

The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, April 8, 2021

€2.50 (Stg £2.20)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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'Clerical' Church must learn from young Catholics

Jason Osborne

Voices at the forefront of youth ministry have warned that if the Church is to avoid attempts to "water down" its core teaching it must take the lead from young people who are already practising Catholics and engaged with faith.

These calls come amid concerns that in an attempt to reach those on the margins of the Church, the planned synod process may overlook the young Catholics it already has on-board and their experiences of embracing faith in a secular culture.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Eamonn Bourke, chaplain at University College Dublin said that young Catholics know they've found a "pearl of great price" and they know "it's not easy to be a disciple today", often swimming against the tide to simply practice their Faith.

"Hopefully the Church will catch up with what's actually happening with young people now because in the past, you would have heard of parents trying to get their kids to go to Mass. I have students now who are trying to get their parents to go to Mass.

"It's almost flipped on its

» Continued on Page 2

Back to the Mass rocks



Fr Gerard Quirke of Achill parish celebrates dawn Mass on Easter Sunday at a penal times Mass rock overlooking Keem Bay on Achill Island. Photo: Sean Molloy. See page 6.

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Now may be the perfect time to get our legal affairs in order PAGES 31&33




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Number of people quitting organised religion continues to rise PAGE 13



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'Wokeists' and the modern Pharisees PAGE 18

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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €165. Airmail €250. Six months €85.

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,

Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,

Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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The older brothers (and sisters) and the coming national synod

Talking to people in Catholic circles in Ireland in recent weeks there are mixed views about the plan of the Irish bishops' to move towards a national synod of the Church.

From my reading, the closer one is to active participation in the life of the Church, the more apprehensive one is about the potential pitfalls of such a synod.

Active

Let me explain: when I speak to younger Catholics who are active in their parishes, chaplaincies or youth movements within the Church views at this stage range from disinterest to concern bordering on alarm. There is an anxiety that the synod will be little more than a 'talking shop'. Further, one young woman told me she was worried it would be cynically used to try to "water down" (her words) what Catholics believe to make it more palatable to loud voices who – in reality – aren't that interested anyway.

“The shepherd must also have the courage to stand firm and protect the Faith and the flock and not flee or falter for fear of the wolves”

I shared the concerns that I have heard with a priest friend of mine. “But they're all conservative,” he said to me. I asked him to point me to the youth groups within the Church in Ireland that are what one might describe as liberal. He admitted that there aren't any.

The reality is that the younger people who are engaged in the life of the

Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Young Catholics attend a pre-pandemic Youth 2000 festival.

Church reach for authentic Catholicism rather than “I'm okay, you're okay” pseudo versions of the Gospel. In embracing Catholicism in contemporary Ireland, these young people have definitively swam against the tide and they deserve credit for that. They also have a right to be heard rather than patronised or taken for granted by people in positions of responsibility within the Church.

'Older brother'

This is where bishops might find themselves with somewhat of an 'older brother' problem.

Think of the parable of the prodigal son. Bishops have said they are (rightly) very keen to hear the voices of those who have left the Church and want little or nothing to do with Catholicism. These people undoubtedly have insights, and the Church has a sacred responsibility to set the light of the Gospel before them and

hear how they feel the Church can better be the face of Christ for them.

But, if the synod process is about killing the fatted calf for the prodigals, what of those who have overcome the easy temptation of the post-modern world to live their lives as if God doesn't exist and instead embraced the Catholic Faith?

If this is the case, they will wonder why their counter-cultural witness is under-valued by the Church at a time when they have taken a hammering from their friends and families for their Faith. These people have been exemplary in their witness and have often faced ridicule and scorn for being committed Catholics.

Demoralised

Are we so demoralised and lacking in confidence as a body that we get to the point where it matters more what the critics of the Church say

than what people inside the Church think?

Faithful Catholics are also not without their quibbles and criticisms of the Church. People I speak to talk about a lack of leadership, a sense of not being nourished and a profound sense sometimes that the Church is not on their side.

“Bishops have said they are (rightly) very keen to hear the voices of those who have left the Church”

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) teaches us that the Church – established by Jesus and guided by the Holy Spirit – continues the salvific ministry of Christ in the world today. That means we have to reach out beyond our borders because we believe that everyone has the right to salvation. Christ might have put it more succinctly when he underlined the mission of the Church to go after the lost sheep.

But the shepherd must also have the courage to stand firm and protect the Faith and the flock and not flee or falter for fear of the wolves.

i To join Friends of The Irish Catholic and support Catholic journalism, please phone the office on 01 6874094 for more information or to make a contribution.

'Clerical' Church must learn from young Catholics in upcoming synod

» Continued from Page 1 head. They're actually going out and they're evangelising their own peers... I just hope that the Church will give them support in that,” he said.

Shannon Campbell, Pastoral Manager at Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplaincy, echoed the sentiment, saying that her hope is that we “meaningfully engage our young people in the synod conversation”.

“I think sometimes in youth ministry we find ourselves out of sync with where young people actually are and what their needs might be. So I hope that the Church will lend its

ear to both those young people and the people that work with them,” Ms Campbell said.

The chaplaincy at Queen's offers a model for the Church to follow according to Ms Campbell, modelling “invitational, Christ-centred, formative, outward-looking,” and “collaborative” campus ministry.

Ms Campbell said that they are “very conscious” that they're forming young people as “agents of change for the future”.

Tony Foy of NET Ministries Ireland said that the Church could benefit from listening to those groups on the frontline of evangelisation.

“Obviously I'm biased, but I think there is a need [to engage youth groups like Net Ministries]. Who is making disciples? Who is bringing people to the faith? Who is increasing the faith of those who already have a little modicum of faith? Those are the people that we need to listen to,” Mr Foy said.

“The Church in Ireland – the clerical Church, for want of a better way of putting it – the established Church – is not in a good place in terms of the future and the demographic deficit that is happening,” he said.

See pages 14 and 15.



Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith / Concern Worldwide

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Ceann Comhairle disallows TD's query on Mass ban

Chai Brady

A politician's question to the Minister for Health, asking whether it is an offence to organise public Mass, was 'disallowed' by the Ceann Comhairle.

Carol Nolan TD of the Laois-Offaly constituency attempted to put the question to Minister Stephen Donnelly.

She asked: "To ask the Minister for Health if it is an offence to organise public Mass or any other form of public religious worship at which members of the public attend in view of a recent report published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission which found that no such offence exists (details supplied); if this is not an offence at present, the reason An Garda Síochána has issued fixed penalty notices to members of the Catholic clergy for organising public Mass; the authority under which they have done same; and if he will make a statement on the matter."

The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, stated

in his reply that the question was disallowed as the matter is before the courts and is "subjudice under Standing Order 69".

“It is likewise an offence for a parishioner to leave their home with the intention of attending Mass”

"In addition, the question is requiring the Minister to provide an interpretation of the law which is not in order as per Salient Rulings 696 and 697 of the Chair which states: '696. Minister may not be asked to express an opinion on or to decide a matter of law - ' and '697. Questions requiring a member of the Government to interpret the law are not in order,'" he wrote.

Stated

Mr Stephen Donnelly stated in the Dáil in October 2020,

and the Department of Health confirmed to this paper in November, that celebrating public Mass is not a penal offence.

Politicians have continuously been calling for clarity on the Department of Health's Covid legislation as this paper revealed that under the legislation priests are in fact facing a penal offence for celebrating public Mass.

Confirmed

This was confirmed in correspondence from the State to Declan Ganley, who is taking a High Court challenge against the ban on public religious worship. Under the legislation it is an offence for a priest to leave his home to celebrate Mass at which a congregation can be present unless this is a funeral or a wedding, then up to ten people can be present. However, from April 26 up to 25 can attend a funeral.

It is likewise an offence for a parishioner to leave their home with the intention of attending Mass.

Easter humour tickles Twitter

"Easter is my favourite holiday because no matter what your religion we can all agree that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, was crucified, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come again to judge the living and the dead. It's the one thing we all have in common."

- Catholic comedian Jeremy McLellan



Photo: Gage Skidmore



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Small rural churches face closure due to pandemic and depopulation

Chai Brady

Small churches in rural Ireland may have to close as depopulation and the devastating effects of Covid will lead to many being unsustainable, according to the Bishop of Killaloe.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Fintan Monahan said: "With the declining number of people that are living in rural areas, rural depopulation – it's a two-tier system in so many ways – you just wonder how small rural churches will be able to be sustained.

"Certainly, with the decline of the number of priests on top of that and the decline then further of people attending, there's going to be a completely different

reality in the very short term when we get back, so trying to alert people to it and trying to get the individual pastoral areas to look at it and plan and see if it's possible to keep their churches open literally; what sort of life will be in them?"

Across Ireland, church collections this year are down by about half meaning there will have to be a process of rationalising, according to the bishop, saying: "If the income is down by about 50%, as it is now, whether that will come back I don't know. If a church isn't able to sustain itself serious questions will be asked. Some of the really tiny churches; I wonder if they will reopen at all after Covid, I just don't know."

"Maybe things will swing back to normality, my hunch is probably not, it will

probably take a big jump in the negative side."

"You'd always try and make a priority of ensuring that rural areas would be serviced but there's a limit to how you can do that in terms of resources that you have, they're constantly declining," he said.

He added that despite the stark realities, "the shameful thing is that rural communities do have a quality that is really outstanding which you don't get in the impersonalised urban environment where the sense of community isn't as strong, the sense of Church, the sense of being together, looking out for each other, you wouldn't have that".

See page 10.

Fundraising in a saint's footsteps from Bangor to Bobbio

Jason Osborne

The student Knights of St Columbanus at Queen's University Belfast undertook a walk, run or cycle from Bangor to Bobbio, Italy, this Lent in an attempt to raise funds for St Vincent de Paul.

The initiative took inspiration from the pilgrimage route of their patron – St Columbanus – and sought to complete the equivalent of the 1,500 mile journey from Bangor to Bobbio.

Tracking their progress, they posted regular updates along the way as they made their virtual journey. Reaching Bobbio earlier this week, the Catholic Knights raised £1,800 altogether for St Vincent de Paul.

The Knights themselves raised a total of £892 pounds, which was match-funded by

a donor, bringing the sum to £1,774.

Posting on Facebook about the work St Vincent de Paul do in their area, which inspired their choice of charity, the Knights said SVP "are tackling such challenges as gaps in Universal Credit, assisting Asylum Seekers with warm clothing which their £35 per week food vouchers don't cover, loneliness among locals who have been isolated further by the pandemic, school uniforms for local children and much more".

St Columbanus arrived in Milan in 612 and was granted land between Milan and Genoa by King Agilulf of the Lombards, to be used as a base for the conversion of the Lombards to Christianity. St Columbanus erected a monastery there in 614 and died there the following year.

Darkness into light in Myanmar



An Irish Columban celebrates dawn Mass on Easter Sunday in Myanmar, April 4 2021, which is still facing waves of unrest and killings following an army coup.

'Cynical actors' using pandemic to promote Holocaust conspiracies

Staff reporter

The memory of the Holocaust has been used by "cynical actors" to campaign and spread conspiracies during the pandemic, according to Israel's ambassador to Ireland.

Speaking at a webinar on Holocaust remembrance, Ambassador Ophir Kariv said it is easy to spot Holocaust denial but far more difficult to recognise Holocaust distortion, which has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

Holocaust used on placards and on social media to spread misinformation. We see offensive comparisons made and the vocabulary of the Holocaust weaponised to hurl insults. This is not only desecrating the memories of the victims of Nazism but degrading to Holocaust survivors."

He said that it "is incumbent on us all to work to challenge this distortion of the Holocaust".

Ambassador Kariv added that the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) provides a comprehensive definition of anti-Semitism which includes all types of contemporary anti-Semitism, describing it as "an important tool to this end and we hope to see more and more countries adopt it".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belfast Catholic school wins prestigious film-making award

Aquinas Grammar school won "best school" at Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year 2021 awards, as one of their students won a top filmmaking award.

Shayna Velasquez received the award for her animated short film, *Alamid*, which was also highly commended for best storytelling.

It is the second time the school has taken home the best school award, a testimony to "determination, talent and unbelievable creativity", said Neil McClean, head of the moving images arts department at Aquinas.

"We are so pleased to accept the award," he said.

Government in south is neglecting Faithful's spiritual wellbeing

The Government in the south is neglecting the spiritual wellbeing of the Faithful, according to the Primate of All-Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh.

Archbishop Eamon Martin said authorities in the North, where the Faithful have returned to public worship, "recognise that people's spiritual, mental and emotional health helps them with their physical health as well".

Asked whether people's spiritual well-

being has been neglected by Government on RTÉ Radio 1's News at One last week, Archbishop Martin said "I think it has been".

He said throughout the pandemic "we've been very much aware about the importance of mental and emotional and physical well-being... But I think also as people of faith we believe we need to nurture our spiritual health".



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Complexity in a same-sex parenting story...

Recently, two young women in Cork were pictured happily with new-born twins. Geraldine Rea and Niamh O'Sullivan were delighted with the babies and although Geraldine actually gave birth to the twins, both women will be registered as parents, under the *Children and Family Relationships Act* of 2015. They said it was a great step forward for LGBT equality.

“Ethics are not a big feature of their practices”

It is absolutely not my place to judge the couple personally. I look back and see some of the failings I had as a mother, and it's taught me never to criticise the conditions of anyone else's situation. And I've also learned that the most surprising people can turn out to be excellent parents.

But stories can show some of life's twists and turns, and a storyline emerged in the French Netflix comedy-drama *Call My Agent* which illuminated some of the complications arising from same-sex parenting.

Call My Agent – originally *Dix Pour Cent* in French – is hilarious, totally amoral, and cynically sophisticated in a very Parisian way. It's the story of four talent agents who are partners in a show-biz agency. They backstab, manipulate, tell any amount of fibs, and double-cross whoever and whenever. Ethics are not a big feature of their practices. And yet, there's a continual theme of actions begetting consequences in the narrative.

Praying the rain away

As it looks as though we'll be doing a lot more meeting and eating out of doors this spring and summer, let's hope for decent weather. And dining *al fresco* is a delightful Italian import. The French café tradition – where the cafeteria extends to the pavement – should be widely copied. I'd like to see city pavements turned over to tables from restaurants and cafeterias (with awnings in case of a shower). The German *biergarten* is altogether a jolly extension to a pub: it should surely be a standard



Mary Kenny



Andréa and Colette in *Dix Pour Cent* with baby.

Andréa (Camille Cottin), a senior agent, is a showboating lesbian, and yet, in a crazy – and typically amoral, if farcical – episode she falls into bed with her financial boss, Hichem (Assaad Bouab). She's appalled when she discovers, subsequently, that she's pregnant. Abortion is never mentioned – it's not a word often used in drama – but it's implied by the declared intention of “not keeping it”. Still, Andréa, hard-bitten though she be, is in turmoil. And then an old girlfriend, Colette (Ophélie Kolb) comes back into her life, and persuades her to continue the pregnancy. They'll be parents together.

And so the pregnancy proceeds, and when baby appears, predictably, everyone is smitten by the joy of new life. Andréa and Colette are preparing to register as co-parents when the biological father suddenly comes forward and says he wishes to be recognised as the sire. French law also allows for official ‘acknowledgement’

feature of hospitality.

The boffins are now telling us that the healthiest place to be, when any virus is still in the air, is out of doors. Prof. Edward Lynch of West Cork has been saying, for ages, that ventilation is a major tool in anti-coronavirus measures. Fresh air blows away the little aerosols of the virus.

Interestingly, fresh air was also a condition of treating TB in times gone – sanatoriums had open-air wards.

So prayers for good weather to be invoked?

of a father, even when a same-sex couple wish to register as co-parents.

“It's the gay girlfriend, Colette, who is the key influence in persuading Andréa to continue the pregnancy”

You'd have to follow the drama to see the eventual outcome! But what the storyline illustrates is that there can be complexities, by virtue of the biological facts of conception, even when the law allows a same-sex couple to register as parents.

Yet there's another irony in the narrative too. It's the gay girlfriend, Colette, who is the key influence in persuading Andréa to continue the pregnancy. So, in a way, she has made a decisive contribution to bringing the baby girl to birth.

The English (and somewhat waspish) Catholic novelist Evelyn Waugh always prayed to St Clare for fine days. Why St Clare should be the patron of clement weather isn't quite clear: perhaps because the Poor Clares were originally a mendicant order and perforce spent much of the time in the open; or perhaps because of the connection with St Francis, and his embrace of nature. In any case, Evelyn Waugh claimed St Clare never let him down. So, here's hoping!

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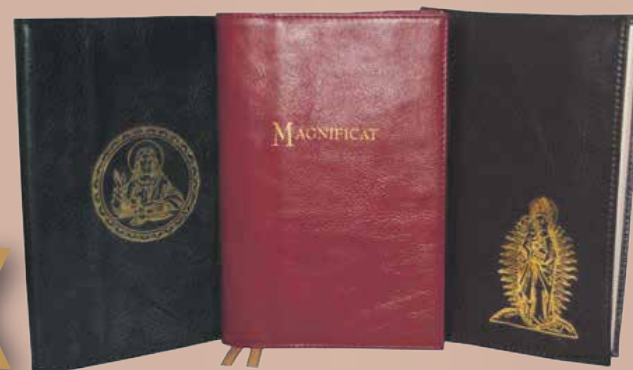
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Lay Catholic organisation welcomes synodal path but warns of inadequate structures

The Association of Catholics Ireland have welcomed the bishops' plans for a national synod, but warned that structures at parish level are "inadequate" to ensure worthwhile outcomes.

Welcoming the announcement in a statement, the ACI added that renewal cannot happen without the full involvement of the laity.

"A parish pastoral council is a minimum requirement to facilitate lay involvement in communities," the ACI said in a statement. "The ACI carried out a pilot research study which suggested that less than one fifth of parishes had effective working PPCs."

Invest in 'care that saves lives' not abortion – PLC

The Pro-life Campaign (PLC) have called for "increased emphasis on maternity care" worldwide, as a new report shows a rise in babies and pregnant women suffering during the pandemic. Responding to the report from the Lancet medical journal, PLC spokesperson Eilís Mulroy said that it is "sad" to see the increase in infant and maternity mortality, but not surprising. She added that, at a time when there is a push for increasing abortion services in developing nations, the report is a reminder of the need to invest in "care that saves lives".

Pope's letter to former Presbyterian leader 'significant' as NI faces fraught times

Ruadhán Jones

Pope Francis' letter to Northern Irish Presbyterian Rev. Norman Hamilton "modelled respectful dialogue" as the North faces "fraught times", said Fr Martin Magill.

Fr Magill, a Belfast-based priest and organiser of 4 Corners Belfast, praised the letter for "modelling dialogue and respectful dialogue".

"I welcome it especially because we are in another of our fraught times here in Northern Ireland," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Over the weekend, there were riots in loyalist parts of Derry and Belfast as tensions boiled over.

Five police officers sustained injuries after being pelted with

petrol bombs and masonry in Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus, near Belfast, on Sunday night.

It brings the total number of police injured in incidents in Derry and Belfast over the Easter weekend to 32.

Pope Francis personally sent a letter to Rev. Hamilton to thank him for the "thoughtful observations you made in your article on my Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* in *The Irish News*".

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin, who drew the article to the Pope's attention, described it as "perhaps unprecedented in the context of Northern Ireland".

Actions

Fr Magill said the actions of Rev. Hamilton and Pope Francis con-

trasts the absence of a "spirit of co-operation amongst our politicians".

"I really welcome the fact that Pope Francis will actually go ahead and send such a significant letter," Fr Magill said. "And credit to Rev. Norman Hamilton for his reflections in the first place, which of course was the piece that sparked off the letters."

Fr Magill said their interaction modelled the kind of dialogue Pope Francis encouraged in *Fratelli Tutti*.

"Norman's particular concern is about wanting to build the likes of justice and peace, his concern for the vulnerable – and here the two of them are, they're able to find common ground," Fr Magill continued. "That's sending out a very positive message."

Irish Easter message shown up by British

Jason Osborne

The Easter messaging from the Irish Government has come under fire after Boris Johnson's strongly-worded statement.

"Let's not lose sight of the fact that this is Christianity's most important festival," the British prime minister said, continuing, "And that, while churches are open, the ongoing coronavirus restrictions mean that once again, it won't be possible for many Christians to mark Easter in the way they would like."

If there's one thing British Christians have shown in the past year, Mr Johnson said, it's that "Jesus Christ is 'the way, and the truth and the life' not just today, but every day".

Mr Johnson commented on the fact that Jesus' teachings and the message of his death and resurrection "permeate through every aspect of daily life". Some commentators have drawn a contrast between this messaging and Taoiseach Micheál Martin's declaration that Easter is a time for "reflection" and "renewal", which has been perceived by some as not going far enough.

Priest celebrates Easter Sunday Mass at penal rock to draw attention to Mass ban

Staff reporter

Fr Gerard Quirke said celebrating Easter Mass at a penal times Mass rock on Achill Island has a "particular resonance" given the legal ban on Masses.

Fr Quirke of the Achill parish celebrated 7am Mass at the site which was used during the era of penal laws when Catholics endured restrictions on their civil liberties.

He said it was the first time

in living memory that Mass had been celebrated at the rock.

Remote

"It's so remote, if congregations could have been there it wouldn't have been possible really," he told *The Irish Catholic*. "I assume that because of its isolated location it was a good spot for a Mass rock."

Fr Quirke said the recent confirmation that Masses other than for weddings and funerals are now a penal offence influenced

his decision to celebrate Mass at the rock.

