitment to work for "justice with mercy" will be key to healing the fissures that have emerged within the community.

“Ms Loughran – who has been working in South Sudan for almost a decade – said the shooting hit the community hard”

At 2am on Monday April 26, Noeleen Loughran was one of a number of people in the diocese of Rumbek contacted by local authorities. They were seeking a blood donor for Rumbek's bishop-designate, who had been shot in the legs by unknown assailants that night. The bishop's attackers confronted him in his house, breaking down his door before shooting him four times and leaving him for dead. Bishop-designate Carlassare was taken to hospital, where many people gathered in support and were relieved to hear that he was alive.

Ms Loughran – who has been working in South Sudan for almost a decade – said the shooting hit the community hard.

“It's terrible,” says Ms Loughran, an Irish missionary nurse in the region. “This is Friday (April 30) and we can't put together the disappointment, the shock and fear; the whole thing is just terrible. People were just completely – there were hundreds of people at the hospital, the police and the army and everyone was here.

“Even one of the priests that I work here with has taken ill with the anxiety. Many people have taken ill over it. It's just the confusion of it all. They feel pain, the people feel pain. This is the first time in 11 years they've been able to have a bishop because of the violence. The bishop was only here since Holy Thursday (April 1) and he was shot.”

Following the shooting, police arrested 12 people in connection with the crime, including three priests and several laypeople prominent in Rumbek. Many of them were integral to the running of the diocese, Ms Loughran says, adding that the diocese is almost “completely shut down now because the people involved were running the diocese. It's just completely collapsed”.

Perpetrators

“The president of South Sudan sent a letter, he is adamant to find the perpetrators of this,” Ms Loughran explains. “The government themselves have really acted quickly, which is very unusual here. But really it's not over yet because the family of the people who are now arrested and in jail.

They may rebel. We're very unsure what may happen. The bishop-elect is doing relatively well, he had surgery last night. He'll not be able to walk for some months, but he's insisting that he will come back.”

Due to the insecurity of the situation, Ms Loughran had considered leaving the country following the shooting. But “because the bishop is so strong and upbeat, that we can still help the people and don't leave the people in time of need”, Ms Loughran decided to stay.

Fr Alan Neville, a Sacred Heart missionary who has been in Rumbek since November 2020, says that while the immediate effect of the attack has been unease and insecurity in the community, he believes the response of the bishop-designate, the state and the people can be a source of reconciliation and solidarity.



Italian-born Bishop-designate Christian Carlassare, who was shot by gunmen in Rumbek, South Sudan, speaks from a hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, in a video message posted April 28, on Twitter.

“There would have to be a sense of unease, that would have to be there,” Fr Neville says. “But that's what these things are designed to do. Whenever you look at these things, it's either people who are overcome by greed or it's people who want to create a climate of uncertainty. My feeling would be that if anything it has done the opposite, because the amount of people who have rallied around, the amount of people who have spoken in support.”

“The response of the bishop-designate, who made a statement from his hospital bed following surgery, has given hope to the Catholic community, Fr Neville says”

In the Western media, Fr Neville continues, the attack has been reduced to a tribal or ethnic struggle. This isn't the case, he maintains, calling it a “lazy narrative”.

“What you have here are people who are greedy, just off the wall behaviour,” Fr Neville says. “We have this thing in the west, reducing it to a tribal thing or an ethnic thing – that's not the case here at all. And certainly what I would say to you is, when we were at the hospital on the Monday, the amount of people who came to show their solidarity – all the parishioners who came, the governor was there. He was there before the crack of dawn with his entire cabinet. They were thinking, this is not who we are.

Incredible rigour

“From my experience, the people here are very welcoming. Yes, it was a shock – there's a challenge around insecurity certainly – but this was shocking for everybody. Not only the governor but the president came out and gave a very strongly worded statement. And they are pursuing



Irish medical missionary Noeleen Loughran, who ministers to a community of lepers in South Sudan.

“First off he forgave the people who attacked him and then he said – and this is him lying in bed after surgery – the people of Rumbek don't deserve this”

the case with incredible rigour.”

The response of the bishop-designate, who made a statement from his hospital bed following surgery, has given hope to the Catholic community, Fr Neville says.

“Bishop Carlassare, he's an incredible guy,” Fr Neville says. “First off he forgave the people who attacked him and then he said – and this is him lying in bed after surgery – the people of Rumbek don't deserve this. He says they're very much with him.

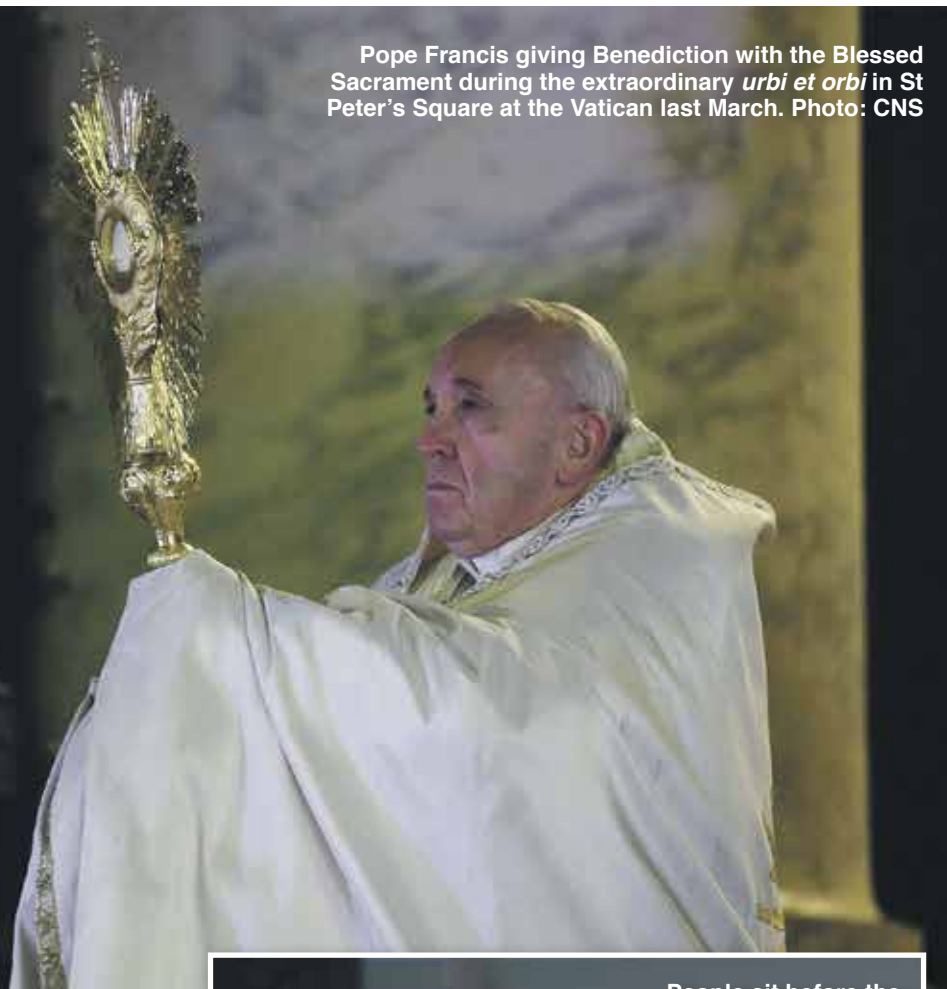
“And the message has remained consistent, very much a message of reconciliation and justice. But also solidarity with the people here.

When people say, is he going to come back? He says he'll be back as quickly as he can. He's the bishop-elect here at the moment, he's not the bishop just yet. But once he is, I think he's going to be extraordinary.”

While uncertainty continues following the shooting, Fr Neville is hopeful that some good will come of it: “How we are responding to what is a difficult situation – the bishop and the people who have been here a great length of time – you can't help but be hopeful. People are living out the message of Romans 12:21 – ‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.’”

Facilitating the legitimate and laudable desire to worship the Lord in lockdown

Pope Francis giving Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament during the extraordinary *urbi et orbi* in St Peter's Square at the Vatican last March. Photo: CNS



People sit before the Blessed Sacrament during the 2012 International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. Photo: Paul Haring



There is a real danger the Blessed Sacrament will be treated as if it were a magical instrument rather than the sacramental sign it is, writes Fr Fergus Ryan OP

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a huge challenge for everyone. It has equally been an opportunity to develop new skills, especially in IT and online communications. This opportunity applies also to the celebration of liturgical rites.

Liturgical prayer

Broadcasting liturgical celebrations is always a challenge but presents immense possibilities for keeping people in touch with liturgical prayer and for giving good example of liturgical practice. It also offers a great opportunity for parishioners to learn a new chant or hymn from the comfort of their own home.

Broadcasting in present conditions, however, also raises some points of concern. Thus, for example, anecdotal evidence suggests

that people are more likely to watch Mass on a device while having breakfast. There are also restrictions on the number of Faithful who can form a congregation with the priest broadcasting the liturgy.

The 'Novus Ordo' liturgy should normally be celebrated by a congregation and in song, but almost every liturgy has a simpler form of celebration. Many have emergency forms. All the options are described in the liturgical books.

In this regard, no cleric is ever free to just make up his own simpler form, but is required to follow the directives found in the liturgical books given by the bishops' conference.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in its simpler form is done before the locked tabernacle. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament always requires a congregation. It's one of those few celebrations that doesn't have a greatly reduced form.

Blessed Sacrament

Without a congregation present, a priest is forbidden to open the tabernacle in order to worship the Blessed Sacrament. Having one server present is also insufficient to permit the priest to open the tabernacle like that. Even with a congregation present, solemn exposition requires incense, singing, vestments and lighted candles (four or six). When it is not possible to follow these rubrics, then the tabernacle remains locked.

As for taking the monstrance outside the church or chapel, a congregation is required for either assisting and surrounding the procession or actually forming the procession. The purpose of going outside with the Blessed Sacrament is for the congregation to show publicly its faith and devotion.

Exposition only for the purposes of giving a blessing (Benediction) is also forbidden. Blessing with the Blessed Sacrament is only for

congregations, or sections of a dispersed congregation such as occurs at Knock or Lourdes, never for an individual person.

“Taking the Blessed Sacrament outside of its ordinary liturgical home goes against the Church's indications found in the liturgical books”

Why be so strict? Because there is a real danger the Blessed Sacrament will be treated as if it were a (magical) instrument rather than the sacramental sign it is. The Blessed Sacrament may be exposed only in a monstrance which has the form of a cross integrated into the design, because the Blessed Sacrament is the Lord's Body and Blood offered on the cross for our salvation. Understood in this light, it is regrettable that some monstrances have only a tiny cross on the rim simply to fulfil the Church rule.

As the sacramental presence of the Body and Blood of the crucified and risen Lord, the Eucharist is primarily intended for reception by eating and drinking. The Lord's Body and Blood offered upon the cross is consumed in order to receive the grace of the Sacrament. Taking the Blessed Sacrament out of its typical context – the altar, the celebration of Mass, the place of reservation, a celebration of Holy Communion as the sacrament of the dying (*Viaticum*) or similar occasions, always with the image of the cross visible, the church/chapel/oratory – risks turning the Lord's Body and Blood into something it was not intended to be. Taking the Blessed Sacrament outside of its ordinary liturgical

“Without a congregation present, a priest is forbidden to open the tabernacle in order to worship the Blessed Sacrament”

home goes against the Church's indications found in the liturgical books.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament – either in its solemn form (in the monstrance) or its unusual simpler form (opening the tabernacle for a congregation but without opening the ciborium or pyx) – is by definition a rare event requiring all the aspects of solemn celebrations of the liturgy: congregation, vestments, candles, singing (incense

may be omitted in the simpler form of exposition).

During the coronavirus lockdown I suggest that the best way to facilitate people's legitimate and laudable desire to worship the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament in a solemn fashion is by streaming exposition only from enclosed monasteries and similar places where the Church's requirements and safeguards can be followed.

Greater days ahead

Our Gospel today, John 15:9-17, is a continuation of the statement of Jesus, "I am the vine, you are the branches." The context is the discourse of Jesus with the disciples at the Last Supper. He has been telling them that his days among them in a physical presence are numbered. However, he offers great consolation, assuring them that there are greater days ahead. While his physical presence among them was wonderful, a spiritual relationship would be greater. The explanation of this would be the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Our celebration is just two weeks away, so it is a good time to start preparing for Pentecost.

“The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love.” The second reading at today’s Mass is from the First Letter of John (4:7-10), written by the evangelist to expand on some of the themes of his Gospel. He develops three stages in the development of love in the light of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Love begins in the Father, is shown to us in the life of

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O’Flynn OFM Cap.



Jesus Christ, and is poured into us by the Holy Spirit. “Let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.” Two classical theologians offer us beautiful answers to the question of why did God create us. St Thomas Aquinas suggests that love did not permit God to remain alone. Creation is the brimming over of God’s love. The Franciscan, Duns Scotus, suggests that God wished to have co-lovers. The ‘Big Bang’ was an explosion of love.

The greatest revelation of love is in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. “God’s love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life in him.”

The third stage is the coming of the Holy Spirit empowering us to pass on the love of Jesus. “This is the proof that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us a share in his Spirit” (1 John 4:13). This is how St Paul expressed it: “The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). Love begins in the Father, is revealed to us in the Son and poured into us by the Holy Spirit.

Interpersonal relationship with God

Returning now to the Gospel of the day, it reveals the astounding intimacy between Jesus and his followers. A modern school of philosophy expands on the idea that it is through interpersonal relationships that we come to know our identity. The Jewish writer, Martin Buber, summed it up thus: “Through the thou, man becomes I”. If you want to know the identity of a Christian, ponder on these gems of I-You relationship.

“This is the proof that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us a share in his Spirit”

I have loved you as the Father loves me.
May my own joy be in you and your joy complete.
I lay down my life for you.
I do not call you servant anymore; I call you friends.
I have made known to you everything I learnt from my Father
You did not choose me but I chose you.
I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit.

Our Christian dignity

Christian, know your dignity. Continue pondering on these expressions of the interper-

sonal relationship that Jesus wants to share with us. No wonder that Pope Francis calls it the joy of the Gospel. He uses simple language that anybody can understand in telling us to say “no” to doom and gloom religion, to defeatism and disillusioned pessimism, not to be going around as if we were coming from a funeral, and not to be ‘sourpusses’.

“I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit”. Pope Francis tells us that Jesus wants evangelisers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence. In his down-to-earth vocabulary he told a group of newly ordained priests that priests are like aeroplanes because they only make news when they crash. The media might highlight the sins of the Church but it is up to all of us to show the beauty of Christianity by the way that we live in the joy of the Gospel. In the early Church people remarked how these Christians love one another.

Rooted in the sacraments

Where can we draw the inspiration to produce the fruit of the Good News? By remaining in Christ as the branches remain attached to the tree. The roots of the tree are what are called the sacraments of Initiation, namely Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The sap or energy coming up from these roots is enriched

through prayerfulness and constant pondering on the inspired word of scripture.

Better days ahead

The churches in the Republic of Ireland will be opened for celebration of the Eucharist from tomorrow, Monday, May 10. Did you avail of Mass being streamed from

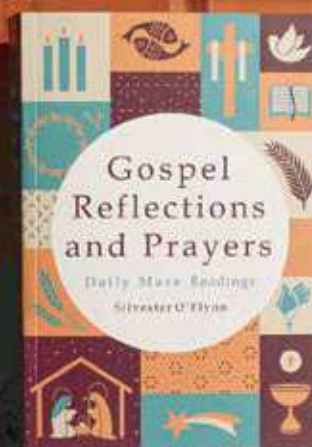
a church of your choice? Did you miss receiving Holy Communion? Perhaps one good result of being deprived of the Blessed Eucharist will be a greater appreciation of the astounding privilege of receiving the Risen Lord as the Bread of Life. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the vine and we are the branches. Apart from you we can do nothing. Grant us the grace to persevere, to remain in you, to be true to your word, and to experience the fullness of your joy. To be your servant is a great honour, but to hear you calling us your friends is beyond anything we might merit. You have called us and commissioned us to go out and bear fruit. As we welcome you in the Blessed Eucharist, nourish us with the grace to go from Mass on a mission of love.

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Re-evaluating the approach of the Church to sacraments post-Covid



The pause caused by coronavirus restrictions might be a moment to look again at how we celebrate important rites of passage in the Faith, writes **Chai Brady**

The Government advice that Confirmation and First Holy Communion ceremonies should not be part of the plans when parishes re-open for public worship of May 10 creates quite the dilemma. If Confirmation ceremonies are postponed until the autumn, young people in the Republic will go to secondary school without the Sacrament.

Quite apart from legitimate concerns expressed about this State over-reach in the life of the Church by trying to insist which sacraments ought to be celebrated and which ought not, it might be a moment that parishes could seize for a reset.

Sacraments

At least for some, there are also hopes that the pandemic, with all the changes it has brought, might be the spark that will ignite change in how children prepare for the sacraments.

Speaking about the effects of a delay to Confirmation, Dr John Murray a theologian at Dublin City University (DCU) told *The Irish Catholic*: "It may have to be done at secondary school level but that's not necessarily a bad thing. It's no harm to think a bit about the Sacrament, the Sacrament of Confirmation and when it's given and the good side to that and the bad side.

"If we were to think that giving the Sacrament because there's less of a likelihood a year later that the kids might commit to getting it, that would be a poor argument because it suggests that you're trying to get them young before they think about it," he said.

"It's part of the challenge facing the Church generally – I mean quite apart from Covid, although Covid does complicate things and make things difficult – how good is the catechesis and the evangelisation the Church carries out in education and in parish? Does it help parents



and individuals, children and adults to understand the Faith and commit to it? That's an ongoing challenge and I think this national synod that's being organised, it's going to have to look at that as a big issue for us."

Dr Murray asks how the Church can attract young people to make the commitment freely and enthusiastically to the Faith, especially as it will become "harder and harder" and more "unpopular" in the future.

“We often pay far more attention to the lawfulness and validity of the sacraments than the fruitfulness”

"So we may need to rethink the idea that everybody receives Communion and Confirmation just as a matter of course, that's worth questioning and thinking about and it may be that the Covid situation offers – even though it's bad and I don't like what's happened – a chance for the people in the Church to think about the way things have been done before and whether that should continue or whether there are new ways, better ways, of doing things into the future," he said.

