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Record numbers train to be permanent deacons

Ruadhán Jones

The record number of candidates for the permanent diaconate starting in Maynooth this autumn is a “welcome sign of hope” for the Church in Ireland. However, this comes as just a handful of new seminarians will enter the Irish college this autumn.

Later this month, 31 candidates for the permanent diaconate – mostly married men – will begin their three-year training programme in Maynooth. However, worryingly for the future this will be greater than the total number of candidates for the priesthood resident in the national seminary. *The Irish Catholic* understands there will be 23 seminarians in total studying in Maynooth this year.

As the Church in Ireland faces a challenging future, the new national director of the permanent diaconate Fr Edward McGee told *The Irish Catholic* he believes the “varied pastoral apostolates” permanent deacons undertake can help foster the “vibrant and life-giving” faith communities envisaged in Vatican II.

Alongside the emergence of new ministries in catechesis and pastoral care, “permanent deacons provide a vital support within parishes and dioceses alongside bishops and priests”, Fr McGee told *The Irish Catholic*.

Already, over the past 10 years, roughly 120 permanent deacons

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‘Take up your cross and follow me...’



A cross and a crown of thorns is placed on Bro. Conor Quinn CP during his recent final profession as a member of the Passionists at Holy Cross Abbey in north Belfast. See Page 12



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It would be good to see the enthusiasm for diaconate translate to priesthood

After the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) great emphasis was placed on the restoration of the ancient order of the permanent diaconate. For many centuries, diaconate had been seen as just one more stop on the road to priesthood. The Church wanted to restore the tradition of the early Church where the diaconate was a specific and unique ministry.

In many countries, the ministry was enthusiastically embraced and in the 1970s the first modern permanent deacons were ordained in the United States. Ireland, on the other hand, decided not to restore the diaconate as a distinct ministry for married men in the Church. It was not until 2001 – with the vocations crisis already biting – that the Irish hierarchy began the process of recruiting the first permanent deacons.

Timing

It was unfortunate timing since it led many people to believe that it was simply a response to the dwindling number of candidates presenting themselves for priesthood rather than an embracing of an ancient tradition.

Fast forward more than 20 years, and permanent deacons are a fixture in many parishes and most Irish dioceses now have men in training for the ministry. A more coordinated approach is now underway to ensure that the requisite intellectual, human, pastoral and spir-

unique vocation.

However, while the number of candidates to the diaconate continues to increase, the worrying decline in vocations continues, with just new seminarians beginning studies in Maynooth this year.

It now seems likely that there will be more candidates to the permanent diaconate starting at Maynooth than there will be seminarians in the entire college.

Bishop Cullinan said that the question of why the call to the vocation of the permanent diaconate is being heeded more than to priesthood "is a good one, something that would merit study".



Editor's Comment
Michael Kelly



A deacon is presented with the Book of the Gospels during the ordination ceremony. Photo: CNS

itual formation needs of the candidates are met.

“The Church wanted to restore the tradition of the early Church where the diaconate was a specific and unique ministry”

While not all dioceses have adopted the permanent diaconate, to say that the ministry has been met with enthusiasm would be an understatement. This week *The Irish Catholic* reveals that more men begin training for the permanent diaconate in Maynooth this month than there will be candidates studying for the priesthood in the national seminary.

If the 31 candidates for the permanent diaconate proceed to ordination in 2025 as planned, that will mean more deacons ordained in that year alone than there would be priestly ordinations for Ireland for 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029 combined.

This is something that should cause a pause for reflection. Permanent deacons serve a hugely – and increasingly – important role in the parishes where they serve. But they can never be a substitute for the priesthood. Communion

services or other liturgies presided over by deacons can never take the place of the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of the Church.

Already there are signs that a worrying theological misunderstanding has crept in to the understanding of the ministry. Explaining his role, an Irish permanent deacon earlier this year told me that he is “like a priest except I can’t say Mass”. That is a rather deficient understanding of both holy orders and the Mass to put it mildly.

Promotion

The enthusiastic promotion of the permanent diaconate also begs the question as to why that level of enthusiasm cannot be found – especially among priests – for promoting priesthood. How is it that many priests have so much energy for encouraging older married men to consider becoming permanent deacons and yet seem reluctant to talk to a younger man about a vocation to the priesthood?

One friend recently suggested to me that the contrast in interest between the permanent diaconate and priesthood might well be the work of the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit might think that permanent deacons are more important to the Church in Ireland at the moment than priests are. But I think that is bad discernment. Christ instituted the sacraments because they are vital for

the Christian life, a Church with fewer priests means fewer opportunities to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and fewer opportunities to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. I think it’s a stretch to suggest that it would be God’s will to deprive people of what is vital for their spiritual life and salvation.

“There are signs that a worrying theological misunderstanding has crept in to the understanding of the ministry”

Permanent deacons serve heroically and with great distinction in many Irish parishes. We are blessed by their willingness to serve, but they can never be a replacement or even a substitute for priests. The Church in Ireland survived and even thrived for many centuries without the ministry of permanent deacons. It cannot survive for one day without priests.

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Record numbers train to be permanent deacons

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 have been ordained to serve in 15 dioceses on the island of Ireland.

“Over the last decade in Ireland, permanent deacons have already been an integral part of the parish and diocesan landscape,” Fr McGee continued.

He added that the example of these “deacons are now inspiring others to follow in this same path”.

The establishment and flourishing of the permanent diaconate, alongside other new ministries, is “a welcome sign of hope for the future”, Fr McGee said.

Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, a member of the Irish bishops’ council for voca-

tions, said the record number of candidates is “something pretty exciting in the Irish Church right now”.

When asked if it is important they are not be seen as a replacement for vocations to the priesthood, Bishop Cullinan agreed, saying they are not “mini-priests”.

“It’s a distinct vocation,” he told *The Irish Catholic*. “And as I say, our experience here and I’d say the experience around the country has been very positive. And so, it’s something which is growing.”

He said that of the three-fold ministry they provide – ministry of the Word, ministry of service and ministry at the altar – ministry of service is the “key” to their

Search for Ireland's favourite hymn at ploughing

Staff Reporter

The hunt is on for Ireland's favourite hymn in advance of the National Ploughing Championships in Co. Laois this month.

The search to find the country's most popular hymn has been launched by Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin who is inviting people of all ages throughout the country to make known their choice.

The diocese of Kildare and Leighlin includes Ratheniska, Co. Laois, where the three-day ploughing championships begin on September 20.

In previous years, the diocese organised competitions to find Ireland's favourite poem and the most popular prayer. In 2019, when 300,000 spectators attended the last pre-coronavirus championships, the 'Hail Mary' was voted the most loved prayer.

Participants in the quest have thousands of hymns to choose from - time-honoured ones learned at school and from their parents, or more contemporary compositions.

Bishop Nulty insisted that it is "important for the Church to have a presence at this unique event and our diocese always has a busy stand whenever it is held in our locality.

"As someone who enjoys and appreciates singing in church, I am

really looking forward to finding out what hymns people most like," he said ahead of the competition.

Hymns

The most highly nominated hymns will be sung by leading performers at the Kildare & Leighlin stand at the ploughing each day at lunchtime.

'Ireland's Favourite Hymn' is one of several initiatives being taken by the diocese at the Ratheniska event. The theme of the Kildare and Leighlin stand is 'Ploughing a Prayerful Path', echoing the recent synodal discussions throughout the world to advise Pope Francis on a way forward for the Catholic Church.

Visitors to the stand will be invited to help create a woollen mural depicting the logo of the synod. Callers will also be given a wristband featuring the colours of Ukraine.

The diocesan stand will also highlight some ancient ritual customs such as the making of St Brigid's crosses and the distribution of blessed salt for dispersal on gardens and farmland. The stand will have a Prayer Wall for petitions, as well as a quiet space for private prayer.

Anyone who wishes to register their preference can do so by submitting same to: favouritehymn@kandle.ie.



Bishop Denis Nulty blessing salt at the Ratheniska site of the National and World Ploughing Championships. The salt will be given to callers at the Kildare and Leighlin tent to disperse on their farms and gardens. Fr Thomas O'Byrne, Adm. Carlow, holds the blessed salt.

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Open heart to faith not ‘genuine evil’ priest warns in wake of Tallaght attack

Chai Brady

A Dublin parish is still in shock after the “violent” and “evil” murder of two young children and a teenager in Tallaght, according to a local priest.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Bill O’Shaughnessy, moderator of Springfield, Jobstown and Brookfield parishes said faith will help

many people after the “extraordinarily shocking” attack.

A 24-year-old man, Andy Cash, was charged with the murders of his siblings Lisa Cash (18), and twin brother and sister Christy and Chelsea Cawley (8). They were found dead at their family home after the attack in the early hours of Sunday morning.

“At the moment the parish team here is offering our support in

terms of our presence, the church is open for people to light a candle, as they come and go to the school, parents, or anyone who wishes to say a prayer in the church,” said Fr O’Shaughnessy.

“Really it’s faith that’s going to get a lot of people through this. Knowing that unfortunately evil acts like this do occur in our world... the foundations of our faith come in to play, knowing deep down that

as bad as things can get the Lord is always with us in all of this, there is going to be light at the end of the tunnel no matter how dark things get.”

He described the attack as “so vicious” it was a whole new level of violence for Tallaght.

Fr O’Shaughnessy warned that “good fruit and bad fruit is always fed. When we open up our hearts to the influence of genuine evil, it does

put into our hearts that human life is something to be wasteful with and we can do what we want with it, to use violence against other people as a means to sort out our problems - which is obviously never the answer.

“It’s the same with our faith, the opposite should feed our lives, it’s to do with compassion, care and love between one another which is so important.”

1500 years of faith come to an end in Waterford and Lismore

Jason Osborne

The Diocese of Waterford and Lismore has been hit by the double-withdrawal of the Dominican Friary on Bridge Street and the Franciscan Friary on Abbey Street in Clonmel, bringing a combined 1,500 years of faithful service in the area to an end.

In a statement, Provincial for the Irish Franciscans Fr Aidan McGrath said the decision to

withdraw from Clonmel was a “sad and difficult” one for them.

“After much consideration and evaluation, we the Irish Franciscans, must today announce our withdrawal from Clonmel.

“This is a sad and difficult decision for us, as we have spent over 700 years in this town, offering our services and continually benefiting from the support of its people. This difficult decision is however unavoidable, as we

like so many religious bodies deal with and respond to our ageing and reducing membership,” Fr McGrath said.

Meanwhile, Prior Provincial of the Dominicans in Ireland Fr John Harris OP told the *Waterford News & Star* that they decided last year to petition the Master of the Order for permission to withdraw from St Saviour’s on Bridge Street.

“We are deeply saddened to have to end an

association with Waterford lasting nearly 800 years. We understand the sadness this withdrawal will cause for the many faithful people who look to St Saviour’s as their regular place of worship and prayer,” Fr Harris said.

The Dominican brothers in St Saviour’s on Bridge Street are set to withdraw December 31 this year, while the final Mass in the Clonmel friary church will be celebrated January 6, 2023.

Gardaí come to a close with Mother and Baby Home criminal complaints

Staff reporter

Gardaí have closed the case on most of the criminal complaints lodged regarding the treatment of women and children in Ireland’s

mother and baby homes.

Out of 89 criminal complaints, 67 have been closed, with the 22 remaining open “subject to further engagement or investigation, as warranted,” the *Irish Independent* reported.

Gardaí found no evidence of crime in many of the reported cases, while in others the complainants decided to take the case no further.

Meanwhile, the Government has abandoned an independent

review of the testimonies given by former residents of mother and baby homes.

The promise came after survivors and academics expressed concern over how testimony provided to the confidential committee on

the mother and baby homes was handled.

A spokesperson for Children’s Minister Roderic O’Gorman confirmed to the *Irish Examiner* that there were no longer plans to carry out the independent review.

Age and beauty...



There was an emotional reunion in Glencairn Abbey in Co. Waterford at the weekend as childhood friends Elizabeth Cogan (87) and Cistercian nun Mother Agnes (92) met to talk about old times.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Actor praises Pope’s guidance to artists at Vatican meeting

The Chosen’s Jonathan Roumie took to social media to praise the “wisdom and insights of the Holy Father” after attending the Vatican summit on the role artists can play in transforming culture.

“I am provoked to discern: ‘How do I continue to amplify the light as an artist?’ ‘How

can I take this initiative further?’ ‘How can I have greater impact on culture as a whole and beyond?’” Mr Roumie shared on Facebook.

“A poignant reminder God can use anyone and everyone in any field that he wants to move hearts towards him.”

Maynooth researchers awarded €2 million grant

Maynooth University researchers are set to receive €2 million to support five projects, including one on the influence of Clonard church on Irish society.

The grant comes from the Science Foundation of Ireland and the Irish Research Council for projects in a variety of disciplines.

These include: work on agricultural productivity and food safety; nanoscale

precision; applying data science to archaeological excavations; patronage in a medieval Ireland church and anti-neoliberal parties and popular movements.

Dr Niamh Wycherley, Department of Early Irish received €382,000 for her research on ‘Power and patronage in medieval Ireland: Clonard from the sixth to 12th centuries.’



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The family that eats together stays together



Mary Kenny

‘Decline of traditional family revealed,’ ran the headline in *The Times* of London last week, describing an official report on the structure of the modern family. The report, led by Dame Rachel de Souza, the English children’s commissioner, found that almost a quarter of British families are headed by a lone parent. And 44% of those born in 2000 will have spent their growing years not in a nuclear family of two biological parents. Among those born in 1970, it had been 21%.

“Marriage is in decline – more couples now cohabit, even though cohabitation often leads to a greater probability of splitting up”

Some 8.2 million families are headed by a lone parent, and in 90% of cases, that means a mother. (In Ireland, the trend is similar. In 2017, some 36% of children came from single or unmarried parents: this year it rose to over 43%.)

Marriage is in decline – more couples now cohabit, even though cohabitation often leads to a greater

“How fascinating to hear this idea being officially revived. Because, until recently, generations of psychologists, sociologists, as well as feminists, have denounced marriage and the family as an oppressive structure which squashes individuality”

Catholic in cabinet

Thérèse Coffey was bound to have a senior position in prime minister Liz Truss’ new Westminster administration, and, at the time of writing, it seemed likely she’ll be deputy prime minister. Thérèse is a Liverpool Catholic of Irish heritage, having gone to two Catholic schools, including St Edward’s College in Liverpool – and from there to Somerville, Oxford. Very

brainy, she subsequently took a PhD in chemistry at London University. She and Liz Truss have been firm friends since they both entered parliament in 2010.

I’ve met Thérèse at Irish embassy parties in London: she’s certainly a free-enterprise Tory, and yet easy and smiling in social relations. Aged 50, she’s single, and seldom speaks about her personal life, but

probability of splitting up. And there are differences among different population sections, Dame Rachel found. Families of Asian heritage, including Chinese, Indian and Pakistani, are most likely to be formed by married parents. Black Caribbean families were most likely to be single-parents – 57% headed by a lone parent, usually a mother. Some 22% of white families were single-parent led.

Single-parent families

Dame De Souza’s family review underlined that single-parent families were more affected by poverty. She stressed the “protective effect” of a strong family against hardship and deprivation – being together could alleviate these challenges.

And she emphasised something else: the role of eating meals together. Families who eat together five or six times a week tend to have a higher general level of happiness than those who don’t. Teenagers are less likely to be troubled, and more likely to do well in exams where there is a pattern of sharing meals around a family table.

It is interesting to see modern sociology deliver nostrums that are as old as the hills. Is not “breaking bread together” a long tradition in Christianity – and before that, deeply embedded in Jewish practice?

The family changes all the time, Dame Rachel said, and yet it remains “the most powerful foundation for the



future” offering “universal values” and a protective shield. How fascinating to hear this idea being officially revived. Because, until recently, generations of psychologists, sociologists, as well as feminists, have denounced marriage and the family as an oppressive structure which squashes individuality.

Rightly, Dame Rachel says that families can be diverse – and can include wider familial relations, grandparents, and extended kin. Quite so. Families don’t have to be blood kin, as the many very loving and thriving adoptive families have shown.

There is a reluctance, today, to be ‘judgemental’

about either divorced or lone parents: and that is both kind and indeed Christian. Yet there is also a growing pragmatic recognition that certain structures quite evidently work best for the formation of children’s lives, and that includes, where possible, a family based on marriage which has a commitment to the regular shared family meal.

● It’s great for motorists that a new bypass will now be constructed to avoid Adare in Co. Limerick, cutting the journey from Dublin to Kerry by an hour. It’s surely good news too for Adare. Residents of Adare get pretty cheesed off with the traffic bottlenecks that crowd their delightful location, especially in the tourist season.

And yet, Adare was always a gorgeous place to see, en route to the south-west coast. Its thatched rooves, charming tea-rooms, 13th Century foundations and attractive shops which sold genuinely Irish merchandise were picture-postcard. And now, when the €450 million bypass is completed, Adare will be left in peace – but many tourists and visitors will miss the chance of experiencing ‘the prettiest village in Ireland’.

JOE WALSH TOURS

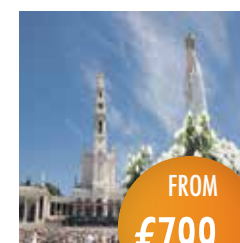
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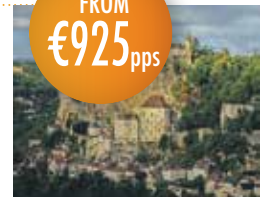
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Ursulines insist Catholic legacy will continue as St Angela's gifted to State

Ruadhán Jones

The Ursuline sisters have insisted that the Catholic legacy of St Angela's College will continue in the newly-founded Merici institute, having gifted the college to the State.

The order no longer has the personnel to continue their involvement in the Sligo college, which is to be incorporated into the new Atlantic Technological University, a

spokesperson told *The Irish Catholic*.

Sr Marieanne O'Connor, who sits on the board of St Angela's, said it is "sad" to be ending their involvement in the college, which was one of three remaining publicly funded colleges with a Catholic ethos.

The order is anxious to preserve their educational legacy in Sligo, and so "are transferring it [St Angela's] free gratis and for nothing to the State".

She added that it is "a terrific

college" and will be a great asset to ATU.

In order to "preserve the legacy" of the order's Catholic ethos, Sr O'Connor continued, they have founded the Merici Institute for Religious Studies, named after their foundress.

The sisters will fund the institute for the first two years, and hope that it will become self-funding from then on.

"I think we need this kind of

backing of our faith in Ireland at the moment," Sr O'Connor said, calling it a "very exciting development".

The primary objective of the institute will be to enrol PhD students to conduct and develop research "that leads us to a better understanding of religion", Sr O'Connor said.

"It will also hopefully extend to offering courses and conferences and philanthropic funding as well," she added.

The sisters have advertised for the position of director of the Merici Institute on a two-year, full-time contract.

According to the specifications for the job, the institute seeks to contribute to the development of religious literacy, foster ecumenical and faith dialogue and contribute to "a living commitment to an integral living planet and spirit of global community".

Republic's Govt 'dictated' pandemic Church rules, while North negotiated

Chai Brady

An Irish academic who will conduct research into the impact of Covid on religion has said it appeared the Government in the Republic "dictated" pandemic rules to Churches while in the North there was a spirit of negotiation and "give and take".

Dr Gladys Ganiel of Queen's University Bel-

fast will undertake a three-year project with academics from around the world called 'Religion in Societies Emerging from Covid-19'.

The research aims to ascertain whether, or to what extent, the role of religion has changed in Ireland, Poland, Germany and Canada.

Speaking on the BBC's *Sunday Sequence*, Dr Ganiel stated Ireland is a "really interesting case" as the Churches are organised on an

all-island basis but were interacting with two different jurisdictions.

She said: "In the Republic of Ireland quite often what seemed to appear to be the case was that the Government kind of dictated restrictions to religious groups and there wasn't a lot of give and take, whereas in Northern Ireland it seemed to be more a relationship of negotiation.

"I think for instance... when the lockdown was coming again after Christmas time, the Churches here [Northern Ireland] voluntarily closed before government had to announce they would close. So to me that seemed to be more a relationship of negotiation and give and take rather than what you got in the Republic so that is quite an interesting difference as well."

Brotherly love...



Bro. Ade OFM Cap. is pictured receiving the *pax* after making his solemn profession into the hands of Bro. Sean Kelly, provincial minister for the Capuchins in Ireland and Great Britain.

'Deep sadness' after death of teenage jockey

Staff reporter

The parish priest of the late Jack de Bromhead's hometown said there is a "deep, deep sadness" in the community.

Jack (13), died over the weekend, September 3, after a horse racing accident at the Glenbeigh races on Rossbeigh beach in Co. Kerry.

Fr Pat Fitzgerald PP of St Paul's and Butlerstown in Waterford said at Sunday Mass in Butlerstown: "I've a sense that life will always come asking for more. That's the nature of things. A lot of life has to do with letting go,

surrendering things that are dear to us. The most awful expression of this is the cloud that hangs over this community today and will do for many days; the deep, deep sense of sadness that we feel in relation to little Jack de Bromhead."

He added he hopes their prayers "will be of some help in this situation and of course the friendship and presence of people who know the family well".

Requiem Mass for Jack was held on Wednesday at noon in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Butlerstown.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UL and Mary Immaculate to discuss 'closer structural alignment'

Discussions are planned to take place on a "closer structural alignment" between the University of Limerick (UL) and Mary Immaculate College, but no talks of a merger.

The news comes following a query from *The Irish Catholic* to the two colleges and Limerick Diocese.

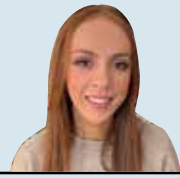
MIC is set to be the last publicly funded third level college with a Catholic ethos, as St Angela's

College, Sligo, and St Patrick's College, Carlow, are to be handed over to the State.

"Discussions are planned to take place in the future on a closer structural alignment between the institutions," a spokesperson from UL said, while MIC confirmed that it is "not in discussions with the University of Limerick regarding the possibility of a merger".

Shannon Campbell

The View



Chaplaincy as a powerhouse for vocations

As I write, I'm in the midst of packing for another wedding. The summer season has been busy this year with weddings and ordinations. Many within my peer group have reached the stage of making lifelong commitments, having discerned how God is calling them to love and serve him.

And it's not just my peer group. The chaplaincy at Queen's University where I work is a real seedbed of vocational discernment.

“For many young people, university is an exciting and transformative time when they experience new possibilities”

This weekend past, we were delighted to receive news of a former student of St Mary's University College, a constituent of Queen's, progressing with her vocation with the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph. Last year, Ciara Fowler, a native of Portaferry, received the Dominican habit and took the name Sr Maire Cooley. At the weekend she made simple vows in the presence of her religious community, as well as her family and friends.

For many young people, university is an exciting and transformative time when they experience new possibilities. A time of growth and self-discovery, students are keen to explore the wider world and consider how they'll contribute to it and shape its values and character.

As they discern the definite plan God has for them, we reassure students that life does make sense, that there is a God who loves them and that in the end all will be well.

We help them understand how they might engage as Catholics in our world today. In their studies, work and recreation they are encouraged to appro-

priate Gospel values and integrate these into their world views.

Of course all vocations are rooted in that first call to holiness made to us at Baptism. One of the most inspiring aspects of our ministry on campus is the regular turnover of young adults encountering faith for the first time.

Each academic year, a small group of students curious to know more seems to emerge from nowhere and we stand ready to accompany them and support them to be received into the Church. We offer short courses in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) using Sycamore; a catechetical programme of print and online resources developed by the University of London's Newman House in association with the Archdiocese of Westminster. It offers several pathways which can be adapted to suit the needs of individuals and groups.

