

The Irish Catholic

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

Jason Osborne

A well-known lay missionary who was dramatically hospitalised with Covid-19 has appealed for Catholics to set aside divisions over vaccines and stand with the Pope.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Tony Foy, Executive Director of NET Ministries Ireland admitted that looking into his children's eyes as he was rushed to hospital led him to serious soul searching about his own stance during the pandemic.

Admitting that he had ignored the advice from Pope Francis to get vaccinated thinking the virus would not seriously affect him, Mr Foy (51) said: "I wouldn't want any other parent to feel the way I felt leaving my family and knowing that it was potentially unnecessary".



The father-of-seven said that he knows "what I would do differently now," given his circumstances, and felt inspired by God to share his experience with people, that they might trust the Pope in terms of the "morals and ethics for this vaccine".

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'All God's creatures got a place in the choir...'



Fr Peter O'Connor PP St John the Baptist parish, Blackrock, Dublin, blesses animals brought by parishioners, October 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. See pages 16-17

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

What makes missionary life worthwhile PAGES 20-21



CHAI BRADY

Drastic change in Dromore's future

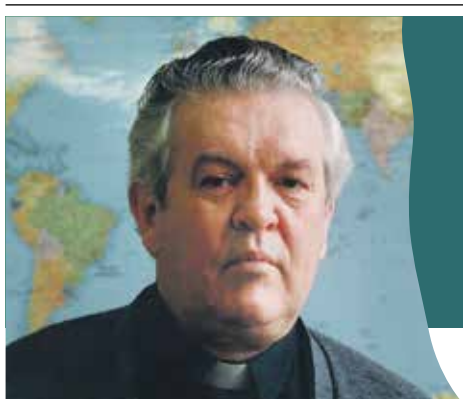
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IRELAND'S WAKE CULTURE

Author Kevin Toolis reveals its value

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Fr. Aengus Finucane: "a legacy of incredible humanitarian significance"

Looking at a rich and varied life lived in the service of others and of God.



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The blessing of animals

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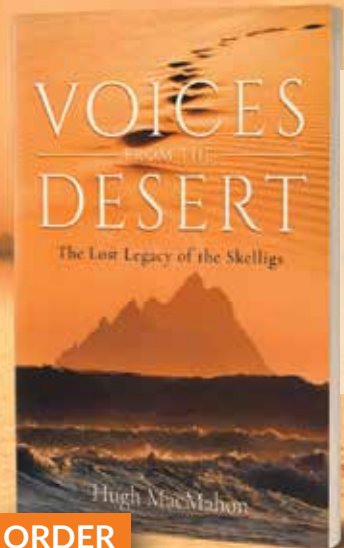
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Church must not be reduced to a drab debating society

From the moment of his election eight years ago, Pope Francis laid down a marker that the Church is not a debating chamber but exists to bring Christ to the world.

Speaking the morning after his election he warned the cardinals who had just thrust him to the papacy: "We can walk as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not confess Jesus Christ, nothing will avail. We will become a pitiful NGO, but not the Church, the bride of Christ".

It was a stark warning and one that bears repeating as we continue on the synodal pathway in the Church in Ireland. The Pope has made it clear that he passionately believes that this is a decisive time for the Church to live in a synodal fashion and he is due to launch the global programme on synodality at the Vatican this weekend.

New

It's a word that is relatively new in our vocabulary as Catholics, though one that has a noble tradition in the first millennium of Christianity. In the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council breathed new life into the concept of synodal governance

in the Church by underlining the importance of all Christians listening attentively to the Word of God and discerning what God is asking of the Church in every generation.

Francis' vision is that everything that the Church does should be done in a synodal way"

It is often said that the Church is not a democracy, and this is true – but the Church is so much more than a democracy: it is a communion of believers dedicated to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ "in season and out of season" (II Timothy 4:2).

A communion of believers means a trustful relationship built on co-responsibility for the Church shared between laypeople, religious, priests and bishops. But, we can never lose sight of the mission of the Church: to preach Christ and invite people into an inti-

mate encounter with Jesus by which they find themselves transformed and able to serve those around them.

Danger

There is a danger in the synodal way if it becomes very process-driven, then the process becomes the most important thing. This will only attract the interest of people who are – by nature – officious and love meetings. Anyone who has ever sat on a committee will tell you that there are people there to work and people there because they love meetings.

One priest – long since dead – used to joke that meetings are really a sign that no-one really knows what to do, and many meetings are a sign that we are hopelessly lost.

Another danger is that it becomes little more than a forum for the exchange of interesting ideas and that five years where we really should be mission-driven is taken up with dull – even if worthy – semantics.

This is not to say that the mission of the Church is anti-

intellectual – it is anything but – or that we should retreat into pietistic or fideistic pseudo-solutions to the real issues facing the Church. But, it also means that we cannot allow the mission of the Church to be diverted into sub-strands to be addressed by committees or fora, however well-meaning.

Francis' vision is that everything that the Church does should be done in a synodal way. This means putting flesh on the bones of this in every parish and faith community in the country. At one level, it is a daunting prospect – but at the same time the way forward is simple. Christianity thrived in the pagan culture of the Roman Empire precisely because Christians were able to transform that culture by service and love. There is no reason to doubt that we can do so again.

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Missionary pleads for vaccine unity

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"I just ignored that [what Pope Francis has said] and I'm not very proud of that, but I ignored it.

"That is as Catholics, when we're in union with the authority of the Church – and who is the Pope? Is he or is he not the Pope? – then there will be blessings, and there will be more grace from that, and you all know this, there will be more grace from that than there will be from doing our own thing," Mr Foy said.

Mr Foy said that his video is not a "pro-vaccine video by any manner or means" but that if ever the Church needed unity behind the Pope, it's now.

"I was in a bad way for a week. Like, delirious for a

week. I couldn't pray – all I could do was hold the rosary beads, and I'm grateful even for that," he said.

"I know when the time comes that I hope I have the courage to do the right thing and follow the Pope...to stick with the Pope, because if we ever needed as Catholics unity and God's blessing, it is now.

"I think that's why, as a 51 year old, somebody who considered themselves fit, I think that might be why God wanted me to do this video, to share with you so that you might learn something from it.

"You know, when we're with the Pope, he has let us off the hook in terms of morals and ethics for this vaccine," Mr Foy said.

Challenge launched against NI secretary's abortion powers

Ruadhán Jones

Northern Ireland secretary Brandon Lewis' "unprecedented" power to impose abortion "must be scrapped", a pro-life organisation has said.

Bernadette Smyth of Precious Life made her comments as a legal challenge to Mr Lewis' powers was launched in the North's high court this week by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC).

The case will hear that Mr Lewis exceeded his legal authority when he granted himself an unprecedented level of control over abortion in Northern Ireland, and his actions are incompatible with the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

"Brandon Lewis' abortion directive must be scrapped,"

Ms Smyth said in a statement, October 4.

"He interfered in a devolved matter even though the NI Assembly is up and running. Westminster does not ignore the principles of devolution for Scotland and Wales, yet they have no hesitation in doing so in Northern Ireland."

In her statement, Ms Smyth added that abortion was forced on Northern Ireland by the Westminster Parliament through Section 9 of the *NI Executive Formation Act* while the assembly was suspended.

"Westminster not only ignored the right to life of unborn babies, but also blatantly ignored democracy and devolution when it seized power to override our Stormont Assembly," the director of Precious Life said.

Irish synod should not ‘water down’ teaching to cater to elite classes

Chai Brady

Many people who seek to change Church teaching are “upper class and highly educated” and Ireland’s national synod must focus on bringing them back to the Church rather than “watering down” the Gospel, according to an Irish priest in Australia.

Australia entered into its ‘Plenary Council’ process on Sunday – a process similar to a national synod – which had a challenging beginning according to Fr Brendan Purcell, a philosophy professor and priest based in Sydney.

“The trouble is when the Church gets going the people who self-identify as Catholics, aren’t necessarily prac-

ting Catholic and may have serious issues with loads of Catholic teaching, they can become the mouthpiece,” Fr Purcell told *The Irish Catholic*.

“A sole focus on organisational structures during Ireland’s synod is akin to moving chairs around the Titanic”

“I’m not blaming them, they have a right to disagree, but I think that’s part of the problem. In Australia, certainly earlier on the plenary council, it looked as if it was staffed by a

certain number of them... We all have to learn how we have lost these people and how we can bring them back.”

Looking at Pope Francis and his focus on the peripheries and those furthest from the Church, Fr Purcell said the peripheries also include the artistic, educated, university staff and academic elites who “don’t really identify with the Church and feel it doesn’t speak to them anymore”.

“There’s different kinds of peripheries and possibly in Ireland the more educated classes are a classic periphery, they’re not at the centre of the Church, they used to belong and maybe they could be but I don’t think the best way to get them back is to basically

throw out the baby with the bathwater, I don’t think the best way back is to water down the Gospel,” he said.

Structures

Fr Purcell added that a sole focus on organisational struc-

tures during Ireland’s synod is akin to moving chairs around the Titanic.

“You can arrange all sorts of parish councils and every darn thing, the absolute result is zero. I think it’s through the life of peo-

ple evidencing that they’re happy, in other words the Gospel actually helps you to be a fulfilled human being, I think that might be the way, both in Ireland and in Australia, we might be able to find the answers.”

Assisted suicide opposed by palliative care movement

Staff reporter

Euthanasia is “anathema” to the palliative care movement according to the chief executive of the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF)

Speaking before an IHF forum which ran from Tuesday to Wednesday this week, Sharon Foley said she could not see assisted suicide happening in Irish hospices.

Speaking to *The Irish Times*, Ms Foley said: “The palliative care movement has come from a movement of dignity and comforting people at the end of life. So it is anathema to them to be any way cutting across that.”

She said People Before Profit TD Gino Kenny’s rejected ‘Dying With Dignity Bill’, which aimed to legalise euthanasia, had “so many

holes” and that before any new legislation is brought to the Oireachtas there should be “very full, inclusive and thoughtful debate around assisted dying”.

“Our feeling on the bill is that despite its coming from very well-intentioned people, it was a rushed process... There are lots of bits missing, that haven’t been considered... It’s such an impactful area of our lives and the Irish people deserve that very inclusive, considered debate,” Ms Foley said.

“Just as there has been a huge push in recent years to improve the experience of childbirth, safety around childbirth, it is the same around end of life. More can be done to enable people to die well, die at home, die with dignity.”

Parish unveils bench for ‘precious’ centenarian



Ruadhán Jones

Cooley parish celebrated Madge Boyle’s 100th birthday by unveiling a park bench across the road from the house she was born in.

Fr Malachy Conlon PP Cooley parish, Co. Louth, described Ms Boyle as “a precious light in our community”.

Born September 12, 1921, Ms Boyle and her late husband Mike had nine children, 25 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

A spokesperson for the parish said Ms

Boyle is “a well-known and much loved member of the Cooley community”.

“Her deep faith is an important part of her life and she always attended Sunday Mass – picking up her copy of *The Irish Catholic* on her way out – until the Covid-19 lockdown forced her to watch Mass from her home on the Church cameras,” the spokesperson continued.

Ms Boyle always took “a great interest in parish affairs and would willingly lend a hand helping at functions and celebrations”.

For many years she organised the Annual Cooley Parish Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine.



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Closing date for applications is 29th October 2021

Newry parishioners annoyed by 'disastrous' council plans

Ruadhán Jones

Plans that would remove Newry Cathedral's parking have annoyed parishioners, with a recent survey showing 72% oppose the move.

Fr Francis Brown, the Co. Down cathedral's administrator, warned that the plans to build a civic centre in the cathedral's parking area would be "disastrous".

"It means there would be no parking next to the cathedral, their plan is to take it all away," Fr Brown said.

"If there's no parking at the cathedral, not only for Sunday Masses, but for weekday – many of the people coming to the weekday Masses in particular, they're retired, they can't be walking a distance.

"It would be an absolute disaster. Naturally, parishioners are very annoyed."

A recent survey conducted by Newry, Mourne and Down council, which received 1,600 responses and 6,000 comments, overwhelmingly opposed the move, Fr Brown pointed out.

"Around 1,600 parishioners responded

to the survey and 72% were opposed to the development," he continued. "Then there were 6,000 people who wrote... They were all pro-parish and against the councils plans."

Cllr Patrick Brown said following a council meeting September 27 that the survey results make clear that "people of the area do not want a second civic centre in Newry".

He added that despite this, councillors "are intent on ignoring the will of the people as expressed in the public consultation".

The cathedral administration has suggested several different sites for the civic centre.

Another survey conducted by the council in 2016 of a number of sites regarded the cathedral site as "the least suitable", Fr Brown added.

"But they've gone ahead despite that," he said. "Parishioners are very annoyed with the council and the local councillors that they are ignoring the request from the parishioners to build their civic centre elsewhere and to leave the parking by the cathedral."

The plans are part of the Newry City Regeneration Scheme.

Famous hotelier laments intolerance of faith in Ireland

Jason Osborne

Hotelier and TV personality Francis Brennan spoke recently about the importance of faith in his life and his disappointment about "an element" introduced into Irish society that doesn't receive faith well.

In an interview with the *Irish Examiner*, Mr Brennan spoke about how fear around a birth condition, which saw him born without an ankle in his right leg, prevented him from walking the Camino de Santiago with friends recently.

When asked about his faith, Mr Bren-

nan said that it's a very important part of his life, and that he's "not afraid" to talk about it.

He spoke about his admiration for racehorse trainer and former jockey, Donnacha O'Brien, who gave a radio interview in which Mr O'Brien mentioned attending Mass.

"It's not easy to stand up at 22-years-of-age and say 'I go to Mass.' Listen, they'd be roaring at you on Main Street for that," Mr Brennan told the *Irish Examiner*.

Asked whether he felt Ireland had become an intolerant place for people

of faith, Mr Brennan responded that it's "not just faith", as there's an element in Ireland "that's just not nice, and I don't know where it comes from".

"I suspect it comes from American television. As an example, when you went to The Late Late Show 15 years ago, you clapped when you got a prize, and you said 'hurrray' when there was one for everyone [in] the audience. Now they roar at the guests; they heckle the guests, which is a direct translation from American television programmes. There's a disrespect for everything now."

Prosperous Parish acknowledged for efforts in combating climate change

Brandon Scott

Prosperous Parish was recognised for its tireless efforts in the fight against climate change and global warming as it became the recipient of an Eco Parish award from Eco-Congregation Ireland, an organisation that encourages churches of all denominations to take an eco-approach to all facets of Church life.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, parish curate Fr Bernard Reyhart explained the origins of the parish's environmental story and just why it was bestowed with the award.

"Our eco-parish group has been working for nearly six years, advocating for the protection of the environment," he says. "They distribute plants and have planted quite a number this year."

"We have made our own compost by collecting fallen leaves and we have also made our own natural fertiliser. There is also a small strip that has been used for re-wilding on the premises of the church."

The distinction was presented to the parish on Sunday by the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty.

Communion, then camogie



Denise, Lizzy, Aoibhinn, Aimee, Molly, Madelaine and Ciara – third class girls from St Michael's NS, Co. Waterford – celebrate receiving their First Holy Communion on September 25 with a quick puck around. The ceremony was officiated by Fr Gerard McNamara.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Parish launches major prize draw

A Co. Monaghan parish have launched a major draw, with the top prize of a Skoda Fabia, to support "urgent" church renovations.

Fr Ray Flaherty PP St Mary's church, Headford, said the 150-year-old church is in urgent need of renovation.

"This is a health and safety issue and the work is needed urgently to repair the roof of the church," he said.

He praised the "fantastic support" they have already received.

The tickets are priced at €10 each with 3 for €20 and the book of 15 tickets for €100, and can be purchased online at www.headfordchurch.com.

Mayo centenarian sacristan celebrated in church she served for 80 years

Fr Austin Fergus, retired PP of Mayo Abbey, has spoken to *The Irish Catholic* about the influence that the parish's former sacristan, Katty Delaney, has held in her 80 years of service. Mrs Delaney celebrated her 100th birthday on September 22.

"She opened and closed the church every morning for 80 years, looked after what was needed, such as breads. She was excellent and knew everything and everybody knew her," Fr Fergus said.

"She broke her hip on New Year's Day in 2019 and has been out of action since. But we were able to have a celebration for her and she came along. We had Mass in the church and a nice little party afterwards for her," he said.

A new public holiday? Great, but pick a meaningful date...

I think it's a lovely idea to introduce a new public holiday in Ireland – to especially thank and commemorate all those health workers who gave of their best in the Covid-19 pandemic.

But just copying the American 'Thanksgiving Day' (on Monday November 29) is pathetic. It has no relevance to the context of Irish life. The date of a public holiday should have some meaning, or it should draw on some common and well-recognised tradition.

“Irish-Americans join in with what is now a national tradition, but it is not theirs to bestow on the Irish in Ireland”

Ciaran Cannon, TD for Galway East, whose proposal this is, wants us to “share Thanksgiving weekend with 35 million Irish-Americans”. But the root of the Thanksgiving weekend is nothing to do with Irish-America: it was established by the Puritan



Mary Kenny

Pilgrim fathers in thanksgiving for their harvests, after colonising the American continent. Irish-Americans join in with what is now a national tradition, but it is not theirs to bestow on the Irish in Ireland. Completely inappropriate, actually.

Public holiday

A new public holiday should surely have authentically Irish roots. There's 1,500 years of Christianity to choose from, or, as an alternative, Druidic feasts from before St Patrick, which were often set with the rhythm of nature.

Or feast-days which have been dropped could be rescued. The Monaghan writer Patrick Kavanagh said that the most important day of the year was always August 15. In winter, December 8 used to be celebrated (as Our Lady's Immaculate Conception) – and country people flooded to Dublin to shop. Clery's in O'Connell Street was certainly en fête for that day!

The Harvard anthropologist Conrad Arensberg noted that Epiphany (January 6) and Shrove Tuesday were days of great jollifications in Ireland, as was St Brigid's Day. Shrove Tuesday, he observed, was often rambunctious, since it was regarded as the last day before Lent for weddings and marital capers.

“But find a date which has some relevance to our culture”

Ireland has indeed fallen behind other EU countries in the number of public holidays allotted. But that's because the continental Europeans didn't junk the traditional holidays such as Mardi Gras, Corpus Christi, Ascension, and All Saints.

Introduce the new Irish public holiday, by all means. But find a date which has some relevance to our culture.



A statue of the Virgin of *El Carmen*, patron saint of sailors, sets sail in the Mediterranean Sea near Malaga, Spain. Continental Europeans retained many of the religious holidays abandoned in Ireland. Photo: CNS

● Heidi Crowter, who, with Maire Lea-Wilson, leads a campaign to support Down's Syndrome people called 'Don't Screen Us Out' (DSUS). Heidi has raised more than £100,000 (€117,000) to challenge British law on late abortion. Abortion law discriminates against Down's Syndrome infants, since they can be aborted right up to birth (whereas 24 weeks – in practice, 22 – is the limit for other pregnancies).

There is enormous pressures on mothers to agree to an abortion for Down's Syndrome: DSUS have reports of mothers being bullied by doctors, even very late in pregnancy, to accede to a termination. Dr Helen Watts of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre in Oxford – a Catholic charity which is concerned with medical ethics – says that it is deplorable that instead of supporting parents and children, the law and the practice is “inviting their parents to end their lives”.

DSUS brought a case to the High Court in London charging the law with discrimination under the *Human Rights Act*: the judges rejected their case, but Liam Fox MP will put forward a Down's Syndrome Bill at Westminster later in the autumn with a view to changing the law.

It's surely barbaric that the remedy for a disability is simply to kill the disabled.

France in distress

It is distressing to read of the French study, commissioned by the Bishops of France, which reports that over the past 70 years, about 3,000 priests abused minors in France. The report, known as CIASE, (the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse), seems to have been undertaken with thoroughness, although reporting isn't explaining. And who can explain it? Did some demonic force enter the corporate spirit?

The only point I can add,

from personal observation, is that I was taken aback, as a teenager, to hear how casual and lax French society could be about sexuality.

Back in those days, train compartments were enclosed units, and general conversation was common among the passengers. On a train from Pau, not far from Toulouse, to Paris, I heard casual chat about a very famous, and well-loved singer. “*Il aime les petits garçons*,” I was told – he likes little boys.

A Gallic shrug greeted

this intelligence. (Although he is dead, I won't name the singer, as it may spoil pleasure in his music, which is enchanting.) After the man's death, it emerged that he had been involved with a teenage youth, which is hardly the same as “little boys”; but it was the casually accepting attitudes expressed openly that so surprised me.

This, I think, was regarded at the time as French sophistication. But in retrospect, it's emerged in a different light.

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'Safe zone' move described as attempt to criminalise protest

Jason Osborne

Pro-life politicians have decried the launch of a bill that would introduce so-

called 'safe access zones' outside hospitals and clinics providing abortion, arguing that it's the attempted "criminalisation of peaceful pro-life

speech and protest".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan said the bill is "nothing short of an ideological wrecking ball".

Drafted by the 'Together for Safety' group, the bill has been submitted to the Seanad. It seeks to create a 100-metre zone around locations where people attempt to access abortion services.

Ms Nolan said that there is "simply no evidence that such stringent and constitutionally dubious measures are required".

"Indeed, if reports referencing the bill's desire to prohibit prayer are correct, then we have we have truly entered a new phase of coercive control that should be a source of embarrassment rather than pride for those who would seek to advance it through the legislative process," she told this paper.

Senator Rónán Mullen said this private members' legislation reflected a "hard-core pro-abortion agenda" but added that it is unlikely to succeed.

"It's a vicious form of virtue signalling, you could

say...the only reason it won't succeed is because constitutionally there would be a problem with interfering with freedom of assembly," Senator Mullen said.

What the bill does point out though, he said, "is the need for pro-life people to be similarly active in promoting legislation that would at least try to remove some of the cruelties from the abortion legislation".

He suggested such measures as precautionary pain-relief for the unborn and the introduction of the requirement of offering ultrasounds

as ways to "show a modicum of humanity in the context of the abortion legislation before we ever get to trying to restrict it and restore the right to life of the unborn".

"My point is that while what these people are doing is deeply cynical because they already have everything they want, the lesson I think for us pro-life people should be to support the pro-life organisations in lobbying politicians for gradual, incremental changes to the abortion legislation, but in the right direction," Senator Mullen said.

Panel backs public inquiry into North's mother and baby homes

Chai Brady

A panel has said a public inquiry should be held into institutions for unmarried mothers in Northern Ireland.

Appointed in late March 2021, the Truth Recovery Panel was scheduled to deliver its findings in six months following close collaboration with victims-survivors of Northern Ireland's mother and baby homes, Magdalene Laundries and workhouses.

