

The Irish Catholic

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Set prisoners free to mark Pope's arrival

Irish prisoners should be given amnesty for papal visit

Colm Fitzpatrick

Hundreds of unfairly-incarcerated prisoners across Ireland should be released to mark the Pope's visit to the country this month, Jesuit campaigner Fr Peter McVerry has said.

The prominent priest said that there are a "significant number" of people in prison who are there for relatively minor offences, including homeless people who would be released "in the morning" if they had an address.

"There are a lot of prisoners who are in for two months, three months and four months, on public order offences, you know drunk and disorderly and they should have been dealt with by non-custodial sentences anyway," he said.

Fr McVerry added that with around 4,000 people currently imprisoned, the State could "easily release several

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Hear it on the grape-Vine



"And equally I believe in the God that loves everyone whose first concern is to let us know that he loves us. He knows that we're human beings and that nobody's perfect." See Pages 16 & 17 for interview with comedian Tim Vine.

Papal plague cautions 'overplayed', expert says

Greg Daly

Warnings that worshippers at the closing Mass for the World Meeting of Families run a risk of contracting infectious diseases have been overstated, a leading doctor has said.

Dr Jack Lambert, consultant in infectious diseases in Dublin's Mater Hospital, told RTÉ Radio it was "very unlikely" that pilgrims to the August 26 Mass in the Phoenix Park would catch any infectious illness.

He was responding to claims from the HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre that mass gatherings of this nature pose "unique health risks to attendees" and that pilgrims should ensure they are up to date on vaccinations, particularly for measles.

Noting how there is a small number of cases of measles in Ireland every year, Dr Lambert said the odds of people with measles interacting with non-vaccinated pilgrims at

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DAVID QUINN

Censoring the Church's view on sex and marriage

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BELFAST'S HEROIC NUNS

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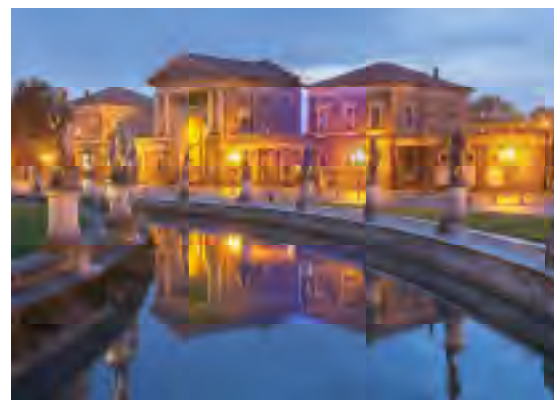
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FR RON ROLHEISER

Why I believe in God

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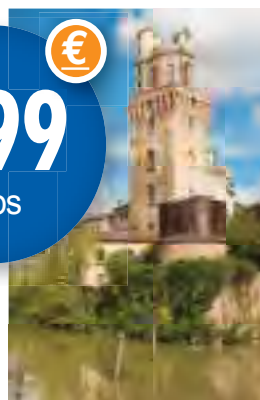


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Stop political 'cheap shots' against Pope of the people

About six months before Benedict XVI was due to visit Britain in 2010, a rather unfortunate memo from the foreign office was obtained by *The Sunday Telegraph* newspaper. The fruit of a brainstorming session amongst officials, the paper was called 'The ideal visit would see...' and included suggestions that the Pope's visit could be marked by the launch of 'Benedict condoms' and that the Pontiff could be invited to open an abortion clinic and bless a same-sex marriage during his State visit.

A rather red-faced Prime Minister David Cameron hastily apologised over what the government described as a "foolish" document and UK Ambassador to the Vatican Francis Campbell was dispatched to the Apostolic Palace to mend fences.

The Vatican was entirely gracious about the incident and in turn the British government threw its full weight behind the visit seeing it as a remarkable opportunity to welcome arguably the most-recognised moral leader in the world.

Negative courage

Despite negative media coverage in the run-up to the trip, Britons by and large agreed. The British Establishment saw the Benedict visit as an opportunity to work closely with the Vatican on issues of mutual concern such as disarmament, climate change, human development, the Northern Irish peace process and the role of faith in public discourse.

Mr Cameron later described the visit as an "incredibly moving four days".

"Faith is part of the fabric of our country. It always has been and it always will be. As you, your Holiness,



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

have said, faith is not a problem for legislators to solve but rather a vital part of our national conversation – and we are proud of that," Mr Cameron said.

"You have really challenged the whole country to sit up and think, and that can only be a good thing," he added.

What, I wonder, will be Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's parting words to Pope Francis when he leaves Ireland? Will Mr Varadkar acknowledge that Francis has made him sit up and think? The omens are not promising. At a recent press briefing, Mr Varadkar vowed to confront the Pope about the Church's teaching on homosexuality.

“It's disappointing that our leaders can't seize the opportunity and try to work hand-in-hand with a real global moral crusader”

Evidently Francis will have a lot to listen to. Children's Minister Katherine Zappone has pledged she'll challenge the Pope on the ordination of women while culture minister Josepha Madigan says she'll tell Francis that celibacy should be optional.

In my 16 years writing about the Church and the Vatican – five of them spent in Rome and accompanying the Pope on overseas trips – I can't think of a Papal visit that has been so marked by an atmosphere where

politicians think it is their right and duty to challenge the Pope on what are internal matters for the Church.

The Pope – who doesn't speak English – will likely listen politely to what the politicians say to him in Dublin Castle. He doesn't much care for politicians or their ideas about what the Church should teach its own members. He'll be keen on getting out of the event as quickly as possible and spending time with ordinary people – what he has often described as "God's holy faithful people".

It's a pity that Irish politicians don't have the wisdom and breadth of vision that their British counterparts sometimes have. It's a pity too that they seem determined to use the Papal visit as an opportunity to take cheap shots against the Church and score points against one of the most charismatic and popular men in the world.

As a small country that aspires to global reach, it's disappointing that our leaders can't seize the opportunity and try to work hand-in-hand with a real global moral crusader like Pope Francis on issues we claim to be concerned about as a State like climate change and tackling global inequality.

Politicians should get over their negative stereotypes, stop playing to the gallery and realise that an ally like Pope Francis is more important than whipping up a mob on Twitter or gaining a few more likes on Facebook.

Correction

In the August 2, 2018 edition of *The Irish Catholic* it was wrongly stated in two articles that Dr Vincent Twomey SVD is the current Editor of the *Irish Theological Quarterly*. The articles should have read that Dr Twomey is a former Editor of the *ITQ*. The current Editor is Prof. Declan Marmion.

Bishop appeals for pilgrims to use public transport



Bishop Fintan Monahan blessing the road to Dublin ahead of the papal visit.

Pilgrims travelling to see Pope Francis in the Phoenix Park this month should be careful travelling to and from the event and make use of public transport when possible, Killaloe's bishop has said.

Bishop Fintan Monahan said that on August 26, around 500,000 people are due to be in Dublin together for the World Meeting of Families and that using public transport will be a much safer and proficient option than travelling by car.

"It will be a major logistical operation to ensure everyone gets in and out in a reasonable timeframe. Already WMOF organisers have appealed to pilgrims to use public transport as much as possible to avoid congestion", he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Dr Monahan added that "great credit" should be given to city authorities who have offered free city transport for the day, the Gardaí, and the "legion of volunteers" who are helping with the occasion.

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Campaigners urge Maria Steen to run for President

Chai Brady

A campaign to get *The Irish Catholic* columnist Maria Steen to throw her hat into the ring and run for President is gaining momentum online.

While the petition calling for the respected commentator to run for president has reached over 1,250 signatures, the flattering gesture may fall flat according to trusted sources.

The page entitled 'Maria Steen for President of Ireland' has received a huge response with fans describing Mrs Steen as "educated and compassionate" and having "all the qualities needed to represent our country".

There's also a sentiment that she would be a voice for the hundreds of thousands of disenfranchised pro-life voters disappointed after the Eighth Amendment was repealed by a landslide vote last May.

Articulate

The petition states: "I believe you are a strong, intelligent and articulate woman with exemplary morals and values."

"Over the past year and during the recent referendum, I witnessed you work extremely hard as you dedicated your time and energy to protect and actually saving countless lives. You have earned my respect and I am certain the respect of many Irish citizens."



Maria Steen speaks at *The Irish Catholic* conference in April this year. Photo: Chai Brady

It adds that Mrs Steen has demonstrated "time and time again" that she is not afraid to speak out for the most vulnerable.

With the petition's signature goal set at 1,500, it is most likely it has reached its target by the time this paper has gone to print – or shortly after.

However, sources close to Mrs Steen say it's most likely

a no go. Her campaign would have to receive support from 20 Oireachtas members or secure backing from four local authorities before she could run to be the president – a possibly very time consuming venture.

There are already several prospective candidates who have put their names forward to contest Michael D. Higgins for the presidency.

Irish prisoners should be given amnesty for papal visit

» **Continued from Page 1** hundred prisoners" in the morning who are no threat to anybody, and particularly women who are usually jailed for minor offenses.

An amnesty for prisoners was given to celebrate the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979. 78 prisoners deemed unlikely to be dangerous to the public and who were due for release by the end of the year were released on October 1, just as the then Pontiff left Ireland.

Support

Alongside his support for a similar amnesty to celebrate the World Meeting of Families, Fr McVerry said it would be "nice" if Francis visited a

prison and that it was a "pity" there are no official plans for him to do so, given that "it would have meant a lot to prisoners".

Echoing these sentiments, former chief prison chaplain Fr Fergal MacDonagh, said that he would also approve of an amnesty as many prisoners may have received unfair sentences or have already suitably reformed.

"In general, I would always be in favour of looking again at sentences people have received, how they're doing in prison, how are they cooperating with various treatment programmes or how they're dealing with their behaviour, and rewarding it, we should be doing that..." he said.

The Dublin-based priest added that Pope Francis has been instrumental in promoting the rights of prisoners, especially given last week's change of Church teaching to focus on the abolition of the death penalty. "It's great for prisoners all over the world and even countries that don't have the death penalty. It's important. It says something about that dignity of human beings that we hold in custody," Fr MacDonagh said.

Although it is unlikely that Pope Francis will speak directly about prisoners, Fr McVerry said the Pontiff may talk about the dignity of people which isn't lost "just because you commit an offence".

DUP leader's refusal of papal invite would look 'small minded'

Colm Fitzpatrick

A failure of DUP leader Arlene Foster to see Pope Francis later this month would promote negative images of unionism as well as enhance "fear and smallness of mind", a prominent Protestant minister has said.

Dr Ken Newell, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who played a significant role in the peace process, said that because of Arlene Foster's position as First Minister, attending the papal event would be "making a gesture that Northern Ireland wants to be in a different than it has been".

"We want the future where everyone is respected – not just freedom – but there's parity of esteem, respect and a desire to engage with each other. I would be totally in favour of it," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

The minister's comments come after the Taoiseach's department revealed plans to invite the leaders of all local political parties to the huge Mass in Phoenix Park on August 26.

Dr Newell added that politicians are "deeply concerned" about family issues, including how they're being treated, excluded and mistreated, and Ms Foster must live up to this expectation.

"So, promoting healthy family life, promoting positive values in relation to the family, trying to enable people to get the best out of their family life and really caring for and valuing each other probably would be very central to any politician worth their salt."

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'Ignored' teaching needs fresh witness, bishop urges

Staff reporter

The principles of *Humanae Vitae*, Blessed Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on the regulation of birth, have been "ignored for too long", Elphin's Bishop Kevin Doran has said, with the Church needing to present them "in a fresh way, in contemporary language and in an appropriate context".

Opening a Nazareth Family Institute-organised conference in Dublin to mark the 50th anniversary of the controversial encyclical which Pope Francis has described as "prophetic", Dr Doran said while there was "undoubtedly" a place for appropriate presentation of the Church's teaching on human sexuality in Catholic schools, he was wary of overloading the school curriculum.

"The people who have the most practical experience of living the challenge are Christian parents and I do

believe that we need to find ways of bringing this message to them, both for themselves and so that they can serve it with their children," he said.

Noting that while most people associate *Humanae Vitae* with the condemnation of artificial contraception, Dr Doran said the encyclical is "much richer than that", and that "many people would be surprised to find that the word 'contraception' does not actually appear anywhere in the document".

Teaching

After Dr Doran's address, Steubenville, Ohio's Dr William Newton explained the essential teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, with Prof. Maria Fedoryka of Florida's Ave Maria University speaking about the centrality of love in the encyclical and Dr Marie Meaney of the International Theological Institute exploring reasons for avoiding artificial human reproduction.

Hanging Bishop Doran for what he didn't say

"Please just make it stop!" tweeted Health Minister Simon Harris on Sunday last in connection with a report on a conference on *Humanae Vitae* at the weekend. "Increasing access to & availability of contraception is and will remain public health policy. Religion plays an important role for many on an individual basis – but it will not determine health and social policy in our country any more. Please get that."

One might think from this that Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin had called for Church teaching on marriage and sexuality to become national public policy, but even reported excerpts from his speech never hinted at such a suggestion, and rightly so, because the bishop had said no such thing.

Rather, Dr Doran had said that sometimes in the past marriage was understood in a "lopsided" way, unduly focused on procreation and insufficiently focused on the love of a man and a woman,



Analysis
Greg Daly

but that today people tend too often to the opposite extreme. In *Humanae Vitae* Blessed Paul VI had mapped out a more integrated, and wholesome view of marriage, he said, with Pope Francis having in *Amoris Laetitia* repeated this vision.

Fidelity to this vision, he said, would require rediscovering the natural connection

between committed married love and the procreation and care of children, with married people understanding how natural cycles can be embraced both to achieve and to avoid pregnancy. Dr Doran described this as a "challenging way" of living sexuality in marriage, which can be enriching and fulfilling but which should not be misrepresented as somehow easy.

A failure to meet this challenge, the bishop argued, had had impacts on such diverse matters as promiscuity, infertility, artificial reproduction, same sex marriage, and threats to the dignity of women, with the last of these claims provoking heated debate online.

"It may seem to some that

contraception has liberated women insofar as it allows them to take control of their own fertility," he said. "But the fact that they are less likely to become pregnant also takes away from women one of the principle motives or freedoms for saying no to unwanted sex."

Tweeting about this, Minister Harris twice equated "unwanted sex" solely with rape, heedless of how the term has broader implications. In a 2016 study, for instance, 13% of 17- and 18-year-olds who had had sex said they had felt a little pressure to do so, with 4% saying they felt a lot of pressure, and 6% saying they feared losing their partner if they did not have sex with them.

A giant scarecrow version of the Pope won joint-first prize in the Annual Durrow Scarecrow Festival in Laois. It was created by a group of men based in Durrow.



Papal plague cautions 'overplayed'

» Continued from Page 1

the gathering of over 500,000 people were low. "It's a theoretical concern, but I think the risk has been overplayed tremendously for that particular infection," he said.

Dr Lambert dismissed suggestions that Irish people need to think of getting extra vaccinations ahead of the gathering.

"I think people are safe already," he said, stressing that "that's really not an issue in Ireland. I think people are well vaccinated and I think vaccine-preventable diseases are not going to spread rampantly at the papal visit, in my opinion."

Reassuring pilgrims that they need not fear shaking hands with other Massgoers during the Sign of Peace, Dr Lambert said: "I would encourage everyone to shake hands – I think the risk of transmitting any infection in this event is second to none."

Bishop calls for action on pornography

The Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty has highlighted the negative effects caused by pornography on young people, calling it the "greatest damage today".

He further expressed concern over the entire area of Relationships and Sexuality Education, saying that "RSE in schools will have to be revised to give people a stronger way of going into life".

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Householders asked to invite elderly to watch Pope's Mass

Chai Brady

Homeowners are being encouraged to invite elderly people who may have mobility or other issues to their houses to watch the papal Mass in a group setting.

Pope Francis' Mass in the Phoenix Park on August 26 is set to be an historic event for all involved, but with many elderly people unable to attend, an Irish charity is encouraging friends and family to come together to offer alternative options.

Anne Dempsey of Third Age says the 5km walk from public transport points and the standing – despite the rest stops, food and drinks stations, medical and toilets facilities that are organised –

would mean many wouldn't chance attending.

"Some people who are very staunch Catholics, weekly and even daily Massgoers, are not going because they say they wouldn't be able for it," she said.

"I have heard that friends are gathering and meeting in houses. It will probably generate a lot of conversations about the Church.

"This is also an opportunity for people to come together in an interesting and different kind of way.

"I would say to people to invite their (elderly) relatives and neighbours. It could be nice for people to sit around in a group setting and perhaps reminisce about the last papal visit."

The Irish Catholic

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Simon Harris was unreflective and superficial

Back in the 1960s, Clive James, novelist, memoirist, poet, TV performer and critic and all-round hilarious Australian lad, memorably said: "Of course I'm in favour of the [contraceptive] pill. It puts more crumpet on the market."

Clive didn't say "I'm in favour of the contraceptive pill because it could help maternal health"... or "...because it empowers women in the control of their fertility", advancing the more 'responsible' evaluations of this new pharmaceutical. He put it in a chuckling Ozzie laddish way: it made girls more available.