We also provide mentoring to help students grow a friendship circle to support them on their faith journey. This year we prepared seven members of the chaplaincy community to be received into the Church; some of them at Easter, and others at Pentecost.

Vocations

We are keen to build on the work of diocesan vocations groups and are encouraged that recent members of the university continue their studies for priesthood and religious life, and that a number of others are actively discerning vocation. Two of our recent alumni are in formation for the Redemptorist and Dominican orders. Another two were ordained priests for the Dioceses of Down and Connor and Armagh.

At Christmas we welcomed for a visit alumna Anna McKinley who, after a period of postulancy with the sisters of life in the United States, has been accepted to their novitiate. She recently received the order's habit and has taken the name Sr Rose Goretta Immaculata.

Anna's is an interesting story. During her medicine studies at Queen's, she spent

a missionary year with the Christ in the City project in Denver, Colorado. While there, she encountered FOCUS campus ministry. At one of their events, she experienced a real sense of God calling her to something different. After graduating from Queen's and qualifying as a doctor, she changed track and is now loving and serving God and his people as a religious sister.

FOCUS, with whom we at Chaplaincy are partnering this year, consider the fostering of vocation as a priority. And not just vocations to priesthood and religious life, but all vocations, including marriage and family.

“Needless to say, we are super excited at the chaplaincy to be partnering with FOCUS”

Their discipleship programmes and mission outreach encourages students to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ and fosters in them a desire to serve. Students are inspired and equipped for a lifetime of Christ-centred evangelisation, discipleship and friendship.

Thanks to their long-established ministry at universities in the United States, tens of thousands of students, after graduation, contribute to parish life and continue their missionary work as ordinary lay women and men. Incredibly, since its founding in 1998, FOCUS has fostered 867 Catholic religious vocations.

Needless to say, we are super excited at the chaplaincy to be partnering with FOCUS. We have a long and noble tradition of fostering vocation at Queen's and we are confident this partnership will continue to grow chaplaincy as a powerhouse of vocational discernment. Not only will this serve the needs of the Church and local communities in this part of Ireland, but well beyond.



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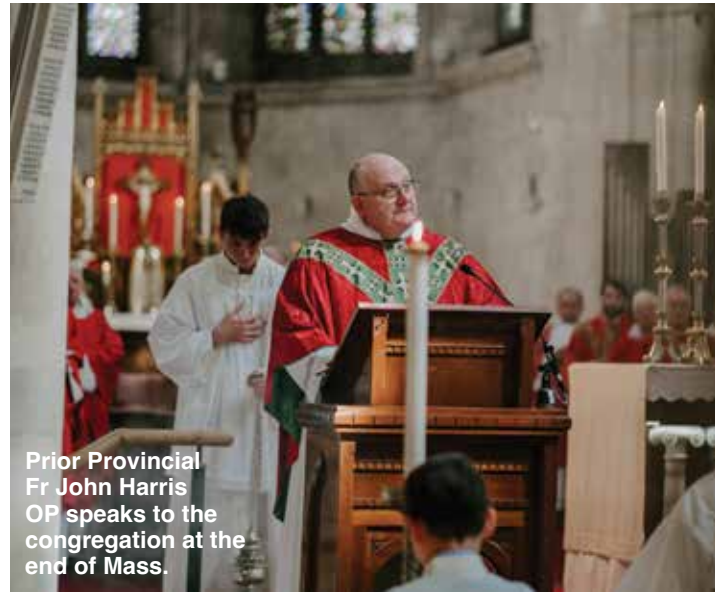
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“This year we prepared seven members of the chaplaincy community to be received into the Church; some of them at Easter, and others at Pentecost”

Hundreds attend St Saviour's for Dominican ordinations



Prior Provincial Fr John Harris OP speaks to the congregation at the end of Mass.



Fr Kavanagh imparts his priestly blessing.

Ruadhán Jones

Hundreds of people gathered for the ordination to the priesthood of Frs Kellan Scott OP and Anthony Kavanagh OP in St Saviour's Church, September 4. Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan ordained the two Dominicans, in front of many family members, friends and the wider Catholic community.

cial of the Dominicans in Ireland, expressed his gratitude to the many people who attended for their support of the young priests.

He thanked in particular the families of Fr Kavanagh and Fr Scott, adding that it is a great day for the whole community.

Long queues of the Faithful waited at the end of Mass to receive the first priestly blessings from Fr Scott and Fr Kavanagh, before a celebratory gathering in St Saviour's priory after Mass.

Fr John Harris, prior provin-

Altar servers and priests process into the church.



Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan lays hands on Fr Kellan Scott.



Fr Anthony Kavanagh (left) and Fr Kellan Scott prostrate themselves before the altar during the Mass in St Saviour's Church, September 4.

“Today the visibility of faith has for all intents and purposes vanished” – Archbishop Dermot Farrell

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Clonliffe College Dublin hailed for last time



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell attends the thanksgiving service in Holy Cross College chapel on Sunday to mark the closing of Holy Cross College Dublin. Photos: John McElroy

Chai Brady

A prayer service of thanksgiving drew hundreds of people to mark the closing of renowned Holy Cross College Clonliffe Dublin in the college chapel on September 4.

More than 200 people, including priests and current and former diocesan staff members, attended.

Archbishop Farrell acknowledged the contribution of Holy Cross College to the life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin for 168 years.

He underlined the need for new modalities of formation for those who will be involved in the ministry of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel in the coming decades.

The college was founded in 1854 as the Catholic diocesan seminary for Dublin by Cardinal Paul Cullen.

The building was subsequently used as an administration centre for the archdiocese after priests stopped being trained there.

The property will officially change hands next month. All of the diocesan offices have moved to new locations. The archdiocese is working closely with the new owners to facilitate the accommodation of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.



Guests are entertained after the prayer service of thanksgiving to mark the closing of Holy Cross College Clonliffe Dublin.

The Vatican's neutrality in the Ukrainian war is defensible



The Pope wants the Church to fulfil the Christian mission to be a peacemaker, writes **David Quinn**

Recently Ukraine's Foreign Minister summoned the Holy See's ambassador to Ukraine to appear before him after Pope Francis had angered the Ukrainian authorities by expressing sympathy for Darya Dugina, a political commentator in Russia who had been blown up in a car bomb.

“Ukraine was annoyed because the Pope implied that Dugina was a victim of the war”

Dugina was an ultra-nationalist supporter of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Her father, Alexander Dugin, is a prominent Russian intellectual and also an ultra-nationalist cheer-leader for the war. Many believe the car bomb was intended for him.

During one of his general audiences last month, very soon after the murder, Pope Francis said: “Innocents pay for war”. He then referred to “that poor girl thrown in the air by a bomb under the seat of a car in Moscow”.

Ukraine was annoyed because the Pope implied that Dugina was a victim of the war. Ukraine denies it had anything to do with the killing, and also because Francis described her as an “innocent” despite her constant public war-mongering and anti-Ukrainian rhetoric.

The Ukrainian ambassador to the Holy See said in response: “How [is it] possible to mention one of [the] ideologists of [Russian] imperialism as [an] innocent victim?...Can't speak in same categories about aggressor and victim, rapist and raped.”

The Holy See acknowl-



A man in Toretsk, Ukraine, drives away from his destroyed house as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues. Photo: CNS

edges that Ukraine is the wronged party in the war (how could it do otherwise?), but at the same time both it, and Pope Francis, have tried to remain as neutral and impartial as possible since the conflict began last February.

Pope Francis wants a swift end to the fighting. There are three main reasons for this. One is that the Church is becoming increasingly pacifist in its overall approach to conflict. Secondly, it fears that the war will escalate and is already causing huge collateral damage to the rest of the world by driving up energy costs, creating food shortages and generally driving the poor even deeper into poverty.

Mediator

Thirdly, it would like to act as a mediator if that is possible and it cannot do that unless it is seen as an ‘honest broker’ by both sides. This annoys Ukraine which believes Pope Francis should simply condemn the evil of the Russian invasion. It believes that in this war, there is no neutral position, especially when you are the leader of a worldwide institution that preaches about right and wrong.

But if you examine Holy

See diplomacy going back to at least the 19th Century, the Holy See often tries to remain neutral in conflicts, usually because it sees this as the best way to pursue peace.

If everyone takes sides, then no-one will be trusted by both sides, and no-one can act as a mediator. The Church wants to fulfil the Christian mission to be a peacemaker.

“In that war, the Holy See could clearly see where the evil lay, namely with Nazi Germany”

For example, the Church remained neutral during World War I. Pope Benedict XV made constant calls for peace, which were consistently ignored. Even though Germany was the main aggressor in that war, the Holy See nonetheless wanted to position itself as a potential mediator. But no-one was interested and so the war dragged on for more than four years, costing millions of lives and sowing the seeds for the Second World War.

In that war, the Holy See

could clearly see where the evil lay, namely with Nazi Germany. But it still maintained political neutrality so that it could carry out its charitable mission properly in all countries, especially those directly torn apart by the war.

But the relative silence of Pius XII about the mass-murder of the Jews left him open to the charge later on of being ‘Hitler's Pope’. Rightly or wrongly, Pius feared that if he confronted Germany directly and openly what it was doing to the Jews, the situation might become even worse. Of course, in the end, the situation was as bad as it could possibly be.

Holy See

In the late 1970s, the Holy See intervened in a dispute between Chile and Argentina over an island group that might have escalated into war. It managed to broker a peace deal between the two countries.

Later in his pontificate, Pope John Paul II opposed the American and British invasion of Iraq.

The Holy See has been involved in the signing of peace treaties in Africa and it could only do so by avoiding taking sides.

Today, the Holy See is walking a delicate tightrope with respect to China. Christians and other religious believers are being increasingly persecuted there. The Holy See has remained mostly quiet about the matter. It won't even condemn the appalling treatment of the Muslim Uighur people in the west of the country. It seems to think that a softly-softly approach towards the Communist Government in Beijing will pay dividends in the end. But remaining silent in the face of evil could undermine the Holy See's moral authority in the end. What is the correct prudential course of action in this scenario?

Pope John Paul II openly confronted the Communist governments of Eastern Europe, and helped to bring about their downfall, especially in his native Poland. But Poland had, and has, a very large Catholic population. Chinese has a tiny Catholic minority. The prudential considerations in both cases are different.

Currently in the war between Russia and Ukraine, both Turkey and the UN are trying to act as mediators. Turkey helped to bring about the agreement that led to food

being shipped out of Odessa again, something that is crucial if famine is to be avoided in parts of the developing world. Turkey could only do this by remaining neutral.

The Holy See might never play the part of mediator in this conflict because Russia does not fully trust it, in part because of mutual mistrust between the Russian Orthodox Church (which is absurdly close to Russian leader, Vladimir Putin) and the Catholic Church.

“Overall, the position taken by the Holy See to date in the Ukrainian conflict is defensible, both morally and prudentially”

But the Vatican also has to be careful not to alienate Ukrainian Catholics by trying too hard to be seen as an honest broker by Russia.

There is no doubt, however, that someone needs to act as a mediator in the conflict. The Holy See is correct to be worried about the wider implications of the war. It has to take a global view and it is natural that it wishes to be a peacemaker. It knows from long and hard experience of history what happens when conflicts drag on. Overall, the position taken by the Holy See to date in the Ukrainian conflict is defensible, both morally and prudentially.

“Pope John Paul II openly confronted the Communist Governments of Eastern Europe, and helped to bring about their downfall, especially in his native Poland”



Brian McKee

Finding renewed meaning for religious life in a new world

Last month saw the Passionist Congregation celebrate the final profession of South Armagh native, Conor Quinn, in the beautiful surroundings of Holy Cross Church, Ardoyne in Belfast. It was in this historic church that Conor first entered the congregation in 2016 following a three-year period of prayer and reflection.

Conor's road to final profession has seen him embark on a six year journey that has witnessed a wide array of experiences. From being a novice in Tobar Mhuire in Co. Down to studying philosophy in Belfast to more recently having completed three years studying theology in Chicago. It would have been hard for Conor to imagine such a journey when he was a student in St Paul's High School in Bessbrook, or studying computer games development at Magee College, University of Ulster. As Conor puts it: "I wanted to live and own my Catholic faith authentically and with conviction. For a few years after university, I worked in software and customer service while beginning to hear a call to religious life and priesthood."

Family has been at the centre of Conor's journey in religious life: "I am the oldest of three siblings, one of which, my sister Niamh, has high functioning autism, which had a marked influence on our family life. I also have a brother Miceal who is the youngest. Our life growing up was fairly normal, but certainly influenced by my sister's needs and our being a family of carers."

“ Sometimes it seems that the maps we are using as a Church to find our way in this new territory are out of date”

A final profession marks the lifelong commitment an individual makes to a religious congregation or order. In previous times, such events were a regular annual event in the life of many congregations, but recent years have seen such a marked decrease that Pope Francis has recently voiced alarm at the 'haemorrhaging' of nuns and priests in Europe, saying "God only knows how many seminaries, monasteries, convents and churches will close because fewer people are being called to lives of religious service."

The Church in Ireland will certainly concur with Pope Francis when he told Italy's bishops that he was concerned about the "crisis of vocations" in a region of the world that in the not too distant past was one of the biggest sources of Catholic missionaries. He said that we were entering a period of "vocational sterility" to which he wasn't sure a solution exists.

The number of Catholic priests worldwide declined by 136 to 415,656



Bro. Conor Quinn CP follows the processional cross on the way to his final profession in Holy Cross Monastery, Ardoyne in Belfast followed by Bro. Cian Hennessey CP.

“ Conor's road to final profession has seen him embark on a six year journey that has witnessed a wide array of experiences”

in 2015, the last year for which data is available. The decrease was greatest in Europe, where there were 2,502 fewer priests compared with 2014. This number was offset by increases in priestly vocations in Africa and Asia, where the Church as a whole is growing. During the same period, the number of baptised Catholics globally rose from 1.27 billion to nearly 1.29 billion, meaning the ratio of Catholics to priests available to minister to them is growing.

Picture

This picture of faith life would have been unimaginable to the first Passionists who arrived in Ardoyne back in 1868 at the invitation of Bishop Dorrian following a parish mission in Portaferry. Before we write the obituary for the Church though, a cursory glance at those previous figures would suggest that, in marketing terms, the goods are still in demand but the production system is broken.

How often have we heard phrases like "It's a different world today"? There is no doubt that we entering new territory regarding faith life in Ireland, but sometimes it seems that the maps we are using as a Church

to find our way in this new territory are out of date and bear little resemblance to the ground upon which we walk. We implement strategies which should have been implemented years ago and are often left to play catch up with changes in society.

Map

The old map for ministry is outdated. We need a new map for ministry in the 21st Century, but before we are able to plot a new map of territory not entered before, we must first have the courage to walk the ground never walked before. Only with men and women holding similar conviction and commitment as Conor, working alongside each other and where the only important label is 'compassion' will the drawing of a new map be possible.

Within the Church we are too quick to blame modern culture for having lost a sense of God and of the sacred, of being less compassionate and caring, of not having time for others. That is not my experience of people today. I encounter people of deep faith and deep compassion every day, but they are not necessarily convinced of the message we are

proclaiming. As we look towards the future, the question is not whether people will have faith, but what will they have faith in, and will we be able to answer the challenge of creating structures to facilitate the living out of this faith?

“ A final profession marks the lifelong commitment an individual makes to a religious congregation or order”

T.S. Elliot sums up this challenge very well by in his poem *Four Quartets*:

"Last season's fruit is eaten and the fulfilled beast shall kick the empty pail.

For last year's words belong to last year's language,

And next year's words await another voice."

Conor Quinn has made a lifelong commitment to the Congregation of the Passion. While on the face of it, these are not good days to be in ministry in our Church, faith tells us

that these are the days in which we have been chosen to be in ministry. Faith would also tell us that the gifts we need to proclaim the Gospel message in these days are present within the community of the Church. There is no benefit in regretting the passing of a past age of security and abundance, and which was also a time of shame and abuse. Religious today, in partnership with others sharing the mantle of mercy, compassion and love are invited to take up the call to walk out into the deep, where faith is not based upon proclaiming certainty but upon having the courage to journey through the greyness of life.

Final prayer

The final prayer of the profession Mass for Conor spoke of the Passionist as one who would "embrace the burden of the burdens of the people". As the wooden cross was symbolically put on Conor's shoulder, and the crown of thorns placed on his head, we were witnessing a man making a commitment "to bear the burden of the burdens of the people" in full knowledge of the difficulties within the Church, a Church that was both crucified and crucifying. That took some courage. I have no doubt that Conor's family, the people of Newtownhamilton and St Paul of the Cross, would be proud of this man from South Armagh.

i Brian McKee is a youth minister in Belfast.

'Keep up the pressure' at the Dublin March for Life



There's been no focus on supports for women in unplanned pregnancies, writes **Eilís Mulroy**

On Saturday September 17, pro-life advocates will gather at St Stephen's Green for the Dublin March for Life. This important event takes place during two major turning points in the campaign for the dignity of unborn children, both at home and abroad.

The march follows the overturning of Roe vs Wade by the US Supreme Court, which was the greatest hammer blow to the international abortion industry in decades.

For the first time, voters in many US states can now properly debate and decide on the issue of abortion, and have a chance to rein in what had evolved into a cruel heartless regime of abortion on demand over the last 50 years. Some 18 US states have already banned or dramatically restricted the practice of abortion, in line with the views of voters of those states.

Pro-life advocates are often told that we are on "the wrong side of history". Developments across the water suggest otherwise, and show that the direction of travel on abortion is not all one-way.

Let this be the moment that the tide turns back towards a culture that cherishes all life from the moment of conception.

Review

Our march will also take place at a time when the Government's three-year review of the abortion law is reaching a conclusion. This review has been deeply flawed, as the Government has sought to pander to the usual pro-abortion vested interests. A small group of committed pro-abortion cam-



paigners and lobby groups have called the shots and set the agenda, while trying to drown out the pro-life side.

“Let this be the moment that the tide turns back towards a culture that cherishes all life from the moment of conception”

For example, the pro-abortion movement has lobbied intensely to abolish the three-day waiting period for medical abortion. Yet, figures from the Department of Health have shown that each year up to 1000 women do not go through with an abortion having sought an initial consultation, which means that scrapping the waiting period could mean an extra 1,000 lives would be lost to abortion each year. This minimal restriction must be maintained.

The proposal to ban pro-life vigils, first proposed in 2018, has been resurrected during the review, with legislation promised later this year – another predictable attempt to silence pro-life advocates.

We cannot take any of this lying down, and we simply have to make a stand.

The Government knows it cannot justify the exclusion of pro-life voices, but it's our responsibility to insist on being included in the decision-making process so we can work towards reducing the spiralling Irish abortion rate.

One glaring aspect of the review of the abortion law has been the complete absence of any focus on the supports which are needed by women in unplanned pregnancies, and which might help them to choose to keep their babies instead of feeling pressured into an abortion.

There are so many things which pregnant women need, and which they are totally denied by the State at present.

Unplanned

Women in an unplanned pregnancy need direct financial assistance, and other practical supports. They need a safe and secure roof over their head, since women in crisis pregnancies are particularly exposed to the injustice of the ongoing housing crisis, particularly if they are not receiving assistance from their family or from the baby's father.

We should be providing

support and advice to parents who have received a diagnosis that their unborn child has a life-limiting condition in utero. We also need to assist parents who are dealing with the physical trauma and emotional pain of miscarriage.

And we absolutely must provide non-judgemental support for women who have had an abortion and who regret that decision.

At present, the State provides none of these services to Irish women. Instead, women must rely on voluntary organisations who receive no state funding.

We cannot accept a situation where millions of euro each year are spent on abortions, but no funding is provided to help these women. Our health system has adopted the worldview of the abortion industry – that an abortion should be the first choice presented to women, and we cannot allow that to stand.

The March for Life will be a key launch pad for our campaign to fundamentally change this mindset.

The march will be a family-friendly event, and we are asking supporters of all ages to join us in Dublin where we'll unite to seek proper representation for pro-life views,

and to secure policies that will help reduce Ireland's spiralling abortion rate. To really pack a punch and show the strength of our commitment, we need every last pro-life supporter to be present.

“We absolutely must provide non-judgemental support for women who have had an abortion and who regret that decision”

At the event, we will be joined by guest speakers including Autumn Lindsey, spokesperson for Students for Life of America and Rachel Mackenzie, a well-known advocate for life in Britain.

Autumn Lindsey first came to prominence in 2017 through a viral video which was viewed by millions, in which she strongly rebutted an article in *Teen Vogue* magazine which promoted abortion. Rachel Mackenzie speaks passionately and with first-hand knowledge of how the abortion industry treats women and of the

deep regret she feels after the two abortions she had.

Inspiration

We hope to take inspiration from these two inspiring women about how their work and advocacy can be applied by pro-life advocates here in Ireland. The march will also be addressed by Dr Brendan Crowley, Katie Ascough and others.

We will also be joined by pro-life Oireachtas members who have consistently supported our work. It's worth remembering that every one of the TDs who opposed the abortion legislation in late 2018 kept their seats at the last general election, while more than a dozen of the most prominent repeal campaigners lost their seats.

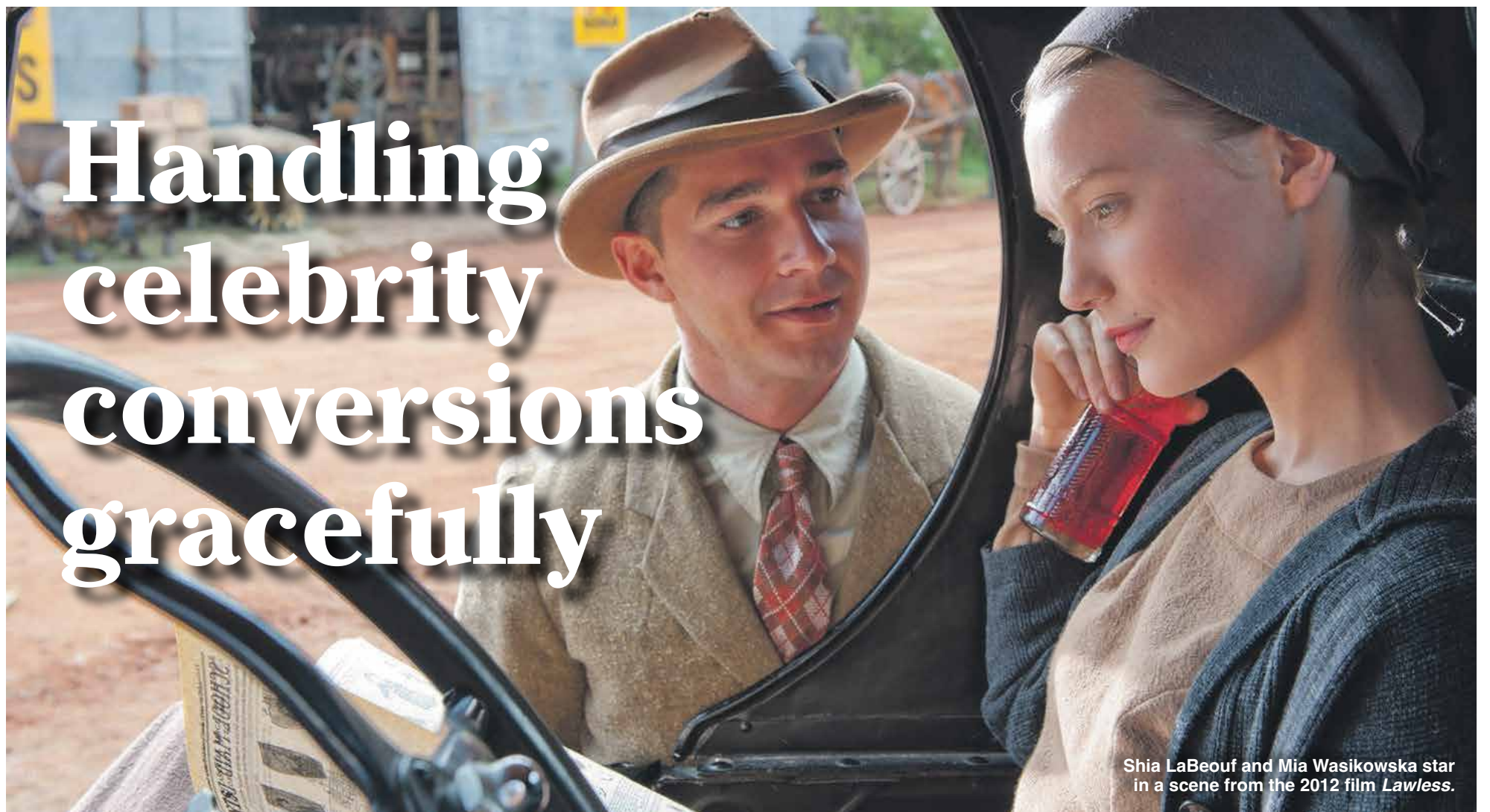
This scotches the notion that the pro-life cause is a risky one to take up.