The three experts, Deirdre Mahon, Maeve O'Rourke and Phil Scraton, advised that survivors receive immediate redress payments.

The report outlined serious human rights violations including forced labour and arbitrary detention. An integrated investigation by a non-statutory independent panel, feeding into a statutory inquiry was the main recommendation.

Further recommendations include supporting measures

to ensure that victims-survivors can participate in the investigation, including access to records legislation.

Victims-survivors and the panel called on all state, religious and other institutions, agencies, organisations and individuals complicit in the processes of institutionalisation and forced labour, family separation and adoption to act without delay in issuing unqualified apologies and "accept responsibility for harms done; demonstrate sincerity in their apology; and demonstrate the safeguards now in place to ensure there will be no repetition of the inhumanity and suffering to which they contributed".

A research report published in January found that at least 10,500 women passed through mother and baby homes of which there were eight in the North. More than 3,000 women spent time in a Magdalene Laundry.

'Christ's love' inspires Irish Capuchins' first solemn profession in 7 years



Bro. Antony Kurian is pictured with Capuchin Provincial Minister Fr Seán Kelly after his solemn profession.

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish Capuchin community celebrated Bro. Antony Kurian OFM Cap making his perpetual vows October 4.

It was the first solemn profession for the Capuchins in Ireland since 2014, taking place on the feast of their founder St Francis of Assisi.

Bro. Kurian's commitment was described as a statement "that there is another way to live a life that can assure a person of happiness" by Fr Seán Kelly.

"People may see your way of life as a follower of St Francis as a strange one, until they get to know you and find out what is behind your commitment today – a tremendous sense of Christ's love, Christ's love for you and your love for Christ," Fr Kelly, the provincial minister for the order in Britain and Ireland, said in his homily.

The ceremony took place in St Mary of the Angels, Church Street, Dublin and was attended by Capuchin Friars from around Ireland.



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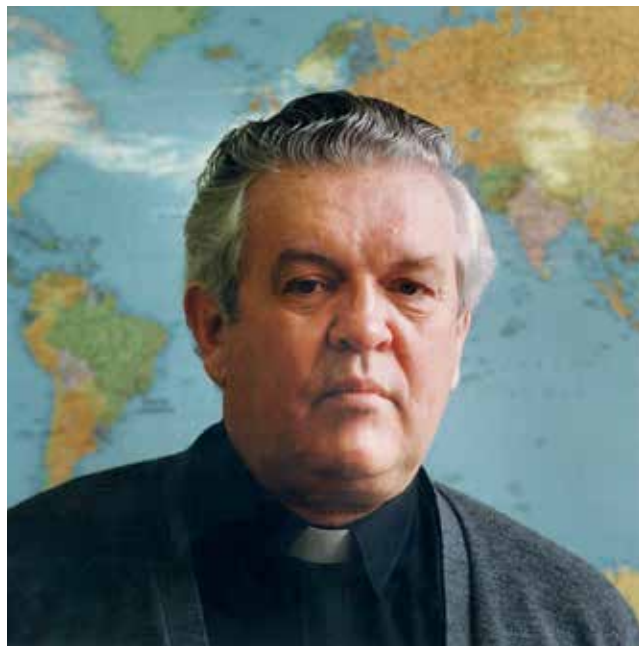


Photo: Concern Worldwide.

Fr. Aengus Finucane.

The Irish Catholic looks at a rich and varied life lived in the service of others and of God.

Fr. Finucane was ordained as a Holy Ghost Priest in 1958. In his first assignment in Uli, Nigeria, Fr. Finucane found himself involved in the bitter civil war between Nigeria and Biafra.

Following Biafra's attempt to secede, this widespread conflict had displaced millions. What's more, there was a blockade of food, medicine and basic necessities by the Nigerian authorities.

At the height of the crisis in the summer of 1968, it was estimated 6,000 children died every week.

An Irish effort

In response to the Biafrans' terrible plight, Concern Worldwide – originally called Africa Concern – was founded and began raising awareness and funds to help those suffering.

On 6th September 1968, the 600 tonne, Columille set sail for Sao Tome – a Portuguese island close to West Africa. The cost of chartering the ship and its vital cargo of powdered food and medicines was all paid for with donations from the people of Ireland.

To circumvent the blockade, the supplies were then flown from Sao Tome to Biafra overnight. The following day in Uli, Fr. Finucane was among the Holy Ghost priests who would help distribute the life saving supplies.

With his commitment and

that of the Irish public and priests, this operation grew into one flight a day for 11 months.

Fr. Finucane was deeply committed to helping the poorest of the poor. So after leaving Biafra, in 1972 he became Concern's Field Director in Bangladesh after its war of independence from Pakistan – the war had left millions in desperate need of food.

The period after Fr. Finucane's time in Bangladesh was particularly testing. In Thailand's Kampuchea refugee camps he saw the desperation of Cambodians who had fled the Khmer Rouge's genocide.

And in Uganda the horror of HIV in Kampala, where even in the best hospitals one third of the children born were HIV positive.

Fr. Finucane worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering, and recognised his responsibility to help the poor and underprivileged.

Concern appointed Fr. Finucane as its Chief Executive in 1981.

During his 16 years as the head of the charity he was 'on the ground' during many of the world's worst disasters. These included the 1983-1985 famine in Ethiopia and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Relinquishing his post in 1997, Fr. Finucane became Honorary President of Concern Worldwide US. He held this post until his death on 6th October 2009.

Fr. Finucane's legacy

Fr. Finucane is the cornerstone behind much of what Concern has become today. It was he who expanded its aid work into 11 countries and dramatically increased its fundraising.

Tom Arnold - Concern's CEO from 2001 to 2013 - says:

“There can be few Irish people of his generation, or of any other generation, who have contributed as much to improving the lives of so much of humanity.

“He inspired a whole generation of Concern overseas volunteers.”

Fr. Finucane continues to inspire as his legacy still influences Concern 12 years after his death.

“Do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.”
– Fr. Aengus Finucane

In 2020 Concern worked in 23 countries, responding to 78 different emergencies, helping 36.9 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Concern's vision, mission and work continues to strive to end extreme poverty, whatever it takes. The charity believes that no-one should live in fear of not having enough food.

The devastation of climate change

Today one of the primary causes of acute food insecurity are weather extremes.

Climate change is increasing hunger levels and pushing even more people to the brink of famine. With multiple famines predicted, there are currently 41 million people teetering on the edge of starvation.

Extreme weather caused by climate change is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries.

And these calamitous weather conditions are now more frequent and varied. No sooner has one disaster struck than another arrives. People don't have enough food for months, sometimes years on end.

In Malawi droughts, floods and strong weather patterns are a regular occurrence – placing huge stress

on land and crop production resulting in food shortages and hunger.

These weather extremes affect an already vulnerable population where 80% source their livelihoods from the land, 71% live below the poverty line and an estimated 20% are living in extreme poverty.

People like Yona Lambiki and his family.

Yona, a farmer, lives in Nkhambaza village with his wife and five children. He was always able to support his family with the crops and food he grew providing them with a healthy balanced diet. Any excess was sold, with some of the money used to pay for his children's schooling. But two years ago everything changed ...



Photo: Kieran McConville / Concern Worldwide.

Crops destroyed by Cyclone Idai.

In March 2019 Cyclone Idai caused devastating floods and loss of life in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The floods completely destroyed crops just weeks away from harvest – food people were relying on for survival.

Although his house wasn't affected, like thousands of others, the crops Yona was about to harvest were completely washed away. There was nothing for his family to eat, let alone any to sell.

Help for now and the future

But thanks to Concern's generous donors and Yona's hard work he is now able to look after his family again.

Yona immediately received a vital cash transfer from Concern. With this he bought food and other basic necessities his family needed to be safe and free from hunger.

Yona received seeds including maize, tomatoes, beans, three bundles of sweet potato vines and other vegetables to grow so he could, once again, support his family. He also received, fertilizer and a hoe to help him grow his crops. As well as five goats for milk and manure.



Photo: Jason Kennedy / Concern Worldwide.

“I would really love to meet everyone that is behind this support so I could thank them in person.” – Yona Lambiki

Like other families in his community, Yona planted the seeds he received in his home garden. What they harvest is used to feed their families, any excess is sold to improve their livelihoods.

But Concern do far more than simply give communities plants, seeds and tools. They provide training in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to ensure long term, inter-generational support.

providing support for years – possibly decades – to come.

On speaking about the people who support Concern and make our work possible, he said, *“I'm so very happy with the support I have received from Concern. My life and family's life is healthy and can afford everything we could not afford before. I'm so happy and thankful to Concern.”*

Will Fr. Finucane inspire you too?

There's a way you, just like Fr. Finucane, can leave the world a better place. And help improve the lives of families like Yona's both now and for future generations.

How? By leaving Concern a gift in your Will.

When you leave a gift, your legacy lives on - helping for years to come.

“I know that this is a very personal decision. But I assure you, gifts in Wills have had a phenomenal impact in reducing extreme poverty, hunger and suffering around the world. Today, as the catastrophic combination of conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have plunged so many people into the grip of crisis, your gift will help us to be there in their time of need.”

– Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide

Gifts in Wills are a vital source of funding for Concern.

Your legacy will help families like Yona's reverse the many struggles caused by Climate Change ...

... will provide the tools and knowledge they need to not just survive but help themselves – a gift from you they can pass down for generations.

To find out more about how a legacy gives a safe, secure future, please request your complimentary copy of 'A World Without Hunger' – Concern's legacy booklet.

You'll learn of others who desperately needed help, and how legacies from people just like you have done so much.

There are also answers to common questions people ask about leaving a gift in their Will. And explains how to get started.

Requesting your free booklet does not oblige you to do anything else.

To receive your free, no obligation booklet – in complete confidence – please contact Concern's Legacy Manager, Siobhán O'Connor. Call **01 417 8020**, email **siobhan.oconnor@concern.net**, or write to 52-55 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2



Martin Mansergh

The View



Benefits of separating Church and State

A friend, who has long been involved with the ecumenical outreach of Clonard Monastery in Belfast, wrote to me recently about the concerns that many of his Indian friends had about the direction of their country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his attempts to establish for it a dominant Hindu ethos and identity, accentuating the marginalisation of other groups.

It is difficult and often unwise to form definite judgments about what is happening in other societies without detailed first-hand knowledge of them. But it was a reminder of the wise statement in the 1993 Downing Street Declaration with John Major, where then Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, on behalf of the Irish Government, considered “that the lessons of Irish history, and especially of Northern Ireland, show that stability and well-being will not be found under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity by a significant minority of those governed by it”. Obviously, this referred both to Northern Ireland under the old Stormont, but also to a future united Ireland lacking the consent or acquiescence of the unionist community. This is not an argument to forestall valid democratic decision-making, but rather an injunction not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Any future united Ireland should be based not on a majority/minority ‘two-nations’ style approach, but on a re-balanced, inclusive and pluralist identity to match a new polity. As Brendan O’ Leary has observed, the way PR operates ensures that every political force in the island is likely to be in a minority, and unable to exercise an oppressive majority rule.

Agreed

One point on which historians are agreed about partition is that Ulster Unionists obtained what they wanted, the maximum area of population that they could control incorpo-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

rated into Northern Ireland. Fellow Covenanters in the three ‘southern’ Ulster counties assigned to the Irish Free State were informed, in an unfortunate analogy with the Titanic, that there were not enough lifeboats to go round.

“Where community differences are so deep that majorities and minorities are frozen instead of fluctuating and changing places, democracy cannot properly function”

Is this judgment right? Viewed from a centenary perspective, Unionists enjoyed close to 50 years, when they were in control, with minimal oversight from Westminster. The IRA border campaign of 1956-62 was easily defeated. However, a minority of 35% was by any international standards a very large one to keep out in the cold, even if post-war the advent of the British welfare state improved everyone’s situation with regard to health, welfare and education.

Democracy is often defined as majority rule. It has long been recognised that, where community differences are

so deep that majorities and minorities are frozen instead of fluctuating and changing places, democracy cannot properly function. Two examples set boundaries to the discussion, Northern Ireland and South Africa. What had been the ruling white minority constituted less than 10% of the population. In the Irish Free State, later the Republic, the minority, whether defined as ex-unionist or Protestant, was likewise below 10%. After upheavals subsided, both were protected to a degree by the wealth and assets they were able to bring to a new State. Even though this position in many cases reflected previous inequality, injustice and worse, pragmatic considerations and concerns for the welfare of the greatest number meant that previous élites who wished and were able to stay, where conditions permitted, needed to be accommodated in the new dispensation as well as having to adjust to it. Treating them as the Soviet Union did the tsarist elite in its first two decades as ‘former people’ or worse would have been ruinously costly as well as politically destabilising. Independent Ireland survived, when many other contemporary new states that pursued more radical courses did not.

Power

When they have lost power without any prospect of reversal, small better-off minorities tend to be more concerned about protecting their mate-

rial situation rather than involvement in a politics with which they do not identify or futilely combating changes designed to reflect the culture, identity and aspirations of a newly empowered majority. There is little basis for the prevalent notion today that social conservatism or liberalism in Ireland is much determined by reference to religious denomination.

It would be good, however, if there were less stereotyping, particularly the notion that the Protestant minority remained nostalgically backward-looking, instead of contributing to life in their own sphere of activity and thereby to nation-building. In contrast, the geographically concentrated unionist community has a critical mass that has to be convincingly accommodated.

“Unionists enjoyed close to 50 years, when they were in control, with minimal oversight from Westminster”

South Africa under majority rule has not experienced a change of government, but nonetheless in the Mandela years described itself as ‘a rainbow nation’. Of course, there are minorities there which are not white, notably the Indian

and coloured communities. Trinity College lecturer Dr Kader Asmal, leading light in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, of Indian background went back to South Africa after 1990, and was for many years an energetic government minister in vital departments such as water and education.

Hindsight

With hindsight, it is better for all concerned that in Ireland the principle of separation of Church and State was maintained after independence, even if for some time the separation in many areas was minimal. The idea was mooted, but not pursued, that the Church should have a veto over legislation. In countries, like Iran and Afghanistan, supreme power belongs to a religious leader, whether Emir, Caliph or

Ayatollah. It does not make for tolerance or pluralism, and running a state, including feeding and educating a people, requires more qualifications than knowledge of religious law.

Undeniably, great statesmen in the past have come from the ranks of the clergy. One has only to think of Cardinals Wolsey, Richelieu, Mazarin, Fleury and Alberoni, to name but a few, not to mention the apostate çı-devant Bishop of Autun, Talleyrand, Foreign Minister of Napoleon and Louis XVIII, but mostly raison d’état was the governing principle. Rev. Ian Paisley finally broke with fundamentalism by leading his party into coalition with Sinn Féin, becoming First Minister. However, the founder of Christianity said: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’.

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“With hindsight, it is better for all concerned that in Ireland the principle of separation of Church and State was maintained after independence”

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Sister Clara's Dream Comes True



Conn McNally

Sister Clara Nas is the prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena in Qaraqosh, northern Iraq. The Dominican Sisters have been active in this part of Iraq since 1890. The Assyrian Christian town of Qaraqosh is located in the Nineveh Plain, around 25 km from Mosul. The Nineveh Plain is the Christian heartland of Iraq. Traditionally most of the Christians in Qaraqosh were Syriac Christians. Previously around 70% of the population of Qaraqosh were Syriac Catholics with the remaining 30% being mostly Syriac Orthodox. In more recent decades, the number of Chaldean Catholics has increased in Qaraqosh, as many Chaldeans fled to the relative safety of the Christian town to escape persecution elsewhere in Iraq. The people of Qaraqosh, like most Christians in the Nineveh Plain, speak a dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus.

Iraq

In 2014, ISIS rampaged through much of northern Iraq. The Christians of Qaraqosh fled. Many took refuge in the Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq. In 2016, Qaraqosh was liberated by the Iraqi Army. The occupation of ISIS had not been kind to Qaraqosh, with much of the Christian town left in ruins after the liberation. Slowly the Christians began to return home. When Sr. Clara returned to Qaraqosh, an idea came to her mind.

Although security is still an issue for Christians in Iraq, economic hardship has become the more pressing issue. As an ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority, the Christians must work extra hard to get jobs and economic opportunities. Education is key to finding secure employment. Having a trade or speaking a second language such as English or Kurdish

can open career opportunities that would be otherwise closed. Realising this, Sr. Clara dreamt of building a new secondary school to help educate a new generation of Iraqi Christians who could stay in their ancestral homeland. Many did not take Sr. Clara's dream seriously. How could they build a new school when the town was still in ruins from the occupation by ISIS? Sr. Clara was determined.

She explained her motivation:

"Our goal was to offer young people a place of reconciliation and healing after being displaced by IS and living for so many years as refugees."

In 2018, she started to look for funding to build a new secondary school. Funding was granted to build Sr. Clara's new school by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) and the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria. This help offered to the Christians of Qaraqosh was gratefully received.

"As an ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority, the Christians must work extra hard to get jobs and economic opportunities"

Education standards in the region were not high. Many school buildings in the region have not been rebuilt and children have to go to school in shifts as there is not adequate space for all of them at once. There is not only a shortage of school buildings but also of public-school teachers. The government did not allocate enough teaching position for the region and teachers are not paid enough to make a live off their teaching salary alone meaning that teachers often need to work another job which distracts them from teaching. Most schools also lack books and other teaching materials.



Sr. Clara.

Respected

The religious sisters are highly respected by the local community and are particularly appreciated for their commitment to education. They had previously run a school in Qaraqosh prior to the invasion of ISIS and had continued educating the Christian children while they were refugees in Erbil. In 2017, a primary school run by the Dominican Sisters was opened in Qaraqosh and now has 427 pupils. The secondary school is expected to open this October for around 625 from the ages of 13 to 18.

Sr. Clara explains the value of education:

"As Dominican sisters, we are convinced that education illuminates the mind and opens the hearts to the truth. That is why we initiated the project for a new secondary school – in a village where young people urgently need a healthy educational environment."

It is hoped that the new three-storey school building in the future will also have sport facilities. The construction of the school also gave the working aged population in the area much needed employment, with around 200 people being employed as part of



The nearly complete secondary school in Qaraqosh.

the construction of the school. Like the primary school run by the sisters, the new secondary school will naturally have a chaplain. This will help with catechism classes and preparation to receive the Sacraments.

ACN is involved in many projects in the Nineveh Plains

to rebuild Qaraqosh and provide the assistance Christian families need to return to their homes after the invasion of ISIS. Among other things, the pastoral charity has approved grants for the education of the children living in the region and for rebuilding schools, kindergartens, and an orphanage.

ACN is determined to provide the support that is necessary for Iraqi Christians to remain in their homeland. Between 2011-2020, ACN had provided nearly €50 million in aid to the Church in Iraq. If you would like to help us in assisting Iraq's Christians in rebuilding, please consider making a donation.



The primary school run by the Dominican Sister in Qaraqosh.

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Addressing abuse legacy and the future of Dromore diocese



Redress scheme aims to reach as many victims and survivors as possible as Dromore looks at potential amalgamation, **Chai Brady** hears



Archbishop Eamon Martin, apostolic administrator of Dromore Diocese launches the redress scheme on September 29. He is flanked by Fr Feidhlimidh Magennis and Patricia Carville, safeguarding officer. Photo: Chai Brady

The future of Dromore diocese is far from certain as a pioneering redress scheme for survivors of clerical sexual abuse is set to decimate financial resources, which will mean the continuation of evangelisation and mission must be “triggered at a local level”.

Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, who is the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Dromore, announced the redress scheme last week.

“But the most important thing of course is what is the most effective way of handing on the Faith and preaching the Gospel”

“There will be very little at the centre available to drive initiatives but perhaps, as Pope Francis’ synodal pathway is showing us, evangelisation and mission will probably have to be triggered at local level,” Archbishop Martin told *The Irish Catholic*.

However, he added: “I think it is possible for this diocese to look at ways of funding evangelisation initiatives, synodal initiatives, and that’s certainly something that the diocese will have to look to but certainly it is true there won’t be a central resource available in the diocese to drive a lot of projects in the coming years.

“Perhaps you might be looking at smaller initiatives but perhaps small is where we’re all having to think over the next number of years because with the decline in

priestly vocations, vocations to religious life, I think the future of the Church in Ireland is more and more in the hands of local parish communities and families handing on the Faith,” he said.

Regarding the future of Dromore diocese, Dr Martin said the big questions will be personnel and resources, “but the most important thing of course is what is the most effective way of handing on the Faith and preaching the Gospel”.

He explained that many parishes around the country have already had to realise some smaller units can no longer be sustainable and this is being looked at in Dromore.

Archbishop Martin specifically requested that he become the apostolic administrator of Dromore due to the need to tackle its legacy of abuse. He recommended to the papal nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, that any further consultations regarding the future leadership of the diocese be suspended for a few years to allow him to become acquainted with the diocese “to get to know the problems, the challenges, the future and then to begin a process”.

While this pertains to the redress scheme, he will also be looking at the diocese’s future, which could include amalgamation with another diocese.

Amalgamation

Dr Martin said: “There are a number of possibilities there and it’s not necessarily the case that a small diocese isn’t the best way of doing things so I think you have to examine the particular context of each diocese.

“So what I’m hoping to do particularly is to harness the

whole synodal pathway, to have the conversation in this diocese of Dromore with people, priests and religious as to how they see their future, because I think it’s really important to begin on the ground – sometimes the whole discussion begins, we think, in some office over in Rome.”

“Then the other possibility is that you go for a full amalgamation”

There may be a “strong case” to be made that a diocese such as Dromore, while it is small, still has a large Catholic population and a number of large towns, which would mean that even though geographically it’s small it is probably considerably bigger than some of the other small dioceses in the country, according to Archbishop Martin, “So they’ll have to decide whether or not the diocese should go alone”. The diocese includes portions of Co. Down, Co. Antrim and Co. Armagh.

Following a more Anglican model, there is also the possibility the diocese could share a bishop from another diocese, which happened most recently when the dioceses of Cork and Ross shared a bishop before eventually amalgamating – becoming the Diocese of Cork and Ross. “Then the other possibility is that you go for a full amalgamation,” said Archbishop Eamon. “So I think that there are a number of options there which should be looked at, but I would stress and I have already said to the papal nuncio and to the congregation in

Rome, I feel that you really do need to have this conversation with the people, the priests – those on the ground who know their diocese.

“Everybody wants their own diocese; nobody wants to be amalgamated or to lose their identity and you have to remember that the dioceses of Ireland are one thousand years old. You don’t want to be just losing the identity, the history, the traditions, the culture, the saints – all of those things that are associated with the diocese by just creating large units. Then you have a number of dioceses in Ireland, take Dublin for example which is huge, and you also have to ask the question there: could a diocese become too big?”