"Part of my decision for choosing it was that's where we are," Fr Quirke said. "I hope that given the precedence of what has happened in Scotland, churches will be opened, especially with regard to Declan Ganley's case in the courts at the moment. So in a few weeks I'm hoping we should be back to public Mass."



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Loreto students raising funds with charity run



Students from Loreto Secondary School Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, are pictured before their 5km charity run in aid of the Irish Cancer Society.

Breda O'Brien

The View



Build Christian communities despite cultural opposition

Predicting the future is a mug's game. For example, anyone who predicted in December 2019 that the world would be battling a global pandemic for the following two years would have been encouraged to go and have a little lie-down.

The folly of predictions notwithstanding, in the year 2000, I agreed to take part in an RTÉ television programme which was to be broadcast in 2020, but to the best of my knowledge, never was. The programme's premise was simple. Gather a bunch of commentators, academics and others together and get them to predict what the world would be like in 2020. Given what 2020 actually turned out to be like, it is even less surprising that it was never broadcast.

“Online seminars are often much better attended than live events”

RTÉ made the bad mistake of showing us a programme made in 1980 for broadcast in 2000, which was so painfully off the mark that we were all stunned into silence. I do remember very clearly what my prediction or more accurately, my expressed hope was – that we would find a more mature way to converse about faith in the public arena and that conversations about religion would be less polarising.

Innocence

Oh, the innocence of it all. Things have deteriorated to an astonishing degree since then and we are further away than ever from a mature ability to discuss matters of faith in the public square.

In fact, since the pandemic started, the only religious ceremonies (which incidentally, also have humanist and secular counterparts) deemed worthy of celebration are

weddings and funerals. During the highest level of lockdown, the numbers allowed even for these ceremonies are very low.

This flies in the face of the right to religious freedom. The United Nations website lists eleven different UN Treaties which are relevant to the question of freedom of religion and belief, and that is before we mention Council of Europe and EU charters and conventions. In Ireland, however, the freedom to worship is treated as something of little significance, which will not be restored until we are back at level 2.

Prediction

It does not require particular skills of prediction to see that this has serious implications for Church-State relations in the future. By and large, the Christian Churches have meekly accepted the State's dictates, even though they are seriously out of step with the rest of Europe, and even the world.

It is one thing for religions to take conscientious and voluntary decisions to restrict numbers and sometimes, even to close places of worship entirely. It is another to have the State dictate when people can worship.

It sets a precedent and because the Catholic Church, in particular, has been relatively meek in its response, it will embolden the State when it comes to other issues, such as school patronage and imposing curricula which are at odds with Christian ethos. There is already creeping secularisation in our schools and this will only intensify. What are the Churches to do?

We must prepare for when the churches do re-open. The Archbishop of Dublin has announced a task force on the future of the Church. This has the potential to enter into the kind of discussions which are long overdue, about how we can build real



Parishioners attend the Easter Vigil Mass in the Church of Christ the King, Strathroy, Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

Christian communities in the face of significant cultural opposition.

Unless the Faith is transmitted in the home, schools are helpless. They can only reinforce what is found at home. On rare occasions, schools can spark faith in those who grow up without it, but this is unusual.

“Unless the Faith is transmitted in the home, schools are helpless”

We have an adult population who have received very little religious education. It is very common for people, just to take one example, to say that those who have died are now angels, which is a fundamental misunderstanding of life after death.

The harsh experiences of Covid-19 have shown one thing. Online seminars are often much better attended than live events. In the future, once the pandemic is over, adult education should capitalise on this but

not ignore live gatherings. One very viable model would be to have four talks or seminars online followed by a social occasion where people can meet in the real world for discussion and social contact.

Housebound

While livestreaming will continue to be important for the housebound, we should really encourage in-person attendance for everyone who can, once the pandemic is over. We should also increase the amount of daily prayer opportunities available online.

Laypeople must make the importance of respect for their faith known to public representatives and in public fora whenever the opportunity arises. Politicians are generally reactive rather than proactive. They will continue to see religion as a hobby until people make it clear that it is, instead, central to people's lives.

We will never have a mature and respectful dialogue unless we make it clear that religious freedom is not optional, but a fundamental human right.

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“Since the pandemic started, the only religious ceremonies (which incidentally, also have humanist and secular counterparts) deemed worthy of celebration are weddings and funerals”

Dying with Dignity Bill offers easy way out but no answers

Jason Osborne

Euthanasia and assisted suicide offer a “tap-out option”, rather than greater dignity, according to 24 year-old disability rights advocate Conor Lynott, who himself has a diagnosis of Spastic Diplegia Cerebral Palsy.

Lost their way

“If it’s there, people might take euthanasia as an easy option,” he told *The Irish Catholic*. “It gets rid of the problem – it doesn’t face it.”

He said that there’s an “irony” about the fact that “the debate is taking place during a pandemic”, and that while he’s sure the bill is well-intentioned, the authors had “lost their way”.

“They’re trying to give people authority over their

own lives and they’re trying to do something for disability rights, but they lost their way,” he said, suggesting instead that the solution lies in “exploring how to deal with pain”.

“You can always find a way to live with a disability,” he said, “and how to live with pain is something that should be explored”.

Mr Lynott made a submission to the Justice Committee about the ‘Dying with Dignity’ Bill out of concern over the consequences of the bill for people with disabilities. Speaking at Hope Ireland’s ‘End of Life Matters’ conference, Mr Lynott said he felt suited to tackling the bill head-on, coming from a background in history and philosophy.

“It’s worth noting that I was interested in the argu-

ments against euthanasia, particularly the ‘slippery slope’ argument that would have been common in philosophy...when I saw this bill, I saw the submission as a platform to make my voice heard about my concerns,” Mr Lynott said.

“I don’t think the bill itself is the answer,” he said, “as it leads to a slippery slope” – a reference to the idea that once introduced in a country, the grounds for euthanasia and assisted suicide expand widely, as has been seen in the Netherlands, Canada, and Portland, Oregon in the US.

Dying process

“There needs to be a broader discussion around the dying process,” Mr Lynott said, “as there is a real misunderstanding of death and what it means”.

Disability rights advocate
Conor Lynott.



Task force created to aid ‘radical renewal’ of Dublin archdiocese

Staff reporter

A task force composed of clergy, religious and laypeople has been established to prepare an assessment of the needs of the people of the Archdiocese of Dublin as they emerge from the Covid crisis.

Archbishop Dermot Farrell has done this in recognition of the fact that the Church in Dublin “faces challenges” which require immediate action, one of the key chal-

lenges being preparing a recovery from the “severe” impact of the pandemic.

“To advance analysis and encourage dialogue and engagement, I established a ‘Task Force on a Church for the Dublin of Tomorrow’, under the title ‘Building Hope’,” Dr Farrell said.

The aim of the task force will be to “prepare an approach to a pastoral strategy” that supports parishes to undertake a “radical renewal”,

and that will allow communities of faith to look to the “future with creativity”.

“To assist the task force, I am also establishing an expert panel in the areas of the economic, social and pastoral situation in Dublin, and the trends which will shape our situation over the next 25 years. Their advice will help us to consider the views and priorities of the many organisations delivering services to the people of Dublin,”

Archbishop Farrell said.

The archbishop has urged the task force to haste, asking it to complete its work by the end of the summer. “There is an urgency, and this cannot be an endless process,” he said, continuing, “It will give us all a basis for moving forward together with hope, confident that the Spirit is with those who respond to the call to follow the one who is the Lord of tomorrow as well as today”.

Myths around homelessness prevent solutions, says Fr McVerry

Ruadhán Jones

Fr Peter McVerry has decried the “myths around homelessness” which prevent the problem being resolved.

Writing for the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Fr McVerry said that myths such as drug-addiction and mental health issues causing homelessness “diverts attention” from structural issues.

“This myth is important because it diverts attention from the structural problems which cause homelessness – lack of social housing, weak tenant protections, low wage and precarious employment – to a ‘moral’ problem, focusing on the personal defects of homeless people,” Fr McVerry said. “The cause of most homelessness today is poverty, an inability to afford their own accommodation.”

Fr McVerry, founder of the homelessness charity the Peter McVerry Trust, said the rise in homelessness is down to “government housing policy failure over the past 20 or so years”.

“In 1975, this country built 8,500 council houses; in 1985, this country built 6,900 council houses; and in 2015, this country built 75 council houses,” Fr McVerry said.

Sharing the way of the Cross



Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell and Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson celebrate a Good Friday ecumenical service, April 2, in St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy

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Rural Church communities face stark choices



Moving from maintenance to mission means reacting to accelerated decline due to the pandemic, writes Chai Brady

The Government's announcement of a raft of plans to rejuvenate rural Ireland have come at a time when rural Church communities face hard future decisions wrought by the pandemic. It may be too little too late.

There is already planning underway to alleviate the toll the pandemic has had and will take on parishes, particularly in rural areas. The view was aired that there will be an accelerated decline in Church attendance in discussions involving pastoral area representatives in the Diocese of Killaloe. Several Irish prelates have already said the pandemic will most likely lead to many people never returning to public worship.

In Bishop Fintan Monahan's Easter message to the Faithful of his Diocese of Killaloe, he raised several questions to help inform diocesan planning post-Covid, one of which focused on the sustainability of some communities, especially in rural areas.

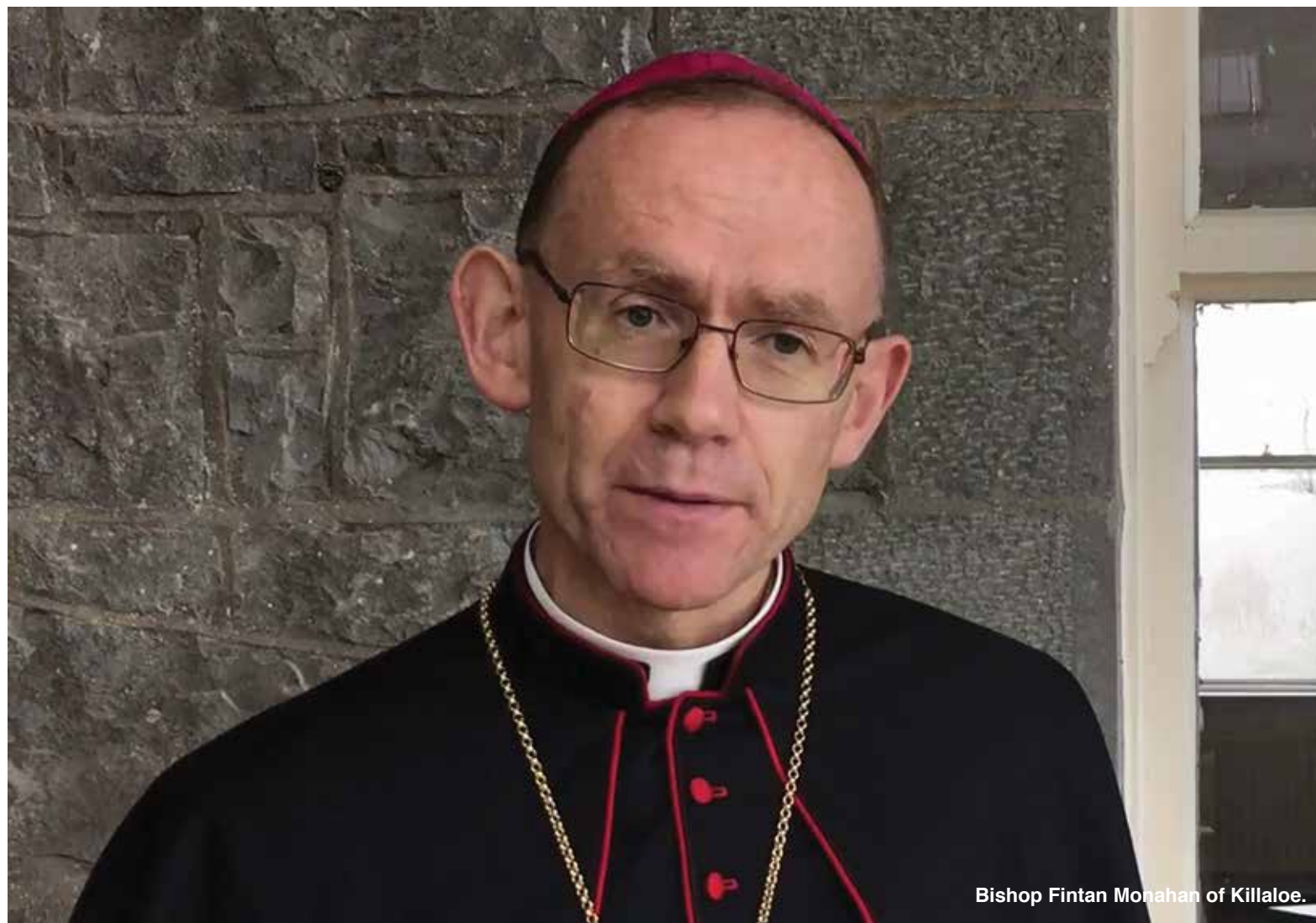
Landscape

In looking at the dramatically different landscape the Church faces, Bishop Monahan said the changes will also extend to consideration of how "our parishes and diocese are funded with the likelihood that parish income will decrease substantially in the coming years".

“Maybe things will swing back to normality, my hunch is probably not, it will probably take a big jump in the negative side”

This will have an effect on how each parish manages its own affairs and also on the services provided by the diocese which are currently funded from parish contributions. Bishop Monahan said this will prompt the Faithful to ask "what are the priorities for using scarce resources?"

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Bishop Monahan said the divide between rural and urban areas in his diocese, which encompasses mostly Clare but also parts of Tipperary, Offaly, Laois and Limerick, has led



Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe.

to an existential issue for smaller churches.

"With the declining number of people that are living in rural areas, rural depopulation, it's a two-tier system in so many ways, you just wonder how small rural churches will be able to be sustained," he said

"Certainly, with the decline of the number of priests on top of that and the decline then further of people attending, there's going to be a completely different reality in the very short term when we get back, so trying to alert people to it and trying to get the individual pastoral areas to look at it and plan and see if it's possible to keep their churches open literally; what sort of life will be in them?"

Difficulty

Regarding rural decline, the bishop pointed to the difficulty with getting broadband, the closure of schools, post offices, presbyteries, Garda stations and the recent announcement of 88 Bank of Ireland branches closing. He said: "All of those things, they're one death knell after another to rural communities and it's a pity because the quality of life in these areas is fantastic and it's a shame.

"Even in our own diocese now, the little triangle of Sixmilebridge, Ennis, Shannon, one-third of the whole population of the diocese are there in that little urban triangle.

"Whereas if you go back, East Clare, West Clare, parts of rural Tip-

perary, parts of Offaly, there are very small numbers of people and any sense of community is very difficult to sustain, whether it's in the school, the church or GAA or whatever it is, it's a real problem. That problem will get worse for the Church in the aftermath of Covid."

Killaloe

Almost two dozen parishes in Killaloe have no resident priest, with Mass being celebrated once and sometimes just twice a week in some churches.

Across Ireland, church collections this year are down by about half meaning there will have to be a process of rationalising, according to the bishop, saying: "If the income is down by about 50%, as it is now, whether that will come back I don't know. If a church isn't able to sustain itself serious questions will be asked. Some of the really tiny churches; I wonder if they will reopen at all after Covid, I just don't know."

"Maybe things will swing back to normality, my hunch is probably not, it will probably take a big jump in the negative side."

Bishop Monahan said his Easter letter is focused on urging people to look at the substantial issues and say: "What are we going to do? Are we going to just let things go into complete oblivion or are we going to move towards that urbanised system?"

“It is my hope that this planning will resume with a new impetus gained from our experiences of what it was to live under the restrictions imposed by the virus”

"You'd always try and make a priority of ensuring that rural areas would be serviced but there's a limit to how you can do that in terms of resources that you have, they're constantly declining," he said.

"You'd hate to go in the direction that either the banks or the post offices have done or some of the closure of small schools, but it's maybe inevitable with the way things are going, it's not just Church but broader society.

“You'd always try and make a priority of ensuring that rural areas would be serviced”

He added that despite the stark realities, "the shameful thing is that rural communities do have a quality that is really outstanding which you don't get in the impersonalised urban environment where the sense of community isn't as strong, the sense of Church, the sense of being together, looking out for each other, you wouldn't have that".

"An awful lot of that came out hugely during Covid, the way people looked out for each other. I suppose the whole point of the letter is encouraging people to look at the stark reality that is there and further alerting people that when we

do emerge from Covid we're going to be in a very different reality, a very different world and with the lessening of resources we need to maybe either rationalise or move in a different direction entirely, the choice will be up to people I suppose really."

Future

Bishop Monahan acknowledged in his Easter message that there is "no clear pathway to the future of our Church" other than planning based on reflection, discussion, discernment, re-visioning as well as practical ideas regarding the needs of the Church.

He said: "It is my hope that this planning will resume with a new impetus gained from our experiences of what it was to live under the restrictions imposed by the virus."

Emerging from the pandemic, he said it is not enough to open church buildings and return to the way things were pre-Covid-19.

"This would simply postpone the necessary changes required for the Church of the future. Planning for the future will take time, creativity and an openness to change," Bishop Monahan said.

Referencing Ireland's national synod, announced by the bishops after their spring meeting, Bishop Monahan spoke of the importance of mission and that the Faithful have, in many ways, become "immersed in the business of maintaining our current structures that it may have drained us of our energy for mission".

He added: "Have we the courage to make that transition to abandon some of our old structures in order to move from maintenance to mission?"

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Encountering the Risen Lord

As we noted at the start of Lent, the number 40 is usually associated with a period of preparation. Following the 40 days of Lent, there are 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension. My very young grand-nephew asked me a deep question one day: "Where was Jesus in the time between his resurrection and ascension?" All I could say was that he came back on several occasions to strengthen the faith of his disciples. Today's Gospel refers to these encounters as signs which were recorded "so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name" (John 20:31). Disciples who had once known him by physical recognition had to learn how to recognise his presence by faith. "Thomas, you believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

There is a common pattern in these stories. Initially, people who were familiar with Jesus no longer recognise him until he does something and then they recognise him. This moment of recognition is the key to the story, portraying how Christians down the ages have come to recognise the presence of the Lord in their lives.

Present in a personal relationship

Mary Magdalene was weeping outside the empty tomb. Even when

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



the Lord appeared to her, she did not recognise him by sight nor by the sound of his voice. But when the Lord called her by name, then she recognised him. Her experience stands for the faith that begins in a sense of personal call and invitation from the Lord.

Present in the Bread of Life

The disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognise that it was Jesus who was their companion on the road. They were going in the wrong direction, away from Jerusalem, the city of pilgrimage. They admit that they had lost hope when Jesus was crucified. Now they were heading towards Emmaus, known for its mineral springs, a place to chill out. He warmed their hearts as he opened up the scriptures for them. It was when he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them that their eyes were opened and they recognised him. But he disappeared from their sight. The story clearly signifies how people recognise that the Lord is with us on



Noli me tangere by Antonio Allegri da Correggio.

the road of life through the Eucharist, the bread of life.

Present in Divine Mercy

Coming back to the Gospel for this Sunday, there are two apparitions. It is now a week since the day of resurrection but the apostles are locked behind closed doors, not knowing what to do, confused and afraid (John 20: 19-31). There is an old Irish saying that God's help is closer than the door. The risen Lord appeared in that room of fear. He showed them his wounded hands and side. He is recognised in his wounded condition. Possibly the wounds stirred the memory of the words of Isaiah:

"Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. By his wounds we are healed." He is the wounded sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. He told them: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." The mission he gave them was to continue his ministry of mercy in the forgiveness of sins. How could they perform this divine work? It would be in the power of the Holy Spirit. He breathed the divine power on them. "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained." Retaining means calling a sin a sin and telling people that divine mercy is being blocked until they humbly repent of their wrongdoing. The message for Christians down the ages is to recognise the presence of God in the forgiveness of sins.

Doubting Thomas

The apostle Thomas was missing that day. He absolutely refused to believe what the others told him about the Lord's appearance. He was so loyal to Jesus that he once declared that he was willing to go to Jerusalem with him and die with him. But he was loyal to a fault. Loyalists find it very hard to accept change. He was so loyal to the former days of knowing Jesus physically that he was not ready to know him by faith instead of physical recognition. When the Lord appeared the following Sunday, he invited Thomas not only to see his wounds but to touch them. Touching the wounds is very significant because it suggests getting in touch with any wounded part of our inner

self. The steps in a rehabilitation programme begin with getting in touch with the inner wounds of life. The humble admission of an inner hurt or an uncontrolled addiction involves touching the wounded area. Then it is handed over to the Higher Power. And there is no Power higher than the Saviour who knows suffering from the inside because he has experienced it personally. He achieved the ultimate victory when he conquered death itself by rising from the dead.

The story of Thomas is a wonderful example of how our very wounds can be the place where we get the grace of knowing that the Lord is closer to us than the closed door. I have met many people in recovery who have developed a powerful prayer-life.

Prayer

Risen Lord, thank you for these encounter stories which tell us how you are with us. As you made yourself known to Mary Magdalene when you called her by name, may we experience the joy of a daily, personal relationship with you.

You are with us on the road of life even when we are going in the wrong direction. As with the disciples going to Emmaus, stay with us and sustain us in Holy Communion, the Bread of Life.

When we fall into sin, cleanse us in the Sacrament of Divine Mercy.

When we are struggling with wounds and problems, grant us your help which supports us and heals us. Alleluia!