We need to build our support in the Oireachtas by providing every support we can to those courageous representatives who proudly represent the views of the one-third of the electorate in the face of relentless attempts by the Government to silence them.

The pro-life marches and rallies that took place earlier in the year were a great source of encouragement and motivation but we have to keep up the pressure to start delivering results. We need to continue that momentum. See you in Dublin on September 17, 2.30pm.

1 Eilís Mulroy is a spokesperson for the Pro Life Campaign.

“The proposal to ban pro-life vigils, first proposed in 2018, has been resurrected during the review”



Handling celebrity conversions gracefully

Shia LaBeouf and Mia Wasikowska star in a scene from the 2012 film *Lawless*.



Catholics sometimes lose their minds when a famous figure embraces Christ and that's neither good for them nor for us, writes **Jason Osborne**

Hollywood actor Shia LaBeouf's recent interview with *Word on Fire*'s Bishop Robert Barron, in which he revealed his conversion to Catholicism and embrace of its traditional expression, caused quite a stir both on and off line, drawing comment from young and old alike. Select clips from the conversation quickly went viral among supporters of the development, particularly clips during which he spoke praise of the Latin Mass, which, in his words, he said "feels like they're not selling me a car".

Others weren't too hot on how

he came across, saying that if his conversion is genuine, he ought to have publicly addressed some of the misdeeds he's rumoured to have committed. Until you see public repentance from someone who admittedly lives in the public eye, they said, you can't know how legitimate their change of ways really is.

For context, Mr LaBeouf's conversion moment came about as he studied for and played the role of St Padre Pio in Abel Ferrara's upcoming movie, *Padre Pio*. Spending an abundance of time with Franciscan Capuchin friars in preparation for the role seems to have had an effect on him, to the extent that Mr LaBeouf sees the role in the saint's upcoming movie as a providential interjection at a dark time in his life, during which he says he felt "shame like I had never experienced before".

The reaction and discussion around Mr LaBeouf's conversion reminded me of the frenzy that erupted in Christian circles when news broke in 2019 of American rapper Kanye West's engagement with Christianity, a relationship which seems to have continued through to today. Mr West released an album that year titled *Jesus is King*, which he described as "an expression of the Gospel".

On that occasion, too, Mr West was held up by Catholics and Protestants alike as an example of Christ conquering new territory in the 'highest' places of human society. Others turned their noses up at it, seeing the media-storm Mr West had drummed up around himself by his conversion as nothing more than a superficial, shallow image of faith.

Regardless, the variety of reac-

tions to celebrity conversions in recent years has struck me as neither particularly wholesome nor as particularly helpful, for the celebrity in question or for the Church. While our collective reaction to celebrities' faith lives or lack thereof is far from the most important issue the Church faces, what we say does count as a contribution to the public square, to cultural conversation, and as such it strikes me that we ought to be as Christlike in it as in all of our other endeavours.

“A conversion or reversion is a wonderful thing, but the spiritually youthful love a recent convert or revert feels is not necessarily the mature, balanced base to build the Church on”

With that in mind, I propose a couple of modifications to the way we receive reports that a celebrity has embraced the Christian faith.

Don't make them a bishop

Taking a lead from St Paul in his letter to Timothy, I suggest we don't hold up recent celebrity converts in support of our own positions when it comes to Church or political matters – at least until they've had space to breathe for a couple of years.

Regarding the qualifications

of bishops in the aforementioned letter, St Paul says in 1; Timothy 3, "He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil". The exhortation that those who guide and guard the Faith must not be recent converts is extremely interesting, as it puts breaks on our often heated reactions to conversion.

A conversion or reversion is a wonderful thing, but the spiritually youthful love a recent convert or revert feels is not necessarily the mature, balanced base to build the Church on. Such young love of God is surely the engine that jumpstarts the spiritual life, but the hands of a person with a time-tested, formed love of God are surely the more prudent choice when it comes to guiding and guarding the Church.

Of course, we're not going to make a recent celebrity convert a bishop, but I think the same lesson applies when, as mentioned, we're tempted to hold them up in support of our deeply held opinions on Church matters and politics. Rather than rallying around and making them the spokesperson for our position, better to thank God that they've discovered, in your opinion, a good thing (such as the Latin Mass) and wait and see the fruit that it bears.

Afford them the privacy the world does not

Meanwhile, rather than hold up celebrity converts as examples, others have knocked them and claimed that they can't be legitimate without some sort of public repentance for public sins. I'm of the opinion that we're not owed that – that a person's repentance

of their sin is between them and God, and between the other people directly involved, if any.

Celebrities, by definition, live their lives in the public eye, which makes it all the more important that they have the freedom to "come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while," as Jesus said to the weary apostles in Mark 6.

“It might seem a funny one, but it strikes me as odd from time to time that I can pray for a celebrity as for someone I know”

The spiritual life is both personal and communal, but the least helpful expression of community faith for a recent celebrity convert is the prying attempts by Catholics and Christians to know their relationship with sin.

Pray for them

It might seem funny, but it strikes me as odd from time to time that I can pray for a celebrity as for someone I know. Again, it's not necessarily the most important issue in the world, but the pressure and scrutiny actors, musicians, athletes and more are under is not something I envy. It's difficult enough to find and follow Christ when we're left to our own devices – how much more when the world is watching? Adding in an intention to your rosary for a celebrity you know to be doing good work or trying hard to be better is just as viable an activity as any other.

Irish monk finds his home in America



Irish Trappist Bro. Brian O'Dowd tells Rhina Guidos about finding his new spiritual home

When Trappist Bro. Brian O'Dowd was looking for a new spiritual home, he set his sights on something different from his monastery in Ireland, built around a 13th-century Norman castle, where the religious community was dwindling.

He found it, but with a minor glitch: on the other side of the world at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Carlton, Oregon, United States, an abbey in a woodsy part of the Pacific-Northwest state that had been recently renovated.

“The migrant religious workers CLINIC represents serve at more than 120 nonprofit religious organisations each year, Mr Dickey added”

The monastic community there supports itself with its bookbinding, fruitcake bakery, wine warehouse, forestry and book shop.

They were “forward-looking” and that’s why he wanted to be part of the community, said Bro. O’Dowd in an August 24 interview with *Catholic News Service*. But the move would entail more than spiritual whispers from the Holy Spirit. It needed approval from US immigration authorities.

With help from Catholic Legal Immigration Network’s Religious Immigration Services, the monk was able to enter legally into the country to join the monastery in 2013.

CLINIC’s programme for religious workers is among the United States’ few groups specialising in religious immigration law, said Jeremy Dickey, CLINIC’s director of communications in a July 19 email to *CNS*.

CLINIC’s religious immigration services represent more than 800 foreign-born religious workers in the US, such as Bro. O’Dowd. The migrant religious workers CLINIC represents serve at more than 120 nonprofit religious organisations

Trappist Bro. Brian O’Dowd, originally from Ireland, gathers for prayer with other monks at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Carlton, Oregon, in this undated photo. Photos: *CNS*.



each year, Mr Dickey added.

This year, CLINIC’s immigration services is set to receive the National Religious Vocation Conference’s Harvest Award “in honour of services to international religious candidates”.

Miguel Naranjo, director of CLINIC’s Religious Immigration Services section, said the department helps Catholic men and women religious navigate the complexities of dealing with the country’s federal bureaucracy when it comes to legal immigration.

Religious vocations

Foreign-born religious workers such as Bro. O’Dowd serve by helping to encourage religious vocations, praying, but also taking part in a religious community’s labours. They work in schools, hospitals and parishes, and some are devoted to a life of prayer behind cloister walls, which is an important part of Catholic life, said Mr Naranjo.

In addition to his life of prayer, Bro. O’Dowd, for example, helps prepare meals for his community and visitors, takes the official photographs for the community, and engages with those who visit the abbey on retreat.

“I enjoy that part of my ministry,” said Bro. O’Dowd. “I came from ethic of hard work and humour. In Ireland, we are extremely hard-working, so it has been a pleasure. I’m not afraid of hard work.”

So that the men and women reli-

gious who serve are able to focus on the important work of praying and other parts of their ministry, lawyers at CLINIC’s religious immigration services labour to stay on top of what’s happening with their cases when it comes to paperwork, deadlines, interviews.

“Earlier this year, after an almost nine-year journey navigated with help from the Religious Immigration Program, Bro. O’Dowd became a US citizen”

The pandemic and other policies presented challenges such as delays, Mr Naranjo said. Though some initially come into the US for a short period of time, others make the decision to stay. Moving cases along the immigration process is not always easy. Because of the delays, some women and men religious found themselves running out of time and some ended up having to leave behind their ministries in the US, Mr Naranjo said.

It creates a big problem especially if the foreign-born religious worker is also the pastor at a parish and has to go back to his native country. The



Trappist Bro. Brian O’Dowd, poses with his naturalisation certificate in this 2022 photo following a citizenship ceremony in Oregon.

delays created “a lot of challenges”, which CLINIC brought to the attention of various federal agencies, Mr Naranjo said.

The good news is that at the beginning of 2022, after CLINIC’s immigration services raised awareness of the problems the delays were causing, some petitions started getting approved faster, Mr Naranjo said.

For Bro. O’Dowd, the services helped him with the initial process of entering and staying legally in the US but also paving a path for a legal future here. Having the legal assistance of someone who understood him helped immensely, he said.

“I felt the fact that they were Catholic lawyers who understood Catholic needs around my ministry gave me a great deal of confidence and peace of mind,” he said.

Not only did CLINIC’s religious immigration services keep on top of

paperwork and deadlines, lawyers also prepared him for interviews with immigration officials, Bro. O’Dowd said.

“She was really making sure that I answered each question correctly,” he said. “She really grilled me hard and I appreciated that grilling.”

Welcome

“There are still challenges,” Mr Naranjo said, but it’s rewarding to contribute to improving the experience for newly arrived men and women religious who come to the US from other countries and help them find a warm welcome.

Some like Bro. O’Dowd decided to make that welcome permanent.

Earlier this year, after an almost nine-year journey navigated with help from the Religious Immigration Program, Bro. O’Dowd became a US citizen.

“It was a very joyful day,” he said. *CNS*.

Mickey Rourke: The rosary saved my life



Hollywood star Mickey Rourke opens up about God's influence on his life, writes Ruadhán Jones

“Most people would say – Mickey Rourke, you wouldn't think he prays the rosary three times a day,” says the Hollywood star with a bad-boy reputation. “But maybe that's why I'm still here.”

Mr Rourke is probably best-known as a boxer-turned actor, the star of *The Wrestler*, *Rumble Fish* and *Sin City*. And if you don't know him for his films, you'll know him by his reputation, one he freely acknowledges has been bad.

“I've been pretty good for a while now, but I had a pretty bad reputation for a long time,” Mr Rourke says. “It was 60% my fault, I take responsibility for it. I had a certain upbringing when I was young that I had to work through,

the physicality and the abuse.”

But Mickey Rourke has always had a genuine faith, one which helped him through many tough periods in his life: his hard childhood; the death of his younger brother; the ups and downs of his careers as a boxer and an actor.

“There's about five prayers I say every night, there's always something that will hit me and I'll think I've got to learn that prayer too. Saying the rosary helps me a lot, I probably do it an average of three times a day,” the 69-year-old actor says almost casually.

“Rourke plays a paralysed man cured by the Greek saint, explaining that he based his performance on his own relationship with St Jude”

Later, he adds: “I do believe in miracles. I believe it was a miracle that my brother got to live 30 years longer than he was [meant to]. I think it's a miracle that I didn't spend my life in jail. Along the way, you meet a few good men to straighten you out. ‘Cos what happened to me when I was little, I'm lucky I didn't end up a savage.”

He recalls two instances in particular where he felt the hand of Our Lady guiding and protecting him, when his prayers were answered: “I know that on two particular occasions when I was suicidal, I was in very, very bad

shape, I went to Lourdes and I waited in line for four hours like everyone else.

“I saw all the wheelchairs and the crutches hanging on this wire that's been there for a couple hundred years. I know that each time I went to Lourdes, what I prayed for was answered. It took a couple of weeks, but it was answered.”

Career

In his acting career, which spans from the 80s to the present day and across a range of genres, Mr Rourke's faith has found occasional outlets, such as a 1980s biopic of St Francis. More recently, he took on a role in *Man of God* about the life of Greek-Orthodox St Nektarios of Aegina, which opens in cinemas in the UK this September.

Rourke plays a paralysed man cured by the Greek saint, explaining that he based his performance on his own relationship with St Jude.

“I didn't read the script for *Man of God* – I didn't want to read it because I didn't want a preconceived idea of how to go about it. What I wanted to use was my private relationship with St Jude,” Mr Rourke says.

“When I spoke with the director, I could see how prepared she was. She knew why she hired me, and I knew why she hired me because I knew what I could bring to the table. I didn't need to know a lot about the Greek St Nektarios – I didn't know about him, I used St Jude, my relationship with St Jude.”



Mickey Rourke pictured with his pet dog during interviews ahead of the release of *Man of God*, which opens in UK cinemas September 9.

Tragedy

Mickey Rourke's relationship with St Jude emerged from the tragedy of his younger brother's cancer diagnosis. Joey Rourke was just 18 when he was diagnosed with what the doctors thought was incurable cancer and given six months to live.

“When they gave him the six months to live, my grandmother told me about a saint,” Mr Rourke begins. “His name was St Jude, he was a carpenter like Jesus. After they murdered Jesus on the Cross, they wanted St Jude to say Jesus Christ is not the Son of God. And he refused.”

“‘When I spoke with the director, I could see how prepared she was. She knew why she hired me’”

“So, God gave him a special privilege. He made St Jude the saint of miracles, so from the first day my grandmother told me about St Jude, I learned his prayer. So from that day, since I was 18, I've said that prayer anywhere from two to 10 times a day my whole life.”

To the surprise of the doctors and his family, Joey Rourke survived six months and more. Three years passed before the cancer returned and once again the prognosis was fatal. But a cycle

developed: four years passed, the cancer re-emerged; then six years and it was back again; and then again two years after that.

Throughout that time, Mickey Rourke kept praying “to St Jude for a miracle and the miracle I was praying for was my brother to live”.

“And then about 11 years ago his immune system was really weak after a very bad motorcycle crash... They said he had six months. This time I knew my prayers to St Jude weren't going to work, so I had to accept it. I went down to Florida to spend some time with him. He was very happy to see me, but he was very weak.

“I remember one time, I was helping him walk to the bathroom and he stopped and he just – he looked at me but he didn't look at me. He said to me, ‘I'm here, but I'm not here’. I said, ‘What Joe’, and I helped him into the bathroom and whatever.

“Four days later he died in my arms and I talked with him, and I told him I'll see him again, that God couldn't have given anyone a better brother,” Mr Rourke remembers with emotion.

Devotion

Mickey Rourke's devotion to prayer stems from his tough upbringing, one marked by physical abuse at the hands of his stepfather and children in the neighbourhood.

“The beatings went on for nine and a half years, I'm talking about



Man of God tells the story of Greek Orthodox St Nektarios, played by Aris Servetalis, who bore the unjust hatred of his enemies while preaching the Word of God.



Halloween III," says Mr Rourke, referring to the horror-movie franchise. "When you're beaten that badly and you're so terrified of someone who's that big... You're six years old, you can't fight back – so I couldn't protect my brother.

"I used to sit in the closet behind the clothes in the dark and I used to say please God, please God, please take me out of here. Please God, please God, please, before I open my eyes let me be back in New York and not here in Miami.

“He came to understand the mysterious way in which God moves, with help from a close priest and friend, Fr Peter”

"I'd open my eyes and I'd still be in the closet," he continues. "I'd stay there for hours until my mother would call me out. That was a kind of miracle I would ask for and I used to... one of my first miracles was I wanted my father to come and get me and take me home.

Pray

"I prayed for that for years. But what I prayed for most of all was that I could close my eyes and just disappear. The years went by and I didn't disappear."



Mickey Rourke (left) in *Man of God* as a paralysed man cured by St Nektarios. Photo: Marilena Anastasiadou.

While Mr Rourke could have taken this to signify God's indifference, instead he came to understand the mysterious way in which God moves, with help from a close priest and friend, Fr Peter.

"When I used to talk to my priest Fr Peter, I'd be crying usually," he says. "He would say, Mickey, God hears everything you're saying. God hears everything you're crying about; God hears everything you say.

"He just doesn't always give it to you when you ask for it or when you want it. I look at it this way – ok, I'm calling up God. The phone's ringing and ringing, but no one is picking up the phone. That's why I think they say God moves in mysterious ways.

Childhood

"I take the childhood I had, now I can understand a little more why I had that particular childhood. First of all, it made me the boxer that I was and it made me the actor that I am. When I get my wheels turning, there's no one else can do what I can do."

Mickey Rourke gives his priest-friend a great deal of credit for helping sort his life out during their 23-year relationship. As he said earlier, God put good people in his path and Fr Peter was one of them

"I had met a priest in New York called Fr Peter and we became really close," Mr Rourke says. "I would come to his church and do my Confession with him. We'd sit with a glass of wine and a cigarette and I'd do my Confession. He said to me, Mickey, I know all your friends, all the Irish, all the Italians. You came this close to being in this [the gangster's] life."

Fr Peter's death hit Mr Rourke hard. Every Christmas up until two years ago, Mr Rourke would

spend Christmas Eve night with Fr Peter. "I would go to midnight Mass at 12 and then Fr Peter and I would go to a restaurant, he'd drink martinis and I would drink wine. For the last two years, Christmas for me is sad because Fr Peter died. I still go to his church, but nobody will ever replace him."

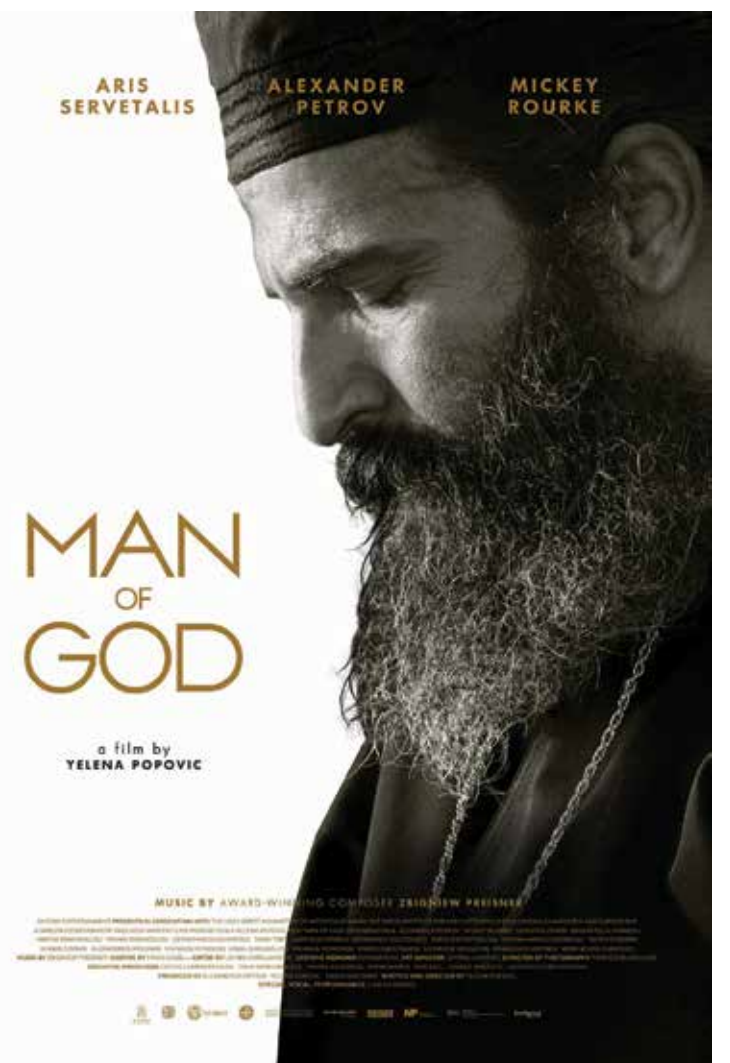
“Mickey Rourke gives his priest-friend a great deal of credit for helping sort his life out during their 23-year relationship”

But this doesn't dampen the fire of Mr Rourke's faith. He has seen more suffering than many, but in the end his faith and prayer carries him through. It has freed him from fear, even of death.

"I'm not afraid of death," he says late in the interview. "I'm afraid of dying, but death I'm not afraid of because in my belief, I'm going to see everybody. All my dogs, my birds, my brother, my father. I've more friends up there than I do here!"

i *Man of God*, produced by Simeon Entertainment and View Master Films, is in UK cinemas September 9-11 only

“Mickey Rourke's relationship with St Jude emerged from the tragedy of his younger brother's cancer diagnosis”



China and Taiwan: Intimidation,



The future of Taiwan and its 23 million people must be decided democratically by the people, an Irish missionary tells Chai Brady

Violent rhetoric between China and Taiwan has intensified in the last month ever since a visit by Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan in early August.

Tensions have always existed, particularly as polls consistently show people in Taiwan want to be recognised as an independent country, while China insists it is a part of China.

Ms Pelosi's visit to the island nation, which is just under 200km from mainland China across the Taiwan Strait, sparked a strong response. China immediately began a series of military drills. Live ammunition has been fired during these drills and planes and ships have crossed into Taiwanese territory.

First Irish missionary

For Spiritan Fr Sean O'Leary CSSp who was the first Irish missionary of his order to arrive in Taiwan – and has been there for 25 years – the acts of intimidation are all par for the course, with most people getting on with their lives.

"Taiwan is used to such exercises aimed at intimidating its government and people and seeking to get the people here to abandon their democratic system of government and claims to be an independent country," Fr O'Leary said.

"It seems that many people around the world are anxiously looking at this worsening situation and wondering if China/Taiwan will be the next big



Chinese troops attend the opening ceremony of a military exercise in 2021.

flashpoint following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"Many family and friends, from Ireland and elsewhere, have contacted me with messages of concern and support. But here in Taiwan, people are getting on with their daily lives, and the military posturing by China does not have much of an effect on people's daily lives," he explained.

“I think the economy is the biggest concern for most people here in Taiwan”

Currently Fr O'Leary believes the Taiwanese are much more concerned with the recent economic pressures placed on people by Covid-19 restrictions and the resultant economic downturn especially in family-owned restaurants, hotels and tourism.