Did he not speak the truth? The pill did make women more 'available'. The seducer's argument was henceforth: "There isn't any reason now to say 'No!'"

Not that we should see male-female relations just as a Victorian *cliché* of "male seducer" and "female victim". Plenty of women availed of the newfound liberation to do just as Simone



Mary Kenny

de Beauvoir had urged women to do – live like men. And on the more positive side, the contraceptive pill did bring more focus onto the subject of female fertility, and doctors subsequently took gynaecology more seriously (until the advent of the pill, gynaecology had been regarded as having low status among medics).

Resonance

Yet Clive James's famous sally found much resonance with those who knew the field. There was "more crumpet on the market", and Hugh Hefner, the late founder of *Playboy*, followed up with the *aperçu* that henceforth "sex is about recreation, not procreation".

Are these analyses, coming straight from the guys who celebrated sexual liberation, so very different in substance from

much of what Bishop Doran was indicating in his recent speech marking the anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*? He was pointing out that women were now more often expected to be compliant to male demands.

“Did he not speak the truth? The pill did make women more ‘available’”

He might have mentioned the phenomenon of the *New Yorker* short story 'Cat Person', by Kristen Roupenian, which went global overnight because it chillingly illuminated contemporary relationships: a young woman doesn't particularly want to have sexual relations with a guy she is dating, but she goes along with it anyway because of a kind

of cultural inertia – it's what you're expected to do.

As a late friend of mine observed in the post-pill age about sleeping with a boyfriend: "It seems so disobliging not to." The notion that this was a hugely meaningful act had gone.

Small wonder that "sexual consent" classes are now required. Or that 70% of female students experience sexual harassment according to a study at Galway university. Indeed, almost every group feels under pressure – men and transgender people too complain of sexual harassment. There has to be a link with the notion that there are now no consequences to 'anything goes'.

Minister Simon Harris's response to Bishop Doran seemed to me unreflective and superficial, but then not a lot of politicians seem capable of more analytical thinking. Perhaps they should go off and have a word with Clive James.

(PS: 'Crumpet' was the printable version of Clive's celebrated quip.)



Silver lining in many ways

● Old gals who played hockey in their schooldays ("bully one, bully two...") will have been delighted by Ireland's women's hockey victory last weekend – a silver medal in the World Cup Final, as never before attained.

Historically, hockey was a minority sport in this country. It was, according to an older Connacht former sportsman, (half-jokingly) regarded as "hurling for Protestants".

That's to say, the game was, in the past, restricted to the North and the Dublin area, and seldom played outside of these regions.

The convent schools took it up as a healthy pursuit, but it was considered more genuinely Irish for girls to play camogie.

Hockey's status as an all-Ireland sport now makes it all the more diverse, surely.



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Baroness O'Loan rejects Simon Harris' conscientious objection definition

Chai Brady

Baroness Nuala O'Loan has refuted the claims of Ireland's Health Minister that conscientious objection is "for individuals, not institutions", and that he should consider the need to protect hospitals from coercion.

Before and since the Eighth Amendment was repealed the decision to opt out of providing abortion by way of conscientious objection, without repercussion, has been a prominent issue particularly among medical staff.

"Those who train to be obstetricians and gynaecologists do not train with a view to terminating the life of the unborn child other than in the most exceptional circumstances and departments

should not be forced to do this," Baroness O'Loan said.

If the State chooses to provide abortion in other circumstances, she said, it should provide them through those who are content to be employed to do so rather than "imposing an obligation on existing institutions".

The baroness quoted the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 1763 which states: "No person, hospital or institution shall be coerced, held liable or discriminated against in any manner because of a refusal to perform, accommodate, assist or submit to an abortion."

It is non-binding, she said, but it reaffirms the normative understanding of freedom of conscience.

Phoenix Park gates removed for restoration

In advance of the papal visit, the wrought iron gates at Phoenix Park have been removed for restoration. The Office of Public Works (OPW) has apologised "for any inconvenience this may cause during this period and appreciate the cooperation of the public as we carry out this necessary restoration and conservation work".

Pope Francis a 'dismal failure' on abuse - safeguarding expert

Greg Daly

Pope Francis' attempts to address abuse in the Church have been disappointing, the former head of the Irish Church's child protection board has said.

Commenting on claims that the Pope has utterly failed to tackle the issue, Ian Elliott, who headed the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, agreed, saying: "He has been a dismal failure so far."

Mr Elliott, who headed the NBSCCC from 2007 to 2013, told *The Irish Catholic*,

"Pope Francis I think promised a great deal and a sense of expectancy that he would deliver, but he hasn't. The situations that have arisen haven't been dealt with very well."

Citing recent crises in the Australian, US and Chilean hierarchies, Mr Elliott said, "it's not an isolated issue, it is a problem which is right across the Catholic world and it needs a much more robust and comprehensive response".

This month's papal trip to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families would provide a suitable chance for Pope Francis to map out what such

a response could entail, but there is no sign this is on the cards, he added.

Opportunity

"This is an opportunity to make a statement, not just apologising for what had happened in the past but about what's going to happen in the future, maybe announce initiatives that are really going to make a difference," he said, adding, "there's no indication that that's going to happen."

Commenting how Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has warned that Pope Francis may not have time on his brief visit to meet abuse survivors, Mr Elliott said such an omis-

sion would be regrettable.

"I think that it would obviously be a great disappointment if he didn't take that opportunity while he was here to listen to them and listen to what those people had to say," he said.

"Really, the opportunity needs to be seized, with him coming to Ireland - not to talk about the past, but to speak about the future and to give some indication of how matters are going to be dealt with to ensure the kinds of things that happened in the past will not be repeated again in Ireland," he added.



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Irish man joins US play depicting Elvis Presley's Faith journey

Chai Brady

A devout Irish man has joined the production team of a New York play which explores Elvis Presley's Christian upbringing and struggle with faith. Louth native John Aidan Byrne says the story "made a deep impression with me as I examined my own positive Catholic upbringing and faith journey".

The King, the Final Hours, a new off-Broadway play, is billed as having a Catholic and Christian angle and recalls the final hours of Elvis Presley's life and imagines his conversation



'A man of Faith and God' - Elvis Presley.

with God.

Mr Byrne, who also has a cameo in the play, was born in Ardee and describes

himself as a practising Catholic. He was active in the US defending the Eighth Amendment.

Final night

The play also revisits historical scenes, like the final night in Graceland when Elvis sat alone at his piano and performed for God.

It takes an artistic look at what went through Elvis Presley's mind as he realised his life was coming to an end on August 16, 1977.

"I emigrated in the 1980s to the US from Ireland," said Byrne, who now lives in New Jersey. "So I can tell you Ireland is a nation of

many Elvis fans, devoted to his Gospel singing and his pop, country and rock and roll music."

"Elvis had his failures and personal weaknesses and was troubled by the temptations he stepped into, in part we imagine because of his fame and fortune," he said. "But he was a man of Faith and God, and he radiated much love and Christian charity."

He added: "Elvis came from a Pentecostal background - and as Catholics and Christians we can learn from his life experience and his search for God."

Breda O'Brien

The View



Time's up for the death penalty

During St John Paul's pontificate, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) was amended regarding the death penalty. Capital punishment was hedged about with so many conditions that the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity were considered to be "very rare, if not practically non-existent".

In other words, the death penalty was only justified in the rarest of cases – where "non-lethal means" were not capable of "effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor".

So while in theory capital punishment was admissible, in reality, in modern times it would never be necessary as secure incarceration was available as an alternative.

Pope Francis has gone even further. The text in the CCC now reads: "Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes.

In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state.

Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

"Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that 'the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person' and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide."

Inspired

For many faithful Catholics, such as Sr Helen Prejean, the nun whose life inspired the film, *Dead Man Walking*, Pope Francis's amendment of the CCC is a moment of great joy.

For others, it is more proof that Pope Francis' pontificate is full of dangerous innovations. The latter group may or may



not approve of the use of the death penalty.

Some, such as author Edward Feser, who along with Joseph Bessette wrote *By Man Shall His Blood be Shed: A Catholic Defense of the Death Penalty*, do not believe that it is necessarily just to administer the death penalty. However, Feser does believe that it is legitimate for a state to have the right to administer the death penalty.

However arcane a distinction it may seem, the concern of Feser and others like him is that if the Church once taught that the death penalty is a legitimate punishment for a

state to wield but now says that it is "inadmissible", is that not the same as saying the Church was in error for decades?

If certain Popes believed it was a legitimate punishment in the arsenal of the state, does this not mean that the Popes are capable of teaching error and so Pope Francis could be in error, too?

Moral views

Others, like influential Orthodox blogger, Rod Dreher, go further. If the Church can apparently change her mind on this, can she also not change her mind on something

simplistic "what would Jesus do?" rhetoric, which can often become "what do I think Jesus would do, given my favourite biases?", I do think that there is a useful question about any development of doctrine.

Does a teaching represent a radical departure from a path on which the Church had been travelling, or does it represent a journey further along an already well-trodden path?

In the case of Pope Francis' decision on the death penalty, I believe it is the latter. The conditions in which the Church originally endorsed the death penalty, which included protecting society, no longer pertain.

“To change marriage would not be a development of doctrine but a radical departure from centuries of explicit teaching”

The Church has always had a clear proscription against killing the innocent. It is very much in tune with the need to emphasise non-violent solutions to declare that today, the death

penalty is inadmissible even though a person is guilty, in order to increase the chances of the person seeking redemption.

On the other hand, while treating our fellow human beings who are gay or lesbian with compassion and respect is certainly what Jesus wishes his followers to model, the teaching on marriage cannot be changed.

To change marriage would not be a development of doctrine but a radical departure from centuries of explicit teaching. It is central to God's plan that we have been created male and female and that marriage is between a woman and a man.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, 251, Pope Francis re-affirms that "there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family".

While understandable, I believe Feser's and Dreher's fears are misplaced. The "inadmissibility" of the death penalty in the circumstances pertaining today is a good development.

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The death penalty and the right to life: an unfolding revelation



The Pope's decreeing capital punishment 'inadmissible' follows in papal footsteps, writes Greg Daly

There's change and there's change. To listen to some of the more feverish reactions to news last week of Pope Francis' decision to change the Church's teaching on the death penalty, one might think that change means one thing and one thing only: a sharp u-turn, a denial, even a rejection of the previous road. This, though, is neither common sense nor what the Church believes.

The Church has always held that doctrine can change, or, as it tends to be put, it can develop. In his 1845 *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the future Blessed John Henry Newman, then an Anglican cleric, explained that there are, broadly, two ways of understanding change or development.

Clarification

True development, he said, is a kind of organic growth, a clarification or refinement through which a doctrine present in Revelation becomes more precisely expressed or more deeply understood, all the while remaining true to itself – he cites the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven as scriptural pointers to how seemingly immense change can happen naturally, gradually, and genuinely.

Against this false development, perhaps best expressed as corruption or mutation, is a more dramatic affair, one that is genuinely at odds with what came before; we might think of how someone can change, and somehow cease to be themselves, rather than growing in a way that they become more themselves.

Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Church's doctrinal watchdog, the Congregation



Pope Francis blesses a prisoner during his visit to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia. Photo: CNS

of the Doctrine of the Faith, has made it clear that Pope Francis' decision is firmly in the category of 'authentic development'.

As he noted last week, when the Pope spoke last October on the 25th anniversary of St John Paul II's promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he had asked that the Church's teaching on the death penalty be "reformulated so as to better reflect the development of the doctrine on this point that has taken place in recent times".

It is worth revisiting the Pope's October address, in which he called for the Catechism to treat of the death penalty in a way that is clearly focused – in line with the document's stated aims – on God's love.

"This issue cannot be reduced to a mere résumé of traditional teaching without taking into account not only the doctrine as it has developed in the teaching of recent Popes, but also the change in

the awareness of the Christian people which rejects an attitude of complacency before a punishment deeply injurious of human dignity," he said, describing the death penalty as essentially contrary to the Gospel through its deliberate suppression of human lives that we recognise as sacred and the gift of God.

"Here we are not in any way contradicting past teaching, for the defence of the dignity of human life from the first moment of conception to natural death has been taught by the Church consistently and authoritatively," he added.

Sanctity of life

His point, in essence, was that the key Church teaching in this area is the sanctity of human life.

The Church had previously supported capital punishment, even using it in Italy's Papal States, but while the justification for this rested on the notion that condemned criminals had disposed them-

selves of their right to live, the right to end their lives was still reserved to the state, to the public power: the death penalty was never something ordinary private people could execute.

It had then seemed sensible and even necessary to protect human life, whether from murderers or from those who would threaten society in other ways, through the use of the death penalty, and there was scriptural sanction for this, but over time the Church has come to recognise the contradictions in this approach.

The key developments in this area were introduced by St John Paul II, building on the teaching of previous popes and especially the Second Vatican Council which in 1965's *Gaudium et Spes* stressed the inviolable dignity of the human person as the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching.

In 1992, St John Paul's catechism centred its discussion of the death penalty not

on the need for just punishment but on the question of how human life and dignity can best be cherished and protected, permitting capital punishment only when there was no other way of protecting society.

"Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor," it said.

In practical terms the Polish Pope had seemed to be saying that that Church could accept the necessity of the death penalty, but only in very rare circumstances. Let anyone miss just how rare these circumstances might be, in *Evangelium Vitae*, his 1995 encyclical on the sanctity of human life, he made this even more clear.

“The Catechism continues: ‘No matter how serious the crime that has been committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and the dignity of the person’”

Maintaining that the death penalty should be considered in the context of a system of penal justice increasingly aware of human dignity and in tune ultimately with God's plan for man and society, he ran through what punishment is intended to achieve and said it "ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society".

Such cases are very rare today, he continued, "if not practically non-existent".

As he said in the US city of St Louis, Missouri, in 1999, the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. "Modern soci-

ety has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform," he said, describing the death penalty as "cruel and unnecessary".

His calls for the global abolition of the death penalty were repeated by Pope Benedict XVI, notably in November 2011, when, echoing the Catechism, he told a group working for the end of the death penalty that their efforts would help initiatives around the world "to eliminate the death penalty and to continue the substantive progress made in conforming penal law both to the human dignity of prisoners and the effective maintenance of public order".

Pope Francis, then, is building on the work of his predecessors in rewriting section 2267 of the *Catechism* to remove any ambiguity that some might claim in this area, spelling out that there is an increased awareness today that a person's dignity is not lost even after committing serious crimes and that today's prison systems allow for the protection of society without denying convicts chances of redemption.

Given this, the *Catechism* continues, "no matter how serious the crime that has been committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and the dignity of the person".

In describing the death penalty as now "inadmissible", the Pope has been careful not to overstep what his predecessors had said or to contradict or in any way overturn previous Church teaching; he has, after all, not even come close to describing the death penalty as 'intrinsically evil' or anything like that.

No, he has simply followed his predecessors' recognitions that all human life is sacred, even that of the worst criminals, and that modern societies virtually never need to kill to protect themselves from criminals, by teaching that since modern societies can protect themselves from criminals without taking sacred human life, capital punishment is no longer acceptable.

“In describing the death penalty as now ‘inadmissible’, the Pope has been careful not to overstep what his predecessors had said or to contradict or in any way overturn previous Church teaching; he has, after all, not even come close to describing the death penalty as ‘intrinsically evil’ or anything like that”

NOVENA

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Theme: FAITH & FAMILY



14th Aug. 'Finding God in the Mess'

3pm Jim Deeds, Writer & Broadcaster
& 8.30pm

Workshop Jim Deeds
12 & 6pm 'Finding God in the Mess'

15th Aug. 'The Strength of the Family'

3pm Archbishop Michael Neary, Tuam
& 8.30pm

Workshop Olive Shaughnessy, Blogger & Author
12 & 6pm 'Keeping Faith while Living with Sickness'

16th Aug. 'The Family: A work in progress'

3pm Fr. Stephen Farragher, P.P. Ballyhaunis
& 8.30pm

Workshop Kathleen Duffy, Retreat Director
12 & 6pm 'Let the Children Come to Jesus...'

17th Aug. 'Now You're Talking – A Spirituality for Authentic Communication in the 21st Century'

3pm Pat Coyle, Jesuit communications Dir.
& 8.30pm

Workshop Pat Coyle
12 & 6pm 'Now You're Talking...'