From all of us at *The Irish Catholic*, we wish you and your families a blessed Easter

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The Irish Catholic



The number of people quitting organised religion continues to rise



Sooner or later the hyper-individualism that exists in the West will burn itself out and the Church has to be ready to meet the disaffected, writes **David Quinn**

A major new study published earlier this year showed a huge increase in the number of Irish people who say they never go to church.

The study, called *Historical Political Cleavages and Post-Crisis Transformations in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, 1953-2020*, found that the percentage who say they never go has jumped to 50% from 19% over the period 2011-2016. In other words, it has increased two and a half times. That is a historical level of change.

“Over 70% of Americans still say they belong to a given religion even if they are no longer registered with one”

Meanwhile, in the US, a new survey from the polling company, Gallup, has found that the number of Americans who say they don't belong to a particular Church, synagogue, mosque etc, is now below half for the first time since polling began in the 1970s. The figure is 47%.

This is not the same as identifying with a religion, by the way. For example, someone might still describe themselves as 'Catholic' on a census form, or to a pollster, but not go to any given Church. In the US, unlike in Ireland, people tend to formally register with the place of worship they attend. Over 70% of Americans still say they belong to a given religion even if they are no longer registered with one.

The aforementioned study that includes Ireland did offer a crumb of comfort. While there has been a huge increase in the number who



say they never go to church, the fall-off in those who attend regularly has been much smaller, from 33% to 28% since 2016.

What seems to have happened is that those who were going only on very rare occasions, or sporadically (a few times a year), have now switched into the 'never go' camp.

Needless to say, the situation varies greatly by age, with older people far more likely to attend while younger people are far less likely to do so.

What is clearly happening is that, as time passes, those who are barely connected with a Church are now drifting away completely. They might still say they are Catholic (or Protestant) in some vague way, but they are non-practicing. Some may turn up to have their children baptised and confirmed, or for weddings and funerals, but that is about it.

Non-affiliation

This kind of non-affiliation is affecting many other parts of society, and not just religion. This cannot be emphasised enough. In general, we belong to fewer organisations and institutions than was once the case.

Far fewer belong to trades unions, for instance. Far fewer belong to political parties, or vote, than in decades past. Far fewer identify with a given party, let alone formally belong to it. Many more are floating voters, when they vote.

Marriage rates have declined. Fewer than half of Irish adults are now married. Cohabitation has sharply increased, and some cohab-

iting couples never marry. Those who don't marry in the end usually break up. Many children have much less stability in their lives as a result.

What we are witnessing is the continued rise and consequences of a type of individualism that puts personal freedom first and wants to be unencumbered. Belonging to something can make demands.

“They also believe that they are saved, unless they do something truly drastic”

Religion is seen as something that involves rules and regulations, the opposite of freedom.

An additional problem for organised religion is that many people are content to be 'spiritual', which is roughly the equivalent of being a floating voter.

They feel no need to belong to any actual religious community because, lip service aside, they actually don't feel the need to belong to any community at all, aside maybe from their families or society as a whole, and even in those cases often only weakly.

They also believe that they are saved, unless they do something truly drastic. That is to say, they believe they are right with God except in extreme circumstances. God also makes no real demands and expects little from you, they think. He is more of a spiritual comfort blanket.



They tend to have a favourable opinion of Jesus, but they don't think Jesus makes too many demands either, even though the commandments to love your neighbours as yourself, and to do to others as you would want them to do to you, demand gigantic self-sacrifice.

Sacrifice

In the case of families, people are still willing to sacrifice a lot, but as mentioned, fewer marry than was once the case, many men do not play an active part in raising their children, and many abortions take place each year.

Paradoxically, we also see the rise of pseudo-religions like 'wokeness', the slang term given to the ideology that sacralises the likes of race and gender, making them totems or idols that can be only spoken about in certain ways or else you run the risk of landing yourself

in extremely serious trouble.

The Church has simply to play the long game. It has existed for 2,000 years and has seen almost everything. Soon or later the sort of hyper-individualism that exists in the West will burn itself out.

“It must offer this and have confidence in its basic message, in season and out of season”

In the meantime, the Church has to keep on presenting Jesus to the world as best it can and invite people to join the community of his followers. That is what the Church is, and is all it can ever be. It must offer this and have confidence in its basic message, in season and out of season.

Listening to the youthful Church



If the Church is to capture the attention of a new generation, it has to catch up with and invest in its faithful youth, Jason Osborne hears

The announcement of a national synod from the Irish bishops has piqued the interest of the Irish Catholic world, with more than a few people expressing deeply held hopes and fears about the direction the discussion could take the Church.

Bishops have told *The Irish Catholic* in recent weeks that the Church cannot shy away from controversial questions – “red button issues” as Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry puts it – as it prepares for the synod, and the disconnect with young people is one that is particularly likely to come up.

Speaking to this paper, a number of people at the forefront of youth ministry and missionary activity expressed the view that if this synod is to be a success, it has to put the young Faithful it already has front and centre.

Voices

“I suppose the most important thing is that the voices of the young people are heard because they, especially young Catholics today in Ireland and the ones I’m dealing with, students on campus, are

extremely articulate, they’re well researched and well read,” Fr Eamonn Bourke of the University College Dublin chaplaincy tells me.

“They’re watching a lot of videos on YouTube and they’re reading up and they’re finding out a lot about their faith and why they believe what they believe. They hold their faith really quite dear to themselves. They really want to not just keep the Faith themselves, they want to share it among other young people and older people as well.”

“A potential danger that both Fr Bourke and Mr Foy have identified is that the synod will become bogged down in practicalities”

For a young person to hold tightly to the Faith in today’s Ireland requires more than a nominal belief – it requires a deep understanding of the “pearl of great price” that they’ve found, as Fr Bourke

put it. Not only are they holding fast to the Church they’ve gone against the grain to grow into – often on the frontlines amongst their peers and families – sowing the seeds that Christ has planted in their own hearts.

“I’d say it’s [the rejuvenation of the Irish Church] already happening among young people, you know? Hopefully the Church will catch up with what’s actually happening with young people now because in the past, you would have heard of parents trying to get their kids to go to Mass. I have students now who are trying to get their parents to go to Mass,” Fr Bourke says.

Evangelising

“It’s almost flipped on its head. They’re actually going out and they’re evangelising their own peers and that kind of stuff. I just hope that the Church will give them support in that.”

A group that understands evangelisation in modern Ireland perfectly well is NET Ministries. A staple at youth retreats around the country pre-pandemic, their efforts have continued online since lockdown. Despite the jarring shift from the real world to the virtual, their missionary approach could still be encapsulated by fellow youth organisation, Youth 2000’s, motto, ‘Youth leading youth to the heart of the Church’.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Executive Director of Net Ministries Ireland, Tony Foy,



tells of the voices the synod needs to hear.

“Who’s making disciples? Who’s bringing people to the Faith? Who’s increasing the faith of those who already have a little modicum of faith?” he asks, continuing, “Those are the people that we need to listen to.”

Bringing the Faith

The young people that Mr Foy works with on a regular basis are bringing the Faith to their peers in a concrete, revivifying way that the “established Church” just isn’t matching at the moment. A young person may not encounter their parish priest or their diocesan bishop as they grow up, other than for their First Communion or Confirmation, but they are surely encountering the young missionaries visiting their schools and doing outreach on college campuses (in pre-pandemic times). This paper has previously

reported on the virtual efforts of Net Ministries’ young missionaries).

It is this missionary spirit that the Irish Church must tap into during the synodal process if it is to reap a harvest among the youth.

“Who’s bringing people to the Faith? Who’s increasing the faith of those who already have a little modicum of faith?”

“We [Net Ministries] hope that the focus of the Church is moved from maintenance to mission. The idea of the parish is brilliant and it’s still going to be there, but the parish must go out. The people must go out, and the priests and the people must go hand in hand. That’s our hope for the Church,” Mr Foy says.

“The Church is meant for mission. It’s not meant to be sitting at home. If there’s a change in emphasis at the synod, that will be a very, very welcome development.”

A potential danger that both Fr Bourke and Mr Foy have identified is that the synod will become bogged down in practicalities. While these are material realities that must be dealt with, the focus of the synod must be on its people – “the true infrastructure of the Church,” Fr Bourke says.

Fear

A fear people have, Fr Bourke insists, “is that too much emphasis would be put on structures and buildings and finances and that kind of stuff, how many churches will we keep open, what kind of buildings will we have, as opposed to saying, ‘Look, we need to start investing in people now’ and investing in young people and making sure that it’s



Tony Foy gives a presentation to a group of young Net missionaries.

“We’re working to develop a new model of campus ministry which is invitational, Christ-centred, formative, outward-looking, collaborative”

“In the final analysis, all synodal conversation must take place with eternity in mind”

“We’re certainly actively working to bridge that divide. As I mentioned, I think a lot of the time, the Church and a certain generation of the Church are out of sync with where young people actually are and what their quite complex needs are, whereas I think up here we are a little bit more in sync and in touch with that because we’re blessed to be right at the heart of a student campus.”

Communities

“I suppose my hope would be that faith communities are engaging with young people as we are – especially those not actively engaged in faith, to better understand how we can create conditions which make possible a relationship with the Church,” she says.

Again, easier said than done. Ms Campbell is keenly aware of the challenges that reaching out to such a rapidly-changing demographic entails, admitting that the Church hasn’t had much opportunity to keep abreast of the shifting cultural and moral concerns of the world’s youngest generations.

“I don’t think the Church knows much about the culture that they’re [18-24 year-olds] living in. There’s just a huge disconnect. I think things like social media...that is responsible for that divide, I think. Just constantly new issues emerging, like the whole ‘safety of women’ thing at the minute and Black Lives Matter – these are things that that generation take really seriously and I don’t think they know where the Church sits on those kinds of things, and they’re things that really matter to them.”

Overall, Ms Campbell says she sees the synod as an “opportunity for all of us”, “especially those who feel disaffected from Church or marginalised in society to be heard”. She hopes it will encourage those already actively engaged in the Church to make it a place of “welcome and belonging”. With regards to young people, she ultimately bases her advice to the hierarchy of the Irish Church upon her own experience of work with the young people of faith and no faith alike.

“As someone responsible for forming students and young adults here in Belfast in the Faith, my hope would be that we meaningfully engage our young people in the synodal conversation. I think sometimes in youth ministry we find ourselves out of sync with where young people actually are and what their needs might be. So, I hope that the Church will lend its ear to both

those young people and the people that work with them.”

A word of caution that she offered at the same time, though, was to avoid the ‘shouting match’ discourse that much of politics and culture has fallen into. If the synod is to effectively hear the voices of those “crying out in the wilderness”, it must listen attentively, offering an alternative to the feverish and pitched voices found elsewhere.

“I think a lot of the time, the Church and a certain generation of the Church are out of sync with where young people actually are”

“My impression of public discourse at the minute is that it’s very much governed by this principle of ‘who can shout the loudest?’ There seems to be little room for reasoned, reflective argument and I think there might also be a perception among some that the synod is something akin to parliamentary democracy where majority rules, but my understanding of synodality is that the process should be concerned with meaningful discernment and that we should be open to conversion of our own opinion and we should seek to build consensus and just greater understanding. It should keep in conversation with the traditions of both

the Church and contemporary culture.”

Also offering a cautionary word, in the hope that it’ll lead to a more fruitful conversation throughout the synodal journey, Fr Ger Dunne of the University College Cork chaplaincy says that “good catechetical instruction” is an essential resource to provide the young people, that the Church so aches to reach, with.

Interaction

Speaking of his own interaction with young people in his role as chaplain in Cork, Fr Dunne said he admires them for “going out of their way to find out” the truth of the Church “of their own initiative and their own volition”, but that a fuller catechesis needs to be offered to supplement the information they come across online.

“It can be quite selective in some of the information that they would find online, for example,” he says.

“While some of it’s wonderful, some of it is without basis, with no catechetical or theological foundation to some of it. This can sometimes give a bit of a warped

understanding of faith, so that certainly is a cause for concern. Things that they find online are often deemed to be the absolute truth, so that can cause difficulties.”

“The synod as an ‘opportunity for all of us’, ‘especially those who feel disaffected from Church or marginalised in society to be heard’”

For Fr Dunne, as with the rest of the voices in youth ministry, the way forward must be forged through honest engagement, open dialogue and attentive listening. “Our younger generation really have to be central to this listening process, this synodal process. There’s no doubt about that,” Fr Dunne says, adding that it can’t only be those heavily engaged with their faith either, but those “marginalised or hanging on by their fingernails” too.

In the final analysis, all synodal conversation must take place with eternity in mind, with the great import of the Faith firmly lodged in the minds of those taking part.

“I think what young people realise now because they’ve actually been swimming against the tide is that the Faith costs people. It’s not easy to be a disciple today. It’s a difficult thing and it’s going to cost people. The truth is quite demanding, but yet rewarding,” Fr Bourke says, offering a reminder that the easy road is rarely the right one to take.



A young woman reads during Pope Francis’ celebration of Mass on the feast of Christ the King in St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican, 2020. Photo CNS.

not just all about the infrastructure”.

It’s easy to say what the synod shouldn’t look like, and what the Church of Ireland’s future shouldn’t look like, but how should it look? That’s a question that the chaplaincy at Queen’s University Belfast is trying to answer, Pastoral Manager Shannon Campbell says.

“Here at the chaplaincy, we’re working to develop a new model of campus ministry which is invitational, Christ-centred, formative, outward-looking, collaborative, and we’re very conscious that we’re forming young people as the agents of change for the future. Concern for things like social justice, the common good, so as we develop that new model of campus ministry here, we hope to develop and model the principles that will inform the synod, and this synodal path that Pope Francis has articulated, and that the Church in Ireland is embarking upon.

Model

“So, we do hope to model it here in, sort of, a smaller scale and in the coming months we’re hoping to engage a wide-ranging consultation process that ensures our engagement with young people is evidence-based, doctrinally sound, and

responsive to the complex needs of the important demographic that is students,” Ms Campbell says.

Offering not just theory and conjecture, the chaplaincy at Queen’s University Belfast boasts a vibrant and active community, which sees plenty of engagement with the university’s young, Catholic population as Ms Campbell pointed out. The voices calling for youth engagement in the upcoming synod and throughout the entire process are united in sentiment: theorising and waxing lyrical about the youth without engaging those at the coalface is ultimately an exercise in futility.

“My hope would be that we meaningfully engage our young people in the synodal conversation”

Ms Campbell comments on the divide that has historically existed between the Church and the youth, both those of faith and those without, advising that these voices be brought into the discussion if the synod is to bear real fruit among young people.

Shannon Campbell

‘There’s never been anything like *The Chosen*’



The Chosen director Dallas Jenkins speaks to Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus, as they film season two of the hit show.



Dallas Jenkins, creator of immensely popular Jesus-show *The Chosen*, opens up to **Ruadhán Jones** about how his failure led to its success

The number one highest crowd-funded project of all time, at more than \$16 million; the first ever multi-season adaptation of Christ’s life; watched by more than 50 million people worldwide; a 100% rating on review site Rotten Tomatoes – *The Chosen* has been, by most conceivable standards, a remarkable success.

Since the first four episodes of the multi-season adaptation of Christ’s life aired over Easter 2019, it has continued to make waves. With the first episode of season two having premiered to much fanfare on Easter Sunday, the hype is set to continue. The show has set out to be different, creator Dallas Jenkins told me.

Different

“Get used to different’, a key line from episode seven of season one – that’s been the motto of our whole show,” says Dallas on our Zoom call. “I think most portrayals about Jesus have been very stiff, formal and emotionally distant. That’s why *The Chosen* really

exists because so many of the Jesus projects felt the same and I don’t think I loved most of them.

“*Jesus of Nazareth* [the 1977 mini-series], I think, is one of the better ones because it spends time on the moments between the stories. I think that’s what we do, we don’t rush the story from miracle to miracle. It’s a multi-season show, so it’s a very different medium. There’s never been a multi-season show about the life of Christ. That allows us the opportunity to do something different.”

The series is Dallas’ brainchild and passion-project in one. It’s the kind of project he wanted to do ever since falling in love with films after watching *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* when in high school.

“When I was growing up, I remember loving television and

loving movies but wondering, why aren’t there more movies and TV shows that reflect my experience, my faith background,” Dallas explains. “Whenever I do see one that does reflect my faith background, it doesn’t look or sound anything like the other stuff I like – it was usually not as high quality.

“But it was when I was a freshman in high school in ninth grade and I saw *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. When I saw that movie, everything changed for me. I thought, whatever that is, I want to do that. I want to arouse in people the kind of emotion that movie aroused in me – that set me on the path to making movies.”

“I believe the last 20 years have prepared me for this moment in my life”

The entertainment industry runs in Dallas’ blood, you could say. He’s the son of Jerry B. Jenkins, the exceptionally popular Christian novelist, best known for the *Left Behind* series, which sold more than 60 million copies worldwide.

“Because I grew up in a very

strict Christian home, when I was growing up I didn’t see a whole lot of movies,” Dallas says. “But as I grew older, my parents – they loved movies too, they were very protective when I was growing up. Then shortly after college, when I graduated from university, I started working with a company that were making my dad’s books into movies... Then shortly thereafter I started my own company with my father.

Making movies

“I’ve been making movies for about 20 years. Nothing of course to the level of impact that *The Chosen* has had, but I believe the last 20 years have prepared me for this moment in my life.”

But when asked what prompted him to make *The Chosen*, Dallas smiles ruefully and says, “Actually, it was failure”. His career had appeared to be on the up-and-up when he filmed *The Resurrection of Gavin Stone* (2017), which had the backing of a number of heavy-weight Hollywood studios.

“I had done it with these big Hollywood production companies who were really excited about it and wanted to do more movies

with me in the future and then it bombed at the box office,” he continues. “My career just crashed effectively. All of those future projects that we were talking about went away and I got to the point where I really didn’t know if I had a future in this business.”

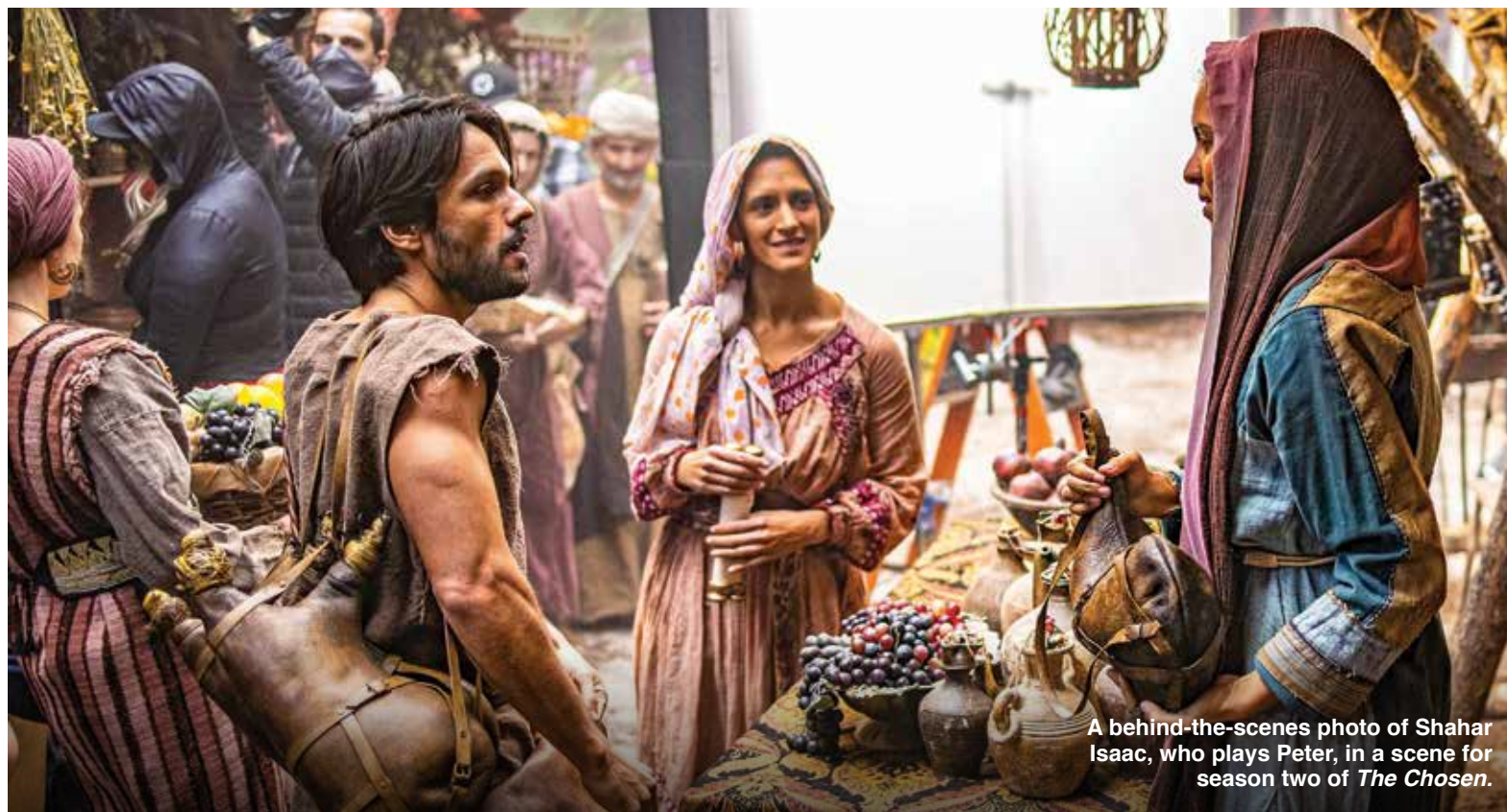
But while Dallas was struggling to process the failure and to figure out what to do next, someone reached out to him with advice that clarified his mind: “They said, your job is not to feed the five thousand, your job is only to provide the loaves and fish.”