Prof. Eamonn Conway of Mary Immaculate College in Limerick said the pandemic can be an opportunity to "rediscover the sacraments

as central moments of initiation, to rediscover key faith moments".

He said there has been too much of a focus on the sacraments being celebrated in a legal way and safe way, saying "the third element is often missing, which is that they be celebrated fruitfully. That is to say, that the grace takes effect".

"We often pay far more attention to the lawfulness and validity of the sacraments than the fruitfulness," Prof. Conway continues, "It's an opportunity to take stock of the reality of the core elements, which are the handing on of faith and the fruitfulness of practice."

It is a "huge disappointment" that confirmation won't go ahead, said Dr Jessie Rogers of St Patrick's College in Maynooth but for those who really want to receive the Sacrament when restrictions are lifted, they won't struggle she insists.

Confirmation

"For anybody who recognises the importance of Confirmation, you'll work around it, you find a way going forward when restrictions do ease that you'll be able to celebrate Confirmation," she said. "It's not a zero sum. Even the assumption that if students don't get confirmed at that exact time in their school curriculum does make you wonder sacramentally how Confirmation is understood. "If it's a case of 'you can't do it now, so you'll never do it', you do have to wonder whether Confirmation is not being

“We may need to rethink the idea that everybody receives Communion and Confirmation just as a matter of course, that's worth questioning”

understood purely as a rite of passage." Asked about the logistics of gathering children who have left primary school to go to different secondary schools for Confirmation, Dr Rogers said if parishes take confirmations seriously, "then there are other ways that the parish can ensure that it still happens and as much as possible it can happen with the same group".

"Perhaps what's being highlighted here is that parishes have handed over to the school too much. It's meant to be a working together of the school and parish. But if we say once the children have left that point in their school career, it will never happen – I think that shines a not too great light on the parish."

Dr Rogers added that she doesn't think the Government should make decisions regarding which sacraments Catholics can receive. With 50 people allowed to gather for public Mass, wedding services and funerals from May 10, Communion and Confirmation were singled out and disallowed due to "what happens after" according to Taoiseach Micheál Martin.

Common good

"I think the Government's remit can only be to say how many people can gather, these are the kinds of measures that need to be put in place. I wouldn't say that the Government should be saying you can do this one and not that one. The Government does have a right to be making decisions in the common good," she said. "Absolutely you can say that there should not be more than 'x' amount of people at a gathering, but I don't think you can single out a particular kind of celebration. You can say you can't have 'x' number of people in a house or 'x' number of people gathering outside, but I don't think it's fair to single out something specific." It's looking more likely that Communion and Confirmation will be celebrated in the Autumn across Ireland but in the meantime the Faithful are being asked to look past cultural norms and into the heart of what the sacraments mean.

Additional reporting by Ruadhán Jones and Jason Osbrone

Pandemic is breeding anti-Semitic conspiracies



There's a need to tackle, in particular, online anti-Semitic conspiracies which connect Jewish people to the pandemic, writes **Chai Brady**

Antisemitism has existed in some form or other for 3,000 years and has taken many different shapes since then, some attacks on the Jewish people are obvious and easily recognised while others are more subliminal – but at times more insidious.

In Ireland, in September last year, a 'bishop' used a Cork 'chapel' to go on an anti-Semitic tirade, which was uploaded online. He falsely claimed Covid-19 "is possibly the creation of the Jews".

'Bishop' Richard Williamson was twice excommunicated by the Church. His talk was held in a chapel built by the schismatic splinter group 'SSPX Resistance' in Maulatanvally, west Cork.

Whenever a major world crisis occurs it seems there are always elements in societies, particularly in the online world in modern times, that consistently point an accusatory finger at the Jewish people. Often, they are made the scapegoat for world crises with zero evidence.

This is no less true during the current crisis humanity faces: the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus has wracked the world for more than a year and has led to a plethora of fear and uncertainty. Honest and probing questions of governments and the holding of public health officials to account are healthy in any democracy, but what has thrived

online are numerous baseless conspiracy theories.

Blaming Jews

Israeli researchers reported in April 2020 that the pandemic has sparked a rise in anti-Semitic expression, with people blaming Jews for the spread of the disease and the economic recession it has caused.

An annual report by Tel Aviv University researchers on anti-Semitism found there was an 18% spike in attacks on Jewish people in 2019. The report warned the pandemic has threatened a further ramp-up of incitement.

Speaking after the report's publication, Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress – which is an umbrella group representing Jewish communities across the continent – said: "Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a significant rise in accusations that Jews, as individuals and as a collective, are behind the spread of the virus or are directly profiting from it. The language and imagery used clearly

identifies a revival of the medieval 'blood libels' when Jews were accused of spreading disease, poisoning wells or controlling economies."

Fortunately, due to lockdowns around the world, the same researchers found that the number of incidents of physical violence toward Jews across some 40 countries dropped from 456 to 371 in 2020.

“There aren't too many of us going out and speaking anymore, we're few in numbers but our voices are heard”

However, this has led to anti-Semitic rhetoric moving online, the researchers stated in this year's report which was published earlier this month. More conspiracy theories blaming the Jewish people for the devastating impacts of the virus are materialising.

Mr Kantor warned this year that "anti-Jewish hatred online never stays online. We have to be prepared that anti-Semitic conspiracy theories could lead to physical attacks on Jews when lockdowns end".

Jews and Israelis have been falsely blamed for spreading the virus so they could sell lucrative vaccines. The accusation is a common trope used by anti-Semitic people; blaming Jews for spreading illness and disease.

“Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a significant rise in accusations that Jews, as individuals and as a collective, are behind the spread of the virus or are directly profiting from it”



Holocaust survivors

Due to the reported increase in anti-Semitism on online forums during the pandemic, Holocaust survivors took to social media. The move was also in response to studies indicating younger generations lack basic knowledge regarding the genocide by the Nazis.

The survivors shared their experiences of how hate speech paved the way for mass murder. There are now several short video messages recounting their stories. Participants in the #ItStartedWithWords campaign hope to educate people about how the Nazis embarked on an insidious campaign to dehumanise and marginalise Jews years before death camps were established to carry out murder on an industrial scale.

The videos were released on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter starting

earlier this month. The posts include a link to a webpage with more testimonies and teaching materials.

“We see symbols of the Holocaust used on placards and on social media to spread misinformation”

Speaking to the Associated Press from Montreal, a Holocaust survivor from Poland, Sidney Zoltak (89) said: "There aren't too many of us going out and speaking anymore, we're few in numbers but our voices are heard. We are not there to tell them stories that we read or that we heard – we are telling facts, we are telling what happened to us and to our neighbours and to our communities. And I think that this is the strongest possible way."

Earlier this month a blogger in England was jailed after making anti-Semitic comments on a radio show. Alison Chabloz (57) made the comments in May and July in 2019 and shared the broadcasts on a blog from Derbyshire. She was found guilty of sending offensive messages by public network at Westminster Magistrates' Court.



Auschwitz, Poland.

The comments breached the conditions of a previous suspended sentence given after she was convicted of broadcasting anti-Semitic songs in 2018. The songs included claims the Holocaust never happened.

Speaking at a webinar on Holocaust remembrance last month, Israel's ambassador to Ireland Ophir Kariv said it is easy to spot Holocaust denial but far more difficult to recognise Holocaust distortion.

Opportunities

Ambassador Kariv said: "Unfortunately, the past year has provided many opportunities for cynical actors to use the memory of the Holocaust as a tool for campaigning and spreading conspiracy theories."

"We see symbols of the Holocaust used on placards and on social media to spread misinformation. We see offensive comparisons made and the vocabulary of the Holocaust

weaponised to hurl insults. This is not only desecrating the memories of the victims of Nazism but degrading to Holocaust survivors."

The ambassador commended the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) which he said provides a comprehensive definition of anti-Semitism which includes all types of contemporary anti-Semitism.

“Social media has become a vehicle for antisemitism”

A Jewish man living in Ireland who preferred to remain anonymous, told this paper if you spend enough time online and actively seek out antisemitism, it can be easily found. Prejudicial and downright horrific sentiments, falsehoods and dog-whistles crop up daily.

While these comments online don't necessarily mean there are people willing to act on their anti-Semitism in certain countries, it can happen, and antisemitism whether it is online or not, should be nipped in the bud before words turn to actions, he said.

Speaking at the same event as Ambassador Kariv, Germany's Ambassador to Ireland Deike Potzel, said "social media has become a vehicle for antisemitism".

“Israel may be used as a substitute for a conceived Jewish collectivity”

"Shockingly, the number of anti-Semitic attacks worldwide is rising once again, with the highest number of incidents reported in major western democracies including the United States, France, Britain and Germany.

"Recent attacks on Jews in Germany and other parts of the world, rising conspiracy myths and incidences of Holocaust denial and distortion have shown that we cannot stop in our efforts to remember and learn. Because these attacks undoubtedly make clear that antisemitism is not a phenomenon of the past. That is why remembering must also be a tool to pause and reflect on how we can make a difference today, in countering antisemitism, intolerance, holocaust denial. It needs all our support."

On April 7 this year a delegation of the EU to Israel, together with the 26 embassies of EU member states present in Israel, released a statement on Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom HaShoah) stating: "We stand against traditional and contemporary forms of anti-Semitism, including recent conspiracy theories falsely blaming Jews for Covid-19. We will strenuously counter such lies wherever and whenever we encounter them and continue to fight anti-Semitism and other hate crimes."

The European Commission has tripled the EU budget for Holocaust remembrance, education and research as of 2022, and later this year are expected to present the first-ever

“Shockingly, the number of anti-Semitic attacks worldwide is rising once again, with the highest number of incidents reported in major western democracies”

EU comprehensive strategy to combat antisemitism and foster Jewish life. Holocaust remembrance, education and distortion will be among the central pillars of this strategy.

At the beginning of the year the European Commission published, in cooperation with the German Presidency of the IHRA [On April 1, 2021, Greece took over the IHRA Presidency from Germany], a handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

The IHRA brings together experts in Holocaust education, research and remembrance, including museum, memorial and education professionals, historians, archaeologists, and specialists in genocide studies and other disciplines.

This handbook shows how the working definition has been applied in the EU and the UK by governments and members of civil society. It provides examples of good practices of implementing the working definition in various fields, including law enforcement, the judiciary, education and educational institutions, international and government funding, and civil society. It relates its guiding examples in the context of real-world antisemitic incidents and crimes. It also provides a checklist for using the working definition across different policy areas.

In recent times the State of Israel has been mentioned in the Oireachtas in relation to the success of their speedy vaccine programme but there has been much criticism of the country from some politicians in relation to its interaction with Palestine and its people. It's important that constructive and warranted criticism does not cross a line.

Criticism

While the IHRA says that criticism of Israel, the only Jewish state in the world, is not antisemitic, it states: "Manifestations [of antisemitism] might include the targeting of the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for 'why things go wrong.' It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereo-

types and negative character traits."

The handbook goes on to say that in certain forms of antisemitic expression, "Israel may be used as a substitute for a conceived Jewish collectivity".

"Rather than 'criticising' Israel as one might any other state, some forms of antisemitism express direct hatred exclusively against Israel or seek to apply double standards in criticising that country. Often, this manifests through the use of antisemitic tropes."

Speaking in a personal capacity to *The Irish Catholic*, Michael Black who is the chairperson of the Belfast Jewish Community, said that whenever there is criticism of Israel's actions in the Middle East, Jewish people become targets and sometimes receive blame for the actions of the State of Israel.

Vandalism

About two weeks ago, on April 15, several Jewish graves in Belfast's City Cemetery were vandalised and headstones smashed. The PSNI are treating the destruction of the 10 graves as a hate crime. Five years ago, August 2016, 17 graves were destroyed by eight youths, some using hammers, while a crowd egged them on, which Mr Black believes was connected to the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Middle East.

"We've had one or two nasty emails to our community email address but in general we don't see a lot of it, or very little of it except when there is problems in the Middle East, that's what gets people riled up," Mr Black said.

“Unfortunately, the past year has provided many opportunities for cynical actors to use the memory of the Holocaust as a tool for campaigning”

"The last desecration of the cemetery coincided with problems in the Middle East. There's nothing wrong with criticising Israel, absolutely not, and like any country it has to be watched from an objective point of view to make sure that they behave properly," he emphasises, "But why are they going after a Jewish target here? That's an antisemitic act but they use Israel as an excuse."

He adds: "I call myself a Northern Ireland Jew, I'm very comfortable here, as much as anybody can be with the troubles etc... I don't feel threatened personally, I think we've got enough local problems. But when problems start in the Middle East that's when you see underlying antisemitism."

As the pandemic continues, with Ireland unlikely to return to normality any time soon and with warnings that false online conspiracy theories connecting Jewish people and institutions to Covid-19 are on the rise, the importance of tackling any rumblings of antisemitic sentiment can't be understated.





We are witnessing an irrational demand for the endless purging of sin from the body politic, writes Kingsley Jones

If you are reading this then you are concerned about 'wokism', about the fact that the tone of our political and social disagreements is growing ever more strident, that we seem to be on the verge of a new age of witch hunts.

But then how did we get to this crisis point? And what is 'wokism'? Firstly, if we regard wokism as the desire to divide the world into camps and to exclude those who don't belong (cancel them) we must acknowledge that we have not diagnosed a disease but have merely identified its symptoms.

And even if we insist that 'wokism' is an irrational moral crusade, a religious zealotry which demands that we acknowledge our sins (racism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.) and then absolves us from them (frees us from persecution!) on the condition of public confession and renunciation, we have still fallen short of a complete description of its pathology. To illustrate my point, let's take a well-known instance of the operation of cancel culture, let's examine again the case of Lindsay Shepherd and see if we can uncover that pathology.

“The committee believed its role was to create a safe space for the oppressed and in so doing to act as a committee of public safety”

Remember that Lindsay Shepherd was a junior teaching assistant at Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada, who in a class on communication chose as a teaching tool to show her pupils a video of Jordan Peterson talking about gender, a choice that resulted in Ms Shepherd being brought before a university disciplinary committee.

In the course of this meeting, the committee made various accusations against Ms Shepherd, but their key allegation was that their investigation had been prompted by a complaint from someone in the communication class, although they refused to divulge any further details, on the grounds of confidentiality. The committee members were unaware that Ms Shepherd was recording the meeting and when she released the recording publicly the ensuing controversy led to the disclosure that

Awakening to the meaning of 'woke'



The case of Lindsay Shepherd highlighted the issue of free speech on university campuses

no such complaint had been lodged against her.

Why did the committee think that their desire to discipline Ms Shepherd and 'cancel' Prof. Peterson justified their lying about the complaints? Obviously, this is a very crude form of end justifies the means argument in which the means was the telling of a lie and the end desired the silencing of certain kinds of political argument in order to protect vulnerable groups from harm (so the committee believed its role was to create a safe space for the oppressed and in so doing to act as a committee of public safety). Thus, the situation had two salient features for the committee members: this was a political conflict and a skirmish in which truth was a weapon.

Morality

It is not just that morality here is being subsumed to a belligerent form of politics – there is an underlying history, beginning with the scepticism of Enlightenment theorists about the objectivity of moral principles and their search for new principles that could justify moral behaviour. As in the political arena, the revolutionary ferment of the Enlightenment generated the formation of the modern left and right, and the ethical conviction emerged that there



US Congresswoman Marcia Fudge with a 'stay woke' t-shirt in 2018.

“Our wokist protagonist might protest that there is a deeper continuity in these heterogeneous ideological narratives”

are no absolute prescriptions of morality and that such prescriptions can only be justified within some larger narrative (defending the cause of enlightenment against the forces of reaction, advancing the cause of workers against the depredations of predatory employers or defending unjustly marginalised identity groups against reactionary opponents). In each case, morally questionable behaviour is sanctioned by the exigencies of political expediency (whether for a Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety in 1790s Paris or a university disciplinary committee in the twenty-first century).

“Freedom is an absolute value beyond which there is no appeal and which constitutes the precondition of the realisation of any good”

But how can such ideological judgments about morality be warranted? And how can the ideologues who make them have such confidence in their ideological narratives when so often these ideologies have changed or even been refuted? By answering these questions, we will also resolve the conundrum of wokism.

Our wokist protagonist might protest that there is a deeper continuity in these heterogeneous ideological narratives, an underlying theme of the emancipation of the oppressed, a quest for freedom that makes these narratives intelligible and confers legitimacy upon them.

The significance of this imperative of emancipation arises from the context in which our protagonist imagines it to be enunciated, for this quest always takes place in the midst of conflict. This quest for freedom is essentially a war between freedom seekers and freedom deniers.

Freedom

Here freedom is an absolute value beyond which there is no appeal and which constitutes the precondition of the realisation of any good. Therefore, there can be no rational adjudication of competing visions of freedom; all that remains is a war in which the side you choose is determined by your experience of conversion or aversion to a quasi-religious crusade of the righteous, those who have history on their side in their quest for freedom for its own sake, and one which on its own terms warrants the behaviour of an organisation like the disciplinary committee in the Ms Shepherd case.

This grandiose vision of historical destiny, to which the committee committed itself, is essentially fideistic: one sees the inevitability of the struggle, one perceives its righteousness and one commits oneself to it. The essence of wokism is this, the assurance to its adherents (such as disciplinary committees in contemporary universities) that they are on the right side of history and that this righteousness validates any course of action they choose and condemns anyone who opposes them.

The premises of wokism are irrational – a matter of faith not reason – and thus it is not surprising that it bears the marks of a cult: the Gnostic division of the world into righteous and unrighteous; the demand for the endless purging of sin from the body politic; the reliance on rhetorical

appeals to emotion; and the use of intimidation to silence opponents and suppress the voice of conscience. But such an irrational philosophy could not succeed were it not in fact parasitic on truly rational beliefs that rest upon a genuinely progressive vision of redemption in history, one founded upon the precepts of an objective morality.

“This was a political conflict and a skirmish in which truth was a weapon”

Thus, if wokism is the anti-rational and immoral antithesis of a genuine philosophy of historical destiny, then we can complete our pathology of the wokist 'disease' by prescribing for it a rational and moral 'cure': that is, insist on the rational intelligibility of the world, respect the requirements of basic morality in our actions and resist the temptation to resolve conflicts by irrational means. In such a world, the quest for freedom ceases to be merely a matter of personal autonomy and becomes instead the quest for emancipation from the constraints of irrationality, from the effects of sin.