Redress scheme

Dr Martin has served as apostolic administrator in Dromore since 2019. Bishop John McAravey resigned in March 2018 following criticism of his handling of allegations of abuse.

Announcing the redress scheme last Wednesday, the diocese stated it “apologises unreservedly for the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors of any priest or Church representative acting under its authority. The Diocese of Dromore finds such behaviour towards children and vulnerable people abhorrent, inexcusable and indefensible”.

It added that the redress scheme came about after meetings with a number of survivors and an examination of the various existing legal claims against the diocese.

Archbishop Martin said he “wishes to facilitate a resolution process to enable the provision of financial and other

supports for survivors without undue further delay”.

This new scheme will be open to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse suffered at the hands of representatives of the diocese. The scheme endeavours to ensure a process which is victim-centred and aims to provide victims with recognition and compensation without the need for lengthy investigation and litigation.

“The redress scheme is intended to try and reach as many victims and survivors as possible, the Diocese of Dromore does not have a lot of resources and one of my concerns is the limited resources of the diocese will not enable us through court processes to satisfy the number of victims and survivors who are out there so the redress scheme is one way of trying to ensure that as many victims and survivors as possible can receive some recognition from the diocese,” Archbishop Martin said.

About £2.5 million of unrestricted diocesan funds are available for the scheme, with individual awards being capped at £80,000. The archbishop added that the diocese was also looking at assets it might have to support the scheme.

As well as enabling the provision of financial redress, it includes the possibility of a personal apology on behalf of the diocese and other ways of providing pastoral support.

The diocese will also support the provision of counselling via the ‘Towards Healing’ service established for survivors of abuse in the Church.

The scheme will respond to applications where there are allegations of sexual abuse – including sexual grooming

– which may or may not have been accompanied by physical and/or emotional abuse, and which occurred when the applicant was under the age of 18.

All applications will be assessed by an independent panel, appointed via an independent process managed by a third-party organisation.

“Fr Finnegan worked at St Colman’s College in Newry from 1967 to 1987, and was the school’s president for the last decade”

The diocese said that in assessing applications the panel will have regard to all the available information and make its decision on the balance of probabilities and on a majority basis.

The process will fall outside the civil litigation process and be comparable to a mediation and it is anticipated that the process will be informal in nature but is intended to be binding on the parties should a resolution be agreed.

In the past 35 years up to 70 people have come forward to make allegations of abuse related to Dromore diocese, with more than half relating to the late Fr Malachy Finnegan.

Fr Finnegan worked at St Colman’s College in Newry from 1967 to 1987, and was the school’s president for the last decade. He went on to serve as a parish priest in Co. Down and died in 2002.

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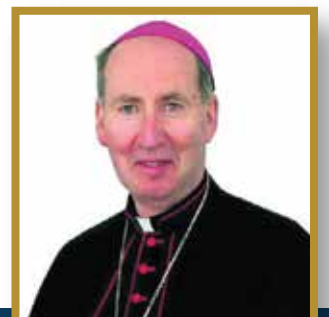
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The mercy of God is greater than our failings

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



Jesus was setting out on a journey, a road that would ultimately lead him to Calvary as the suffering, serving Messiah. Are his followers prepared to overcome self-centred ways to follow him? Today's second reading tells us that the Word of God is alive and active, as sharp as a sword, like the surgeon's scalpel able to reveal secret emotions and thoughts (Hebrews 4:12). It certainly touched a sore point in the inner life of a rich young man who ran up to Jesus, knelt before him and asked him, "Good master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?" He was a good man who observed the commandments.

The key word to this man's mentality is possess...to possess eternal life. He was a very wealthy man. Possessions were important to him. Eternal life would be the ultimate possession. In his life everything had a price. He speculated that the price for eternal life must be some good deed. "What must I do?" Jesus challenged his bondage to possessions. "Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven: and then come, follow me." At this, the young man turned away. He went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth. His problem was that he did not own his possessions but his possessions owned him.

Jesus was poor

St Paul reflected on the poverty of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ, although he was rich became poor for your sake, so that you should become rich through his poverty" (II Cor. 8:9). Jesus was poor in his simple lifestyle, his dependence on others, in the poverty of undergoing an unjust trial, and finally the poverty of death. All the popes of the past century have stressed the obligation of sharing with the poor. Pope Francis came to Rome from familiarity with the shanty regions of Buenos Aires. He wrote of his ideal Church. "I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. They have a deep sense of faith. In their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to be evangelised by the poor and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to

share with us through them" (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 198).

The rich young man of the Gospel walked away from that challenge. There is a very misleading version of Christianity, sometimes called Cadillac Christianity or Prosperity Gospel, which claims that success and wealth are a sign of God's blessing. What about people who have nothing but bad luck, loss of their business, illness in the family? Prosperity Gospel's answer is that there must be a curse on these people because of sins, maybe in past generations of the family tree. What would Jesus say?

Put yourself into the story

One way of meditating on the Gospel is to use your imagination to put yourself into a scene in the Gospel and then let the incident cast light on your feelings and inner life. Mark is particularly helpful for this meditation. His Gospel has a powerful sense of close bodily contact. Crowds press around, Jesus heals people by reaching out, touching, and laying hands. Remember how he caressed the little children. Today's story highlights three looks of Jesus. Firstly, he looked at rich young man with love. Secondly, he looked around at his disciples. His third look is gazing at the disciples.

A look of invitation

Jesus looked steadily at the young man and loved him. It is a look of warmth and invitation. He is inviting the rich young man to break the chains that hold him in thrall to his possessions. Is he ready to change his set of values, let go of his possessions, give his money to the poor and follow the example of Jesus? "But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth." What a contrast between the loving look of Jesus and the sad face of the young man. It's as if his face was just a plastic mask that melted before the fire.

Jesus looked round on his disciples

This is the second look of Jesus. He is the teacher who makes eye contact with his pupils to get their attention before speaking to them. "How hard it is for those



Pope Francis kisses the foot of an inmate during Holy Thursday Mass on March 29, 2018, at Regina Coeli prison in Rome. Photo: Vatican Media

who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" To enter the kingdom means to live by the teaching and ideals of Jesus. Really, for me to enter the kingdom I must let the kingdom enter me. This involves a lifelong effort to live according to the ideals of Christ. Not easy going.

He gazed at them

The apostles realised that this would be a very difficult ideal. They asked, "Who can be saved?" Then, we are told, Jesus gazed at them. Gazing is a look of wonder. It is a way of looking into the distance and seeing a bigger picture. The bigger picture here is the mercy of God which is greater than our failings. "For men it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God." Then, to reassure the apostles, he

said that those who faithfully follow him, maybe through persecutions, will be rewarded a hundred times over in eternal life. Everything is possible for God.

Prayer

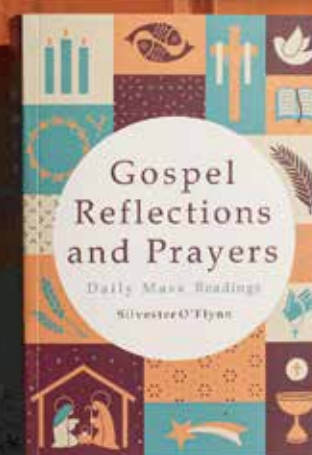
O Jesus, allow me to sit with you and feel the warmth of your love for me. May I sense your loving eyes inviting me to be one of your followers.

O Jesus, my teacher, help me to pay attention to your teaching. Strengthen me so that I may not be afraid of your lofty ideals. May your grace sustain me when I am tempted to drift from your way.

O Jesus, my Saviour. May I be filled with hope when I reflect on the promise you made of rewarding our efforts a hundredfold.

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Feminist and Christian criticisms of James Bond echo each other



If a woman plays the next Bond, Daniel Craig should be the next Miss Marple, writes David Quinn

The latest James Bond movie, *No Time to Die* is out at last, after a long delay thanks to the pandemic. It was due to be launched just as Covid-19 sent us all into lockdown last spring, and its title was probably a bit unfortunate under the circumstances.

The first James Bond movie, *Dr No*, was released in 1962, before this writer was even born. Anyone who was an adult when it was released will almost certainly be retired by now, unless they're happy to work well past the age of 65 because if they were 18 in 1962, then they are 77 by now.

The Bond movies are around as long as most people remember and the books, by Ian Fleming, even longer than that. The first of them, *Casino Royale*, was published in 1953.

“The writer, Kingsley Amis, said in 1965 that Bond believed in loyalty, fortitude, had a sense of responsibility”

Both the books and the movies attracted quite a lot of criticism from Christian quarters when they first came out.

In 1962, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, published a lengthy article attacking *Dr No*.

The piece, called ‘The James Bond Case’, denounced it as “a dangerous mix of violence, vulgarity, sadism and sex”.

The newspaper wasn't interested in *Dr No* as a movie, and whether it was well acted or well made. It worried about the effect it might have on viewers. Would James Bond appeal to them? Would men



Daniel Craig as James Bond alongside Ana de Armas as Paloma in *No Time To Die*.

want to be like him, would women be attracted to him?

The Vatican newspaper was concerned the answer in both cases would be ‘yes’ and that would be a danger to people's souls.

Bond did not attract the ire of the Vatican only. In 1961, the Rev. Leslie Paxton of the Great George Street Congregational Church in Liverpool preached a sermon against the character.

Upset

Ian Fleming was upset and asked for a copy of the sermon to see if it had any merit. The sermon itself does not seem to have survived.

Fleming described himself in response as a “some kind of sub-species of a Christian”.

We have to remember that in the 1950s and into the 1960s, Christian leaders were a lot of more influential than they are today, including in Britain. Christian ideas about sexual morality and the world in general were much stronger than they are now, and the Bond character was fairly shocking com-

pared with the action heroes people were used to at the time.

Think of Charlton Heston in *Ben Hur* or *El Cid*, for example. Heroes were rarely morally ambiguous.

But Bond was ruthless and a womaniser. He often used people as a means to an end, men as well as women. We can be glad that he fought for his country against ‘supervillains’ and was not on their side.

007 did not attract criticism in the early days from Christian quarters only.

A review in the *New Statesman* of *Dr No* when it was published in 1958, said the Bond books consisted of “three basic ingredients, all thoroughly English”: “the sadism of a schoolboy bully, the mechanical two-dimensional sex-longings of a frustrated adolescent, and the crude, snob-cravings of a suburban adult”.

Differently

If things had gone a bit differently for Bond, he might have turned out like Harry Flashman of the Flashman novels which are set in the 19th Century.

Flashman is the appalling bully from *Tom Brown's School days* who is eventually expelled. The writer, Gordon MacDonald Fraser, decides to take up the Flashman story from that point on (the 1830s) and has him join the British army. Flashman is the ultimate cad, rotter, bounder and a coward into the bargain.

“Both the books and the movies attracted quite a lot of criticism from Christian quarters when they first came out”

Bond is far from a coward. But if Bond, an orphan, had fallen into the wrong hands after leaving boarding school, he might have turned into a Flashman character, minus the cowardice.

But Bond has always had his defenders as well.

The writer, Kingsley Amis, said in 1965 that Bond believed in loyalty, fortitude, had a sense of responsibil-

ity and was willing to die for a greater good. In the stories, it is always clear who the villain is. There is nothing morally ambiguous about that. So, they were more traditional and black and white in their story-telling than might have seemed the case at first.

Review

Much more recently, *L'Osservatore Romano* seems to have come around to some of the Bond movies. A review in 2012, while Benedict XVI was still Pope, praised *Skyfall* which came out that year.

It said the version of Bond played by Daniel Craig was “less of a cliché, less attracted by the pleasures of life”. The character had become “darker and more introspective” and therefore, “he is more human, even able to be moved and cry”.

The biggest criticisms of the Bond stories more recently have come from feminist quarters. The complaint is that women are mainly sexual objects for Bond and almost never treated as equals.

That is not entirely true, however. In the second Bond

movie, *From Russia With Love*, 007 teams up with a female Russian agent to track down the villains.

He does the same in *The Spy Who Loved Me* in 1977, and there are plenty of other, similar examples as well.

“The piece, called ‘The James Bond Case’, denounced it as ‘a dangerous mix of violence, vulgarity, sadism and sex’”

In a way, the criticisms of Bond have come full circle. Christian leaders didn't like him because he didn't treat women with due respect, lacked an inner life, and was too cold and calculating. The term wasn't used at the time, but he was effectively being accused of ‘toxic masculinity’.

The Bond movies shook off the Christian criticisms because traditional morality was going out of fashion by the 1960s. It hasn't been able to shake off the feminist attacks so easily. Therefore, the modern Bond is a reformed man compared with the early Bond.

Finally, there is talk that next time out Bond should be played by a woman. Well, if that happens, then they should let Daniel Craig play the next Miss Marple.

“But Bond was ruthless and a womaniser. He often used people as a means to an end, men as well as women”

Sacraments and smiles in Limerick



Oisín Clancy, from Sexton CBS, Limerick, pictured with his family and Fr Noel Kirwan after his Confirmation. Fr Noel administered the Sacrament and is an uncle to Oisín.



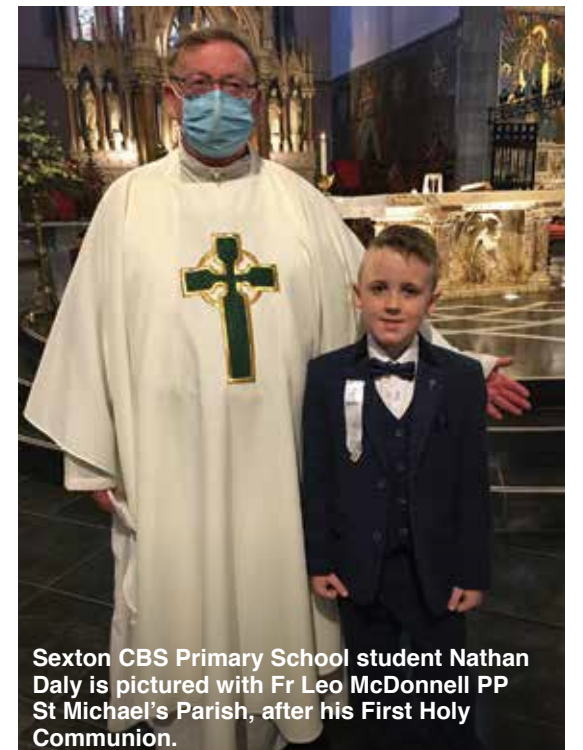
Conor Neill from Sexton St CBS, Limerick, pictured with Principal, Denis Barry and teacher, Timmy Ryan, after his Confirmation in St John's Cathedral Limerick. Fr Noel Kirwan Adm. St John's Cathedral administered the Sacrament.



Jake Meehan, a pupil at Sexton CBS Primary School, Limerick, pictured with his class teacher, Niamh Fitzgerald, after his First Holy Communion at St John's Cathedral.



Adam O'Connell, from Sexton St CBS, Limerick, pictured with his parents and Fr Noel Kirwan after his Confirmation in St John's Cathedral.



Sexton CBS Primary School student Nathan Daly is pictured with Fr Leo McDonnell PP St Michael's Parish, after his First Holy Communion.



Conor Neill with his parents David and Siobhan and his brother Andrew, along with Fr Noel Kirwan after his Confirmation in St John's Cathedral.



Leon Bader from Sexton St CBS, Limerick, pictured with Fr Noel Kirwan after his Confirmation in St John's Cathedral.



Mark Thompson pictured with Denis Barry, school principal of Sexton CBS Primary School, Limerick, after his First Holy Communion.

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Praising the Lord through all his little creatures



Parishes around the country celebrated the feast of St Francis of Assisi with ceremonies for the blessing of animals. The feast of St Francis, who is famous for his love of animals, took place on October 4 and many parishes held the ceremonies after weekend Masses.



Fr John Bracken PP Dundrum parish, Dublin, blesses pets at Holy Cross church on Sunday October 3.



Fr Peter O'Connor PP St John the Baptist parish, Blackrock, Dublin, blesses animals brought by parishioners, October 4.





Fr John Dunphy PP Graiguecullen/Killeshin parish helps his parishioners celebrate the feast of St Francis by blessing their pets, October 3.



Fr Eamonn O'Driscoll of the Franciscan Friary in Killarney greets locals who have brought their animals to be blessed, October 3.



Ireland's wake culture is necessary for establishing a healthy relationship with death, hears **Jason Osborne**

The pandemic brought the Catholic tradition of *memento mori* ('Remember your death') back to the forefront of the public's mind, a virus which proved deadly for many intruding upon the removed safety of our daily lives. Key to combatting the potentially corrosive effects of improperly handled grief upon our lives is the 'socialisation of death', which was also curtailed to some degree by the pandemic.

Author of *My Father's Wake: How the Irish Teach Us to Live, Love and Die* and *Nine Rules to Conquer Death*, Kevin Toolis told *The Irish Catholic* about the irreplaceability of wake culture, and its age-old origins.

"The wake is a really old universal rite within virtually all human cultures, and in some shape or form. Obviously, we're united in birth and we're united in death, and so funeral rites of some kind exist in every human culture and there's certain commonalities which go back a long way, and you can at least trace the Irish wake back to the Middle East," Mr Toolis tells this newspaper.

“In this tradition of the wake, it goes back to the Persians, it goes back to the Babylonians”

Traces of recognisable wake-culture are visible in such timeless works as the *Iliad* by Homer, Mr Toolis says, and this speaks to its necessity.

"Homer wrote the *Iliad* in roundabout 750BC. The end of the *Iliad*, it actually ends with Hector's wake, and there's lots of content in that which would be in the final pages of the *Iliad*, which would be absolutely explicable to any Irish wake-goer today," Mr Toolis explains.

Gathering

"There's the gathering round the body. He talks about the minstrels of the dirge who are keening women. There's even funeral games which, when I was a kid I played a 'wake game', which were games of a certain dodginess where you celebrate life in the presence of the corpse."



The Irish wake must not die

Usually games with a "subversive tinge" to them, there's a certain defiance about the place wakes have occupied in human cultures throughout the centuries.

"But in this tradition of the wake, it goes back to the Persians, it goes back to the Babylonians. The last verse of the *Iliad*...says 'thus held they the wake and funeral for Hector, tamer of horses'," Mr Toolis says, continuing, "It's almost like what Homer is saying in the *Iliad* is, Hector's been killed by Achilles, soon the city will fall, it's a catastrophe, but the Trojans still take time out in order to give Hector a decent wake and funeral rite, and to put his soul to rest."

Traditions

Such is the importance with which some ancient cultures regarded 'socialising death' as Mr Toolis puts it. However, as noted, these traditions are not relegated to the pages of history, but continue to accompany us today in Ireland.

"Obviously we have an awful lot of religious iconography and religious expression around wakes.

"The most important purpose of an Irish wake really is the socialisation of death. That takes place in

a number of different forms and for many of the different participants. The most important aspect I think of an Irish wake is the public acknowledgement of death. So it's the public acknowledgement that you have lost somebody who was dear to you, who was close to you – your father, your wife, your child, whoever – in every circumstance, and obviously people die in lots of different ways.

“The most important purpose of an Irish wake really is the socialisation of death”

"As a community of mortals, we are coming together to acknowledge the loss of another mortal. An event of significance, we're respecting the dead and respecting ourselves, really.

"No man is an island entire unto himself. The death of any man diminishes me, I am connected, and that's the most important thing. Which, it must be said, in the Anglosaxon world, in America and England, that relationship, that social connection with death,

has almost entirely broken down. Death has become very abstract, quite traumatic, very private, privileged, people don't go to funerals, they don't ever see dead bodies. The underlying thing is the socialisation of death."

Death has been removed from the day-to-day experience of most people, and with it the chances for a healthy relationship with it. Mr Toolis is adamant about the importance of the wake being not just for the dead, but for the living. Being "united in birth and united in death", a culture that doesn't acknowledge such a seminal human experience is sure to become lopsided.

Ritual

"It's not really just about the dead person. The dead person takes part in a kind of ongoing ritual, social awareness, social education between the living and the dead. So what's important, really, is that children should go to wakes, because what we're actually saying is people die, it's sad, but life goes on, it's not the end of the world. One of the metaphors I use in my book: you wouldn't say to your child, 'Hop in the BMW, drive down

to the motorway, I'm sure you'll get the hang of it', you know?"

"You take them on practice drives, driving lessons, there's somebody there supervising them, showing them how to work the car, the gearstick, the indicators, etc. But of course, wakes are a bit like that for mortality. This is what happens when people die, it's sad as I say, but life goes on, we gather together, etc."

“By not freaking out and running away, you are enabling people, actually, to get through their grief in a far more psychologically healthy way”

Induction into the elements of the human experience is essential – births, marriages, death – and yet, Mr Toolis identifies that as a culture, we've allowed death to be "shunted off" out of homes and into hospitals, care homes and hospices. While people undoubtedly receive excellent care in each, there's no doubt it's a far cry from the social process of dying in the home, surrounded by family and possibly friends from the surrounding locale.

"So you have that level of, it's a socialisation process – you're teaching the next generation. But also for the current generation, you're also saying to the bereaved, you know, it's important. This is an important thing. It's not insignificant, it's changed your life, and I'm here."

“But the wake, nevertheless, has been incorporated within the Irish Catholic tradition. It's a defining icon, really, of Irish culture”



Kevin Toolis, Author of *Nine Rules to Conquer Death*

“Women keened together, there was a catharsis of emotion, and that is very therapeutically useful for human beings”

“Also, in psychological terms, you’re allowing people to give expression to public grief. In the older forms of the wake was ‘keening’. Women keened together, there was a catharsis of emotion, and that is very therapeutically useful for human beings.”

The effects of not properly incorporating that grief can be damaging to both the individual suffering, and to the community, Mr Toolis says. A large part of wake culture is about “creating a space” for grieving to occur healthily.

“One of the great problems about grief is, and this might relate to the pandemic in a sense, the absence of physical interchange”

“That is so much more emotionally and psychologically healthy than people being trapped, imprisoned in their own grief and not having any public expression. So at the wake, and at the funeral, in front of all these people, you’re allowed to have a public expression of grief. You’re allowed to cry, you’re allowed to cry in public, you’re allowed to be upset and give expression to some of the most powerful emotions that you ever experience in your life,” Mr Toolis says.

“Again, everyone says by being there, by not freaking out and running away, you are enabling people, actually, to get through their grief in a far more psychologically healthy way than by just pretending death hasn’t happened.”

The pandemic was widely understood as having struck a blow against the grieving process – funerals and wakes limited to a mere six people for much of the past year and a half. However, Mr

Toolis focused on the adaptations he saw take place in Irish society on that front, and was impressed by what he saw.