18th Aug. 'The Best Wine'

3pm V.Rev. Alan McGuckian, Bishop of Raphoe
8.30pm Maeve Mahon, Primary Ed. coordinator

Workshop Maeve Mahon, Primary Ed. coordinator
12 & 6pm 'The Church as a Family of Families: Tending the Door'

Family Day: Sunday 19th August (12 - 3pm)

19th Aug. 'Family: The First School of Human Values'

3pm Very Rev. Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin
8.30pm Fr. Michael Conway, Lecturer, Maynooth

Workshop Fr. Michael Conway, Lecturer, Maynooth
12 & 6pm 'Finding your place: family, story, identity'

20th Aug. 'St Joseph – a Sign of Faith'

3pm Cardinal Christoph Schönborn OP,
& 8.30pm Dr. of Theology, Archbishop of Vienna

Workshop Cardinal Christoph Schönborn OP,
12 & 6pm 'St. Joseph – A Sign of Faith'

21st Aug. Anniversary of Apparition at Knock
'Gospel of the Family'

3pm Afternoon session & **Workshops**
Dr. Andrew Meszaros, Maynooth College

12 & 6pm 'Gospel of the Family'

8.30pm Evening session

'The importance of the Apparition and the Family'

Fr. Richard Gibbons, PP, Rector, Knock Shrine

22nd Aug. 'Our Young Church'

3pm Nicola Mitchell, Director of Youth
& 8.30pm Ministry, Knock Shrine

Workshop Knock Youth Ministry
12 & 6pm 'Our Young Church'

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Censoring the Church's view of sex and marriage

The Government seems determined to bar religion from public life, writes **David Quinn**



We live in truly extraordinary times. A conference on *Humanae Vitae* is addressed by a bishop and there is an immediate negative response on social media from no less a figure than our Health Minister, Simon Harris, who tweets, "Please just make it stop!"

The conference was organised by the Nazareth Family Institute to mark the 50th anniversary of the famous encyclical issued

by Pope Paul VI to an international outcry because it confirmed the Church's position that artificial means of preventing conception should not be used.

The event, which drew a good-sized crowd, especially given that it was the last Bank Holiday weekend of the summer, was opened by the Bishop of Elphin, Kevin Doran, and addressed by a number of international experts. Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin was also in attendance.

It's telling that no official events to mark the anniversary are being held in Ireland and so a small lay group had to do it instead. Nor for that matter is the Pontifical Academy for Life in Rome holding any events to mark it, and neither is the World Meeting of Families.

The attitude calls to mind the final scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Indiana Jones has gone to great lengths to find the Ark of the Covenant and in the end, after all his efforts, we see the US Government putting it in a crate and leaving in a huge warehouse with thousands of other crates where it will gather dust and be forgotten about again. That appears to be the attitude of the official Church towards *Humanae Vitae*; its teaching is hard and unpopular and it's best we pretend it does not exist.

This is why Bishops Doran and Nulty deserve all credit for attending the event.

So, why did Minister Harris take such umbrage at? He obviously wasn't at the conference, nor can he have read Bishop Doran's address which hadn't been released at that point. Instead he was reacting to a report of the event that appeared in *The Irish Times*. The article was headlined: "Principles of contraceptive ban 'ignored for too long', says bishop".

Minister Harris responded on Twitter: "Please just make it stop! Increasing access to & availability of contraception is and will remain public health policy. Religion plays an important role for many on an individual basis - but it will not determine health and social policy in our country any more. Please get that."

Headline

This statement takes a bit of unpacking. First, note the kneejerk character of it. Minister Harris would object if someone of note reacted in this way to a headline writer's summary of a longer address he had given.

Second, it is vanishingly unlikely that Minister Harris has ever read *Humanae Vitae* (which is very short, by the way), let alone contemplated its underlying philosophy or read any sympathetic commentary about it.

Third, Bishop Doran never suggested we ought to ban contraception or make it hard to obtain. So, what was the Minister objecting to? On



Minister Simon Harris and, inset, his Tweet which was picked up by the media.

the surface it looks like he was objecting to the simple reiteration of the Catholic teaching on sex, marriage and birth control.

Fourth, his Tweet reduces religion to an individual thing. It must have no societal expression that gets in the way of Government policy. But lots of groups oppose Government policy on lots of things. Why shouldn't Catholics and Christians and religious believers more generally have that same right? (But to repeat, Bishop Doran was not, in fact, calling for a ban on contraception.)

“The secular view is that sex has no intrinsic purpose and need not be attached to marriage, or love, or even any kind of emotional intimacy at all”

In a later Tweet responding to Senator Ronan Mullen, the Minister said he was objecting to Bishop Doran saying contraception had made it harder for women to refuse “unwanted sex”, but this was completely unclear from his first Tweet.

What we are seeing in this small incident is more evidence of a growing

intolerance towards any Catholic (or Christian) teaching that clashes in any way with the secular, liberal view of untrammelled sexual freedom. That view has only one rule of conduct: consent.

The Christian view is that God created sex for a purpose and the purpose is unitive and procreative, that is to say, sex is a physical expression of the couple's unity and must be open to the possibility of children.

The secular view is that sex has no intrinsic purpose and need not be attached to marriage, or love, or even any kind of emotional intimacy at all. It also holds that the possibility of children can be prevented by any means, including abortion, that is, through the deliberate killing of the unborn child. It is not obvious why the secular, liberal view of sex is so radically and manifestly superior to the Christian view.

The Government, allied to our media, is now trying to make it almost impossible to teach the Christian view, except in private and almost in secret. It wants the way completely cleared for its own view to be taught and promoted with no opposition at all.

The Christian view is not to be taught in schools, not even in Catholic ones. Nor, it seems, is a bishop to express

it at a small, privately organised conference.

“The Government, allied to our media, is now trying to make it almost impossible to teach the Christian view, except in private and almost in secret”

This is incredible stuff. It has nothing whatsoever to do with pluralism and smacks very strongly of the authoritarianism the Church was once accused of promoting. Indeed, it even smacks of totalitarianism because the aim of totalitarianism is to ensure we are only ever exposed to the official, approved view of any given subject.

As Christians we need to have the courage to withstand this. But we also need to understand what it is that we believe about sex and marriage and their intrinsic purposes. Ultimately this is what Bishop Doran was trying to say in his address. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go to arrive at this understanding, even in our own churches and that is partly because there is such a reluctance to preach or teach about it.

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Brave priest is praised after long charity trek



Fr Tony Coote is welcomed after his arrival in Ballydehob following his 550km journey.

Colm Fitzpatrick

An Irish priest who was diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease (MND) in February, has completed a 550km journey from the top to the bottom of Ireland raising almost €220,000 to aid research into the condition.

Dublin-based priest, Fr Tony Coote said the disease was a "very degenerating and difficult illness" but rather than complain about his situation, he set out to raise funds for research and for taking care of those suffering with the condition.

Big impact

Beginning in Letterkenny on July 10 and finishing in Cork's Ballydehob on Monday, Fr Coote invited people to become part of 'Walk While You Can' and donate, walk, organise a fundraising event or offer accommodation to those doing the walk.

After travelling for almost a month, Fr Coote thanked all those who supported him on his journey and hopes that the money raised will make a big impact on treating sufferers of the illness.

"What a warm welcome I received from Ballydehob and west Cork. Crowds of people on the streets and led by three huge horses. Also, I had a fantastic reception in



Some of those who accompanied Fr Coote on his way.



the community hall," he told RTÉ *Drivetime*.

Motor Neurone Disease affects over 400 people in Ireland and there is still very little known about how it can be effectively treated. Fr Coote's medication is 24-years-old and the Motor Neurone Dis-

ease Association can only provide three nurses, whose salaries are paid for by church gate collections.

i For more information about 'Walk While You Can' and to donate, see: <http://www.wyc.ie/>



Fr Coote with some young supporters in Ballydehob.



Davis Clark asks whether Scotland is still haunted by anti-Catholicism

The recent assault of a Catholic priest during an Orange parade has lent an extra bite to an age-old debate about the historical treatment of Catholics in Scotland.

The assault, along with a report released this year by the Scottish government which found that around half of all religious hate crimes in Scotland are perpetrated against Catholics, has spurred outrage among many in Scotland who have criticised the government for not taking adequate action to curb perceived anti-Catholicism.

As tensions begin to rise, it becomes more important than ever to rigorously consider the history of the problem, as well as ask to what extent it still plagues the lives of Scottish citizens.

The Protestant Reformation transformed Scotland, changing the nation's state religion from Roman Catholicism to Presbyterianism. In those days, religion was a far more dominant part of national identity, so the arrival of Irish Catholic immigrants meant the introduction of a stark cultural "other", one which found itself subject to various kinds of discrimination.

Events

Perhaps paralleling contemporary events, many natives felt that these immigrants threatened their security and employment prospects. This perceived competition, exacerbated by a separation of Catholics and Protestants in terms of where they lived within cities and towns, helped to add an edge of resentment and apprehension against Catholics.

And this continued for many years, such to the point that labour market discrimination against Catholics could still be observed as late as the 1970's. In the light of the recentness of this institutionalized discrimination, many have argued that it remains alive and well.

Daniel Harkins, editor of the *Scottish Catholic Observer*, has commented extensively on the issue. "It's

Laying the beast to rest



not the problem that it was 50 years ago, but religious sectarianism is still a problem", says Mr Harkins. He points to the statistics released by the government that show that roughly half of all religious hate crimes are against Catholics.

Mr Harkins also sees the language surrounding the issue as obscuring the problem. As many have pointed out, "sectarianism" seems to imply two factions of equal power and culpability, perpetrating offense in equal measure. "The most important thing is for politicians to call anti-Catholicism for what it is. There's an issue in Scotland where unfortunately, politicians will refer to anti-Catholicism as sectarianism. They need to start using the correct words."

“The most important thing is for politicians to call anti-Catholicism for what it is”

Indeed, many would agree that the use of the term "sectarianism" denies the history behind the oppression of a Catholic minority. He lauds Scottish Justice Secretary Humza Yusef's recent call to "defeat anti-Catholicism", calling it a "landmark moment". "I'm not aware of any minister previously using that term in any official capacity. It's a big step forward", says Mr Harkins.

However, it may be possible that a narrow focus on religious sectarianism may be in itself creating the problem. Modern Western societies are

characterized by the coexistence of individuals adhering to different, and often multiple, spheres of identity.

With so many nuanced intercultural relationships influenced by generations of history and spanning religion, race, and gender, it becomes difficult to separate the extant antagonism from the perceived, the actual striking hand of animosity from its phantom limb.

Prof. Sir Tom Devine, historian and Emeritus Professor of the University of Edinburgh, argues that this is rather the case, that Scotland is haunted by the ghost of sectarianism, not the flesh and blood enemy.

Earlier this year, Professor Devine and University of Edinburgh Professor of Sociology Michael Rosie co-wrote an essay in the *Sunday Herald*, which offers a thorough statistical and sociological analysis of the religious hate crime figures released by the government. That the data says Catholics are assaulted far more often than Protestants is misleading, they argue, due to the massive population imbalance.

"If you have a situation which you have even in the west of Scotland which is that the majority of people are Protestant, maybe not church attending but brought up in that tradition, and the minority is Catholic, its statistically inevitable that most of the religious hate will be against Catholics because we are in the minority", says Prof. Devine.

He points to the fact that Catholics and Protestants

alike have been reared in an environment that has taught them to conceive of the other in antagonistic terms. "It's very ingrained. You've got to remember the history of Irish Catholic descent in Scotland.

"Labour market discrimination was still practiced as late as the 1970s, and so it may be easy for me, who's seen the hard evidence, but it's difficult for people who have been brought up in that environment, in that tradition, in those stories coming from relatives, it's very difficult for them to abandon the view that they are still under siege", he says.

Blame

Then from where do such incidents as the assault on Canon Tom White, complete with the slur "Fenian", arise? Professor Devine says that one could blame any number of ethnic and cultural divides that exist within Scotland and the world. "It could be simple tribalism, fear and hatred of the other. It doesn't necessarily spring from religious values anymore. It's cultural and tribal. The beast of anti-Catholicism, as I say in the

article, is not dead, but it's nothing like the way it was in my lifetime. I lived through it."

In his essay, he further points out that religious hate crime is far from being the most common, eclipsed significantly by assaults motivated by race, and those motivated by sexual orientation. Due to the attention that sectarianism receives, less focus is given to other, often more prominent, issues.

“Sectarianism is, at least for journalists, very sexy”

And this is indicative of what Prof. Devine would consider a significant problem surrounding the issue: the media coverage. Because it's such a historically charged issue, and one so neatly packaged in a certain football rivalry, Prof. Devine says that "sectarianism is, at least for journalists, very sexy".

Daniel Harkins has previously responded to argu-

ments like Devine's. He agrees that structural anti-Catholicism may be dead, but asserts that Catholics still experience sectarianism in Scotland.

Speaking to the *Irish Post*, Daniel Harkins said "only last month we reported on 15 employees of a local authority who had complained to their union of anti-Catholic discrimination by their supervisor – a convicted bigot".

He identifies the nature of his arguments correctly: "Our evidence is anecdotal, not statistical – but it has always been difficult to accurately measure levels of anti-Catholicism in Scotland."

Prof. Devine's arguments may run the risk of invalidating the everyday experiences of individual Catholics in Scotland. As the minority, Catholicism will bear the disproportionate brunt of whatever animosity exists between the two communities, and therefore great care must be taken as these problems are slowly unravelled. But to fan the flame and push these two communities further apart is not helpful. The beast can only die if we let it.

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The heroism of the habit

Matthew Carlson explores the rise and recession of Belfast's Poor Clares



Nuns are often portrayed in popular media as frail, silent and hidden away from the rest of the world, but the profound story of one religious order in Ireland has flipped that paradigm on its head.

The Poor Clares in Belfast were a group of nuns established in Belfast who served the Down and Connor Diocese from 1924-2012, and their experiences highlight the difficulties they endured in service of their community and Faith in God.

Although their biography was previously unknown, a new book written by Fr Martin Magill of Belfast's St John's Parish entitled *The Poor Clares in Belfast* recounts and collates the moving and powerful stories of the sisters.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Martin says his interest in the nuns developed after a friend asked him to find someone who had been impacted by their work. After having trouble in finding someone willing to give a talk on them, Fr Martin took the matter into his own hands.

"I thought I could find someone in the area who knew the Poor Clares pretty well and I could probably get one of them, but actually I couldn't and I had already agreed to that, so I thought that's fine so I ended up having to do the research myself," says Fr Martin. After all his research on the group of nuns, Fr Martin felt the calling to write a book on them so everyone would know their story.

Origins

The Order's origins go back to the 13th Century with St Clare of Assisi. Clare was born in 1194 as the eldest daughter of an aristocrat family. At the age of 18 in 1212, Clare heard a sermon from Francis, founder of the Franciscan order in 1208, that radically changed her perspective on life.

She decided to leave her family and their wealth in order to live the Gospel more fully.

She cut her hair off and exchanged her extravagant garments for plain robes and began work in the San Paolo delle Abbadesse. Despite her father's disapproval, she continued in her Gospel work and moved further away in order

to delve deeper into seclusion.

As she continued in her Gospel work, other girls became attracted to the lifestyle and joined her and began living with no money or property, no shoes or meat and lived in a poor house, remaining in silence most of the time. It wasn't long before they became known as the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.

Even though they spent most of their time in seclusion and lacked material possession, they were known for their high spirits and joy. Clare died in 1253 and 10 years later, the order was named the Order of St Clare or the Poor Clares.

With St Clare as inspiration, the superior of the monastery in Dublin addressed the bishop of the Down and Connor Diocese asking for permission to establish a group of nuns from the order in Belfast in 1923.

“Around 11,000 Catholic people lost their jobs, 23,000 were forced out of their homes and around 500 businesses owned by Catholic people were destroyed”

Leading up to this point, Belfast had experienced several years of violence and turmoil.

Beginning in late July, 1920 to the end of June, 1922, 491 people were killed during the violence. The last six months of the fighting claimed the lives of 285 people. It is estimated that around 11,000 Catholic people lost their jobs, 23,000 were forced out of their homes and around 500 businesses owned by Catholic people were destroyed.

Seeing the hurt and pain that was being experienced, this drove the nuns of the Poor Clares to set up a headquarters in Belfast in order to be a place of rest and prayer for the people there.

With the permission of the bishop of the Down and Connor Diocese, the sisters officially made the move in May 1924. Quickly the Order began attracting sisters from differ-



The Poor Clares in 1989.



Fr Martin Magill signing copies of his book, *The Poor Clares in Belfast*, at its launch.

ent areas and the number of nuns in the monastery grew steadily.

In their ministry, the nuns prayed for hours during both night and day for their community. They also listened to the sufferings of the community members. Their lives were lived in solitude, spending much of their time in silence and prayer.

They continued to refuse to own property and only live off of alms given by local people. As money was scarce and impoverished conditions were brought on, the sisters often slept on pallets of straw.

As war began in 1939, the sisters began praying often

and fervently for peace, while realising that they were for the most part out of harm's way.

However, the Belfast Blitz began in April of 1941. German planes bombed several times in the months of April and May with the bombing of April 15 coming dangerously close to the monastery. The bombing lasted five hours and set houses near the monastery on fire.

Mother Colette Egan of the order reported in a letter saying that "God was liberal with his grace" in sparing the monastery from destruction.

After the bombing, a crater was discovered less than

a half mile away in the middle of the road. Even though the sisters had been spared of the bombing for the most part, much of Belfast was not so lucky. Hundreds of people perished in the bombings and much of the city's living areas had been deemed unlivable.

To cap it off, thousands of people fled Belfast, either because their homes had been destroyed or in fear for their life. In the wake of this tragedy and devastation, the Poor Clares returned to Belfast in efforts to be support to the community.