“And so I realised I just want to be someone who provides the best five loaves and two fish that I can,” Dallas says. “Whatever that looks like and whether that’s successful or not is not my job to worry about. That’s what made me open minded to some crazy ideas.”

“I started working with a company that were making my dad’s books into movies”

The first of these ideas was to shoot a short film for his church’s Christmas Eve service, typically attended by upwards of 20,000 people. The film centred on the nativity scene, but from the perspective of the shepherds. It was picked up by independent, Christian production company VidAngel and quickly went viral.

“There’s never been a multi-season show about the life of Christ. That allows us the opportunity to do something different”



A behind-the-scenes photo of Shahar Isaac, who plays Peter, in a scene for season two of *The Chosen*.

“The main theme of season two is that Jesus’ fame is increasing, which is bringing in more friends and more enemies”

“That short film ended up going viral online and I had this idea to do a multi-season show about the life of Christ,” Dallas says. “I was binge-watching all these shows and wondering, ‘Why has there never been a multi-season show about Christ, that would be so cool!’

“The idea to crowdfund season one of *The Chosen*, which I thought was a ridiculous idea, I thought, well it’s not my job to worry whether it works or not, it’s someone else’s idea. I thought ok, what do I care I’m just making the best show that I can.

“We ended up generating \$10 million, shattering the all-time crowdfunding record. All of this process with *The Chosen* has come from this notion that I’m just going to do what I believe God is calling me to do and not worry about the results. If my movie had succeeded, I would be doing other movies, I wouldn’t be doing *The Chosen*, so God for sure had a plan for me.”

Path

Having failed, Dallas was now set on the path to what he had always wanted to do – make faith-based entertainment of high-quality and using modern media. Every life-of-Christ, every artist, will have a vision of Christ that he wants to bring to the screen. So it was with Dallas – what he wants to bring out is “Christ’s humanity and his relationships with the disciples and with some of his enemies”.

“We believe that if you can see Jesus through the eyes of those who met him, you can be changed and impacted in the way they were,” Dallas says. “Most Jesus movies, the problem with them is they’re short. They try to cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time. You’re going from miracle to miracle, Bible verse to Bible verse, and you never get a chance to give any back story, you never get a chance to know anyone who’s interacting with Jesus.

“The Gospels weren’t written to tell Jesus’ relationships and to tell the day-to-day story, they were written to show Jesus greatest hits to prove that he was the messiah. So in the show, we include those great stories and miracles, but we spend more time in between and before those miracles.

“We meet those disciples before they meet Jesus, we meet the people who were changed by Jesus, we meet them early on in their lives so that when those changes happen, when they encounter Jesus, it’s that much more impactful. If you can identify with these people and the questions they had, then you can identify with the solution to those problems and the answer to those questions.

“We ended up generating \$10 million, shattering the all-time crowdfunding record”

“That’s what we’re focusing on and by focusing on Jesus’ humanity – even though we’re not denying his divinity, we’re still showing the miracles and portraying Jesus as the Son of God – when you see him as a man and human being, that part of him in many ways enhances our experience of his divinity and this seems to be what’s impacting people so much.”

To that end, *The Chosen* focuses on the characters around Jesus, providing each of them with a narrative arc – a journey of development which they must take. In essence, it attempts to take the best that modern TV has to offer and adapt it to fit the life of Christ.

“What we did was we started with where they end up in the Gospels,” Dallas says. “You see where Simon Peter’s end is in the Gospels, how he denies Jesus three times at the cross, but then becomes a very passionate follower, then you see

where Mary Magdalene ends up, where Nicodemus ends up.”

Backwards

“Then we work our way backwards because we want to make sure that those moments are earned. Like any good storytelling, TV especially, you want to have a beginning, middle and end, you want to have a journey for your character. So, in the first few episodes and in season one, we’re telling the before, the beginning of their journey.

“You see them before they meet Jesus, which I think is very important. That I think allows most of the audience to connect with them. So yeah, our character journey and our character arcs start in episode one and they’re not going to fully conclude until season seven.”

The first episode of season two aired this Sunday past and Dallas

says that it provides hints already as to the key theme for the characters in season two.

“The main theme of season two is that Jesus’ fame is increasing, which is bringing in more friends and more enemies,” Dallas explains. “So you see the tension rising, even among the disciples who are trying to figure out – what does it look like to follow Jesus?”

“You see that in episode one of season two, there’s already fighting among the disciples, there’s already confusion about what they’re supposed to do, what Jesus is supposed to do next. What does it look like to follow him? That’s something that we face today. Even our Bible study that we’re doing in addition to this show, it’s called *What Does it Mean to be Chosen*. That’s a question the disciples faced as well.”

Successful

The show has been successful across the world – it has also been successful across denominations, from Catholic to Greek Orthodox to Latter Day Saints (LDS). Series two was the first non-Mormon production to film on the Mormon version of ancient Israel

in Goshen, Utah County. Although Jenkins is an Evangelical Protestant, he has advisors from Catholicism, Messianic Judaism and Evangelical Protestantism to ensure the show is respectful of as many perspectives as possible.

“I’m evangelical personally,” Dallas says. “But when I send the advisors the scripts and show them the episodes, it’s not that I’m trying to present a Catholic version or Jesus or a Protestant version of Jesus. I’m just trying to present Jesus, a Gospel version of Jesus, an authentic version of Jesus.”

Disagreements

“Most of the disagreements we have are based on debates we’ve had since Jesus was here. There’s not lots of disagreement about the stories of the Gospels – what they mean, what they represent, what we do as a result of those stories. But the thing that you see when you watch the show and the reason I think we’re seeing so many people from all different denominations – including LDS and Greek Orthodox – coming together and loving the show is that we’re not focused on the religious differences we have with each other.”

In entertainment, the show must ever go on, and so it is for Dallas – even while season two was being filmed, he was working on the script for the third.

“Our character journey and our character arcs start in episode one and they’re not going to fully conclude until season seven”

“It never stops because we’re trying to get these seasons out as fast as we can,” he says. “We want to get on a schedule. We plan on shooting season three in the fall. I only finished filming season two a few weeks ago and the first episode came out Easter Sunday. It’s non-stop.”

Although he hasn’t a chance to rest on his laurels, given that the show has been such a success, it would be fair to think that Dallas is immensely proud. When asked if he is proud of the show’s success, he pauses for a moment to think.

“Well, I’m very happy with what’s happening so far, but when I sit down to write season two or season three, the blank page on my computer doesn’t care at all about how successful season one was,” he begins. “It’s really hard to write a good television show, it’s really hard to bear the weight and responsibility of telling the stories of Jesus honestly and authentically.

“If I think about the success of it, it’ll cripple me. I just can’t worry about that. I’m proud, yes, of the hard work, but I’m more humbled than anything that God has chosen me to tell these stories, that God has blessed me with such favour and is changing people’s lives. I’m proud of

i The *Chosen* is available to watch for free by downloading The Chosen app from Google or Apple stores. The first episode of season two came out April 4 and a new episode will be released weekly. You can also purchase the show’s companion Bible study *What Does it Mean to be Chosen*.



Dallas Jenkins directs children during shooting for season one.

Woke and the modern Pharisees



I long for the day when the self-serving, virtue-signallers who jump on bandwagons will be exposed, writes **Fr Nicholas Grace**

To be a social media pariah, or frowned upon by your peers, abused by your enemies, cancelled by your favourite platform, even fired by your employer, are a few of the punishments meted out directly or indirectly by the high priests of social media in today's beautiful, tolerant and free western world.

Freedom of speech is out and subservient snivelling is in. People are afraid to say what they really think or believe because they are literally terrified that the moral authority of the new secular religion will have them branded as racist, ignorant, or culpable of any number of phobias.

Social bullying

I was recently reflecting on this, and the ever growing list of social bullying we are being exposed to, and I thought that there is a great similarity between the current moral authority, and the moral authority that was so abhorred by the penniless preacher from Nazareth all those years ago: the Pharisees.

“They parade their compassion, high culture, and all their ‘values’ (what happened to virtues?) to their social media devotees”

In the Holy Land when Christ walked the earth *some* of these had a lot of political influence and most of the moral authority, and some of them used and abused it through their interpretations of Jewish laws which they certainly liked to burden the people with in almost every aspect of daily life. They liked it, they fed off of it and they used it to bludgeon the simple people into submission.

Now when Christ emerged as a man on a mission, the God-man nonetheless, the Pharisees were at the zenith of their power over the people. Jesus understood clearly that many of these Pharisees had



become nothing more than corrupt overbearing bullies who used religion to subject, silence and censor a huge swathe of the good honest people who were threatened by them, it seems, with being ostracised from society if they did not comply, agree, or submit. Remember we are talking about a society whose life blood was religion.

What did Jesus do? He let them have it: “Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honour in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces...Woe also to you...You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them...” (Luke 11:43-46).

Hope

Christ's take down fills me with hope that someone will not only stand up and castigate, but also silence and depose the 'new Pharisees' - the new moral leaders, the self-important bullies who lord it over all of us and threaten us with exclusion if we do not submit and subject ourselves to every detail of their doctrine, ideology, cultural and moral world view and take truth as completely relative and subjective.

I'm talking about what I like to call, the professional wokeists. Who or what is a professional wokeist? Well wokeist, as many, but not all of you know, comes from woke. Now woke is the end of an evolution that started with wide awake, a term which appeared in political ads during the 1860 presidential election in support of Abraham Lincoln (the Republican Party promoted the movement primarily to oppose the spread of slavery). In more modern times it referred to a

“When Christ emerged as a man on a mission, the God -man nonetheless, the Pharisees were at the zenith of their power over the people”

perceived awareness of issues that concern social and racial justice. The term has been around ever since but over the last ten years and particularly since the 'Black Lives Matter' movement after the death of George Floyd in 2020 woke has, according to journalist Aja Romano, evolved into a “single-word summation of leftist political ideology, centred on social justice politics and critical race theory”.

“Let us hope for finer days, days when the good become great because they have acted rather than tweeted”

The professional wokeist - the new Pharisee I am talking about - is one who uses left-wing politics, anti-racism (when it translates into the promotion of white guilt), LGBT rights, feminism and environmentalism, to name just a few (in an age where 'victimhood' is a virtue, these wokeist 'causes' are increasing all the time) as platforms to constantly promote themselves. They parade their compassion, high culture, and all their 'values' (what happened to virtues?) to their social media devotees. It all seems so plastic given that it usually amounts to little more than words, tweets

and likes. But, all the same it seems to succeed in framing these phonies as the secular saints that the new religion craves.

Phonies

Well, the phonies didn't fool Jesus, (“whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside... appear righteous, but inside...are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing”) and they don't fool us. We see their cheap ambition, which every other day tries to cancel those more talented and deserving of public applause than themselves.

For every wacky cause the wokeist 'supports', for every victim claiming and cringe-causing narcissist that they applaud (from their iPhone), they make themselves more worthy of 'likes' for that inevitable day when they will come to cash in their chips and be jettisoned to the upper echelons of the wokeist high priesthood, to sit in judgement and to beat, bully and brainwash the rest of us into giving them the adoration they crave.

Let us hope for finer days, days when the good become great because they have acted rather than tweeted, truly merited rather than simply moaned. In a word, earned the respect and esteem of worthy people, even though they never sought it.

Let's never stoop to the level of the professional wokeist - not to

be confused with the many good people who might identify as woke, citizens who really do put their heart and soul into causes outside of themselves (even if some of their causes are a little misguided) - who pretend to care for certain popular causes where it seems the worse the cause, the more praise they receive. Being praised for pretending to care about important social matters, amounts to taking the credit from those who really do take action for what really does actually matter.

“Jesus understood clearly that many of these Pharisees had become nothing more than corrupt”

So, if you are appalled at the idea of ever becoming a self-serving, self-praising, virtue-signalling, attention-seeking, trumpet-blowing hypocrite and indeed feel a passionate desire to call out persons for being such - resign yourself to being unpopular, or passed over, or cancelled, and keep your dignity for the day when they are found out for what these professional wokeists really are: an unoriginal, mediocre, 'update' of the worst type of Pharisee.

Mass is more than a place where we go to pray as a group



Mass at St Mary's Church in Belfast city centre after restrictions in Northern Ireland were lifted. Photo: Hugh Russell.



You would really have to wonder how public health advice intersects so neatly with secular convenience, writes **Paul Brosnan**

It has been such a difficult year for myself and indeed all other practicing Catholics across Ireland. Government policy has made it impossible to perform our natural obligation as Christians, which is to attend and participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Many might say "Can't you just pray at home?" or "Is God

not everywhere?". While these are great questions, they ignore the fact that the Mass is more than a place where we go to pray as a group.

“A priest in Dublin was warned by An Garda Siochana to stop giving Holy Communion after Mass or risk punishment”

I am reminded of a homily that I read from Pope emeritus Benedict XVI: “The Eucharistic Celebration is the greatest and highest act of prayer, and constitutes the centre and the source from which even the other forms receive ‘nourishment’: the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic adoration, *Lectio Divina*, the Holy Rosary, meditation. All these expressions of prayer, which have their centre in the

Eucharist, fulfil the words of Jesus: ‘I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.’”

Fundamental truth

This is such a great quote because it reminds us of a fundamental truth, that the Eucharist forms a key component of every Christian's life. It is our greatest form of nourishment, and our highest form of prayer. When deprived of the Eucharist, many Christians feel lost and hopeless. Most Catholics, including myself, have for many months been praying an “Act of Spiritual Communion” after watching a Mass online - however, as Aquinas and the Catechism of the Catholic Church teach us, this is definitely not a replacement for the Blessed Sacrament. It is very painful therefore to realise that Ireland is

nearly the only country in Europe that does not permit public worship.

“The Eucharist forms a key component of every Christian's life. It is our greatest form of nourishment”

We can find some inconsistencies when we examine our public health guidelines. For example, in one day I can do my weekly grocery shopping, fill my car with diesel, take my clothes to the dry cleaner, get a takeaway, buy a bicycle and apply for a mortgage provided I'm willing to wear a mask, sanitise my hands and social distance. These are sensible and logical precautions that myself and millions in Ireland are prepared to follow. However, if I follow the same precautions while I attend Mass in St Mary's Cathedral

in Killarney (which can comfortably hold at least 300 people) the Government and public health experts will tell me that this is too dangerous and may facilitate the transmission of Covid-19. It really makes me wonder how public health intersects so neatly with secular convenience.

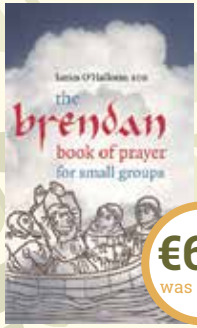
Warned

A priest in Dublin was warned by An Garda Siochana to stop giving Holy Communion after Mass or risk punishment. Another priest was fined €500 for saying Mass before a congregation. It's shocking to think that in 2021 the Government is prepared to punish citizens for practicing their spirituality. Article 44 of Bunreacht na hEireann says “The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.” If almost every other country in Europe is able to hold public worship in a safe way, then why can't Ireland?

I hope and pray that the Government and public health officials come to their senses and permit an immediate return to public worship in Ireland.

“It is very painful therefore to realise that Ireland is nearly the only country in Europe that does not permit public worship”

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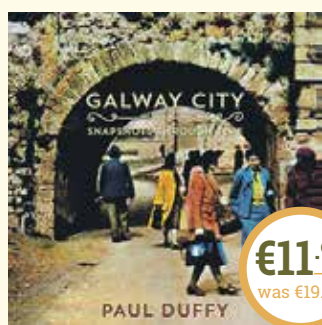
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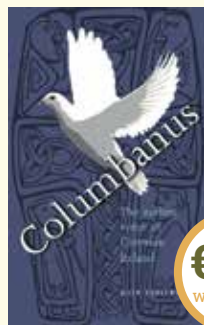
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Out&About

The Gospel according to St John's parish



KERRY: St John's parish youth group, Jake Carroll, Clodagh Hickey, Isabella Bright, Scarlett Bright and Megan Diggins, staged 20 different still scenes from Gospels for St John's public reading of the Gospel according to St Mark at St John's parish, Tralee, March 31.



ANTRIM: Bro. Ryan Holovlasky CSsR is pictured with Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor, after he was ordained a deacon, March 21.



DUBLIN: Ballyroan parish pastoral worker Averna Laharte (left) is pictured with her husband Joe, Fr Michael Murtagh and John Shortt, after a Mass in honour of her retirement, March 23.

IN SHORT

Inter-diocesan music project to raise funds for Mary's Meals

An inter-diocesan Easter music initiative was launched March 25 involving seven dioceses and 66 post-primary students to raise awareness and funds for Mary's Meals.

The initiative brings students and young people from over Ireland together to record three songs focused on the three movements of Easter – Palm Sunday, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

The project is the brainchild of Declan Browne, Diocesan Advisor for Diocese of Waterford & Lismore, according to a press release.

Mr Browne wants to connect "with schools in a meaningful way during lockdown, as well as creating a space that would give the students a lift and an enjoyable focus whilst drawing on their creativity and talent".

In launching the finished project, it is anticipated the music video will generate funds for Mary's Meals who presently feed 1.6 million children a day.

Concern helps refugees after massive blaze leaves 50,000 homeless in Bangladesh camp

Concern Worldwide is providing emergency support to victims of the huge blaze in Cox's Bazaar refugee camp in Bangladesh.

More than 50,000 people were forced to flee the flames on Monday, March 22. Fifteen people are confirmed dead while at least 400 more remain missing. More than 10,000 homes were destroyed.

Cox's Bazaar is home to one million Rohingya people who fled violence in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017.

"This is a tragedy that even the most resil-

ient people will find hard to bear," said Heather Macey, Concern's Emergency Response Director in Cox's Bazaar.

"The needs are vast; drinking water, food and shelter are the priority. Protection and safety concerns including reuniting families and supporting lost children.

"Toilets and water points are destroyed and need to be restored as soon as possible. Temporary shelter is needed now but with the monsoon season due in the next few weeks a more permanent solution is needed quickly."

The fire last Monday was the third blaze to hit the camp in four days, though they caused minor damage.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LEBANON: Members of the Irish Army are pictured outside the UNIFL Head Quarters in Lebanon on St Patrick's Day, holding shamrock for the occasion.



ANTRIM:

Jim Deeds receives the first copies of his book, *A Look of Love*, published by Redemptorist Communications.

CORK:

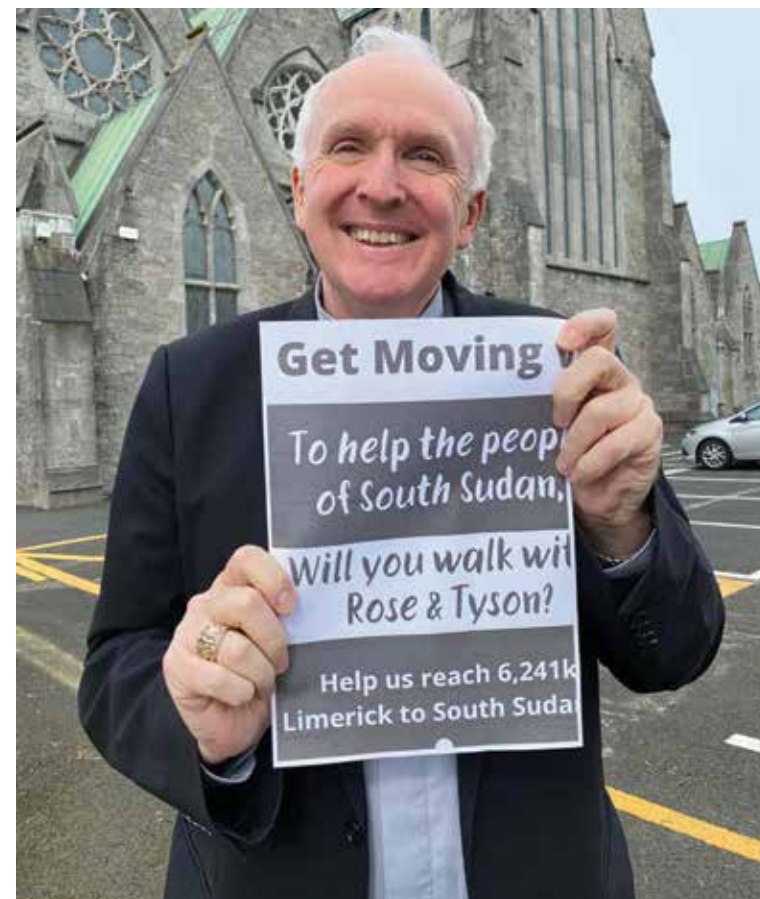
Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Joe Kavanagh, accompanied by Lady Mayoress Stephanie, represented the people of Cork at Mass for St Patrick's Day at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork.



ROSCOMMON: Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry launches the Year of the Family by blessing an icon of St Joseph in the Cathedral of the Annunciation, Ballaghaderreen.



WESTMEATH: Christopher Murtagh and Grainne McGeown pictured after their wedding on New Year's Eve, celebrated by the Bishop of Meath Dr Micheal Smith in the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar.



LIMERICK: Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick supports Trócaire volunteer Sharon Collopy's campaign to raise funds for South Sudan through a virtual walk.