We should not be surprised that the committees of public safety are most active today in North America, or that currently it is the most susceptible to the spirit of wokism. After all, North America has a long history of awakenings, of fideism and of apocalyptic expectations. However, the same continent also has vast untapped resources of wisdom, 'the better angels of our nature', and in awakening to the truth about woke, it will also have the opportunity to awaken to its real historical destiny.

The new National Maternity Hospital: A principled fight or a phony war?



Political parties determined to promote their 'progressive credentials' are intent on stoking fears of an imaginary Catholic threat to their vision of a secular Ireland, writes **David Mullins**

From 2012 to 2017 the decision to relocate the National Maternity Hospital at Holles Street to a site on the Elm Park campus of St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin, owned by the Religious Sisters of Charity, created sustained levels of public controversy.

Indeed, the proposal was attacked from every side of the political and cultural spectrum as questions arose around what kind of reproductive or termination of pregnancy-related procedures could and would be offered in a new hospital built on land owned by a Catholic religious order.

In the heat of the ensuing debate the Religious Sisters of Charity were accused of moral complicity in the provision of future abortion and sterilisation services, while the State was accused of incomprehensibly transferring ownership of a €300million-plus project to a 'bunch of nuns' in an apparent clear breach of the wider, secular, public interest.

“Minister of State Anne Rabbitte has confirmed that the final text of the legal contract underpinning the transfer will be published in the coming weeks”

But in 2016 an agreement between the National Maternity Hospital (Holles St.) and St Vincent's Hospital Group, mediated by Kieran Mulvey, made it explicitly clear that a new special purpose company, The National Maternity Hospital at Elm Park DAC would be set up to provide extensive 'reserved powers' to the Minister for Health as well as clinical



People protest outside the Department of Health in Dublin about plans to site the new National Maternity Hospital on land owned by the Sisters of Charity in 2017. Photo: Niall Carson.

and operational independence in the provision of maternity, gynaecology, obstetrics and neonatal services “without religious, ethnic or other distinction”.

Investment

The State's investment would also be protected for future generations.

It was then confirmed last May that the Sisters of Charity would be transferring their shares in St Vincent's Healthcare Group (SVHG) after 186 years involvement with St Vincent's Hospital to a not-for-profit with charitable status company governed by Irish company law (not Canon Law).

In other words, the sisters could and would have no further say in how the new hospital was run.

The Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly even assured the Dáil that when the legal framework was published it would categorically show that the new hospital “will be operated without religious or other distinction”.

Now, what should hopefully be clear at this point, irrespective of where one stands on the appropriateness of the strategy adopted by the Sisters of Charity, especially

with respect to the preservation of a Catholic healthcare ethos, is that the new National Maternity Hospital will operate according to the laws of Ireland and this will include facilitating the provision of abortion services.

What is interesting however is that despite such clear evidence being laid before them, many politicians, particularly those on the left, remain determined to continue framing the issue as some kind of Machiavellian plot that will enable the new hospital to operate as an 'anti-woman' institution beholden to a 'regressive' Catholic ethos.

In fact, we know that the co-leader of the Social Democrats Roisin Shortall has already organised a meeting that is open to all TDs and Senators with leading abortion campaigner Dr Peter Boylan and the Campaign Against Church Ownership of Women's Healthcare (CACOWH).

Timing

The timing of this is hardly a coincidence now that Minister of State Anne Rabbitte has confirmed that the final text of the legal contract underpinning the transfer will be published in the coming weeks.

When this happens it is almost guaranteed to stir up yet another round of media and political hyper-ventilation where every institutional and historical sin of the Church will be paraded and repeated ad nauseam until even the imaginary thoughts of 'having a nun about the place' will fill the general public with horror.

“The proposal was attacked from every side of the political and cultural spectrum”

So why are they doing this? What is to be gained?

Surprisingly enough, an insight into the possible motivation of some of those on the political left was provided by the former Minister for Health Simon Harris in 2017.

At the time he was responding to Deputy Brid Smith on questions she had raised about the independence of the new National Maternity Hospital.

No matter how many times Minister Harris assured her that there would be no religious ethos at the

site, the deputy would not take yes for an answer.

Eventually Minister Harris gave up and said: “no matter how often I say it, the deputy will never be convinced or accept it because she wants to be in the politics of protest”.

That, I suspect, will be the real and broader agenda at play in the coming weeks.

Progressive credentials

Political parties and groups with a vested interest in promoting their 'progressive credentials' will use the National Maternity Hospital issue, that has long since been resolved, to protest about, and stoke fears around, an imaginary Catholic threat to their vision of what a secular civil society should look like.

It will be a phony war fought against an 'enemy' who is already in serious cultural retreat. But even phony wars can yield victories on other fronts as they can serve to create the impression of strength and courage where none exists.

In other words; by piggybacking on this issue the momentum can be kept going until the final end is achieved; the total isolation of the Church and the religious orders from any aspect of Irish civic life.

It might be worth bearing this in mind as we prepare for the upcoming political and media campaigns that will be waged around this issue.

“In the heat of the ensuing debate the Religious Sisters of Charity were accused of moral complicity in the provision of future abortion and sterilisation services”

Human-monkey embryos point towards a dark horizon



Chimeras are moving out of the stories and into the world with the latest scientific advances but they appear no less monstrous, writes Jason Osborne

Chimeras once stalked the landscape of legend and myth. In Greek mythology they were one of the more famous kinds of monster, composed of the parts of more than one animal – be it a lion, goat, snake or range of other creatures. Often able to breathe fire, the chimera was something to be feared. Disregarding this fear though, our world strides towards them.

Monkey-man

Making waves in recent weeks was the announcement that a team of scientists in the US and China have managed to create a “monkey-man” by injecting human stem cells into monkey blastocytes, forming a hybrid embryo. While some of the headlines were sensationalist, the development

is not to be taken lightly, as it signals a further foray by the sciences into disputed territory.

Lead researcher on the project Dr Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte said they then managed to keep some of the embryos alive for up to 20 days. Speaking about the reasons behind the controversial research to *NPR*, Dr Belmonte said demand for organ transplants is much higher than supply, suggesting that new avenues have to be explored to meet that demand.

Speaking in the same article, bioethicist at Case Western Reserve University and Harvard University Insoo Hyun backed up Dr Belmonte’s comments, by saying such research was aimed at “lofty humanitarian goals”.

Transplantation

Dr Hyun added that thousands of people die every year waiting for transplants in the United States alone, and that research such as is being carried out with the embryos could be an important step towards finding new ways to grow organs for transplantation in other animals.

Other scientists have echoed their support, with organ transplantation being the main justification offered in response to the concerns raised by many. This is not the first time this defence has been offered, with scientists in 2000 defending in the same way the creation of two pig-human embryos.

The method of creation on that occasion was the extraction of nuclei cells from a human foetus and the inserting of them into a pig’s egg cells. Overseen by American and Australian scientists, the embryos were allowed to grow to 32 cells before being destroyed. On that occasion, the scientists said the embryos would have grown further if they had been implanted in the womb of either a

woman or a sow. The creation of pig-human embryos has been replicated since, albeit in different manners and places.

Such developments have resulted in kickback across the board, with science and technology fellow at Rice University, Texas, Kirstin Matthews summing up the opposition in the same article:

“My first question is: Why?” she said.

“I think the public is going to be concerned, and I am as well, that we’re just kind of pushing forward with science without having a proper conversation about what we should or should not do.”

“Today, this is often taken to mean that the creators of these texts and maps didn’t know what lay beyond, so they simply filled in the blanks with monsters”

The ethics of hybrid creatures have always occupied the edges of human consciousness and imagination. For Catholics the Bible sets the tone, with chapter six of Genesis making reference to the sons of God mixing with the daughters of men to create the Nephilim, a shadowy creation that was in some way responsible for the flood – a narrative suggesting that God wasn’t happy with the development.

Similarly, classical and medieval texts and tapestries are replete with references to monsters at the edge of the world. Today, this is often taken to mean that the creators of these texts and maps didn’t know what lay beyond, so they simply filled in the blanks with monsters. A deeper reading is required though.

The “monsters at the edge of the world” trope means that as you expand your knowledge or vision of the world, you surely encounter things you don’t expect. Just as it was true for sailors

exploring the world’s seas, and explorers searching new lands, it’s also true for scientists probing new fields of study and possibility.

As sailors may have been stunned by the discovery of the monstrous giant squid or sperm whale, and as European travellers would have been struck by the strange animals they encountered in Africa, Asia and America, so too are we today shocked by what we encounter as the bounds of scientific possibility are pushed.

The difference between the discoveries of old and today’s creations though is just that – the “monsters” once chanced upon are a part of the natural world and play key roles in the complex web of nature, whereas today’s monsters are artificial creations that stray into dangerous ethical territory.

While much of this research and exploration has taken place in the US and around the world, there is nothing to say that it could not come to Ireland’s shores. A parliamentary question submitted by Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan sought to clarify the legality of the “generation of interspecies, chimeric, hybrid embryos”.

The response from the Department of Health revealed that there is currently no specific legislation regulating chimeric or interspecies hybrid embryos, which is to say, there’s nothing prohibiting the practice here currently.



Illustration of an early-stage human embryo. Photo: CNS

However, the response did go on to say that the drafting of a bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research is ongoing, and that sections of it would address

research involving embryos. Part 7 of the bill would prohibit the “creation of embryos specifically for research purposes and also prohibits certain practices that may be associated with embryo and stem cell research, for example, the generation of chimeric or human-animal hybrid embryos”.

“It seems more likely that the ever-present lure of greater technology will override whatever concerns we have, and monsters may well end up walking out of our progressive dreams”

The response assured that the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill would ensure that AHR practices and related areas of research are standardised and conducted with the necessary oversight.

In a country that so eagerly embraced abortion, the question remains as to what grounds the dignity of human life will be defended on. It seems more likely that the ever-present lure of greater technology will override whatever concerns we have, and monsters may well end up walking out of our progressive dreams.

Trusting our own authority



Listening will only get the Church so far if it doesn't trust its own Tradition, writes Ruadhán Jones

Let's cut to the chase; why does the Church want to reach out to those outside it, many of whom are hostile to it, some of whom have already rejected it? Wouldn't it be easier if the Church settled for becoming smaller, more homogenous and simpler to manage?

The answer to the second question is probably yes, but the Church doesn't think this way and for a particular reason – we believe we have the keys to eternal life. Our mission is to share the good news that others can join the eternal wedding banquet with Christ, the bridegroom, in Heaven.

What brings this thought to mind are two things. First, the announcement of our own national synod in five years' time. And secondly, an interesting report by a US agency – the Springtide Research Institute – on the relationship between young people and religion entitled, 'The State of Religion and Young People'.

The mission of the synod is to reinvigorate the Church in Ireland and to set it on a path for the future. It proposes to do so by "outreach to the peripheries", listening to what people, young and old, within and without the Church, have to say about the Irish Church's past, present – and future. What are we likely to hear? And what should our response be? A tentative answer to these questions, at least in relation to people aged between 13-25, is hinted at in the aforementioned report.

Loneliness

The report suggest that loneliness is one of the major issues facing young people. In particular, a lack of trusted adult mentors affects them badly: 40% of participants report they have no one to talk to and half report that their life has no meaning. Young people who have one trusted adult in their life are more likely to express

satisfaction than those who don't, by a difference of 20%, and it increases the more trusted adults they know. Then why don't they have more interactions with trusted adults?

The report proposes a few answers to this question. One is that "the fabric of society" has broken down. As communal structures are dismantled by a culture which demands mobility as one of its primary virtues, a young person's community is reduced more and more to family or friends.

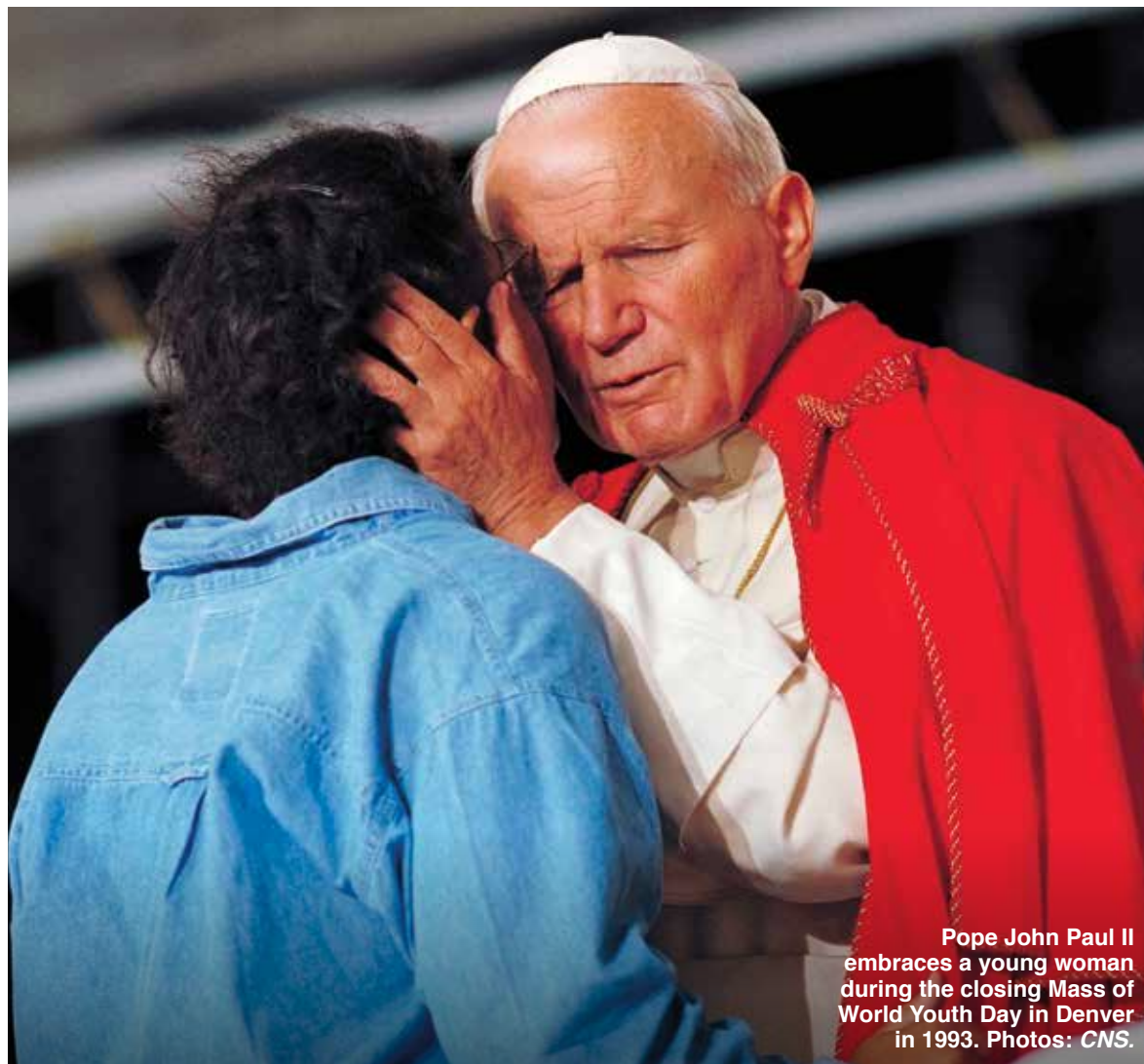
Around 75% of young people turn to their parents when looking for support, according to the report. Religious leaders come in at 8%, behind coaches (9%) and teachers (17%), who are the most trusted authority figure in the lives of young people aside from the family. Young people are leading an increasingly isolated life.

“The mission of the synod is to reinvigorate the Church in Ireland and to set it on a path for the future”

This is also a result of a gradual erosion of trust in institutions among people of all ages. It is not just religious institutions, as David Quinn pointed out April 8; this is across the board. It is an effect of post-modernism and one the Church needs to be aware of; in attempting to liberate us from traditional forms of community, it has taken us back to one very ancient form – tribalism. Postmodernism and tribalism themselves are a consequence of the collapse of post-war rationalist



Youths from Poland present the World Youth Day cross to young representatives from Panama at the conclusion of Palm Sunday Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in St Peter's Square at the Vatican in this April 9, 2017.



Pope John Paul II embraces a young woman during the closing Mass of World Youth Day in Denver in 1993. Photos: CNS.

optimism, which left a vacuum that nothing has filled except the irrational ideologies of modern elites and the tribal sub-groups over which they rule. Either through blood ties or through shared views, people group into tight-knit communities, impenetrable from outside. They neither desire nor seek an ultimate authority.

Desire

What young people do desire are relationships. That is because for them, says the report, identity "is increasingly seen as something that each individual personally constructs piece by piece, rather than something handed down from a prior generation or imposed by a community". To assess character implies a communal, cultural understanding of what it means

to act as a particular person in a particular role. Young people – and adults – lack that context and are unable to judge goodness or badness, or to suggest any way forward apart from personal choice.

That doesn't mean they are amoral. But it does mean their morality and convictions are tied to 'personal belief' or 'convictions' and not an 'ethic' or 'religion'. Challenges to a person's choices are, as a result, interpreted as being a personal attack, rather than an assessment of their character, and reinforce tribal associations. What they desire are relationships of company and support as they explore and define their own identities. Empathy – experiencing as I experience – and listening become the key virtues.

“40% of participants report they have no one to talk to and half report that their life has no meaning”

It is fortunate, then, that empathy and care are two of the Church's charisms. The Church, by virtue of its temporal organisation, is present everywhere, in small villages and big cities, isolated rural communities and cosmopolitan urban hubs. As a result, it is always present in, as the report puts it, "the messiness of the present moment" and provides a community outside the family or clan. It is "the People of God" which, "whilst remaining one ... is to be spread throughout the whole world" (*Lumen Gentium*, 13).

But presence and empathy are not enough, even though these virtues are constantly referenced in modern life as the balm for every ill. Empathy enables us to under-

stand a person's problems, but it can also lock us into their vision of these problems. When preparing for the Synod, we must bear this in mind. It is highly likely that people writing in with proposed solutions will in fact be presenting what is a symptom of our society's malaise. Listening, care and empathy are all elements of the Church and a point of connection for us. The emphasis placed on them by post-modern cultures hints at the hurt people are feeling and their inability to deal with it. Young people want to be treated with care because they are hurt.