As time went on, the Poor

Clares remained in Belfast and in prayer. They also celebrated various festivals and ceremonies honouring different saints and traditions. Beginning on June 11, 1954, the sisters celebrated a 'Forty Hours' Devotion'.

The practice references to the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 26, in which Jesus visits the Garden of Gethsemane and encourages his disciples to stay awake and pray. It involves putting a large Eucharistic Host in a receptacle called a monstrance in the centre of the altar. As Catholics believe that Jesus is present in the Host, they are encouraged to pray in the



Poor Clare letters preserved in Belfast. Left, Fr Martin Magill speaks at the launch of his book, *The Poor Clares in Belfast* and, right, stands in a cemetery, over a headstone erected by the order.



“They were there for 88 years and one of the main things was I didn’t expect to have an emotional reaction to the book. But honestly the Belfast that the sisters left was totally different than the Belfast they arrived in,’ said Fr Martin”



presence of Jesus Christ for a continuous 40 hours. As time went on though, the calmness and somewhat peace was short lived in Belfast.

Riots

In the early months of 1969, loyalist paramilitaries planted several bombs in Northern Ireland, including in Castlereagh in East Belfast. Violent riots began in July of that year. A journal kept by the sisters recorded these riots, but became quiet after the entries of 1969.

The next recorded documentation came in May of 1972, with the sisters describing that riots were continuing

in the North. The following July, the bodies of two men, Hugh Clawson and David Fisher, were found by several children playing in the Cliftonville cricket club which was next to the monastery. Events such as this created a traumatising environment in Belfast which became another time of intensive praying for the sisters.

According to Fr Martin, parishioners would often come to Mass every day and the group of people who attended daily formed a special bond with each other as well as with the sisters, a true sense of belonging and family. In this time, the Poor Clares

didn’t serve as counsellors in offering ways to cope with these experiences, but rather served as a safe space to talk.

They created a confidential surrounding with a listening ear which became known as their ‘ministry of listening’. “The nuns themselves were providing a ministry that really wasn’t available at the time especially during the Troubles. They provided a safe space where they could listen,” said Fr Martin.

The journal kept by the sisters records that one of the groups of people that they served frequently was the wives of men who had been killed in fighting or in riots.

These women were described as often having children who they felt the need to be strong in front of, as someone who was going to make sure they were looked after.

“One of the groups of people that they served frequently was the wives of men who had been killed in fighting or in riots”

On the inside, they were broken and scared, feeling

like they needed to be strong for their children. In these cases, the nuns provided a safe space for these kinds of broken people to find a place of refuge.

One particular family included a mother, father and their two sons. Over the years of the Troubles, the family adopted seven other children. Tragedy struck as one of their birth sons was tortured and killed.

The report says that at first the mother didn’t know what to do, she just sat on the couch and cried all day. Stories such as these were the reason that the Poor Clares were put in Belfast, to help

people and to pray for them in their struggles.

This was the way of the sisters. They weren’t intervening on behalf of the people to men, but to God. In times of anxiety or troubles, the nuns prayed and then prayed some more.

In 1993, the sisters began welcoming nuns from the Philippines, but around this time, the number of nuns serving in the monastery began to decline. Over the next few years, it became evident that the number of sisters leaving was greater than the number of sisters that were joining.

In 2012, the remaining five sisters of the Poor Clares in Belfast voted to close down the monastery and have the sisters relocated. The three Filipino sisters returned to the monasteries from which they came and the two Irish sisters were admitted to other groups of Poor Clares in Ireland.

“They were there for 88 years and one of the main things was I didn’t expect to have an emotional reaction to the book. But honestly the Belfast that the sisters left was totally different than the Belfast they arrived in,” said Fr Martin.

“In less than a century, the Poor Clares endured some of the most difficult ordeals that a person can experience”

“One thing as well is that there are a lot of terrible things that nuns and priests and brothers and lay Catholics get in terms of child abuse for example. And understandably, people get judgmental and condemning of the Church and that’s understandable because it is appalling,” said Fr Martin.

“But they don’t see a lot of the good work that those people do.”

Even though many members of the community felt the loss of the sisters, the nuns encouraged people to continue with them in Faith and prayer.

In less than a century, the Poor Clares endured some of the most difficult ordeals that can be experienced, and their story recounts the rise and recession of a religious order who provided needed help to the people of Belfast.

And they did it with joy and thanksgiving in their hearts.

To purchase the *The Poor Clares in Belfast*, see: <http://shanway.com/product/the-poor-clares-in-belfast/>.

Colm Fitzpatrick talks to international comedian Tim Vine about God, laughter and his new Irish tour



It's not often that comedy and religion appear together in the same sentence in an Irish context – usually musings of *Father Ted* or the sketches of the late Dave Allen take that prize – but a famous one-liner comedian may become part of this odd anomaly.

Beginning stand-up comedy in 1991, British-born Tim Vine has won numerous awards for his quirky jokes and endearing puns and will soon be coming to Ireland to tour his new show 'Sunset Milk Idiot'. Alongside his clever witticisms, Tim is also a Christian and very vocal about his Faith.

"I was brought up in a Christian family so I've always been used to the fact that on a Sunday morning we went to church and I think I made my own decision about whether or not I believed in it when I was about 12. I always think that I became a Christian, if there is that kind of moment, when I was 12 at a Pathfinders camp. It was a sort of Christian summer camp," he explains.

"The church that I was christened and the same one I've gone to all my life, I still go to it actually, is a Church of England church, sort of evangelical not very high church. Sometimes I'm a little bit jealous of people in their twenties who have that moment when they can see a definite change between before God was in their life and afterwards because for me it's something that I've always believed in and that doesn't make sense at every question I've got in life."

Sermons

Tim adds that his parents, and in particular, his father, had a "strong" effect of both his Faith and comedy as he used to preach in church resulting in the parishioners thinking he was "very funny".

"He would break off in the middle of sermons and suddenly point to someone in the congregation and say 'Oh you know this Alan' – kind of bringing them in. He's still around but he doesn't preach anymore. I'm used to the fact that when I got out of bed in the morning my dad was already up, he always got up and the first thing he did was read his Bible and get on with the day."

Influenced by this imagery

and the Christian camps he attended as a boy, Tim's Faith has continued to develop as he has reflected on it what it means to be a believer, and what the message of the Gospel ought to be.

Notably, he says that churches have been too controlling in the past with little mention about the love of God, which should really be the focus of Christianity.

“I believe in the God that loves everyone whose first concern is to let us know that he loves us”

"I have quite a simple approach – my faith is quite simple. You hear about people doing theological courses and coming out with no faith at the end. Faith is a spiritual thing, more than it is an intellectual thing, as much as I like to talk about the intellectual.

"You just can't get all the answers intellectually. It's called faith because at some point you've just got to say I can only get this far – do I take the rest of it and trust God that he's real and he loves me like he loves everybody else?" Tim says.

"In this world there's an enormous number of people who don't feel loved. And equally I believe in the God that loves everyone whose first concern is to let us know that he loves us. He knows that were human beings and that nobody's perfect. It's a very hard line for churches to try and walk and I think particularly in the past churches have leaned too much on rules."

Despite his resolute Faith, Tim explains that he, like most people, has doubts but that this ambivalence is part and parcel of belief, and so people should not reject their Faith outright if they're experiencing difficulties.

As a questioning species, it's normal to wonder about certain aspects of religion, but Tim suggests that praying can help bridge the gap between the intellect and the mysterious.

"There have been times where if I've had doubts I find myself praying about it, and of course everyone has doubts, if

Blessed be the comedians

Tim Vine.



they're honest, about all sorts of things. We're all looking for reasons for things the whole time. There's just some questions that don't have answers, and when that overlaps with your actual life you become even more desperate for answers. But that's never made me throw the baby out with the bathwater – throw

the baby Jesus out with the bathwater," he says.

Accompanying Tim on his new tour which will take him to counties such as Cork and Galway, is the comedy magician John Archer who is also a Christian. Originally working as a police officer in England, John decided to focus on full-time entertainment, gigging

all the around the country and at Christian festivals. It was at one of these festivals called 'Spring Harvest' in the early 1990's that Tim and John first met.

Chance

"John's brilliant and complements my act very well. He's a comedy magician. If you ever

get the chance, for your readers, to go and see an evening with John Archer, he does lots of church gigs. In the first half he does his regular act. In the second half he does a comedy-testimony – it's how he became a Christian when he was 19 and in a gang – it's a totally different background to mine. It's the only thing of

“As a questioning species, it's normal to wonder about certain aspects of religion, but Tim suggests that praying can help bridge the gap between the intellect and the mysterious”



John Archer.

that sort that I've seen – he's sharing the truth about how he became a Christian while at the same time being funny en route," Tim says.

“We've done some comedy for Christian audiences, and some of that just translates to just regular audiences”

Taking place annually predominantly in the UK's Skegness and Minehead, 'Spring Harvest' is a teaching and worshipping festival which aims to equip churches for action and create a space for all people to encounter God. Usually evangelical in tone, all age groups are offered

the opportunity to learn about the Christian message through prayer, music and talks. For John and Tim, festivals like these are the perfect platform for titters and testimony.

"We've done some comedy for Christian audiences, and some of that just translates to just regular audiences. I do a bit where I say there's a new Christian restaurant called the Lord giveth and it also has takeaway. Most of my act is just me being silly and trying to make people laugh.

"My job is to make people laugh, the reason people pay me is that the people sitting in front of me are laughing. If my job was to build a wall or to paint someone's house or to do someone's accounts, you've got to do what you're paid for first. What people

take out of it is on a deeper level, and I'll leave that in God's hands," Tim says.

Although religion isn't a focus or theme of Tim's comedy performances, he does say that at Christian events there are occasions when he may "push the line", but in general the audience are happy to hear religious jokes because everyone, including Tim, are in the same boat with the same beliefs.

"Strangely, you can always get away with more with a Christian audience. I don't know what it is. We're all kind doing jokes at our expense, and it's a Christian audience so were all Christian together.

"Sometimes I feel like we [Tim and John] push the line even more than I would

in a normal act – let's put it that way. We felt that, looking back to the first times we did 'Spring Harvest', that the audiences were much more uptight. You'd be more likely to get people saying, 'Oh that bit was too irreverent', but now I think people are a bit more easy-going. I think ultimately, God is big enough to laugh at everything."

“You've got to do what you're paid for first. What people take out of it is on a deeper level, and I'll leave that in God's hands”

And with this perspective in mind, Tim is hoping that his first ever stand-up tour to Ireland will be a hit with the crowds. The quirkiness of the show can be gauged from the title itself which implicitly promises that Tim will take the audience on a wacky and entertaining trip of comedy and mayhem.

"It's called 'Sunset Milk Idiot', and people ask why it's called that. I took the picture for the poster before I came up with the title of the show. There's a bit of a sunset colour behind me, I've got milk cartons around my head and I'm gazing upward like a bit of an idiot. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about these things, as you can tell. But I liked the picture, so that's why it's called 'Sunset Milk Idiot'.

"There's lots of silly jokes, it's totally clean, it's family friendly. I wouldn't say it's a kids show because I have a tendency to make references to the 70s and 80s. Lots of one-liners, and references to one armed-butlers – they can take it but they can't dish it out – and silly songs and John Archer doing some comedy magic. We've been having a great time doing it in the UK so we're definitely looking forward to doing it in Ireland," Tim says.

With shows in eight different counties across Ireland throughout September, Tim says he's excited to perform, drive around the "Emerald Isle", and hopefully won't resolve to concealing his name if the shows don't go too well.

"A long time ago I did Galway and when I arrived I was one of a few acts. When I was riding around in a taxi there were all these posters that said 'Jim Vine'. I always wished I kept one of those. I said to myself, if the show goes well I'll tell them my real name, if not I'll stay Jim Vine."

i For more information about the Tim's touring show, 'Sunset Milk Idiot', see: <http://www.timvine.com/>

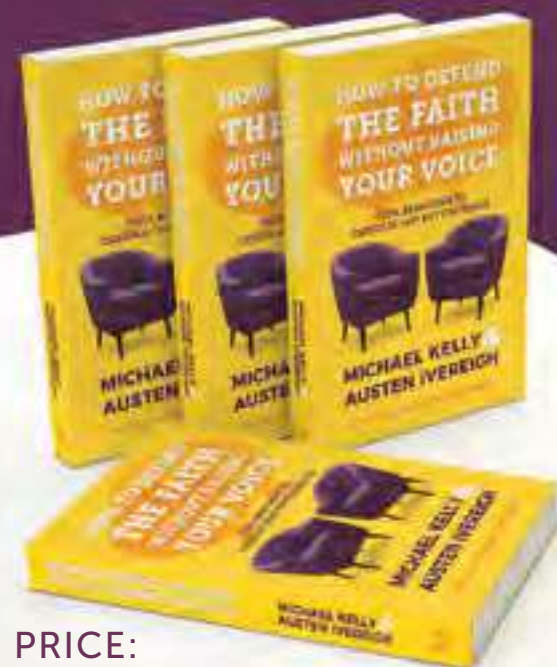
Tim Vine (left) starred in BBC's *Not Going Out* for several series.

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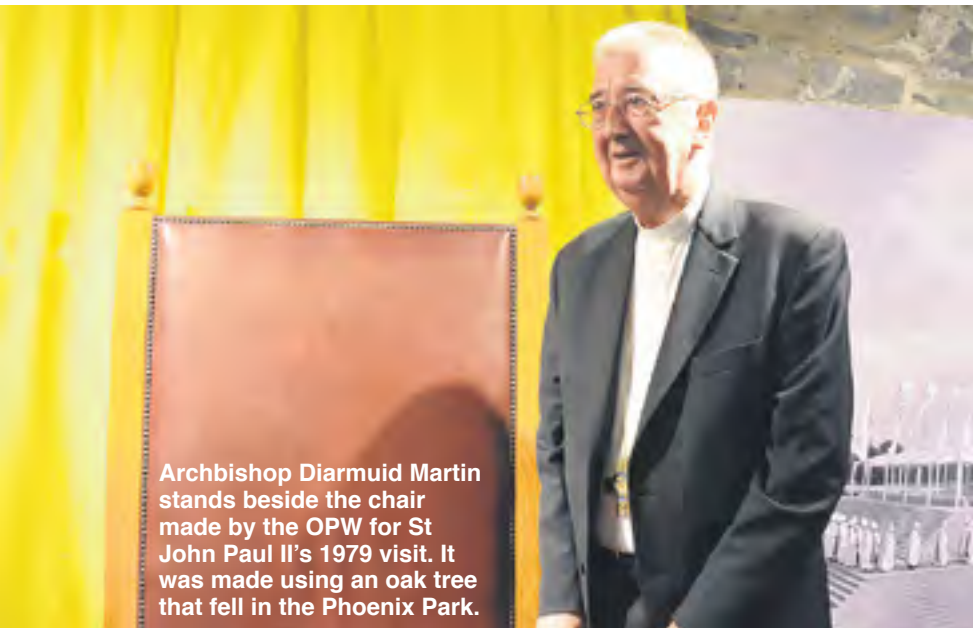
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Remembering St John Paul II, it's time



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin stands beside the chair made by the OPW for St John Paul II's 1979 visit. It was made using an oak tree that fell in the Phoenix Park.



Chai Brady

The papal visit this month will be an opportunity to "showcase Ireland" with well over 15,000 people coming from abroad to attend the Word Meeting of Families, the Archbishop of Dublin said at the opening of an exhibition revealing the preparations made for St John Paul II's visit.

Although regretting not being able to attend the 1979 visit, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said there is not only the physical memories the visit left behind, but "there's the memories of anybody you talk to, they can remember the details, how they got here, what time they got up at, who they met".

"But the one thing everybody says is there was an extraordinary atmosphere."

The exhibition 'Preparations for the Visit of Pope John Paul II to the Phoenix Park in 1979' was launched in the Phoenix Park visitor centre this last. It chronicles how, in 10 short weeks, the visit of St John Paul II was facilitated and how the 1.2 million people that came were catered for.

It also details how the Papal Cross, the dais, altar, canopies and banner were designed to create his outdoor cathedral, as well as the complicated logistics used to get over one million attendees in and out of the park.

Preparations

Dr Martin added: "With the advanced preparations for the upcoming visit of Pope Francis, it's great to have the opportunity to reflect on the previous papal visit and the organisational skills required for the largest event ever held in Ireland."

"I encourage the many people coming to the Phoenix Park to visit this wonderful exhibition and the recorded memories of some of those wonderful people who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the success of the 1979 Papal Mass. I look forward to reading the reflections in the memory books from members of the public who will come to view the exhibition over the next couple of months."

Those visiting the exhibition can also watch a specially



A ciboria ceramic bowl created by Irish potters that was used to distribute the Host during the papal visit. 2,400 were made and each held 350 hosts.

commissioned 15-minute video featuring some of those who worked on the papal visit in 1979.

Speaking about Pope Francis' visit to the park on August 26, Dr Martin said: "Now on this occasion it's slightly more complicated.

"In all the committee meetings there were two words that were never used: health and safety. That's the world we live in today, and right so.

"I feels like something is

happening every day, something surprising, because there's a huge amount of work.