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

Iraqi cardinal: Pope Francis gave \$350,000 for poor during Iraq trip

● During his recent visit to Iraq, Pope Francis gave a donation of \$350,000 to the Chaldean Catholic Church to support local families affected by conflict and the pandemic. Cardinal Louis Raphaël Sako told *Agenzia Fides* that the Pope's gift was "intended to be a sign of how real and concrete is the Pope's love for all the Iraqi people". Cardinal Sako, who is the Patriarch of Babylon and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, said that \$250,000 will be managed by the Chaldean Archdiocese of Baghdad. The remaining \$100,000 has been divided between the Chaldean Archdiocese of Mosul and Syriac Catholics in Bakhda, also known as Qaraqosh.

Chilean chapel follows design by Sagrada Familia architect

● Plans by architect Antonio Gaudi are the basis for a new chapel in Chile dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels. The project could resume this year, some 95 years after his death. The chapel was originally intended to be part of Gaudi's famous unfinished masterpiece, La Sagrada Familia Basilica of Barcelona. However, it was never added. The Gaudi de Triana Corporation was launched in 1996 with the goal of

building the chapel. Beatriz Valenzuela, the corporation's executive secretary, said there is "hopeful news" of progress on the chapel, which has faced several delays. In February, Raúl Irrarázabal, the architecture ministry's National Director of Architecture, announced the reactivation of the construction project. The project is in its administrative phase to evaluate its social and economic viability.

Only 'patriots' can stand in Hong Kong elections

● The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has consolidated its grip on Hong Kong by approving an overhaul of its quasi-democracy to ensure only "patriots" get to govern the Chinese territory.

Resolutions that drastically curb democratic representation were endorsed unopposed by the National People's Congress Standing Committee on March 30, while the next election, already delayed because of the pandemic, was rescheduled for December.

That follows last June's passage of the national security law, widely seen by critics as a means of crushing dissent and effectively ending any vestiges of the promises guaranteeing self-rule for 50 years made before Hong Kong's 1997 handover from Britain to China.

A powerful new vetting committee will ensure candidates picked for public office are loyal to Beijing. The committee will be backed by national security authorities.

Catholic priest and six others killed in Nigeria church attack

● A Catholic priest and at least six others were killed by gunmen in an attack on St Paul's Catholic Church in Benue State, Nigeria, the Diocese of Katsina-Ala confirmed last Wednesday.

Fr Ferdinand Fanen Ngugban had just offered Mass in his parish church of St Paul Ayetwar in eastern Nigeria and was preparing to leave for the Holy Week Chrism Mass when he was shot in the head by gunmen on March 30.

According to a statement by Fr Fidelis Phelle Akjmbul, chancellor of the Diocese of Katsina-Ala, the body of the priest and those of six other victims were recovered after "there was pandemonium among the internally displaced persons who took refuge in the parish premises".

Mozambique massacre should prompt response – Catholic group

While a recent massacre in Mozambique has drawn headlines internationally, the country has been dealing with violence for years, which has largely gone unacknowledged in the international community, said leaders of a Catholic charity and peace organisation present in the country.

Johan Viljoen, director of Denis Hurley Peace Institute (DHPI), which is an entity of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), said footage and images coming in from the Palma massacre are horrifying.

"There are bodies lying everywhere on the streets and on the beaches; countless bodies of innocent civilians," Mr Viljoen told ACI Africa, on March 29.

"What's happening here is no different from what we used to see in Iraq... unfortunately, the world has all this time been silent about it," he said.

He lamented that it has taken an attack on foreigners "for the world to finally realise the full extent of the crisis in Mozambique."

"Whatever the world is seeing now has been going on in Mozambique for years. We have tried to talk about it, but no one cared to listen," he said. "There is a global uproar now because a handful of foreigners were affected. But this has been going on. More than 3,000 innocent Mozambicans have died in this violence and no one cared."

Indonesia Palm Sunday bombing 'disgraced human dignity'

Indonesia's Catholic bishops have strongly condemned the Palm Sunday suicide bombing on the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral on the island of Sulawesi which injured at least 19 people.

The two attackers, who both died in the bombing, were believed to have been a part of the local Islamic State affiliated group, Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), according to the national police chief.

Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo, the archbishop of Jakarta, told CNA on March 29 that the injured victims



A woman religious prays during Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Maputo, Mozambique in this 2019 file photo. Photo CNS.

Militants seized control of the northern Mozambique port town of Palma last weekend, following a multi-day attack. Hundreds of militants ambushed the town on March 24, attacking shops, banks, and government buildings. They also attacked convoys trying to escape the town.

Dozens of people were killed in the attack, according to local officials, including seven foreigners. Tens of thousands of locals have fled as a result of the insurgency.

A militant group connected to the Islamic State has been blamed for the

attack, which is part of a years-long conflict with Islamist extremist groups in the region. According to the BBC, more than 2,500 people were killed in the fighting since 2017, and 700,000 displaced.

Palma is home to a billion-dollar natural gas project, making it a strategic target. The Mozambican government had promised to provide security to the French-run Total oil and gas company in the area.

Mr Viljoen maintained that the increasing military involvement from Western

countries is only aggravating the situation in Mozambique, where a number of Western powers are pursuing their respective economic interests.

He said the world should listen to the cry of Mozambicans who are suffering both at the hands of the insurgents and of authorities who sometimes wage war against innocent civilians.

"We are equal; foreigners and locals. Every life matters. As a Catholic organisation, we believe that we are all created in God's image," Mr Viljoen stressed.

of the cathedral bombing are hospitalised and recovering.

He said that the attack on the first day of Holy Week "shocked everybody in Indonesia, not only Catholics", noting that "leaders of all religious communities ... condemned the brutal violence".

"After the suicide bomb, the government has assured us Catholics, and Christians in general, that Holy Week services can be carried out as planned – with a security guarantee from the government," Cardinal Suharyo said.

"We all pray that we can celebrate this

Holy Week peacefully and that all Indonesians – not only Catholics – experience the peace Jesus Christ brings us."

The bombing occurred at the side gate of the Catholic cathedral of Makassar, the capital city of South Sulawesi province, as church-goers were exiting the cathedral at the start of Holy Week.

Two people, a man and a woman, drove up to the cathedral on a motorbike and tried to enter through a gate. They were reportedly turned away by security guards before the bomb detonated.

Easter celebrations return to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Christians celebrated Easter at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre this year after the storied church remained closed last Easter due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, presided over Palm

Sunday Mass on March 28 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with a small group in the church and more than 2,000 people participating in an outdoor Palm Sunday procession.

More than half the population of Israel is fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, and

authorities have relaxed some restrictions to allow small congregations to gather for Holy Week with social distancing measures in place, *Reuters* reported.

The church, which houses the tomb of Christ and the site of the crucifixion, was closed

for Easter 2020.

"Last year was a terrible Easter, without people, closed doors. This year is much better, the door is open, we don't have a lot of people but we feel more hopeful that things will become better," Archbishop Pizzaballa told *Reuters*.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Following in God's footsteps



Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris washes the feet of a man on Holy Thursday, April 1, 2021, in Notre Dame Cathedral, which was partially destroyed by a fire in 2019. Photo CNS.

US poll finds Church membership continues its downward trend

While fewer than half of American adults responding to a recent poll said they are members of a Church, synagogue or mosque, the findings do not necessarily mean that people have lost faith in God, a pair of Church observers said.

Church membership in 2020 dropped to 47% of the more than 6,100 respondents to a Gallup Poll. It is the first time since the polling firm started measuring Church membership in 1937 that a minority of adults said they belonged to a formal religious institution.

Back then, in the midst of the Great Depression, 73% of

adults said they belonged to a Church. Over the next six decades, membership levels remained steady at about 70% before a measured decline began.

The number of non-Church members continues a downward trend that began at the turn of the 21st century.

"The poll doesn't note that fewer than 50% of Americans don't believe in God. It's important to note that across society institutional belonging is not high right now," said Timothy O'Malley, director of education at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame.

"It's becoming quite clear that at least Church membership is not the way most Americans are practicing religiosity," he said.

Matthew Manion, faculty director of the Centre for Church Management at Villanova University, agreed, saying the polling results confirm what many Church leaders already knew.

"Membership in a Church is not seen as relevant or worth people's time in a growing portion of the country," Mr Manion said. "It (the poll) does not say that a belief in God does not exist among these people."

The trend of declining

Church membership parallels similar drop-offs in membership in clubs, organisations and professional associations in much of American society.

The poll's findings show that the number of Catholics belonging to a parish dropped from 76% in 2000 to 58% in 2020. Among Protestants, the membership decline in the same period was smaller – from 73% to 64%.

Mr Manion noted that the poll showed the Catholic falloff in membership has accelerated since 2010, when 73% of Catholics said they still belonged to a parish.

Benedict XVI 'delighted' by Year of St Joseph

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI has paid tribute to the Year of St Joseph declared by Pope Francis and urged Catholics to read Francis' apostolic letter *Patris corde*, describing it as a simple text "coming from the heart and going to the heart, yet containing such profound depth".

In an interview with the German Catholic weekly newspaper *Die Tagespost*, the 93-year-old, whose baptismal

patron saint is Joseph, also talked about family memories, and impressions from his pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

"I am of course particularly delighted that Pope Francis has drawn the attention of the Faithful to St Joseph," Benedict XVI said in the interview which was published in full April 1.

"I have therefore read with particular gratitude and heartfelt approval the

apostolic letter *Patris corde*, which the Holy Father issued on the occasion of the elevation of St Joseph to patron saint of the entire Church 150 years ago."

"I think that this text should be read and considered again and again by the Faithful and thus contribute to a purification and deepening of our veneration of the saints in general and of St Joseph in particular."

Pope signals further reforms to tackle financial crime

● Signalling further reforms of the Vatican City State penal code, particularly when it comes to financial crimes, Pope Francis said the laws must reflect "the equality of all members of the church" by doing away with "privileges that go back in time and are no longer in keeping with the responsibility of each for building up of the Church". Meeting March 27 with the judges, prosecutors, investigators and other members of the Vatican's state tribunal, the Pope also encouraged efforts to facilitate international cooperation in investigations to ensure an accurate exchange of information in a timely manner. Earlier in the week, the 42-page decision of a London judge was released explaining why he overturned a court order freezing the assets of a financier being investigated by the Vatican for extortion, fraud and money laundering in connection with the Vatican Secretariat of State's purchase of multimillion-dollar property in London's Chelsea neighbourhood.

The judge said that in asking the British government to freeze the assets of Gianluigi Torzi, who helped broker the deal, the Vatican's application contained "material non-disclosures and misrepresentations".

Pope grants Hamburg archbishop leave from duties

● Pope Francis has granted Hamburg Archbishop Stefan Hesse a leave of absence from his duties, the Hamburg Archdiocese announced March 29.

The archbishop recently offered his resignation after a report on the handling of clergy sex abuse cases in the Cologne Archdiocese, where he served as director of personnel and vicar general.

In the interim, Msgr Ansgar Thim, vicar general, will handle archdiocesan administration, reported the German Catholic news agency, KNA.

The question as to if or when the Pope will accept Archbishop Hesse's resignation remains open.

The Vatican has so far not issued any statement on the case.

Pope Francis now has time to unhurriedly decide about the resignation, KNA reported. Further information was not available, a Hamburg Archdiocese spokesman said, adding that the Pope had confirmed the steps the archdiocese had already taken.

Archbishop Hesse remains archbishop, meaning that the bishop's see is not vacant. Archbishop Hesse has no right to demand that his resignation be accepted. However, the Hamburg Archdiocese noted on its webpage, "We assume that Rome will respect the archbishop's request".

Pope Francis tells priests at Chrism Mass 'the cross is non-negotiable'

● Pope Francis told priests at Chrism Mass at the Vatican that "the cross is non-negotiable" when preaching the Gospel.

"The preaching of the Good News is mysteriously linked to persecution and the cross," Pope Francis said in his homily on April 1.

The Pope went further to say that "the preaching of the Gospel is effective not because of our eloquent words, but because of the power of the cross".

The Chrism Mass of Holy Week is the Mass at which the Pope, as the bishop of Rome, blesses the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and the Chrism Oil, which will be used throughout the diocese over the coming year.

This year, fewer than 100 priests from the Diocese of Rome were allowed to concelebrate the Mass and renew their priestly vows in St Peter's Basilica due to Covid-19 restrictions.

At the Mass offered at the basilica's Altar of the Chair, the Pope emphasised that the cross was present in the Lord's life "from the very beginning".



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Vatican can't blame the media for spin cycles around Becciu

Suppose that earlier this week, when plans for what eventually happened were confirmed, the Vatican Press Office had issued something like the following statement.

"Pope Francis usually celebrates the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday outside the Vatican with vulnerable and excluded people, expressing the Lord's special love for them. Due to Covid-19 concerns, such a gesture is impossible this year. Instead, the Holy Father has chosen to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper this year at the Vatican apartment of His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Becciu.

“The Pope does something obviously destined to make waves, but it isn't announced officially”

"To avoid any possible misunderstandings, it is to be recalled that there are currently investigations underway of financial transactions in which the former Archbishop Becciu was involved as the Substitute of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, and this visit in no way prejudices the outcome of those inquiries.

"Neither should the visit be seen in connection with the Holy Father's decision in September of the past year to accept His Eminence's resignation as Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and from his privileges as a member of the College of Cardinals. The visit is a strictly private, pastoral act of the Holy Father. There will be no press presence and no pool video or photography."

Media sensation

Had that been the case, perhaps when Pope Francis actually did skip the Vatican's own Holy Thursday Mass, which he delegated to Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, and strolled across Vatican grounds to Cardinal Becciu's apartment, it wouldn't have become a media sensation of quite the same magnitude.

Instead, we got the usual PR dance of the Pope Francis era.

Here's how it goes. The Pope does something obviously destined to make waves, but it isn't announced officially. Instead, it leaks from a journalist who has the Pope's ear, in this case a veteran Italian writer who did a 2017 book rebutting Francis's traditionalist critics. Vatican spokespersons dodge calls for a while, then

Pope Francis lights the paschal candle at the start of the Easter Vigil in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 3, 2021. Photo: CNS



“The underlying assumption was that the Pope has concluded Becciu is guilty and was trying to show him compassion”

issue a nod-and-a-wink, non-confirmation confirmation.

(In this case, the only on-the-record statement came from *Vatican News*, which published a brief item about the Pope's visit to Cardinal Becciu but stressed it wasn't an "official" confirmation, raising the "angels on the head of a pin"-style question of how the Vatican's own official news agency can publish non-official news.)

In such a void, a rule kicks in as hard-wired into the physics of the media universe as the laws of thermodynamics are into the physical one: Without any official explanation, speculation abounds.

Consider the context. When Francis defenestrated his former Chief of Staff last September, Becciu had been linked to a \$400 million London real estate scandal that began on his watch at the Secretariate of State, and he was also facing charges of illegitimately funnelling Vatican money to relatives and friends from his native Sardinia, most notoriously a female business manager named

Cecilia Marogna who's been dubbed "the cardinal's dame".

For many observers, especially in the Italian and English-language press, to hear that the Pope decided to drop in on Cardinal Becciu for one of the holiest nights on the Christian calendar couldn't help but be taken as a show of support, if not an indirect papal *mea culpa*. (The fact that Francis often visited Cardinal Becciu's apartment in years past on Holy Thursday is irrelevant, because the cardinal wasn't facing the Vatican equivalent of indictment before.)

Holy Thursday Mass

One joke making the rounds had it that since Pope Francis skipped the usual foot-washing ritual at the Holy Thursday Mass, he decided to cleanse Cardinal Becciu's reputation instead.

In some Spanish and Portuguese commentary, the opposite conclusion was more instinctive. The Pope's decision to visit the cardinal was seen as of a piece with his habit of going to prisons and treatment

centers for drug and alcohol addicts on Holy Thursdays, i.e., reaching out to people who've fallen and are in need of conversion. The underlying assumption was that the Pope has concluded Becciu is guilty and was trying to show him compassion.

These competing interpretations metastasize and go viral, at which point the now-inevitable other shoe drops: Another leak goes out, again from sources close to the Pope – in this case, the same journalist who originally broke the story – indicating that Francis is upset that his simple private act has been misunderstood and manipulated, with the pontiff blaming "media instrumentalizations".

Here's the thing.

It's entirely possible the visit was nothing more than a purely pastoral act. Perhaps Francis simply wanted to show gratitude for the long years when Cardinal Becciu was the Pope's most important aide as the *sostituto*, "substitute", in the Secretariat of State, and also, in the spirit of Easter, to offer the consoling idea that no matter how the current legal process shakes out, spiritually there's always the possibility of rebirth and new life.

Yet from a PR point of view, it doesn't really matter what the Pope's intentions may have been. Francis and the people around him

are anything but naïve about media dynamics, and they knew full well the frenzy the visit to Cardinal Becciu would trigger.

“Similarly, if you build a PR bomb and take no steps to defuse it, you don't get to blame the media for the blast”

The only possible conclusion is that Francis wanted the visit to be open to multiple interpretations, but he didn't want to own any of them.

In any event, it's disingenuous to call those interpretations "instrumentalizations". If you stand on a balcony and chuck a brick over the side, and that brick ends up hitting somebody in the street, it's no defence to blame the law of gravity. Similarly, if you build a PR bomb and take no steps to defuse it, you don't get to blame the media for the blast.

If clarification is needed, it's now on the Pope to provide it.

As we say here in Rome, *Buona Pasqua a Tutti!* Happy Easter to All!

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*

Pope on Easter calls for faster, fairer distribution of Covid vaccines



Elise Ann Allen

Pope Francis on Easter offered consolation to all those still struggling as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and he urged speeding up production of Covid-19 vaccines amid global delays and ensuring they reach the poorest countries.

In his Easter *Urbi et Orbi* address, the Pope said the resurrected Christ is a sign of “hope for all who continue to suffer from the pandemic, both the sick and those who have lost a loved one”.

“Everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us, requires assistance and has the right to have access to necessary care,” he said, adding, “This is even more evident in these times when all of us are called to combat the pandemic.”

“Pope Francis said the risen Christ is also a sign of hope and comfort for all those unemployed or struggling financially because of the pandemic”

Calling vaccines “an essential tool in this fight”, Francis urged the international community “in a spirit of global responsibility, to commit to overcoming delays in the distribution of vaccines and to facilitate their distribution, especially in the poorest countries”.

Pope Francis offered his traditional Easter *Urbi et Orbi* blessing “to the city and to the world” after celebrating Mass Sunday morning in St Peter’s Basilica, which was closed to the public and livestreamed due to ongoing coronavirus restrictions.

Rather than giving a homily, the Pope, as he has done on occasion in the past, sat in silence for several minutes after the Gospel reading before continuing the liturgy.

In his *Urbi et Orbi* address, given after Mass at the entrance of the basilica, Pope Francis said the risen Christ is also a sign of hope and comfort for all those unemployed or struggling financially because of the pandemic, and asked that pub-

lic authorities “act so that everyone, especially families in greatest need, will be offered the assistance needed for their decent sustenance”.

He prayed that restrictions preventing Christians from attending liturgical celebrations would soon be lifted, asking that these “as well as all restrictions on freedom of worship and religion worldwide, may be lifted and everyone be allowed to pray and praise God freely”.

Francis also prayed for the many young people who have gone months without going to school or seeing their friends in person, insisting that “Experiencing real human relationships, not just virtual relationships, is something that everyone needs, especially at an age when a person’s character and personality is being formed”.

Crisis

Turning to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, he offered a special shout-out to young people there who are “committed to supporting democracy and making their voices heard peacefully, in the knowledge that hatred can be dispelled only by love”.

As he traditionally does in his *Urbi et Orbi*, Pope Francis made a special appeal for countries experiencing war and violence, asking for peaceful resolutions and genuine dialogue.

The Pope prayed for migrants fleeing war and extreme poverty, praying they would “never lack concrete signs of solidarity and human fraternity, a pledge of the victory of life over death that we celebrate on this day”.

He praised countries that welcome migrants such as Jordan and Lebanon, which is undergoing its own internal political and economic crisis but nonetheless has taken on hundreds of thousands of Syrians fleeing civil war.

“May the people of Lebanon, who are undergoing times of difficulty and uncertainty, experience the consolation of the Risen Lord and find support from the international community in their vocation to be a land of encounter, coexistence and pluralism,” the Pope said.

Francis prayed for an end to the war in Syria, and for a peaceful resolution to other violent conflicts in the Middle East, including those ravaging Yemen and Libya.

“May all parties involved commit themselves effectively to ending conflicts and allowing war-weary peoples to live in peace and to begin the reconstruction of their respective countries,” he said.

Pointing to Jerusalem’s special status in the Middle East, Pope Francis prayed that the city could



Pope Francis delivers his Easter message *urbi et orbi* (to the city and the world) after celebrating Easter Mass in St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican April 4, 2021. Photo: CNS

become “a place of encounter where all can see one another as brothers and sisters, and where Israelis and Palestinians will rediscover the power of dialogue for reaching a stable solution that will enable the two states to dwell side by side in peace and prosperity”.

“Francis also prayed for countries and regions in Africa ravaged by violence, including Nigeria, Tigray, and Cabo Delgado”

He recalled his historic visit to Iraq last month and prayed that the country would continue to pursue peace and become a place “hospitable and welcoming” to everyone,

regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Francis also prayed for countries and regions in Africa ravaged by violence, including Nigeria, Tigray, and Cabo Delgado, asking that efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully continue “in respect for human rights and the sacredness of life, through fraternal and constructive dialogue in a spirit of reconciliation and true solidarity”.

“There are still too many wars and too much violence in the world! May the Lord, who is our peace, help us to overcome the mindset of war,” he said, and asked that prisoners of war, especially those in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh, would be able to safely return to their families.