Due to harsh restrictions imposed by Taiwan's government during the pandemic, much like Ireland, the local economy suffered heavily.

"Recently you're beginning to hear about a lot of young

people unemployed," said Fr O'Leary, "I think the economy is the biggest concern for most people here in Taiwan."

That being said, he adds that the recent increase in military activity by China has made some impact. Just last week Taiwan said it would counter-attack if Chinese forces enter their waters or airspace.

This has led some people to feel uncertain for the future, with some Taiwanese – if they have the means – sending their children abroad to places like Canada and the US to escape the tensions.

"It's very complicated. It's there [tension] but you have to get on with your life. The Taiwanese are very hard-working, young people if they are in college, they're working very hard," Fr O'Leary said, "I've some friends of mine who set up their own business recently, that's really their focus."

"I think it's in the back of their minds and really the feeling is that nobody knows what's going to happen in the future so you can't let it paralyse your life today. They also feel that, whatever happens in the future it probably won't

come to a full-scale war, most people would feel like that. It's at a political level the tensions are high, but in daily living they're used to that tension with China."

Church relations

By-and-large the Church is respected in Taiwan. For instance, in 2020 Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen went to Archbishop Thomas Chung An-zu of Taipei's installation ceremony and at the event said the Church's presence in the country for 100 years has been vital for Taiwan's growth.

“Christians are a small group so they need a lot of accompaniment and support”

"Over the past few decades, the Church has helped Taiwanese society in so many ways and at so many levels that it is impossible to describe them in a few words or a few days," he said. His comments were seen, by some local reports, as a criticism of China, whose record of persecuting religions including Catholicism is well documented.

However, while the Church is respected, evangelism is very challenging, according to Fr O'Leary, but new migrants – much like in Ireland – are bolstering Church numbers. Christianity is a minority reli-



Fr Sean O'Leary CSSp visiting a church in central Taiwan.

gion, estimated at less than 4% of the population. The majority of people follow Buddhism or Taoism.

Priest shortage

Due to a shortage of priests Fr O'Leary said the Spiritans stationed there do most of their work in parishes, many of which are quite small. While being in charge of prison ministry in his Diocese of Taichong, he also helps at a centre for those with drug addiction and AIDS and teaches English.

Fr O'Leary, speaking about his work, said: "It's very varied, that's the good thing in

Taiwan, you don't really have the big institutions. Some priests, they're working in a school or in a big parish, you're very involved let's say in sacramental ministry, it's not like that here in Taiwan. The sacramental ministry is a very small point of your life. Our bishop here, he's very strong on social outreach.

"Christians are a small group so they need a lot of accompaniment and support but apart from that, because the parish is small... all our guys are involved in other ministries, some are in charge of youth ministry for the dio-

“Tensions have always existed, particularly as polls consistently show people in Taiwan want to be recognised as an independent country”

democracy and a small Church



Fr Sean O'Leary CSSp with a sign celebrating 25 years of ordination in Holy Family Church, Taichong, Taiwan.



Fr Sean O'Leary CSSp with parishioners Rose and Cai Yun at a church in central Taiwan.

cese, some are teaching in university, some are working with migrants," he said.

During the pandemic, like many parishes around the world, they prepared kits to help people who contracted Covid and had to isolate, which included food and other necessities.

Older age group

Like Ireland, Fr O'Leary said many Taiwanese Catholics are in the older age groups. He said there is a "natural decline" but that the Church is changing, particularly in the cities.

"Compared to the Irish Church, in Taiwan, because the groups are small you would have a lot of emphasis on lay formation and basic Christian communities. A lot, nearly in every church, you would have a Bible sharing group, or you'd have a basic Christian community faith in action group, you've got the Legion of Mary," he said.

"Most of the Catholics are encouraged to get involved not just in Sunday Mass but they would also be part of a group in one way or another. So the Church is small, it will remain small, it won't be huge, but it's very active and there's more emphasis on the training of the laity, on Bible study, Bible sharing, on evangelisation."

Fr O'Leary said that while there has not been much growth in the local Church, there are many Vietnamese migrants arriving who have a very strong Catholic faith and come from a very active and vibrant Church. He said when Vietnamese migrants come,

they bring their faith with them, even if they get married.

"A lot of those brides would be Catholic and they would have children and the man might not be that interested in religion but the Vietnamese Catholics would be very strong," Fr O'Leary said.

“During the pandemic, like many parishes around the world, they prepared kits to help people who contracted Covid and had to isolate”

"There are huge Catholic communities of Vietnamese within the parish then. Or you might have an English Mass where there would be Filipinos, so the migrants are bringing their faith and are kind of bringing a little bit of youth and energy to the Church here."

Evangelisation

Returning to the challenges around evangelisation, he said he has many friends who are Taiwanese that would say the Church has a very good reputation in Taiwan. "Fifty years ago, Taiwan was very backward, very poor, just after the Second World War and the Kuomintang (KMT) government came. There was a lot of poverty," he said.

"At that time the American Catholic missionaries, the Maryknolls and more, they came with the NGOs so

they provided a lot of relief services but at that time there was no one helping people with mental or physical disabilities so all the early centres were started by the Catholic Church in Taiwan. So even though we're not big it has a very good name. We have none of the baggage of having been a powerful Church that misused its power which has happened in other places. So we're kind of a servant Church and a minority – we never had the opportunity to misuse power because we didn't have any power," he said.

"People see that and they say 'they are benevolent and very helpful' but it's very difficult for Taiwanese to leave their family religion and become a Christian or become a Catholic, they'll feel they're betraying their family or betraying their ancestors."

Victory

A civil war in China over many years led to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which is now in power in China, attaining victory over their Kuomintang rivals who fled to Taiwan. Currently the vast majority of people in modern Taiwan either want to keep the status quo or move towards independence, according to one of the latest surveys, released by the Taiwan New Constitution Foundation on August 10.

With the current restrictions and control on religious freedom and practice

in China, it is logical to extrapolate that a Taiwan closely united with the Chinese mainland would lead to the same measures being imposed on the small Taiwanese Church.

In an article that he wrote, Fr O'Leary stated he believes the current tactics, including shows of military force by the Chinese government, "hasn't worked in the past and it isn't working now; they are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese, and their bullying tactics have the opposite effect to that intended. The more China threatens the people here, the more determined the Taiwanese people are to maintain their open, free and multi-party democratic system".

"Recently the Taiwanese ambassador to the United States likened China's actions to coercive control – isolating Taiwan, preventing Taiwan from participating in international fora and trying to prevent Taiwan's friends from visiting the country," he said.

“He has many friends who are Taiwanese that would say the Church has a very good reputation in Taiwan”

"Looking at the historic evolution of the relationship between China and Taiwan the truth is that the Communist Party has never ruled Taiwan which is also known as the Republic of China. Since 1947, when the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan after being defeated by the Chinese Communists, the KMT ruled Taiwan and,

after the lifting of martial law in 1987, a multi-party democratic system was put in place. The political systems of the two countries have evolved differently – China as a one-party communist system and Taiwan with its multi-party democracy," Fr O'Leary stated.

Issue

The issue which China must face is that the Taiwanese have lived in, and got a taste for, democracy and freedom, Fr O'Leary believes, and that for many young people it's the only system they know as they have grown up in a free and democratic country.

"I don't know of any situation in recent history where a people abandoned democracy in favour of a one-party totalitarian system. If most Taiwanese were offered a choice to unify with China and be integrated into their one-party totalitarian rule, their response would be along the lines of 'Not for all the tea in China!'" he added.



Altar decorated for Chinese New Year at the Holy Family Church, Taichong, Taiwan.

Michelle O'Neill and 'that' interview



We should have a serious debate about the consequences of teenage pregnancy rather than indulging in Catholic bashing, writes **Fr Andrew McMahon**

Sinn Féin's vice-president Michelle O'Neill gave a lengthy interview to BBC Radio Ulster recently, focusing on her background, personal history and motivation for entering politics.

Two aspects of the interview were highlighted in the media: a claim by Ms O'Neill that "there was no alternative" to the Provisional IRA campaign of earlier decades and, secondly, her report of being "prayed upon" in her Catholic school, after becoming pregnant whilst a pupil at the age of 16.

“Michelle O'Neill was fortunate in having a supportive family and she acknowledged, in the interview, the thoughtfulness and concern of her form teacher at the time”

While this latter story was headlined prominently by the BBC in advance of the broadcast - 'Michelle O'Neill says she was prayed over when pregnant at school' - it generated - as it turned out - little by way of public commentary or reaction.

On the other hand, Ms O'Neill's remarks about the IRA caused a storm in the days surrounding the broadcast, with politicians, columnists and victims' spokespersons lining up to repudiate her reading of the past.

Listening to the interview, it is hard not to be struck by the determination and tenacity with which Michelle O'Neill responded to her pregnancy at a young age - her daughter being born just six days before she sat her first GCSE exam. Undoubtedly this would have been an extraordinary challenge for a schoolgirl in any situation and Ms O'Neill deserves much credit for

Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neil.



her resolve in coping with her pregnancy and caring for her newborn, while continuing her education.

It would have been even more difficult in a culture where becoming pregnant outside of marriage - never mind at 16 - was neither socially easy, nor widely accepted, and we have had stark reminders in recent years of how traumatic and isolating this could be for the women and girls involved.

Michelle O'Neill was fortunate in having a supportive family and she acknowledged, in the interview, the thoughtfulness and concern of her form teacher at the time.

Ms O'Neill was far from complimentary, however, about other aspects of her school pregnancy experience. "It was a Catholic grammar", she told her interviewer, the veteran presenter Mark Carruthers. "A 16-year-old girl being pregnant was frowned upon and they wouldn't have been the kindest in terms of their approach to supporting me at that time."

Prayer

It was in this context that Ms O'Neill referred to the prayer which had given the BBC their headline: "It was nearly like, you know, that I had sinned and therefore I must be prayed upon, which obviously was not the right approach." Elsewhere she explains how she was home-schooled for a period. Eventually achieving five GCSEs, she argues that it was her "right to come back to the school to finish my education" and she criticises the school authorities for "creating a huge fuss" around the fact that "I hadn't asked for permission to come back to the school" to begin A-level studies.

The interview aimed at getting behind the public image of the politician and, in attempting to be personal was likely to be somewhat subjective. It seems a pity nonetheless that, given the strength of her remarks about her old school, and her implied criticism of 'Catholic' ways, much of what Michelle O'Neill had to say was allowed to remain unclear and unchallenged. In what spirit, for example, was the pregnant pupil 'prayed upon' and might this interview have done an injustice to whoever took time to pray for her and, presumably, her unborn child back then? Why, even years later, would prayer in such circumstances be so "obviously" - to Ms O'Neill's mind - "not the right approach"? Why would such an 'approach', moreover, be out of place in a school built around a religious tradition and strong spiritual and moral values?

“Did you feel that the Church was playing a part in how the school was actually dealing with the circumstances you found yourself in at that time?”

Meanwhile, on the matter of returning for A levels because of her five GCSEs, was this actually a 'right' in post-primary settings? Could the pupil's understandable withdrawal from school for home tuition have created a reasonable assumption that, in light of this, a request for

re-admission or enrollment within sixth form would be expected?

One wonders, even more fundamentally, if this politician - who hopes to become the North's First Minister - could not have been persuaded, in the course of the interview, to reflect upon her school experience from a perspective wider than simply her own? To read it in a way, perhaps, that might attempt to be respectful of the school's ethos - an ethos which, whatever she considered its limitations, had undoubtedly been critical to making it an environment where many young women, including Ms O'Neill herself, were enabled to progress and succeed.

Experience

Rather than explore such possibilities or alternative readings of her experience, however, Mark Carruthers seemed merely to reinforce his guest's prejudices and encourage her towards some very questionable conclusions. For example, in regard to her initially becoming pregnant, he suggested: "Do you think they would have preferred you to move on, for you to become somebody else's problem?" Ms O'Neill readily agreed. Later Mr Carruthers asked: "Did you feel that the Church was playing a part in how the school was actually dealing with the circumstances you found yourself in at that time?"

"Yes, I think so" she replied. In this way, a convenient consensus was reached between journalist and politician: Her school was ultimately to blame for any discomfort or disadvantage arising from her teenage pregnancy, while the Church was, in reality, the villain of the piece.

Astounding, for various reasons, is the premise upon which their consensus appeared to be based - namely, that no other educational sector or religious denomination would take the view that pregnancy in the life of a 16-year-old child was something to be, in Ms O'Neill's phrase, 'frowned upon' - nor that they ever should! Given her political position and current aspirations, Michelle O'Neill ought to know better than this. Given his long experience as a journalist, and as a husband and father, Mark Carruthers surely does know better.

“It is highly regrettable that it opted, instead, to descend into a thinly disguised exercise in Catholic-bashing”

The public was neither asking nor expecting Michelle O'Neill to come on air at this time to discuss personal aspects of her life-story. That was her decision, presumably at Radio Ulster's prompting. If it was to happen, however, then a mature and thoughtful conversation could doubtless have been developed between both parties on the dangers and consequences of teenage pregnancy, in a way that would have been helpful for society today - not least our young people. It is highly regrettable that it opted, instead, to descend into a thinly disguised exercise in Catholic-bashing.

Fr Andrew McMahon is a priest of the Diocese of Dromore.

Out&About

Following the path of light



MEATH: Navan parishioners and friends pictured at the Hill of Slane Saturday, August 27, on completion of their day of pilgrim walking from Tara to Slane along Bealach an tSolais (the path of light). Fr Declan Hurley was glad of the help of parishioners at Tara, Skyrne, Walterstown, Yellow Furze and Slane who provided hospitality and a welcome for the group along the 15-mile route.



CLARE: Anne Marie Sheedy from Kilmurry, Sixmilebridge Parish, is pictured following her commissioning in the role of pastoral care at Ennis Cathedral, August 28, along with some family members and new ministry colleagues.



WICKLOW: Members of the Pure in Heart community are pictured on a sunny hike to Glendalough, August 27.

INSHORT

Heed the voice of creation – Diocese of Kerry

The Diocese of Kerry is calling on people of faith to “listen to the voice of creation” this Season of Creation.

The season runs from September 1 to October 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, when Christian Churches around the world focus on prayer and action to protect the natural world.

In a statement, a diocesan spokesperson said it “is certainly opportune as all of us are called to awaken to the urgent need to heal our relationship both with creation and with one another”.

“Our 53 parishes across the diocese of Kerry are being encouraged to mark the season in some way,” the spokesperson continued.

Parishes have received copies of a leaflet explaining the theme and offering practical actions that can be taken.

On September 22, the organising committee, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee (JPIC) of the diocese, will host a free webinar focusing on the vital role of soil and water with speakers: Thomas O’Connor, organic farmer and Talamh Beo, and Catherine Seale-Duggan, Local Authorities Water.

The registration link is available on the diocesan website, www.dioceseofkerry.ie.

Trócaire calls on Govt to increase overseas aid

Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Irish Catholic bishops’ conference, has called on the Government to increase overseas aid in the forthcoming budget.

The charity’s call comes as figures show the number of people experiencing severe hunger around the world has almost tripled since 2019.

According to the UN, almost a billion people don’t have enough food to eat, a statement from the charity says.

Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra, said the “reality that people are dying of hunger in 2022 signifies a profound political failure”.

“We call on Ireland to support global mobilisation of humanitarian funds at speed and scale to address this crisis.”

Ms de Barra highlighted that Ireland’s overseas aid has not recovered from post-2008 budget cuts and has remained at 0.32% of GNI for the past eight years.

“As countries face the devastating impacts of climate change, conflict and Covid, we call on Ireland to play its part and increase aid towards our international commitment of 0.7% GNI,” Ms de Barra said.

She added that it is “alarming” that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance globally has increased from 135 million to over 345 million in the last two years.



SLIGO: Canon Pat Peyton, who marked his Golden Jubilee and also his retirement as PP of Collooney recently, is pictured with Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey, August 28.



DOWN: Queen's University Belfast's Catholic Chaplaincy's core team, made up of FOCUS missionaries and the residential community Saul, is starting to gather in Belfast in time for the new academic year. They enjoyed a pre-semester get-together at the Belfast Giants, August 28.



WATERFORD: Fr Richard O'Halloran PP and Rev. Christine O'Dowd jointly blessing the bees and the beekeepers at a ceremony in the Dunhill Ecopark, August 20.



CAVAN: Fr Padraig McMahon, Fr Emmet Carolan and Fr Joseph O'Reilly are pictured at the unveiling of a commemorative stone to mark the 150th anniversary of the church with Seamus Rooney of Carricleck from whose lands the stone came from and who also provided the same rock for the completion of the bell tower previously.



CORK: Students from Mater Dei Academy enjoying the sunshine at the school's new home on Farranferris Education and Training Campus in Cork city. Mater Dei Academy, an independent Catholic secondary school, welcomes 40 boys and girls this September.



KILKENNY: The Kilkenny Gospel Choir is pictured at St Fiacre's Well, Sheastown, at the closing Mass of the St Fiacre's Well Novena which took place recently.



CLARE: Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan is pictured with Ukrainian families in Ennis, following the welcome Mass held in the cathedral, August 29.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



CAVAN: Kingscourt native and award-winning wedding photographer Paul Callaghan makes a presentation to Fr Emmet Carolan on the occasion of his recent diamond jubilee Mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt.



HOLY LAND: Fr Benny McHale is pictured with Irish pilgrims, having led his 43rd pilgrimage to the Holy Land.



KENYA: Minister of State with responsibility for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora Colm Brophy visits Sr Mary Killeen in the Mukuru area of Nairobi to see the impact of support from Ireland, August 29.



MEATH: Fr Michael, parish priest in Johnstown, celebrated recently his 25th anniversary of ordination and is pictured here with Bro. John O'Brien, Killucan, Co. Westmeath and Fr William Coleman, Rochfortbridge, Co. Westmeath.

ANTRIM

Progressive whist takes place every Monday night in the Minor Hall, Antrim parish. Starts at 8pm sharp, admission £5.

ARMAGH

The Dromantine retreat and conference centre is hosting an understanding suicide workshop. It runs from 9.30am-4.30pm (£40) September 24. Contact Jacinta/Louisa on 048 3082 1964 or admin@dromantineconference.com

CAVAN

Legion of Mary meetings take place on Tuesdays at 8pm in the St Clare's Chapel until further notice.

CORK

The diocese of Cork and Ross has announced that CONNECT 2 will take place in UCC, on Sunday October 16 from 10.30am. Connect is for young Catholics in the diocese. More details to follow and the opportunity to register.

'Life in Spirit' Seminar commencing Friday night September 23 and subsequent Friday nights in Glash Community Hall, Glash, Newmarket P51W024. For more information contact Pat on 0872505528.

DONEGAL

A triduum in preparation for the feast of St Padre Pio (St Pio of Pietrelcina) will take place at the Franciscan Friary, Rosstown from Tuesday 20 until Friday September 23. There will be Mass, homily and blessing with his mitten at 7.30 pm each evening. Preacher: Fr Pius McLaughlin OFM, who met Padre Pio.

DOWN

Adoration takes place every Wednesday 2pm to 4pm in Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore.

DUBLIN

Youth Mass in Gardiner St parish every Sunday at 7.30pm, followed by a social afterwards. Contact Fr Niall on 01 836 3411. The charity cycle for the Peter McVerry trust takes place September 17. The cycle starts in UCD and

ends up in White's Hotel, Co. Wexford. Registration is €80, visit pmvtrust.ie/cycle/.

FERMANAGH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will take place each Tuesday from 10.30am until 9pm at the Crypt Chapel, St Michael's Church, Enniskillen.

GALWAY

A Taizé holy hour takes place on Mondays at 8pm in Galway cathedral.

KERRY

A Season of Creation free Zoom talk takes place September 22, focusing on the vital role of soil and water with speakers: Thomas O Connor, organic farmer and Talamh Beo, and Catherine Seale-Duggan, Local Authorities Water. To register, visit www.dioceseofkerry.ie.

KILDARE

An African Mass is held on the third Sunday of the month in St Brigid's Church, at 2pm.

KILKENNY

The rosary is said at 2:30pm on Fridays in the Grotto Graiguenamanagh.

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in the Adoration Chapel Abbeyfeale, every Friday after 10am Mass until 8pm.

The Glenstal Liturgical Conference takes place October 29-31 on the theme 'Recovering Liturgical Space'. The conference explores different aspects of the community's liturgical experience when gathered in the space of worship. Cost: €95 for a single day, €230 for the full conference. Contact litcon@glenstal.org to book or for more information.

LOUTH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in St Peter's Church, Drogheda, in the main body of the church during church opening hours, except when Mass or some other liturgy is being celebrated. Adoration also takes place each Sunday in Our

Lady of Lourdes Church, 1pm-4pm.

LEITRIM

Ballinamore prayer group meet on Tuesdays 8:30 to 9:45pm, in St Brigid's Parish Centre, Ballinamore.

MAYO

A weekend dedicated to Padre Pio will take place in Knock International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine September 17-18, including a seminar on Padre Pio's life and legacy on the Saturday.

OFFALY

Clonmacnoise pattern day takes place Sunday, September 11. The pattern begins at 2.45pm with Mass at 3pm.

TYRONE

Youth 2000 country barndance takes place Saturday, September 23 at the Mellon hotel, Omagh. From 6pm-late, includes dance lesson, dinner, barndance. Cost is £30/€35, strictly for 18s and over. Wild west attire suggested. Contact office@youth2000.ie.

WATERFORD

The Chosen: Season 2, a nine week zoom series, takes place Tuesdays October 4 to November 29 from 8-9:15pm. Registration is essential, contact events@waterfordlismore.ie

WESTMEATH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King from 2:30pm-7pm Monday-Friday.

WEXFORD

A 'Come and See' vocations discernment residential weekend will take place in Ballyvaloo Retreat Centre, Blackwater from September 16 to 18. It is open to men 18 and over who would like to know more about the priesthood as a beautiful way of life and vocation from God. For further information contact Fr Billy Swan at: billyswan68@hotmail.com



World Report

IN BRIEF

Ukrainian bishops praise efforts to restart schooling disrupted by war

Ukrainian bishops welcomed efforts to restart classes for a new school year and offered church basements as emergency air raid shelters for children.

"The Ukrainian authorities know education is vital for the country's future, so everything is being done to get youngsters back to school, even while our soldiers are fighting at the front," Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia told *Catholic News Service* September 1.

"Although the war drags on, there are basic things we must provide them with, including the possibility of being educated. Children can best help Ukraine and their families by studying for their homeland's future."

Classes restarted across Ukraine September 1 after months of disruption caused by Russia's February 24 invasion, amid warnings that children needed protection against shells and bombs.

Pope: Family under attack by ideologies

Christians are called to bring hope to those going through dark times, especially families who are threatened by ideologies prevalent in today's world, Pope Francis said.

Addressing the Schonstatt Fathers, who were in Rome for their general chapter September 1, the Pope urged them to be "bearers of a message of hope in these dark situations that people in every stage of life are going through. Today, there are

many marriages in crisis, young people tempted, the elderly forgotten, children suffering," he said.

"We often see that the nature of the family is under attack by various ideologies, which shake the foundations that support the personality of the human being and, in general, society as a whole."

Furthermore, he said, within families there is "a gap of understanding" between young and old.

German court rules in pro-life favour

Silent prayer gatherings near an abortion counselling facility cannot be prohibited, a German court ruled.

The decision lifts a ban issued in 2019 by the city of Pforzheim in southwest Germany and upheld in May 2021 by a lower court decision.

The Mannheim Administrative Court ruled on August 31 that "authorities could only make an assembly dependent on such a condition if public safety would be directly endangered if the assembly were held. This was not the case here".