"We're preparing for at the moment, the ticketing, all the details regarding the liturgy, the logistics and the preparations for the Pope himself to come, the details which we're in dialogue with people in Rome about the various aspect of.

"In general people are very enthusiastic about what's happening."

Please contact World Meeting of Families correspondent Chai Brady with photos, news or articles relating to your parish or diocese's WMOF2018 preparations and events for inclusion in the weekly update:

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to 'showcase Ireland' for Papal visit

What they said about the Exhibition...



Lillian Killean and Ian O'Donovan.

Lillian Killean and Ian O'Donovan

Having a photographer in the family is always fortunate, but Lillian Killean's brother snagged the opportunity to photograph St John Paul II at Aer Lingus – Lillian said he was "very excited" to be on the papal flight.

Her son-in-law Mr O'Donovan said they're both "really looking forward to the papal visit" and that both families have exclusive pictures of St John Paul adorning their hallways.

Three generation of the O'Donovans

Foreman during the building of the Papal Cross in the Phoenix Park, Mattie O'Donovan told *The Irish Catholic* "it's marvellous to see it still standing".

"It was quite simple because it was all very straightforward, there was no problem. We had a welding machine that could weld for about 30ft in one go," he said.

Although he regrets not being able to make the papal visit this year, he'll be there in spirit as his initials – along with everyone else involved in the cross's construction – are inscribed on the inside of the cross. He is pictured above with his son and grandson, all named Matthew.

Reggie McDonald

After 41 years of service as a ranger in the Phoenix Park, Head Ranger Reggie McDonald was already working for two years when St John Paul II visited.

Reminiscing, Mr McDonald said it was a time when there was no mobile phones or communication systems like today, and "health and safety was at its infancy in Ireland".

"But at the same time the will of the people to pull all this together regardless of the hours that were to be worked and the work that had to be done – there was no boundaries, we just did it," he said.

His job, along with about 11 other rangers, was to guide thousands of stewards to their positions when it was dark.

"So our job was to make sure they got where they needed to go safely to direct the 1.2 million that was to come later. All we had at the time were hand torches. We were positioned at the main junctions of the park so once the people got there



Reggie McDonald.

we showed them where they were supposed to go and everyone got there safely."

"Above all there was good humour, it's hard to believe that that many people came to the park and had the patience to queue up. It was the people that made it, we had a part to play in it but the humour of the people – it was like an adventure," he added.

Eithne Merrins

Working in the Archdiocese of Dublin's finance department just before the visit of St John Paul II was no picnic, but "well worth it".

Eithne Merrins was working until 11pm on some nights but said it was a "very happy time" especially when witnessing the generosity of people who hoped for a successful visit.

"People came in and handed in un-opened pay packets, people came in with jars of coins that you had to count and it was lovely, she said. "It was magical meeting people at that level. They were the working people, I wouldn't say they were wealthy by any standard. I'd ask how much I could take out of their pay packet and if they wanted money for the week, they'd say 'I'll manage'."

"It was a wonderful experience with people," she added.

Angela Roife

The person to thank for the exhibition of the preparation for the visit of St John Paul said the most compelling part was the timeframe in which it was all organised.

Angela Roife said: "The scale is quite difficult to comprehend, but actually the most interesting thing is the 10 weeks from start to finish and the amount of work that was done and the co-operation and the collaboration to get it done, it's phenomenal."

Overall there were 18 meetings of the Dublin Diocesan Committee and 11 meetings of the National Committee, which took place



Three generation of the O'Donovans.

throughout the 10 weeks and focused on each aspect of the papal visit.

Cyril McIntyre

With during St John Paul's visit, but the media also had to be catered for and Cyril McIntyre was on hand to arrange their transport.

Then press officer for CIE, Mr McIntyre made arrangements for special buses to be used by the

1,500 members of the media – these were paid for by the Church. He was also in charge of publicising papal timetables for public awareness.

"You just felt you were just moving along in a cloud, everything was happening, you were praying that nothing would go wrong and you kept the head down and kept going. Over the three days I probably only got about eight hours sleep," he said.



Eithne Merrins.



Cyril McIntyre.



Angela Roife, exhibit organiser, stands beside a 10m tall Vatican flag.

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Papal choir gears up for the big day at Papal Mass



Derek Mahady, Liturgical Music Coordinator for the Papal Mass in the Phoenix Park.

Chai Brady

More than 2,000 singers from across Ireland gathered in the RDS to do a full run through of the music for the closing Mass of the World Meeting of Families.

With the WMOF only weeks away, the massive chorus is gearing up for the real deal on August 26 when they sing in the Phoenix Park.

In total, 3,000 voices from across all 26 dioceses will make up the main choir, and many more will contribute to the congregational singing with their own parish choirs in the corrals spread across the Phoenix Park.

Individuals and choirs have been rehearsing together locally in their dioceses for a number of months but this was the first time that

the countrywide group was brought together.

Commenting after the rehearsal the Liturgical Music Director, Derek Mahady, said that he was heartened by the work and effort that each diocese has put into the preparation of the music for the papal Mass. The full music team includes:

- Derek Mahady as Liturgical Music Coordinator.
- Dr John O'Keeffe as Conductor of the Core Choir and Orchestra.
- David Grealy as Organist.
- Amy Ryan and Dominic Finn as Assistant Conductors of the Massed Choir.

The music chosen for the Papal Mass will place an emphasis on congregational singing, so many of the pieces will be familiar to those in the Phoenix Park congregation of 500,000.

Irish music and composers feature prominently throughout the Mass. The Opening Hymn is *A Joy For All The Earth* which is the official hymn for WMOF, written by Ephrem Feeley. Well-known liturgical composer Fr Liam Lawton has composed a new Psalm for the Mass which is called *The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor*.

Verse

Two pieces by Seán Ó Riada feature as the Penitential Rite/Kyrie (*A Thiarna Déan Trócaire*), and at the Lord's Prayer (*Ar nAthair*). Fintan O'Carroll's *Celtic Alleluia* with an enhanced verse by Ronan McDonagh will be sung as the Gospel acclamation.

The Apostles' Creed will be John O'Keeffe's own composition, while Fr Pat Ahern's *A Thiarna Éist Linn* will be sung

between the Prayers of the Faithful.

A number of international music will feature in the Mass including *Caritas et Amor* by Z. Randall Stroope, which has been chosen for the Presentation of Gifts, and a three-piece from Jean-Paul Lécot's Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes will feature as the Gloria, Sanctus and Doxology/Amen.

The Communion hymns will be *Ave Verum* (William Byrd), *The Last Supper* (Bernard Sexton), *Come Feast at this Table* (Ian Callanan), *Anima Christi* (Mon. Marco Frisina) and *Bí Íosa im Chroíse*.

And finally, the Anthem to Our Lady will be *Go mBeannaítear Duit, A Mhuire* by Peadar Ó Riada (son of Seán), and the Recessional hymn will be *Jesus Christ, You Are My Life* by Msgr Marco Frisina.

Andrea Bocelli highlights value of family

Staff reporter

Family is the "strongest building block of society" according to Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli who has been confirmed to sing at the Festival of Families in Croke Park on August 25.

The event is a celebration of family life and is expected to be one of the highlights of the WMOF with Pope Francis also in attendance.

Andrea Bocelli has met Pope Francis and has performed for him on more than one occasion including at the last WMOF which took place in Philadelphia in 2015.

He is a devout Catholic and he has spoken openly many times about the importance of Faith and how it takes first place in his life. He has regularly donated his time and talent to causes and events that he is passionate about.

Commenting ahead of his performance he said: "Singing before Pope Francis is a privilege for our soul; it is an honour for what the supreme Pontiff represents in the world. For the indescribable human fragility, typical of the average man such as myself, it brings me great pleasure and immense satisfaction to even have the privilege to be close to a person of such exceptional importance and grace.

"It is a joy to be able to offer my most modest contribution on the occasion of this grand meeting and moment of reflection about the family.



Andrea Bocelli.

"The family remains the strongest building block of society, a cluster of affection, and a privileged space in which one can teach and learn – in every action – how to choose a life that leads toward the greater good."

Community groups

Andrea Bocelli will join other well-known and community groups already announced for the event including Nathan Carter, The Riverdance Troupe, Dana Masters, Daniel O'Donnell, The Begley Family, The Priests, The Holy Family Deaf Choir and Deaftones,

Celine Byrne, Paddy Moloney, Bridgie and Missy Collins and Moya Brennan.

In addition to these artists, the cast for the Festival of Families will include an orchestra in excess of 50 musicians; over 700 Irish, Sean Nós and contemporary dancers, including 500 from Irish dance schools across the country; a 1,000 strong choir; 100 community groups, and 300 flag bearers.

Andrea will also be returning to Dublin at the end of the year to perform a headline show at the 3 Arena on October 31 and 32.

JOIN US AT OUR

WMOF STAND!

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Papal Mass tickets to be sent this week

Those who have booked tickets for the WMOF closing Mass on August 26 are being advised they will receive their tickets this week, on August 10.

There has been some confusion surrounding ticket distribution regarding the Mass as organisers delayed sending out tickets. Too many people for Dublin's

infrastructure to handle said they were planning to travel to the Phoenix Park by car – which was one of the main reasons for the delay.

WMOF organisers have been encouraging attendees to use public transport, and to plan their journeys in the most effective way. The tickets will

be issued via email as a 'print at home' ticket.

They were originally meant to be distributed on August 1, but this was delayed by 10 days.

The Mass is expected to be the biggest event in Ireland for decades, with 500,000 bookings.

Family group engages fully with WMOF preparations



Mai Corpuz with her children Sofia and Jilliane.

Chai Brady

For the last seven months a Dublin family group has been meeting to pray, sing, dance, engage in discussion and enjoy arts and crafts all in preparation for the World Meeting of Families.

The initiative began when the community of the Daughters of Charity who live in St Vincent's, North William Street, wanted to engage with the preparation for the celebration of the World Meeting of Families 2018 and the visit of Pope Francis.

They issued an invitation and a banner and flyer were made asking all members of families to attend. Grandparents (some of whom support from home), mothers, fathers and children all answered the call.

Programme

Some drop in for one night and others have committed to the 27 sessions and want to continue after Pope Francis' visit. Up to 20 people come each night and they have continued throughout the summer months.

The group meet for a

'Family Hour' in the Marillac Centre, St Vincent's on North William Street every Thursday from 7-8pm.

The families began with the programme of catechesis provided by the Church and published by Veritas for the WMOF. Every opportunity was used through the liturgical year to engage with the Valentine tokens, the cube of love, the shamrock and the icon.

They engaged with the resources produced for Catholic Schools Week and those provided by the Archdiocese of Dublin for the Family/School Faith Week in April 2018 and the group also used the *Amoris* parish presentations and are now watching the *Amoris* cartoons - all helping to enhance family life.

The children have done beautiful art work throughout the year and much time has been spent on the Icon of the Holy Family, the Bible stories and on the detail of the icon.

The children also decorated a prayer box and people were encouraged to place their petitions in the box. These petitions will be brought to a convent of contemplative nuns and will be prayed over.



Families from St Agatha's Parish prepare for the World Meeting of Families.



Easter celebrations - time to love and share in a spirit of joy.



Helen Grange and her granddaughter Charleigh.



Marie Byrne with her children Molly and Jodie.

Out&About

WMOF celebrations around the country



LIMERICK: Parishioners from Dromin-Athlacca celebrate an outdoor Mass to celebrate the World Meeting of Families. The Mass included Irish traditional music and symbols from all parish organisations. Tea was served after followed by a Céilí. Photo: Karen Fox



LIMERICK: Parishioners from Dromin-Athlacca at their outdoor Mass to celebrate the World Meeting of Families.



MONAGHAN: Fr Tom Quigley PP of Latton/Bawn on his Golden Jubilee, marking 50 years of priesthood.



WICKLOW: Bill Hendrick, accompanied by his wife Anne, receives a Benemerenti medal from Bishop Eamon Walsh at Mass in the Church of Our Lady in Blessington for decades of voluntary service devoted to the parish.



FRANCE: The Tyburn Nuns promote the opening of Mother Marie-Adèle Garnier's (their foundress) childhood home as a chapel and a centre of pilgrimage. Maison Garnier in Grancey-le-Château, Burgundy, will be formally opened during a Mass in the afternoon of August 15. The order is connected with the deaths of Irish martyrs in Tyburn.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



MAYO: Bishop William Crean of Cloyne made a presentation during Mass of Benemerenti medals to Margaret Hanley, Ballycosgry, Eileen Buicke, Ballinadrideen, and Geraldine Egan, Castlewrixon, in St Mary's Parish in Ballina for their long service to the Church. A special presentation was made to Tom and Mary Moloney, Castleharrison, in recognition of their work at the Holy Well. (l-r) Tom and Mary Moloney, Eileen Buicke, Bishop William Crean, Margaret Hanley, Fr James Monsignor O'Brien and Geraldine Egan.



CARLOW: Fr John O'Brien PP of Clonmore assesses the damage on the roof of Kilquiggan Church.



MAYO: Bishop Fintan Monahan hikes with pilgrims up Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday with about 5,000 other pilgrims.



FRANCE: During the Cork and Ross pilgrimage to Lourdes this year, three Benemerenti medals were awarded to Sr Noelle Ryan, Bon Secours Sister, Mrs Maureen O'Donovan and Dr Peter Moreham for their dedicated service as medical personnel for pilgrims. Also photographed are Fr Damian O'Mahony, chaplain to the sick, Fr Charles Kiely and Canon James O'Donovan. Photo: Photo Viron, Lourdes

ARMAGH

Eucharistic Adoration in St Malachy's Church, Armagh daily from 6am to midnight, and all night on Wednesdays.

CLARE

Ennis Parish, led by Fr Tom Hogan, will make a pilgrimage to Italy on October 15-22. Details: Mary 087 124 7669.

CORK

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday night at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing are on the first Wednesday of every month.

The Alliance of the Two Hearts - Vigil of Reparation and Adoration at Ss John and Paul Church Shannon each first Friday-Saturday of the month from 7pm to 2am. First Friday Mass at 7pm and first Saturday Mass at 12.05am.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

DUBLIN

Mass in Celebration of St Pio - 50 Years since his death, 100 years since receiving the Stigmata - Friday, September 21 at 7.30pm at St John the Evangelist Church, Ballinteer, Dublin 16. Celebrant Fr Martin Bennett OFM Cap. Blessing with Padre Pio glove.

Agape Charismatic prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, Tuesdays, 8pm (Mass last Tuesday of the month), Disciples of the Divine Master Oratory, Junction of Newtownpark Ave./Stillorgan Road. Bus: 46A/C/D or 58C. Tel: 087-6509465.

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home. Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8pm-9pm.

St John Vianney (Curé of Ars) Novena at St John Vianney Parish, Ardlea Road takes place on August 4-12. Mass with invited preacher 10am each day and 7.30pm on Friday August 10. Also Saturday 6pm, and Sunday 9.30am and 11.30am. Mass with Anointing of the Sick: Wednesday 8, 3pm. Holy Hour: Thursday 9, 7.30pm. Evening Prayer and Benediction: Sunday August 12, 4pm. Contact: 01 847-4123. This year we are celebrating the 200th Anniversary of John Vianney going to his parish in Ars.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KERRY

The Alliance of the Two Hearts First Friday and First Saturday Vigil of Adoration and Reparation in Caherciveen parish church at 3pm: Divine Mercy Chaplet, Adoration, rosaries. Ends with Mass at 7.30pm.

KILKENNY

First Saturday Devotions, Adoration, Rosary, Divine Mercy and Prayer for Healing from 7-9pm in St Fiacre's Church, Loughboy.

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12noon and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10am to 12noon.

Young adults ages 18-35 are invited on a pilgrimage with the Dominicans to Bracciano and Rome from October 25-29. Please email limerick@op-tn.org for more information or to request an application. Spaces are limited so please apply soon.

Night prayer with the Dominican Sisters every Tuesday at 5.30pm in St Saviour's Church, Dominic St.

LOUTH

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascanlon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00 353 86 362 3361 from NI or 086-3623361 from RoI.

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form will take place on Sunday, August 12 in the Parish Church, Knock, at 5.30pm.

OFFALY

Clonmacnois Prayer Vigil in Cluain Chiarain Prayer Centre on Friday August 17 and every third Friday. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and prayers follow until 2.10am. Enquiries Dave: 085-7746763.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoore, every Monday, 10-11am and Thursday, 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

WEXFORD

Join Fr Patrick Duffy and parishioners from The Church of St Mary Magdalene, Kilmysshall for a live Mass broadcast. Listen live on South East Radio on 95.6fm to 96.4fm on August 12, at 10am.

WICKLOW

The Glenree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glenree on the first Saturday of every month.

St Patrick's Prayer Meeting on Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the Scout Hall, South Quay, Wicklow.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Faithful give thanks for Mexico plane crash survivors

● Hundreds of worshippers gathered outdoors at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines last week to give thanks for the survival of all 103 people aboard Aeromexico Flight 2431. The flight crashed almost immediately after take-off from Durango's General Guadalupe Victoria International Airport in Mexico on July 31.