Faith

But the Faith is more than a therapeutic response to the troubles of the world; it calls people further, to acknowledge the reality of suffering and sin, and to take up our cross knowing that God's love makes our burden light. The Church didn't create suffering or sin, but it has to begin by acknowledging them – without that starting point, all we do is manage the symptoms, not strike the root.

Though they may not ask for it in their synodal submission, what young people need is the challenge of the Church's authority as well as the balm of its community. This is an authority handed down to us by God of which we are stewards and teachers, and which we have a duty to pass on.

The Church has a responsibility to elevate people so they can see beyond the limitations of a fragmented society. The Church has to trust that it has a set of truths to teach people, independent of this or any society, which are the prelude to actually experiencing the truth itself, the source of our being. We have to trust we are the ultimate authority which most have given up on finding – and yet still need.

Out&About

Charity takes root in St Columb's College



DERRY: Marc Kirk (Ambassador Prefect), making a cheque presentation to Fr Chris Ferguson (School Chaplain) for Trócaire from St Columb's College, who raised £6000 during lockdown by doing walks, cycles, and runs.



ANTRIM: Abi Gaskin, Maria Mc Caffrey, Aoife Ginley and Seamus Magee after Mass at St John's Parish, Falls Road, where they are preparing for the first Communion, April 18. Photo: Catherine McCoy.



LOUTH: The Drogheda Augustinians celebrate Vocation Sunday in style. Pictured are Augustinian student Mark, Fr Malachy and Fr Declan.

IN SHORT

Vatican UN observer calls for safe, universal access to digital connectivity

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the digitally interconnected nature of our society, but also that many people are excluded from this connection, the Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See told the United Nations. Archbishop Paul Gallagher also warned against the "dark web" and the exploitation and human rights violations it enables. He called for the development of a framework of international standards to properly guide the use of digital technology, putting these technologies at the service of the "common good of humanity".

"The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdowns and social distancing have shown how the use of digital technology is rapidly growing in so many areas of our daily life," Archbishop Gallagher said during the UN General Assembly's High-Level Thematic Debate on Digital Cooperation and Connectivity.

"Digital connectivity, however, is not a reality for many people," he continued. "Those who have the least access to digital technology and connectivity are those who can least afford it... The international community should work toward digital access not only that is universal, but also safe and secure, ensuring that fundamental human rights are respected."

Almost 80% of Irish people support Irish Govt's aid to tackle global poverty

Around 77% of Irish people support the Irish Government's provision of funding to tackle global poverty, injustice and inequality, a report from Dóchas found.

Dóchas, the Irish Association of Development Non-Governmental Organisations, launched the findings of its Worldview public engagement research project exploring Irish attitudes to global poverty and inequality in relation to overseas development aid (ODA) on April 28. The research, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, also found that 81% of those surveyed feel Covid-19 has rein-

forced the need for international cooperation in addressing global problem, while 75% are concerned about levels of global poverty.

Human rights (53%), shared humanity (42%) and humanitarianism (40%) ranked as the top drivers of individual support for global development and 79% believe overseas development aid can help bring about positive global change.

Speaking at the launch Minister of State for Overseas Development and Diaspora, Colm Brophy said "This research highlights the strong public support for our overseas development programme, Irish Aid".

A total of 3,008 people were included in the first Worldview survey, carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes on behalf of Dóchas.

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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DERRY: The Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother are pictured attending the Sister Clare Crockett retreat on the fifth anniversary of her death, April 20. Photo: Gerry Temple.



DERRY: Fr Michael McGoldrick and Fr Stephen Quinn of Termonbacca discaled Carmelites are pictured outside St Columba's Church, Long Tower, where the Sister Clare Crockett retreat was held, April 25.



KERRY: Mary, Kathleen and Nora from St John's Parish Liturgy group, Tralee, don the gloves and gear while washing/painting & decorating the local Grotto to Our Lady of the Wayside, April 26.

ANTRIM: Jack and Ben Dornan of St Kevin's Primary School are pictured with parents Brendan and Roisin, after celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in St John's Parish, Falls road, April 23.



DUBLIN: Alan Brogan, former Dublin Gaelic footballer and three-time All Ireland medal winner was 'Walking With Hope' to raise funds for marginalised Irish emigrants. He was joined by Fr Paul Ward at the Papal Cross in the Phoenix Park Dublin, April 25. Photo: John McElroy.



VATICAN CITY: Irish Ambassador to the Holy See Derek Hannon lights a candle to mark UN Chernobyl Remembrance Day, marking the 35th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.



Events

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Russian troops instilling fear in Ukraine border regions

● A Catholic bishop from eastern Ukraine said tensions remain high despite an announced withdrawal of Russian forces.

“Nothing has changed – the great bulk of Russian forces are still here, as fighting flares intermittently and people still die,” said Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoriuk of Odessa-Simferopol.

“The east and south of Ukraine are areas of greatest Russification in Ukraine and have always been the main object of Russian interest. So the situation remains insecure – no one knows what will happen.” Current estimates indicate Russia has more than 100,000 military personnel at the border. In an April 28 interview with Catholic News Service, Bishop Szyrokoriuk said constant media images of Russian tanks and troop movements had instilled “great fear” among Catholics, especially in Odessa and Kharkiv.

Jailed Indian Jesuit appeals to high court seeking bail

● An elderly Indian Jesuit priest has approached Bombay High Court seeking his release on bail a month after a special court twice turned down his bail plea.

Fr Stan Swamy’s legal team on April 26 filed a bail application in the high court of Maharashtra state in western India, said Fr A. Santhanam, a Jesuit who is monitoring the case. The latest move comes a month after a special

court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the federal anti-terror agency, denied the priest bail for a second time on March 22.

“He has been in prison for over 200 days. He approached the special court twice seeking his release on bail, but unfortunately his demands were rejected after the probe agency opposed it,” Fr Santhanam told UCA News on April 29.

Thousands displaced by military airstrikes in Myanmar

● Myanmar’s military has stepped up its offensive in Karen and Kachin ethnic areas with airstrikes and ground attacks that have displaced thousands of people.

On April 27, the military resumed airstrikes, dropping five bombs near Bwa Dear and Dagwin villages in Butho township of Papun district in Karen state, according to Free Burma Rangers, a Christian humanitarian group.

It said the latest offensive has increased the numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 24,000 to 25,000.

The group said there were three airstrikes between Dagwin and Ei Htu Hta IDP camps on April 28 morning and more than 100 IDPs at Ei Tu Hta camp crossed to Thailand.

The airstrikes came after an army base was captured by Karen guerrillas near the border with Thailand.

Three kidnapped Catholics released in Haiti

● More than 10 days after five priests, two nuns, and three lay people were abducted in Haiti and held for ransom, there are reports that three of the kidnapped Catholics have been released.

Fr Loudger Mazile, a spokesman for the Haitian bishops’ conference, told AFP on April 22 that the two kidnapped French citizens – one missionary priest and a religious sister – were still being held by the kidnappers, along with five others.

Mazile added that the three lay people, who are family members of a Haitian priest, were not among those who were released.

The group of Catholics was abducted on April 11 at Croix-des-Bouquets, a suburb of Port-au-Prince, while on the way to attend the installation of a parish priest.

India’s Catholic leaders seek ways to ease ‘critical’ Covid-19 crisis

As India continues to add more than 300,000 Covid-19 patients daily, Catholic leaders have suggested ways to meet the needs of the thousands approaching their health facilities.

“Our hospitals are full and there is no scope for fresh admissions unless the patients in the hospitals are discharged,” Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore told UCA News on April 28.

“It is not a solution to tell critically ill patients that we have no space for them. They need immediate medical care, especially those in need of a life support system.”

The archbishop has instructed Catholic hospitals in his archdiocese, based in Karnataka state’s capital, to convert Catholic schools and institutions close to each hospital as Covid-19 care centres to take care of non-critical patients.

More beds

“This way we can spare more beds in hospitals for critical patients. Those who have crossed the critical stage can continue to get their care in the temporary centres,” he said.

He said the city has 12 Christian hospitals including St John’s Medical College, which is managed by the national bishops’ conference.

“But all our hospitals are full and we are helpless to admit new patients. St John’s has admitted close to 500 Covid-19 patients and every day we get distressed calls for fresh admissions. We can do nothing,” Archbishop Machado said.



A man runs past flames during a mass cremation of Covid-19 victims at a crematorium in New Delhi April 26, 2021. Photo: CNS.

He said government permission is needed to convert a non-hospital facility into a Covid-19 care centre.

“I have also made this offer to the state government” but the government has not yet responded, he said.

The Church is also ready to offer its institutions near government hospitals to be used as temporary Covid-19 care centres. “The need now is to save lives,” he said.

The prelate has also offered the help of volunteers to supplement hospital staff.

Since mid-April, India has been reporting more than 300,000 new Covid-19 cases and 2,000 deaths daily, with the tally increasing each day.

On April 28, the country reported a record 360,960 new cases and 3,293 deaths as hospitals in major cities and towns faced a lack of beds and oxygen. Patients could be seen sharing beds and lying on the floor in many hospitals.

Exasperated

A hospital official on condition of anonymity said many doctors, nurses and paramedical staff are exasperated by working continuously. “Some have even left the job,” he said.

Church leaders have appealed to people to follow Covid-19 protocols and remain at home as the only remedy to protect them from the pandemic as medical treatment even in critical cases has

become nearly impossible.

Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal of Indore wrote to Catholics in his diocese in central India expressing his inability to help them find hospital beds.

“I could not arrange for a bed in our hospital for your dear ones. It was because there were no beds available. All hospitals are full,” Bishop Thottumarickal said in an open letter on April 27.

“Times are hard for everyone. Every day we hear about the death of someone dear. If not death, a friend is in a ventilator or ICU. Those who get a bed in the hospital are lucky,” he said.

Revamped Centre for Child Protection will attack ‘systemic’ abuse

An initiative aimed at protecting minors from sexual abuse that has reshaped how the Catholic Church safeguards children is ready to take the next step.

On September 1, the Centre for Child Protection at the Gregorian University in Rome will become the Institute of Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care, or IADC.

The change symbolises the Church’s changed approach to a problem that has widened far beyond the Church, according to the Fr Hans Zollner SJ, the president of the organisation and a leading figure in the

Vatican’s efforts on the issue.

“Since the Centre for Child Protection’s establishment nearly a decade ago, we have begun to see new dimensions of abuse scandals,” said Fr Zollner, a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors created by Pope Francis in 2014.

Fr Zollner cited the #MeToo movement and reports of abuse in military organisations, the United Nations and other non-governmental organisations.

In the Catholic Church, Fr Zollner added, there has been a growing number of cases

of “spiritual abuse, coercive control and abuse of power” against lay and religious women.

Pope Francis has instituted sweeping reforms during his pontificate to address the avalanche of cases of sexual abuse by clergy, including issuing guidelines for dioceses for reporting abuse and safeguarding minors.

But Fr Zollner noted that they “are sadly not enough.” Sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults “is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed,” he added.

Head of Central Committee of German Catholics won’t seek re-election

Thomas Sternberg, 69, president of the Central Committee of German Catholics, announced April 23 he will not seek re-election to the post in November.

Mr Sternberg assumed the highest office of Germany’s Catholic lay organisation in

2015. The German Catholic news agency KNA reported the organisation will be forced to find new leadership in the midst of some upheaval.

The organisation is currently in the middle of dealing with the issue of clergy sexual

abuse in the church. Catholic laypeople in the Archdiocese of Cologne recently called for a local synod to address the ongoing crisis surrounding how abuse was handled in Germany’s most populous diocese.

However, lay Catholics

also have made strides: The German bishops’ conference elected a woman as general secretary.

Beate Gilles, a 50-year-old theologian, became the first noncleric and woman to head the bishops’ secretariat. She will take up her post July 1.



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Clash on the border as Myanmar unrest continues



Ethnic minority Karen troops are seen after setting fire to a structure inside a Myanmar army outpost near the Thai border in the remote mountainous province of Mae Hong Son Thailand, April 28, 2021. Photo: CNS.

Truth about shooting will help diocese in South Sudan, bishop-designate says

While Bishop-designate Christian Carlassare already has forgiven his attackers, he said finding the truth about why he was shot in the legs at his home in Rumbek, South Sudan, will help achieve reconciliation.

The Italian-born bishop-designate, 43, was responding to news that three local priests were among the 12 people arrested for their possible involvement in the attack April 26. Local reports say lay members of the local church community were also among those arrested.

"Only the truth, even if it is painful, will be able to point

out what choices we will have to make. It is a great suffering for the Church, perhaps necessary for building something on a clean foundation," he said in an interview April 29 with *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper of the Italian bishops' conference.

Arrested

One of the priests who was arrested was Fr John Matiang, who had administered the Diocese of Rumbek for the past nine years. The diocese had been without a bishop since the death in 2011 of Bishop Cesare Mazzolari, an Italian-born Comboni mis-

sionary, like the new bishop-designate.

Hearing there was evidence pointing to the involvement of members of his diocese, Bishop-designate Carlassare told *Avvenire*, "now we just have to let the investigations continue. It is a very sad story," he said, but if it turns out church members are guilty, then the local church will have to repent and recognise its responsibility.

"Now the truth," he said. "Let the light shine on the ambush for bringing about reconciliation."

Education and evangelisation are essential for build-

ing "a community that is not held hostage to violence", he said, adding that he intends to return to his diocese as soon as possible to help promote "another step forward" on the path to peace.

Bishop-designate Carlassare, who has been ministering in South Sudan since 2005, said he is convinced that dialogue will help resolve what is a complicated and difficult situation.

The attack occurred shortly after midnight April 26 when two gunmen entered his residence, shot at the door of his room, then fired four bullets into his legs.

White House: Biden 'respectfully disagrees' with bishops on foetal tissue research

The White House press secretary said last Tuesday that President Biden "respectfully disagrees" with Catholic bishops on federally-funded foetal tissue research.

At the White House press briefing, EWTN News Nightly's Owen Jensen asked press secretary Jen Psaki about the Biden administration's recent decision to remove restrictions on federally-funded foetal tissue research.

"As you well know, the administration just lifted the ban on researchers

using foetal tissue from elective abortions," Mr Jensen said. He cited a statement of the US bishops' conference that the decision to lift the ban and allow for taxpayer-funded research with aborted foetal tissue was "deeply offensive".

"Look, I think the White House respectfully disagrees," Ms Psaki said in response. "And we believe that it's important to invest in science and look for opportunities to cure diseases, and I think that's what this is hopeful to do."

The National Institutes of Health

(NIH) announced on April 16 that it was reversing restrictions on research using foetal tissue and organs of aborted babies.

By repealing Trump-era policies, NIH would once again allow for foetal tissue research at NIH facilities. Furthermore, it said it would no longer require researchers at outside facilities seeking federal funding to first submit foetal tissue research proposals to a federal ethics advisory board.

Pope Francis' anti-corruption law seeks to quash Vatican 'envelope' culture

● As part of a sweeping new anti-corruption law, Pope Francis last Thursday declared that officials of the Roman Curia should no longer accept personal gifts with a monetary value over €40.

The new rule appears to be an effort to quash the Vatican "envelope" culture, in which large monetary donations are made to bishops and cardinals working in the Roman Curia. These gifts have been blamed for contributing to corruption in the Church when they were used between high-level Church officials to seek favours, most notably in cases like that of ex-cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

Pope Francis' April 29 apostolic letter, issued in the form of *motu proprio* (on his own impulse), added this rule to the General Regulation of the Roman Curia, along with other requirements ensuring that Vatican personnel who handle the Vatican's economic affairs are not involved in financially corrupt or illegal behaviour.

In the *motu proprio* on "provisions on transparency in the management of public finance", Pope Francis said that, the new measures were necessary to "prevent and fight, in every sector, conflicts of interest, methods of patronage, and corruption in general".

Church must help counter resistance to vaccines

● Members of the Catholic Church, especially religious working in health care and schools, have an important opportunity and duty to educate people about Covid-19 and to counter resistance to vaccinations, said an expert on the Vatican's Covid-19 commission. Women religious and Catholic organisations who serve others every day and have people's trust are "our best hope for safe and fair distribution of vaccines as well as the best tool for convincing people of the safety", said Sr Carol Keehan, a nurse and Daughter of Charity. The Church also has

clear teachings about the need for more ethical ways to produce and test vaccines, but it has said that receiving vaccines is not participating or cooperating with the evil of abortion, she said during an online meeting April 27 sponsored by the Rome-based International Union of Superiors General. The event, dedicated to how women religious can be leaders in bringing Gospel values to new models of the economy and health care, was part of a series of meetings looking at ways sisters can empower women and accompany and support those most affected by the pandemic.

Pope calls for global prayer marathon for end of pandemic

● Pope Francis has called for a global prayer marathon for the entire month of May, praying for the end to the pandemic.

"The initiative will involve in a special way all shrines in the world" in promoting the initiative so that individuals, families and communities all take part in reciting the rosary, "to pray for the end of the pandemic", said the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation in a press release April 21. "It is the heartfelt desire of the Holy Father that the month of May be dedicated to a prayer marathon dedicated to the theme, 'from the entire Church an unceasing prayer rises to God,'" it said.

The theme refers to the miraculous event recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (12:1-12) when all the Church prayed for Peter, who was imprisoned until God sent an angel to free him, illustrating how the Lord listens to the Christian community's prayers.

There will be a livestream from one of 30 chosen Marian shrines or sanctuaries to guide the prayer at 5pm GMT every day in May.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Taking a 'wait and see' stance on Pope's latest blow for accountability

Perhaps no one was as startled this week when a 46-year-old woman was placed under house arrest for aggravated theft from a small church in the far southern Italian province of Reggio Calabria as the woman herself.

Her name hasn't been released by Italy's military police, who made the arrest, but they did provide details on the case. The woman works as a cleaner, and the church was among her clients. She apparently told police the pastor paid her almost nothing for several hours of intense work every week, so, some time ago, she'd adopted the habit of simply lifting cash out of the poor box when she opened it to dust.

In effect, she said, the money was part of her compensation, even if she'd never technically been given permission to take it, and she insisted she hadn't done anything wrong. (By the way, she was nabbed by military police who'd gone "undercover" in the church as ordinary Faithful in order to find out where the money was going.)