Violence

Pope Francis condemned the fact that while the pandemic is still spreading and many countries continue to be burdened by crippling social and economic crises, violent conflicts continue and “military

arsenals are being strengthened”.

He prayed that God would “inspire world leaders to curb the race for new weaponry” as violence continues, noting that April 4 marks the International Awareness Day against anti-personnel landmines.

“Amid the many hardships we are enduring, let us never forget that we have been healed by the wounds of Christ,” he said. “In the light of the Risen Lord, our sufferings are now transfigured. Where there was death, now there is life. Where there was mourning, now there is consolation.”

“In embracing the cross, Jesus bestowed meaning on our sufferings and now we pray that the benefits of that healing will spread throughout the world,” he said, wishing the world a happy Easter.

i Elise Ann Allen, senior correspondent for Cruxnow.com

Letters

Letter of the week

Abortion push in North 'throws democracy in wastebin'

Dear Editor, The unelected Secretary of State Brandon Lewis is preparing to impose a further horrific abortion regime on the North, riding roughshod over the wishes of the vast majority of the population here who wish to save the lives of both mothers and their unborn babies from this murderous onslaught.

Abortion is exclusively reserved for the Assembly. This means the secretary's actions amount to nothing less than a coup d'état, effectively making

redundant ministers' positions, neutralising my vote, and throwing democracy into the wastebin, just like recent events in Myanmar/Burma. Further, it means any decision taken by the Assembly can now be disregarded according to the secretary's latest whims.

As a pro-life voter, I ask your readers to write to their MLAs and demand they stop this genocide of, and discrimination against, the unborn by withdrawing their parties from the Executive in response to this unconstitutional power

grab. Bringing down the Executive will mark a return of democratic accountability and power restoration to elected ministers answerable to the people of Northern Ireland. It will also save the lives of the – as yet – unconceived children now at risk of being murdered in their mothers' wombs and prevent the well documented traumatic post abortion effects on mothers.

*Yours etc.,
John Austin
Limavady, Co. Derry*

Pro-choice politicians must be sent 'sterner message'

Dear editor, The recent decision to push abortion by Westminster on the NI Assembly was met with a somewhat "forceful" response by the northern Church leadership. However, I feel that it did not go far enough. Likewise, calling upon local political action could be viewed as practical, but what of these local politicians who may welcome Brandon Lewis' decision? I personally feel that enough is enough, especially when such political leadership cannot bring themselves to reference the unborn child's humanity, but instead tailor it with the indifference of being a "pregnancy"!

To these progressive political views, an unborn child is an inconvenience, whose removal is nothing more dramatic an act than one would remove lint from a coat.

The whole process of accompaniment is very well and good, but these politicians and their acolytes need to be sent the sterner message of canonical sanctions and refusal of Holy Communion, for the good of their souls and a determined act of solidarity to the unborn. The example set by St Ambrose towards the Emperor Theodosius I in 390AD is a case in point, as it too was over the matter of the death of innocents!

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



Indebted to those who pushed for Knock's international recognition

Dear Editor, News that Knock Shrine has been designated an international Marian and Eucharistic shrine by Pope Francis [IC 11/03/2021], during a special address by video link from the Vatican, is welcomed.

And the recognition is of special significance, given the apparition of St Joseph in Knock in 1879. Archbishop of Tuam Michael

Neary petitioned the Holy See to redesignate the Mayo pilgrim site. On August 21, 1879, 15 pilgrims claimed to have seen an apparition on the gable end wall of the Knock church. They said Mary, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist were observed standing nearby.

The witnesses to this even stayed viewing the apparition for two hours in

torrential rain, reciting the rosary and subsequently submitted evidence of seeing an apparition of Mary, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist at the gable end of the church in Knock. We are indebted to the efforts of Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation and

Archbishop Michael Neary, Archbishop of Tuam for this historic milestone without whom this international recognition would not be possible. Heretofore Pope Francis visited Knock Shrine in 2018 as part of the World Meeting of Families.

*Yours etc.,
Gerry Coughlan
Kilnamanagh, Dublin*

Church statement on couple blessings raised hackles

Dear Editor, The Vatican's recent re-statement of Church teaching, in which only couples aspiring to live a married life, may have their relationships blessed, has predictably raised the hackles of those critical of everything distinctively Christian. The evasion and ignorance underlying so much of this commentary is so tiring and stifling.

Wouldn't it be strange if the Catholic Church acquiesced with anything that is destructive of God's life within us?

To be authentic the Catholic Church must repeat and represent in every

generation Jesus Christ's call to 'Repent, and believe the Good News'. For us who are members of his Church, this means that we have discovered that God loves us more than we can ever imagine.

At the same time, we also discovered that our sin – our refusal to follow his will and our stubborn reliance upon ourselves – thwarted our happiness and diminished our contribution to those around us.

With great personal pain, Jesus has revealed to us and made it possible for us, to share in God's mercy. We have

found that Jesus's promise to give us "life and have it to the full" requires us to unreservedly abandon ourselves to him.

Finally, in our struggle against the snares of this world – ever-present, perverse, and pervasive – the discernment of the Church he founded, is indispensable. Let us thank and praise God for this clear, considered, and compassionate re-statement of authentic marital life as it was presented to us by Jesus Christ.

*Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy,
Lee Road, Cork.*

facebook community

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

Government now says public Mass is an offence despite earlier denials

Penal times? Back to the Mass rocks. – **Charles Taker**

In times of crisis, the last thing we need is hysteria. This Government has over-reacted hysterically by criminalising the celebration and attendance at public Mass I thought we were led by reasonable persons but to imagine there is a greater risk of spreading the virus at church than at the supermarket is simply absurd. They may argue that people need food and other necessities but this actually shows the Government fails to realise people also need Mass. Remember, "not by bread alone does man live". – **Brendan Kennedy**

In ostensibly protestant Scotland, the Church challenged the criminalisation of going to church, through the courts, and won. Here the Irish Church and bishops have been woeful, waiting like children to be "allowed" to practice their faith, by the godless in Government. – **Gerry O'Neill**

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." As we enter Holy Week, let us remember the words of Our Lord as he was nailed to Cross. – **Anthony O'Shaughnessy**

Back to penal times. The Mass rocks increased the faith. This will do the same. On the first Palm Sunday when the people were told to be quiet Our Lord said that if they were hushed the very stones would cry out. Our voices will not be silenced. – **Deirdre Nic Eanruig**

Whilst I agree with all places of worship being opened up for the public celebration of faith, the comparisons made here with Oliver Cromwell and the penal times is absurd and over reactionary to say the least. Catholics and priests were exiled or killed for their faith in such times. Some context please! – **Thomas Bierney**

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

Why is March 25 not a holy day?

Dear Editor, The edition of *The Irish Catholic* in my hand was dated March 25, the date on which we celebrate the visit of God's angel to Mary, when she said yes let it be done. God as promised took on human form, a form which became visible when he was born nine months exactly later on December 25.

While I do not decry the status of Christmas, it is a source of mystery to me why the annual celebration of his arrival on earth is not elevated to that of a Holy Day. Surely the two events have similar meanings for the Christian community.

Coincidentally, March 25 marked the end of one year and the beginning of another in the medieval calendar. This was the day when taxes on land were paid. When the Westminster Parliament joined the rest of Europe in the late 18th Century to fall in with the Gregorian calendar, days were added for tax purposes which is why April 5 up to recently marked the end of the UK and the Irish tax year.

*Yours etc.,
Gerald Murphy
Rathfarnham, Dublin 16*

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



▲ **EL SALVADOR:** A man carries a crucifix during the Los Cristos procession in Izalco, April 1, during Holy Week celebrations.

◀ **USA:** Deacon Dominik Wegiel uses incense during the chrism Mass, March 30, at St Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, NY.



FRANCE: People carry crosses into Sacre-Coeur Basilica on Montmartre in Paris before taking part in a Good Friday procession April 2.



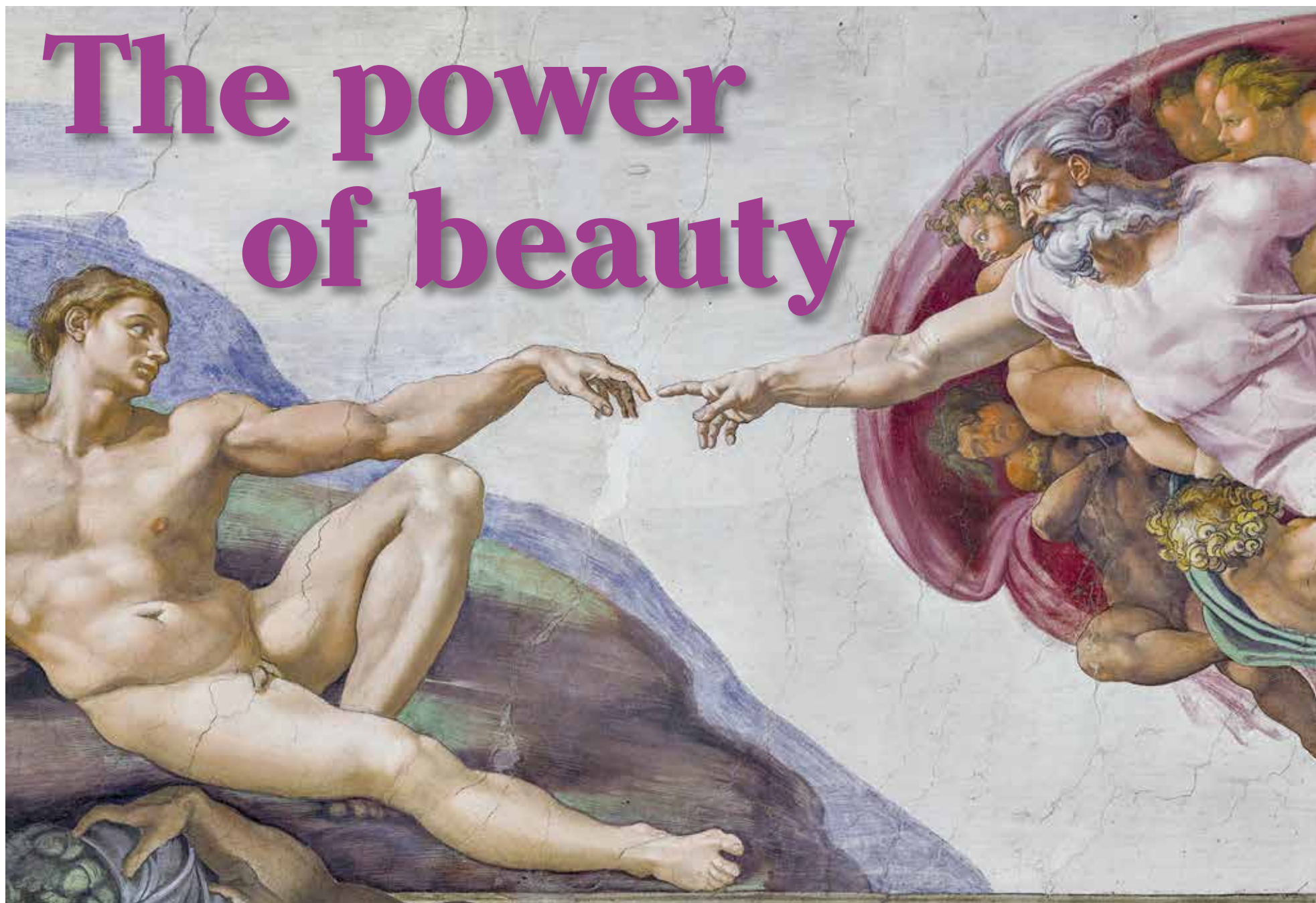
IRAQ: Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Youna speaks following a Palm Sunday procession outside the Church of St John the Baptist in Qaraqosh, March 28.



HOLY LAND: Worshippers take part in a procession on Holy Thursday in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City, April 1.



VATICAN: Pope Francis leads the Way of the Cross in St Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 2.



The world will be saved by beauty! Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote that, Dorothy Day quoted it, and centuries before Jesus, Confucius made it central to his pedagogy. They were on to something. Beauty is a special language that cuts through and sidelines all the things that divide us – history, race, language, creed, ideology, politics, economic disparity, gender, sexual identity, and personal wounds. Beauty melts down all differences. Its speech, like that of a newborn, has no explicit words, but is a language so perfect that it can only be soiled by violating oneself. Two things in this world cannot be argued with, beauty and a baby. They also cannot defend themselves, and have only their own vulnerability as protection.

“Emotional beauty is not the beauty of a sunset or a great painting”

In classical Western philosophy, beauty is seen as one of the transcendental properties of being, and therefore as one of the properties of God. God is understood as having four transcendental qualities, namely, as being one, true, good, and beautiful. Hence, beauty possesses a divine, sacred quality. Artists and everyone sensitive to aesthetics have always recognised this, not necessarily in that they affirm explicitly that beauty is a



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

property of God, but that they recognise a godly quality in beauty; they sense a “blaspheme” whenever it is defaced, and feel the energy to create as divine.

Many forms

Beauty, as we know, takes many forms. Who of us has not at times felt the stunning power of physical beauty? Who has not been momentarily transfixed by the beauty of a sunset, an ocean, a mountain range, the stars, a full moon, a desert landscape, a particular tree, a thunderstorm, fresh snow, a gentle rain, an animal in the wild, a work of art or architecture, or a human body? Physical beauty is self-justifying. It cannot be argued with and may never be denigrated by an appeal to something higher and more spiritual. It is unequivocally real and thus needs to be recognised, affirmed, and blessed.

“In classical Western philosophy, beauty is seen as one of the transcendental properties of being, and therefore as one of the properties of God”

For most of us, when we hear the word beauty, physical beauty is what comes to mind. Now, while that beauty is real, powerful, and can transform the heart, there are other kinds of beauty equally as powerful and transforming. I am not sure what language works in terms of what I am about to describe, so forgive me if my expression here is amateur and awkward, but we can speak, and need to, of beauty in the emotional and moral realm. There is something we might call emotional beauty or moral beauty.

Emotional

Emotional beauty is not the beauty of a sunset or a great painting, but is the beauty of a particular expression of love, of empathy, or of compassion that, like a beautiful sunset, we are occasionally graced to witness. For example, we can be transfixed when seeing the miraculous rescue of a child, when seeing

a helpless animal saved by rescuers, when seeing an elderly couple affectionately holding hands, or when hearing of a generous response by the public to a plea for help by a poor family. As with physical beauty, there is a divine quality here and, as with physical beauty, there is something here that only the most boorish of persons would dare smudge. However, whenever our emotions are involved there is always the danger of an unhealthy sentimentality also being present; but, that danger notwithstanding, our emotions, like our eyes, are also an opening to beauty.

“For most of us, when we hear the word beauty, physical beauty is what comes to mind”

Finally, not least, there is moral beauty, beauty of soul. The salient example here is martyrdom and every other kind of love that sacrifices its own wishes, desires, and life for something higher. While this does not always make for a beautiful body, it does make for a beautiful soul. In affirming this, I am not thinking, first, of its

most salient examples, the religious martyrs who gave up their lives rather than deny their faith, or even of persons like Mohandas Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Maximilian Kolbe, Oscar Romero, and the many today who give up their lives for others. These are powerful examples of moral beauty, but many of us see this first-hand in our own families and circle of friends. For example, I look at my own mother and dad who for most of their lives sacrificed to provide for a large family and, especially, to provide that family with what is more important than food and clothing, namely, faith and moral guidance.

Moral

There was a moral beauty in their sacrifice, though sometimes during those years, by Hollywood standards, my mom and dad looked more haggard than beautiful. Moral beauty, though, is measured by a different standard. That being said, there is also the need to be cautious here: while emotional beauty carries the risk of sentimentality, moral beauty carries the risk of fanaticism. Fanatics, serial killers, and snipers are also highly focused morally. Morality, like anything else, can be misguided.

The world will be saved by beauty! True, though I would employ the present tense, the world is being saved by beauty.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, April 8, 2021

Personal Profile

The privilege of opening space for women

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Where there is a Will, there is a way



The pandemic may have been a time when many of us have reflected on and considered our legal affairs. In this article I would like to look at various matters which may be on our minds and also to reassure readers that legal services are deemed as an essential service even during level five restrictions and can be attended to in strict compliance with public health guidelines.

One issue is that of a will. A will is used to describe “a document in which a person called the testator or testatrix sets out his or her wishes in relation to certain matters which are to take effect on his or her death”. It is important to



Now may be the perfect time to get our legal affairs in order writes solicitor Elaine Byrne

remember that your will shall only take effect on your death so that it is open to you, provided you have capacity, to make and update your will as many times as you wish.

Why make a will?

If somebody dies without having made a will, the rules of intestacy apply. These are rules set out in the *Succession Act* of 1965 which

automatically determine how a person's estate is divided.

So, for example, Joe and Patricia are a married couple with three adult children. If Joe passes away without a will, anything in joint names will pass to Patricia as survivor while anything in Joe's sole name will be divided as to 2/3 to Patricia and 1/3 to their three children.

In making a will you can determine what happens to your property. You can also pick an executor who is the person or persons who will look after everything after your day.

Potential claims to a will

In making a will your solicitor will guide you through any potential claims that could be made against your estate to include:

- Your spouse is entitled to a legal right share to your estate, being half of your estate if no children and 1/3 if there are children;
- A child can make a claim to his or her parent's estate pursu-

ant to Section 117 of the *Succession Act* if he or she can show that “the testator has failed in his moral duty to make proper provision for the child in accordance with his means whether by his will or otherwise”;

- The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 provides that a qualified cohabitant (a member of a couple for two years or more if parents of one or more dependent children or five years or more in any other case) can bring an application before the court for provision to be made for him or her;

» Continued on Page 33

Family News



AND EVENTS

EASTER EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

The Dublin School of Drama and Communications is offering a range of classes for both children and adults looking to develop public speaking, confidence, and performative abilities.

Elocution classes, vocal training and public speaking and communications classes are all on offer, as well as children's group drama, roleplays and various other workshops. For more information visit: www.speechdramadublin.com.

As well as this, lingotot offers children the chance to learn French or Spanish in a fun, friendly and relaxed environment using an award-winning methodology. Classes are lively and interactive, but are based entirely on educational research. The activities are designed to expose the children to new sounds and vocabulary in an engaging and child-centred way.

Terms last four to ten weeks and each class lasts between 30-50 minutes depending on the age group. Classes are limited to small numbers to allow for quality time with the tutor. For more information, contact ireland@lingotot.com.

PLANS TO CUT CARBON EMISSIONS IN NI

The BBC reported that ideas to reduce carbon emissions from homes, businesses, transport and power sectors went out to public consultation last Wednesday.

It comes as Northern Ireland begins to formulate plans to deal with the climate challenge.

NI is heavily reliant on fossil fuels in many ways, but the plans announced last week aim to cut carbon emissions from energy use to near-zero.

It will mean more renewables, higher energy efficiency in homes, an end to petrol and diesel cars and a move to clean power sources like hydrogen.

Among the proposals is a new target of generating 70% of electricity from renewables by 2030.

However, the scope is much wider than power generation alone, and will affect how people get around and heat their homes as well.

The ideas are in the Economy Department's Energy Strategy, which aims to set future policy in the area and goes out to public consultation until June 30.

COVID SPENDING TO SOAR TO €28 BILLION BY THE END OF 2021

The total cost of Covid-19 related spending to the State across 2020 and 2021 is estimated to reach €28 billion by the end of this year.

This comes following comments made by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Addressing the Institute of International and European Affairs last week, Minister Michael McGrath said the deficit for the year is expected to be similar to 2020's €19 billion.

"It is entirely appropriate that we have acted to support the economy in these circumstances, and this has been greatly assisted by the approach taken by the European Central Bank in its response to the pandemic," the minister said.

He said that the Government will try to restore the public finances to a sustainable trajectory and ensure the country doesn't become an outlier as it emerges from the pandemic.

Persistent memory problems? Get it checked out



Memory decline is common in older age and indeed about 20% of adults over 65 have some degree of clinically significant cognitive impairment. Notably, the incidence of dementia also doubles every 5 years from the age of 65 reaching a prevalence of about 20% by the time one achieves octogenarian status! Despite the rising number of dementia cases, there is some good news in that the age at which it develops appears to have increased in the last decade.

Unfortunately, even with healthy ageing comes the inexorable death of brain cells and by as early as midlife, subtle changes in cognitive function are detected. In some cases, the brain may shrink by as much as 5% per decade after the age of 40 with a loss of both grey and white matter. Studies suggest that this shrinkage is not uniform and may be more marked in part of the frontal lobe that is important for attentional processing and problem solving. However, this does not usually impact in any significant way in gross cognitive ability.

“In about 30% of cases, dementia has other causes including stroke and some neurodegenerative conditions”

In clinical practice, it's common to see variable degrees of brain shrinkage on neuro-imaging in people of the same age and in the absence of dementia. Several factors such as genetics, lifestyle (alcohol intake and possibly smoking) and other vascular risk factors like high blood pressure may influence this. Diabetes, smoking and hypertension also contribute to hardening of the arteries in

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



the brain reducing or blocking blood flow in the smaller vessels and causing micro-areas of brain damage. Indeed, these appear as small spots on brain scans, usually occur without any symptoms and as they accumulate can result in increasing cognitive impairment.