Adapt

“Well people do adapt, and obviously you did have, I thought it was a very fantastic Irish response – the guard of honour. You know, the people lined up, socially distanced, along the road, and again, obviously, that’s not quite the same as shaking your hand, but again, it was a way of expressing to the bereaved that they weren’t on their own.

“That their community was acknowledging this, and that there would still be verbal exchanges or people may not have called up to the house but they could have phoned to the house, so although

it’s not the same, it wasn’t quite as bad as it could have been – it wasn’t so complete a catastrophe. As long as we shape our responses,” he says.

“In a weird way, death has become very privatised, so the sick and dying are, sort of, shunted off into hospitals”

He was glad to see this adaptation to the times in which we live, as there can be many abnormal side-effects to improperly integrated grief, many of which could have come about in Ireland had people not made an effort to accompany those who were grieving.



“One of the great problems about grief is, and this might relate to the pandemic in a sense, the absence of physical interchange. One of the problems people have about grief is a year of magical thinking where often after the funeral, they expect the dead person to come back, and it’s just a very common psychological response.

“One even more common one is that you’re visited in your dreams by the dead person, but another one is this odd, weird lapse where you sort of think, ‘Well, I can’t chuck out the shoes in the wardrobe because they might need them’. Or it manifests itself with them saying we can’t move house because how will they know where to come back to? How will they find us?”

Psychological reactions

These are very common psychological reactions, Mr Toolis explains, “particularly with spousal deaths”.

“Because if you’ve lived with someone for 30 years, your whole life, there’s maybe that hunger and maybe that wanting, and you fall into an expectation of where are they now? Or you forget that they’re dead. You think they’re going to come back, or you look out the window – I talked to a widow about this – she looked out the window and the grass is growing long, and she says, ‘Oh, I must get Brian to cut the grass’. Except he’s not going to cut the grass because he’s lying under it. It’s very easy to slip into that ‘year of magical thinking’,” he says.

Such is the importance of socialising death. However, this process is under threat in Ireland by, what Mr Toolis refers to as, the invasion of the “western death machine”.

“I think one of the problems really which Ireland faces in a sense is, you might call it, the invasion of the ‘western death machine’. I write about this in *My Father’s Wake* a lot, and in *Nine Rules to Conquer Death*. Over the last 200 years in America and in the UK, death has begun to become diminished as a social experience.

“In a weird way, death has become very privatised, so the sick and dying are, sort of, shunted off into hospitals, usually. Out of the sight of the living. Then, this has grown up over

the last two, three generations, this absence of contact between the dead and the living. People don’t see their dead relatives. They don’t ever see them.”

Common

“It’s incredibly common for English people in their 80s to have never seen a dead body in their life. They’ve never ever seen the corpse, they’ve never gone to a wake, they’ve never, ever seen one, not even one of their closest relatives. The most they might see is possibly their granddad for five minutes. So one or two, or none. That’s a marker of the diminishment of social death.

“Now, that has crept in a little bit in Ireland, although I’d say that Ireland has still got quite a healthy death culture, certainly in comparison with the English model. But I know through my children’s Dublin friends that the Irish wake is completely alien and they just wouldn’t know what you’re talking about. Sometimes there’s funeral homes, you don’t have wakes. You can have the weird thing about private flowers only, family members only, that death can be ‘civilised’ away as it often is in England. There’s a possibility that Ireland could sort of adapt by default to some of those models. It creeps in in a, sort of, insidious way, but can be quite profound.”

“It’s incredibly common for English people in their 80s to have never seen a dead body in their life”

A simple example of this process, Mr Toolis says, which is experienced by many every day, is the fact that it takes so long to be buried or cremated in England, disrupting the grieving process immensely.

“That has a terrible, profound fracture in the whole grieving process, because you can’t go and visit your auntie who lost her husband for six weeks. You can’t have a wake for six weeks. So everything gets fractured because death has become chopped up and bureaucratised and diminished of social significance. Those are very dangerous precedents. Something that Ireland and Irish Catholics should definitely seek to avoid. We should definitely not adopt the English model of death.

“People might say, ‘Oh that’s how it is, that’s modern’. Often it’s presented as that’s the way that we do these things now, but you say, ‘Hold on, that’s not the way that they did it in Troy, and basically people have been dying roughly the same way as long as there’s been people’. You’ll get an innovation within the death industry that’s often in favour of the death industry, and not necessarily in favour of how people cope with grief and loss as we have coped with grief and loss merely by being human.”

Mr Toolis’ analysis of the contribution wakes have made in Ireland and the dangers they’re facing should encourage us to cling to these rituals and traditions as to a “rope”, as he saw people cling to the Rosary at many wakes himself.

What makes missionary



Daughters of Charity Sister Geraldine Henry tells **Ruadhán Jones** about the rewards of missionary life

The work of a missionary can be tough. Their life's mission is to travel to the most marginal communities, often placing their lives at risk in ministering to the poor, the sick and the outcast. But it is exactly this charitable love offered to the marginalised that makes the missionary life worthwhile, Sr Geraldine Henry says.

There are few people better placed to offer this testimony. Having worked on mission in Kenya, Nigeria and Burkina Faso – to name but a few – and now through her work as mission development officer, Sr Geraldine knows the missionary life inside and out.

But though her work has taken in great swathes of the world, it began as it continued – with a love for all people.

Falls Road

Growing up on the Falls Road in Belfast, Sr Geraldine couldn't help but come in contact with the Daughters of Charity. They were "part and parcel" of everyday life there, running a local school and conducting a great deal of outreach work.

"From when I was a very small child, I saw the sisters when they were around serving the poor and then I went to primary school with them," Sr Geraldine begins. "The school was really opened for the poor. My granny went to that school and it was opened for kids who were working in the mill so that they could go to school in the morning and go to the mill in the evening or vice versa. All my aunts went there as well."

After attending the Daughters of Charity's primary school, she continued on to their secondary school. It was here that she determined to join



Sr Geraldine with schoolchildren in Matisi, Kenya.

the order, after witnessing the kindness and goodness of the sisters.

"While in secondary school, we came down to St Vincent's, Navan road, to a centre for people with an intellectual disability and we did holiday work there," Sr Geraldine explains. "It was just the relationship with the sisters, the kindness, the overall goodness of them with the people with special needs. They were so good to us and I said to myself, if I ever wanted to join a community, I would want one where there were people involved and it was outgoing and that I was able to work with people at that level. That was why I joined the Daughters of Charity."

Charism

In seeing the sisters at work in St Vincent's, Sr Geraldine was witnessing their charism in action. Founded in 1633 by St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac, first coming to Ireland in 1855, the order was devoted to the poor and the marginalised.

"Really they didn't go out to found a religious order or anything, what they wanted to do – they were working with people who were poor," Sr Geraldine explains. "Louise de Maril-

lac just brought young girls together to serve the poor.

"At that stage, if you were a nun, you had to live in a convent. So they said we were servants of the poor so that you could work out among the poor. They set up the Daughters of Charity so that we weren't nuns as such, but a society of apostolic life in which we make an annual commitment every year – we don't make permanent vows, we make an annual commitment.

“Everything we do is in order to help us serve the poor”

"Our whole commitment is to serve the poor and in order to serve the poor, we live together to serve the community and we follow the basic maxims of poverty, chastity and obedience.

"Our whole thrust is that work, looking to serve the poor. Everything we do is in order to help us serve the poor. That really is our charism and our mission. There is at the moment – our numbers are gone well down, we have 13,800, we lost

a lot of sisters during the Covid all over the world, in 90 plus countries," she finishes.

On mission

Having joined the order, Sr Geraldine's first few years were spent in Ireland working with people with intellectual disabilities. But she always longed to head overseas.

"I did general nursing, I did paediatrics working in Crumlin," she says. "Then I went into administration. I always wanted to go overseas, but everybody said, oh you're needed here, you're needed here. As it happened, they were looking for somebody in Nigeria to do some work about project development.

"I went to Nigeria and I went for three months, then stayed for 13 years! I worked with the archdiocese for a while, developing their project. Then I worked for the Daughters, I developed our own projects, the hospital that I was managing – it was subsequently knocked down by the government to build a railway line. We had an awful time trying to get back and go to court and everything."

As Sr Geraldine puts it herself, in heading overseas, the Irish missionaries brought with them their focus on ministering to people with intellectual disabilities.

"A lot of our projects are for people with disabilities," she says. "Whether

“From when I was a very small child, I saw the sisters when they were around serving the poor and then I went to primary school with them”



Sr Geraldine is pictured with young people with a disability in Thigio, Kenya.

life worthwhile...



Sr Geraldine Henry receives a warm welcome.

they're physical disabilities, whether they're intellectual disabilities or whatever. We have schools and we have centres for people with disabilities; we have healthcare as well. Not huge big hospitals, we would focus on specialisations like HIV, aids, leprosy, TB, people who have orthopaedic problems, eye surgery.

"You know, very specialised things like that and then primary healthcare. We would do an awful lot of primary healthcare, going out to the villages and setting up small rural clinics, to try and improve the health of people at a local level and through a lot of nutrition. We see that, in some of the places where we are, we'd have children very malnourished and trying to teach mothers how to care for them."

Worthwhile

For Sr Geraldine, it is this kind of work that makes the missionary life so worthwhile: "It's seeing somebody who has never been able to go to school getting to school; it's seeing people, maybe mothers who have been left on their own to struggle with children helping them. I love the basics.

"When I was working in Kubwa, Nigeria, we set up a small maternity hospital and a woman came one day. She had lost four children and needed a caesarean section. The husband wouldn't pay for it. I said, look you'll have to have this c-section and we'll do it, we'll do it free, which we did.

"That woman had that baby and I met her years later – and you know, you forget about these people. I was out minding my business and she came running out at me with a bunch of bananas and with her child who was about 14. She said, this is the girl that you gave to me. We helped that woman, she was so bad, she was nearly dead and she said to me, if I had died, my husband didn't care, he would have just got another wife. For some people, life is cheap.

"You know there are so many people like that," Sr Geraldine continues. "My first love is for people with an intellectual disability. It's actually seeing children who were locked away at home, were just not wanted by their families, abandoned. One of the fathers, the poor man has died since, he said to me that his daughter was kind of ostracised in the village.

“We would do an awful lot of primary healthcare, going out to the villages and setting up small rural clinics”

"But he said, once he saw you people coming and bringing her to school, she's seen now as being a very important person in the village. That to me is what makes it all worthwhile," Sr Geraldine concludes.

Sustainability

One of the challenges facing many missionary organisations is making sure they are sustainable. By virtue of their charisma, Sr Geraldine explains, they don't run big, fee-paying schools, or work in affluent areas.

"It's always a struggle, we're always looking for funding," she continues. "We do get funding from Misesan Cara, I do a lot of fundraising here and fundraising events. We were doing parish promotion through AMRI [Association of Missionaries and Religious Ireland] and that brought us in some money and it was running a school scholarship programme for children.

"But of course Covid came and we weren't able to come out to the churches and that has caused us problems as well. There's always challenges. But we keep going and I have to say, in our countries now

where I'm the main contact, they're all local sisters and they are just wonderful.

"They have kept the charisma, they've kept the work with the poor. We work in places that nobody else would go. Sometimes, you'd think, how did we ever get to this far flung place? And we'd say, that's part of our life as Daughters of Charity."

Hardship

In heading to the margins, the sisters face hardships that can seem quite extreme to our eyes. Sr Geraldine explains that, even where sisters are working in war zones, they won't back out.

"We have sisters in conflict areas – they don't run away. We have sisters at the moment in the north of Ethiopia that we're trying to support. We have sisters in the

north of Nigeria, and in other parts where there's conflict."

Covid has proven to be another all-encompassing hardship, throwing up difficulties of hunger and poverty.

"And of course Covid, we have been trying to help with the problems and lockdowns and people hungry. One of the sisters said to me, we're not worried about dying of Covid – but the people are worried about dying of hunger. Because they couldn't do their business. They weren't allowed out to sell their bits and pieces."

Daily life

These types of hardships are not the norm, however. More typically, the sisters have to combat the everyday struggles of access to basic needs such as food, water, medical care and education.

"One of the things we've started doing are kitchen gardens, that we would get in a wee place, maybe even a slum outside Kitale, Kenya," Sr Geraldine explains. "There are women we have set up, in collaboration with Misesan Cara and others, with a bit of land and we teach them how to grow.

“Covid has proven to be another all-encompassing hardship, throwing up difficulties of hunger and poverty”

"Something we found was, when we got the land, a problem is water. They had to go for miles to collect water. We said ok, we need to sort out this water problem. So we started then doing shallow wells, to try that there'd be some water near where the people were, they'd have the kitchen gardens. It meant they could have vegetables and sometimes they sold them to buy other things, and they're still going very well."

Another area the sisters are very active in is education. In keeping with the particular focus of the Irish Daughters of Charity, the majority of these are for children with special needs.

"In Ethiopia and in Kenya we have nursery primary schools, kindergartens. In Ethiopia we actually have a training school where we teach young women Montessori methods. Then they go out to the different projects and set up Montessori schools all over. We have a big school in Abbas, Ethiopia, for very poor displaced children. Some of them are living just on the streets and things like that. We try to support and get kids into school and that kind of way."

Development

Now that she's back in Ireland, Sr Geraldine continues to work with the missionaries abroad, co-ordinating their work to ensure it reaches as many people as possible.

"I work with the sisters in the five traditional countries that the Irish sisters and the British sisters had gone to, which are Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Kenya. My work since I've been at home has been doing projects, working with Misesan Cara, doing fundraising and doing capacity development in-country.

"Before Covid, I went to these countries at least once a year. I did development with the sisters and worked with the different people, helping the sisters develop their projects and doing that kind of thing. Since Covid it's all been on Zoom – I'm zoomed out!"

Though the number of Irish missionaries has declined, their legacy will be thriving indigenous Daughters of Charity provinces, wherever they worked.

"In all our countries we have an awful lot of local sisters," Sr Geraldine says. "I'd say in Nigeria, we have about 150 between Nigerian and Ghanaian sisters. The same in Ethiopia, the same in Kenya. We've developed the local communities. But they're still connected... The numbers might be going down here in Europe, but they're still very much part of the overseas missions in the different countries."

A Daughter of Charity at work

Sr Ellis O'Kelly went to Kenya in 2005 and started a programme for the elderly who were very poor in Thigio village and surrounding areas. This involved a weekly club, where the elderly enjoyed a nutritious meal, basic care and other social activities. Here Sr Ellis is pictured in the centre for the elderly enjoying their meal during their weekly club meeting. Since 2016, Sr Ellis has been involved with the mission development fundraising activities.



Out&About

A proud day in Portlaoise



▲ LAOIS: Three classes from Holy Family NS kicked-off celebrations of First Holy Communion in Portlaoise parish September 24 and 25.



IN SHORT

Govt's responsibility to maintain living standard – Archbishop Martin

The archbishop of Armagh said maintaining a basic living standard is a government's responsibility, not a charity's.

Archbishop Eamon Martin was speaking on the feast of St Vincent de Paul, when he celebrated Mass for members of the Society of Vincent de Paul from Armagh, Craigavon, Banbridge and surrounding areas.

Praising the charity's work of "practical, loving steps to lift up those who are struggling", Dr Martin also warned that "maintaining a basic standard of living for citizens is the responsibility of government - not of charity".

"During the pandemic your voices alerted us to the phenomenon of 'in-work' poverty which can impact especially on those who are self-employed or part-time, and those with temporary or on zero-hours contracts," the archbishop said in his September 27 homily.

He added that a "buy now pay later" culture "binds so many citizens, including a lot of our young adults" in unsustainable debt.

"In that regard, we must all be alert to the repercussions of the ending of emergency pandemic measures, including the imminent cut in weekly universal credit payments.

"These, together with ongoing increases to fuel and other living costs, remind us that maintaining a basic standard of living for

citizens is the responsibility of government - not of charity."

Catholic Institute for the Deaf celebrates 175th anniversary

Archbishop Dermot Farrell praised the institute's founders' "prophetic" action at a commemorative Mass, September 27.

The institute was founded in 1846 by Msgr William Yore and Fr McNamara to answer the "pressing needs" of the deaf community.

"Msgr Yore and Fr McNamara were prophetic when they heard God's call to speak God's word on behalf of children who could

not hear," the archbishop of Dublin said during the Mass at Emmaus chapel, Cabra.

"With a word of encouragement from wise leaders they ensured that the pressing needs of the deaf community were addressed when they founded the Catholic Institute for the Deaf and opened a school for deaf girls on the grounds of the convent of the Dominican Sisters here in Cabra."

St Joseph's School for deaf boys was established later, and five years ago the two schools were amalgamated to become the Holy Family School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

"This school, along with other facilities, have become an integral part of our Church's ministry to the deaf," Dr Farrell said.

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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



OFFALY: Assumpta Windsor McGlynn, Caroline McGee, Jim Windsor McGlynn are pictured after Mr Windsor presented Ms McGee with the Benemerenti Medal in recognition of her 30 years working for St Rynagh's parish, September 25.



CLARE: The boys and girls from Clooney National School who made their First Confession with Fr Tom Ryan are pictured in the school hall, September 27.



CORK: Members of the Knights of Columbanus from Queen's University Belfast join Fr Damien Polly OP at the Catholic Men's Conference in St Mary's Dominican Church, September 25.



DUBLIN: Fr Bryan Shorthall OFM Cap. cleans Priorswood church after Mass, September 28.



DUBLIN: St John the Baptist Blackrock parishioners Mary Murphy, Joy and Paddy Elliot and their grandchild Grace prepare the thanksgiving altar for the parish harvest thanksgiving Mass, September 29. Photo: Fr Peter O'Connor.



DUBLIN: Bro. Ruairidh Grieve OP was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology by the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum). He is pictured with St Saviour's prior Fr Joseph Dineen OP and regent of studies Fr Terence Crotty OP, September 28.



CARLOW: The third class from Myshall and Drumphea parish are pictured after making their First Holy Communion, September 18.



DOWN: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin celebrated the feast of St Vincent de Paul with SVP Ireland members from Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Area. He is pictured with local conference presidents, September 27.

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

Scottish Catholics urge opposition to assisted suicide legalisation

● Scotland's Catholic bishops are urging opposition to a measure that would legalise assisted suicide, warning that the government "prevent suicide, not assist it". A consultation on the Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill was launched on September 22, and will run through December 22. The Scottish Parliament has twice vetoed similar proposals in recent years.

"Legalising assisted suicide moves in the opposite direction: putting immeasurable pressure on vulnerable people including those with disabilities to end their lives prematurely, for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden on others", stated Anthony Horan, Director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office, an agency of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Bishop of San Marino re-affirms support to pregnant women after country's legalisation of abortion

● The Bishop of San Marino, Andrea Turazzi, released a statement saying that pregnant women must be supported so that "no stone is left unturned in seeking alternatives" to abortion. The statement follows the country's legalisation of abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

"We must ensure that never again does a life not blossom because of insecurity, distrust, loneliness, lack of custody and protection or for economic reasons," Bishop Andrea said. "Today, with the progress of science, with the means at our disposal, with the growth of social consciousness, we can do so much to welcome unborn life."

Archdiocese of Toronto requires regular testing for unvaccinated

● The Archdiocese of Toronto announced that it will adopt a more robust approach when dealing with the issue of unvaccinated clergy who minister in the archdiocese. Outlining the new rules, Cardinal Thomas Collins intimated that clergy in the Archdiocese of Toronto who have not received a Covid vaccination must show proof of a recent negative coronavirus test to their pastor "prior to or immediately upon entering

parish offices, or presiding at religious services". The new requirements also apply to volunteers, lectors, choir members, ushers, and "individuals performing similar functions" as well as employees at parishes, the chancery, and "satellite offices". However no proof of vaccination or recent negative test will be required to attend Mass or other religious services, the policy states.

Transgender students 'unknowingly' admitted to Catholic seminaries, archbishop warns

● Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome Listocki believes that, "bishops should consider requiring DNA tests or physical examinations to ensure that all seminarians are biological men", in a recent brief sent to the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The statement comes after the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church

Governance was made aware of instances where it had been discovered that a woman living under a transgendered identity had been unknowingly admitted to the seminary or to a house of formation of an institute of consecrated life.

In one case, said Archbishop Listocki, "the individual's sacramental records had been fraudulently obtained to reflect her new identity".

Colorado parish church vandalised with pro-abortion graffiti

● A Catholic parish in Boulder, Colorado, with a memorial to aborted babies on its front lawn was desecrated with pro-abortion graffiti in the early hours of September 29.

Mark Evevard, Youth Director and Social Communications Director for the parish, stated that, "the police believe it was a group of unidentified assailants who hit the church, and that police are currently investigating".

Attack on Christians in Nigeria described as a 'massacre' by Catholic priest

Further attacks on northern Nigeria's Christian population continue to traumatise the region's Christians, many of whom are becoming resigned to the fact that their safety is no longer guaranteed.

The latest onslaught was compared to a 'massacre' against native people by a local Catholic priest, many of which are Christian.

An estimated 49 people, including women and children, were killed in a two-hour-long attack by Muslim Fulani herdsman in Kaduna State who "came in large numbers and began shooting at anything on sight", the Catholic priest stated while concealing his identity for fear of reprisal.

"We have counted 30 dead bodies, mostly women and children, three still missing, while five are receiving treatment in the hospital." The priest also estimated that at least 20 houses were burned down in the attack.

Nigeria has increased insecurity since 2009, when Boko Haram, one of Africa's largest Islamist groups, launched an insurgency seeking to turn Africa's most populous country into an Islamic state.

The group has conducted indiscriminate terrorist attacks on numerous targets, including religious and political groups, as well as civilians.

The situation has compounded by the involvement of the predominantly Muslim Fulani herdsmen, also known as the Fulani Militia, who



Local herders watch their cows at a local milk collecting centre near Kano, Nigeria, January 19, 2016. Catholic leaders are frustrated with Nigeria's yearslong conflict among traditional herders and Christian farmers that has claimed lives and displaced people. Photo: CNS

have clashed frequently with Christian farmers over grazing land.

Pope Francis said that he was praying for victims of the attacks, in an appeal made at the end of his general audience on September 28. "I learned with sorrow of the news of the armed attacks last Sunday against the villages of Madamai and Abun, in northern Nigeria," he said.

"I pray for those who have died, for those who were wounded, and for the entire Nigerian population. I hope

that the safety of every citizen might be guaranteed in the country."

Other villages in Kaduna State were also attacked on the evening of September 26 and into the morning of Sept. 27, resulting in more deaths, injuries, and abductions.

According to reports, 27 members of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) were abducted and one member killed in a September 26 attack on the Gabachuwa community in the southern part of Kaduna State.

"The predominantly Christian ethnic minority tribes who inhabit the southern part of the state have experienced relentless attacks since 2011, with a significant uptick following the advent of the current administration in 2015," the human rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide said in a September 28 statement.