This minor incident comes to mind in light of yet another amendment to the Vatican's legal system introduced by Pope Francis on Friday, April 30 which, in some quarters, is being hailed as a dramatic step toward accountability, but it has elicited scepticism and cynicism in others.

“In general, Italians tend to be relativists about law and absolutists about family”

In effect, the amendment – published in the form of a *motu proprio*, meaning a change to church law under the Pope's personal authority – allows the Vatican's regular civil courts to try cases against cardinals and bishops. Previously, had a cardinal or a bishop been charged with a civil crime under the laws of the Vatican City State, the case would have had to be heard by the Vatican's Supreme Court, presided over by a cardinal.

Prelate privilege

The move eliminates a traditional privilege enjoyed by senior prelates of being judged only by their own, subjecting them to the same legal process as any other defendant, although the pontiff still has to approve any such trial in advance. It's being spun both as Francis's latest blow against clericalism, and a signal of his determination to fight crime and corruption in his own ranks.



Pope Francis leaves after a consistory to create 14 new cardinals in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in this June 28, 2018, file photo. Photo: CNS.

“The people responsible for what's now understood as corruption honestly don't think they're doing anything wrong”

In some commentary, the immediate question is whether Francis has a particular prelate in mind, with the usual suspect being Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu – either for the alleged misappropriation of Vatican funds to members of his family for which he was fired by the pontiff from his post as prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints last September, or for his role in the London real estate scandal that began when he was still the substitute, effectively the Chief of Staff, in the Secretariat of State.

Although so far Vatican investigators haven't charged Cardinal Becciu with any crime relative to the London mess, they have sought extradition from Italy for Cecilia Marogna, an associate of Cardinal Becciu and a fellow Sardinian dubbed “The Cardinal's Dame”. (The request was abandoned in January after Italy's supreme court expressed doubts about its legality.)

Before getting terribly excited, however, there are at least three reasons to take a “wait and see” attitude.

The first is the “cleaner and the poor box” problem, which is that, in many cases, the people responsible

for what's now understood as corruption honestly don't think they're doing anything wrong.

Charges

Take the original charges the pontiff levelled against Cardinal Becciu: Siphoning money to a construction company owned by his brother for repairs to overseas papal embassies and moving charitable funds to a couple of foundations in Sardinia in which other relatives are involved. When Cardinal Becciu called a press conference the next day, he didn't so much deny those claims as insist there was nothing amiss about what he did.

In general, Italians tend to be relativists about law and absolutists about family, so skirting rules on competitive bidding and conflicts of interest in order to help out relatives and others considered *della famiglia*, or part of the family, is seen by many Italians not only as acceptable, but actually noble.

Until that culture changes, *motu proprio* in themselves are a bit like trees falling in the forest with no one to hear.

Second, a legal process is only as good as the will to use it, and it remains to be seen if Cardinal Becciu or anyone else in a senior position actually will be indicted and tried. Heretofore, the typical practice has been to charge laity and lower-level clerics while insulating the higher-ups from blame – in some cases, declining even to summon them as witnesses, let alone defendants.

“Heretofore, the typical practice has been to charge laity and lower-level clerics while insulating the higher-ups from blame”

In theory, the Vatican's supreme court could have been hearing cases against cardinals and bishops all along. The mere fact that jurisdiction has been transferred doesn't automatically mean we'll be seeing heads on pikes anytime soon.

By way of comparison, the Pope's recent *motu proprio* on episcopal

accountability for sex abuse cases, *Vox Estis*, so far has resulted in an increase in claims and investigations, but there haven't been any high-profile convictions. At worst, bishops targeted by a *Vox Estis* complaint have resigned without official explanation – the April 13 resignation of Bishop Michael Hoeppner of Crookston, Minnesota, is an example – but that's not the same thing as a legal finding of guilt.

Legal system

Third, there's the question of whether the lay-led lower tribunals of the Vatican legal system will be more inclined to be tough on cardinals and bishops than a court presided over by a fellow Prince of the Church. If anything, experience suggests most laity likely to get important jobs inside the Vatican tend to be deferential to Church authority, and to give prelates a generous benefit of the doubt.

Of course, all reforms can be frustratingly piecemeal and slow, and even the most sweeping and successful, probably at some point seemed promising but unproven. Time will tell whether that's the case with Francis's latest innovation – or whether, as has happened so often in the past in the Vatican, this turns out to be another case of everything appearing to change so that, in reality, everything can remain the same.

Latin America launches continent-wide assembly



Inés San Martín

As the Catholic Church in different countries begins various synodal processes, the conference of Latin American bishops could not stay behind, and has launched its own Ecclesial Assembly.

Pastoral plan

“Did you know that our Latin American Church is calling together the 377 million Catholics in 46 countries of the continent to discern a joint pastoral plan?” reads the header of an invitation to the presentation of the initiative in Chile, which took place last Thursday. “The idea is to open ways to respond as a Church to the current social, health, political, economic, ecological and ecclesial crisis.”

“Pope Francis asks all the People of God (not only the bishops) to make their voices heard in the ‘Listening Process’ of the First Ecclesial Assembly,” the invitation continues.

“This type of assembly is unique to Latin America, and no other continental conference of Catholic bishops has done anything similar”

In May 2019, during an assembly of bishops from all over the continent, the new presidency of the conference of Catholic bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM) was asked to send a request to Pope Francis to summon the bishops to a new general conference of the episcopate. The last such meeting was in 2007 in Aparecida, Brazil.

This type of assembly is unique to Latin America, and no other continental conference of Catholic bishops has



Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte, president of the Peruvian bishops' conference, is seen with Pope Francis in Trujillo, Peru, 2018. Photo: CNS.

done anything similar.

The 2007 assembly was attended by some 200 bishops who met for 20 days, sharing concerns and drawing up a document that is still guiding the Church in Latin America. Yet when the CELAM leadership brought the initiative to the Pope, he argued that there are many things from Aparecida that were never applied, and advised them to hold a meeting of the people of God instead, to strengthen the guidelines that were set out in 2007.

Hence, the idea for an Ecclesial Assembly involving not only bishops, but also priests, religious, men and women religious, deacons, and laymen and women.

There have been similar assemblies at a diocesan level, but thus far, according to CELAM, this is the first one at a continental level.

Listening Process

The “Listening Process” was technically launched earlier this month at a continental level, but each local church has put together its own plan, mostly to be carried out through online platforms due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Ecclesial Assembly, in addition to further living out the spirit of Aparecida, is also looking forward to two important anniversaries in 2031 and 2033. The first date makes reference to the Jubilee Year of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the 500th anniversary of her apparitions, and the second to the 2,000 anniversary of Christ’s resurrection.

“The Ecclesial Assembly will have two stages, beginning with the listening process”

Throughout the first year of his pontificate, particularly when welcoming leaders from his home continent, Pope Francis gave them the final text from Aparecida, which he was tasked with drafting when he was still known as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

The Ecclesial Assembly will have two stages, beginning with the listening process. Then, thousands of representatives of the Latin American Church will – if the pandemic allows – gather in Mexico City in November, to further discuss the topics presented in the preparatory document, available online in Spanish and Portuguese.

“As missionary disciples, gathered in synodality in the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, we will remember what happened in the Fifth General Conference in Aparecida, and looking contemplatively at our reality with its challenges, we will rekindle our pastoral commitment so that, in Jesus Christ, our peoples may have a full life in and through the new paths towards 2031 and 2033,” says the assembly’s website.

Future steps

This listening process is meant to serve as a moment of discernment for those who will gather in November, and it’s hoped that it will guide the future steps of the regional Church so that it can “accompany Jesus incarnated

today among the people, in their *sensus fidei* which is their sense of faith”.

The listening process will take place between April and July of this year, and lay people are invited to both pay attention to the call from the national bishops’ conferences to participate, or to request to be heard if no such initiative is announced.

“People are invited to answer a questionnaire and share their reflections on several issues affecting the Church”

Through a video message, Archbishop Eduardo Eliseo Martin, of Rosario, Argentina, encouraged people throughout Latin America to actively participate in the Assembly: “The Church wants to listen to all the laity, to all the Faithful,

to the greatest number, to be able to evaluate through all of you which is the path we have to follow.”

The listening process takes a similar methodology to that carried out by the Vatican’s Synod of Bishops under Pope Francis, where through different ministries or individually, people are invited to answer a questionnaire and share their reflections on several issues affecting the Church.

Epochal change

The list of possibilities is long and varied, and include the Covid-19 pandemic as a sign of epochal change; the environment; violence; migrations; the increase in the number of people who declare themselves agnostic, non-believers or atheists; the growth of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the continent; the new challenges of the family and its different realities; the full participation of young people in society and in the Church; the prevention of clerical sexual abuse; and clericalism.

• Inés San Martín, Rome bureau chief for Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

People must not accept the denial of their religious rights

Dear Editor, Michael Kelly's call for 'a more robust approach' to the Government [IC 22/04/2021] regarding the criminalising of Church services is certainly welcome. As all diplomatic approaches have been ignored, I think one solution could be for the bishops to tell their priests to no longer close the church doors while Mass is going on and allow those who wish to attend do so. It's very strange that legal challenges to this closure of churches during worship is constantly postponed. Is

it in the hope that the closure can be extended until such time as the Government considers it should? It's well time for the people to make it clear that they will no longer accept this denial of their right to attend Mass and I find it hard to believe that there has been so little criticism of the Government's action. Surely it is time to stand up and be counted regarding the practise of our faith?

I was horrified to read in *The Irish Catholic* [IC 22/04/2021] our Presi-

dent's remarks on Catholic schools and especially his lack of knowledge of what it actually entails. Catholic schools have always accepted those of other religions and none and the teaching of the Church has always been to foster love and acceptance, not hatred. Hopefully, the President will be asked to explain and to apologise for his insulting remarks.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Stewart
Ardeskin, Donegal Town*

Is the Government anti-religious?

Dear Editor Micheál Martin has declared that the Government is not anti-religious! He has also stated that every citizen has a fundamental right to practise his/her religion but same may be 'restricted' in favour of the 'common good'.

However what he failed to attest, either through ignorance but more likely deliberately, was that when the 'common good' is introduced into the equation 'proportionality' is key to determine the legitimacy of such a restriction.

Considering the sheer size and height especially in the largest churches, limited and physically spaced out congregations, supervision, mask wearing etc. the treatment meted out to those who wish to practise their faith is so obviously not proportionate but is contemptible!

A once off gesture could have been made for Easter Sunday if not indoors, outdoors in parks, car parks, cemeter-



ies even as is the case every year. People would have accepted drive in masses but Mr Martin and his Government would not yield an inch.

Did they serve the common good or

was it proportionate? Is the Government anti-religious?

*Yours etc.,
John Burke
Clontarf, Dublin 3*

Fostering Mass-going at home undermined by clergy

Dear Editor, It gives me no pleasure to agree with your observation that "when Mass 'went online' - as the phrase goes - we should have consistently underlined the heaviness of heart around the decision and the fact that it is a very poor substitute" [IC 22/04/2021].

I am afraid that the rush to cocoon by many of our priests who are in rude

health was a huge dereliction of duty. I have spent almost 20 years fighting a battle with my grown-up children about the importance of going to Mass.

I have now had to run the white flag up the proverbial pole. I just never imagined that my efforts would be so spectacularly undermined by our religious leaders.

My only dilemma now is whether the priority for my prayer should be said grown-up children, or the priests who fled and abandoned the flock at our time of greatest need.

God help us.

*Yours etc.,
Mary O'Carroll
Windy Arbour, Dublin 14*
Editor's Note: I think in fairness to our priests,

many are extremely unhappy at the continued ban on Mass. Many of those who cocooned did so on Government advice due to age and declining health. The innovation shown by parishes in moving online has been nothing short of miraculous. That being said, it is indeed a poor substitute for being present at Mass.

Fair City not fair on Confession

Dear Editor A confessional scene on an episode of RTÉ soap Fair City has been lampooned by a priest from North Kerry. Parish priest Fr Kevin McNamara, became aggrieved with a scene depicting one of the show's main characters invoking the seal of Confession to tell a priest that he is the father of her child.

Actors Tina Kellegher who plays the character Ger and Phelim Drew son of The Dubliners singer the late Ronnie Drew who plays Fr Liam Plunkett, seen wearing a stole [a liturgical vestment derived from the Latin word stola], are drinking and smoking in the Church

scene. On *Newstalk Breakfast* Fr Kevin McNamara, insisted it was: "totally disrespectful and inaccurate" to connect it in with the seal of Confession.

"To come in on Sunday night and to see the blatant, casual and disrespectful way the confession was treated - taking place in a church with alcohol, cigarettes and a stole being put on, I felt it just couldn't be more hurtful or blatant to the Catholic tradition." The priest "strongly objects" to the part of the scene where Ger "gets aggressive and starts questioning" Fr Liam Plunkett. Fr McNamara denounced reports he urged

Catholics to stop paying their TV licence fees over the Fair City episode, insisting he was misquoted in the paper. There is something iconic pertaining to the seal of the Confession that has an intensity about confessing and forgiveness of sins. Heretofore RTÉ apologised profusely for any offence that may have been caused by the broadcast of a comedy sketch which depicted God being arrested for rape.

Time has come for another apology.

*Yours etc.,
Gerry Coughlan
Kilnamanagh, Dublin 24*

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

The Government's contempt for Mass-goers shows the need for a more robust approach

"We've had meetings and are seeking legal advice" is about the extent of the leadership and shepherding shown by bishops throughout this ordeal, and most have been deafeningly silent altogether. The enthusiasm for live-streamed Mass from clergy and faithful is just worrying. It really beggars belief, a huge mess to be cleaned up - and one that could have largely been avoided were it not for the Church's complacency. - **Cearbhall O Lonagain**

Catholics must organise themselves if they want their faith and Church preserved. Isn't it obvious how hostile the political establishment and secular culture are. There must be efforts made to defend our Catholic faith. - **Aidan Mulkearn**

Bishop slams 'senseless antisemitic vandalism' of Belfast Jewish graves

Wouldn't it be a wonderful gesture if The Catholic Church organised the restoration of those headstones on those Jewish graves? - **Denis Kearney**

I am very glad that Bishop Treanor has spoken about this despicable action. - **Patricia O'Neill**

God forgive them, hopefully they will repent and fix the damages they have done. - **Christine O'Brien**

Archbishop calls halt to First Communion plans

First Communions are going ahead here in Belfast. Surely the archbishop should be pushing the Irish government to ease the restrictions on religious ceremonies. - **Brendan Kennedy**

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

Church should apply for State grants for outdoor Mass

Dear Editor, The Government is giving grants to pubs and other entertainment places to make their premises and outdoor surroundings/gardens suitable for social distancing, fresh air and protection from bad weather.

They're even speaking of having portaloos in Dublin City. Will someone please apply on behalf of our Church and us Mass-goers for a grant to protect us from rain by providing overhead cover so we can have Mass outdoors. A great number of people would rather go to Mass than to the pub. We desperately need our church services resumed. Please help.

*Yours etc.,
Teresa Mahon
Kiltubrid, Co. Leitrim*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



▲ **KAZAKHSTAN:** Horses graze on a pasture during sunset in the remote Almaty region of Kazakhstan, April 28. Photos: CNS

◀ **MYANMAR:** Demonstrators flash the three-finger salute during a protest against the military coup in Yangon, April 27, in this still image obtained from a social media video.



TURKEY: People enjoy a warm and sunny day at the beach in Istanbul April 28, during the Covid-19 pandemic.



UKRAINE: Service members of the Ukrainian armed forces drive military vehicles past destroyed buildings on the line of separation from pro-Russian rebels in Shyrokyne, April 21.



USA: A person in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, occupies an intersection, April 28, a week after Andrew Brown Jr was killed by sheriff's deputies.



VENEZUELA: The beatification Mass of José Gregorio Hernández in Caracas, is seen on April 30.



The eyes of love



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Imagine a young couple intoxicated with each other in the early stages of love. Imagine a religious neophyte in love with God, praying ecstatically. Imagine an idealistic young person working tirelessly with the poor, enflamed with a thirst for justice. Are this young couple really in love with each other? Is that religious neophyte really in love with God? Is this young social activist really in love with the poor? Not an easy question.

Whom are we really loving when we have feelings of love? The other? Ourselves? The archetype and energy the other is carrying? Our own fantasy of that person? The feelings this experience is triggering inside us? When we are in love, are we really in love with another person or are we mostly basking in a wonderful feeling which could be just as easily triggered by countless other persons?

“For John of the Cross, when we are in love, partly the love is real and partly it is an illusion”

There are different answers to that question. John of the Cross would say it is all of these things; we are in fact really loving that other person, loving a fantasy we have created of that person, and basking in the good feeling this has generated inside us. That is why, invariably, at a given point

in a relationship the powerful feelings of being in love give way to disillusionment – disillusionment (by definition) implies the dispelling of an illusion, something was unreal. So for John of the Cross, when we are in love, partly the love is real and partly it is an illusion. Moreover, John would say the same thing about our initial feelings of fervor in prayer and in altruistic service. They are a mixture of both, authentic love and an illusion.

Generous

Some other analyses are less generous. In their view, all initial falling in love, whether it be with another person, with God in prayer, or with the poor in service, is mainly an illusion. Ultimately, you are in love with being in love, in love with what prayer is doing for you, or in love with how working for justice is making you feel. The other person, God, and the poor are secondary. That is why, so often,

when first fervour dies, so too does our love for its original object. When the fantasy dies, so too does the sense of being in love. We fall in love without really knowing the other person and we fall out of love without really knowing the other person. The very phrase “falling in love” is revealing. “Falling” is not something we choose, it happens to us. ‘Marriage Encounter’ spirituality has a clever slogan around this: marriage is a decision; falling in love is not.

“The experience of love arises when we surrender our separateness into the universal”

Who is right? When we fall in love, how much is genuine love for another and how much is an illusion within which we are

mostly loving ourselves? Steven Levine answers this from very different perspective and throws new light on the question. What is his perspective?