Worried

But when should you be worried about your memory? Firstly, for some patients, subjective memory complaints are nothing to worry about and can occur in healthy normal people. For example, absent mindedness doesn't usually reflect anything serious and simply results in a lack of focus and attention. Several factors can impair attention like tiredness, poor sleep, low mood and worry or anxiety can also lead to distractibility and lack of focus too. This will both impair the efficient pick of information but also its retrieval – we all have encountered times when we've been stuck for a word or name, or lose our train of thought mid-sentence! Certain medical conditions like an underactive thyroid gland can also give a similar pattern of cognitive dysfunction as can mild to moderate vascular disease in the brain. Some medications can also affect memory and may need to be changed.

On the other hand, concerning features for Alzheimer's include progressive cognitive decline,

persistent loss of memory for new things and often problems with word finding and naming. Damage to the hippocampus which is the brain structure that stores new memories occurs early in Alzheimer's resulting in impaired retention of new information. Over time, nothing new can be retained with patients often repeating themselves and having no recognition even when reminded. As the disease spreads to other brain areas, it affects problem solving and judgement and eventually leads to global cognitive impairment.

However, early in the course of Alzheimer's general day to day function is preserved and the diagnosis is difficult to make. In fact, the term dementia is only applied when a medical condition causes sufficient cognitive impairment to impact on the usual activities of daily living. In practice, Alzheimer's is only reliably diagnosed when it progresses to the early stages of dementia.



The term 'mild cognitive impairment' also denotes a problem with your memory in the absence of dementia, but has an annual rate of transition to dementia of about 15%. Mini-stroke disease and other conditions may result in stable cognitive impairment but don't have the classical hallmark of rapid forgetfulness as occurs in Alzheimer's.

In about 30% of cases, dementia has other causes including stroke and some

neurodegenerative conditions. For example, Parkinson signs with dementia suggests Lewy Body dementia or Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. Prominent personality changes, apathy and disinhibited behaviour at an early stage suggest frontotemporal dementia. Still another type of dementia called Primary Progressive Aphasia results mainly in language difficulties. And there are even very rare causes that result from autoimmune conditions where the body attacks the brain but can be halted with drugs.

“Even with healthy ageing comes the inexorable death of brain cells and by as early as midlife, subtle changes in cognitive function”

Despite this, Alzheimer's makes up the bulk of cases for which there are currently two medications available. Both work to improve neurotransmitter imbalances in the brain, though their effect on cognitive performance is modest and not everyone benefits. In recent years, what has become clear though are some of the main risk factors for Alzheimer's. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, higher alcohol intake and lower education status. If these are addressed from midlife, Alzheimer's risk may be reduced by as much as 40%.

If you have persistent memory problems, do make sure to go your GP and get checked out – as there are things that can be done that may help.

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

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Special Cases

All of us should consider making or updating a will. In particular:

- Parents of young children.
- Parents of a child or children with special or additional needs
- Anyone whose circumstances have changed, remembering that a later marriage can revoke an earlier will but a later separation or divorce can not revoke an earlier will.
- If you have a large estate, it is important to get good tax advice. There is no inheritance tax between husband and wife. Currently a child can inherit €335,000.00; a brother, sister, niece or nephew can inherit €32,500.00 and a 'stranger in blood' €16,250 tax free. Anything over these amounts will be subject to inheritance tax at the rate of 33%. Your solicitor will advise you of various tax reliefs for example maximising group thresholds, agricultural relief and business relief.

Charitable legacies

Making a will is often a good time to consider leaving a bequest to charity. Please give full details of your chosen charity to include the charity number to your solicitor. Registered charities can inherit monies, property free of inheritance tax.

Transferring property during your lifetime

For anyone considering passing on property during your lifetime, the following should be considered:

- Who owns the property, is it in your sole name or in joint names with another; where are the title deeds; is it subject to a charge in favour of a bank and if so will the bank consent to the transfer?
- Are you transferring the whole of the property or part only? If part only a land registry compliant map marking the part to be transferred will be needed.
- You should organise a valuation for the property and this will determine any possible taxes to include any capital gains tax for you, the transferor, any capital acquisitions tax for the person getting the property, the transferee, and stamp duty again for the person getting the property.
- You and the person being gifted the property will need separate solicitors.

Creating an enduring power of attorney

An enduring power of attorney is a mechanism which one can put in place

when appointing one or more named individuals known as attorneys to act on your behalf in the event God forbid of a future mental incapacity.

You will need to furnish your solicitor with the following information:

- Your full name and address and your date of birth.
- Details of who you will appoint as your attorney(s).
- Your GP details, having first checked with your GP that he or she will be satisfied to sign the requisite form 'part E' confirming you have the requisite capacity.
- Names and addresses for at least two notice parties, one of whom must be a close relative.

When the enduring power of attorney is completed, it is put away for safekeeping and it only reappears if one's mental health deteriorates to a point where one doesn't have capacity. The registration process takes in the region of four months and the Application is made to the Office of the Wards of Court, EPA section. A Certificate of Registration will then be available.

Part 7 of the *Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act* of 2015 deals with enduring powers of attorney and, for example, Section 75 thereof deals with reports by attorneys. When this act has fully commenced there will be greater accounting obligations on attorneys which is to be welcomed.

Nursing home 'Fair Deal' scheme, from a legal perspective

If going to a nursing home you can apply for financial support to help pay for the cost of care in a nursing home through the Fair Deal scheme. When the application process and the care needs assessment have been completed, the financial assessment then comes in to play. This will work out how much you will need to pay towards your nursing home care. You will pay 80% (40% if you



are part of a couple) of your assessable income. Assessable income is your total income minus allowable deductions, for example, income tax, PAYE and health expenses. You will also pay 7.5% (3.75% if you are part of a couple) of your assets such as land or cash. The first €36,000.00 (€72,000.00 if you are part of a couple) of your assets is not taken into account.

The following points are worth remembering:

- The family home is taken into account for a maximum of three years (three year cap).
- Any assets transferred within the last five years are taken into account.
- In relation to the farm or business, there is a provision whereby a farmer or business owner can also avail of 'the 3 year cap' if certain conditions are met.

Nursing Home Loan

If there are insufficient monies to make the contributions the Health Service Executive (HSE) will help but will require security in exchange, so a nursing home loan can be applied for. If the person applying for the loan does not have capacity, an enduring power of attorney can be registered or a family member can apply to the Circuit Court to be appointed as the applicant's care representative. The nursing home loan will eventually become due after the applicant's death and must be repaid within 12 months of the date of death. There are certain circumstances in which payment can be delayed and a partner, relative or connected person may apply for a deferral of the loan repayment.

Please take care during these challenging times. Please God with the roll out of the vaccine we will soon be able to venture out again. In the meantime, now may be a good time to make decisions on legal affairs and get the ball rolling.

Elaine Byrne is a solicitor practising in Regan McEntee & Partners, High Street, Trim, Co. Meath and specialises in probate, wills and estate management. She has extensive experience and expertise in this area, having been enrolled as a solicitor with the Law Society of Ireland in 2008. The information in this article is intended as a general guide only. While every care is taken to ensure accuracy of information contained in this article, solicitor Elaine Byrne and Regan McEntee & Partners do not accept responsibility for errors or omissions howsoever arising.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



My two-year-old has now spent most of her life under coronavirus restrictions. Of course, she doesn't understand the bigger picture, but she does know that, at times, the Government stops the older children from going to school and her from going to her beloved childminder. She knows that sometimes we are not allowed to go to the beach. She knows that we are often not allowed to visit our friends and family. Such restrictions on our basic rights were considered unthinkable until just last year, yet they now have become normalised as a backdrop to children's lives in Ireland, and around the world.

The older children understand the rationale for the restrictions, and that their purpose is to prevent the transmissions of coronavirus, and so to save people's lives and their health. While most of the Government's restrictions have seem perfectly reasonable, some have been clearly unnecessary and even counterproductive. That much is obvious to small children.

We live in a rural area, but near a large town. A few weeks ago, we were driving past the local town park, which was thronged with people, thanks to the government's 5km travel limit which prevented all these townsfolk from dispersing safely into the nearby woodlands and beaches, which lay empty. The illogic of this struck my ten-year-old daughter, who said, "why is the Government making people crowd together, if crowding together makes the virus spread?"

We really had no answer for this, except to say that the Government makes mistakes sometimes. The Government appears to have belatedly accepted that the 5km rule was unnecessary, having now abandoned it.

Yet illogical positions remain in the government's latest iteration of the rules. We have now been told that we are allowed to meet another household for social reasons – but only in public places, such as streets and parks, which are invariably crowded. Therefore, we may meet with the children's friends in the local skatepark, which is a quarter acre at most, and usually has at least 100 people in it, all in close proximity. Yet we may not meet friends in our 2-acre garden, where there would be nobody but ourselves and we could safely socially distance.

Last autumn, the Government allowed hairdressers to operate in small shops, in close contact with clients, while keeping cavernous churches closed to public worship, even though social distancing is obviously achievable in large buildings. This was so, even though there is no constitutional or human



right to getting your hair done, but there are important rights to practice religion.

There are also constitutional and human rights to family life. It is widely accepted that people can meet safely outdoors if they observe social distancing. This fact alone means that it is not necessary – and therefore not lawful, in my view – to curtail such fundamental rights and prevent people meeting close family members in their gardens.

Children are curious and questioning. Yet it is often impossible to explain the logic of some of the Government's restrictions to them, since there is no inherent logic there to explain. When rules are made which even a child can see are irrational, many people simply refuse to obey them. Sadly, they then also begin to disobey those rules which really do help stop the spread of covid. It seems to me that the Government has shot itself in the foot by failing to properly balance people's rights and rationally assessing which restrictions really are necessary to stop the spread of the disease and so save lives.

As children grow up, they form elementary understandings of the relationship between the State and its citizens. The experience of growing up during Covid may well alter how today's children will come to see their relationship with the State. Will they see it as normal for the State to intervene and restrict people's basic rights, or will they react and become more suspicious of authority? Will they, as adults, redraw the lines as to what restrictions on rights are acceptable to secure public safety? After all, a generation which, as impressionable children, experienced the State confine them to their homes and gardens, and saw it deprive them of their right to education, to travel and to meet friends and family, will no doubt carry that experience with them into adulthood.

The privilege of opening space for women

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

Dr Jessie Rogers made history recently, becoming the first lay person and the first woman to be dean of St Patrick's College, Maynooth. To her, it seemed as natural as anything – but she recognises the privilege and responsibility that comes from the appointment.

“The Bible, she says, held a fascination for her from childhood when the stories and psalms captured her imagination”

“From my own internal experience of Maynooth, it didn't seem like something strange. My experience of working with Maynooth is that I am one colleague among many,” the South African scholar tells *The Irish Catholic*.

“It was only after the feedback I got from people – I realised then it was actually a big deal. From Maynooth's wider history and people's experience of it, I suppose it is a big step.”

The feedback and support Dr Rogers received made her stop and reflect on her appointment, which came after she was nominated by the university.

“It made me stop and realise that there have been many women who had to work very hard to be



recognised,” she says. “I think I'm fortunate that I can come in on their coat-tails. It has really brought home to me the privilege and responsibility for opening up a space for others as a space has been opened up for me.”

Studies

Dr Rogers specialises in Old Testament studies, especially wisdom literature, and the spirituality of childhood. The Bible, she says, held a fascination for her from child-

hood when the stories and psalms captured her imagination.

“It always kept my imagination and it felt like something very, very life giving, and very important for my faith from early days,” Dr Rogers explains. “When I left school, I did a degree in physics because I thought that, you know, you have to be able to do something useful. But as I was doing it, I thought maybe I could make my career and my passion into the same thing. So I changed my degree to theology.

“The reasons for doing it changed over the years. When I was younger, I was going to be a missionary and I was going to save the world. Then I was going to be a Bible translator. But I almost fell into academics by accident. I found I was good at teaching and I was able to communicate with people. It just developed that way.”

Dr Rogers did all her studies in her native South Africa, where she had some experience in administrative and leadership roles. She came to Ireland in 2007 to teach in Mary Immaculate College before joining the Faculty of Theology at Saint Patrick's College in 2014.

“One of the ways in which the real world and the academic meet for Dr Rogers is through her family life”

She has maintained a strong interest in ministry and is always seeking, as she puts it, “a connection between ‘the academic world’ and ‘the real world’”: “I do a fair amount in finding ways to empower people and ways to serve the Church and wider society through a scripture course and that kind of thing.”

One of the ways in which the real world and the academic meet for Dr Rogers is through her family life. It was in finding ways to teach the Bible to her children that Dr Rogers began to take an interest in the spirituality of childhood.

“The theology of childhood actually came about more because I came across Godly play, which is a way of doing scripture and liturgy with children,” she says. “I've done a lot over the years working with children, finding a way to communicate the faith which was living and vibrant. I felt I discovered that in Godly play.

“Once I discovered that, it led

me to a childist reading of scripture. You know what a feminist reading would be – like that, a childist reading looks at the Bible from the perspective of children. In Mary Immaculate, I worked with Eamonn Conway who is a Rahnist specialist. I got to Maynooth and Declan Marmion is a Rahnist specialist. Between the two of them they introduced me to what Karl Rahner had to write on childhood. Not that much but so, so rich.

“It woke up my fascination in the theology of childhood. What use is theology if our children don't have a life-giving encounter with and therefore commitment to the Faith? I would say that's definitely one of the places where academia and life connect.”

Reflecting finally on the role women can play in the Church, and on the Irish Church's synodal pathway, Dr Rogers says she believes that “giving women space to take the role that's already theirs' as part of the body of Christ could be very, very transformative for the Church”.

Church

“I think the one part which Pope Francis emphasises, is that the Church needs to become less clerical in its thinking,” she says. “Often when people hear is there a role for women, they think, is there a role for women's ordination? I'm sure at some stage it will be the right time to open up that all again.”

“But a synodal Church reminds us that the Church is the body of Christ, that there are so many gifts and so many roles. I think what has tended to happen is that it has been assumed that women play the supporting role. Whereas actually, women have so many different gifts and so many different experiences they can bring.

“Women aren't monolithic – they are diverse. But there is something about women, their relationality. I think as women we tend to network better, and have a come-alongside approach as opposed to a top-down approach.”

Living Laudato Si'

Jane Mellet



Suez Canal ship debacle teaches us about unbridled consumerism

Last month we saw one of the world's biggest cargo ships, the Ever Given, get stuck in the Suez Canal. While this event provided much needed light relief in the form of many memes floating around social media, it also highlighted some pretty startling statistics. The ship had 20,000 forty-foot containers on board, transporting foods, machinery, cars, garments and lots more consumer goods. Approximately 370 ships were blocked from travelling up and down the canal, a traffic jam to beat all traffic jams. It was also an expensive traffic jam! About 12% of global trade passes through the canal each day. According to news reports, the blockage was holding up over \$9 billion (€7.66 billion) of trade each day. No doubt, some of the trade on these ships are essential items, but we know that much of it springs from out-of-control consumerism. So as consumers we are left with questions about what we really need and where it comes from. That was the take away

from the Suez Canal debacle for me. Do we absolutely need to order an item from the other side of the world to satisfy a momentary craving?

Laudato Si' invites us to reflect on many things, but a throwaway culture and unbridled consumerism is a recurring theme: “A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment” (LS, 222).

It is really important that we include in our spiritual practice, reflections on our relationship with God's creation. As we enter into examining our conscience on certain issues we can include a reflection such as: “I ask God for the grace to look closely to see how my life choices impact creation, the poor and vulnerable. What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation? How can I turn away from a throwaway culture and instead

stand in solidarity with creation and the poor?”

This is not just an exercise for Lent, but part of a profound interior conversion that we are called to as Christians so that we can walk more gently on this earth.

Laudato Si' invites us to celebrate the ‘little ways of love’, embracing small actions on a daily basis that can help live more in harmony with creation. One very simple action that Pope Francis suggests is reintroducing grace before meals in our families: “That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence of God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods and reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.” (LS, 227)

As we celebrate this Easter season we are invited to transformation. Can we create anew our relationship with creation and encourage our families and parishes to do the same?

Jane Mellett is the Laudato Si' officer with Trócaire.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A moving glimpse inside the monastery

I could probably fill the whole paper with reviews of all the religious programmes on over the Easter season – the media tend to put in an extra effort at Easter.

RTÉ's coverage of the ceremonies was impressive. **The Mass of the Lord's Supper** (RTÉ One) on Holy Thursday was a memorable event. Fr Martin Smith was graceful and reverential and also seemed quite bowled over by the quality of the music provided by RTÉ's youth group Cór Linn. That was a studio-based Mass, but for Good Friday and Holy Saturday the ceremonies came from the basilica in Knock, with rector Fr Richard Gibbons as celebrant – again it was reverential, but it was painfully obvious that the huge basilica was so relatively empty.

Enhanced

Again the music, by the socially-distanced singers, enhanced the event so well, giving a sense of grace, depth and solemnity as befitted the occasion. On the Holy Saturday night the symbolism of the hundreds of candles lighting for those not present made quite an impact. By contrast with the basilica, the Eurovision Mass on Easter Sunday morning took place in a small oratory in a Covid-19 hospital in Locarno, Switzerland, with a masked music group out in the nearby gardens enhancing the ritual remotely.



Brotherhood on BBC Four.

BBC has done some marvellous programmes set in monasteries, and Nick Hamer's film **Brotherhood – The Inner Life of Monks** (BBC Four, Wednesday) was one of the best. Set in Mount St Bernard's in Leicestershire, it started in a most striking way, briefly hearing from a monk who was dying. He talked of not saying 'prayers' but of having a strong sense of just being in the presence of God at all times. Not long after we saw his dignified burial – it was both a shock and the most natural thing. It wasn't the only funeral – another monk in his 90s, who seemed very well, and who spoke in a very animated way about the mystery

of God, said he might die soon. The next sequence was his funeral – open coffin with simple burial in a shroud. Another monk spoke rather touchingly of finding it hard to remember things. But while many in the community were elderly, there were younger monks too – e.g. the abbot, who spoke of his role as 'father' – of assuming responsibility for those he served, enabling them to mature, of being in the ongoing process of 'becoming' a monk.

Generous

The monks, so generous with their lives, were changing from dairy farming to brewing to help keep the community

alive and I was tickled by the ceremony for the launch of the new brewery, complete with blessings, including this one: 'May the beer delight all those who savour it!'

There were some really interesting radio items over Easter. On **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) there was an interview with singer Harry Connick Jr, a Catholic (didn't know that), whose experience of lockdown led him to record an album of faith songs – *Alone with My Faith*. I wasn't too keen on his version of 'Amazing Grace' but *Benevolent Man* was worth a listen. Spotify here I come.

On a different musical note, and also well worth listening

PICK OF THE WEEK

Being...Christian

BBC 2 Saturday April 10, 8.50am

How British Christians from across the Faith celebrate life's big milestones, from birth and coming of age to marriage and the end of life.

Mass

RTÉ One Sunday April 11, 11am

The Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin Denis Nulty, celebrates Mass in the RTÉ studios in Donnybrook. Music is by RTÉ Cor na nÓg, directed by Mary Amond O'Brien.

FAITH AND LIFE

EWTN Friday April 16, 8.30pm

Fr La Flynn speaks of his work in Kenya, a world away from his current Irish home in Lough Derg.

back to, on **The Leap of Faith**

(RTÉ Radio One, Good Friday)

Michael Comyn explored the

different musical settings of

The Passion with Scottish

composer Sir James MacMillan,

Prof. Deborah Kelleher, Director

of the Royal Irish Academy of

Music and choral director Mark

Duley. The insights were thor-

oughly engaging and of course

they all had a nod towards J.S.

Bach as indeed did Paul Simon

when he borrowed from Bach

for his *American Tune*, the song

that opened the programme.

But then Bach had borrowed

from much earlier songs for

his catchy melody.

Conversation

On **Sunday Sequence** (BBC

Radio Ulster) Audrey Carville

had a fascinating conversation

with astronomer Karin Öberg

of Harvard. She had converted

to Catholicism and found surprise rather than hostility in the scientific community. Her enthusiasm for scientific discovery was infectious, though the discussion on extra-terrestrial life was an odd one for Easter Sunday.

Easter tends to be a time of repeats when it comes to religious programming, but one repeat I'm happy to see at any stage is **Give Up Yer Aul Sins** (RTÉ One, Good Friday). This episode featured the usual children's take on the death of Jesus, accompanied by the marvellous animation of Brown Bag Films. Catch the full series on YouTube.

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

Film

Kidnapping people for a living

Raymond Chandler once said there were only seven plots. Everything else was just variations on a theme.

The idea came back to me as I watched the French thriller *In the Shadow of Iris* (Netflix). It starts interestingly enough with a kidnapping but there are so many convolutions in the storyline afterwards I lost interest half way through and gave up trying to figure it out.

The wife of a Parisian banker is kidnapped. Or is she? Her husband is distraught. Or is he?

Chandler said something else interesting as well: In a whodunit, the identity of the killer should not only be clever... but inevitable.

You couldn't say that

about this film. The twists are gratuitous or sensational for their own sake. Neither are any of the characters attractive. You have to like someone to care what happens to them. If you don't, no matter how ingenious the plotline, it goes for nothing.

Shifts

Here we get identity shifts, sexual deviance, chronological imbalances and tasteless dialogue. It's a smorgasbord of excess that shouts when it should whisper. The gruesome finale leaves you with a feeling of "So what?"

A much better kidnapping film is Ron Howard's *Ransom* (1996). This is available to buy on Amazon and other sites. Mel Gibson is on fire



A still from the 1996 film *Ransom*, starring Mel Gibson.

here. Gary Sinise always plays villains with great credibility. He does so again here.

Rene Russo is Gibson's wife. Their son is snatched at a playground. Afterwards we get two hours of white

knuckle tension.