The prayer organiser welcomed the decision.

Religious robbed amid a wave of church violence in Mexico

A priest and a group of seminarians were tied up inside a Catholic church amid a growing wave of violence and robberies in churches in Mexico City.

At about 8am on August 29, criminals entered the Saints of America parish on Mexico City's south side and tied up the parish priest, Fr José Luis Pérez, and a group of seminarians who were entering into the church at that time.

In a statement to ACI Prensa, Fr Pérez explained that the criminals took advantage of the fact that at that time "the parish opens up for Mass".

"They stole all the things we had here," he said. The seminarians, who take virtual classes, had their computers and mobile phones stolen.

The robbers took the priest's mobile phone as well as money from the metal donation boxes and from the weekly collections at the Catholic church.

Pope Francis beatifies 33-day Pope, John Paul I

Pope Francis beatified John Paul I, who reigned as pope for only 33 days, amid a thunderstorm in St Peter's Square on Sunday.

In his homily for the rainy beatification Mass on September 4, Pope Francis said that John Paul I "embodied the poverty of a disciple" through his "victory over the temptation to put oneself at the centre, to seek one's own glory".

Often called "the smiling pope," John Paul I died unexpectedly on September 28, 1978, a month after the conclave that elected him.

In one of the shortest pontificates in papal history, John Paul I gained a reputation for his humility and his dedication to teaching the Faith in an understandable manner.

Cardinals stood in the rain under yellow and white umbrellas as Pope Francis read out the declaration that Pope John Paul I can now be venerated locally on his feast day on August 26.

"With a smile, Pope John Paul I managed to communicate the goodness of the Lord," Francis said.

"How beautiful is a Church with a happy, serene and smiling face, that never closes doors, never hardens hearts, never complains or harbours resentment, does not grow angry or impatient, does not look dour or suffer nostalgia for the past. Let us pray



Pope Francis leads the beatification of Pope John Paul I in St Peter's Square at the Vatican September 4. Photo: CNS

to him, our father and our brother, and ask him to obtain for us 'the smile of the soul.'"

During the beatification, a large banner on St Peter's Basilica unveiled a portrait of Blessed Pope John Paul I as the pope's postulator processed through the square with a relic—a handwritten note by the blessed pope on the theological virtues.

John Paul I presided over only four general audiences as pope, offering catecheses on poverty, faith, hope, and

charity. Pope Francis quoted these catecheses throughout his homily.

"As Pope John Paul I said, if you want to kiss Jesus crucified, 'you cannot help bending over the cross and letting yourself be pricked by a few thorns of the crown on the Lord's head' (General Audience, September 27 1978). A love that perseveres to the end, thorns and all: no leaving things half done, no cutting corners, no fleeing difficulties," Pope Francis said.

John Paul I was the first pope to be born in the 20th century and the most recent pope to be born in Italy. Born Albino Luciani on October 17, 1912, the future John Paul I grew up in relative poverty in Italy's northern Veneto region.

He made history in 1978 when he became the first pope to take a double name, after his two immediate predecessors, Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. His episcopal motto was simply: *Humilitas*.

US bishops condemn anti-Catholic comments by school official

Connecticut's Catholic dioceses have condemned comments made in a video by a public elementary school assistant principal who admitted on hidden camera that he discriminates against Catholics in the hiring process.

"The revelations that an official in the Greenwich school district discriminated against people of the Catholic faith who are seeking employment are extremely disturbing and should be treated as a serious breach of the public trust and state laws," Christopher Healy, executive direc-

tor of the Connecticut Catholic Conference said in an online video posted August 31.

The comments were made by Jeremy Boland, assistant principal of the Cos Cob Elementary School in Greenwich, Connecticut, one of the wealthiest municipalities in the country.

Mr Boland, who was secretly recorded in conversation with an unidentified reporter from Project Veritas, can be seen saying "You don't hire them" in response to a question asking about Catholic applicants in the hiring process.

"So, would you ever hire a Catholic then?" the female journalist, who was sitting with Mr Boland at a restaurant, asked in a follow up question.

Mr Boland responded, "No, I don't want to ... Because if someone is raised hardcore Catholic, it's like they're brainwashed. You can never change their mindset. So, when you ask them to consider something new, like a new opportunity, or 'you have to think about this differently,' they're stuck — just rigid."

Pope offers 'heartfelt condolences' to Gorbachev's only child

Pope Francis offered his prayers and praise for former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who died at age 91 August 30 in Moscow after a long illness.

In a telegram sent to Gorbachev's only child, Irina Virganskaya, the Pope conveyed his "heartfelt con-

dolences" to her, all family members and those "who saw him as an esteemed statesman".

The Vatican published the telegram August 31.

The Pope expressed his spiritual closeness during "this moment of sorrow for the death of your

honourable father, Mikhail. Recalling with gratitude his far-sighted commitment to harmony and fraternity among people, as well as to the progress of his own country during an era of important changes," the Pope offered his prayers of suffrage, "invoking eternal

peace for his soul from the good and merciful God".

Gorbachev was known for his policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) that set the stage for the breakup of the Soviet Union and the return of religious freedom.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Tensions simmer as summer ends



Followers of Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr withdraw from the streets after violent clashes near the Green Zone in Baghdad August 30. After a series of deadly clashes erupted in Iraq, Pope Francis said "dialogue and fraternity" were needed to overcome the current situation and for Iraq to become a nation of diverse communities living in peace. Photo: CNS photo/Ahmed Saad, Reuters.

Abducted American religious sister freed in Burkina Faso

An American religious sister ministering in Burkina Faso who was kidnapped in April is free and safe after nearly five months of captivity, according to her congregation and the local diocese.

Sr Suellen Tennyson, 83, a New Orleans native, has served at a missionary outpost in northern Burkina Faso since 2014. She was abducted by unidentified armed men on April 5 from the small home she shared with two other members of her congregation, the Marianites of Holy Cross. Reportedly abducted without shoes, she also left behind her glasses and blood pressure medication.

Sr Ann Lacour, the current Marianite congregational leader, confirmed August 30 that Sr Tennyson is now safe and in the hands of US authorities. The FBI had issued a missing person notice for the sister, but until this week there had been no news of her location or condition.

"She is safe," Sr Lacour told the Clarion Herald, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. "She is on American soil, but not in America. She is safe. She was recovered (Monday) morning. We have spoken to her. She eventually will get back to the United States."

On August 31 Bishop Theophile Nare of Kaya released a statement saying that Sr Tennyson is currently "in a safe place and in good health," as reported by the BBC.

Sr Tennyson is a former international leader of her congregation who was moved to start a missionary outpost in Burkina Faso after a 2011 visit to the country. Her congregation requested continued prayers for Sr Tennyson's recovery, as well as privacy until she is ready to speak publicly about her ordeal.

"We are so very grateful for ALL the prayers and sup-

port these past 5 months. We now ask you to pray for Suellen's complete renewal of body, mind and spirit," an August 31 Facebook post from Sr Tennyson's congregation reads.

Though three Marianite sisters were living in the house in Burkina Faso at the time, Tennyson was the only one kidnapped during the assailants' invasion of the home. Sr Pauline Drouin, a nurse from Quebec, and Sr Pascaline Tougma, from Burkina Faso, were unharmed in the attack. Lacour said she believes the gunmen may have been looking for money and medicine.

English diocese committed to protecting threatened mural

The Diocese of Salford, UK has reiterated its commitment to preserving and protecting a historic Catholic mural in a church, following increasing concerns about its survival due to the threat of vandalism.

The artwork was created in 1955 by George Mayer-Martin, a Hungarian Jew who sought refuge in the UK following the spread of Nazism and has been granted Grade II listed status by the UK Government.

The celebrated piece depicts the

Crucifixion of Christ and resides in the Church of the Holy Rosary in Oldham, a large town in Greater Manchester, England.

The church was closed in 2017, "leaving the mural vulnerable to decay and vandalism", the Catholic Church in England and Wales noted in August 2022.

Local councillors have written a public letter expressing their worries that the historic piece is under threat due to anti-social behaviour and they have called on the local council and Salford Diocese to

move the mural to the local gallery in the area, known as Gallery Oldham.

According to a report by Quest Media Network, councillors Dan Costello, Luke Lancaster and Max Woodvine wrote in their letter: "We write as three Catholic Councillors sitting on Oldham and Tameside Councils to express our increasing concern surrounding the future of the mural currently housed in Holy Rosary Church, in the Medlock Vale Ward of Oldham, which is threatened by vandalism."

Artists encouraged at Vatican to promote beauty and truth

September 1 marked the final day of a two-day meeting in the Vatican's Casina Pio IV aimed at promoting a conversation on how to use the arts to foster a culture of hope and unity.

The "Vitae Summit", organised by the Vitae Global Foundation, was animated by a host of celebrities of the arts, media and entertainment industries who gathered to discuss their role in triggering a cultural transformation that promotes the common good, universal values and a culture of encounter.

Pope Francis joined participants at the end of the summit and encouraged them to be "preachers of beauty", because he said, "Beauty is good for us; beauty heals; beauty helps us go forward on our journey."

A Holy See Press Office communiqué revealed that during their conversation, the Pope and those present focused on the need to reach out to young people, communicate the message of the Gospel, and share stories of witness and accompaniment that stem from an encounter with God.

The Pope, the statement said, pointed to the need to undertake paths of communication that lead to truth, goodness and, particularly for artists, beauty and the path of contemplation.

Pope's September prayer: 'Abolition of the death penalty'

Pope Francis has asked Catholics around the world to pray in September for an end to the death penalty.

He made the appeal in his September prayer intention, shared with an accompanying video on August 31.

"We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country," reads the prayer intention, promoted by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

In the video explaining his prayer intention, Pope Francis said that "the death penalty is morally inadmissible as it destroys the most important gift we

have received: life". "Let us not forget that, up to the very last moment, a person can convert and change," the Pope said.

"And in the light of the Gospel, the death penalty is unacceptable. The commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' refers to both the innocent and the guilty."

More people were executed by the death penalty in 2021 than the year prior, with 579 executions recorded in 18 countries, according to Amnesty International.

The most known executions took place in China, followed by Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

Pope: Correct view of tradition nurtures beauty of the liturgy

The liturgy must be nurtured with care and never be neglected or abused, Pope Francis said.

"The liturgy is Christ's work and the Church's, and as such, it is a living body," he told members of Italy's Association of Professors of Liturgy.

The liturgy "is not a monument made of marble or bronze, it's not a museum piece. The liturgy is alive like a plant, and it must be nurtured with care" and never be "neglected or mistreated," he said.

The Pope made his remarks during an audience at the Vatican September 1 with members of the association, which was founded 50 years ago to promote the study and teaching of liturgy at seminaries, departments of theology and other educational institutions.

Pope Francis underlined the importance of progress being rooted in a true sense of tradition. "Progress in the understanding of, and even in the celebration of, the liturgy must also be rooted in tradition, which always advances in the way the Lord wants," he said.

Like with a tree, growth comes from the roots – from tradition, which is "the assurance of the future".



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

The death of former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev at the age of 91 has triggered an avalanche of commentary and tribute around the world, mostly focusing on Gorbachev's role in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet system for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

A sidebar to the story that probably deserves more prominence than it's received, however, is that the Mikhail Gorbachev the world is now lauding, meaning the reformer and change agent, arguably never would have come to be without the moral and political pressures on the Soviet system created by Pope John Paul II.

Let's recall the tick-tock in the Gorbachev story.

Born in 1931, for most of his career Gorbachev followed the path of the typical Soviet apparatchik. He became a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee in 1978, the same year the Archbishop of Krakow was elected to the papacy, and a few months later Gorbachev became a member of the Politburo – the same time, as it turns out, the new pontiff was making his historic first visit to Poland, showing the world a people collectively asserting an alternative vision of life to official Soviet ideology.

Solidarity

The following August, in 1980, the Solidarity movement was founded in Poland by Lech Wałęsa with the ardent encouragement of John Paul II. As we now know, it would set the dominoes in motion that eventually brought down the entire Soviet house of cards.

“Born in 1931, for most of his career Gorbachev followed the path of the typical Soviet apparatchik”

In one of the most prescient comments ever made in public by a Vatican journalist, *Time's* correspondent Wilton Wynn appeared on American TV the night of October 16, 1978, when a son of Poland was elected to the papacy. Asked, “What are they thinking in Krakow tonight?”, Wynn's answer, delivered in his inimitable Cajun drawl, quickly became the stuff of legend: “That's not the question,” he said. “The question is, what are they thinking in Moscow tonight?”

Exactly.

As Gorbachev continued his steady march to the top during the early 1980s, it was becoming increasingly clear that things had to

Gorbachev's legacy inevitably bound to that of Pope John Paul II



Pope John Paul II greets Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the Vatican November 18, 1990. Pope Francis offered his prayers and praise for Gorbachev, 91, who died in Moscow August 30, 2022, after a long illness. Photo: CNS

“Gorbachev's role in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet system for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990”

change. In part, that was the result of internal forces, such as the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, but it was also due to external pressures, especially the growing restlessness of Soviet satellite states becoming increasingly bold, in part, because of the example of Poland and its support from a determined Polish pope. It was during this time that Gorbachev launched his twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

By December 1989, the Polish Round Table Talks had already happened in Poland in April, setting the stage for legislative elections over the summer that ushered in the first non-Communist government in the Soviet sphere, and it was clear to everyone that before long Wałęsa would become president.

It was in that context that Gorbachev made his historic visit to the Vatican on December 1, 1989,

to meet John Paul II. It came on the heels of a massive celebration in Russia the year before to mark the 1,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus in Kiev, traditionally regarded as the birth of the Russian Orthodox Church, in which a Vatican delegation had been invited to participate.

Persecution

The John Paul/Gorbachev summit effectively marked the end of the USSR's policy of religious persecution. Just a month later, a papal envoy was named for Moscow, and two months later Gorbachev reciprocated by naming an ambassador to the Vatican.

That's not to say there weren't flashes of the old Soviet defiance. For example, despite the custom, which still held sway back then, that women to be received by the pope were supposed to wear black,

including a black veil covering the head, Raisa Gorbachev arrived in 1989 in a bright red dress, raising plenty of eyebrows.

Nonetheless, it was the first ever meeting between a pope and a Soviet premier, and virtually the first direct contact of any kind with Soviet leadership since Pope John XXIII had received the daughter and son-in-law of Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1963. Of course, it was also the last such encounter, since the formal end of the Soviet system came two years later on December 26, 1991, as its constituent states gained independence.

After the meeting, according to Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, John Paul said he had been impressed with Gorbachev.

“He's a man of principle,” Navarro-Valls said John Paul told him the next day, prompting the spokesman to ask what the pope meant by that.

“It's a person who believes enough in their values to be willing to accept all the consequences that derive from them, even if they may be unpleasant or don't seem useful,” Navarro recalled John Paul replying.

“The John Paul/Gorbachev summit effectively marked the end of the USSR's policy of religious persecution”

Naturally, it's a counter-factual exercise to speculate about the course of Gorbachev's life and career had their never been a John Paul II. What the available evidence suggests, however, is that Gorbachev was also a pragmatist whose choices were, at least in part, a product of any politician's natural ability to see the handwriting on the wall.

And whose handwriting was it that Gorbachev and others saw in the 1980s and 1990s? As we know well, to a great extent it was the steady penmanship of Karol Wojtyła, Pope John Paul II, who carved onto the walls of history the call that inspired a generation: “Be not afraid!”

Wisdom of centuries: Swedish cardinal says much to learn from Church's past



Pope Francis greets Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm, Sweden, during a meeting with members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican in May of this year. Photo: CNS



Junno Arocho Esteves

The prophecies and revelations of St Bridget of Sweden, who lived in Rome for nearly 20 years until her death in 1373, were known for their direct reprimands to popes and princes alike, calling for an end to corruption and the start of reform within the Catholic Church.

"She was not afraid to deliver stern admonitions about the moral reform of the Christian people and the clergy themselves," St John Paul II wrote in his 1999 apostolic letter proclaiming her co-patroness of Europe.

Her countless admonitions, written in several volumes of her "Revelations," highlighted a new vision for the Church, one that emphasised the importance of humility within the Church hierarchy.

Revelations

"The pope can improve the situation greatly by allowing (cardinals and bishops) to have only what they need and nothing superfluous, and he should order each bishop to watch over the ways of his own clergy," she wrote in her fourth book of "Revelations".

Centuries later, standing on the rooftop of the convent where Sweden's first saint spent her final days in Rome, Sweden's first cardinal reflected on the August 27 consistory that saw the creation of 20 new cardinals of the Catholic Church.

"It's a very typical consistory of Pope Francis because, as we see, he always picks people – as someone said – from nowhere," Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm told *Catholic News Service* August 28. "But it's his policy to call people from all over the world whom you don't expect to be cardinals, in order to show the universality of the Church."

“The Swedish cardinal said the Church must also look to its own backyard and address the crisis of faith in Europe”

It's clear "that the centre of the Church is now not in Europe anymore," he added. "It's very evident, especially (because) he picked so many from Asia, where (Catholics are) mostly a minority, but it's where people live. And if we're going to stress evangelisation, we have to stress it in the areas where faith is not known."

Eastern patriarchs

Cardinal Arborelius, who was named a cardinal by Pope Francis in 2017, was among the nearly 200 cardinals, Eastern patriarchs and officials of the Secretariat of State who met in the Paul VI audience hall with Pope

Francis August 29-30 to reflect on the apostolic constitution *Praedicate evangelium* ("Preach the Gospel") on the reform of the Roman Curia.

Reflecting on the apostolic constitution, Cardinal Arborelius said "it would be interesting to see" how the Roman Curia will place evangelisation at the centre of the Church's "bureaucratic work".

Pope Francis, he said, "wants all the Church to be present in every dicastery and to have people from the clergy and religious life, of course, but also laypeople".

Lay leadership

The Pope's emphasis on including the laity in Church leadership, he said, is also evident in his naming of 14 new members of the Dicastery for Bishops, including three women, in July.

Cardinal Arborelius, who was among those named, said the inclusion of women in the group that helps the pope choose bishops shows that Pope Francis "is very eager to have a broader viewpoint of what it means to be a bishop".

"Someone said that it used to be professors or rectors of seminaries" who were chosen as member of the Curia, including those who choose bishops, the cardinal said. "Now, it's mostly pastors; not university people but people from the (ground,) from the grassroots. Of course, it's very important to have women."

While the Catholic Church is growing in the peripheries, the Swedish cardinal said the Church must also look to its own backyard and address the crisis of faith in Europe.

Traditional Catholic countries in Europe, such as Italy, Poland, Spain and France, "are facing big problems," from confronting the horrors of abuse to the politicisation of so-called Christian values, he said.

“It's a very typical consistory of Pope Francis because, as we see, he always picks people – as someone said – from nowhere”

One of the reasons for the steady decline of Catholicism in Europe, he said, could be "that people identify Christianity with a kind of political movement," Cardinal Arborelius said. "It's a bit dangerous when some politicians would use" Christianity to justify certain policies that often counter Church teaching, like on issues such as migration.

Some politicians "often speak more about Christian values than about Christ," he said.

"It's a problem that some will use Christianity – or Christian values as they say – for political (purposes) without bringing the Gospel. They pick out what they think is Christian," the cardinal added. In Sweden, "we call it a 'smorgasbord faith'".

The Swedish cardinal told CNS that the Pope is not only confronting challenges at home, but abroad as well, from Russia's ongoing war with Ukraine to the persecution of Catholics in Nicaragua.

Cardinal Arborelius acknowledged that although the Pope has

been tireless in his appeals for peace since the start of the conflict in Ukraine in late February, "many want stronger words and actions".

Similar calls for the Pope to speak out have also been made after the August 19 arrest of Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, and nearly a dozen others who had been under house arrest for more than two weeks.

Pray

Although the Pope did not specifically mention Bishop Álvarez's arrest, he prayed for peace in the country during his Sunday Angelus address August 21.

Nevertheless, Cardinal Arborelius said it was important for people, especially those who live in countries "where we can say exactly what we want to say," that there are areas where speaking the truth can have the opposite effect on those who suffer.

"Traditionally, the Pope has always been a bit above" political agendas and tries to help those in need "in a more silent way to bring about better conditions".

"People have to realise that there are societies where it can become much worse, even if you say the truth," Cardinal Arborelius told CNS. "I think it's the experience through the ages that makes the pope more prudent and not too outgoing in his criticism. It's part of the wisdom of centuries."

"It's not easy to be the pope, because people expect so much," he added.

Letters

Letter of the week

Raising brave martyrs to sainthood

Dear Editor, I am delighted with the news that the cause of seven Columban priests who served in Korea has been sent to the Vatican for approval opening the way for their eventual sainthood [*The Irish Catholic* – July 28, 2022].

I wish to point out that there are 17 other Columban martyrs including one nun Sr Joan Sawyer (killed in Lima, Peru in 1983) who suffered cruel deaths for their faith.

I would suggest that their names are now sent *en masse* to Rome for the examination of their cause on the first steps to canonisation, *Deo volente*.

I have in mind my cousin Fr Timothy Peter Leonard, the first Columban martyr who suffered the cruellest of deaths in Nan Feng, China on July 17, 1929. He was attacked while celebrating early morning Mass in his Church by Red Bandits, taken captive, interrogated, tortured and beaten to death. He was partially beheaded – his crucifixion lasted three days.

“Practicing religion” was his crime. He was ordained for the Diocese of Limerick in 1918 before joining the Columbans (Maynooth mission to China at that time). The fainne-wearing Co. Limerick man was aged 36 years.

The last of the 24 Columban martyrs was Glenstal-educated Fr Rufus Halley who was murdered by Muslims in the Philippines in 2001 after a life spent in conflict resolution between Muslims and Christians in that land.

May the Holy Spirit inspire the Church authorities and the Holy See to raise these brave martyrs to sainthood.

Thanking you.

Yours etc.,

John M. Leonard
Corbally, Co. Limerick

Covid measures and a fear of death

Dear Editor, I am saddened to see the continuation of various Covid measures at Mass and in other faith settings even though the overwhelming majority of people in the country have moved beyond them.

It conveys that we are more afraid of suffering and death than the average person.

How does this translate to those of little or no faith? It tells them that not only is faith pointless but that it leaves you fearful and is thus a pathway into personal darkness.

We live in a country beset by addiction, hopelessness, and suicide and yet we who have the ultimate belief and hope choose to convey a message of fear and despair. Our hope lies in the fact that we can have an eternal relationship with God. It is an implicit rejection of the cradle to grave mindset that thinks only of this physical world and thus greatly fears suffering and death.

The statement issued by the Irish Catholic bishops' conference in



March of this year states:

“We should however remain sensitive and respectful (by way of responsible social distancing and optional wearing of masks) towards those who may still feel vulnerable or anxious.”

This may appear laudable however I believe that it is a mistaken approach. We are allowing the fears of a small number of people to undermine the

very hope given by faith.

Some would state that such Covid measures are an act of love. I think not.

This viewpoint may have held some sway at the beginning of the pandemic over two years ago but definitely not now.

Yours etc.,

Michael Gavin
Royal Canal Park, Dublin 15

Unjust that women are excluded from priesthood

Dear Editor, I cannot understand how, in this age of enlightenment, that women are excluded from the ministry of the priesthood and even the diaconate in the Church. Their exclusion from the presbyterate is not based on any core teaching of the Lord. In Luke 24: 44-48, Jesus told his apostles: “You are my witnesses to this” – the Good News. However, in Israel at that time, the legal system was very precise. In the list of those named as being invalid witnesses

were firstly women, followed by slaves, minors, the blind, the deaf etc. And that law was on the statute books until very recently. In fact, it was only 71 years ago that the modern State of Israel has allowed female witnesses in a civil court of law by passing the Equality of Women's Act of 1951.