CSW said that Kaduna State was currently "an epicentre of kidnapping and banditry activity".

First Mozambique-born cardinal dies at age of 97

Cardinal Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, the first cardinal born in Mozambique, has died at the age of 97.

The Catholic leader is remembered for advocating peace amid Mozambique's bloody civil war which raged between 1977 to 1992, during which he aided refugees and victims of violence as the founding president of Caritas Mozambique.

Pope Francis paid tribute to the cardinal in a condolence telegram sent to Archbishop Francisco Chimoio, OFM Cap,

archbishop of Maputo since 2003.

He said: "Having received with sorrow the news of the death of brother Cardinal Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, I wish to express my solidarity to the bereaved family members and to all those, especially in the Archdiocese of Maputo, who have benefited from the service of this shepherd."

Cardinal Dos Santos died on the evening of September 29 in Maputo, the capital city where he served as archbishop for nearly three decades.

Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi also informed local media that the country had lost "one of its best sons who stood out in the world for his commitment to the good of humanity, regardless of social status, race, or any other form of distinction".

Prior to his death, Cardinal dos Santos was the second-oldest living member of the College of Cardinals, behind Slovakian Cardinal Jozef Tomko.

Church in Canada pledges funds for healing, after residential schools

The Canadian bishops are aiming to raise \$30 million (€20.5 million) over the next five years to support the Indigenous peoples of the country, including survivors of residential schools.

Bishop Raymond Poisson of Saint-Jerome and Mont-

Laurier, who was recently elected president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that there was a "universal consensus" among his brother bishops that "Catholic entities needed to do more in a tangible way to address the suffering experi-

enced in Canada's residential schools".

The bishops will launch fundraising initiatives throughout the country, to be "achieved at the local level, with parishes across Canada being encouraged to participate and amplify the effort".

The announcement comes days after the Canadian bishops concluded their plenary assembly. At the conclusion of the assembly September 24, the bishops issued an apology for the Church's role in the country's residential school system.



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Coca grower protest



Coca growers from the Yungas region pray in front of police during a protest over the control of the leaf's main market, in La Paz, Bolivia. Photo: CNS

More than 3,000 paedophile clergy active in Church in France since 1950s report estimates

An independent commission set up to measure the extent of abuse committed by Church members has estimated that over 3,000 paedophiles, out of a total of 115,000 priests, were actively engaged in ministry with the Church between 1950 to the present day.

The 2,500-page report, which was commissioned by the French Catholic Church in 2018, has been commended by Katherine Dalle who is head of communications for the Bishops' Conference of

France, as she stated that the report's release, "is a very important moment for people who have been abused. It is an important moment for the Church in France. Jean-Marc Sauvé (commission president) has done remarkable work".

In the lead up to the finalisation of the report, Church authorities in France distributed a message to be read at every parish in the country during Sunday Mass. It says that the publication of the report "will be a test of

truth and a tough and serious moment".

The report is the latest instalment in an assortment of measures taken by the Catholic Church in France to tackle the horrors of sexual abuse in recent years. In 2019, the Diocese of Paris signed a protocol with the city prosecutor to allow suspected abuse to be investigated without victims making a formal complaint to the authorities.

In addition to the novel protocol, the Church also voted in favour of 11 resolu-

tions to tackle the problem of abuse, including: the establishment of a council "for the prevention and fight against paedophilia" and financial "contribution" for victims. These resolutions were ratified in March of this year.

The report's compilation saw input from 21 contributors all from wide-ranging backgrounds with doctors, historians, sociologists and theologians among those who participated in the process.

Human rights activist: Myanmar's Christians are suffering amid crackdown

Benedict Rogers, a human rights campaigner, explained that Burma's Christian minority is suffering amid the military's continuing crackdown on protesters opposed to its February coup.

Speaking last Tuesday, Mr Rogers told a webinar at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, on September 28 that earlier this month the military killed a Christian pastor, Cung Biak Hum.

"One of the most recent examples of Christian persecution is the murder

just 10 days ago, on September 18, of a 31-year-old Baptist pastor in Chin State, Pastor Cung Biak Hum, who was shot dead as he tried to extinguish a blaze of fire after the military had fired artillery that had caused houses to burn," he said.

"And not only did they kill him, but they chopped off his ring finger in order to take his wedding ring."

There are approximately 4.4 million Christians in Burma, a predominantly Buddhist country

of 54.8 million people bordering Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, and Thailand. There are some 750,000 Catholics in the country, led by Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, the first Burmese national to receive the red hat.

The Christian legal group ADF International estimates that more than 100,000 Christians living in internal displacement camps in northern Burma are currently denied access to food and healthcare.

Vatican roundup

Modern 'throwaway Culture' leads to neglect of society's vulnerable, says Pope

● Pope Francis condemned abortion and euthanasia in a speech in which he said that today's "throwaway culture" leads to the killing of children and discarding of the elderly.

"There is the discarding of children that we do not want to welcome with the law of abortion that sends them to the dispatcher and kills them directly," the Pope said. "And today this has become a 'normal' method, a practice that is very ugly. It is really murder."

In an address to members of the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Pope said that to understand what abortion is, it helps to formulate two questions: "is it right to eliminate, to take a human life to solve a problem?", he queried. "Is it right to hire a hitman to solve a problem? That's what abortion is".

The Pope re-affirmed his belief that both abortion and euthanasia "deny hope" by negating "the hope of children who bring us the life that keeps us going and the hope that is in the roots that the elderly give us".

World Youth Day 2021: Pope Francis asks young people to 'testify joyfully that Christ is alive'

● In a message for World Youth Day 2021 on September 27, Pope Francis summoned young Catholics to "testify joyfully that Christ is alive". The Pope also invited youth to join a "spiritual pilgrimage leading to the celebration of the 2023 World Youth Day" in Lisbon, Portugal.

Reflecting on the dramatic conversion of St Paul the Apostle, the Pope made a gamut of appeals to young people ahead of the annual celebration on November 21, "in Jesus' name, I ask you: Arise! Testify that you too were blind and encountered the light. You too have seen God's goodness and beauty

in yourself, in others, and in the communion of the Church, where all loneliness is overcome", he said.

As well as international World Youth Day (WYD) gatherings ordinarily held every three years, the Catholic Church also sponsors local youth day events for which the Pope offers an annual message.

This year, WYD will be celebrated at the diocesan level on the Solemnity of Christ the King with the theme "Arise! I make you a witness of what you have seen," inspired by Jesus' words to St Paul recorded in Acts 26:16.

President Biden expected to meet Pope Francis at end of October, sources say

● Pope Francis is expected to receive Joe Biden on October 29, in the US president's first official visit to the Vatican since his inauguration, according to sources at the Apostolic Palace.

According to a Vatican source, it would seem that preparations are already underway at the US Embassy to the Holy See and the first loads of trucks and equipment for the visit are already on their way to Rome.

According to sources, Biden's trip would constitute an official visit, with the Vatican's diplomats heavily featuring in President Biden's itinerary. First, the president would have a meeting with Pope Francis. Then there would be bilateral talks in the Secretariat of State with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Secretary for Relations with States and the Vatican's equivalent of a foreign minister.

Biden met Pope Francis for the first time in September 2015, when the Pope attended the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. At the time, Biden was vice-president of the Obama administration.



Letter from Rome



Carol Glatz

The instrumental nuns in Vatican's celestial survey

Of the many momentous or menial tasks women religious perform, one of the better-kept secrets has been the role of four Sisters of the Holy Child Mary who were part of a global effort to make a complete map and catalogue of the starry skies.

Nameless nuns

Until a few years ago, the women were no more than nameless nuns whose image has long been preserved in a black and white photograph that showed them wearing impeccably ironed habits and leaning over special microscopes and a ledger.

But now their identities have been pulled out of obscurity by Jesuit Father Sabino Maffeo, assistant to the director of the Vatican Observatory. He stumbled onto their names as he was going through the observatory archives, "putting papers in order," he told Catholic News Service in April 2016.

Sisters Emilia Ponzone, Regina Colombo, Concetta Finardi and Luigia Panceri, all born in the late 1800s and from the northern Lombardy region near Milan, helped map and catalogue nearly half a million stars for the Vatican's part in an international survey of the night sky.

Top astronomers from around the world met in Paris in 1887 and again in 1889 to coordinate the creation of a photographic "Celestial Map" (*Carte du Ciel*) and an "astrophotographic" catalogue pinpointing the stars' positions.

Barnabite Father Francesco Denza, an Italian astronomer and meteorologist, easily convinced Pope Leo XIII to let the Holy See take part in the initiative, which assigned participating observatories a specific slice of the sky to photograph, map and catalogue.

Fr Maffeo, an expert in the observatory's history and its archivist, said Pope Leo saw the Vatican's participation as a way to show the world that "the Church supported science" and "was not just concerned with theology and religion".

The Vatican was one of about 18 observatories that spent the next several decades taking thousands of glass-plate photographs with their telescopes and cataloguing data for the massive project.

But the project at the Vatican Observatory began to suffer after Fr Denza died in 1894.

When Pope Pius X found out the new director wasn't up to the job, he called on Archbishop Pietro Maffi of Pisa to reorganise the observatory and search for the best replacement, Fr Maffeo said.

In 1906, the archbishop found his man at Georgetown University in Washington, DC – Jesuit Father John Hagen who had been heading its



Members of the Sisters of the Holy Child Mary use microscopes to review glass plates as they measure star positions. Photo: CNS.

“The plates were overlaid with numbered grids and the sisters would measure and read out loud each star’s location on two axes and another would register the coordinates in a ledger”

observatory there since 1888 and was renowned for his research on “variable” stars, which have fluctuating brightness.

Though he had extensive experience in astronomy, Fr Hagen never did the kind of measurements and number crunching required for the astrophotographic catalogue, Fr Maffeo said.

“So he went to Europe to see how they did it and saw that in some observatories there were women who read the (star) positions and wrote them in a book with precise coordinates,” the 93-year-old Jesuit priest said.

Lady computers

The astronomers told Fr Hagen that once the young women “were shown how to do it, they were very diligent,” Fr Maffeo said. At the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, for example, they even were referred to as “lady computers” because of the skill needed to calculate the coordinates according to set formulae.

When Fr Hagen wondered where he might be able to hire young women for the Vatican, “he immediately thought – nuns,” and contacted the Sisters of the Holy Child Mary, who were located nearby, Fr Maffeo said. Coincidentally, Mary is often symbolised in Catholic Church tradition by a star.

In a letter dated July 13, 1909, to the superior general, Mother Angela Ghezzi, Archbishop Maffi said the Vatican Observatory “needs two sisters with normal vision, patience and a predisposition for methodical and mechanical work.”

Fr Maffeo said the sisters’ general council was not enthused “about wasting two nuns on a job that had nothing to do with charity”. However, Mother Ghezzi was “used to seeing God’s will in every request,” he said, and she let two sisters go to the observatory.

Work for the sisters began in 1910, but soon required a third and later a fourth nun to join the team.

Two would sit in front of a microscope mounted on an inclined plane with a light shining under the plate-glass photograph of one section of the night sky.

The plates were overlaid with numbered grids and the sisters would measure and read out loud each star’s location on two axes and another would register the coordinates in a ledger. They would also check enlarged versions of the images on paper.

Painstaking work

The Vatican was one of about 10 observatories to complete its assigned slice of the sky. From 1910 to 1921, the nuns surveyed the brightness and positions of 481,215 stars off of hundreds of glass plates.

Their painstaking work did not go unnoticed at the time. Pope Benedict XV received them in a private audience in 1920 and gave them a gold chalice, Fr Maffeo said. Pope Pius XI also received the “measuring nuns” eight years later, awarding them a silver medal.

The Vatican’s astrophotographic catalogue, which totalled 10 volumes, gave special mention to the sisters, noting their “alacrity and diligence,” uninterrupted labours and “zeal greater than any eulogy” could express at a task “so foreign to their mission”.

The international project to catalogue star positions and build a cele-

stial map ended in 1966 and recorded nearly 5 million stars. The catalogue consists of more than 200 volumes produced by 20 observatories and the unfinished map is made up of hundreds of sheets of paper – all work culled from more than 22,000 glass photographic plates of the sky.

“The project showed that even in a new era of satellites and software, quaint glass-plate photographs and ‘lady computers’ weren’t wholly obsolete”

Fr Maffeo said, “Never before had there been a presentation of the stars as vast as this.”

While the project was quickly eclipsed by huge technological developments in surveying stars, modern-day scientists eventually discovered that comparing the star positions recorded a century earlier with current satellite positions provided valuable information about star motions for millions of stars.

The project showed that even in a new era of satellites and software, quaint glass-plate photographs and “lady computers” weren’t wholly obsolete.

The 'Gang of Four' at the heart of Vatican's megatrial



Swiss Guards march in front of the tower of the Institute for Works of Religion, commonly called the Vatican bank, in this May 6, 2014, file photo. Photo: CNS.



Elise Ann Allen

While Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu is the most high-profile defendant among those indicted by Vatican prosecutors over a disputed London real estate deal, a group of four Italian laymen, both inside the Vatican and out, loom as the real architects of the scheme, forming the heart of what one senior Vatican official described as a "rotten and predatory system" within, and around, the Secretariat of State.

“Here’s a nutshell’ version of what role these four men played in the London affair.”

These men, as mostly unknown to outsiders as they were powerful on the inside, are Raffaele Mincione, Fabrizio Tirabassi, Gianluigi Torzi, and Enrico Crasso.

According to prosecutors, these four men formed a power centre, their own "Gang of Four," whose allegiances were to one other and to lining their own pockets rather than the good of the institution with whose finances they had been entrusted.

Here's a nutshell' version of what role these four men played in the London affair.

Crasso

An Italian-born Swiss citizen, Mr Crasso stepped in to assist with the management of the financial resources of the Vatican Secretariat of State in the early 1990s. Now 73, he's a former manager at Swiss bank Credit

Suisse, which served as a banker and financial advisor for the Vatican Secretariat of State, and which also played a hand in directing investments for the London deal.

It was Credit Suisse which advised Holy See officials, including Cardinal Becciu, to use Mr Mincione's company to do due diligence on a proposal to invest \$200 million in an oil project run by one of Cardinal Becciu's former contacts from his time as nuncio to Angola. As part of that due diligence, Mr Mincione advised against the Angola investment and convinced Holy See officials to instead invest in a fund his own company operated, which purchased the shares in the London property.

Mr Crasso is also the manager of the Centurion Global Fund, in which the Holy See is the principal investor, and which is managed by Sogonel, a company he owns.

When Mr Crasso left Credit Suisse in 2014, the Vatican resources the bank managed amounted to €40 million. Upon his departure, these funds were handed over to his son, Riccardo, who is an employee of the bank.

In his role at the Vatican, Mr Crasso had broad control over its investment portfolio, allegedly making risky and speculative investments. Several of Mr Crasso's companies, including HP Finance LLC, Prestige Family Office SA, Sogonel Capital Investment – likely his money-moving entities – have also been indicted for fraud, not only for the London deal but other alleged irregularities.

As part of their inquiry into the London incident, investigators discovered that Mr Crasso once secured a 7-million-euro Vatican bond investment by pitching a falsified proposal to invest in a highway construction project in North Carolina, while the money was actually used to fund an equity stake in three Italian companies.

The companies involved in that transaction involve HP finance, a US-based company that Mr Crasso owns which he never disclosed to Vatican

officials, and which has also been indicted for fraud.

However, it was through Sogonel, a company he founded, that Mr Crasso managed the Centurion Global Fund in which the Vatican invested tens of millions of euros, including money from the Peter's Pence Fund, at the time overseen by Italian Monsignor Alberto Perlasca.

The Centurion fund was used to finance a number of questionable investments for an institution such as the Holy See, including several Hollywood films, such as Rocketman, the Elton John biopic.

Tirabassi

An Italian lay businessman who also had a hand in managing the Secretariat of State's finances, is another insider with ties to both Mr Mincione and Mr Torzi.

In total, Mr Tirabassi managed more than \$700 million in investments for the Secretariat of State, which included proceeds from the charitable "Peter's Pence" fund.

According to corporate filings, Mr Tirabassi was appointed in November 2018, just after the London property deal began to go south and Mr Torzi was brought in to orchestrate the Vatican's exit, as director of Gutt SA, a company owned by Mr Torzi and which is registered in Luxembourg.

While he was working as an investment manager in the Vatican Secretariat of State, Mr Tirabassi also reportedly held a contract with Swiss bank UBS, which allegedly paid him a .5 percent commission on every Vatican deposit, and for each deposit by new clients recruited by Mr Tirabassi.

That deal dates back to at least 2004 and remained intact until Mr Tirabassi was suspended from his Vatican post in 2019 amid the unfolding London property scandal.

As part of their query, investigators found an account at UBS in Mr Tirabassi's name which contained around \$1.2 million, despite the fact that Mr Tirabassi's Vatican salary

was just \$3,000 a month, equating to roughly \$36,000 a year.

Mincione

Mr Mincione's own relationship with the Secretariat of State dates back to 2014, when, under Cardinal Becciu's direction, the Vatican enlisted his company's help for due diligence on the Angola proposal.

That money was instead invested into Mr Mincione's Athena Global Opportunities Fund. The money for that \$200 million investment came in part from two Swiss banks, BSI and Credit Suisse, where Mr Crasso was a former manager.

“That same year, facing enormous losses on the London property in the wake of Brexit, the Holy See dropped Mr Mincione and enlisted Mr Torzi to craft their exit from the deal”

Mr Mincione invested those Vatican funds in a 45 percent stake in a former Harrod's warehouse in London's upscale Chelsea neighbourhood, which was set to be converted into luxury apartments, as well as other ventures either owned by or connected to himself.

In June 2018, Mr Mincione also invested some €10 million of Vatican funds in Sierra One SpV, a bond product that was packaged and sold by Sunset Enterprise Ltd, a company then under Mr Torzi's control.

That same year, facing enormous losses on the London property in the wake of Brexit, the Holy See dropped Mr Mincione and enlisted Mr Torzi to craft their exit from the deal.

However, under the terms of the separation agreement, overseen by Mr Torzi, the Secretariat of State attempted to purchase the remaining share of the London building, giving

up its remaining investment in the Athena Global Opportunities Fund, and reportedly paying an additional €40 million to Mr Mincione through Athena for those shares. It was Mr Torzi who arranged that payout.

Torzi

Mr Torzi was brought into the Vatican scene in November 2018 when the London property deal went south and was enlisted as a commission-earning broker who got a 10-million-euro payout for his role in the affair.

Amid the crafting and execution of this exit strategy, Mr Torzi also had connections to a British-Italian architect who in 2019 was named a director of a UK-registered holding company owned by the Secretariat of State, and which controls the London property the Vatican had invested in.

That architect had previously served as a director of several companies where Mr Torzi also served as a director, or in which Mr Torzi and his companies had financial interest.

Mr Torzi is accused of pulling a fast one on Vatican officials by secretly restructuring shares in the London property's holding company so that he had full voting rights. He then apparently extorted the Vatican for €15 million to gain control of the building they thought was already under their control.

According to the Associated Press, Holy See officials, after realising that Mr Torzi actually controlled the building, opted to pay him off for his voting shares on grounds that suing him would be a drawn-out process which could eventually play out in his favour.

Amid the Vatican investigation into the London affair, Mr Torzi was arrested by UK police in May, who carried out a request from Italian authorities. He was indicted by the Vatican in July.

i Elise Ann Allen, senior correspondent for Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

Excessive wealth has devastating effects

Dear Editor, As I listened to what it says in the papers after the news this morning – Saturday, September 25 – I heard it said that so many of our politicians are millionaires. Then later I heard on playback two good ordinary citizens share their sad stories of being asked to vacate their apartments after several years because the landlord had decided to sell the Dublin-based apartments. Both women were sad, angry and upset and felt they had no option except to declare themselves homeless.

Because of the news I heard about our politicians I decided to buy the *Irish Independent* newspaper and

there I read that 68 of our TDs have in excess of one million euros. My heart broke to think that in our supposedly Christian country that the rich are becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. As I prayed and reflected during the day, I asked myself what has gone seriously wrong? I realise this is a deeply complex issue and that the roots lie in a system that has lost much sense of justice, equality and fairness.

How did this happen? In my humble opinion I believe God and his ten Commandments have been ignored and neglected for several years now. I have talked with many genuine and sincere people who also believe we

need to go back to basics.

Jesus came not to do away with these laws but to add a further dimension of love that helps lead his followers to live the Beatitudes. He is the way, the truth and the life and now more than ever we need to follow his example and the example of so many holy people who care and share for those in need. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to help see that excessive wealth has devastating effects on the poor and seldom produces happiness in those who possess it.

*Yours etc.,
Sr Susan Teague
Knock, Co. Mayo*

Gianna Care should be expanded

Dear Editor, The decision by the hierarchy even with the benefit of hindsight to abolish Cura in 2018 was a serious error of judgement.

Cura managed on average almost 8,000 face-to-face and telephone counselling sessions each year.

Now a small pro-life organisation Gianna Care is struggling to fill the gap while the abortion rate is soaring.

It is high time for the hierarchy to help establish a branch of Gianna Care in every diocese.

They have no shortage of empty offices and could surely allocate one member of staff to respond to communications from women with a crisis pregnancy.

Instead of giving the HSE a free hospital the Sisters of Charity could sell St Vincents to the Government and donate the funds to this worthy cause.

*Yours etc.,
Liam de Paor
Carrickane, Co. Cavan*



Hypocritical to reject teaching but claim to be Catholic

Dear Editor, Mary McAleese is certainly profiting from her study of Canon law with her many profound suggestions for reform of the Catholic Church – another Martin Luther maybe? Her lecturing is becoming quite tedious. She states that “fictitious baptismal promises” interfere with members human rights to “make up their minds and inform their consciences” without reference to the fact that Catholics are simply doing this based on the Church’s teaching. She seems to forget

that no one is forced to accept anything and is free to leave at any time. Because we are free it can result in abandoning the Faith and, in some cases, actually attacking it. God gave us free will with the responsibility of using it in accordance with the Commandments, which are there to accept or reject. It is, therefore, somewhat hypocritical to reject them but still claim to be practising Catholics, as is very evident in the US just now with President Joe Biden, actually doing this regarding abor-

tion, which he not only supports, but imposes it on the tax payers and on developing countries through International Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers. Surely Ms McAleese can understand that “inalienable human rights” begin with the right to be born – otherwise no right can apply.

No Catholic with even the slightest understanding of membership could claim “to be in a relationship of subservience and submission” but rather to do their best to follow ‘the way’ of Jesus,

remembering that the first Christians were described as ‘followers of the way’. Ms McAleese may have forgotten that when his followers refused to accept his teaching on the Eucharist as his body and blood and turned away, he made no effort to stop them. Rather he asked if the remainder were also going to leave and Peter said “to whom shall we go, you have the message of eternal life”.