What kicks the film off is the fact that Gibson refuses to pay the kidnappers. This is unusual as he's a very wealthy man. The film owes its origin to a Glenn Ford film of the same name from 40 years before. If you're interested you can order this from the Canadian website, Golden Era Classics.

Fearful decision

The Ford film in its turn was based on a 1954 TV programme called *Fearful Decision* where Ralph Bellamy plays a wealthy man who decides to use his money to track down the kidnappers instead of paying them. A brave decision though one clearly fraught with danger.

I see Liam Neeson has said he's about to retire from action films. It's about time,

Liam. You're now tipping 69. I know he does a lot of his own stunts but the idea of people like Neeson (or Harrison Ford or Clint Eastwood) jumping from trains or hanging off airplanes in 2021 is ridiculous. They're long past Free Travel age. What price credibility?

Kidnapping occurs in nearly all of Neeson's *Taken* films. I enjoyed these up to a point but it got to the stage where there were very few people in his life that hadn't been snatched.

I had visions of watching 'Taken 17' in 2029 where the tally of people stolen from his life would include his babysitter, his au pair, his manservant, the doorman at his apartment and the seventh cousin of his pen pal from Normandy.

Aubrey Malone





BookReviews

Peter Costello



Journeys with a pious purpose

Pilgrimage: Journeys with Meaning

by Peter Stanford
(Thames & Hudson,
£25.00/€30.00 approx.)

Peter Costello

Peter Stanford, a former editor of *The Catholic Herald*, is also the author of a long series of books that explore aspects of Christianity from a Catholic point of view which manage to appeal to a wide audience through his skill in making the often complex material accessible in a graceful and appealing way.

His latest book is a fascinating study of the varied nature of pilgrimage in the modern world. It is often said that religion is in decline, but the evidence of others and of our own eyes suggests otherwise. One comes away from this book impressed how religion, a many-headed hydra if ever there were one, shows great signs of resilience. So we can follow the trail of Peter Stanford with much benefit to our minds.

“For nearly the last half of the book Mr Stanford travels through stranger scenes to many”

It turns out to be a mind-broadening experience. He begins his exploration in search of the essential nature of religion and travel with what is today the most ‘relevant’ pilgrimage in the world, one which seems to suit everyone, whatever their ideas and beliefs. Travel is of the essence of the matter, but pilgrimage is something more than a mere aspect of tourism, though both are confusedly mixed. Mr Stanford attempts to untangle them.

Thus he starts with the Camino, which is perhaps the most fashionable route to follow. To get to Compostela, to



Pilgrims in medieval Europe - their destination calls.

the tomb of St James’, or the shore where the boat carrying his supposed relics from the East were landed. Every kind of character can be found along ‘the way’, as we can regularly read in the annual books in many languages that appear.

Heritage

But from this ultra-modern activity, he plunges back into the past to Jerusalem, a city with a now complicated pilgrimage heritage. This is built around the quest of Helena - the Emperor Constantine’s mother - for relics of Jesus, which eventuated in the discovery of the True Cross. Given a new focus, from all over the Christian empire pilgrims set out.

So much is for most people familiar territory. But then he slips back to the first Christian century, and to the devotions paid to the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul, a key moment in the development of the new faith.

But now the author moves on to Mecca and the annual Hajj which is compulsory for all Muslim believers in a lifetime. It has now become, thanks to the facilities of modern travel, and the ruthless Saudi destruction of the past, one of the most extraordinary events in the world, the sheer teeming size of it is intimidating.

By now the reader may need a rest, and Mr Stanford provides it in the form of Lalibela, that wonderful church carved out of the living rock, a place which epitomises the whole spirit of Ethiopian Christian-

ity, a faith that since earliest times seems to have resisted all the troubles of the world, and which encapsulates for many people a feeling of early centuries of the Faith.

Lourdes, Medjugorje, the whole blue realm of Marian shrines has inevitably to be encountered, for it certainly involved tourism, travel and faith. This chapter has, remarkably, some new thoughts about these places. Mr Stanford even manages to have a fresh insight into Medjugorje by placing it firmly in the war wracked history of the Balkans from which so many Western visitors try to draw it away.

By contrast the now appreciated Celtic shrines, in Mr Stanford’s case in North Wales - but much that he says could be echoed by Ireland and Scotland.

“He starts with the Camino, which is perhaps the most fashionable route to follow”

So far so familiar, more or less. But for nearly the last half of the book Mr Stanford travels through stranger scenes to many: to the largest Hindu pilgrimage in the world, to Buddhist trail ways, to the trail of a master in Japan. The United States finds a place in a chapter dealing with ‘optimistic hiking’ - the spirituality that derives at long distance from the notions of John Muir and others, by way of Thoreau and the Sierra Club. This, however, has developed, as it had to, into the movement to ‘save the planet’ that has rightly been encouraged by Pope Francis.

Final chapter

In his final chapter on Machu Pichu, Mr Stanford invokes again a spirituality of the wilderness, though neglecting the true reality of Machu Pichu as an expression of Inca social power, and not of engagement with creation.

The realms of pilgrimage remain strange and engaging. Mr Stanford quotes TS Elliot’s famous lines from *Little Gidding* of returning home to know the place for the first time.

Yet in relishing what they have achieved pilgrims should also recall the sentiment encompassed in those anonymous lines from early Christian Ireland, (a society that loved pilgrimages):

“To go to Rome / is little profit, endless pain; / the Master that you seek in Rome / you find at home or seek in vain.”

On the path to Rome today

Night’s Bright Darkness
by Sally Read
(Ignatius Press, £14.99/€18)

Ruadhán Jones

It’s hard to resist a good conversion story. They have a ready-made narrative to exploit, one typically filled with twists and turns, and the ending is a happy one. When luminous talent is combined with an already pleasing narrative form, it’s bound to entrance.

That is exactly the case with *Night’s Bright Darkness*, the autobiographical account of English poet Sally Read’s conversion from militant atheism to Catholicism. Her story resonates deeply with our age and is a reminder that, despite the confusion of

modern life, a path can still be found “across the night to reach Him”.

“Ms Read refused to believe in God, even though she would have liked him to exist”

The product of an atheist upbringing in 1970s England, Ms Read refused to believe in God, even though she would have liked him to exist, and was determined to accept the consequences of his absence. But with a vivid turn of phrase, Ms Read describes the alienation of her 20s, working in London as a nurse for the physically and mentally-ill.

Her acute artistic temperament and a desire to seek out the truth meant the restless, muscular English capital didn’t suit her. But it wasn’t then that she turned to the Faith, committing herself instead to her poetry - she was rewarded in 2001 with the Eric Gregory award for poets under 30.

Brought

What, then, brought her to faith? Surprisingly, the catalyst was a book she was researching on female sexuality. This book led her to seek out the advice of a Catholic priest in March 2010. She couldn’t resist, while in contact, asking questions of this man about the Faith and his justification for believing it. Though aggressive at first,

“Her acute artistic temperament and a desire to seek out the truth meant the restless, muscular English capital didn’t suit her”



The ancient church at Lalibela in Ethiopia.

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.



Poet Sally Read after her conversion.

it was this initial contact which would lead her, nine months later, to enter into the Catholic Church.

Her conversion could not have happened, however, without her commitment to the quest for truth. Ms Read is blessed with a contemplative mindset, as is often the case with poets. From writing, she was already used to clearing her mind in order to be receptive, effectively to a higher power.

“But when she came to pray, she understood that she had to open her entire self to God”

But when she came to pray, she understood that she had to open her entire self to God, to let him enter into her being. Her father had always taught her to kneel before no false God. But she felt driven to kneel before the one true God. She recognised him in prayer as the truth that she had been yearning for in her poetry.

In the book, she writes that the truth peeled away suddenly, and she recognised God as a poet: “It was for communion with God, who knows already, who has the metaphor, the poem, already in hand, who is already writing, has already written, the ultimate poem.”

Poetry

Ms Read found her poetry flourished after her conversion, now that she knew its true source. That flourishing is to our benefit, for though *Night's Bright Darkness* is a work of prose, it is written with a fluidity more akin to poetry. A short and pithy book at 157 pages, it is the kind which deserves slow reading; and yet it was all I could do to stop myself finishing it in a matter of hours.

It seems appropriate to end with the poet's own words, reflecting on the final effect of her conversion: “A self returned to me more fully than before. The heart kick-started to sense its intrinsic architecture of logic, love and reason.” I hope her writings may have that effect on you, as they did with me, kick-starting my appreciation for the love we are so blessed with.

That other India: the India of the Princes

A Princess Remembers: The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur,

by Gayatri Devi with Santha Rama Rau
(Rupa & C, New Delhi, 2008; copies of other editions are available second-hand online from €10.00 approximately)

J. Anthony Gaughan

These extraordinary memoirs of an eminent Indian princess, who achieved great electoral success in later life, present a fascinating account of India in the twentieth century - but from an unusual point of view.

It comes, not from the Congress Party/Nehru family point of view, but from what the author Rosita Forbes in 1939 called “the India of the Princes”.

For western readers, especially those (like Irish missionaries) who have anxieties about the decline of tolerance under the present ruling regime, it will provide those, for instance, anxious about the fate of Christian and other minorities, with a totally different viewpoint than that of prime minister Narendra Modi.

They provide an ‘insider’s’ view of that ‘other India’ and is all the more important for that reason; the ‘insider’ being the third wife of Jai, the Maharani of Jaipur.

Written from an upper-class and privileged perspective, the memoirs offer a profound insight into the unique, enduring and patriarchal character of Indian society and the rarefied environment in which the region’s royal and princely families conducted their lives.

Gayatri Devi was born into a royal family in Cooch Behar in northwest India on May 23, 1919. She received her early education in the palace and was then sent to the school managed by Rabindranath Tagore, the celebrated poet and Nobel Prize winner, to experience “the best of traditional Indian culture”. Later she attended a girls’ college and a secretarial school in London. She completed her education at a finishing school in Lausanne in Switzerland.

A few days before her twenty-first birthday in a lavish wedding ceremony on May 21, 1940 she became the third wife of Sawai Man Singh II. The couple had one child, Prince Jagat Singh. Although it was an arranged marriage, they had a happy life together until he died in June 1970.

Backdrop

The maharani narrates her memoirs against a backdrop which could not be more interesting. There was Mahatma Gandhi walking across the Indian sub-continent preaching the gospel of non-violence. The National Movement for Independence was increasing its grip on the country and morphing into the Indian Congress Party of the Gandhis.

Meanwhile, the British authorities were attempting to retain some influence - if not some control - as the Raj ebbed to its demise. Then there was World War II during which India placed 2.5million



Gayatri Devi, the Maharani of Jaipur, in regal style.

men in the field, including the Maharaja of Jaipur, who was an officer in an Indian regiment. There was the Cold War during which the author’s husband was India’s ambassador to General Franco’s Spain. However, the issue which was of most concern to the maharani was the impasse between the government, led by Mrs Indira Gandhi, and the former rulers of the independent states, such as Jaipur. Mrs Gandhi’s government reneged on a formal agreement to properly compensate the rulers of those states for agreeing to have them incorporated into the national state. This prompted the maharani to become a leading figure in the Swatantra Party, one of India’s opposition parties, she won landslide victories at local and national elections and became one of Mrs Gandhi’s fiercest adversaries.

Arrangements

For some readers the most interesting section of the memoirs will be those describing the domestic arrangements and leisure pursuits of the Indian aristocratic families. They resided in palaces, some of which had more than



A princess among her constituents.

500 servants. There were the lavish celebrations of Hindu festivals and the presentation of ritualised public demonstrations. Big-game hunting was a feature of life: tiger-hunting, bear-hunting etc. and shooting parties. The author is pictured with her first tiger-kill at the age of 12! Sport also loomed large in palace life at Jaipur. While the maharaja was an internationally-renowned polo-player, the maharani was also, it seems, quite accomplished both as a horse-rider and polo-player.

Relationship

The author describes her relationship with the first and second wives of the maharaja and their extended families. They were almost as young as she was. She refers to the *zenna*. This was the area in the palace, where women from the princely families were required to reside. She explains the custom of *purdah*. This was the practice in India, whereby upper-class women were screened from public view and from men other than their husbands. She and her husband were unsuccessful in their attempts to eliminate the practice at Jaipur. However, she had more success in that regard when she established the Maharani Gayatri Devi School, where the girls received the same kind of education as she had in Europe.

An iconic beauty, following her husband’s death she featured in fashion magazines in Europe and the US. Emerging from those memoirs is a strong, independent-minded, multi-talented woman to whom we are greatly indebted for a magnificent account of her life and times.

Leisure time

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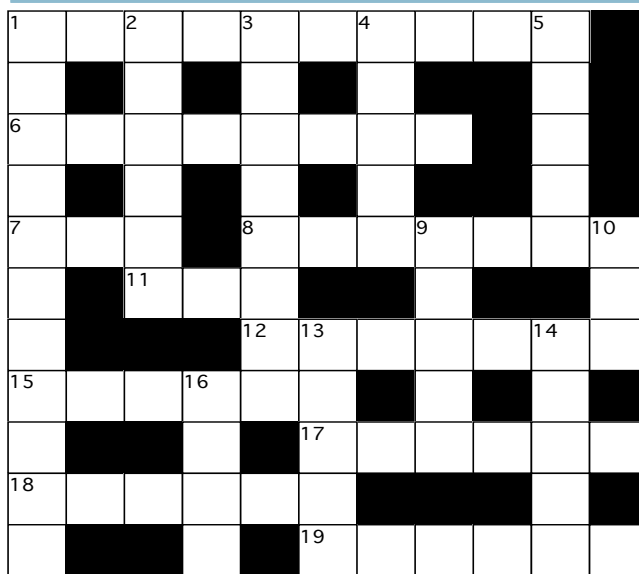
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 377



Across

- 1 Harry Potter's house in Hogwarts (10)
- 6 A simple house made of wood (3,5)
- 7 You listen with this (3)
- 8 Creepy-crawlies (6)
- 11 Moses was given have this many Commandments (3)
- 12 King Kong was one (7)
- 15 A writer of books (6)
- 17 Pattern (6)
- 18 'We're the champions - we finished top of the _____' (6)
- 19 Human-like machines (6)

Down

- 1 This large bird of prey sounds very valuable! (6,5)
- 2 Dip your spoon into this fruit-flavoured treat (6)
- 3 Tall, pink bird which often stands on just one foot (8)
- 4 Hammer them in (5)
- 5 Correct (5)
- 9 Ways out (5)
- 10 Ocean (3)
- 13 Command (5)
- 14 Not heavy (5)
- 16 Enormous (4)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 1

GORDIUS NO. 501

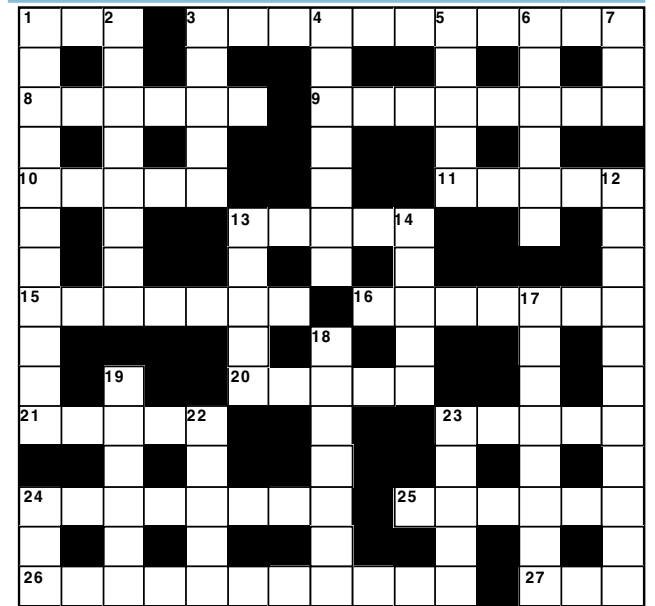
- Across** – 1 Fun 3 Drawing room 8 Assume 9 Redeemed 10 Under 11 Eclat 13 Fling 15 Fiefdom 16 Platter 20 Teary 21 Meath 23 Pence 24 Serenity Prayer 26 Unsweetened 27 Urn
Down – 1 Feature film 2 Nose dive 3 Demur 4 Warship 5 Grebe 6 Ormolu 7 Mod 12 Tetrahedron 13 Frost 14 Gully 17 Thank you 18 Van Dyke 19 Madras 22 Hence 23 Pared 24 Sou

CHILDREN'S No. 376

- Across** – 1 Raindrops 5 Cupboard 8 Open 9 Nestling 11 Essay 13 Clint 14 Archer 16 Rolls 18 Scrub 19 Knit
Down – 1 Racing car 2 Impossible 3 Oar 4 Slaney 5 Owllet 7 Dogs 10 Nearest 12 Sahara 15 Robs 17 Son

Crossword

Gordius 502



Across

- 1 High, dropping shot (3)
- 3 Group trying to find one who is missing - Patsy Archer, perhaps (6,5)
- 8 Small (6)
- 9 Kerosene (8)
- 10 I love the pale person from the Hawkeye State (5)
- 11 Excavation, dike (5)
- 13 Dossiers (5)
- 15 & 25a The chap speaking to God, 'tis an insect! (7,6)
- 16 At lower volume (7)
- 20 Digging tool found in a deck of cards (5)
- 21 Members of Hitler's party (5)
- 23 Culpability (5)
- 24 This clue for such glands, though confused, is dead on! (8)
- 25 See 15 across
- 26 Dissatisfaction shown by some sad polar VIP (11)
- 27 Home improvement activity (1,1,1)

Down

- 1 Does he give the children

- sweets as he helps them cross the road? (8,3)
- 2 Where in Africa to have a boat sawn asunder (8)
- 3 Beauty parlour (5)
- 4 Quickly (7)
- 5 Tartan design (5)
- 6 Prove a charge to be false (6)
- 7 A pendant for Japanese currency (3)
- 12 In an uncaring or callous way (11)
- 13 Animal teeth (5)
- 14 See 18 down
- 17 Prevented? That drew some change! (8)
- 18 & 14d Peppery condiment named for a Mexican state (7,5)
- 19 Members of an ancient Mexican civilization (6)
- 22 Pry (5)
- 23 Rough fight (5)
- 24 Tot up (3)

Sudoku Corner

377

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 376

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

Last week's Hard 376

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



Fr Vincent Sherlock

Notebook

Early days and first steps...

THERE'S A SENSE of the Church at its best going on this weekend. It's that early enthusiastic excitement of a new relationship or hobby. We've got all the gear and are ready to spend ourselves fully in the pursuit of love of person, sport or activity. We couldn't imagine missing a meeting, training session or opportunity to progress our interest. "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul...", "the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord with great power ..." Certainly it was a great time to be alive in the wake of the awe-filled wonder of an emptied tomb.



The Incredulity of St Thomas by Caravaggio.

We move then to John's letter and the laying it on the line for us.

Overcoming

Commandments and the keeping of them are discussed. Recipes are given for overcoming the world. "Only the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God" can overcome the world. It looks like the cycling gear, the fitness regime, the daily texts or calls of friendship and love are gathering a bit of desert dust.

Enter Thomas – the Twin! Rather don't enter, for he wasn't there when the Lord came. He had his doubts much and all as he wanted to believe. He knew the marks had

to be left on Jesus and unless he could see them, touch them (maybe even weep because of them) he could not believe. Yes, he'd heard the tomb was empty. He'd heard of the Emmaus conversation and broken bread but it wasn't sinking in. "Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands ..."

"Peace be with you", Jesus said but Thomas wasn't there to hear. He had to rely on others and he found it difficult to accept their version of events. Chances are he wanted to but couldn't. What did the others

lack in sharing the story that stalled the transmission of Jesus' message? "Where did we go wrong?" parents sometimes wonder when their children give up on the Faith. Sometimes we priests wonder too when people seem to drift away from church and practice. The closer people can be to the direct word the better. Hearsay evidence is only part of the story. It's a pity Thomas wasn't there with the others, even in the confusion of that room. Maybe that's why the Church places such strong emphasis on the weekly call to Sunday worship – so

that it's not hearsay for people but first hand.

Despite all this, Thomas had his moment. Wounded flesh touched, he came to know a new the man he had walked and worked with for three years. Yes, he knew him as friend, one for whom he had mourned, but more than that, he now recognises him as "My Lord and my God".

Doubting

For this, Thomas gets the title 'doubting Thomas' and it seems so unfair to label him – anyone for that matter – based on a single event. Thomas asked the question and received an answer that took us to a deeper place. It wasn't the first time he'd done that. "I'm going to prepare a place for you", said Jesus, "and after I've prepared it you can come with me. You know the way to the place where I am going". They hadn't a clue but stood there and said nothing. Not Thomas though – "We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way ..." and this led to the words that are central to all we're about today; "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one can come to the Father, except through me".

Good man Thomas! From hearsay, to recognition and the new enthusiasm that is faith in action. It is not a bad road to be on – in fact, it is the only road to be on.

Put on your walking shoes!

Water blessed

This Easter was not the one we had anticipated a year ago as we faced into Covid-19 and its restrictions. Nobody could have imagined we would be in the same place this year. Sadly, we are. Like most parishes, we did our best with the hand dealt to us and it was so encouraging to have people join via webcam and Facebook. Thank God for that technology. A highlight for me, lies in 400 bottles of holy water, blessed at the Easter Vigil and left in our churches for collection. Happy to say, practically every one of them was gone by evening. Lovely to think that there are 400 bottles of Easter Water out there, with the potential to bring blessings to many.



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