So, Jesus was not in a position to appoint any of the women, who had loyally followed him, as his apostles or disciples. And because he didn't, Church

leaders 2,000 years later use this as a reason for not ordaining women. “If Jesus didn't appoint women, then neither may we”, is their argument. However, in the early days of the Church, when new Christians were being baptised, it involved going naked into the baptismal pool. And so deaconesses were appointed to administer this Sacrament of Initiation to the women neophytes. So while some of the more conservative clergy might use tradition as their major excuse, there

is no theological reason for refusing our sisters ordination to either the diaconate, or more importantly to the priesthood.

It took the Church 400 years to admit that Galileo was right when he claimed that the earth was not the centre of the universe. Hopefully, the Church will see the injustice and the abuse that our sisters in the faith have suffered for so long.

Yours etc.,

Pat Seaver
Farranshone, Co. Limerick

facebook community

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

Synod: Church can only be reformed by insights into message of Jesus

Our Lord Jesus was and is counter culture in every age. The Church must speak truth to Power. Way past the time the Church stopped being “nice” and inoffensive and spoke about sin and our Lord Jesus dying for us. – **John Taaffe**

I am a Protestant and I would gladly hold out the right hand to anyone who shares the bishop's point of view. – **Glanville Martin**

Not for bishops to decide who receives Communion, says Bishop Doran

There's nobody stopping anyone from receiving communion. However you shouldn't receive unless in a state of grace. If some group or individual is publicly not in a state of grace then the bishop can stop someone from receiving communion for example Nancy Pelosi and her Bishop Cordileone. – **Daragh Harmon**

Amazes me how many are happy to jump on the bandwagon and judge others. “Judge not, lest you be judged.” – **Noel Wilson**

He is so right. Jesus came for everybody. And nobody knows what's truly in anyone's heart. – **Eadaoin Goggin Delaney**

It is the job of the clergy to protect the Holy Eucharist and prevent recipients from committing the mortal sin of sacrilege. – **Maire Cassells**

I was there. I heard his homily. He made the point that Gods invitation was there for all of us, but some people have to refuse that invitation because of the sins they commit. It was actually a brilliant homily. – **Bernie O Hara**

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

In the spirit of Christian forgiveness

Dear Editor, I was a bit surprised to see a gossip, tabloid article about the marriage of Mrs O'Leary by Mary Kenny, page five [*The Irish Catholic* – August 25].

I'm not sure what was the motivation for including the article, mostly about a sin of Mrs O'Leary?

Was it just to blacken or label, mark her cards, with this irrelevant information, that happened over 15 years ago?

I had not heard about this, as I don't follow the sins of public figures, nor do I wish to know.

I think it was a very un-Catholic, un-charitable article aimed at spreading the sins (forgiven) about a married woman. The little line about “in the spirit of Christian forgiveness”, was not the main motivation of the article, and a justification.

“In the spirit of Christian forgiveness” will Mary Kenny list down all her relationships and serious sins in an article? What about the Editor, would he do the same?

Has Mary Kenny researched other politicians and published their sins?

Yours etc.,
Philip Norden
Bracken, Co. Limerick

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.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, September 8, 2022

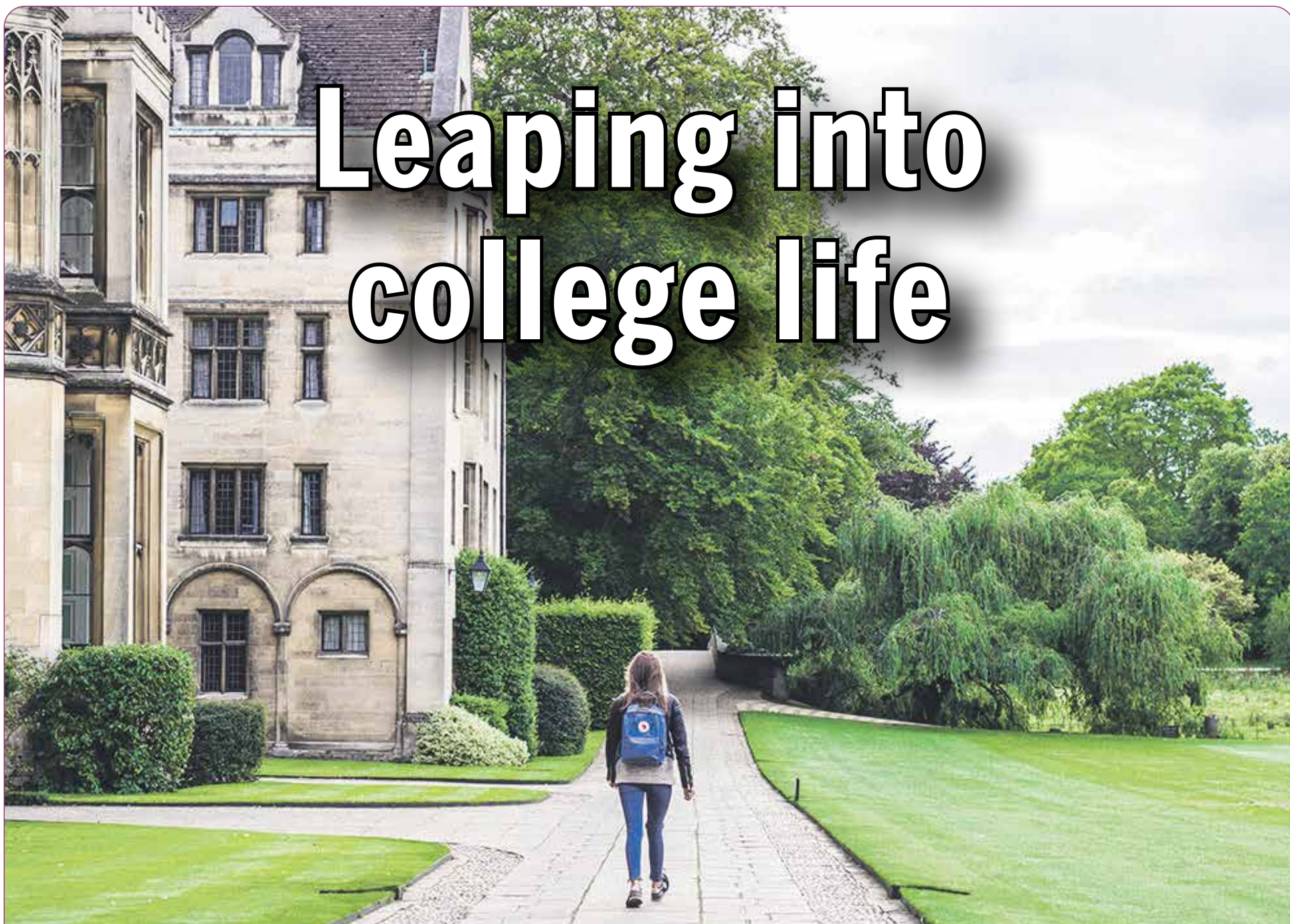
Personal Profile

From bailing hay to the Holy Land

Page 32



Leaping into college life



Around this time of year, thousands of young people gear up to make the huge transition from school to college life. The size of the change in lifestyle will vary from person to person, but it's a big step out of the sheltered school environment regardless. Very little in life is the "be all and end all" of our story, and college is no different. Still, making a good start here can set a young man or woman off down a promising path.

I've personally reaped the rewards of the space college gave me – it was during that time that I found God, or more accurately, God found me. Were



Transitioning from school to college is a big deal for young people, and every effort should be made to help them hit the ground running, writes Jason Osborne

it not for the reading, thinking and ultimately, praying that college life enabled me to do, I'm sure our relationship couldn't have progressed as it did, and my life wouldn't have very happily turned out as it has.

Hence, my emphasis on college years well spent! Just as there are many opportunities in

college, so too are there many ways to waste those opportunities. This doesn't mean it has to be 100% productivity, 100% of the time in college, just that it's important to have your priorities in order going in if at all possible.

With all of that said, and with my college experience

relatively recent in my mind, here are a couple of tips to help the fresh-faced college-goer in your life make the most of their time in a very special place.

Attend those classes

This might seem a no-brainer to someone who has just worked very hard to get into college in the first place, but soon cold, hard reality will set in. Unfortunately, in my experience, many students quickly fall into the habit of attending the bare minimum number of classes and lectures they need to in order to reach whatever goal they have set for themselves.

Now that remote learning is

largely a distant memory and most students find themselves on campus, distractions will abound. One of the quirks of college life that I recall was the way in which a class would be full at the start of a semester, but would quickly empty out as the weeks and months progressed. There were just too many things to do instead on campus, whether it was meeting up with friends, going to the bar, the gym, calling it a day and heading home early or otherwise.

Ideally, your young person will be studying something of personal interest, that proves

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Family News



AND EVENTS

DROUGHT IN SPAIN UNCOVERS SUBMERGED MONUMENTS

A centuries-old church and a huge megalithic complex are among the underwater monuments that have resurfaced in Spain as a severe drought causes water levels in reservoirs to plunge, AFP reports.

After a prolonged dry spell, Spain's reservoirs are at just under 36 percent capacity, according to environment ministry figures for August.

The receding waters have exposed the ruins of an 11th-century church in the usually submerged village of Sant Roma de Sau, which was flooded in the 1960s when a nearby dam was built.

Normally, the church's bell tower is the only visible sign of the village in the northeastern region of Catalonia.

Drawn by pictures on social media and television reports, crowds of tourists now fill the restaurants in the nearby village of Vilanova de Sau.

"It has been years since (water levels) are as low as they are now," said 45-year-old Nuria Ferrerons during a recent visit to the site.

"We saw it on social media and we said 'well let's see how it is'," she added.

SKELETON OF HUGE DINOSAUR UNEARTHED IN PORTUGUESE GARDEN

Palaeontologists in Portugal have unearthed the fossilised skeleton of what could be the largest dinosaur ever found in Europe.

The remains are thought to be those of a sauropod, a herbivorous dinosaur 12 metres tall (39 ft) and 25 metres long that roamed the Earth around 150 million years ago.

"It's one of the biggest specimens discovered in Europe, perhaps in the world," palaeontologist Elisabete Malafaia, from the Faculty of Sciences at Lisbon University, told AFP.

The bones were uncovered by Portuguese and Spanish scientists in the garden of a house near Pombal in central Portugal at the beginning of August.

Among the bones collected, they found the remains of a rib about three metres long, Ms Malafaia said.

Fossil fragments were first noticed at the site in 2017, when the owner was digging up his garden to make way for an extension.

He contacted palaeontologists, who unearthed part of the dinosaur skeleton in August and have been examining it ever since.

FINNS URGED TO TAKE SHORTER SAUNAS AMID ENERGY CRISIS

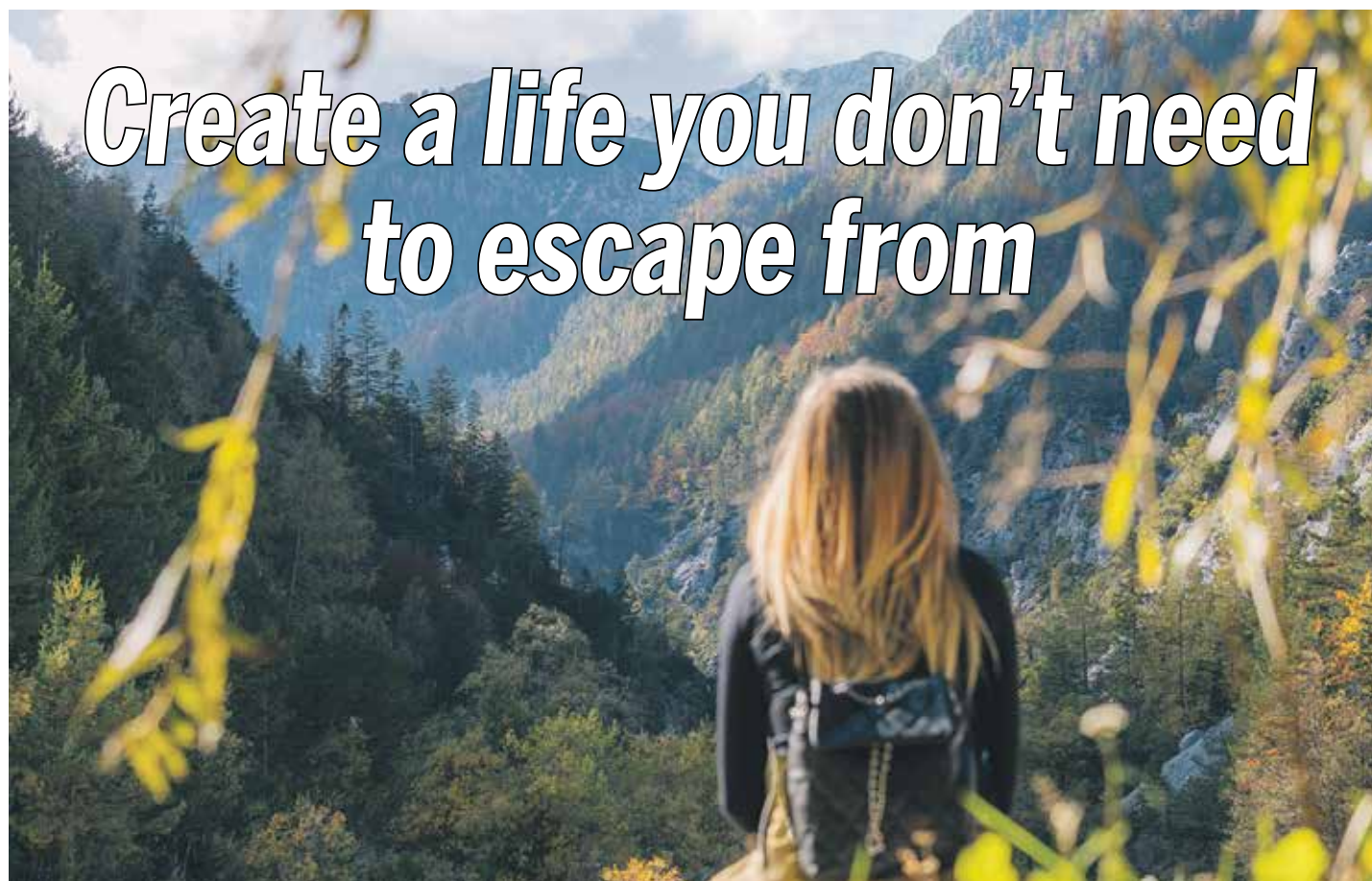
Finns are being urged to turn down their thermostats this winter, take shorter showers and spend less time in their beloved saunas, as Europe faces an energy crisis following Russia's war in Ukraine.

Russia has cut gas supplies to Finland and other European countries in recent months, causing energy prices to soar.

Called "A degree lower", the campaign will be launched on 10 October, Kati Laakso, a spokeswoman at state-owned company Motiva which promotes sustainability said.

The company is behind the campaign together with the Finnish government and energy authority, according to AFP.

In addition to lowering their heating and taking shorter showers, Finns will be encouraged to cut back on sauna time.



Create a life you don't need to escape from

As summer ends, I always get a little bit of that melancholy back-to-school feeling even though it's years since I set foot in a classroom. By the end of August the days are a bit shorter, many crops have already been harvested and there's that undeniable hint of autumn in the air.

I was out walking with my daughter recently and there were leaves underfoot already, a sure sign that our lovely summer was drawing to a close.

“These words capture something that resonates deep within the human spirit, that longing to be filled and fulfilled”

As a child, I wasn't a great lover of school so the beginning of September signalled a certain amount of trepidation with a distinct feeling that there was a dark cloud hovering over me. I hated the fact that all the delicious freedom of the summer was over. The days I'd so longed for, that seemed to stretch out endlessly, had passed all too quickly and I was facing into cold mornings, painfully early rises and more time away from the pursuits I loved.

Looking back at my childhood angst, it's clear that the cause of my worry and distress was connected to my lack of understanding that all the lovely things that we set our sights on, or anticipate with such delight, are fleeting. Even the joy of love is tainted by the shadow of death; one of the saddest things to witness is the tears of a bereaved spouse on the death of their lifelong partner.

I often think of the words of St Augustine: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts



A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

are restless until they rest in you."

These words capture something that resonates deep within the human spirit, that longing to be filled and fulfilled. It's the reason why, no matter how much we pursue passing earthly pleasures, they alone can never completely satisfy us.

When I repeated my plaintive end-of-summer lines "There's nothing to look forward to", I was focused on the ephemeral nature of so much of what we set our hearts on in this life. Even as adults, we try to hang on too long to those blissful little moments.

One of my own personal weaknesses is putting off bedtime as I so enjoy those last few late-night moments of solitude after a hectic day.

YouTube channel

Fr Mike Schmitz from the Catholic YouTube channel, Ascension Presents, described going to bed as an act of faith in God and a good spiritual exercise. He says that we often stay up late because we have so much to do, are super-busy and betray a level of vanity in feeling that we're so important that we can't afford to rest. Many of us can identify with that feeling of wanting to hold on to that last 20 minutes or half an hour in an attempt to somehow hold off the work, worries and challenges of the next day. It's something we do in all areas of life where we feel that we're in control of everything and that if we take our eye off the ball chaos will ensue.

I often see the quote online which urges us to "create a life

you don't need to escape from". Is our endless activity an effort to get away from what we view as the mundanity and worry of ordinary life?

If we're finding life overwhelming and are suffering from the end-of-summer blues we can use a few strategies to help us cope. It's important to sur-



round ourselves with supportive friends or family that will offer us a shoulder to cry on. Even better, they might accompany us to an autumn class or event – trying something new or learning a new skill can improve our outlook. I always like to support Catholic events and the number and range has never been better.

Don't forget to engage in some self-care. We all want to help others and be of service but, if we're running on dry, how can we be truly there for them? Autumn is a lovely season too, the "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" in the words of John Keats. It's a great time to snuggle up on the couch to watch a family film or to indulge in warming mugs of hot chocolate, and who doesn't

love an October walk when the trees are a multitude of autumnal shades?

It's a time for simplifying life, ditching the emotional clutter and stepping back a little. Most of all, we need to focus on the fact that we can "let go and let God". When God is the source of our joy, we have an inner peace that is less affected by the passing seasons and vagaries of life.

“We can rest in God and hand over all our concerns and woes, firm in the knowledge that, whatever lovely things end, God's love is infinite and will never end”

I watched a great video on YouTube by Fr Columba Jordan CFR called 'How to Beat Worry and Live Peacefully'. He said that when we live in fear and worry, we're placing our faith in ourselves by thinking that we can control something that we can't control, almost putting ourselves in the place of God.

He suggests entrusting all our worries and fears to God by doing the Surrender Novena which can be found online and includes the refrain "O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything!"

He assures us that "God can work most powerfully through us when we are at peace and we trust". We can rest in God and hand over all our concerns and woes, firm in the knowledge that, whatever lovely things end, God's love is infinite and will never end.

» Continued from Page 29



sufficient to maintain engagement. Even if that isn't the case, however, now is the time to develop the ability to persevere. Whether or not they had a good relationship with school, that was a more linear, controlled setting than the one they now face. Freedom is the name of the game from now on, and the limits a person places on themselves going in are the only ones that really matter.

“I was a bit of a late-bloomer, only really getting involved with Catholics on campus in the latter months of my last year there, but I was so glad that I did”

Try to communicate therefore the importance of sticking with their commitment, come what may. The ability to stick to something will stand to them both in college and throughout life, and they have an opportunity to develop it like never before here. Attending classes is just a good idea when it comes to writing essays and passing exams too – it makes life much less stressful.

Get involved

Your horizons broaden significantly once you've left the trappings of school behind and find yourself wrapped up in an often overwhelming, intimidating institution like college. There's likely more by way of clubs, societies

and groups on offer to a young person than ever before, and it's important to get involved if they feel like doing so.

I was a bit of a late-bloomer, only really getting involved with Catholics on campus in the latter months of my last year there, but I was so glad that I did. On this particular note, a young person will find more spiritual support in college from peers who are choosing to stick to their faith out of personal conviction, such as they do in college prayer groups or Catholic societies, than they did from people they found themselves alongside in school by circumstance.

This principle is not limited to religion, however. If they have a real passion for rock climbing, kayaking, poetry, reading, writing or anything else, depending on the college's offering, they'll find more of an outlet here than anywhere else. Enjoy the experience of being surrounded by those with similar tastes and interests – it won't necessarily last forever.

Establish routine

I've been driving home the point throughout about the freedom of college being a double-edged sword, but the point cannot be overstated. For many, that freedom is wasted on nights out five out of seven nights a week. I enjoy a good party as much as anyone, and the college years are likely to boast more than their fair share of a life's proportion if we're lucky.

However, college is about more than this, and it sadly isn't for

“If your young person has the time or inclination, encourage them to keep in touch with the friends they've had for years, and with family too”

many young people. It's important to try and communicate to those heading out the door each day or to their accommodation for a semester that they can enjoy the best of both worlds with a good, healthy routine and a sense of balance. If you develop a work ethic in college and a sense of responsibility, that will of course stand to you in the workplace and in personal life going forward. If you slack off, though, in favour of a good time, it'll always be all too easy to keep doing so going

forward.

The staples of a healthy life elsewhere are the staples of a healthy life in college, too – plenty of sleep, exercise, good work, leisure and socialising. Try not to let any one element vastly subsume the others.

Keep in touch with old friends and family

A last point on this whistle-stop tour of college preparation – make sure to keep in touch with those you care about. For

many, college is a time of great upheaval, during which friends from school are scattered to the four corners. This was my experience.

If your young person has the time or inclination, encourage them to keep in touch with the friends they've had for years, and with family too. Any familiar elements will be most welcome during the oft-confusing early days of college and beyond.



From bailing hay to the Holy Land

Personal Profile



Ruadhán Jones

When Fr Eamon Kelly LC was a young man in Co. Clare, he considered giving up his schooling and working on his family farm. But the advice of a local priest changed his mind, and set him on a path to ministering in the Holy Land.

Fr Kelly grew up on a farm near the Burren, milking cows, shearing sheep, doing homework in the off season and the hay in the summer. He attended school in Our Lady's College, Gort, Co. Galway.

“Hearing himself say those words came as a surprise to Fr Kelly, who thought he had never spoken like that before”

He recalls how he “was actually, going to quit after the inter-cert in 72, but it was purely providential that the priest in charge of the school Fr Christie Burke, he said to my mother, ‘he’s an eejit!’ I was happy because I was going to be on the farm, but he said to my mother that I should finish the Leaving Cert.”



Fr Eamon Kelly LC.

It proved a providential intervention. Fr Kelly went back to school in September 1973, and a few weeks after school began, two members of the religious order the Legionaries of Christ came and gave a talk. After that visit, “my heart was completely stolen to give my life to Christ and become a missionary”.

“That last year of school kept progressing, but my mind was already made up,” he explains. “About six weeks after we had the visit of the Legionaries, we had a three-day silent retreat. I remember going to Confession and at the end of it being asked, what are you going to do after the Leaving Cert. I said, I’m going to be a priest.”

Hearing himself say those words came as a surprise to Fr Kelly, who thought he had never spoken like that before. However, his sister corrected him, reminding him that he came home one day with a homework assignment – an essay on what he would like to be

in the future.

“Don’t you remember when we came home,” his sister said, “Mammy asked what are you going to write about. And you said, I want to be a priest. I had forgotten it completely.”

Legionaries of Christ

Fr Kelly travelled a great deal after joining the Legionaries of Christ, studying first in Dublin, then in Salamanca, and then in Rome. He was appointed to a youth internship and assigned to an area just outside the city of Detroit, Michigan, in the US. While there, he quickly became passionate about youth work.