Emotion

Love, he says, is not a “dualistic emotion”. For him, whenever we are feeling authentic love we are, at that moment, feeling our oneness with God and with all that is. He writes: “The experience of love arises when we surrender our separateness into the universal. It is a feeling of unity... It is not an emotion, it is a state of being... It is not so much that ‘two are as one’ so much as it is the ‘One manifested as two.’” In other words, when we love someone, in that moment, we are one with him or her, not separate, so that even though our fantasies and feelings may be partially wrapped up in self-serving affectivity, something deeper and more real than our feelings and fantasies is occurring. We are one with the other in our being - and, in love, we sense it.

In this view, authentic love is not so much something we feel; it is something we are. At its root,

love is not an affective emotion or a moral virtue (though these are part of it). It is a metaphysical condition, not something that comes and goes like an emotional state, nor something that we can choose or refuse morally. A metaphysical condition is a given, something we stand within, that makes up part of what we are, constitutively, though we can be blissfully unaware. Thus, love, not least falling in love, can help make us more conscious of our non-separateness, our oneness in being with others.

“Whom are we really loving when we have feelings of love? The other? Ourselves?”

Passionately

When we feel love deeply or passionately, then perhaps (like Thomas Merton describing a mystical vision he had on a street corner) we can awake more from our dream of separateness and our illusion of difference and see the secret beauty and depth of other people’s hearts. Perhaps too it will enable us to see others at that place in them where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes.

And wouldn’t it be wonderful, Merton adds... “if we could see each other that way all the time”.

“When we fall in love, how much is genuine love for another and how much is an illusion within which we are mostly loving ourselves?”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, May 6, 2021

Personal Profile

Dreaming big after a long journey

Page 34



Tips for successful springtime studying



A number of friends of mine have been settling down to study recently as one test or another reared its head. The studies range from college to exams for work, but the fundamentals remain the same. In ordinary time, the Junior and Leaving Certificate exams would be rapidly approaching, and so teenagers around the country would have their heads buried in the books too. While many may choose to sit the exams this year, it'll be a different experience.

Regardless of the reason for our studying, one thing remains the same; it's very difficult for us to sit down and focus on



Studying is difficult at the best of times, but especially as the weather turns for the better, writes Jason Osborne

dry, rote learning, especially as the weather picks up. Despite having left school and college behind several years ago now, I'm not sure I'd be any better suited to the long hours of studying today. Whether this is because of the dry manner with which the subjects are communicated, or because the subjects themselves

aren't sufficiently interesting isn't entirely clear.

These factors shouldn't matter, though, as studying is one of the unfortunate facts of life for everyone at one stage or another. While some people are better suited to it than others, few enjoy it. What are we to do then?

There are a number of practi-

cal steps anyone can implement to ensure that our displeasure at the prospect of studying doesn't hold us back. Don't let despair or hopelessness overwhelm as you sit at the desk – studying smarter is possible.

Space out your studying

We live in a real "cramming" culture – whether it's trying to cram, or binge, all of the episodes of a new show we like into a day, or whether it's trying to cram all of our study into the day of the exam. No matter what you're doing, stuffing a lot of content into a short amount of time isn't a particularly

effective way to assimilate it.

Research has shown that it's more useful to space out your study – not only are you more likely to take something in, you're less likely to hate the experience, too. A 2009 experiment saw college students studying vocabulary with flash cards. Some of the students studied the words in spaced-out sessions throughout four days, whereas others studied smaller batches of the words in crammed sessions over a single day – both groups spent the same amount of time studying overall.

Testing showed that the group with spaced-out sessions had

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

DISNEY BRINGS FANTASY FILM TO IRELAND

The production company working with Disney to bring a new film to life has set up in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow. A large film set for the movie *Disenchanted* – sequel to Disney's blockbuster *Enchanted* – is being built in the centre of Enniskerry village, with filming expected to begin next month. The filming process is due to take place between May and August of this year. A team of builders, carpenters and painters are working to transform Enniskerry's Schoolhouse for Art into a Disney palace. RTÉ report Neil Condrón, Director of the Schoolhouse for Art, as saying it is "emerging every minute of the day and it's transforming this beautiful village into something spectacular", and that he believes a movie of this size will leave a legacy. Clocktower Productions has announced a casting call, and people are able to apply to be extras in the movie through movieextras.ie.

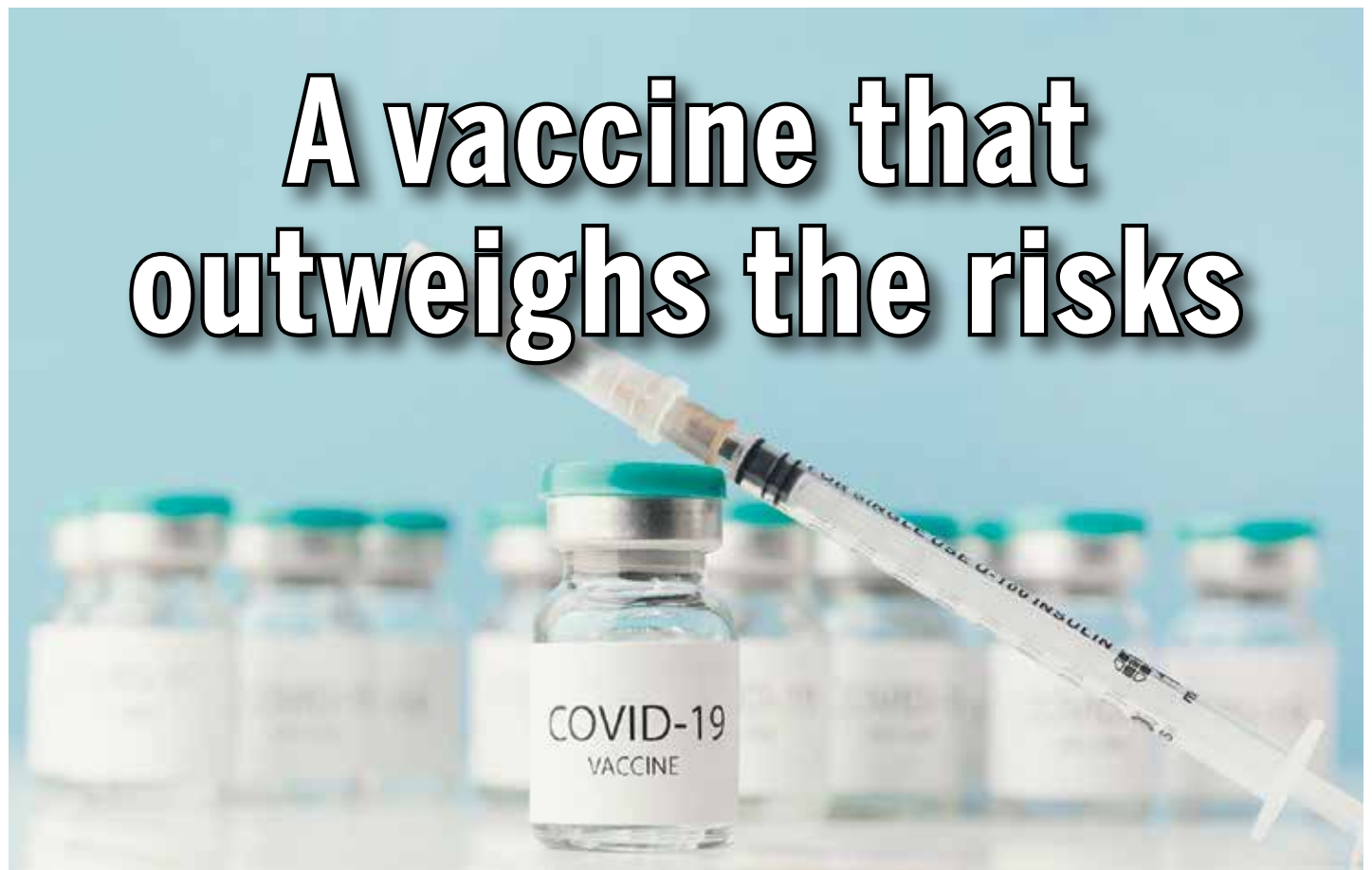
DONEGAL OFFERS MONEY FOR MOVIES

Donegal County Council is seeking to attract filmmakers to shoot a short drama or documentary in the county this year by the offer of a €10,000 grant, according to RTÉ. Funding for the bursary has been secured from Creative Ireland and the Donegal Film Office is now putting out the call for filmmakers to apply for it. The bursary aims to encourage talent, creativity and activity in filmmaking in Donegal and it will be given towards the cost of the production of a short film of 10-12 minute duration. The script must have already been developed, seen by a director and had input from a producer. Aideen Doherty of the Donegal Film Office said: "We are looking for original, entertaining stories by talented filmmakers who, if selected, must set and shoot their project in Co Donegal." Ms Doherty also said that "Donegal has lots to offer the industry by way of talent, landscapes and services and we look forward to showcasing the end product."

MARS HELICOPTER PHOTOGRAPHS ROVER

Nasa's Ingenuity Mars helicopter has photographed the Perseverance rover, the BBC has reported. The rover, which acts as the drone's radio base-station, is seen in the upper-left corner of a newly released image against a backdrop of Martian desert. The picture was taken by Ingenuity during its third demonstration flight in a single day. At the time, the miniature-helicopter was about 85m from the rover and flying laterally at an altitude of 5m. Sunday's flight was the most ambitious yet for Ingenuity, which saw it travel 100m over the course of 80 seconds. Engineers are trying to test Ingenuity's limits and are willing to accept a crash in the process. Ingenuity was carried to Mars by the Perseverance rover, which landed in Jezero Crater in mid-February.

A vaccine that outweighs the risks



Over one billion people globally have now received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine. While this may sound encouraging, it only represents about 14% of the world's population with notable differences in vaccine roll out by country. Israel now takes the place at the top of league table with over 50% fully vaccinated, whilst our closest neighbour (UK) has managed to administer at least one vaccine jab to half the population. By comparison, about 30% have been given one dose in the EU, with Ireland just trailing behind, and the US also trumping that figure reaching 40%.

“One question still very much up in the air is just how long immunity from vaccination will last”

With such a slow easing of restrictions, all our hopes now rest on a 'crank up' of vaccine supply in the next two months. Currently, just over 10% of the country is fully vaccinated, but one jab can provide up to 80% immunity against Covid which is likely to last for several months. If vaccine roll out goes as planned, then it's predicted that about 80% of the country will have been innoculated with at least one dose by the end of June. This would mean levels beginning to approach 'herd' immunity in August paving the way for an opening of society at large. For those under 50 who have suffered with Covid in the last 6 months, one vaccine shot may be enough to bolster immunity to a similar level in those fully vaccinated.

One question still very much up in the air is just how long

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



immunity from vaccination will last. Typically, after common colds caused by other coronaviruses, there is believed to be good immunity for up to one year with levels waning thereafter. However, vaccination is likely to give a more robust and durable response. While there is strong immunity with the Pfizer vaccine for at least 6 months, only 2 weeks ago its company CEO suggested that a third dose may be needed in the period up to one year after immunisation. Antibody levels which are easily measurable in blood samples remained high at 6 months but may well drop off significantly. Despite this, immunity mediated by T cells generally provides more long term 'immune memory' but the effect of this in preventing clinical infection is harder to assess. However, it is thought that regardless of vaccine type, protection against Covid may be lost in a significant proportion of people by 12 months.

New viral strains

The emergence of new viral strains is also an ever-present threat to vaccine efficacy and while mRNA technology used by Pfizer and Moderna can be deployed quickly to redesign new jabs, the whole process still takes months. It has also been suggested that vaccines that use a viral vector to deliver

the coronavirus (AstraZeneca and Johnston & Johnston) might not be as suitable for multiple dosing. This is because the body over time may mount an immune attack on the virus vector in a phenomenon known as 'vector immunity'. As well as reducing efficacy it could also theoretically increase the risk of adverse immune mediated reactions.

Disorder

As we now know, both vaccines can also cause a very rare and unusual clotting disorder which appears to be triggered by the immune system. It's associated with activation of the 'clotting cascade' and



production of antibodies against platelets in the circulation. Clinical presentations are very similar, occurring in those under 60 and within 2-3 weeks of vaccination. In particular, clots can occur in the veins in the brain (cerebral venous thrombosis) giving rise to severe headaches and in the spleen causing abdominal pain. However, estimated incidence is very rare affecting about 1 in 900,000 with Johnston & Johnston and 1 in 250,000 in those given the AstraZeneca. Furthermore, risk of mortality

is less than 1 in 1.4 million. Importantly, those with a history of clotting do not appear any more likely to develop thrombosis. Indeed, the risk of any major adverse effect is so low that its benefits far outweigh the risk. In fact, it is estimated that those between 60-64 are 85 times more likely to die from Covid than to develop blood clotting.

“The Novovax vaccine is also likely to be approved by the EU soon and is 95% effective”

Vaccination has also been recommended by the National Immunisation Advisory Council for women who are between 14 and 36 weeks pregnant. A recent report on the largest study of Covid vaccine safety in pregnant women involving 35,691 participants (827 completed pregnancy) showed the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to be safe. Evidence also confirms protective immunity to newborns through breast milk. Reassuringly, several vaccines used for other conditions are safe in pregnancy and viral vector and mRNA vaccines are also unlikely to reach the placenta.

The Novovax vaccine is also likely to be approved by the EU soon and is 95% effective. It now seems that vaccination against Covid-19 may well become an annual event but at last, an end to our current lockdown is soon approaching and a return to semblance of a more normal life!

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

» Continued from Page 31



more successfully committed the words to memory, creating an argument for spacing out studying rather than cramming it. An analogy is that our memory is akin to a bucket of water with a small leak. If you try to refill the bucket while it's still full, you can't add much. However, if you allow time between your sessions, some of the material may leak out of your memory. You'll then be in a position to relearn it and more with your next session.

Practise studying

As an athlete has to train over and over, so too do those who wish to learn.

One of the best things you can do if you want to retain information is practice. In a 2013 study, students took practice tests for a number of weeks before the real thing. On the final test, they scored on average a full grade better than the students who studied the old-fashioned way, without practice.

“The second group of students was found to remember the material more fully a week later”

This is the principle behind redoing old exam papers in school, but the same can be done in college and for work exams. Research shows its an effective method which results in better performance.

Another study saw college students read material and then take recall tests. Some took one test, whereas others took a number of tests with short breaks of a couple of minutes in between. The second group of students was found to remember the material more fully a week later.

Do more than just read and re-read

Re-reading books, notes and worksheets over and over again is generally thought of now as a particularly poor way to study (unless you're in possession of a photographic memory, which

most of us aren't). Despite this, it's still one of the only methods most of us employ, rarely studying any other way.

“One group wrote questions about the contents, whereas the other group answered questions from someone else”

Flash cards, practice tests, reflecting on the material and other practical activities are all useful ways of supplementing your reading. They actively engage the brain, whereas reading can become a passive activity in many cases.

A 2010 study saw students who reread material compared to students from two other groups. One group wrote questions about the contents, whereas the other group answered questions from someone else. The results revealed that those who answered the questions did the best, offering some evidence towards the idea that active engagement is best. Compounding this is the fact that those who just reread the material were found to have done the worst.

Use pictures

In keeping with some of the advice offered above about mixing up your study techniques, using pictures is one of the best ways to help infor-



mation stick in your brain. Paying attention to diagrams and graphs can be extremely beneficial, and creating replicas of the pictures goes a step further.

Whether it's drawings of different biological systems in science, landscape features in geography, or curves and graphs in economics, using pictures is much more likely to engage your brain along a number of metrics, rather than just words.

In a 2003 study, a group of psychologists at a university in Germany gave cartoons to college students along with information about five scientists who study intelligence. An example of this is that the text about Alfred Binet (a French psychologist who is best known for developing the first widely-used intelligence test) came with a drawing of a race car driver. The driver wore a bonnet to protect his brain in the picture, which resulted in the students who saw the drawings doing better in the test than those who only received the text information.

Find examples

A final tip is to find examples of what you're studying. Abstract examples can be difficult to retain and think about, so practical examples can be very helpful.

“If you find studying as difficult as I do, then you'll be willing to resort to outside the box thinking”

An example of this is that sour foods usually taste as they do because of acid, but this may be forgotten. However, if you think about a lemon or vinegar, it may be easier to recall than if you had nothing to associate acid and sour with.

These are but a few examples to make studying that bit easier, but every little aid helps. If you find studying as difficult as I do, then you'll be willing to resort to outside the box thinking.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



Like many parents, thanks to the lockdown, I've been moonlighting as a hairdresser. With the actual hairdressers being closed these last months, we've had no choice but to take matters into our own hands. My wife even ordered a proper hairdressers' scissors and combs online, to give us an undeserved air of professionalism. With these shiny new tools, and with some trepidation, we recently set out to tame four unruly mops.

All went well with the older girls' hair, the cutting of which is fairly straightforward. It took all my skill with scissors and electric razor to tackle my son's Beatles hairdo, but this too was neatened quite successfully. The greater challenge would be to give our toddler her very first trim. There's something moving about cutting the fine hair of a toddler for the very first time. My mother had kept a lock of my own hair from the first time she cut it, and I did likewise with each child in turn.

Everyone was very excited when the day came for our two-year-old girl's very first haircut. Everyone, that is, except the little girl herself. She was absolutely horrified at the idea and burst into tears, before running away saying "no, no, please don't cut my hair!"

The look on her face was one of true fear. It told me that she wasn't just worried about having a bad hair day. I reassured her, "it doesn't hurt at all! Don't worry". Yet she still seemed quite sceptical. I guess when you've been repeatedly told that knives and scissors are

dangerous and can hurt you, you're bound to feel a little concerned when someone suddenly proposes cutting off a part of you with them.

We demonstrated on my eldest daughter, who let me trim a small bit off her hair. "See! It doesn't hurt a bit," she said. The little face then grew very slightly less wary. She sat worriedly in the kitchen chair, unconvinced at the whole concept of cutting off hair, and very sceptical of our promises that it wouldn't hurt.

As the other kids distracted and entertained her, my wife gently set about her work. With a neat snip, the first lock of golden hair came off. Everyone cheered as my wife showed it to her, and let her hold it. Now she had proof that it didn't hurt. A smile slowly returned to her face, as she looked around the kind faces of her brothers and sisters. A few more snips and more blonde locks fell about her, as she relaxed into the occasion and even began to laugh.