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

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

Tuam: there is a social dimension...

Of course there’s a social dimension of those times and in all societies not just Irish. Single pregnant girls and women were shunned, put away. The treatment of them was the institutions fault. But let’s not pretend society at large including families don’t bear responsibility for rejecting them. – **Caroline Hendron**

Yes greater society at the time should be held accountable for what happened then but another pertinent question is who or what was responsible for the socially conditioning at the time which lead to the manifestation of prevailing attitudes? – **Padraig Cosgrave**

I had a Catholic priest as our teacher for Latin and religion. He had worked as a chaplain to the Tuam Mother and Baby home before it closed in 1961. He told a very different story about how he officiated at the few children’s funerals that occurred while he helped as chaplain there. – **Denis Kearney**

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

Thanks for an informative read

Dear Editor, The article by Jason Osborne ‘The end is in sight in fight against leprosy’ [*The Irish Catholic*, September 2, 2021] was truly a humbling read. Thank you for this and thank you for all the great work by your reporters and writers for a very informative read on all issues in Ireland and abroad. May God continue to inspire all concerned in bringing truth and light to our society.

*Your etc.,
Josephine Clarke
Dundrum, Dublin*

The Irish Catholic should be sold in Centra, SuperValu

Dear Editor, Since the pandemic many parishes have stopped selling *The Irish Catholic* at the church door. This must have greatly affected your circulation sales.

You regularly have a full-page ad saying your newspaper can be bought from Dunnes Stores, Tesco and Easons shops. Most of your readers are not in the catchment area of these shops whereas the SuperValu/Centra stores are in most parishes across the country – certainly below a line from Galway to Dublin. I’m a country man and I would say a reader of *The Irish Catholic* is more likely in these shops and not Dunnes, Tesco and Easons.

It’s an absolute ‘no brainer’ to recommend that you sell through SuperValu and Centra shops, they are smaller and OAPs like myself are more comfortable in using these shops. They are very obliging at sponsoring and supporting local community organisations, like the GAA and tidy towns. I’m sure they would facilitate *The Irish Catholic*. I don’t like going to these bigger shops.

*Yours etc.,
Tommy O’Sullivan
Millstreet, Co. Cork*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



▲ **USA:** Fr Larry Swink, pastor of St Cecilia's Church in St Mary's City Maryland, during the Archdiocese of Washington's annual 'Ride for Vocations'. Photos: CNS.

◀ **VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis addresses the meeting, 'Faith and Science: Towards COP26', with religious leaders in the Hall of Benedictions at the Vatican.



AUSTRALIA: Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney celebrates the opening Mass for Sydney members of the first assembly of the plenary council in Sydney.



GERMANY: Bishop Georg Bätzing, and Thomas Sternberg president of the Central Committee of German Catholics, speak to women during a protest in Frankfurt.



MEXICO: Migrants who were returned to Mexico from the US receive food during a quinceañera celebration at the Casa del Migrante shelter in Ciudad Juarez.



SPAIN: Supporters of pro-life organisations protest outside the Constitutional Court in Madrid.



Do we have guardian angels?

As a child, I was taught that I had a guardian angel, a real angel given me by God to accompany me everywhere and protect me from danger. I remember a pious holy card given to me by my mother, showing a young boy playing dangerously close to the edge of a cliff and an angel protecting him there. Most Roman Catholics of my generation, I suspect, remember a pious prayer we prayed each day asking for the guidance and protection of our guardian angel: “Angel of God, my guardian dear...”

“Scripture scholars don’t give us a definitive answer but rather suggest that the question can be answered either way”

What’s to be said about guardian angels? Do such personified spirits really exist or are guardian angels simply creatures of our imagination created to be helpful in the religious development of children? Are we meant to outgrow our belief in them?

Whether or not we are meant to outgrow that belief, the fact is that today for the most part we have outgrown it. Most adults, within all Christian denominations, either see the existence of guardian angels as pious fantasy or are simply indifferent to the idea.

Are we still meant to believe in guardian angels? If yes, in what



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

exactly are we meant to believe? Are angels real personified beings or simply another word for God’s presence in our lives?

Scripture scholars don’t give us a definitive answer but rather suggest that the question can be answered either way. In scripture, the word ‘angel’ might be referring to a real personified spirit or it might be referring to a special presence of God in some situation. Church Tradition affirms more strongly that angels are real. Here angels have a rich history and for the most part are taken to be real persons (albeit spirits). Christian iconography and music abound with angels, and the Roman Catholic Church has major feasts celebrating angels and guardian angels. The Fourth Lateran Council (taking place in 1215, long before the Protestant Reformation) stated that belief in guardian angels is

“Christian iconography and music abound with angels, and the Roman Catholic Church has major feasts celebrating angels and guardian angels”

implicit in Scripture. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that “from infancy to death human life is surrounded by their [guardian angels] watchful care and intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life”.

Conservative Christians

Where does that leave us? Divided. Conservative Christians generally assert the existence of angels as a dogmatic teaching. Angels are real. Liberal Christians tend to doubt that or at least are agnostic about it. For them, ‘angel’ more likely refers to a special presence of God. For example, they take the statement in the Gospels where the evangelist tells us that while Jesus was praying “an angel came and strengthened him” to mean that God’s grace came and strengthened him.

Who’s right? Perhaps it doesn’t matter since the reality is the same in either case. God gives us revelation, guidance, protection, and strength and does so in ways that are ‘angelic’, that are beyond our normal conceptualisations.

Those who believe that angels are real have a strong case. Even if we just look at the origins and dimensions of physical creation (whatever scientific version of this you subscribe to) mystery immediately dwarfs our imaginative capacities. It is all too huge to grasp! We know now that there are billions of galaxies (not just planets) and we know now that our planet earth, and we on this planet, are the tiniest of minute specks inside the unthinkable magnitude of God’s creation. If this is true, and it is, then this is hardly the time to be skeptical about the extent of God’s creation, believing that we, humans, are what is central and that there can be no personified realities beyond our own flesh and blood. Such thinking is narrow, both from the point of view of faith and from the perspective of science itself.

Agnosticism

However, the agnosticism of those who doubt the existence of angels is ultimately benign. When scripture tells us that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce her pregnancy and when it tells us that after Jesus had exhausted himself with struggle in Gethsemane, an angel

came and strengthened him, it makes little difference whether this occurred via the modality of a personified spirit or via some other modality of God’s presence. Either way, it was real. Either way, it was a particularised, real entry of God into someone’s life.

So, do we have guardian angels? At birth or at Baptism does God assign a particular angel to journey with us throughout our lives, giving us invisible, heavenly guidance and protection?

“At the end of the day, it matters little whether this comes through a particular personified spirit (who has a name in heaven) or whether it comes simply through God’s loving omnipresence”

Yes, we do have a guardian angel, irrespective of how we might imagine or conceive of this. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves and God’s solicitous love, guidance, and protection are with us always. At the end of the day, it matters little whether this comes through a particular personified spirit (who has a name in heaven) or whether it comes simply through God’s loving omnipresence.

God’s presence is real – and we are never alone, without God’s love, guidance, and protection.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 7, 2021

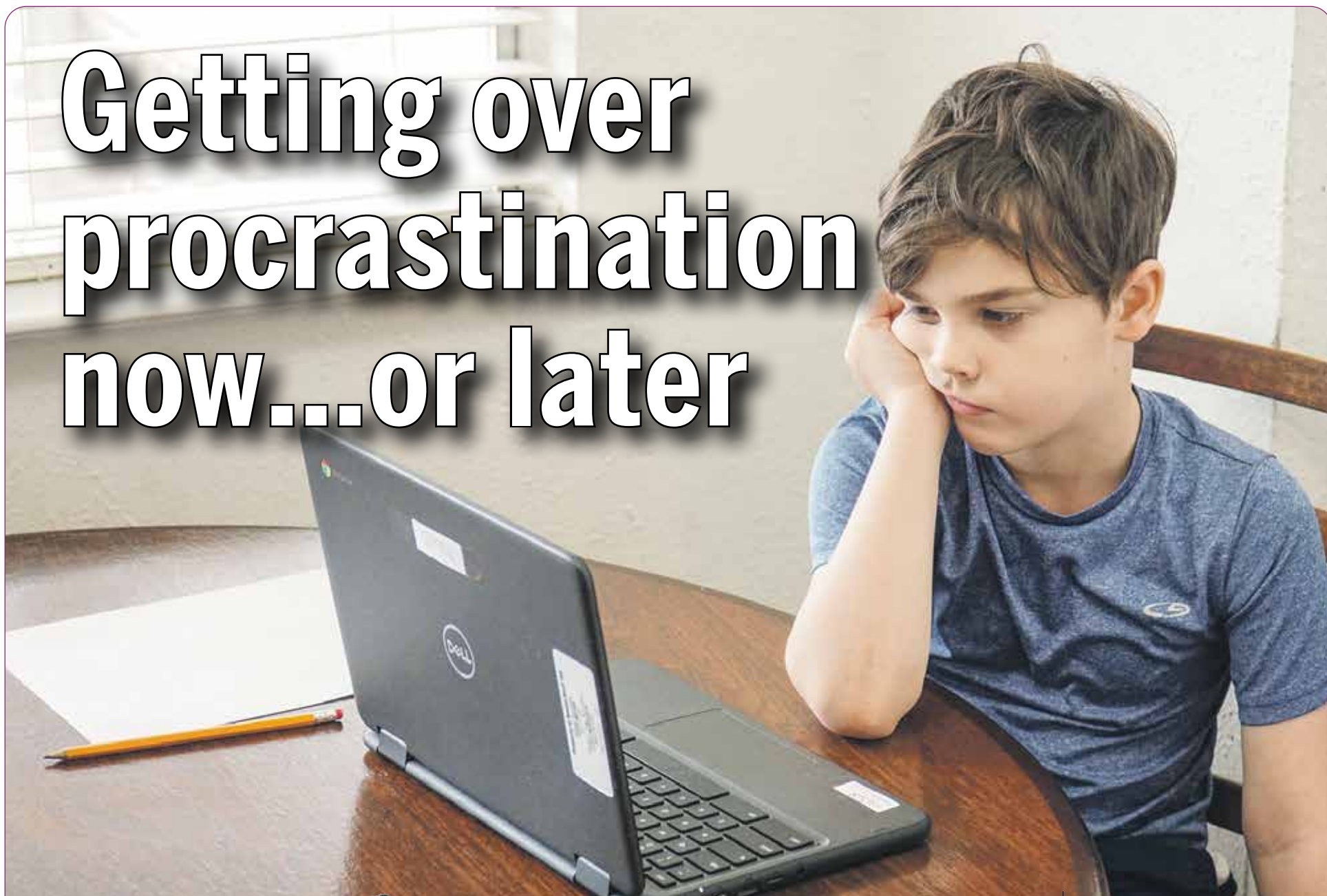
Personal Profile

Leading a life devoted to Mary

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Getting over procrastination now...or later



From schoolchildren who put off doing their homework for hours, to politicians who avoid addressing pressing issues and everyone in between, procrastination is an issue that affects us all. In college, I spent countless hours putting off essays that I'd have been better off just sitting down and doing. One particularly grim occasion comes to mind, which saw me sit down to do an essay in the evening, completing it only as the sun rose the next morning – and most of the intervening time was not spent writing.

Speaking in the context of procrastination, we have the misfortune to be born into a time when it's easier than ever before to put things off, smartphones and laptops bringing more content to our fingertips than we could read,



Procrastination is an issue that plagues everyone, and we'd be better off if we chose to confront it now, rather than later, writes Jason Osborne

view or listen to in a million lifetimes or more. Of course, people always have and always will find ways to distract themselves from doing what needs to be done – but we have particularly efficient means of distracting ourselves these days, especially if our work necessitates our sitting at a laptop or computer all day.

Are we to abandon ourselves to procrastination? Writing it off as a necessary part of being human? While we will undoubtedly always live with it to some degree, being

humans and not robots, there are ways to ensure it doesn't waylay us too severely. But first, a line ought to be drawn between procrastination and plain, old laziness.

What is procrastination?

Procrastination is understood as an active process. It's when you choose to do something else, knowing full well that you have a task to be doing. Laziness on the other hand, suggests inactivity or

passivity. There is surely an element of this in procrastination – when you should be writing an essay but 'fall into' mindless browsing, say, seemingly against your will.

It's important to recognise this, because procrastination makes our lives worse. It's one of the clearest-cut examples of choosing to do the easy thing, and suffering in the long run because of it. Our baser instincts seem to push us towards the path of least resistance in life, and so we give in, scrolling social media and watching YouTube videos for instant gratification, when we should be doing our duties, the completion of which results in longer-term satisfaction, if only because we end up with more time with which to actually enjoy ourselves.

Enduring procrastination, therefore, can result in all sorts of guilt, shame and demotivation. Extreme cases could of course lead to poor grades or a job loss, and so it's important to recognise it early on and make an active effort to cut it out. How are you to do that?

Recognise when you're procrastinating

Procrastination can be a little insidious because we can make the choice to slip into it almost without noticing. The decision is always there, however. It's as simple as clicking open a new tab and searching for a site you know might lead you down a rabbit hole, or sitting down to watch 'just one episode', when you know you have work to do.

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

DANISH ARTIST TAKES THE MONEY AND RUNS

A Danish museum loaned an artist 534,000 kroner (over €71,800) in cash to recreate old artworks of his using the banknotes, but he ended up pocketing the money and sending blank canvasses with a new title: "Take the Money and Run".

Jens Haaning, a Danish artist, was commissioned by the Kunsten Museum in the western city of Aalborg to reproduce two works using the cash – Danish kroner and euros – to represent the annual salary in Denmark and Austria.

But the museum's director Lasse Andersson told AFP that "two days before the opening of the exhibition we got an email from Jens telling us he won't be showing the works we agreed on".

The artist was true to his word, sending two blank canvasses.

Mr Andersson said he laughed out loud and decided to show the works anyway in the museum's modern art exhibition that opened on 24 September.

While the museum's director has seen the funny side so far, he indicated that would only last until the end of the exhibition.

FRANCE LOPS METRE OFF MONT BLANC'S HEIGHT

French experts say they have measured Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in western Europe, at almost a metre lower than its previous official height.

Geographical experts said that after an expedition in mid-September the mighty mountain in the heart of the French Alps was 4,807.81 metres high, lower than their last published estimate of 4,808.72 metres in 2017.

"Now it's up to climatologists, glaciologists and other scientists to look at all the data collected and put forward all the theories to explain this phenomenon," they told a press conference in the town of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains, at the foot of Mont Blanc.

As alarm grows worldwide over the melting of glaciers, the official height of Mont Blanc has been on a downward slide for over a decade. The highest reading was 4,810.90 metres in 2007.

The mountain has been losing an average of 13 centimetres in height annually since 2001, the geographical experts said.

WALKING STICK OWNED BY MICHAEL COLLINS SOLD FOR €60,000

A walking stick reputedly owned by Michael Collins has sold for more than five times its estimate at auction in Belfast.

The phone buyer, from the Republic, purchased the stick for £52,000 (€60,000) plus fees at a sale at Bloomfield, a record for the auction house.

Police files tracking Collins' activities during the War of Independence also sold for £6,800 (€7,900) at the police and military-themed sale.

It was also bought by a phone bidder from the Republic.

The stick was bought by an as yet unidentified organisation in the Republic.

It is hoped it could be displayed publicly in the near future.

A forced silence bears fruit



I was suffering from laryngitis recently and needed to rest my voice for a few days to give my vocal cords a break. It was an unusual occurrence for me which I found quite challenging. In my family, we're all very talkative and love to chat at length about every topic under the sun. This sort of regular discourse and discussion was also a key feature of my childhood years. In school, I was never in trouble much but, if there was anything I was called out on, it definitely was connected to talking too much. Extended family gatherings are always lively affairs with a lot of competition to be heard and everyone eager to expound on the important issues of the day. Even in everyday life, the nature of my daily work involves lots of conversation, talking and explaining. You can't home educate an active 11-year-old and an exuberant 15-year-old without many hours of daily interaction and voice projection. It's not surprising that there's rarely a quiet moment. Being forced into a three-day lull took a bit of an adjustment.

“Without the pressure to be constantly chatting and contributing to conversations, there was a growing sense of ease”

In my first few hours of silence, I felt a bit like the heroine in a silent movie, although my contortions, while trying to communicate, were less artistic and more hilarious. My children thought the whole thing was highly amusing with my youngest daughter kindly making me some word cards to help me to express my basic



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

needs. And basic they were with my whole vocabulary limited to "A cup of coffee please", "Turn on the news" and other such simple requests and instructions. It was funny at first but quickly became frustrating. With me normally having so much to say, it was a struggle to have to sit in silence.

Strangely, as the time passed, I began to get used to not saying anything. In fact, I started to experience an unexpected sense of calmness and peace. Without the pressure to be constantly chatting and contributing to conversations, there was a growing sense of ease. I didn't have to worry about what comment I was going to make next, what advice I'd offer or what bit of banter to engage in. I could just listen for a change. It's a rare person who's a really good listener but it's a skill that's worthwhile to work on. Within a few short hours, I discovered that my temporary, self-imposed silence, positively transformed the home environment. St Francis de Sales was quoted as saying that "It is better to remain silent than to speak the truth ill-humouredly, and spoil an excellent dish by covering it with bad sauce." How often are we speaking just to admonish, complain or criticise instead of praising, complementing and building up? When we listen more, we make room for others to have a platform and a voice. A good listener helps to create an atmosphere of openness and trust, being inspired by the virtues of wisdom, patience and

charity. Often, when dealing with our spouse, children or friends and colleagues, we're just biding our time until we can chime in with our own perspective. Rather than actively listening, we can be concentrating on formulating our answers or what we're going to say next. We miss out on a real opportunity to share as



clamouring voices drown out any chance for true understanding and communication. As I talked less at home, I heard more and took in more.

It's great to see children finally being able to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit which include wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge. Wisdom gives us the ability to view the world through God's perspective and to be wise in making life's choices. The gift of understanding inspires us to view others with compassion and sympathy, helping us to grasp the teachings of the Church and seeing how to help others who are in need. The gift of counsel aids us in developing

good judgement and prudence in our dealings with others. We can ascertain what is good or evil and act accordingly. This helps us to get to the heart of a situation and see what the right path ahead is. As well as coming up with solutions to challenging situations in our own lives, we have the ability to give good advice and guidance to others. Using the gifts received at Confirmation requires us to pray and ponder which isn't easy if we're always surrounded by an unrelenting hustle and bustle. In the midst of the daily din, we can barely hear our own voices, never mind the voice of the Holy Spirit.

“The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace”

In the words of St Teresa of Calcutta "We need to find God and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence." In introducing the book *Don't speak ill of others* by Capuchin priest, Fr Emiliano Antenucci, Pope Francis talks about silence being one of God's languages and also being a language of love. He referred to another quote from St Teresa of Calcutta: "The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace." Let's take 30 minutes every day to just be silent in the presence of God and what a difference we will see in our lives.

» Continued from Page 31



However, procrastination can also be a less immediate experience. It can take less obvious forms, such as:

- Leaving certain tasks on the back-burner for prolonged periods of time.
- Filling your time with necessary, but unimportant tasks instead of getting on with the top priority.
- Waiting to be in the 'right' mood or waiting for the 'right' time before getting down to the job at hand.

These are a couple of the nearly unconscious ways that we choose to procrastinate. I say "nearly", because at least in my case, there's always that little choice not to do what you should be doing. Recognising these moments and those choices is the first step towards cutting them out.

Fight the urge to procrastinate

Procrastination is a habit like any other, and as such, it can be broken. It just takes time, and an active effort on your part. It's tiring, but it's worth it.

“As far as is possible, aim to eliminate the things that can distract you”

As anyone who has ever escaped a bad habit can tell you, strategies and counter-habits are essential if you're to break their hold over you:

- Implement rewards: We're simple creatures, in some ways. One of the most advocated-for methods of habit-changing is rewarding yourself when you achieve the desired result. With regards to procrastination, this might take the form of a treat when you complete your task or manage to stick to a deadline.
- Minimise distractions: As far as is possible, aim to eliminate the

things that can distract you. If it's the TV, work in a room without one. If it's a smartphone, put it away, out of easy reach. This step can be tricky if, as mentioned, your work requires constant internet access, but remove what distractions you can and take it from there.

- Embrace the interruption: While removing the distractions works for most, others (myself included) find it easier to get down to work if we (briefly) embrace the interruption procrastination has brought to our schedules. What do I mean? If I'm in a rut of procrastination at my laptop, continuing to sit there doesn't usually do me much good. Instead, getting up for a short walk around the area is much more likely to see me sit down refreshed and ready to work.
- Start the day with accomplishments: If possible, start the day productively. Pray, exercise or read before your workday begins – whatever it takes to get you into a positive headspace going into the day's tasks. It's easier to get things done when you're on a roll, rather than when you feel you're at the end of your tether.



Change your environment

While we saw a recent return to workplaces, colleges and schools, many continue to work from home. As was identified during the depths of the pandemic, working from bed or lying prostrate on the couch is unlikely to result in a productive day.

“This will make it easier to associate that location with work, making you less prone to procrastinate”

Instead, consider establishing a workspace at home, reserving that space solely for work. This will make it easier to associate that location with work, making you less prone to procrastinating. Similarly, getting out of the house entirely can be a good idea – a library or coffeeshop providing suitably studious environments for those who have the freedom to work from them, without the seductively comfortable trappings of home.

Just do it

Unfortunately, procrastination is one of those challenges that ultimately requires action. We sometimes procrastinate through putting anti-procrastination strategies into place, planning and hypothesising, feeling that if we only put the right measures in place, then we'll get our work done.

At the end of the day, an act of the will is more valuable than anything else in this struggle. That alone will see us do what needs to be done.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



The other day, I awoke early and checked the time. For one strange half-awake moment, the second hand on my watch seemed to be moving unnaturally fast. It soon settled to its normal pace. This odd temporal misperception seemed like a warning of the speed at which time is passing by.

The parents of small children are inevitably harried. There's no such thing as a night's sleep. We are awakened at all hours to tend to small people crying, or suffering from bad dreams, accidents or illnesses. In our waking hours, there's the morning's panicked rush to get the gang ready and out the door to school and nursery. This involves a storm of breakfast cereal, lost socks, hairbrushes, missing lunchboxes and frantic searches for PE kits. Afternoons mean meals must be prepared, while the evenings are a rush to guides, brownies, rugby training and a million other things. Somewhere in-between all this, we must find time to work.