He returned to Rome to complete his theology studies in the Angelicum, before being ordained a priest. While he was initially to return to America, visa issues kept him grounded and instead his attention turned to central Europe.

“I ended up doing some exploratory work in central Europe and Germany... and that eventually became the foundation of our

congregation there, in Germany, Austria and Hungary. I was in Germany initially in 1988 and then I was there full-time from ‘89 to about September 1999. That was a time of incredible transformation in Central Europe, with the fall of the Soviet bloc, an amazing time.

“That work was very blessed we had young people who chose to consecrate their lives to God in lay consecrated life or in the priesthood. It was a very difficult time in a way for faith communities in central Europe. It was a time of great secularisation and of Church issues that were being debated.

“Appointed to New York this time, he ministered in the Twin Towers before they were destroyed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks”

“But that faith of the young people to answer the call – they were attracted by the Spirit of Christ and many of them followed other paths, not necessarily in our community. It was wonderful to see the variety of vocations springing out of it.”

In 2000, Fr Kelly got his wish to return to America. Appointed to New York this time, he ministered in the Twin Towers before they were destroyed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After that, he returned to youth work, developing adults to take on youth faith formation.

“While I was there, I was called to come and serve in the Holy Land,” Fr Kelly says. “That was an amazing thing. But then the Hezbollah war broke out in 2006 and I was told to wait as there would be no work for me.

“I had never been to the Holy

Land before. I had this dream of maybe coming for my 25th anniversary of my ordination because around that time we were given the assignment of running the Vatican guesthouse in Jerusalem. But I didn’t think that would be something for me.

“But then I was called to serve here, to look after all the pilgrimage work, promoting pilgrimage and helping pilgrims and pastors and priests and everybody. Meanwhile we also started the project in Magdala which has become an incredible oasis of grace. I’ve been living on site here for the last six years.”

Fr Kelly says he has noticed great spiritual benefits to working in the Holy Land. Three different elements in particular caught his attention. The first was the diversity of the people he met; the second was the “amazing impact these places have had precisely because of the history of salvation”.

“The third thing is after working in central Europe and the northeast of North America a lot, you tend to find a certain hardness or secularisation against religious work. Here in the Holy Land, it’s different, even with atheists who might just be here a short while.

“It becomes conversational, it becomes possible to engage people in dialogue, to encounter people more deeply, to go beyond the cliché and to have serious conversations with people.”

Fr Kelly continues his ministry at the Magdala Centre in the Holy Land, including his pandemic initiative of livestreaming the sunrise. He strolls and chats and comments on the daily Scriptures. You can watch the livestream by following this link <https://linktr.ee/ekellylc>.

Do you know someone who we should profile? Send an email to ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Sweet Treats

Kiley Britten

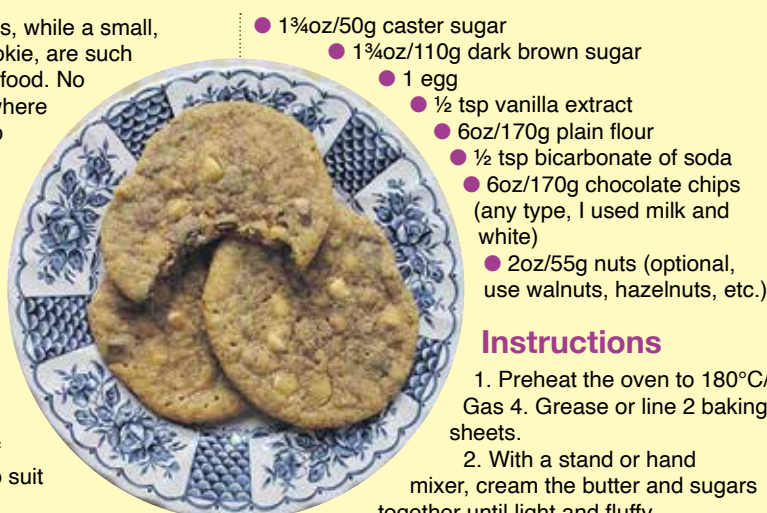


Customisable chocolate chip cookies

Chocolate chip cookies, while a small, humble-seeming cookie, are such a wonderful comfort food. No matter your age or where you are from, a chocolate chip cookie just feels like eating a little bit of happiness. Kids and adults enjoy them, making these cookies perfect for back-to-school baking or a quick treat for the kids after school – or a quick treat for the parents while the kids are at school! As always, use your favourite chocolate and nuts, omit the nuts, or change the amount of chocolate – tailor the recipe to suit your own tastes, and enjoy!

Ingredients

- 4oz/155g butter at room temperature



- 1¼oz/50g caster sugar
- 1¼oz/110g dark brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 6oz/170g plain flour
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 6oz/170g chocolate chips (any type, I used milk and white)
- 2oz/55g nuts (optional, use walnuts, hazelnuts, etc.)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/ Gas 4. Grease or line 2 baking sheets.
2. With a stand or hand mixer, cream the butter and sugars together until light and fluffy.
3. In a smaller bowl, whisk the egg and vanilla together. Slowly beat the egg into the butter and sugar. Sift the flour and bicarbonate of soda

over the bowl, then gently mix in (you can use the mixer on the lowest speed, or use a spatula).

4. Once all the flour is mixed in, add the chocolate chips and nuts. Use a spatula to mix the chips and nuts in, ensuring they are evenly distributed in the batter.

5. Using two spoons or your hands, roll the dough into meatball-sized balls, then place on a baking sheet- do not add more than 8 on a sheet so the cookies do not melt into each other. I recommend 6 per sheet, and baking the cookies in two batches.

6. Bake the cookies in the oven for 12-15 minutes. They will be lightly coloured. Let the cookies cool in the pan for about 2 minutes before transferring them to a wire cooling rack to cool down and harden a little more before eating.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Leaders who could bring people with them

Several of this week's stories and programmes had me thinking about the importance of visionary leadership and how that quality is largely lacking these days, especially in the political arena.

The death last week of Mikhail Gorbachev, former premier of the Soviet Union, reminded us of a time when political leaders East and West were working for world peace. No doubt none of them were saints, and politically they didn't need to be, but they did provide a positive vision and brought people with them. Gorbachev's legacy in relation to religion was explored on **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4). Xenia Dennen of the Keston Institute, which deals with the study of religious affairs in communist countries, outlined how there was a severe clampdown on religion during the Khrushchev regime in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But then in Gorbachev's time, from 1985 on, there was a religious 'free for all', especially when he brought in a liberal law in 1990. Eventually Orthodox leaders became worried by the influx of religions from abroad and some restrictions were enacted in 1997. Bruce Clarke who worked in Russia as a journalist in Gorbachev's time, spoke of churches re-opening, stories



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty at the White House in Washington in 1987. Gorbachev died August 30 in Moscow after a long illness. Photo: CNS

of how President Ronald Reagan tried to convert the Soviet leader, without success apparently, and there were even rumours of Gorbachev becoming Catholic. However, he scotched these rumours himself, though he was interested in religious freedom.

Challenge

Political leadership is sorely challenged by the worldwide migrant and refugee crisis. The particular problem that faces the UK in relation to the dangerous channel crossings is a conundrum that faces their new Prime

Minister Liz Truss and her new-look cabinet. The issue was teased out on **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One, Sunday) and as always on that show, the main debate featured a welcome diversity of views. It was presented as being a conflict between compassion and tougher border controls, but I wondered if it needs to be one or the other. Methodist Rev. David Butterworth suggested some sort of harmonious approach – "let's join together in the middle". He believed the UK needed more workers anyway after losses due to Brexit. Dr Rakib

Ehson, described as a political commentator (aren't we all!) thought border security left a lot to be desired, condemned "grotesque people smuggling" and suggested many asylum seekers came from places that weren't places of conflict and war. Sarah Hason of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants saw many as fleeing from exploitation, even from relatively stable countries like Albania and saw the fact that they had been granted asylum as evidence that they had a case. She criticised the UK government and didn't like the scapegoating of refugees. Patrick O'Flynn, another political commentator, thought the grounds for asylum internationally were so wide that 'hundreds of millions' would qualify. However, he didn't favour the "country is full" argument and thought we should be assessing who was most in need.

Immigrant

Another immigrant story featured on **The Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio One, Friday). Afshin Samali, Professor of Cancer Biology NUIG, and a member of the Royal Irish Academy was a refugee from religious persecution in Iran. In his case the persecution was occasioned by his being an adherent of the Bahá'í religion.

PICK OF THE WEEK

NIGHT OF THE PROPHET

EWTV Sunday September 11, 9pm

Through the eyes of a Roman journalist, a dramatisation of Padre Pio, who is unveiled as a man of purity and Christian charity.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

RTÉ One Sunday September 11, 10.25pm

Joe Duffy speaks with music legend, Cait O'Riordan, former bass player with The Pogues.

FILM: A HIDDEN LIFE

Channel 4 Tuesday September 13, 11.15pm

(2019) World War II drama about Franz Jagerstatter (August Diehl) who refuses to serve in Hitler's army because of his Catholic values and faith. Directed by Terrence Malick.

They were accused of many things, including being apostates from Islam, of being a political movement set up by Israel and the West, but he believed the real reason was because their progressive principles (e.g. equality of the sexes) were "at odds with the worldview of the leadership in Iran".

In some ways, pilgrimage mirrors the journey of refugees, and on the show Siobhan Garrigan interviewed Fr Frank Fahey of Ballintubber Abbey. With others in the area, he had helped re-discover an old pilgrim path that went all the way back to St Patrick's time, but had fallen out of use when it was dangerous to be Catholic, especially during penal times. The revival was very much welcomed locally. Fr

Fahey said that in a pilgrimage, the journey, not the destination, was the important thing. It involved "allowing ourselves to be changed by something greater than ourselves".

The programme also features some lovely and lively Irish traditional music, though, apart from a trad-style version of Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* the relevance to faith was rather peripheral. With such a short programme and so few religious programmes scheduled, I'd like to see a closer focus on content where faith is more central.

✉ boregan@hotmail.com, @boreganmedia

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Veronica Dunne would be proud of the standard

With numerous sponsors, including Hinch Distillery Company, the triennial Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition brought 36 young hopefuls, of whom nine were Irish, to the National Concert Hall last week to participate in its preliminary piano-accompanied rounds before being whittled down to six for the finale with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Laurent Wagner.

There was an element of sadness attached to the proceedings, of course, as Veronica Dunne, who established the competition in 1995 and whose unflinching enthusiasm was its life's blood, died on April 5, 2021 in her 94th year.

The six finalists, divided evenly between male and female artists, presented their chosen operatic arias before an international jury, chaired by Jane Carty, with its six members drawn from Australia, Germany, UK, USA (2) and Ireland (celebrated mezzo Tara Erraught, who was herself a competitor in 2007).

Finale

Sometimes for those, including myself, hearing only the grand finale - unlike the jury who had closely assessed each competitor in the preceding rounds - the end result can often come as a surprise. Indeed, such was the case for me, at any rate, and I raised an eyebrow when, after the presentation of the many lesser



Baritone Grisha Martirosyan

awards, the €10,000 first prize went to Armenian baritone Grisha Martirosyan (24).

Undoubtedly he gave dramatic and expressive performances of arias by

Leoncavallo, Gounod and Massenet. His good firm range, that had a 'tenorial top', maybe reached its best in Gounod's 'Avant de quitter ces lieux' (*Faust*). Grisha Martirosyan also received a number of other awards including the €1,000 audience prize from votes cast on the night.

Dublin mezzo Aebh Kelly (25) took the €5,000 second prize. My favourite voice among the finalists, she crossed the coloratura hurdles of Rossini's 'Una voce poco fa' (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) with assured aplomb. Ms Kelly's range had a good clear top without any sense of strain while her lower depths were equally assured. Her Mozart - Dorabella's extravagant 'Smanie implac-

abili' aria (*Così fan tutte*) - abounded with personality and character.

Latvian soprano

I was also greatly impressed by the €3,000 fourth prizewinner, Latvian soprano Laura Lolita Perešivana (27), whose interpretation of 'Wenn sich die Menschen' from Berg's *Lulu* had a frightening quality. Her complete contrast and elegance in Mozart's 'Porgi amor' (*Le nozze di Figaro*) was no less captivating while her Rossini - 'Ah donato il caro sposa' (*Il signor Bruschino*) - found her gorgeous tone awash with musicality.

Among the other contestants I particularly enjoyed third prizewinner 27-year-old UK tenor Aaron Godfrey-

Mayes' full-blooded style in Donizetti's quirky 'Ah! mes amis' (*La fille du régiment*) and Polish mezzo Zuzanna Nalewajek's 'Wie du warst! Wie du best!' (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Ms Nalewajek (27) gave the difficult extract all it demanded.

South Korean bass baritone Changdai Park (29, the oldest of the six finalists and a member of Berlin's Komische Oper) was at his vocally colourful best in Rossini's 'La Calunnia' (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*). Aaron Godfrey-Mayes, Zuzanna Nalewajek and Changdai Park respectively received the €4,000, €2,000 and €1,000 prizes.

The indefatigable Veronica Dunne was, no doubt, with us in spirit.

You are precious to God

While the first reading and responsorial psalm are chosen to connect with the Gospel of the day, it occasionally happens that the second reading touches on the same theme. The mercy of God to sinners features in each text this Sunday.

In the first reading (Exodus 32:7-11.13-14), when the Israelites worshipped a calf of molten metal, Moses pleaded with God not to blaze in anger against them, and God in mercy relented.

In the second reading (1 Tim. 1:12-17), Paul recalls his own conversion from being a persecutor of Christians: "Mercy was shown me...and the grace of Our Lord filled me with faith and with the love that is in Christ. Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Seven years ago, Pope Francis introduced the Jubilee of Mercy: "Jesus Christ is the face of God's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him."

“In response, Luke gathered together three parables about the celebration when something that had been lost is found”

The Gospel today (Luke: 15:1-32) sets before our eyes this living face of mercy. "The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and scribes complained. 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'" The name, Pharisee, meant the separated one. They stayed apart from sinners, proclaiming condemnation rather than offering mercy and hope.

In response, Luke gathered together three parables about the celebration when something that had been lost is found. A caring shepherd finds a straying sheep so he calls his friends to celebrate. Luke, the evangelist most sensitive to the role of women, follows with the story of the woman who finds a lost silver coin. She too calls for a celebration. Then we get the most famous of the Lord's parables, the joy of the father hugging back his lost son is contrasted with the negativity of the elder son who refused

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



to share in the party and coldly referred to his brother as "this son of yours".

On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, we already reflected on the Prodigal Son. Today we focus on the importance of one in each of the three parables, one sheep, one coin, one lost son.

One is important to God. The love of God is intensely personal and individual. A man with a hundred sheep is concerned when one has strayed away. A woman with ten silver coins searches diligently when one is lost. There is more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over 99 virtuous people who have no need of repentance. A man with two sons loses the younger one to his youthful wildness. Daily he shields his ageing eyes which scan the horizon for that one face. Many travellers pass that way and they exchange pleasantries. But there is one for whom his heart is waiting.

As Isaiah wrote, "I have carved you on the palm of my hand". One name is precious to God: "I have called you by your name, you are mine."

So different is the law of the jungle built into society today. It's weakest to the wall and survival of the strongest. Multinational corporations manipulate thousands of employees and will change location with little sympathy for the individual. In the cruel world of competition, compassion is regarded as a weakness: its only function is to cover up a mistake.

Law of the jungle

In contrast to the law of the jungle, the law of Jesus draws attention to the one, to the littlest one. "In so far as you did this to one of the least brothers of mine, you did it to me." Judgement itself is based on our attitude to the one, the least one. The kingdom won by Jesus on Calvary is promised that very day to one...and he, a condemned criminal. In the one-to-one dialogue which took place there, the repentant thief did not address Jesus with any title such as Lord, but called him by his name as all are equal in the poverty of suffering and death.

The first lesson to draw is that I am important in God's eyes. Jesus is concerned about one sinner: so much so that the return of one is an occa-



The Return of the Prodigal Son by 17th Century Dutch master Jan Steen is at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Photo: National Gallery of Art.

sion for rejoicing in heaven! If I were the only sinner in the world, Jesus would have done all he did for my sake alone. I am that important to God. Many people fight shy of intimacy with God... keep him at a respectful distance! No – he loves me – he wants to hear the sound of my prayer, the beat of my heart. Imagine, God wanting me!

The second lesson follows naturally. What I receive from God I should pass on to others. Charity begins with the people you meet every day. It can be safe and

undemanding when one talks compassionately about the plight of people thousands of miles away. But what of the one to whom I owe an apology...the one about whom my talk is always critical...or the one I have frozen out of my affections? That one person is precious in God's eyes. If I claim to be serious about God, then I must strive to partake in God's special love for each individual.

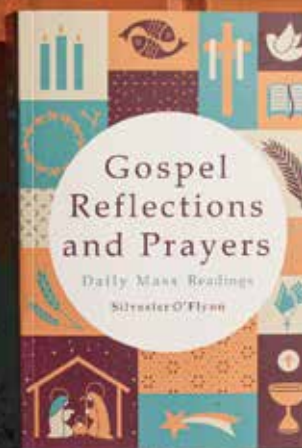
Brother, sister, one is important to God: every single one.

Prayer

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger and rich with mercy. Open up my heart to enjoy your love for me. And may your grace enable me to pass on your love to everyone I meet.

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Nothing is as important as forgiveness. It is the key to happiness and the most important spiritual imperative in our lives. We need to forgive, to make peace with the hurts and injustices we have suffered so as not to die angry and bitter. Before we die, we need to forgive - others, ourselves, and God, for what happened to us in this life.

But, that isn't easy to do; indeed, sometimes it is impossible to do. That needs to be said because today there is a lot of well-intended literature around, in every kind of circle, which gives the impression that forgiveness is simply a question of willing it and moving on. Let it go and move on!

“When we are slighted by a colleague at a meeting, we need a little time to sulk about that injustice”

It doesn't work that way, as we all know. Wounds to the soul take time, a long time, to heal, and the process is excruciatingly slow, something that cannot be rushed. Indeed, the trauma from an emotional wound often affects our physical health. Healing takes time.

Healing

In looking at the question of healing and forgiveness, we can get a long-neglected, valuable insight from the Jewish and Christian spirituality of the Sabbath. Keeping the



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Sabbath holy isn't just about honoring a certain day of the week; it's also a formula for forgiveness. Here's how it works.

The theology and spirituality of Sabbath teach us that God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh day, the Sabbath. Moreover, not only did God rest on the Sabbath, God declared this a day of rest for everyone forever, and with that God set up a certain rhythm for our lives. That rhythm is supposed to work this way:

- We work for six days, then rest for one day.
- We work for seven years, then rest for one year (a sabbatical).
- We work for seven times seven years, 49 years, then have a jubilee where the world itself goes on sabbatical.
- We work for a lifetime, then

enjoy an eternity of sabbatical.

Now, that rhythm is also intended as the rhythm for how we move towards forgiveness:

- We can hold a mini-grudge of seven days, but then we need to give it up.
 - We can hold a major grudge for seven years, but then we need to give it up. (The “statute of limitations” is based on this.)
 - We can hold a massive soul-searing wound for 49 years, but then we need to give it up.
 - We can hold a massive soul-shattering wound until our deathbed, but then we need to give it up.
- This highlights something which is too often absent in therapeutic and spiritual circles today, namely, that we need time to be able to forgive, and that the length of time needed is contingent upon the depth of the hurt. Thus, for example:

“Wounds of this kind radically disempower us, particularly towards the person who did this to us, making it very difficult for us to forgive”

- When we are slighted by a colleague at a meeting, we need a little time to sulk about that injustice, but normally a few days can help put it into perspective and enable us to let it go.

“The ability to forgive is more contingent upon grace than upon willpower”

- When we are coldly terminated at a job by an unfair employer, seven days or seven weeks will often not be enough time for us to put this into a larger perspective, to let it go, and to forgive. Seven years is a more realistic timeframe. (Note the “statute of limitations” vis-a-vis this biblical insight.)
- There are traumas we suffer which leave far deeper wounds than those left by an employer who treated us unfairly. There are wounds we suffer from abuse, neglect, and years of injustice that need more than seven years to process. It may take 49 years, half a century, to make peace with the fact that we were bullied as children or were emotionally or sexu-

ally abused in our youth.

- There are wounds so deep and traumatic that it is only on our deathbeds that we can make peace with the fact that they happened to us, let them go, and forgive the person or persons responsible for them.
- Finally, there can be wounds that are too deep, too disempowering, and too painful to ever process in this life. For them, thankfully we have the merciful healing embrace of God after death.

Forgive

The ability to forgive is more contingent upon grace than upon willpower. To err is human, but to forgive is divine. This little slogan contains a deeper truth than is immediately evident. What makes forgiveness so difficult, existentially impossible at times, is not primarily that our egos are bruised and wounded. Rather, the real difficulty is that a wound to the soul works the same as a wound to the body; it strips us of our strength.

This is particularly true for those soul-searing and soul-shattering traumas that take 49 years or a lifetime to heal, or sometimes can never be healed in this lifetime. Wounds of this kind radically disempower us, particularly towards the person who did this to us, making it very difficult for us to forgive.

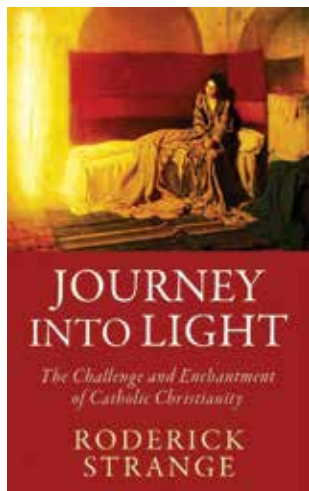
We need a spirituality of Sabbath to help us.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Follow the Church's year to Christian enlightenment



Journey into Light: The Challenge and Enchantment of Catholic Christianity
by Roderick Strange
(Hodder & Stoughton,
£10.99/€12.99 pb)

Peter Costello

A concern of some parents' over the last decades is a feeling that somehow schools do not seem to impart religion, by which they mean Catholic culture, to their children in quite the way it was once done when they and their parents were at school.

Programmes to teach religion are always heavily criticised, yet most parents recognise that they are incapable of doing the same task. Their own education, much as they would like to see it restored, seems to have ill prepared them for the task of "handing on the Faith". The theology and the social views of the Church today have in any case deepened and become more nuanced since the 1950s, or even the 1970s!

Roderick Strange's book has already been noticed in these pages in a general way. Here I want to emphasise its great usefulness to young people and their parents in the context of a return to school.

Solution

This book may well provide both parents and teachers with a solution. Young students rightly feel that what they are taught is not quite what one would need to really understand either the nature of religion itself, or the particular character of modern Catholicism.

This book is not intended to be a school book, and it was not written by Roderick Strange for that purpose. But it would serve better than those long, often impenetrable pages of Frank Sheed's

Theology and Sanity, who so often referred to a "real world" that seemed to bear little resemblance to the real world of the late 20th century.

The appeal of this book to young adults lies simply in the fact that it is *not* a school book. It is a book for adults. And nothing appeals to people in their teens more than reading books intended for adults rather than written for that strange publishers' category of "young adults". Reading adult books – Hemingway at 14 for instance – is a large part of the process of growing up.