After the momentous first haircut was finished, a more grown up looking two-year-old went to admire the "big girl" in the mirror, with her trim blonde bob. She rushed off out to play and I was left feeling happy and sad at once, with a lock of her hair in my hand. I was to see this wonderful little lady grow and thrive. Yet I was sad at the sure realisation that we now had a little girl on our hands, one who would turn three soon. We no longer had a baby in the house, nor even a toddler. We had a big little girl who got haircuts, and who knew that they didn't even hurt, not one little bit.



Dreaming big after a long journey

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Vocations Sunday 2021 marked the culmination of ten years hard work for Brother – now Father – Damian Casey OFM, as he was ordained to priesthood by Archbishop of Dublin Dr Dermot Farrell. It was a joyous day for Fr Damian, whose path to the priesthood was a long one, he says.

“It’s been a long journey, in some sense I thought by God, I’m never going to get there,” he tells *The Irish Catholic*. “But it happened, God is good. It’s pretty surreal at the minute, it’s taken on a life of its own. The day itself went off as well as can be expected under the circumstances. But in many ways, less is more – it was actually more meaningful. Just my immediate family, my parents and my brothers.”

“I always remember feeling at home in the friary church in Waterford and that always stayed with me”

Fr Damian was a relatively late vocation, entering the seminary aged 34. Prior to that, he worked for ten years as a teacher in Mother of Fair Love special school in Kilkenny.

“I left my job in 2011, so I was actually studying for 10 years between the jigs and the reels,” he



Fr Damian Casey, who was ordained on Vocations Sunday 2021, ten years after entering the seminary.

says. “It was a long journey looking back on it now. I was a teacher of kids with special needs. I worked in Waterford where my home place is, but then I worked in a special school in Kilkenny – Mother of Fair Love Special School – I was there for almost ten years and I finished out my time there as principal of the school. I was principal for the last three years. I loved that work, Kilkenny is like my second home. I met

so many good friends there and they are very delighted, very proud that one of their own was just ordained.”

The origin of his call to the priesthood is hard to identify, Fr Damian says. It was always something in the back of his head, a niggling sensation which never went away. This was despite, as he says himself, his best efforts to ignore it, “putting it on the longest finger imaginable”. It was his attraction to the Franciscans that

ultimately won him over.

“The whole idea of the Franciscan way of life, that really is the first call. I remember growing up in Waterford and we’d go the friary for Mass and confessions,” Fr Damian explains. “I always remember feeling at home in the friary church in Waterford and that always stayed with me.

“The draw of the Franciscans was partly the result of the associations of his childhood”

“Initially, I entered the diocesan seminary for Waterford and Lismore. But when I entered the seminary, I knew something was missing and that was the Franciscan element for me. I completed my first year philosophy and then finished in Maynooth with the diocese and joined the Franciscan order. And immediately that felt right, it fitted.”

The draw of the Franciscans was partly the result of the associations of his childhood. But it was also down to the warmth and simplicity of the Franciscan way of life, Fr Damian continues: “There’s a lovely ordinariness about the friars, there’s something very approachable about them. I’m hospital chaplain to the Bon Secours in Barrington, Limerick, and one of the patients said to me a couple of weeks ago, there’s something so warm about your habit.

“And it’s very true. There’s something about the habit that makes us accessible to people. She called it a warmth. And I’ve experienced that both as a young guy looking at the friars and now from another perspective as a friar being with people, that it has an attraction that’s warm, friendly, approachable. It’s something that makes an unspoken connection with people.”

Fr Damian is hoping to take a well-deserved rest soon, but there

are always jobs to be done. He recently completed his work as a deacon in Ennis Cathedral and continues to work as a chaplain to Bon Secours.

“I worked with Ennis parish and with Fr Tom Ryan who was basically my mentor for the year,” Fr Damian says. “Tom is like a brother to me, I learned so much from him and we got on very well. It was an amazing experience working with him.

“As a deacon, I fulfilled all of the roles, baptisms, marriages, funerals and preaching at the Masses at the weekend. I’m also chaplain to the Bons in Limerick. Hospital ministry is something that I really like. It’s a really beautiful position to be in, to be working with people when they’re at their most vulnerable, at their lowest. It’s extraordinary work, an extraordinary ministry but a very fruitful one.

“Then of course there’s living in a fraternity, there’s always something to be done, whether it’s cooking in the kitchen when one of the cooks is absent, or someone needs brought to an appointment.”

“Dream the dream that God is dreaming for you”

When asked what advice he would give to someone discerning for the priesthood, Fr Damian drew on the words of Pope Francis, saying he would encourage them to “dream big”.

“Something I’ve been reflecting on at the moment is what Pope Francis says about St Joseph – having dedicated the year to St Joseph – is about dreaming big,” Fr Damian says. “God always has a plan for all of us. I think for anyone discerning a vocation and we have a guy here in Ennis in our postulancy, I would say dream big. Dream the dream that God is dreaming for you. I think that it’s a wonderful way of looking at vocation and it’s a fresh way of looking at vocation.”

Living Laudato Si’

Jane Mellet



Watching in horror as Killarney National Park burned

Many of us watched the news in horror in recent weeks as we saw Killarney National Park on fire. Similar fires also burned in the Mourne

Mountains and many other areas across the country. These fires are started deliberately, run out of control very quickly, and do untold damage to wildlife and ecosystems. Reports say it is feared that half of Killarney National Park’s habitat has been lost, an area which contains some of our country’s last remaining oak forests. The loss of habitats for nesting birds, deer and countless other species is truly heart-breaking. According to Birdwatch Ireland two-thirds of bird species in Ireland are being driven to extinction as there is virtually no habitat left for them breed in peace.

In a recent scientific report, *Living Planet*, scientists stated that 68% of wildlife has been

lost since 1970 due to human activity. This is a shocking statistic and reiterates the fact that we are living during an age of mass extinction.

Dr Jane Goodall, conservationist, and scientist, recently participated in a Vatican webinar which focused on the biodiversity crisis. She said: “We’ve got this one, beautiful, green and blue planet created by God. How is it possible that the most intellectual creature to ever walk on this planet is destroying its only home?” Dr Goodall also noted that, “Every time a species become extinct it is like a tear in the tapestry of life.” *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’ encyclical on ‘Care for Our Common Home’, reminds us of the interconnectedness of all things and just how dependent we are on the vast ecosystems of our planet. We are part of nature and called to protect it. From May 17-24 this year, Catholics all over the world will mark *Laudato Si’* Week which celebrates the



6th anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si’*. This is a key moment for each of us to reflect on what kind of world we are leaving to generations who come after us. It is an opportunity to pledge once again to live out the first commandment we were given in the scriptures, to be guardians of this world, not destroyers. We can start with our families, local parishes and it can be as simple as sowing wildflowers together in the garden or taking a walk in a local park and noticing what is around you, birds, soil, wind, flowers, planting trees, seeing how you can help support local wildlife, “all is a caress of God”. You can look at www.laudatosiweek.org which has a special message from Pope Francis as well as prayer resources, and ideas for families and communities. Let us use this opportunity of *Laudato Si’* Week 2021 to move forward together and walk more gently on this earth. “For we know that things can change” (LS, 13).

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

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A welcome revival of live television

I can see the headline now – ‘Shock! – Catholic Teaching Found in Catholic School’.

This fanciful notion struck me listening to **Liveline** (RTÉ Radio One) last Thursday when the controversy of the day was *Flourish*, the Catholic bishops' programme for relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in Catholic primary schools. There was a lot of complaining. One woman didn't like religious beliefs intruding on sex education as it should only be about the science. But then she complained about the document's position that human life began at conception – there were varied views about this she thought, reminding us of the abortion referendum. So much for following the science – some people do that only when it suits the ideology, otherwise fairy dust will do. Only one caller took an opposing view – why should you be surprised to find Catholic teaching in a Catholic school? Fair play to him, but unfortunately it was pretty much his only relevant point, and his case wasn't helped when he described a child being raised by a same-sex couple as “child abuse”, clarifying that he meant it wasn't right to *deliberately* deprive a child of a mother or father.

News bulletins on Friday showed another dubious aspect of the controversy –



Some viewers were left disappointed by the finale of *Line of Duty*.

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar said schools must teach about same-sex relationships, while the bishops' document was quoted as saying the complementary and gender balanced man-woman concept of marriage shouldn't be left out. This was seen as some sort of clash...the media does thrive on conflict, whether real, imagined or contrived.

Confession

But enough of the real world! I added another confession scene to my collection from drama series **Viewpoint** (ITV) last week. It was a pretty intense adult thriller with a ‘Rear Window’ vibe as a surveillance team kept watch

on a murder suspect. In one episode the police officers followed a person of interest and found him in a church, coming out of a confession box...so ha! He must have something to hide! One officer blessed herself and sat down respectfully, the other approached the sinner and reminded him that it doesn't count, that it's only words, if you don't do restitution. So, he urged the man, who had provided a fake alibi, to come clean.

It was building up to an exciting climax, when ITV pulled the last episode - usually it's the characters that get bumped off in these shows! Angry fans blew up the Twitter machine. The main char-

acter was played by Noel Clarke who was accused during the week of bullying and sexual harassment. According to news reports he apologised for any inadvertent offences on the first count and denied the second. For viewers that had already invested four hours in the show, they moved the final episode to the ITV Hub catchup service, which didn't help Irish viewers as that service is not readily available here. Ironically, they replaced the show with an episode of *It'll Be Alright on the Night*...it wasn't.

If there was great anticipation building up for that series finale, it was nothing like the massive build-up for the final

PICK OF THE WEEK

GIVE UP YER AUL SINS

RTÉ One Saturday May 8, 3.15pm

Making the Blind See: Charming animated story of the miracles of Jesus.

SUNDAY

BBC Radio 4 Sunday May 9, 7.10am

Topical religious and ethical stories.

MASS

RTE One Sunday May 9, 11.00am

Fr Patrick Cahill celebrates Mass in the RTÉ studios in Dublin with members of the Holy Family Mission, a residential evangelisation project for Catholic young people, based in Glencomeragh House, Co. Waterford. The musical director is Patrick McCamley.

episode of **Line of Duty** (BBC One) on Sunday night. This show is unique in the way it has brought people together for unmissable live television – no binge watching here! It's pretty much essential to watch it live, or better still on slight delay so you can rewind to catch the smallest of details that might be significant. If you wait too long you might be exposed to spoilers that will ruin the twists and turns of the convoluted plot. That last episode, while gripping as always, lacked the big punch people were expecting, and once again Twitter blew up, this time with the term ‘disappointing’ trending.

Secular

The world of the show is almost entirely secular, though last Sunday Superintendent Ted Hastings (Adrian

Dunbar) worried about the judgement of God on an error of judgment he had made that had tragic though perhaps unintended consequences. His iconic phrase “Mother of God” doesn't come across as disrespectful, and on a recent show he topped this with an expression of exasperation “Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the wee donkey”, which set the internet alight with searches for images of St Joseph to use in twitter memes. Maybe in this year of St Joseph the saint had a wry smile at the sudden renewal of interest.

Heaven knows what it might lead to.

boregan@hotmail.com,
[@boreganmedia](https://www.facebook.com/boreganmedia)

Film

Aubrey Malone



Force-feeding melodrama to captive – or captured – audiences

Arrah shure isn't it a grand thing entirely that Lionsgate is after puttin' *Wild Mountain Thyme* up for rental? And shouldn't we all be dancin' jigs of delight as we root out our shillelaghs and cloth caps for the occasion.

It was originally slated for the cinemas. They're citing Covid as the reason for the change of plan but methinks it was brought about by the negative backlash from the media. Make no mistake about it, this straight-to-video lark is an exercise in damage limitation.

How do they think they can foist such bilge on us? John Ford might have got away with it in 1951 with *The Quiet Man* but in an era that produced cerebral directors like Jim Sheridan and Neil Jor-

dan and actors like Brendan Gleeson and Michael Fassbender are we really going to fall for such paddywhackery? What was Emily Blunt thinking?

I'll be watching it from behind the sofa with a wet towel over my head to prevent any sudden attacks of dizziness.

Teenagers

Here Are the Young Men (VOD) is a disturbing portrayal of a group of teenagers who've fallen into a vortex of drink and drugs. Treasa O'Brien's *Town of Strangers* (IFI@home) is an interesting documentary charting the lives of a group of foreign nationals living in Galway. *The Winter's Tale* (Digital Download) is a contempo-



Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie in *By The Sea*, a film directed by Angelina.

rary re-working of the Shakespeare play of the same name.

Normally I'd watch Naomi Watts reading the phone book but her radar was on the blink

with *Gypsy* (Netflix). It has her as a therapist desperately trying to inject some vim into her marriage. She gets so involved with her patients

as to effectively become part of their worlds in a raft of pseudo-erotic vignettes.

It started with a bang like another Netflix offering, *The Stranger*, thereafter collapsing under the weight of some fuzzy Freudiana into an anticlimactic fug.

Pretentious

I found similarly pretentious elements with a lot of other recent mini-series, not only on Netflix but on “ordinary” TV too. *Smother* suffered from it, and so did *The Drowning*, *Deadwater Fell* and *Cheat*. And the two “cougar” series, *Gold Digger* and *Penance*. How many hours did I waste watching identikit features like these that laid the tension on with a trowel?

The demand for behemoths is creating the supply. We're stuck in our homes. The makers figure that if they suck us in with an explosive opening sequence we'll be hooked. We'll pencil them in for our subsequent viewing like higher grade soaps.

At the Sea (Netflix), in contrast, had me glued to the set. When it started I thought it was going to be just another autopsy of a dead marriage. The evocation of empty wealth with this couple (Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie) put me in mind of what I imagined their real-life liaison must have been like a lot of the time.

But this developed into a very interesting study of jealousy and depression brought on by childlessness.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Chicago art and Ireland

Art, Ireland, and the Irish Diaspora: Chicago, Dublin, New York 1893-1939, Culture, Connections, and Controversies

by Éimear O'Connor
(Irish Academic Press, €35.00/£35.00)

Peter Costello

First off it has to be said that this is a remarkable book, which will be read by anyone interested in the course of Irish culture since the Irish Revival in the 1890s down to the eve of World War II, the era of Jack Yeats to Michael Scott so to speak. This will be for some familiar territory, but in these elegantly-designed and illustration-filled pages there are new facts, fresh insights, and food for thought on every page.

Turning over these pages I was reminded of the cottage which filmmaker Robert Flaherty built to use as a studio on Inis Mór. It was fitted with a huge east facing skylight (one of Peadar O'Donnell's 'Big windows' perhaps) which flooded the scene of the director's artistic activities with light. This book, too, lets in a flood of light on the Irish cultural scene over two generations. As a result it will be a 'must have' buy for countless people.

Opening

In the opening sections we meet again Lady Aberdeen and the Chicago exhibition, which is well described by Simon Welfare in his enchanting biography of the Aberdeens' (recently reviewed in these pages).

But in between these two poles we meet the artists, writers, poets, critics, painters, patrons and those who purchased, those who imagined, created and sustained the whole idea of a new culture for a new nation - a nation able on the one

hand to look to the past, but also anxious to play a part in the new age of air flight and international accord (when the great powers allowed it).

The patrons were such people as New Yorker John Quinn, whose multitudinous activities were so important. The book is peculiarly rich in the famous and the less famous, forming a web, or proto-internet, the effects of which linger to this day. In this book the readers are able to discover so much not about the usual gallery of patriots and politicians, but about the creative soul of the Irish nation.

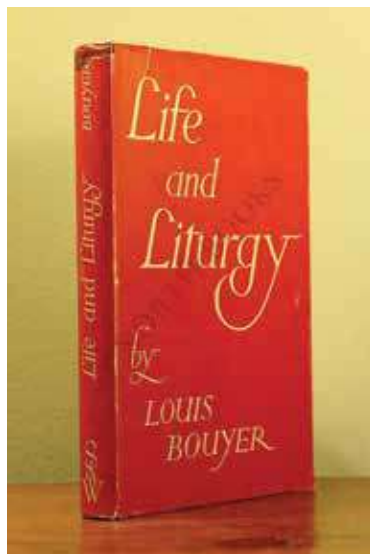
Research

A wonderful book, and a wonderful read. It is the outcome of years of concentrated research: every August for six years was passed by Éimar O'Connor in torrid steaming New York, from where every sensible person had fled to the seaside or the mountains. But such is the personally-demanding nature of the work that went into this book, all 360 pages of it.

Éimear O'Connor's interests have always been in images of nation-making from the Celtic Twilight to the white heat of modernism. But there were also Irish artists whom this did not interest, working in America and Ireland. I am thinking of, say, Timothy O'Sullivan, in the previous generation to the Yeats brothers, photographer of the Civil War and of the Far West - a great artist certainly, but how did his Irish origins (he was born to Irish parents about 1840) affect his work. Breaking away from the parameters of nationalism, there are many things yet to learn about Irish artists and what 'Irish art' might mean in a larger context. A wonderful prospect for exploration.



Michael Scott's modernist conception of the Irish pavilion for the New York World Fair in 1939.



Life and Liturgy
by Louis Bouyer
(Sheed & Ward, revised edition, London 1978)

Ruadhán Jones

When we gather to celebrate the Mass and receive the Eucharist, we are constituted as the people of God. We were not so beforehand, except in potential. This is what Pope Pius XI meant when he described the Mass as "the principal organ of the Church" - without it, we could not be considered the Church.

That, at least, is the view of liturgist Fr Louis Bouyer in his book *Life and Liturgy*. Fr Bouyer converted to Catholicism from High Lutheranism, attracted largely by the Church's liturgical traditions. He was a significant figure in proposing change during Vatican II, acting as an advisor on liturgy. *Life and Liturgy* was originally written pre-Vatican II, but Fr Bouyer revised it significantly and the re-released edition reflects many of the findings of the council. (Confusingly, the book, based on lectures given in Notre Dame University, was first published in the USA in 1954 as *Liturgical Piety*. Select the later British Sheed and Ward editions from 1978 or 1989 for preference.)

“Without a proper liturgical life, the Church becomes either over-sentimental or over-intellectual”

Coming from outside the Faith, as it were, Fr Bouyer had no qualms drawing from traditions outside the Church. For example, one of the chapters in *Life and Liturgy* devotes much time to what he considers the excellent efforts of Anglicans to preserve elements from the liturgy, efforts which were often more successful than the Church's.