Among the passengers on the plane were Fr Esequiel Sanchez, the shrine's rector, and about 15 of his family members and friends who were in Mexico to celebrate his 50th birthday. The group was flying to Mexico City on their way back to Chicago.

Fr Sanchez suffered a broken arm that required surgery but is expected to make a full recovery.

Greek prelates warn 'real steps' needed after wildfires

● Catholic leaders in Greece urged their country to learn lessons from the worst wildfires in a century, which left almost 100 people dead and more than 500 injured.

"Help and support have come from all over Greece and Europe in wake of this tragedy, and I think we'll recover," said Archbishop Nikolaos Printezis of Naxos, Greece, general secretary of the Greek bishops' conference.

"But there are still many dangers, and we need real steps to prevent such disasters from recurring. Our government, churches and people at large must learn the lessons," he said.

India's bishops decry state scrutiny of all Christian NGOs

● The Catholic bishops of the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand have sent a memorandum to the state governor saying Christian NGOs are neither illegal nor dens of terrorists.

The Jharkhand Regional Bishops' Council (JRBC) made the memorandum public at a press conference.

The bishops were reacting to harassment and close scrutiny that Christian

organisations and operations are facing in the hands of state authorities after a baby-selling scandal was recently uncovered in a home for unwed mothers run by the Missionaries of Charity (MC) nuns in Ranchi.

A blanket investigation of all NGOs merely because they are Christian is unjust, unfair, illegal and against natural justice, the bishops said.

Nicaragua withdraws from WYD event for security reasons

● The bishops of Nicaragua have made the decision to withdraw from hosting the 'Days in the Diocese' event leading up to the 2019 World Youth Day (WYD).

The decision was sent by the bishops to the President of the Organising Committee for WYD 2019.

The letter thanks the organisation for choosing Nicaragua to host the event, but explains that the current political situation in the country does not make for a safe place for pilgrims to visit.

Preceding the main celebrations of WYD are 14 days of 'Days in the Diocese' in which pilgrims spend time in the organising country's diocese leading up to the WYD. The Pope wanted it to be celebrated across Central America. WYD will be held in Panama in 2019.

Yemen militants invited to Geneva

● The UN has invited Yemen's warring parties to Geneva on September 6 for a round of talks to end the three-year old conflict. It is time to "begin the difficult and uncertain journey away from war" and that there is now a chance "to weigh the opportunities for peace", Martin Griffiths, UN Special Envoy for Yemen told the Security Council last week.

Griffiths said: "It is time long past for us, together, to call for an early resumption of the political process, two years since the last round in Kuwait".

He was referring to the UN-supported peace talks that where first held three years ago in Switzerland before shifting to Kuwait in April 2016.

Calls for prayer after Indonesia's devastating earthquake

Prayers are being offered after almost 100 people have been confirmed dead after a magnitude-6.9 earthquake struck Indonesia's Lombok Island on August 5, a week after another powerful quake killed more than a dozen people.

The country's National Disaster Mitigation Agency said more than 200 people were injured in the latest quake, which also jolted the neighbouring tourist island of Bali, damaged thousands of buildings and forced thousands of people to flee their homes.

Pope Francis sent words of condolences and solidarity to Indonesia authorities on August 6 through Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state.

Cardinal Parolin said the Pope was praying "especially for the repose of the deceased, the healing of the injured and the consolation of all who grieve the loss of their loved ones".

"In offering encouragement to the civil authorities



A woman injured during an earthquake is assisted outside the North Lombok Hospital in Indonesia. At least 100 people have been confirmed dead in the earthquake. Photo: CNS

and those involved in the search and rescue efforts as they assist the victims of this disaster, His Holiness willingly invokes upon the people of Indonesia divine blessings of consolation and strength," the message said.

Mitigation

A disaster mitigation agency representative said the victims urgently need medical supplies, clean water, food, blankets, mattress and tents.

Among the damaged buildings was St Mary Immaculate Church in the West Nusa Tenggara provincial capital of Mataram.

"The quake was stronger than before. The church ceiling fell down, but the church's walls remain intact," Fr Laurentius Maryono, a priest at the parish, said this week.

"There were no casualties as there was no religious activities going on in the church when the quake

occurred.

"Some parishioners are currently trying to clean up the church and get rid of the debris," he added.

The parish emergency response team was coordinating with one from the Diocese of Denpasar.

"They will go to the worst-hit areas of North Lombok and East Lombok districts to collect data. We will continue to collect aid for victims, something we had started doing for victims of last week's quake," the priest said.

The disaster mitigation agency reported that last week's quake killed at least 16 people, left 355 people injured and forced more than 5,100 people to flee their homes.

Meanwhile, Holy Spirit Cathedral Parish in Denpasar, Bali province, reported only slight damage in the quake.

More than 130 aftershocks were recorded following the latest quake.

China churches must raise national flag on certain days to promote patriotism

China's nine major religious organisations want all religious sites across the country to raise the national flag on special days to reflect patriotism and sinicisation.

But some Catholics claim the initiative aims to force religious people to be patriotic. "Is it necessary to train believers to hold the ritual of raising the national flag and to play the national anthem before they can hold religious activities?" one priest asked.

The official Catholic Church in China website quoted a report from the website of the Central United Front Work Department saying that the

Sixth Joint Conference of the Country's Religious Groups was held on July 31 in Beijing. Wang Zuoan, deputy director of the Central United Front Work Department and director of the State Religious Affairs Bureau, addressed the meeting.

Consciousness

They propose raising the national flag at all religious venues to help religious figures and believers strengthen their national consciousness and civic awareness, deepen their political, ideological and emotional recognition of the Communist Party and the country,

and adhere to religious sinicisation.

A Catholic in Hebei Diocese in central China described the initiative as "a political incident, as politics directly interfere in religious internal management. Convening a national meeting for promoting this practice means it is mandatory and has to be nationally implemented."

He said that raising the national flag at churches started after crosses were demolished in Zhejiang province. The practice was then launched in Xinjiang province and is now being promoted nationwide.

Bishop regrets lack of transparency in priest's case, but denies cover up

Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, has apologised for failing to be more transparent about a pastor removed from ministry and sent to treatment last year because the priest had developed "an emotionally inappropriate, non-sexual relationship with a 19-year-old male which involved alcohol".

He sent Fr Charles Townsend, pastor of St Peter

Parish in Lincoln, to the Shalom Centre in Houston for treatment.

"My failure at the time was the lack of transparency with the people of God about this incident," Bishop Conley said in an open letter to Catholics of the diocese.

"Despite reports to the contrary, I did not oblige anyone to keep silent about this matter. Our priests and the parishioners of St Peter's

were told that he went away for health reasons. I made no effort to 'cover up' any element of this situation, and I tried to address it with integrity," he wrote.

Transparency

"However, I did not encourage transparency. I did not encourage an open discussion about this situation with our priests, with parishioners,

or with those involved," he continued. "Even though we were not legally obligated to report the incident, it would have been the prudent thing to do."

He added, "Because the young man had reached the age of majority, we did not tell his parents about the incident. I deeply regret this lack of transparency and breach of trust."



Edited by Chai Brady
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'Wake me up when he starts!'



Young pilgrims take shelter from the sun as they wait for Pope Francis to lead the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

Death penalty is deemed 'inadmissible' by Pope Francis

Building on the development of Church teaching against capital punishment, Pope Francis has ordered a revision of the Catechism of the Church to assert "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person" and to commit the Church to working toward its abolition worldwide.

The catechism's paragraph on capital punishment, 2267, had been updated by St John Paul II in 1997 to strengthen its scepticism about the need to use the death penalty in the modern world and, particularly, to affirm the importance of protecting all human life.

Announcing the change, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said: "The new text, following in the footsteps of the teaching of John Paul II in *Evangelium*

Vitae, affirms that ending the life of a criminal as punishment for a crime is inadmissible because it attacks the dignity of the person, a dignity that is not lost even after having committed the most serious crimes."

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life) was St John Paul's 1995 encyclical on the dignity and sacredness of all human life. The encyclical led to an updating of the Catechism of the Church, which he originally promulgated in 1992 and which recognised "the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty".

At the same time, the original version of the catechism still urged the use of "bloodless means" when possible to

punish criminals and protect citizens.

The catechism now will read: "Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good. Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state.

"Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption."

Bishop supports Philippines' rescue op of 3 Filipinos in Libya

A Catholic bishop in the Philippines has expressed support for a government plan to rescue three Filipino migrant workers abducted in Libya last month.

Bishop Rufino Santos, head of the Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People, said he supports President Rodrigo Duterte's proposal to send a frigate to help rescue the Filipinos.

"Yes we support," said the

prelate in an interview. "We should show our solidarity and [that] we are serious about the freedom of Filipino abductees," said Bishop Santos.

The prelate also called on the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs to do its best to help rescue three Filipino engineers and a South Korean who were taken from a water project site on July 6.

"We appeal to our [Foreign

Affairs Office] to exhaust all means for the safe freedom of our three Filipino engineers abducted in Libya," said Bishop Santos.

On August 4, the Philippine Navy announced that its fleet-marine unit is preparing an "appropriate force package" to help the kidnapped Filipinos.

South Korea has already deployed the 4,000-ton warship *Munmu the Great*, which

was part of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

"Every life is important, precious. A single life is valuable," said Bishop Santos, adding that the Filipinos in Libya "have only best intentions to serve the country where they are in".

Last week, Duterte said the Philippines would send two warships to Libya to join efforts to secure the release of the kidnap victims.

Vatican roundup

Faith in Jesus satisfies deeper hungers

Doing God's will means believing in Jesus and allowing love for him to translate into love for one's neighbours, Pope Francis has said.

The Gospel story of the multiplication of loaves demonstrates the concern Jesus showed for people's daily physical needs, the Pope said, but the passages that follow show how "it is even more important to cultivate our relationship with him, reinforcing our Faith in him who is the 'bread of life' come to satisfy our hunger for truth, our hunger for justice, our hunger for love".

Before reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St Peter's Square last Sunday, Pope Francis offered a commentary on the day's Gospel reading, John 6:24-35, which tells of the crowds fed by Jesus following him and asking him what it means to do "the works of God".

Jesus answers: "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent."

Pope Francis said that Jesus "wants to satisfy not only their bodies but also their souls, giving them the spiritual food that can satisfy their deeper hungers".

Pope prays Blessed Paul VI intercedes for peace

On the 40th anniversary of the death of Blessed Paul VI, Pope Francis went into the grotto under St Peter's Basilica to pray at his predecessor's simple tomb.

The Pope who oversaw the last sessions of the Second Vatican Council and began implementing its teachings died on August 6, 1978, at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence outside of Rome.

He was buried six days later in the basilica's grotto. Unlike most of the Popes buried there, his tomb is

in the earth – rather than elevated – and is covered with a simple travertine marble slab.

Pope Francis reminded visitors to St Peter's Square of the anniversary and of the fact he plans to canonise his predecessor on October 14.

"From Heaven may he intercede for the Church he loved so much and for peace in the world," Pope Francis said.

He asked the people in the square to join him in a round of applause for "this great Pope of modernity".

Tourists should promote respect online says cardinal

With more and more people planning their vacations online and sharing their experiences digitally, the tourism industry and tourists themselves should pay more attention to using online forums to encourage respect for the locales visited and for the communities that live there, the Vatican said.

In a message for the September 27 celebration of World Tourism Day, Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said the "digital transformation" of tourism has the potential for promoting happier and healthier vacations that do more to protect the natural environment and promote authentic encounters between people.

The cardinal's message was released by the Vatican on August 4.

For the 2018 celebration of the day, the World Tourism Organisation is focusing on the industry's digital transformation. The cardinal's message noted how digital technology is "dramatically changing the way we live periods of rest, vacation, mobility and tourism in all its forms".

Digital innovation, Cardinal Turkson wrote, should have the aim of "promoting inclusiveness, increasing the engagement of people and local communities and achieving an intelligent and equitable management of resources".

Catholic physician braves Sudan despite extreme danger



Paul Jeffrey

A US physician who has won accolades for his service in a war-torn corner of Sudan said he has just done what any missionary is called to do.

"I'm a lay missionary. We're supposed to show the face of Christ to people, but how can you do that if you take off when the going gets tough?" asked Dr Tom Catena, a 54-year old physician from Amsterdam, New York, sent by the Catholic Medical Mission Board to run the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, a village in the isolated Nuba Mountains.

In 2011, fighting between rebel Nuba forces and the central government in Khartoum grew particularly fierce. The area around the church-run hospital began to experience intense bombing by the Sudanese Armed Forces. Bishop Macram Max Gassis, then the bishop of El Obeid, which includes the Nuba region, ordered all foreign church workers, including Catena, to leave.

The bishop sent three planes on a daring mission to evacuate the foreign staff, most of whom were contracted teachers and nurses from Kenya and Uganda.

Catena was among a handful who said no.

"My organisation was getting nervous. They had someone in Juba assessing the situation who said it was too dangerous, so I would have to leave. I said I wouldn't go. They said if I didn't leave they would terminate my contract. I said ok," Catena said.

Crisis

"We made up in the end, but the way I saw it was that if I left, that tells the people here that my life is more valuable than theirs. And I don't believe that. That's not how Christ was, he gave his life for everyone. And we're supposed to follow Christ. So how can we take off in the middle of a crisis?"

Catena said it wasn't a difficult decision.

"We knew the consequences if we left, because the wounded were coming in right and left. There was no way we could leave. Many of the other staff stayed as well, so I wasn't by myself," he said.

Catena said that years earlier, before he arrived, the area had been subjected to heavy shelling and bombing, but pastoral workers



Dr Tom Catena, a Catholic lay missionary from the US, listens to a nurse during rounds at the Mother of Mercy Hospital in Gidel, a village in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. Photo: CNS

had stayed put.

"You get a lot of credibility when people see you sticking around, see you eat what they eat and share the same fear they experience. It's a huge witness. It speaks more powerfully than any preaching can do," he said.

Sr Angelina Nyakuru, a Comboni sister from Uganda, heads the hospital's nursing staff. She and Catena both came to Gidel to open the hospital in 2008. She said Catena's courage proved infectious several times.

"In 2015 there were rumours that northern soldiers were just 30km away and moving toward us. You could hear the big artillery. It was frightening. Everyone on

the staff decided to leave, but Dr Tom put up his hands and said he wouldn't go.

"So I told the sisters I wouldn't leave either," Sr Nyakuru said. "All the sisters stayed, and one priest. Everyone else relocated across the border for two weeks until things calmed down. His calm commitment encouraged the rest of us. Every time something happened Dr Tom was ready to sacrifice his life."

Challenges

Catena is not just the only surgeon for a million people. He's the director of a 435-bed hospital wrestling with staff discontent about stagnant salaries and

the technological challenges of practicing medicine in one of the poorest corners of the planet (the hospital just got its first X-ray machine). In rare moments of candor, he rants about the international agencies that won't enter the Nuba Mountains because they're afraid of incurring the wrath of Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's president and an indicted war criminal.

"If I can be the one to get the message out, to show another face of the Church and the good it's doing in the world, then let me give it a shot"

Catena's passion and commitment have brought him attention from the outside world, including last year's Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. He's the subject of a recently released documentary film, *The Heart of Nuba*. And Nicholas Kristof, writing in *The New York Times*, quoted a local Muslim leader who called Catena 'Jesus Christ' because he heals the sick and helps the blind see.

For some, the world's focus on Catena is unfair.

"Tom is a hero. He has given 10 years of his life to the people of the Nuba, and he's a rock star in that hospital," said John Ashworth, a former Mill Hill missionary priest who serves as an advisor to the Catholic bishops in Sudan and

South Sudan.

"But there are lots of heroes there, hundreds of heroes, yet they are not white and they're not American. They are Africans, and they all have interesting stories, but the journalists aren't interested in them," Ashworth said.

Catena said he's embarrassed by the attention he's received.

"I've never asked anyone to come here and interview me. But if people come, fine. If I can be the one to get the message out, to show another face of the Church and the good it's doing in the world, then let me give it a shot," he said.

"And I haven't been alone.

The sisters never left. The priests didn't leave. The Nuba nurses and other incredible hospital staff didn't leave. But when I tell that to a journalist, they often respond, 'they're from Africa', as if Africa was just one country. They want to write about the *khawaja* (a local Arabic term for white person) from the US, because that's what people in the US want to read about. Otherwise nobody cares."

At the end of the day, Catena said he just wants people to care.

"One way I've tried to get comfortable with the attention," he said, "is to believe I've been given a chance to show both how the Nuba are suffering, as well as the great work that the Catholic Church is doing here."

Paul Jeffrey reports for Catholic News Service.



Dr Catena with some members of the community in Gidel.

Letter from Britain



Charles Collins

International aid agency sex abuse report could provide road map for Church

A new report on sexual abuse committed by staff of international aid agencies could provide a blueprint for the Church in dealing with the aftermath of the accusations surrounding once-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former Archbishop of Washington, and other high-ranking clerics that have come to light in 2018.

The British Parliamentary International Development Committee (IDC) began an inquiry on the international aid sector after an article in *The Times* revealed that the British-based agency Oxfam – one of the largest and most well-respected development charities in the world – had covered up sexual abuse by staff members in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake that devastated the country.