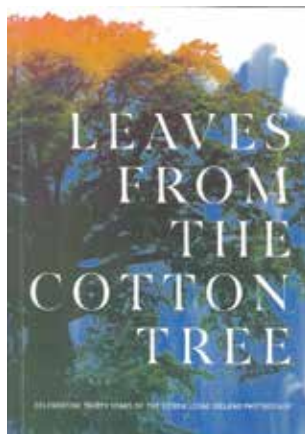
Programmes to teach religion are always heavily criticised, yet most parents recognise that they are incapable of doing the same task"

Not that Roderick Strange is not himself a teacher. He is an authority on Newman's theology, and lectures at St Mary's University in Twickenham as professor of theology. In contrast to Sheed, his wish is to present "the challenge and enchantment of Catholic Christianity". As this suggests he does actually live in the real world, but also apprehends those other worlds of the spirit and where they can lead individuals.

The material is arranged around the liturgical year so he is able to explore and illuminate the life and teachings of Jesus, and how those teachings, so immediately accessible to all in the gospels, created Christianity.

This is an approachable and accessible book. As I see it, in these weeks of "back to school", this is a book which parents or even students themselves can buy and read, so beginning their own explorations of that world of enchantment that Strange himself fully entered into through the writings of St John Henry Newman. This book could become a central text in many young and growing lives.

(But for others I should add that *Theology and Sanity* by Frank Sheed remains in print from Ignatius Press in America, whose books are distributed in Ireland in a meagre way by Veritas.)



Leaves from the Cotton Tree, Celebrating Thirty Years of the Sierra Leone Ireland Partnership, with a foreword by Claire Buckley, Ambassador of Ireland to Sierra Leone, edited by Joseph Bockarie and seven others (SLIP, Kilt ale, Dunsany, Co. Meath, €15.00 + \$5.00 p+p; email martindillon@slip.ie for payment details.)

Peter Costello

The cotton tree of the title stands in the centre of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, on the coast of West Africa, on what was once called "the Whiteman's grave" because of the tropical diseases rife there which made off with countless traders.

The tree is said to be hundreds of years old, to have been there even when the British came at the end of the 18th Century. It still flourishes after all those years, and can be seen as a sort of symbol of the history of Sierra Leone itself, a country founded for freed British slaves. Though a great tree grows and changes all the time, it remains the same tree at its core.

Development

This is a book which will interest anyone at all

concerned with the development of modern Africa. Sierra Leone was much more important in the last two centuries than it is today, as it was almost the first base the British had on the bight of Africa. But Africa, which might once have seemed unchanging, is now known to be a place of continuing change.

Graham Greene, the novelist, was based there as a British intelligence officer keeping an eye on Vichy controlled French Guinea. That was in 1942 and it later gave rise to his novel *The Heart of the Matter* (1948).

"This is a book which will interest anyone at all concerned with the development of modern Africa"

He came back to Freetown for Christmas 1967 and was astonished at the change. The population had grown. The shabby little house he had once lived in was now brightly painted, and the garden around it, then filled with weeds, was now beautifully laid out with flowers and shrubs. The rickety hotels of the old days had been replaced by shining modern ones. The streets were filled with cars, and crowded with people.

One of the 37 contributors to this book, Frank Roden, who went to Sierra Leone to teach in 1967, went back there in 2016, and like Greene was astounded by the changes, though in between times there had been a civil war and viral epidemic.

As one reads, various aspects of Sierra Leone passing through these great changes come before our eyes. All the contributors

wish the country well and want to see it thrive. As it improves the people may look around at their immediate neighbours, such as Guinea or Nigeria, and see that the region as a whole remains deeply troubled.

Overall this book provides a panorama of Irish involvement in various aspects of this ever changing Sierra Leone. But it was a task that had to reconcile both the new ways with the old traditions. Africa today is largely young and urban. Zaire, for instance, now the largest city in Africa and growing fast, was a riverbank muddle of huts in the 1890s. This vitality is the great contrast with the old colonial Africa and with the early years of independence.

Striking

There is something striking, or at least of great interest, in every article. But it is the details that strike one and remain in one's memory. Sr Hilary Lyons, for instance, recalls an incident from 1997.

Called across to the clinic in Cameroon, where she was then serving, she arrived by the patient's bedside to find a hen sitting on her head, a traditional healer also by the bedside. Her account of how she saw the rituals of the healer that night as a reconciliation of development and tradition is an insightful one.

Her acceptance of the healer ran counter to what others felt was Church teaching, but she saw it all from a different angle. "All God made is sacred. According to Thomas Berry and other theologians nothing is profane." The hen was an important symbol.

Helen Fallon, now at the library in Maynooth, notes the tremendous improvement in library access. Back in 1991 it was hard for local graduates to do research and even harder to submit their



research papers to journals in Europe and North America. Now thanks to international support that has greatly improved. Africa's own ancient and medieval heritage is now being investigated, completely altering perspectives on the past.

Witness

This is a book of witness statements to life and experience in Africa which ought to have a wide readership. This is not the Africa so often presented in our news media, nor is it Graham Greene's "sweet soup land", let alone "the Whiteman's grave".

In concert they all present a symphony of Africa, of the real Africa they have all come to love and admire.

Graham Greene's essay on returning to Sierra Leone in 1967 can be found at the end of his *Collected Essays* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969)

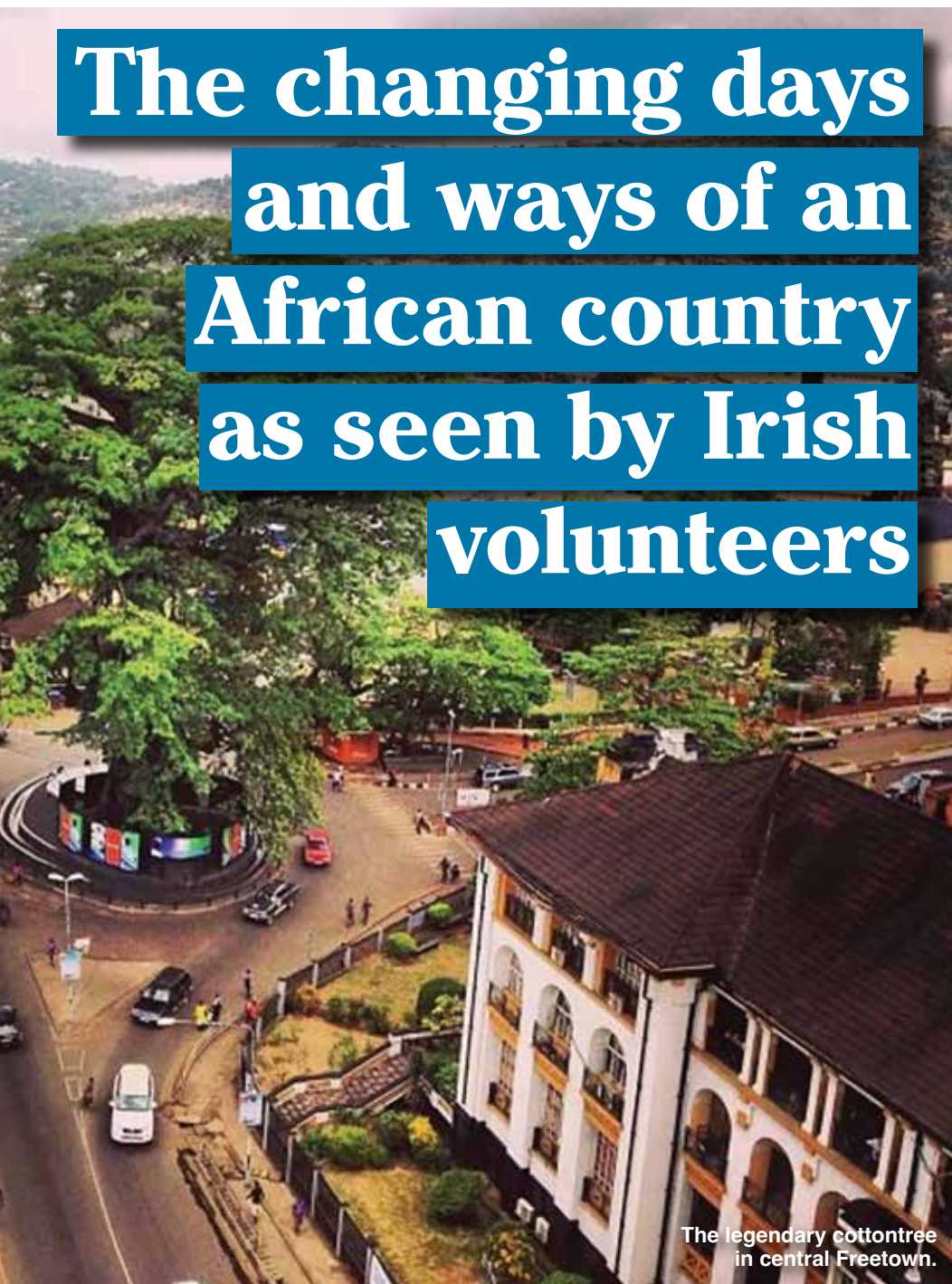
A street in Freetown in the early 20th century.



SIERRA LEONE — Freetown — Oxford street

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

The changing days and ways of an African country as seen by Irish volunteers

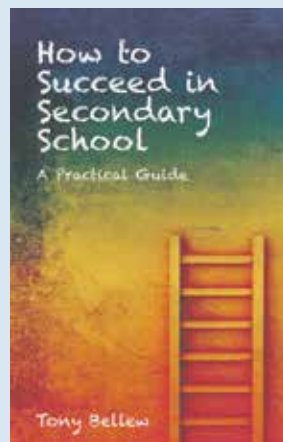


The legendary cottontree in central Freetown.



Freetown in the 1950s.

Back to school month: What do we really need from education?



How to Succeed in Secondary School: A Practical Guide

by Tony Bellow
(Orpen Press,
€15.00/£13.00pb)

Peter Costello

These first weeks of September, what with the anxieties of students of all ages about going back to school, the stress and strain on teachers, parents, and indeed families is very real. Their worries are not just economic, but also social and psychological, worries for the future of our young people.

I can foresee a great sale for Tony Bellow's book. He is an experienced teacher, but these days he runs a tutorial business, not for groups but for individuals too. From personal experience I am well aware of the tremendous benefits from sitting with a personal tutor; it really focuses the mind and improves not only concentration, but also retention.

However, the great call for these services suggests as least to me that schools, perhaps from excessive class size, are failing a good number of their regular students.

In his book he provides a scheme by which students can organise themselves for work all the way through the secondary years. And this is a most helpful plan, not just for students, but for their parents who have to support it. Education has changed so much since most parents passed through it that an explanation of the present day system is most welcome.

But this raises the question – it does not pose the question, that is quite a different thing, as doubtless Mr Bellow explains to his students – of what education is for, what should we get from it, and what in fact we do get from it.

Today it seems to be the general policy of education in Ireland to prepare young people for a career in technology or related to technology. This is where the jobs will be, we are told. Yet if there is one lesson to be

learned from the last 30 years or so, it is that technology changes all the time and often so rapidly that within a year or two much that is learned will be out of date and valueless.

(Many have become confused, failing to distinguish technology which alters all the time, from science which attempts to refine our knowledge of fixed facts as best it can, truths that never change.)

Rather, someone like this reviewer would feel that the purpose of education is not to provide the job training that firms like Google should provide from their own resources for their own staff.

“In his book he provides a scheme by which students can organise themselves for work”

What society needs is rather a system that educates people to be better people, finer citizens and attentive members of their communities. This was the ideal of the ancient cultures, or the classical cultures and the middle ages and most cultures of the world, even the pre-technological ones. We all want better citizens and kinder people. Such humanistic ideals, as expounded by Newman, were the commonplaces of classical and medieval and early modern teaching, but are no longer called for.

The classics have been abandoned and with them the proper manner of debate. Instead of debates leaving us

open to the possibility of changing our minds through the quality of another's arguments, “debate” has come merely to mean a way of excoriating people that we dislike, but do not know or want to listen to, through social media. No wonder we read constantly this year that social media, even telephones, are being curtailed or even abandoned by young people. Communicating rapidly does not mean communicating well.

What parents should demand is a return to older norms. For many rational minded Catholics that means restrictions on teaching, whereas Newman in his numerous writing on education called for a liberal education, a way to knowledge through the widest range of reading possible, as the proper way forward. Though he used liberal in the original meaning of that word, based on the humanities, and not on the meaning as distorted by economists, politicians and commentators.

This is the style of education we need, but alas it is not the education we get.

However, teachers are already beginning to say that the styles of education we have today may meet the needs of high tech, but it does not meet the real needs of society as a whole. We all know what should be done. We will have to see that it comes about.

Perhaps then focused teachers like Mr Bellow can provide all children with personal tutors!

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Image: Roge Wavio (29) of Kalacha, Marsabit, Kenya holds produce she has grown with support from Concern. Photographer: Jennifer Nolan / Concern Worldwide

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Email Clare Martin at clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie



Your heart for the homeless

Merchants Quay Ireland reaches out with kindness to people living on our streets, sleeping in doorways, suffering and alone.

Your legacy, of any amount, can enfold the most vulnerable and lonely in wrap-around supports. You may wish to keep the details confidential. But we want to give you this little wooden keepsake, made by a client, for you.

This is your heart for the homeless and those on the road to recovery.

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Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

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

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

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

www.mscmissions.ie

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

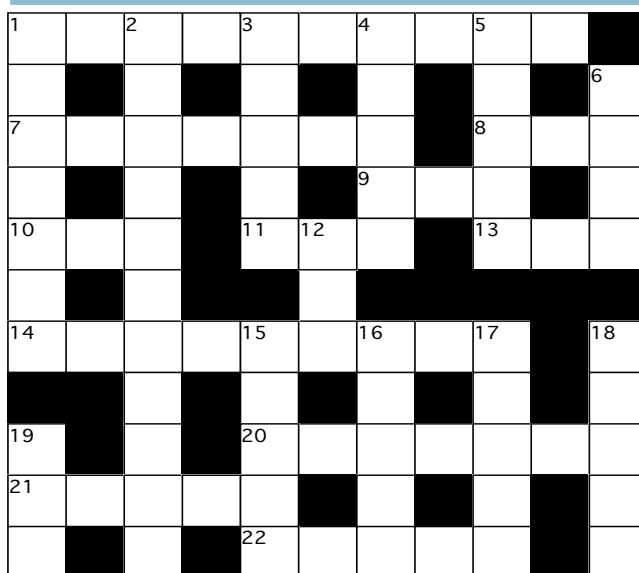
Trócaire

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

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

Crossword Junior

Gordius 449



Across

- 1 This close friend of Harry Potter's has red hair (3,7)
- 7 Cards and _____ come in the post (7)
- 8 Sprint (3)
- 9 Take part in a play (3)
- 10 Black substance poured onto the road (3)
- 11 You have one when your skin turns brown (3)
- 13 You wear it on your head (3)
- 14 Police officer who does not wear a uniform (9)
- 20 Where you can look at paintings and other works of art (7)
- 21 You might feel someone's wrist to take this, and check their heart is beating properly (5)
- 22 Tale (5)

Down

- 1 'We're _____, we're part of the same family' (7)
- 2 You might find leaves and pictures of creatures on this piece of classroom furniture (6,5)
- 3 Vote into power (5)
- 4 A girl with this name might be called Sue for short (5)
- 5 Our planet (5)
- 6 Make something with needles and wool (4)
- 12 Insect which lives in a colony (3)
- 15 Animals may be locked up in them (5)
- 16 House made of snow and ice (5)
- 17 Someone you fight against in a war (5)
- 18 This river flows through Derry (5)
- 19 Secret agent (3)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 1

GORDIUS NO. 574

Across – 1 Bob 3 Convalesces 8 Locket 9 Terrapin 11 Liege 13 Brash 15 Trapeze 16 Overdue 20 Twain 21 Slang 23 Libra 24 Oratorio 25 Mitten 26 Fortnightly 27 Cod

Down – 1 Bell-bottoms 2 Bacteria 3 Czech 4 Veteran 5 Errol 6 Copper beech 7 Sin 12 Entertained 13 Bizet 14 Haven 17 Diabetic 18 Van Gogh 19 Bazaar 22 Groan 23 Laity 24 Off

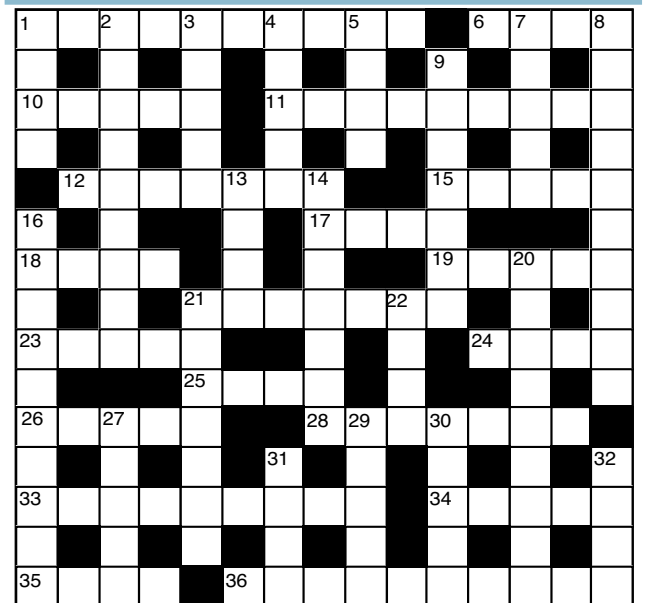
CHILDREN'S No. 448

Across – 1 Republic 6 Air 7 Dangerous 8 Key 12 Trampoline 14 Rudder 16 Girl 17 Ape 18 Flying 19 Sews 20 Eat

Down – 1 Radiator 2 Panama 3 Blew 4 Idol 5 Army 6 Ask 9 Eyebrows 10 Courage 11 Biggest 13 Madrid 15 Ugly

Crossword

Gordius 575



Across

- 1 Coffee with steamed milk (10)
- 6 Availed of (4)
- 10 Sensational in a melodramatic way (5)
- 11 Eucharist celebrated on Saturday evening (5,4)
- 12 Marriage ceremony (7)
- 15 Colloquial name for a drink of tea (5)
- 17 & 27d She would not give up her seat on the bus, or pass ark around (4,5)
- 18 The snowman from 'Frozen' has upset the foal (4)
- 19 Word describing a dog with hydrophobia (5)
- 21 Ancient Egyptian structure (7)
- 23 Cruise ship (5)
- 24 The king of the birds, according to legend (4)
- 25 Word found on Irish stamps (4)
- 26 Aspired (5)
- 28 Motorists navigate with this chart (7)
- 33 Native bird, Crex crex (9)
- 34 Mediterranean island, popular with holidaymakers (5)
- 35 Mediocre (2-2)
- 36 Having seven-sides (10)

Down

- 1 Serene, untroubled (4)
- 2 Fine china (9)
- 3 Negated, counteracted (5)
- 4 Ulster county (5)
- 5 Near (4)
- 7 The skin that covers the skull (5)
- 8 Throwing away (10)
- 9 Notice carried on a picket line (7)
- 13 Very black or dark, like writing-fluid (4)
- 14 Larger (7)
- 16 Colourful flowers of the genus Alcea (10)
- 20 Uncivilised person, or a member of a famous rugby team (9)
- 21 Foretell (7)
- 22 American State, capital Des Moines (4)
- 27 See 17 across
- 29 Obvious (5)
- 30 Performing (5)
- 31 Step (4)
- 32 Don't succeed (4)

Sudoku Corner

449

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 448

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

Last week's Hard 448

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Church gatekeepers did not suppress fresh synod voices

FOR ALMOST 60 YEARS a British journalist, Alistair Cooke had a weekly show on BBC Radio 4 called *Letter from America* looking at various topics from an American perspective. I feel a little like that this month as I'm writing this piece while sitting in a café just across the street from the White House. I'm here to visit friends from my student days in Washington back in the early 1990s. In the café I see the latest edition of *America*, a Catholic monthly magazine from the Jesuit community in the US. Leafing through the magazine I come across an article entitled, "Ireland's synod report reveals a country that is largely 'suspicious' and 'intolerant' of its Catholic inheritance".

Reflection

The article is a reflection on the recently published synthesis document bringing together the responses of the Irish people to the synodal listening process which took place in every diocese during Lent of this year. The author, Fr Gerry O'Hanlon SJ references many of the themes which emerged in the refreshingly unfiltered and honest synthesis

of the views of thousands of Irish Catholics about their Church at this time. I might suggest here that if you have not read the synthesis document try and find it on your diocesan website.

As I'm delving into both my coffee and the article, I'm a little intrigued that *America's* leading Catholic magazine is interested enough to talk about the state of the Church in Ireland and what its own members are saying about their experience and their hopes for the future. Then suddenly I'm distracted by a breaking news story on the TV above my head, Mikhail Gorbachev

has died in Russia aged 91. I think back to my student days in this city and the excitement of Gorbachev's visits to that big white building I'm now looking out at. Those visits were historic because they were part of a journey which brought the Cold War to an end. Gorbachev's whole approach to change and renewal in his own society was built on two words: *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. *Glasnost* basically meant a greater openness to new ways of thinking and communication. *Perestroika* was about restructuring both the economy and society, changing the way things

are done and how decisions are made and who makes them.

Ringin

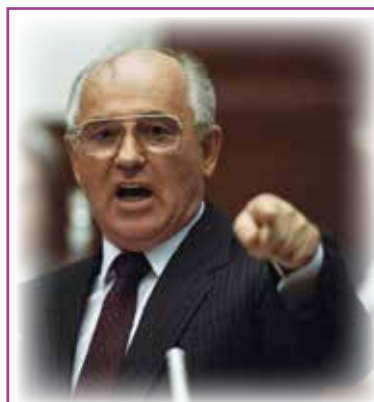
Mr Gorbachev's two words were ringing in my ear as I go back to the article about the Church in Ireland, the state it is in and how it may need to change. I thought of a speech Gorbachev made back in the late 1980's where he said: "Those who attempt to suppress the fresh voice, the just voice, according to old standards and attitudes, need to get out of the way".

Thankfully, the 'gatekeepers' of the Church in Ireland did not attempt to suppress the fresh

voice, the just voice, the honest or the faithful voice during the initial listening phase of the synodal journey. Fr Gerry O'Hanlon's article in *America* leaves no doubt about the challenges that lie ahead but he finishes on a hopeful note: "However the momentum and hope generated by the synodal pathway to date give confidence that the whispers of the Spirit are being attended to in Ireland..."

Taking responsibility

A husband and wife are at Mass. During his homily the priest notices that the husband has fallen asleep and says to the wife, "Wake your husband up!" The wife answers, "You're the one who made him fall asleep, you wake him up!"



The late Mikhail Gorbachev.

God had the last word

Mikhail Gorbachev's funeral took place in the grand Pillar Hall of the old Soviet House of Unions where many of his predecessors were also honoured in death including Leonid Brezhnev. As Vice President, George Bush Senior represented the US at the funeral of Brezhnev in 1982. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid,

Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband.



FOOD IS NEEDED BY MANY FAMILIES IN MONGOLIA

Sr Anne Waturu works for Caritas in Mongolia and wishes to improve food security and create sustainable livelihoods for those struggling to heat their homes in winter, as well as to improve the nutrition and living standards of all concerned.

She tells The Little Way Association: "We work in an area of the capital where the people live in gers, the traditional tents of Mongolia. A very large number of families in Ulaanbaatar have very little food and other needs, with children under the age of five the worst affected, suffering stunting in height and muscle wastage. The funds we hope you will send us will enable us to provide food for the poorest of the poor who are really struggling to survive and then the little money earned from menial jobs can be used for fuel and other basic needs such as clothing, hygiene materials and education."



"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul."
~ St Therese

WELLS NEEDED

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The Little Way Association will send your gift, without deduction, to the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for this much-needed Home for the abandoned elderly in Peru.

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