Effort

The book itself is an effort to examine the liturgy using what the historical sciences had revealed about

The need for authentic renewal of the liturgy

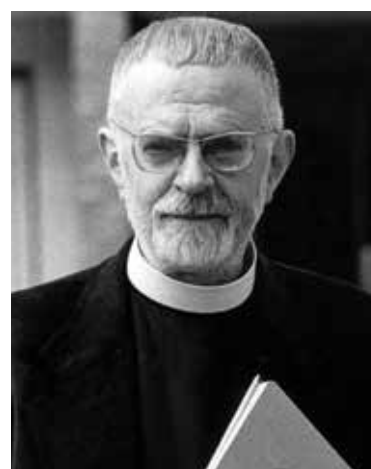
the Mass and the development of its forms. In doing so, he is able to strike a neat balance between criticism of the 'fossilised' liturgical celebrations of the time, which had developed little since the 16th Century, with a call for renewal, not for its own sake, but to return the liturgy to its roots.

He begins with an examination of the 1950s liturgy and attitudes

towards it. What he discerns is a mindset which saw the Mass as being an external sign of the Church, rather than its lifeblood. People prayed at Mass, they didn't pray the Mass, and while there was a sentimental attachment to the Real Presence and Christ's sacrifice, it lacked the 'sober mysticism' of the early Church.

“Fr Bouyer converted to Catholicism from High Lutheranism, attracted largely by the Church's liturgical traditions”

Developments in the historical sciences enabled Fr Bouyer to explore the history of the liturgy, returning to the *qahal*, the Jewish convocation and precursor to the Catholic Mass. He draws from this the key aspects of liturgical celebration properly defined, and its shape or structures. From there, he explains in detail the teachings of the Church Fathers,



Fr Louis Bouyer at the height of his influence

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.



Fr Stanley Klores celebrates the traditional Latin Mass in St Patrick's Church in New Orleans.

“The Mass where we offer to God the perfect offering of Christ's sacrifice”

before again putting in context the modern development of the liturgy.

Studies

And where do Fr Bouyer's studies lead him? To the conclusion that the life of the Church always comes back to the Cross, not as a sign of suffering, but of Resurrection. The Mass is where we offer to God the perfect offering of Christ's sacrifice, receiving it, returning it and in so doing becoming children of God.

The book concludes with a final call to integrate the liturgy into our lives fully, so that we recognise the Mass as constitutive of our Faith, as opposed to its

external sign: “[T]he world of the sacraments, the world into which the liturgy introduces us is not a world in its own right...it is rather the meeting-point of the world of the Resurrection with this very world of ours in which we must live, suffer and die.”

Without a proper liturgical life, the Church becomes either over-sentimental or over-intellectual. The benefit for us, as readers, is that Fr Bouyer is neither of these things. In addition, he is determined to be understood by the layman. It takes hard-work all the same, but his fluid prose and playfulness make for lively reading – by the standards of the theology.

Is a resurgent Christian Armenia possible, or even wise?

Peter Costello

The designation the other week by the United States of the massacres of Armenians in Asia Minor between 1915 and 1923 as genocide was an important step in satisfying the call for justice. But that particular passage of brutality was only one of many actions taken by the Ottoman Empire and the republican government of the new Turkey. The Armenian question has been one which has always confused many in the West.

Most people will have heard of, and many read *The Song of Bernadette* by Czech-Austrian novelist Franz Werfel. But when Mr Werfel arrived in Lourdes in flight from the Nazis, he was already famous as the author of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933). Here, on the coast of the Mediterranean, far from what many today think of as Armenia the population was massacred: Mr Werfel's novel is a literary monument to a forgotten moment.

Mussa Dagh was an Armenian settlement in what is now northern Syria and had once been southern Turkey on the western extremity of the realm of Armenia which stretched eastward to the edge of the Caucasus. The legendary past of the country was centre on Lake Van in eastern Turkey.

In the boundary changes made by the Allies to the defeated Ottomans many nations were given a new form. Others were refused a return to their historic past. Such was the case with Armenia and to the south into Iraq and Persia was Kurdistan. Russian Armenia had a brief few months of independence after 1918, only to be quickly suppressed by the Soviet army in 1920. Since then both have remained to trouble the conscience of the world with their neglected claims, and their ill treatment by their new masters.

This was especially true of Arme-

nia. There are few enough Armenians in Ireland, a couple of hundred; but there are large communities in France and in the United States. From both of these have come, since the 1920s, a continuous stream of books and journalism constantly reiterating the claims of Armenia as a whole to justice, but to the great annoyance of the changing regimes of Turkey.

What Turkey feared then and fears now is territorial loss, that Armenia and Kurdistan claims recognised would reduce the extent, power and influence of Turkey in the world. The old imperial habits of mind linger long.

However, leaving aside Muslim Kurdistan, the re-emergence in the 21st Century in the Middle East of a Christian state with an historic past and crowded history would certainly pose a problem, one akin in some ways to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Lineage

Turkey can trace its lineage as a nation back to around 1300, when Turkic tribes from Central Asia established themselves in north-west Turkey. In contrast the Kingdom of Armenia goes back to Tigran II who flourished before 63BC. It was a Christian realm for the earliest days of the new faith.

Armenia outclasses Turkey in its claims through culture and religion. Certainly in Marco Polo's account of the medieval world both Greater and Lesser Armenia loom large. The Armenians now in exile recall all of this history and sustain a longing to see their ancient nation once again a

flourishing state.

Only when Armenia and Kurdistan are settled in peace under their own rulers will peace in general begin to prevail in the Middle East.

Last week's declaration was the end of one process, but also the beginning of another. Only by accepting what local cultures individually want and need, will the great powers be able to sleep easy in their beds. But what new problems will emerge remains to be seen.

The current conflict between Armenia (the former Soviet Republic, an independent fragment on the edge of the Caucasus) and its neighbour Azerbaijan does not bode well for a



The heroes of Mussa Dagh.

future of peace. To the Armenians, Armenia means historically a much larger region of the Middle East, as suggested by a map of the area in the time of Marco Polo (see map).

For Marco Polo Greater Armenia was famously the country of the mountain where Noah's Ark came to rest, a legend that still obsesses many Bible Christians in the US who would send more expeditions there if conditions were calmer and less crossed by conflict.

Joe Biden followed through on his campaign promise of an annual commemoration to be called 'Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day'. From now it will be harder to forget the massacres. But the complete peace the region's peoples so long for retreats further into the future.



The position of Great and Lesser Armenia in the Middle East in the days of Marco Polo, c. 1290 (from *The Travels of Marco Polo*, courtesy Penguin / Folio Society)

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The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

B.D.

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PLEASE REMEMBER BÓTHAR IN YOUR WILL. €1,800 will allow us to give an Irish, in-calf, dairy heifer to a struggling family in Rwanda, completely transforming their lives. Your gift will live on for generations. Phone the office on 061 414142 or info@bothar.ie

The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,
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Say this prayer for three days.

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Advertorial

Be part of the Miracle | China Church Solidarity

I have been visiting China since 1979 and working systematically there since 2000. In 2014, we were able to open an Augustinian Sisters' Active contemplative Monastery (pictures below). I unhesitatingly call this a wonder and a miracle in the context of Communist China. The foundation of this monastery can be sourced to many, including the prayers and financial support of many in Ireland and Britain, but in a special way to the extraordinary faith of two people: the Mother Foundress, Sr Mary, who with her family lived through all the oppression of the '50's and '60's in China and the positive response of an elderly bishop despite his suffering during the same period.

I once asked Sr Mary's Bishop how was it possible for him to say yes when asked to sponsor

this Contemplative Monastery in his diocese in such difficulties for Christians in China. His reply was profound: "When Sister Mary told me her story and the dream of her contemplative vocation, my twenty years in prison, ten of these in solitary confinement, flashed to memory, painful as they were. But in a moment I saw the point of it all. It was a grace that allowed me to recognise and understand her call to initiate a contemplative monastery, as that was the only option available to me while in prison - Contemplation."

The Monastery was formally opened in 2014. However, permission to open the Monastery was given by the government with a BIG CONDITION, namely, that a Nursing Home for the Aged would be attached to the monastery. This was acceptable

to the sisters and would constitute the "active" part of their mission.

We expect the cost of the nursing home to be about one million, nine hundred thousand US dollars. The Catholics of China have collected \$500,000 to date and now I'm seeking support outside of China to raise another \$1,000,000.

I am most grateful for your generosity to us over the past twenty year which has helped strengthen the Church of China in its mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Please continue to support the mission of the Monastery with your prayers. If you wish to support with a donation, please return the coupon on the lower left or donate via Paypal on our website: www.ccschina.co.uk.



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Please send cheque made payable to CCS or cash
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Leisure time

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Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

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Please pray for the beatification of

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

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

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

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

www.mscmissions.ie

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

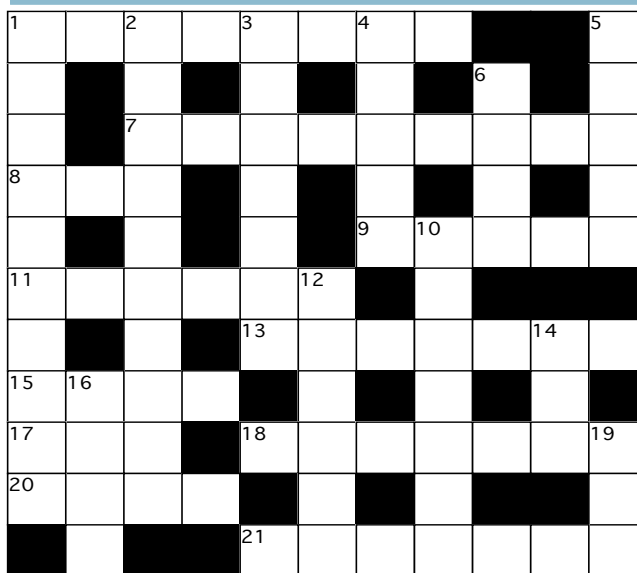
Trócaire

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

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

Crossword Junior

Gordius 381



Across

- 1 Name shared by artist Da Vinci and actor Di Caprio (8)
- 7 Of the best quality (9)
- 8 Short form of the name Kenneth (3)
- 9 '_____ right of way' (5)
- 11 Small red fruit with a stone in it (6)
- 13 Shouting (7)
- 15 The first man in the Bible (4)
- 17 'Yo ho ho and a bottle of ____' (3)
- 18 Aeroplane trips (7)
- 20 When you are introduced to someone, you might say "Pleased to ____ you" (4)
- 21 This bird has a forked tail (7)

Down

- 1 It might be a rabbit's foot or a four-leafed shamrock (5,5)
- 2 Password used to get into the cave in 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' (4,6)
- 3 Sport involving bows and arrows (7)
- 4 Hold up or slow down (5)
- 5 Played a role in a movie or play (5)
- 6 In this place (4)
- 10 Against the law (7)
- 12 The colour of custard (6)
- 14 An acorn, perhaps (3)
- 16 A song to be sung by two people together (4)
- 19 Use it to cut timber (3)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 29

GORDIUS NO. 505

Across – 1 Truthfully 6 Acne 10 Prima ballerina 12 Bandana 15 Sprig 17 Bach 18 Isis 19 Offal 21 Ketchup 23 Tense 24 Ages 25 Town crier 26 Rivet 28 Drapery 33 Congenial 34 Drool 35 Lamp 36 Shackleton

Down – 1 Type 2 Unitarian 3 Hoard 4 Urban 5 Lily 8 Evangelist 9 Tea shop 13 Aide 14 Abscond 16 Historical 20 Figure out 21 Kettles 22 Ulna 27 Venom 29 Relic 30 Pedal 31 High 32 Flan

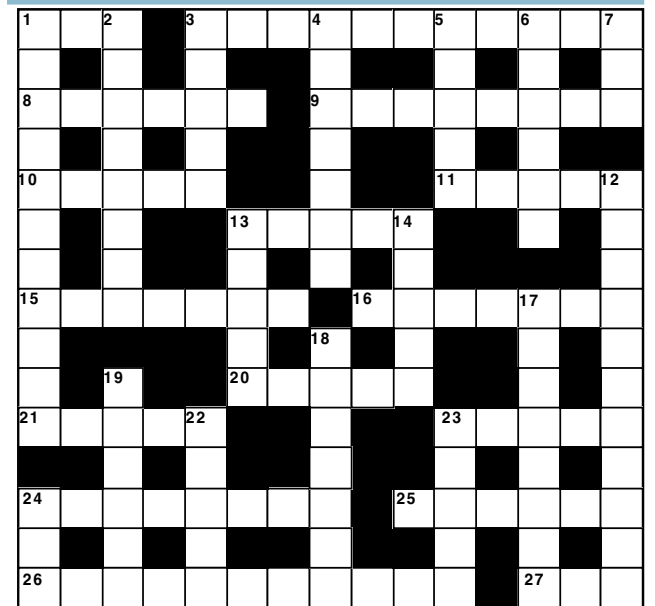
CHILDREN'S No. 380

Across – 1 Goalscorer 7 Neptune 8 Idea 9 Leaving 11 Igloo 13 Moss 15 Elevators 16 Fresh 17 Prepare

Down – 1 Gentlemen 2 Applause 3 Studio 4 One 5 Enid 6 Meadows 10 Giraffe 12 Looked 14 Sleep

Crossword

Gordius 506



Across

- 1 Toothed wheel (3)
- 3 The stud lit furs? Somehow, that's suspicious (11)
- 8 Santorini and Rhodes are in this sea (6)
- 9 French bread stick (8)
- 10 Astute (5)
- 11 Thighbone (5)
- 13 In naming actor Michael, Abel's brother has a point - not a lot of people know that! (5)
- 15 The Garden of Ireland (7)
- 16 It's a strange golf map that helps motorists in poor visibility! (3,4)
- 20 Joyful (5)
- 21 Chambers (5)
- 23 & 24 Our Lady may be referred to thus at this time of year (5,2,3,3)
- 25 Hang loosely (6)
- 26 Ulster town named for our patron saint (11)
- 27 Feline creature (3)

Down

- 1 A calm cowherd stirred the seafood stew (4,7)
- 2 Enormous (8)
- 3 Personal journal (5)
- 4 One size of newspaper (7)
- 5 Cram (5)
- 6 Portuguese Marian shrine (6)
- 7 Fib (3)
- 12 Dazzling to behold (11)
- 13 Material (5)
- 14 Black wood (5)
- 17 Unwelcome type of reaction, perhaps to certain foods (8)
- 18 The cardinal has an invocation for a sprinkler (7)
- 19 Show obeisance in an Oriental way (6)
- 22 Precipitous, sharply inclined (5)
- 23 Unscrupulous 'doctor', or the sound of a duck (5)
- 24 Ancient (3)

Sudoku Corner

381

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 380

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

Last week's Hard 380

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Celebrating the togetherness of public Mass as we rebuild

AS OUR PARISHES PREPARE again for the return to public worship, albeit in a limited format, we are thankful for this progress and the opportunity it affords us to gather as communities of faith. Truly we will celebrate that togetherness and rebuild, week by week, on the strong foundation that remains at the heart of parish and Church life.

Difficult time

It has truly been such a difficult time and, for some, an unbearable situation where attendance at public Mass was not an option. Thankfully, I was able to continue celebrating Mass in the parish and through livestreaming and Facebook, managed to maintain a good level of contact with people. That said, I know that many – even within the parish, could not access our online Masses due to poor internet connectivity or, for others, not being “internet people”. I was pleased to recently celebrate a Mass for a man who died in Hawaii, the Mass requested by his brother in Chicago who has tuned into our parish over the past twelve months because his grandfather came from Kilkelly. There seemed something reassuring in this, that across the ocean we were praying for the same person, brought together by faith, through history and



geography. The world seemed small, though we were not meant to travel beyond 5km! Prayer does not have any limits.

As we prepare to return to shared and public worship, we will move slowly and carefully. The sacrifice that people made is commendable and the patience shown deserves great credit. I believe the core driving force of all that was done and continues to be done is in the name of saving life and is in that regard “pro-life” and should be cherished as such. Someone said to me that if one life was saved because of what has been done in our parishes, it was worth it. Surely that has been the case. It is certain that in that difficult place of being apart, we helped people to

avoid contracting Covid-19 and to that end, saved some from serious illness or perhaps even death. This may sound dramatic, but I believe it to be true.

Family of families

There are lessons to be learned from our recent experience too. In the parish I am assigned to, there are four churches – each with its own community and story. We strive to be a parish – that “family of families” Pope Francis refers to. In pre-pandemic days, at the weekend I celebrated Mass in the four churches, two Vigil Masses and two on Sunday. During the week, I celebrate Mass between two of the four. During ‘lockdown’, all our Masses were celebrated in the

parish church, with weekend Masses reduced to two (one on the Vigil and another on Sunday). Funeral Masses were celebrated in the church local to the deceased, likewise baptisms and, to a lesser extent, weddings. All four churches were open for private prayer and, it is clear, that all four were very much in use by the people of the parish – seldom did I visit any of the churches and not see signs of people having been there, not least in candles burning on our shrines. The role of the churches as centres of prayer never diminished. In a time when priests numbers continue to decrease, we might well need to look at this in terms of “where we go from here?”. Can we continue as before or has this time shown us that there are other options around celebrating Masses in our parishes? Would changing venues or even days for the celebration of Mass be a viable option? Could the location of the Mass be less significant than its celebration?

For now, like all people of faith, I am happy that we are moving in the direction of public worship and I look forward to hearing the voice of gathered people rather than imagining it. Safe journey!

The month of May

“Do you like May?” he asked the parish priest on the First Friday visit. The answer was definite. “I do,” Martin.

“It is my favourite month – Our Lady’s month, new life, growth, flowers, farmers in the fields, birds in the sky – everything about it. If Heaven were a month, Martin, it would be the month of May.” They parted company and the priest said, as he got into his car, “See you soon Martin, and enjoy the month of May”. Two weeks later, the priest recalled this conversation at Martin’s funeral Mass. He concluded his homily with words I will never forget... “We will meet again Martin and, enjoy the month of May”.



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We are arranging for a Novena of Masses to be offered for your intentions during Easter as a mark of gratitude for your kindness and support throughout the year.

May Our Risen Saviour bring you His richest blessings, peace and happiness.

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In these fraught times, missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas. We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass.

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