On July 31, the resulting report ‘Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector’ was published, and the head of the committee, Member of Parliament Stephen Twigg, noted that “the abject failure of the international aid sector to get to grips with this issue, leaving victims at the mercy of those who seek to use power to abuse others...must be tackled”.

The report brings up many issues in the aid sector which Church-watchers will find familiar.

Due to confirmed under-reporting, the exact scale is currently impossible to define, but practitioners suspect that those cases which have come to light are only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. The lack of information must not be a cause for inaction. In addition to the abuse of aid beneficiaries, there is also evidence of significant numbers of cases of sexual harassment and abuse within aid organizations, including where the resulting proceedings have been conducted very poorly.

Thread

There seems to be a common thread in this apparent inability of the aid sector to deal well with allegations, complaints and cases involving sexual abuse. There seems to be a strong tendency for victims and whistleblowers, rather than perpetrators, to end up feeling penalized.

One of the problems in dealing with clerical sexual abuse has been the inability to separate Church politics from this issue: within the Church, there has been a habit to blame ‘the other side’ for the crisis, with the ensuing tendency to defend the clerics on your side of the ecclesial divide and assume the



guilt of the clerics on the other.

Yet these issues do not cloud the UK inquiry into the aid sector, which also covered UN agencies and peacekeeping forces, meaning it can provide an interesting prism in which to look at the crisis in the Church.

The parallels are striking: much like the Church, a major scandal at the UN in 2002 involving its humanitarian workers and peacekeepers resulted in the first major inquiry into sexual abuse. Several new safeguards were put into place – however the report points out that, in reality, the response to the crisis was “reactive, patchy and sluggish”.

“Evidence was given that people were allowed to resign, rather than be fired, to ‘protect the mission’”

The report noted debates on what constituted abuse: For example, in 2011 Oxfam did not ban the use of prostitutes by employees in crisis zones, although they have now changed their policy.

The document also quoted William Anderson, the first person to hold the safeguarding position at Oxfam, who said “safeguarding was only valued in the abstract and was about ticking boxes rather than seriously looking at the dynamics that foster abuse”.

The report said Oxfam’s “concern for reputation was more apparent than its commitment to rooting out the problem” of sexual abuse by its staff.

The committee found that evidence points to a “sector-wide culture” in which sexual exploitation and abuse is an “open secret” and those who speak out are silenced and ostracised; this is coupled with a “culture of denial” that stymies meaningful reform.

Related

Evidence was given that people were allowed to resign, rather than be fired, to “protect the mission” of the aid organizations in the countries where abuses occurred. Some organisations cited a duty to protect their staff as the reason they were not reported to the local authorities when they committed offenses.

“The Committee is roundly critical of the sector’s ability to drive transformational change.

Action only seems to come when there is a crisis...and even then, it has been superficial. A reactive, cyclical approach, driven by concern for reputation management in the face of media reports has not, and will not, bring about meaningful change,” the IDC said.

For anyone following Church news over the past 20 years, a feeling of *déjà vu* wouldn’t be surprising. Looking at the report’s conclusions, it’s also not hard to see how they could be applied to Church reform.

The committee made several recommendations for the sector, including empowering aid recipients so they know their rights if they are threatened or violated; proactively seeking out victims and responding “robustly” to their complaints; establishing ‘zero-tolerance’ policies on sexual exploitation and abuse; making sure all accusations are followed up by investigation, and all confirmations of abuse must be met with accountability.

The IDC noted the vital role of establishing clear guidelines for referring incidents, allegations and offenders to relevant authorities, and said aid agencies want common standards for reporting, investigating and following up cases of sexual abuse.

“It is absolutely critical that we get the investigators who have experience of handling disclosures of rape. It is really risky and dangerous not to, because you risk re-traumatizing people and you risk compromising evidence that may be used in a future criminal case. That is critical,” Helen Evans, another former global head of safeguarding at Oxfam, told the committee.

The report also noted “purposeful perpetrators” can be opportunists and would not necessarily be filtered out by the system of “passports” and background checks commonly in place, and called for a global register of aid workers, where abuse allegations would be noted.

“The fact that a senior staff member [at Oxfam] who had admitted to sexual misconduct, had been the subject of other allegations, and had failed to uphold safeguarding responsibilities was able to remain in the sector undetected, underscores the urgent need for rapid improvements in the way that the international aid sector communicates misconduct,” the

report said.

The report also said that a “failure to listen to and consider the needs of victims and survivors” will make any reform ineffective.

“Victims and survivors should demonstrably be front and center of all efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and this means the inclusion of victim and survivor voices in policy-making processes on an ongoing basis. A failure to listen to and consider the needs of victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse will engender a response that is not only ineffective, but potentially harmful,” the report said.

“The IDC noted the vital role of establishing clear guidelines for referring incidents...to relevant authorities”

“However, the vulnerability and disempowerment of the victims and survivors of abuse in crisis settings create multiple interlocking barriers to reporting,” the report said, listing the possible dependency of the victim on the abuser, fear of retaliation or stigmatisation and the social consequences of the accusation.

The IDC said whistleblowing systems, to be effective, need to be as accessible as possible, and recommended the establishment of an independent ombudsman that victims could approach if the normal reporting systems break down.

The report noted the impact of sexual abuse and exploitation “obviously and clearly falls directly upon the victims and survivors” and said often such people will already be “desperate” and “traumatized”.

For Church-watchers, the only surprising thing about the report is the speed in which it was produced. The first press reports on the Oxfam scandal in Haiti were in February – the committee was able to collect testimony, collate it, and publish the report in less than 6 months.

The next step will be a major safeguarding conference in October sponsored by the UK government Department for International Development. It might be an interesting event for Church leaders to attend.

Charles Collins is Managing Editor of Crux.

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

We must retain our common decency

Dear Editor, Greg Daly's analysis piece, (IC 26/07/18) on the proposed referendum to remove the Constitution's provision on blasphemy, and the associated Defamation Act 2009, was a timely reminder that it works, is important, and is a model for other countries.

The purpose of the Constitution is to outline the standards we aspire to live by while the law of the land is there to protect us and to provide a means by which grievances can be resolved amicably. Our current situation does both unobtrusively, in much the same way as the smoking or hose-pipe bans have achieved their objectives; almost unnoticed.

To be found guilty of the offense

of blasphemy, one must not only cause widespread offence amongst a religious grouping but be found to have acted with this intention. Works of genuine literary, artistic, political, scientific or academic value are not subject to it.

Its existence is comforting to all who value free speech, democracy and who wish to live in a Republic that values "parity of esteem" for all its citizens, because history is replete with examples of where the unscrupulous recalibration of public opinion made sectarian hate-crimes, discrimination and persecution acceptable.

Far from deleting our legislation, we ought to commend it to other

countries, particularly those like Pakistan, where laws lack objectivity, resulting in accusations by individuals being pursued with all the vigour of private vendettas.

All of the above leads me to dismiss this proposed referendum as contrary to our society's commitment to values of fundamental human decency, our abhorrence of language that locks others in negative stereotypes and our belief that every religious group is worthy of that respect which allows them to participate fully and at all levels in society.

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

Accusation of discrimination needed explanation

Dear Editor, On reading your report on 'liberal lay group accuses WMOF of discrimination' I was disappointed that you simply published this claim without informing us of the make-up of this group together with an explanation as to why they deserved publicity.

It's bad enough having to read of them in the

secular press but in *The Irish Catholic* I expected that there would be some examination of this group and why they should be given a platform to criticise Catholic Church teaching. They are certainly not 'Church' as the Catholic Church is, according to the Creed, one apostolic Church. If they do not accept the Creed they have no right

to claim to be part of our Church.

Any motley crew can make a claim to be part of the Church while refusing to accept its teaching, and I may add, not its teaching, but that of Jesus who promised to be with it always after appointing Peter as leader. Therefore, surely it is reasonable to expect that

they should be questioned on their claim while pointing out that they are simply objectors and as such hardly deserve coverage in *The Irish Catholic* except by robust interrogation of their claim 'we are Church'.

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

How is it wrong to stop blasphemy?

Dear Editor, Charlie Flanagan's plan to remove the blasphemy offence from our Constitution to enhance our international reputation is nothing more than an excuse to remove God further from our nation. Greg Daly's assertion (26/7/18 IC) that God can defend Himself is true.

In this world we have free will to love God, or reject Him, and God does not interfere with this. If we loved God, should we not try to stop him being blasphemed against?

*David Kelly,
Crumlin,
Dublin 12.*



Pope's ruling on capital punishment is welcome

Dear Editor, My ears buzzed with delight when I heard that Pope Francis had changed Church teaching on the death penalty, granting that it was no longer admissible to be implemented. To me, I was always baffled as a Catholic why it was permitted given the belief that all

life has inherent dignity and worth.

This means that at a very fundamental level, the value of one's life is not contingent upon actions, either positive or negative, but based solely on the notion that we are all made in the image of God. Just like abortion, who

are to take away the life of somebody – and who are we to judge who is more 'deserving' of receiving the penalty than others?

We are all guilty of sin and God is the sole arbiter of our fate. With this news in mind, I rejoice in knowing that many prisoners will

now have the opportunity to repent of their crimes and will hopefully find a loving and caring God at the end of that process.

*Yours etc.,
James Cullen,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22.*

Mass is anchor of our Church

Dear Editor, I am delighted that the Pope is coming to Ireland and that people are allowed to express their thoughts.

I grew up in a very religious home and was always attending Mass. I had never fully appreciated/understood the importance of the Mass until my teenage years, when a sermon was preached about the Mass at an annual mission.

On one evening of the mission, the priest spoke on the topic: "It's the Mass that matters." He spoke plainly about the meaning of the Mass and emphasised it in terms I, as a young boy, could understand.

I feel this sort of explanation for all people, young and old would be most beneficial. He is now 70 plus years old and this sermon has stayed with me. It has had a powerful and lasting impact on me. I believe the Mass is the anchor of the Catholic Church. I look forward to the Pope trying to reenergize the Mass and bring it back to the level of the people.

*Yours etc.,
Joe Smith,
Shercock, Co. Cavan.*

Treatment of religious is outrageous

Dear Editor, As a committed practising Roman Catholic, I wish to object in the strongest possible manner to the appalling abuse, being meted out, on a daily basis, to our Church, our priests, nuns and religious. It is fashionable in Ireland to criticise, sneer at and condemn our Church and its representatives.

Particularly, in Irish media circles, there is an imbalance when it comes to reporting on all Catholic Church matters. We have the most dedicated hard working and kind priests and nuns, and yet they are suffering constant insults every day.

For most of my life I have worked closely with priests and religious in Ireland and with Missionary priests in Africa and never once, even as a young child did I have any fear of being with them. It is my experience that we were blessed and are blessed to have them.

*Yours etc.,
Helen O'Brien,
Bishopstown, Co. Cork.*

Fair play, transport chiefs!

Dear Editor, I think it's wonderful that public transport in Dublin will be free for the Pope's visit this month. It may be the case that the sheer number of people paying would lead to a bureaucratic overload, but I think it's also a kind gesture showing that this is an historic event and nothing should stop people from experiencing it.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Devine,
Galway City,
Galway.*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

📷 Around the world



EL SALVADOR: Fireworks explode behind El Salvador's patron saint the Divine Saviour of The World in San Salvador.

◀ **ISRAEL:** Young people play in a water fountain near the Old City of Jerusalem. Photos: CNS



BELGIUM: Fishermen in Oostduinkerke ride horses to haul shrimp nets out of the sea.



USA: Ronald Tabak, chair of the death penalty committee of the American Bar Association's Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice, listens as Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago talks about the death penalty during a panel discussion in Chicago.



USA: An extraordinary minister of the Eucharist distributes Communion during Mass at Transfiguration Church in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York.



NICARAGUA: The mother, sister and nieces of Junior Rojas sit outside their home in Sutiaba. The Nicaraguan police, with masked and armed paramilitary support, attacked Sutiaba, killing three people, including Rojas.

Why I believe in God



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Some of my favorite authors are agnostics, men and women who face life honestly and courageously without Faith in a personal God. They're stoics mostly, persons who have made peace with the fact that God may not exist and that perhaps death ends everything for us. I see this, for example, in the late James Hillman, a man whom I greatly admire and who has much to teach believers about what it means to listen to and honor the human soul.

But here's something I don't admire in these agnostic stoics: while they face with courage what it should mean for us if God doesn't exist and death ends our personal existence, they don't with the same courage ask the question of what it should mean for us if God does exist and death does not end our personal existence. What if God does exist and what if the tenets of our Faith are true? They need too to face that question.

No doubts

I believe that God exists, not because I have never had doubts, or because I was raised in the Faith by persons whose lives gave deep witness to its truth, or because perennially the vast majority of people on this planet believe in God.

I believe that a personal God exists for more reasons than I can name: the goodness of saints; the hook in my own heart that

has never let me go; the interface of Faith with my own experience, the courage of religious martyrs throughout history; the stunning depth of Jesus' teachings; the deep insights contained in other religions, the mystical experience of countless people; our sense of connection inside the communion of saints with loved ones who have died; the convergence of the anecdotal testimony of hundreds of individuals who have been clinically dead and resuscitated back to life; the things we sometimes intuitively know beyond all logical reason; the constant recurrence of resurrection in our lives; the essential triumph of truth and goodness throughout history; the fact that hope never dies, the unyielding imperative we feel inside of ourselves to be reconciled with others before we die; the infinite depth of the human

Leon Bloy.



heart; and, yes, even the very ability of atheists and agnostics to intuit that somehow it still all makes sense, points to the existence of a

“I know that existentially: I'm happy and at peace to the exact extent that I take my Faith seriously and live it out in fidelity; the more faithful I am, the more at peace I am, and vice versa”

living, personal God.

I believe that God exists because Faith works; at least to the extent we work it. The existence of God proves itself true to the extent that we take it seriously and live our lives in face of it.

Simply put, we're happy and at peace to the exact extent that we risk, explicitly or implicitly, living lives of Faith. The happiest people I know are also the most generous, selfless, gracious, and reverent persons I know. That's no accident.

Leon Bloy once asserted that there's only one true sadness in life, that of not being a saint. We see that in the story of the rich young man in the Gospels who turns down Jesus' invitation to live his Faith more deeply. He goes away sad.

Of course being a saint and being sad are never all or nothing, both have degrees. But there's a constant: we're happy or sad in direct proportion to our fidelity or infidelity to what's one, true, good and beautiful.

I know that existentially: I'm happy and at peace to the exact extent that I take my Faith seriously and live it out in fidelity; the more faithful I am, the more at peace I am, and vice versa.

Inherent in all of this too is a certain 'law of karma', namely, the universe gives back to us morally exactly what we give to it. As Jesus worded it, the measure you measure out is the measure that will be measured back to you. What we breathe out is what we're going to inhale.

If I breathe out selfishness,

selfishness is what I will inhale; if I breathe out bitterness, that's what I'll meet at every turn; conversely, if I breathe out love, gracious, and forgiveness, these will be given back to me in the exact measure that I give them out.

“Simply put, we're happy and at peace to the exact extent that we risk, explicitly or implicitly, living lives of Faith”

Our lives and our universe have a deep, innate, non-negotiable structure of love and justice written into them, one that can only be underwritten by a living, personal, divine mind and heart of love.

None of this, of course, proves God's existence with the kind of proof we find in science or mathematics; but God isn't found at the end of an empirical test, a mathematical equation, or a philosophical syllogism. God is found, explicitly or implicitly, in living a good, honest, gracious, selfless, moral life and this can happen inside of religion or outside of it.

The Belgium Benedictine, Benoit Standaert, submits that wisdom is three things, and a fourth. Wisdom is a respect for knowledge; wisdom is a respect for honesty and aesthetics; and wisdom is a respect for mystery. But there's a fourth – wisdom is a respect for Someone.

Family & Lifestyle

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Fending off fears about school

As summer break draws to a close, it's time to pull our attention away from the beach and focus on a very important event: the first day of school. Starting a new school year can be both a source of excitement and a source of anxiety for parents and children alike.

If you find yourself approaching this day and feel unprepared, there are many things you and your child can do to lessen the anxiety and increase the odds of a productive first day.

Here are 10 tips for making sure that everyone's ready so that stress and dread won't occupy your mind throughout the day.



Returning to school is one of the biggest changes in your child's life, writes **Davis Clark**

1. Start bedtime routines before school begins

Getting up early in the morning can be difficult for many children, especially if they've spent the summer getting some much-needed snoozing. It's possible that the kids have fallen into a less productive sleep schedule, and they may need some time to get back into the swing of things.

If you want to soften the blow on that first morning, start

getting them into bed earlier during the last few weeks of summer, and try to wake them up earlier. This could help get them on a more regular schedule, and be better prepared for that first day.

2. Back-to-school shopping

In order to be prepared to send them off, it's important to make sure that you have all the shopping done before the

first day of school actually hits. If you have the school uniform purchased days in advance, there will be no stress when everyone is getting dressed in the morning. And when it comes to supplies, set a date in your calendar to take your kids shopping. This will make sure it gets done, and will actually help get them excited for school.