The lockdowns provided a blessed relief from all this. There was suddenly no rush to school in the morning, nor any clubs in the afternoons. The pace of life changed radically. A great deal of stress was lifted from the daily routine, despite the many downsides of lockdown. The other thing that happened in lockdown was a major easing of our once-strict rules about screen time. This was firstly because the older kids had to do all their schoolwork online. We felt bad that they couldn't meet friends, so we increasingly let them socialise online by messaging groups of schoolfriends. As, during the lockdowns, the kids had no access to friends or clubs we also let them watch more movies than before. Soon, screen time mushroomed.

This was a global phenomenon, which even UNICEF noticed, with one of

its experts writing last year that, "Today, about 3 billion people are in lockdown around the world – and almost 90% of the student population cut off from school. It's no surprise that a lot of children and their parents are increasingly

connecting to the outside world through screens they might have once regarded with restraint or even reproach."

A strange new normal had been established worldwide. Certainly in our house,

our once strict screen policies had lapsed for a time. Over summer, this wasn't an issue, since the kids were out and about so much. Yet, as school returned, I noticed screens beginning to feature in their lives rather too much, and so I swiftly issued a ban. I took every single device the kids have and piled them up in my office, with a view to updating their security and age-settings. That was three weeks ago, and not one child has asked for a device back. Instead, they're practically thanking me, by playing in the garden more, reading more and relaxing in the quiet. They're going to bed earlier and sleeping better. They don't miss messaging friends in school, which can cause misunderstandings and anxiety, but instead happily catch up with them face to face each day.

Above all, this is giving them slow time, thereby prolonging the beautiful time of life that is childhood. I've always felt haunted by the research which suggests technology use speeds up our perception of time. Amongst other researchers, Prof. Zimbardo of Stanford university has argued that our personal "time zone" can be changed by technology, by speeding up our internal clock. That matches my own experience, and the same must go for children too. The connectivity provided by technology helped us all get through the pandemic, but now it's time to unplug and reset.



Leading a life devoted to Mary

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

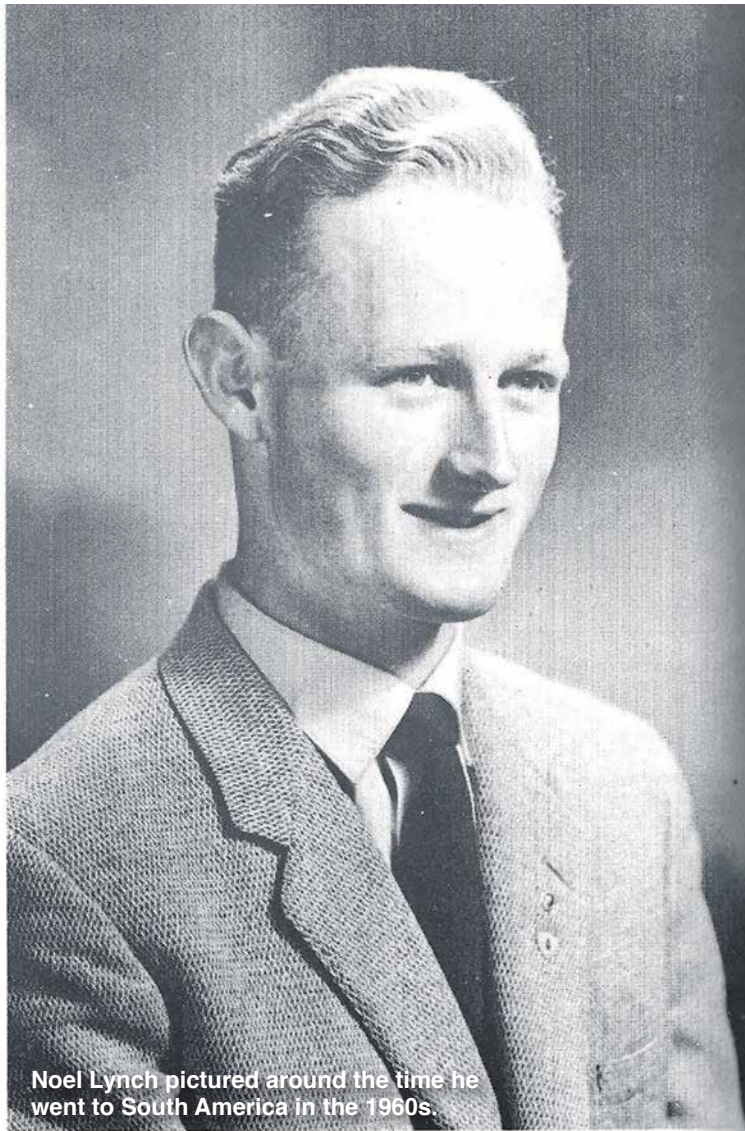
When Noel Lynch travelled to South America as an envoy for the Legion of Mary, he didn't speak a word of Spanish. Now, 60 years later, he continues his life of ministry to the Spanish speaking community that gathers at St Saviour's Dominican church, Dublin.

Noel joined the legion while still in secondary school – almost 70 years ago – after being invited to the school's praesidium.

“With the legion, his faith continued to flourish and he joined the senior praesidium, before eventually being sent to South America as an envoy”

“There were more attractions to leave then to say,” he jokes, “a lot of good works you know. But it was just that, we had very good spiritual directors who gave good allocutio [a talk] every week. They kept us on track. There was a good president as well, they just kept us toeing the line.”

It wasn't Noel's first contact with the Faith, as “in those days most families were very religious”, he explains. “We would have said the family rosary and gone to Mass on Sundays. There was definitely support from the house, from the family.”



Noel Lynch pictured around the time he went to South America in the 1960s.

With the legion, his faith continued to flourish and he joined the senior praesidium, before eventually being sent to South America as an envoy. The envoy's role was to continue spreading the legion across the world. He spent eight years from 1959 to 1967 working in South America, and had “big boots to fill”.

“When I arrived in Argentina [Servant of God] Alfie Lambe had just died,” Noel explains. “He had

been there six years, he died of cancer at the age of 26. It was just taking over the work that he had been involved in. There was a tremendous interest in him as a person, particularly as a young legionary.”

The legion

“Lots of young people – older people as well, but mostly younger – wanted to do something like what he had done. They wanted to imitate his apostolate. So many of them

offered their holidays their free time and their money to go and do his work, to start new groups of the legion around the country.”

Noel laughs a little when I ask if he was sent to South America because of he could speak Spanish.

“I couldn't speak a word, not a word. Everybody kept on saying, ‘ah it'll be grand, you'll be grand’. The envoys going out on that work, they usually work for three months with another envoy and then they'd go off on their own.”

“So they said, ‘ah sure it'll be alright, Alfie Lambe will teach you all that stuff, teach you what to do, where to go, how to do it. And obviously you'll pick up the language on the way’. And, as we say here in Ireland, he was dead and buried when I arrived. I was thrown in at the deep end.”

Noel was quickly in awe at the level of dedication the local legionaries displayed.

“But they were very good, the legion, they were extremely good,” he begins. “Many of them offered to do full-time extension work and since then there have been envoys – the first envoys for the most part were Irish – but there have been envoys from South America that have extended the legion in many different countries and outside of South America as well.”

Spiritual director

“We have one at the moment, he's an Argentinian and he offered to do extensive work but then became an envoy. Then he had a vocation to the priesthood while he was extending the legion in Armenia and Asia. He was ordained and he's still working as a spiritual director to the Legion of Mary as a missionary in Armenia. He has extended the work of the legion in many countries in Asia, apart from the work he did in South America.”

As a result of his good experience working as an envoy for the legion, Noel has continued to work with them since returning to Ireland.

“You felt you owed it to the legion to give them that good example, that you would still continue,” he says. “They were writing constantly, now with the internet and that it's more fluent. It was a great opportunity and great privilege to be there with them on the journey extending the legion.”

“Now that I'm back in Ireland, I'm involved in the correspondence for the Legion of Mary, so there's this constant, constant flow of correspondence from South America coming in. It would be the same all over the world, the different correspondents here in Dublin would be in contact with the different continents. There are huge amounts of correspondence going on. It's keeping the legion ticking over, but also keeping it expanding.”

“They are very devout people, most of South America would be Catholic”

On top of his new duties with the legion, Noel has started helping the Dominicans in St Saviours with their ministry to the Spanish community.

“There is one Spanish Mass in Dublin, every Saturday night,” Noel explains. “The Spanish speaking community in Ireland would consider that their parish and the priest who says the Mass is Dominican from Columbia, they would consider him their chaplain. It's a huge population of immigrants and students from South America. They are very devout people, most of South America would be Catholic. It's a great opportunity to be able to help them in their ministry.”

As a final word, Noel praised the legionaries who continue to “work so hard in many parts of the world, following on with the spirit of Frank Duff” in praying for the conversion of the world.



Children's Corner

Chai Brady

How does water react to hot and cold temperatures?

Some people rather hot temperatures while others prefer cold, it's a matter of personal preference at the end of the day but a scientific mind might want to explore how hot and cold temperatures react with certain substances.

Our bodies are made up of more than 60% water, so why not have a look at how water reacts to changing temperatures? Water molecules change how they act when heat is involved and this makes for a very interesting experiment!

This experiment is great for testing if hot water molecules really move faster than cold ones. Pour some water, drop in some food colouring and compare results.

Apparatus

- A clear glass filled with hot water

- A clear glass filled with cold water
- Two different types of food colouring
- An eye dropper

Method

- Fill the glasses with the same amount of water, one cold and one hot
- Put one drop of food colouring into one glass and the other colour into the next glass as quickly as possible
- Watch what happens to the food colouring

What's happening?

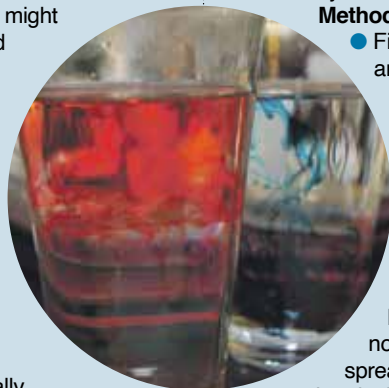
If you watch closely, you will notice that the food colouring spreads faster throughout the hot water than in the cold. The molecules in the hot water move at a faster rate, spreading the food colouring faster than the cold water molecules which move slower.

You should notice the food colouring in the warm water spreading out faster than the food

colouring in the cold water. If you didn't observe this, try making your cold water a little colder and your warm water a little warmer. Also make sure you add the food colouring to each glass at the same time.

Water is made of molecules (two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom stuck together). Molecules in a liquid have enough energy to move around and pass each other. This is why water can flow and take the shape of the glass you pour it into. The molecules in solids, like ice, don't have enough energy to move around very much so the solid keeps its shape. Molecules in a gas have lots of energy and spread out even more than molecules in a liquid.

Warm water has more energy than cold water, which means that molecules in warm water move faster than molecules in cold water. The food colouring you add to the water is pushed around by the water molecules. Since the molecules in warm water move around faster, the food colouring spreads out quicker in the warm water than in the cold water.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



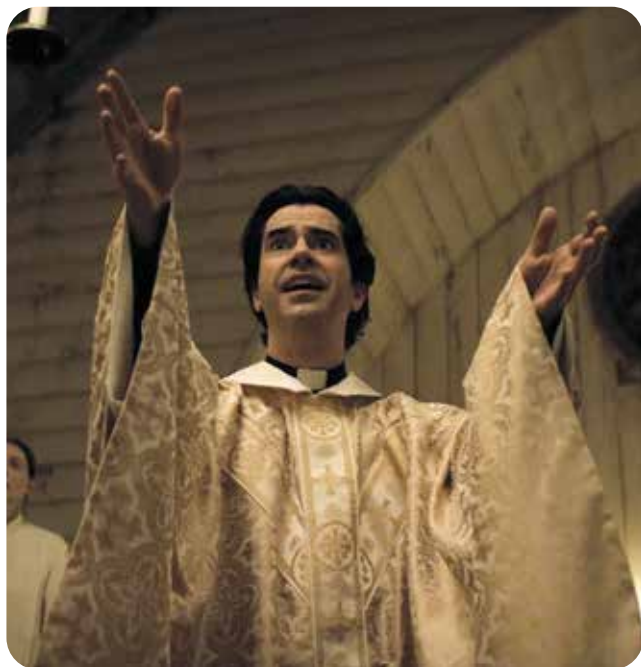
The new Netflix take on Catholicism is a mixed bag

It was a bizarre day to be tuned in – imaginary petrol shortages in the UK, the English Labour Party locked in a debate about what constituted a woman, feminist icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg having one of her quotes re-imagined, with the removal of the term ‘woman’. I wondered what sort of alternative universe I had strayed into.

Scouring

Then I was scouring Netflix (it needs cleaning up for sure) and noticed **Midnight Mass**. And it was only 1pm. So, it wasn't a livestream, but a new 'limited series' drama with a Catholic background. The first episode was creepy and intriguing. A young man returns to Crockett Island on parole after serving a four-year sentence for the death by drunken driving of a young girl, who still haunts his dreams (or does she?). A new young priest who doesn't seem to know his appropriate vestment colours arrives with a mysterious trunk, which may or may not contain the previous parish priest who is observed (or is he?) roaming the island in a storm.

The ex-prisoner has lost his faith in prison. A young pregnant teacher has returned to church and likes it. We see an ultrasound of her unborn baby. The ex-prisoner's mother is very



Hamish Linklater as Fr Paul in *Midnight Mass*.

religious and welcoming, his father is very religious and wary. He insists on the adult son going to Mass, but says he shouldn't go to Holy Communion as he hasn't been to Confession (someone with splinters of a Catholic background must have written the script). Oddly the priest draws attention to this in front of others, suggesting that Jesus was most interested in sinners anyway. The sacristan-teacher is very religious and a fussy pious woman (or is she?), the sheriff-shopkeeper is a Muslim and he prays with

his son, who smokes dope to fit in with the foul-mouthed altar boys. Oh boy.

Mixed

After that first episode, it's a mixed bag. There are some moving moments involving forgiveness and redemption, relatable characters searching for purpose in life, gorgeous hymns throughout, some surprisingly long theological discussions between people of faith and non-believers, a strong emphasis on the Eucharist...why didn't they just develop these intriguing strands? Instead, like the

witches adding ingredients to the cauldron in Macbeth, they threw in bits of Fr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, *The Walking Dead*, *Sr Carrie*, *Angels and Demons*, with nods to the *X-Files*.

All seven episodes are named after a book of the Bible and with each one the horror gets worse, as implausibility descends into absurdity. Ultimately religion doesn't come well out of it and it's more than distasteful to see aspects of faith we hold dear being exploited for schlock horror. Some scenes are quite disgusting. Yes, religious extremism is destructive, but the entertainment business too often seems happier dealing with psychotic religious people than with people of genuine faith.

Now, if you wanted to hear about people of genuine faith, you'd watch **Poverty, Chastity and (Dis) obedience** (RTÉ One, Thursday) a fine documentary about the extraordinary work of Irish missionaries in South Africa, especially during apartheid times – they were idealistic, energetic and practical. The emphasis in this film was primarily on their work of opposition to apartheid, for example Catholic schools taking in both black and white students and getting bomb threats as a result. One black activist paid tribute to the Irish priests that “made us proud to feel that we are full human beings”.

PICK OF THE WEEK

LIFE AND TIMES OF SISTER FAUSTINA

EWTV Saturday October 9, 9.30pm, Sunday October 10, 4pm, and Thursday October 14, 9am

Re-enactment of Blessed Faustina's life. Born in Poland in 1905 as Helena Kowalska, she is now known as St Faustina, 'The Apostle of Divine Mercy'.

MASS

RTÉ One Sunday October 10, 11.00am

Fr Paul Kivlehan celebrates Mass in the RTÉ studios, Donnybrook, with a folk group from Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon. Musical directors: Anne Carmody and Anne O'Brien.

BARNEY CURLEY: THE MAN WHO BROKE THE BOOKIES

RTÉ One Monday October 11, 9.35pm

The story of the racehorse owner Barney Curley – from his tough origins as a Catholic in Co. Fermanagh, through his betting coups and his decision to donate all of his winnings to charity and die penniless.

There were varying degrees of involvement in the struggle – some were very active, others, including prominent Church figures gave important public support, others worked away quietly supporting the poor regardless of race. One religious sister was so angered by the injustices that she said she could have been tempted to take up arms. But she didn't. They spoke of having Church support and no interference from Church authorities. The 'disobedience' of the title was towards South African government who regarded them as “the Roman danger”.

Grateful

Finally, I'm grateful to TG4 for replaying, every weekday evening that much loved television series from the 1980's **The Wonder Years**. I was afraid it would be dated, but I found it as fresh, witty, moving and reflective as ever. Some of the humour is mildly adult, but then it is about an adult looking back on his formative years in the 1960's, a time of relative innocence and dramatic social change. And I love the 60's music on the soundtrack – a bonus!

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@boreganmedia

Film

Aubrey Malone



Gore, gunplay, girls, and galimoney

Something violent this way comes...

Deadly Cuts is a black comedy with Angelina Ball and Victoria Smurfit playing two hair stylists who swap their scissors for knives as they take on local Dublin hoods.

You can also expect tomato ketchup in *The Many Saints of Newark*, a prequel to *The Sopranos*. Michael Gandolfini (real life son of late lamented James) plays his dad as a young man.

No Time to Die is the latest James Bond movie. You'll be shaken if not stirred to learn that Daniel Craig is getting out of 'Bondage' after 15 years. There are lots of Bond girls here as per usual but not as scantily clad as of yore. Political

correctness has infiltrated the franchise.

Political correctness

Undoubtedly it's a good thing that Bond women aren't being treated as sex objects anymore but are we bringing political correctness too far in calls to have the new 007 female? And/or African-American?

As Craig points out, “Why should a woman or a man of colour play Bond? There should be parts just as good for them in other films.”

Reputed to be worth \$160 million, he says he doesn't plan to leave his money to his daughters in his will. He finds the idea of inheritance “distasteful”. That's fine if not much fun for the daughters.



Daniel Craig is James Bond in *No Time To Die*.

It's a pity a middle-of-the-road actor like Craig gets to be so wealthy. Or indeed Dwayne ('The Rock') Johnson. Johnson is reputed to be the richest actor in the world. For what, one wonders? His success

is more mysterious than cot death.

Robert De Niro, meanwhile, scavenges for work as he zones in on his 80th birthday. The reason? He has to keep his ex-wife, Grace Hightower, “in

Stella McCartney outfits”, to use his lawyer's phrase. She's currently fighting Hightower's bid to make De Niro increase his alimony from \$100,000 a month to \$375,000.

How can someone need \$375,000 a month to live? (Actually I know how. She recently bought a diamond for \$1.2 million.) Time was that De Niro made no more than a film a year. For many moons now he's been over-working. The quality has suffered.

Richest

Reese Witherspoon is the richest actress in America. (Am I allowed say 'actress'? The PC brigade regard this as a sexist term now. You're supposed to say 'actor' for both sexes. Does

that mean duchesses will soon be called dukes?)

If Dwayne Johnson is no Robert de Niro, she's no Meryl Streep. But of course it isn't about talent, is it? It's about the lowest common denominator. Which isn't to say Reese can't act. But when the history books come to be written, will she be remembered?

She turns up as a breakfast TV presenter in *The Morning Show* (Apple TV+). Jennifer Aniston co-stars. Aniston is another obscenely rich actress, largely on the strength of *Friends*. Yes, it's a funny show but not, as the viewing figures might suggest, the greatest thing since sliced bread.

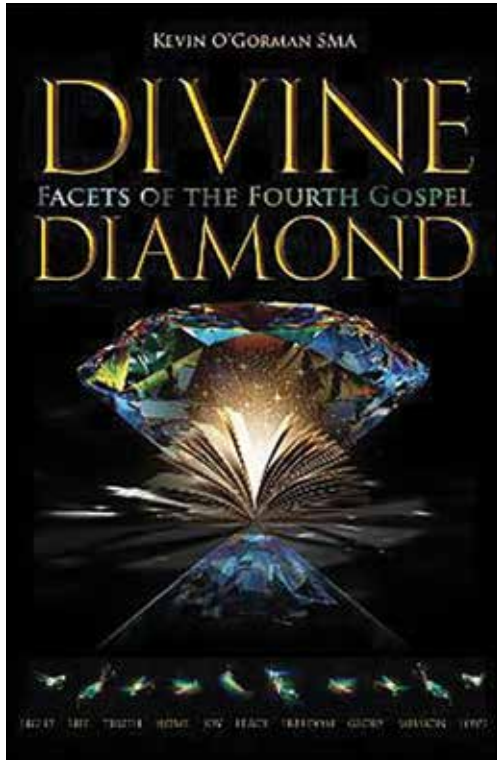
Reality check, please?

BookReviews

Peter Costello



St John's Gospel explored



Divine Diamond: Facets of the Fourth Gospel

by Kevin O'Gorman SMA
(Messenger Publications, €14.95/£12.95)

Peter Costello

The writings attributed to St John the Apostle have long stood out in contrast to the synoptic gospels. Indeed there were those who thought that the apocalypse of St John of Patmos attributed to the same author should not be added to list of canonical writings when it was established in 382AD. But today, the authorship is denied to John the Apostle by most scholars.

Even so the Gospel according to John presents its own complication. Fr Kevin O'Gorman in introducing his book remarks that since the 3rd Century it has been known as the 'spiritual Gospel', and admits that it can often seem intimidating. Certainly it abandons the narrative lines of the other gospels for a more mystical exploration.

By his title Fr O'Gorman wishes to suggest to his readers that it is a multifaceted text, not easy to quickly understand, but in which many themes are being explored. He believes that the themes opened up by the author of the Gospel "are inexhaustibly fresh and challenging".

He approaches these through a series of ten chapters on the controlling ideas of light, life, truth, home, joy and so on down to the theme of love. Every reader will be able to recognise the immediate relevance of these, and still admit their complexity. Light for instance can be broken up by the prism of experience into the many hues of life.

Fr O'Gorman's experience of the Gospel has been enlarged by his wide reading in the modern scholarship on the text. He shares the insights he has gained with his readers. But with the understanding that what is written here is very far from the last word. The readers will have to test what he writes and what the Gospel seems to say in the light of their own experience. This book, which runs to some 85 pages, is a short one, but it is opening up ways of thinking and understanding (or attempting to understand) that may prove to be endless, but also endlessly enriching.

The author is a lecturer in moral theology at the Pontifical University at St Patrick's College Maynooth, and his experience as a teacher helps make this a very approachable book despite its complex material.

One man's vision from the Hill of Truth

Crimson and Gold: Life as a Limerick

by Mark Patrick Hederman
(Columba Books, €19.99hb/£17.99hb)

John F. Deane

Dear reader: I presume you are an Irish Catholic; I am an Irish Catholic; I am reviewing a book on Irish Catholicism by an Irish Catholic for *The Irish Catholic*. And are we not all anxious, in the present, over the past, and for the future?

This timely, utterly readable, almost adorable book by an Irish Catholic, a monk and a priest and a former Abbot of Glenstal, may surely help to ease that anxiety, even a little.

We are given, scattered here and there as we read, some salient details of the life of Mark Patrick Hederman. Two of these, in particular, clarify the direction and tenor of the book. The first is that he was born close to Knockfierna, an *Cnoc Fírinne*, the 'hill of truth', in sight of the Galtee Mountains.

He tells us this hill was the palace of Donn Fireannach, god of the dead and of fertility, and that he rides on horseback. It was - and is - a place rich in the Irish world of fairy and myth, an offering to the otherworld.

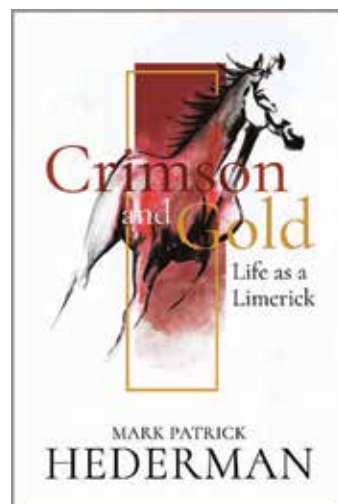
Epiphany

As a child, Mark Patrick found God on that hill, experiencing "an epiphany" and promising his

life to the service of his Christ. This he has faithfully and seriously carried out.

“He suggests a complete decluttering of all that hides the purity of the gospels from us”

The second detail is that, at the age of 64, as a contented monk, he was suddenly elected Abbot of Glenstal Abbey. Canon Law, Church rules, state that only an ordained priest may become an abbot and Mark Patrick found himself with a shotgun ordination, being made a priest within two months. This emphasised for him the ludi-



crous and volatile nature of Canon Law.

The early part of this delightful and sometimes mesmerising and disconcerting tale, presents a carefully sieved history of Ireland in the twentieth century, and how we have seen and treated our Irish Catholic faith down the decades. This is an enlightening tour, and a tour de force, told with precise detail and affirmation of sources, and with an engaging sense of humour.

Immaturity

How, for instance, we grew to immaturity under a monarchical hierarchy: John Charles McQuaid was always 'a prince of the Church', and acted accordingly; how we accepted celibacy as a law, infallibility, the elite standing of priests, and so much more.

And it was definitely wrong even to raise a question about such things. The Roman Church became our master and ruler and eventually Canon Law began to shoulder out of existence the purity and truth of the gospels themselves and, of course, that God is love. And remember, Mark Patrick offered himself to God on the Hill of Truth.

The result of our subservience was that we knew, by following all the rules and regulations given to us by our saintly betters, we would make it across the high rope-bridge

into Heaven. We neglected, therefore, the wilderness within, disregarded our being persons-in-Christ and working for universal love, and even the care of the earth on which we live.

Early years

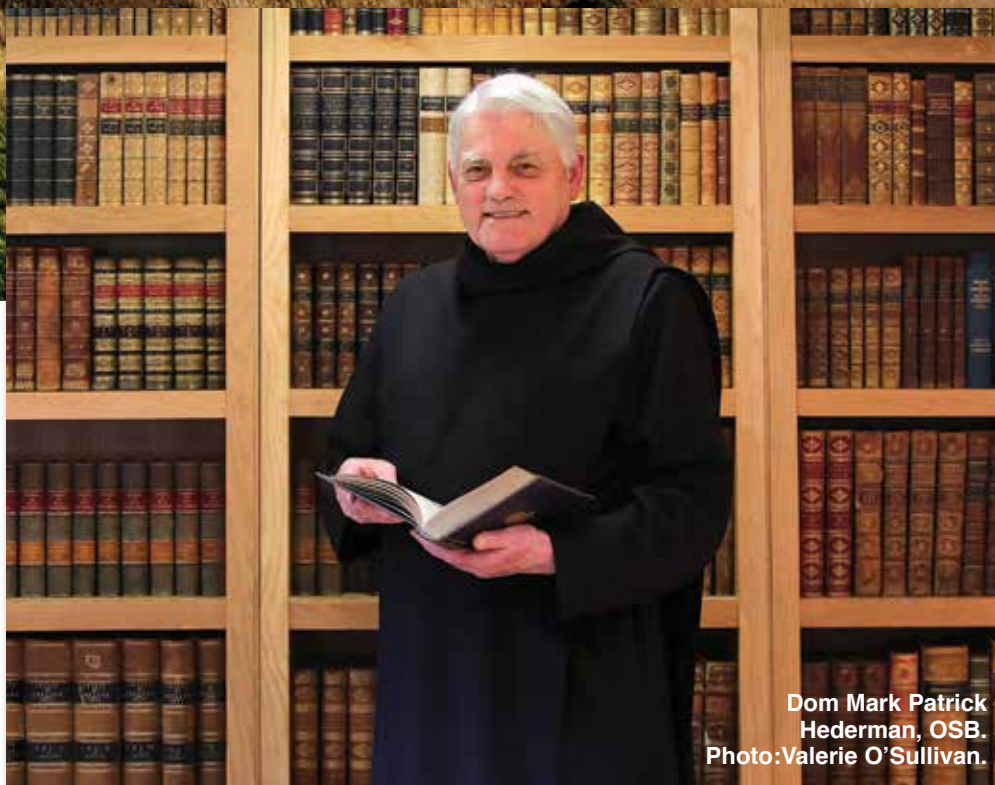
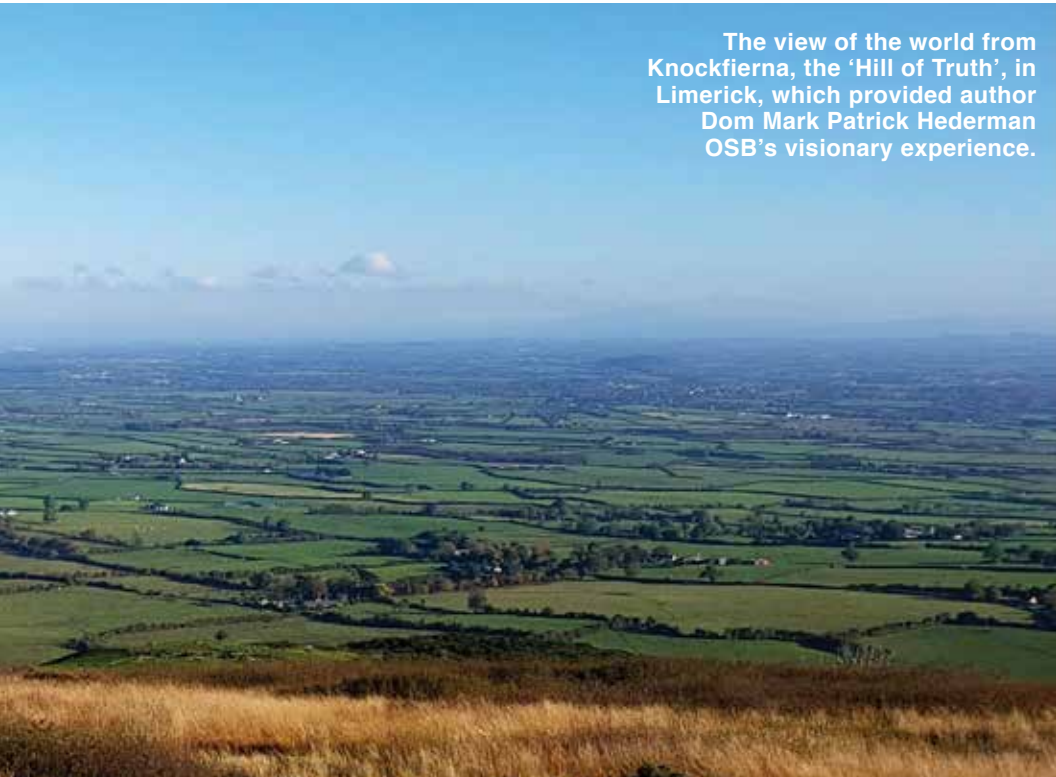
In the early years of our nationhood, great demands were made to shape Ireland as 'a Catholic nation'. To the detriment of so much more: our culture, our literature, our freedoms to grow as human beings in the wider cosmos. We lost a sense of the beauty of contradictory things, of the deeper wisdom available to us, of the wonders that poetry can expose us to. 'Nature', the magnificent earth we survive on, became inimical, in the Western Church, to the 'supernatural' and we took the Church as absolute and changeless.

“Canon Law, Church rules, state that only an ordained priest may become an abbot and Mark Patrick found himself with a shotgun ordination”

Mark Patrick brightly alerts us to the sixties in Ireland and, indeed, throughout the world,

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

The view of the world from Knockfierna, the 'Hill of Truth', in Limerick, which provided author Dom Mark Patrick Hederman OSB's visionary experience.



Dom Mark Patrick Hederman, OSB.
Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.

when all of this began to disappear, as quickly as dewfall on a summer day. Now 'the lazy monopoly' of the Irish Church was quickly eroded.

This book outlines the reasons why, and they are reasons that go far beyond our own shores. A newspaper, commenting on the Fleadh Cheoil held in 1963, noted the "disgraceful and unruly scenes in Mullingar", the sexual explosion, the wild dancing, the music. Vatican II came about; Eamonn Casey was a bishop! Oh, and so much more unreasonable ballast we were hauling about for centuries.

Fr Hederman tells several stories, quotes poems, refers to our need for a deeper relationship with God, one that corresponds to the reality of our lives, of who we

are. After the many preambles he comes to the point, and the preambles authorise him to do so: "How do we here in Ireland, in this twenty-first century, get nearer to our God?"

“Fr Hederman tells several stories, quotes poems, refers to our need for a deeper relationship with God”

He does not prescribe any answers: but he suggests a complete decluttering of all that hides the purity of the gospels from us. He outlines many ways this may be undertaken and how we all

may come to offer "a fling of the heart to the heart of the host".

The final sections of this richly orchestrated book make positive and heartening reading. The many streams outlined throughout come together in a fluidly delightful and hopeful confluence to make a satisfying assault into the sea of faith. The *Cnoc Fhírinne* of the child's epiphany offers us the Christ, the way, the truth and the life, for the adult Irish Catholic.

John F. Deane is from Achill Island; he is founder of Poetry Ireland and its journal The Poetry Ireland Review. His new collection of poems, Naming of the Bones, comes from Carcanet Press in November.

St Brigid in the life of the Nation

The Book of St Brigid
by Colm Keane and Una O'Hagan
(Capel Island Press,
€14.99/£15.00)

Peter Costello

The names of the author will be well-known to readers, for many of their books have been popular bestsellers. They have a knack, derived perhaps from their days in television, of making what they write accessible, vivid and immediate to a wide audience.

Now the bulk of this book is devoted to legends and traditions of Brigid across the centuries, much of them from quite modern times and in North America. Indeed, in the popular lore of the United States all female Irish servants seem to have been called Brigid, though from reading popular fiction of the last century they were not considered to be as accomplished as Swedish cooks.

The authors have culled a great deal of amusing material about the connections of the name down to our own times. Though this strays far from St Brigid's native Kildare it all makes for diverting reading.

But these traditions arose in Ireland and the central part of the book deals with the Brigidine connections in medieval and early modern time, in which the name of the saint was spread where ever the Irish went, into Wales, England, Scotland and across Europe over time. The saint's name became so pervasive that they are able to connect up the Swedish St Birgitta (who flourished in the 1300s) with Brigitte Bardot, whose surprising Catholic connections are well drawn out by the authors.

Modern concerns

But what is most striking in a way for our modern concerns is the status in Gaelic pre-Norman Ireland of St Brigid herself. Like so many of Ireland's early saints, she was a child of the ruling classes. Her establishment in Kildare was one of the most famous places in Ireland, as we can see in the admiring description that Gerald de Barri gives of it in his account of Ireland at the time of the Norman invasion after 1185.

What we know about Brigid has to be based on



St Brigid of Kildare.

early Irish accounts of her life and their interpretation, which has often been mixed and contradictory (a familiar phenomenon in early Irish history).

“These traditions arose in Ireland and the central part of the book deals with the Brigidine connections in medieval and early modern time”

The earliest of these, around 650, was by Cogitosus, who lived a century or so after the saint, and was familiar with her shrine at Kildare and the early traditions and legends then circulating about the saint and her numerous miracles.

But what many readers with a serious purpose will find of interest is the tradition that Brigid was ordained a bishop. This was called by one journalist in recent time a "grotesque fable". But we are talking here of an early Celticised period of the Church in Ireland. She was made a bishop by Saint Mel. Another priest attempted to guide Mel by suggesting to him that a bishop's orders should not be conferred on a woman.

To this admonishment Bishop Mel had a ready

reply: "No power have I in this matter. The dignity has been given by God unto Brigid, beyond every [other women]". The *Book of Lismore* (created at the end of the 15th Century) which only came into the hands of scholars in 1814, records that the men of Ireland would be obliged not only to regard Brigid as a bishop but that "Brigid's successor" as Abbess of Kildare would also hold the title. But the reforms introduced by St Malachy and others especially after the Norman conquest changed the old Patrician ways of Christian Ireland to conform to the then current European norms.

Status

These days with increasing scholarly research into the status of woman in ministry in the first centuries of the new faith we shall surely hear more about the true status of St Brigid. These few pages form the controversial core of this book. And the serious nature of it should not be lost among all the entertaining and pious stories that fill the book and which make for interesting, even delightful reading.

But every book of a scholarly kind should have a list of books for further reading, but this book like so many these days - though it acknowledges its sources - does not have such a handy guide for the ordinary reader who wants to explore the subject further.

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www.mscmissions.ie

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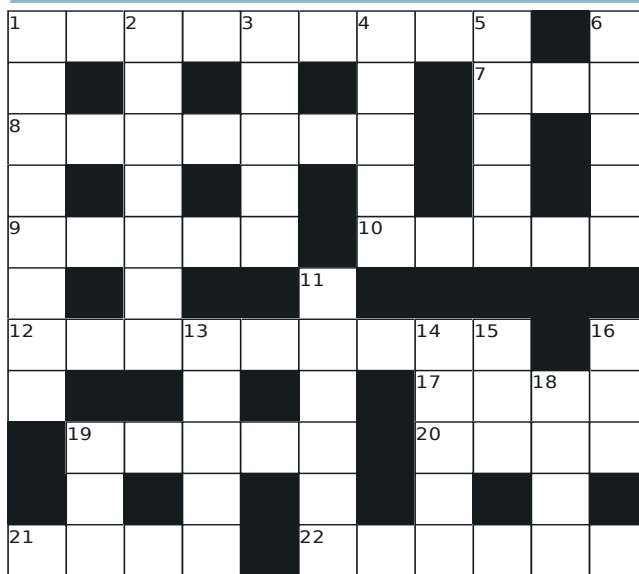


It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

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 403



Across

- 1 The police might put these on a criminals wrists (9)
- 7 Jump on one foot (3)
- 8 The early part of the day (7)
- 9 Tiger _____ is a famous golfer (5)
- 10 The name of a book or film (5)
- 12 Small red summer fruit (9)
- 17 Deserve because of effort or work (4)
- 19 Madrid and Barcelona are in this country (5)
- 20 Nickname for a potato (4)
- 21 Clean, using soap and water (4)
- 22 Pay attention to what someone is saying (6)

Down

- 1 The teacher asks you to do this in your house (8)
- 2 Unsure, not confident (7)
- 3 Weeps (5)
- 4 Quarrel (5)
- 5 Not tall (5)
- 6 William Tell shot it from his son's head (5)
- 11 Doghouse (6)
- 13 Fruit with a fuzzy skin (5)
- 14 Relaxes, takes a break (5)
- 15 Bark the way a small dog does (3)
- 16 Also (3)
- 18 Impolite (4)
- 19 Ocean (3)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 30

GORDIUS NO. 527

Across – 1 Ashes to Ashes 7 Orb 9 Reap 10 Uranus 11 Brig 14 Shaky 15 Exact 16 Gala 18 Arena 21 Vinyl 22 Clogs 23 Yells 24 Tome 25 Tramp 26 Reply 29 Oils 33 Caesar 34 Papa 36 Sin 37 Doctor Watson

Down – 1 Awe 2 Hops 3 Smug 4 Omagh 5 Shuck 6 Sour 8 Beggar's Opera 9 Reservations 12 Magnum opus 13 Italy 14 Snail 17 Anorak 19 Essay 20 Acute 27 Enact 28 Laser 30 Lend 31 Area 35 PIN

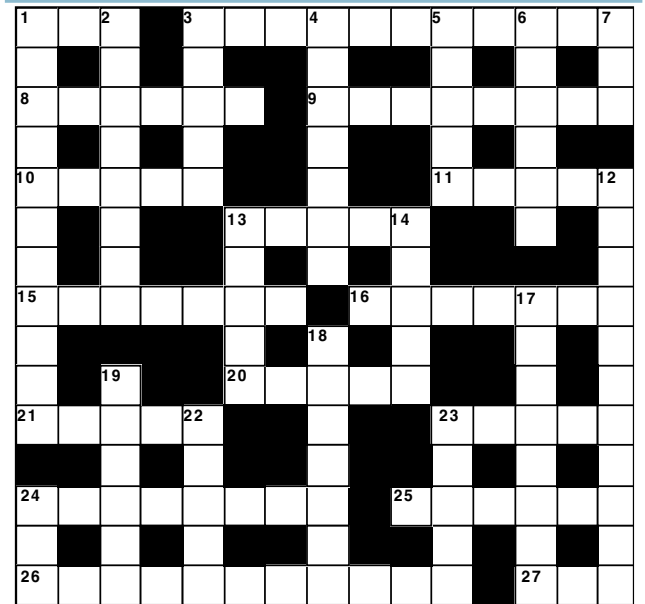
CHILDREN'S No. 402

Across – 1 Repairing 6 Understands 8 Deliver 9 Run 10 Free 12 Let 14 Ogre 15 Ate 17 Air 18 Abel 19 Toss 20 Toy Story

Down – 1 Roundabout 2 Paddle 3 Internet 4 General 5 Basin 7 River 10 Feast 11 Early 13 Telly 16 East

Crossword

Gordius 528



Across

- 1 Droop (3)
- 3 Dissatisfied feeling, as torn fruit is rearranged (11)
- 8 See 23 down
- 9 Told (8)
- 10 Bring upon oneself (5)
- 11 Sacrificial table (5)
- 13 Negotiations about scattered salt containing potassium (5)
- 15 Communities near the edge of a city (7)
- 16 Ascended a mountain or tree, for example (7)
- 20 Vacant (5)
- 21 Capital on the Seine (5)
- 23 & 22d Find the Beatles' drummer, sir, or grant free movement! (5,5)
- 24 The highest point of a new, clean pin (8)
- 25 Rebound, like a ball (6)
- 26 Be forward-looking, or serve pigs otherwise (11)
- 27 Major conflict (3)

Down

- 1 This craft relies on the wind for movement (7,4)
- 2 Where to play eighteen holes, or what you use while there (4,4)
- 3 Of higher quality (5)
- 4 Nastily upset, yet pious (7)
- 5 Wicklow river (5)
- 6 Resident in an institution (6)
- 7 Bushwhacker Kelly, the northern editor (3)
- 12 'Off the peg' (5,2,4)
- 13 Item of furniture (5)
- 14 Daft (5)
- 17 Descriptive of an item that has never previously been owned or used (5-3)
- 18 Arachnids (7)
- 19 Twentieth century fascist leader of Spain (6)
- 22 See 23 across
- 23 & 8a This American state was the undoing of Doris Handel (5,6)
- 24 Seed found within a fruit (3)

Sudoku Corner

403

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 402

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

Last week's Hard 402

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



A disturbing question about the remains of babies

THE RECENT REVELATIONS about the disposal of organs of babies who died at Cork University hospital were deeply troubling for many reasons. The organs of eighteen babies born at the hospital and who were still-born or subsequently died were sent to be incinerated at a facility in Belgium. The story came to light as a result of an RTÉ investigates programme. As I listened to the commentary and reporting around this story the cause of scandal was the manner in which the organs were disposed of ie. incineration in a foreign country and secondly, that this was done without the knowledge or consent of the parents on the infants. It would appear that there are protocols around how the remains of a baby should be treated but these protocols were not followed by the hospital. All the aspects of the story were very disturbing and it was very clear that the parents who were interviewed were extremely distressed and angry.

There were for me, other aspects of the story which I found troubling and that was more about what was not said or covered in the report. While I absolutely accept that there was huge distress



for the parents of the babies whose remains were treated in this very inappropriate way, there was a more fundamental wrong done to the babies themselves. They were human beings and for their bodies to be treated in this way was outrageous.

Troubled

However, what troubled me was that none of the reporting or commentary was about the babies themselves but only how it affected their parents. Does a baby who dies at birth or shortly after birth have a right to a dignified burial or cremation or are those rights only pertaining to their parents? I would love

RTÉ investigates to explore this question but I'm fairly certain it never will. It never will because that question would inevitably lead to another very troubling reality in Irish society today. What happens to the remains of the thousands of babies whose lives are terminated every year in Ireland? Despite Covid, there were still 6,577 babies' lives terminated in Ireland during 2020. How were their bodies disposed of? Did their parents have any say in what happens to them or was the question even considered? I doubt very much if they were sent to Belgium but rather incinerated in hospitals and other facilities all over Ireland.

Uncomfortable

These are uncomfortable questions which many of us would prefer not to even ask but sadly I think we have become very selective about what causes us to be outraged. We are rightly very angry about so many areas of Irish life from decades ago, whether that be, mother and baby homes, Magdalen laundries, industrial school and so on. However in the Ireland of the 40s, 50s and 60s these institutions and much of what happened in them was accepted and even encouraged by large sections of the community at the time. There was a 'group think' which allowed practices which we are now outraged by. What examples of 'group think' are existing and thriving today that in 50 years' time we will be horrified by?

Isaiah 49: 14-16

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and feel no pity for the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;

Tree of Life by Evan Boland

This poem was composed for The National Maternity Hospital

A tree on a moonless night
Has no sap or colour. It has
no flower and no fruit.
It waits for the sun to find
them.
I cannot find you
In this dark hour
Dear child.
Wait
For dawn
To make us clear to one
another.
Let the sun
Inch above the rooftops.
Let love be the light that
shows again
The blossom to the root.



Little Way Sisters providing refugees with food, medicines and accommodation, and bringing them the love, care and compassion of Christ.



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"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses."
- St Therese

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