Giving your kids opportunity to pick out their own backpack and supplies will involve them in the process, and give them a chance to express themselves.

3. Start putting things on a calendar

A calendar is obviously a great way to keep a schedule, and doing so can help kids know

what they have to do and when. When the school year starts things tend to get a little hectic, and it can be nice to have a visual aid that tells everyone what they need to do. And even better, you can give each of the kids their own that they can fill out, giving them a sense of autonomy.

Learning to keep a calendar in their room and filling it out will make them feel good, and crossing days out can help give them sense of progress.

4. Find healthy meals

There's been a lot of research that's found that people, especially kids, function better on healthier diets. Before school starts, take the kids shopping

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Family News

AND EVENTS

Ketch-up with the festival

Is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable? This historic debate could easily be the topic of discussion at a festival which celebrates the mysterious food item. The Totally Terrific Tomato Festival will be paying homage to the ingredient vital for bolognese and pizza, with a series of exhibitions, talks, cookery demos and much more.

Taking place from August 19-26 as part of Heritage Week at the National Botanic Gardens, you'll be able to find out how the various varieties are cultivated and about the humble tomato's plant-life relatives, including tobacco, potatoes, chillies, petunias and even deadly nightshade.

As the theme for Heritage Week 2018 is Sharing Stories, self-confessed tomato addict Nicky Kyle, along with Botanic Gardens Director Matthew Jebb, will also be on hand for the fascinating series of talks known as Tomato Tales to amuse and beguile you.

Bon appetite!

BRAIN GAMES DEFAMED: In the past if you wanted to train your brain you would do riddles and puzzles, but with technological advances in society, brain games can be easily played on your phone. But do they work?

According to a new report carried out by Bobby Stojanoski, a research scientist in the Brain and Mind Institute at Western University in Ontario, the answer is an affirmative 'no'.

The participants took part in an experiment which tested their working memory in a certain task, and then tested them on another secondary task. Researchers found that there was no improvement between those who had trained in the first game, and a control group who only were only tested for the second task.

"Despite hours of brain training on that one game, participants were no better at the second game than people who tested on the second game, but hadn't trained on the first one," Stojanoski said.

Brushing up!

With summer soon coming to an end, it is probably wise to squeeze in one last holiday before the bad weather hits. But as most people know from personal experience, travelling can be very stressful, especially for the hygiene-obsessed among us. Whether you're on a plane or in a secluded area in an unfamiliar country, fighting off germs might be the only thing on your mind. One small way this can be alleviated is through the cleaning power of Toothettes.

Unlike normal toothbrushes which require water and toothpaste, Toothettes are ultra-soft swabs which have distinct ridges that help lift debris and mucus, clean between teeth and stimulate oral tissues while being gentle on the mouth.

They're very easy to use as you simply have to pop them in your mouth, brush your teeth, and throw them away. They even come in handy bags of 20, so you can always have them ready to go and even share one with a friend!



Making legal provisions in advance is a wise move

An ageing population has resulted in a major increase in the number of older adults who have significant cognitive impairment. While the incidence of dementia at any given age has not changed much in recent decades, the number of people affected has noticeably risen due to gains in life expectancy.

Dementia incidence doubles every five years after the age of 65 and importantly there has been more than a 19% increase in this age group since 2011. In fact, it is now estimated that 55,000 people in Ireland have dementia with about 4,000 new diagnoses every year. Extrapolating from current trends this number is set to double over the next 20 years.

Indeed, about one in three people over 65 will develop dementia and its prevalence is about 15-20% by the age of 80. While this may seem grim, for most, dementia is a condition that is slowly progressive over a decade or more and indeed in mild to moderate cases is compatible with leading a good quality of life. For example, mild dementia does not necessarily preclude one from driving a car or engaging in many activities of daily living.

Decline

Despite this, in its early stages more complex functions like managing finances can be affected. Furthermore, with advancing cognitive decline, decisions regarding care needs and other matters can prove difficult due to a loss of mental competency.

When there is a significant memory problem it is prudent to consider making legal provisions for the future. For

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



instance, it is often advised that a person should consider either making or changing a will (where applicable) early in the course of a cognitive decline. For many with early dementia this is usually not a problem.

“About one in three people over 65 will develop dementia and its prevalence is about 15-20% by the age of 80”

By law, it requires one to know the nature of a will (i.e. it comes into effect only when one dies), the people who would normally be considered to be entitled to inherit (closest family or next of kin) and the extent of one's assets. While a solicitor must be satisfied as to one's capacity to execute a will, it is common (though not necessary) for a doctor to be asked to give an opinion when a patient has dementia.

In the event of one losing capacity to look after their personal and financial affairs, the existence of an Enduring Power of Attorney can be helpful. In fact, setting up or executing an Enduring Power should be

considered by anyone though requires a doctor and solicitor.

It involves nominating one or more people to look after your affairs in the event that you become permanently incapacitated in the future as a result of dementia, stroke or other brain injury. Where used, the attorney's appointed have the legal right to make decisions regarding how your finances are spent to best support you as well as personal care matters such as where you live.

Unfortunately, if one loses capacity and no provisions



are made, neither the person themselves nor anyone else has the legal authority to make decisions regarding their finances or other matters.

For applications for nursing home under the Fair Deal Scheme, a mechanism exists (which is commonly used) whereby a "care representative" who is a family member can be appointed at a hearing of the Circuit court to make the decision on behalf of the patient. However, this does not grant power to make decisions on any other financial matters.

Indeed, where there is no Power of Attorney and there are significant finances to be administered, a person may have to be made a "ward of

court".

Many older adults with dementia lose insight into their condition and care needs and indeed refuse supports. While in the majority of such cases, the expressed wish will be to stay at home, this may not be viable or carry a substantial risk.

In particular, patients may not appreciate the issues and risk involved and lack the capacity to make an informed and reasoned decision. In fact, it is often difficult for families who may feel guilty about decisions such as nursing home placement which though contrary to their relatives wishes may be in their best interest.

Recently, the Court of Appeal ruled that there is no legal basis (outside of the Mental Health Act) to detain patients in hospital who express a wish to go home though lack capacity and are at substantial risk to themselves by doing so. This has already resulted in several hospitals making emergency applications to the High Court to give legal status to their decisions and is likely to prompt future new legislation.

Finally, most parts of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 have not been commenced but will allow for a process to facilitate persons who are losing or have lost capacity to make decisions, as well as allow for the creation of healthcare directives. However, making legal provisions in advance can prove to be very useful and is always worth considering.

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

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and help them pick out nutritious foods that they like so that their lunchboxes can be packed with a meal that they will enjoy and that will help them be more productive in school. They'll feel more involved, and better energized.

If the school sells food, have a look at the menu and see what the healthy options are. If there are healthy snack options, your child can keep their energy up and do better in school, and have more fun while they're at it.

5. Help with homework

Of the things that can help your child get the most out of school, understanding the academic material is probably one of the most important. Children who feel capable in the classroom tend to be more engaged with the classes, and will enjoy themselves more because of it.

“A great way to make your child feel more comfortable is to make sure that they can find a familiar face”

Being involved with the homework process in some way can be a good way. Don't necessarily be hanging over their shoulder, but simply ensuring that they are doing homework in an appropriate space can go a long way.

If there's a TV on, or if they are in a room with a lot of distractions, they may engage less with the material. Make sure they have a quiet space, and that they have enough time to complete their work thoroughly.

6. Help them feel more comfortable

Kids, especially older kids, can have a lot of expectations and anxieties about what their school year should look like. Worries about making friends and new relationships, as well as academic pressures, can potentially put a lot of stress on kids.

Having conversations before school can help them manage their expectations, and you can help them to feel more comfortable going into the new year.

Check to see if they have any questions, or are unsure about anything.

Use your experience to reassure them that everything is going to turn out okay. Let them know that they have many people available to help them, like their family and teachers.

7. Connect them with their friends

A great way to make your child feel more comfortable is to make sure that they can find a familiar face. Call some of the parents of your child's friends and see if they have classes together, so that they'll feel reassured that they have a buddy in class.

You could also see about getting them together before school starts, so that they feel like they have strong relationships going into the new academic year.

Having a strong social network in their classes will have them feeling more confident and happy, which will make school a more fulfilling experience.

8. Tour the school and meet the teacher

The biggest anxieties about going back to school are often centred on the unfamiliar environment and people.

The stress of not knowing where to go on the first day can be a source of nervousness leading up to the school year, so giving children the opportunity to walk around the



school and familiarise themselves with it can go a long way. Another major source of stress is whether or not they will like their teacher.

So if you get the chance, introduce them to their teacher early, so that their fears can be put to rest and the teacher will seem familiar on the first day.

9. Find a balance between preparation and relaxation

While it's certainly very important to be prepared on the first day, it's also important not to transform the last few days of summer into a boot camp.

Try to find time to let them relax and enjoy their days of freedom. Having a fun end to the summer can help them feel more calm and happy going into the often-stressful first days of school.

Ease them into the routine, with the operative word being “ease”. They should feel prepared for school, but not suffocated by various tasks and obligations.

10. Be available for them

This seems obvious, but it's never more important than when your child is entering a new environment and requires reassurance. In an unfamiliar situation, their family will be their bedrock.

Little things that show your support, like a note in their lunchbox, can help them to feel loved and supported. In addition, being home and spending time with them for at least some period every day is an important part of maintaining a strong relationship and making sure that they feel supported.

It's often easy to forget how difficult going to school can be for children as an adult because most of the fears they have may seem trivial given your own experience of the world.

But it is often the case that your child's head will be bombarded with fears and worries that you don't even realise, especially if they're starting school for the first time, or making the giant leap to secondary school. These tips will help your child feel more comfortable in what will be a massive transformation in their life, so be open to applying them.

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

We are off to Rome this weekend – and I am so excited! Now

Rome in the middle of August will probably be swelteringly hot but Rome is always wonderful. My brother Niall and sister-in-law Fritzie are in Ireland from Chicago for a couple of weeks and had decided to visit Rome which prompted our decision to travel with them.

We don't often get time with them, certainly not a block of time like this and I am looking forward to that.

We have some plans – the Colosseum on Sunday when we arrive, the Vatican Gardens and Museum on Monday morning – but after that Danny and I have said we just want time to wander, potter, sit in a café and watch the Roman world go by. We spend most of our days living according to schedules. Even over the summer, apart from the routines of work, there is a constant stream of “I need dropped to training/a match/work/a friend's house” from our two kids at home.

So, for Danny and I, Rome needs to give us some time out from schedules.

I am not good at doing nothing. I get edgy if I'm sitting in the house. I feel like I should be doing something worthwhile. I had some time off at the beginning of June however and with the sun shining I developed the ability to sit in the garden – and relax. I might be reading a book or having a chat or simply sitting there feeling the sunshine and the breeze. It was wonderful.

“Danny and I need to nurture our relationship – and the Rome trip is part of that”

The word that came to me was ‘recreation’ – not that I was simply having a good time but that I was being re-created, reminded of who I am, stopping long enough to realise that I was actually deeply at peace.

I'm hoping – perhaps madly – that Rome in August will offer us some of that sense of peace and recreation. Danny and I celebrate 25 years of marriage in September and had decided that we would treat ourselves to a few days away together. We have rarely gone away, just the

two of us. Maybe a night away now and again but as our children have grown up it has become much easier to do.

I cannot quite believe that we are married for 25 years. That seems like an awfully long time and I don't feel old enough but our daughter who is twenty-four is living proof!

Now seems like a good time to stop and reflect on where we have come from, what our journey so far has been and to consider where the future may bring us.

College

We are not far from being just the two of us again, when our youngest goes off to college in a year's time. There was uproar in the house one of



the days over the summer when Danny and I headed off together, leaving the rest of them behind.

Our girls have no bother taking time to go off for dinner or out on a date with their boyfriends but the idea that their daddy and I could do that provoked something of a reaction. But Danny and I need to nurture our relationship – and the Rome trip is part of that.

The Gospel at our wedding was the Road to Emmaus – two on a journey, encountering Christ, recognising him in the breaking of bread. Going to Mass in St Peter's, visiting other churches at our leisure will be part of our time in Rome. That element of Rome as a place of pilgrimage is important to us.

So, we are off to the Eternal City in search of time – time for laughter and craic, time with Niall and Fritzie, time for good Italian food and wine, time to wander, time to pray, time to talk, time for us.

Personal Profile



Matthew Carlson learns about the intricacies of parish life

Born in England, Glen Phillips says that there were two things that were enforced in his house growing up: soccer and Faith. "I grew up going to Mass. Growing up in our house there were two things, being Catholic and supporting Manchester United," says Glen.

Growing up in a Catholic environment, Glen and his family went to Mass often, and his Faith developed quickly given the piety of his parents.

After he moved out, his own religious convictions did not waver, primarily due to the strong Faith foundation he garnered from his family and his devout friends. He says, that in particular, parish priests and prominent Catholics set a "good example" for him, leading to the shaping and forming of his Faith.

Formation

This formation was especially pertinent as he got older, where he learned to appreciate his religious traditions in a much deeper way. "I suppose like anything as you get older and you gain more experience, you grow to appreciate it," says Glen.

After having kids of his own, his desire is that they would grow up in a way that fosters their Faith and they would understand the importance of going to Mass. "As a family we went to Mass and it was

Managing God's house



Glen Phillips.

important that we are Catholic and for our family growing up in Belfast it's important that them being Catholic is just part of identifying themselves."

“It's important to invest at the local level not only in children and language, but politics as well”

Glen is the Parish Manager at the St Oliver Plunkett Parish in Belfast. At his job, Glen helps out the parish priest in keeping care of the grounds, managing finances and helping out with the staff. Glen recalls that over the years, the number of priests in the parish decreasing has made it difficult to maintain the services that the parish provides. "Twenty years ago, this parish had three priests and

then 10 years ago it was down to one so the pastoral council decided to employ someone to manage the parish," says Glen.

The priest, he explains, would be responsible for duties like taking care of the finance accounts, making sure the parish grounds are kept, and helping with the day to day functions of the staff in addition to his pastoral duties.

So, the pastoral council decided to employ someone who could assist the priest with his duties so that he could focus on priestly matters.

With the other part of his childhood being invested into supporting Manchester United, it's no surprise that sports, like his Faith, have continued to be a passion even into adulthood. Glen has four kids and all of them are involved in GAA sports.

"Well I coach GAA football and

I'm involved in the local GAA club and all my kids are involved in the GAA as well," says Glen. GAA football and handball are the sports that he and his family are most involved in.

"You know, when you're a young person you've got everything ahead of you and then when you become a parent, you're constantly thinking about the next generation, your own children, your wife and your family and how they develop in that way."

Irish language

Glen even coaches the local football club and used to be involved in coaching the school's football team. "That and I am involved in the Irish language locally," says Glen.

"More promoting the Irish language community and doing what we can to make it a living

language in Belfast."

According to Glen, it's important to invest at the local level not only in children and language, but politics as well. He has long been an advocate for social issues on a local government level. "I've always been involved with politics at a local level and have always tried to see what would the Catholic way forward be."

With the recent abortion referendum in the Republic of Ireland, eyes have been turning to the North to see if it will follow along and make changes regarding its stance on the issue. Glen says that although there are a lot of issues in the North, this is one that a lot of people are discussing and is important to modern day society.

“Catholics should be involved in some community activism whether that is supporting orphans or anything that's happening locally and take that role”

"I think it's important that Catholics are taking the lead and standing up whether it's the issue of abortion, or when I was growing up the issues happening in Belfast City," says Glen. He continues that Catholics are the ones who should be in active roles in political matters, especially when supporting those downtrodden. "Catholics should be involved in some community activism whether that is supporting orphans or anything that's happening locally and take that role."

With the Faith and a passion for people and sports instilled in him, Glen looks to continue to develop his Faith and lead others to have a meaningful relationship with the Lord.



Children's Corner

Davis Clark

Five sand science experiments for you to enjoy

As we move deeper into summer, you may find yourself heading to the beach to catch a few rays before the season ends. While the ocean is certainly an opportunity to have fun, it can also provide the opportunity for learning. Playing with sand has always been a favourite activity for kids and it can be a great chance to practice some science.

Here are a few ways that kids can explore and perform experiments with sand, and add some learning to all that fun.

Many people never actually take a close look at sand. Bring a magnifying glass to the beach, and tell your kids to use it. From a distance, sand looks like it's all one colour and one texture, but if you look closer, you'll notice that all the individual grains of sand are different and unique. The sand we walk on is made of an infinite variety of tiny particles. Tell your kids to look at them closely and describe what they see.

Sand is also interesting because it acts as both a solid and a liquid. If it's left in a pile, then it

appears to be a solid, but if it's poured it almost looks like a liquid! This fact can open the door to fun activities, like pouring sand out of holes of different sizes and seeing how fast it pours out. This can teach kids about science and the different properties of liquids, solids, and volumes.

Lesson

Sand is also great to build with, and your kids can get a mini-architecture lesson as well as an opportunity to express creativity. Building sandcastles is a great tradition, and experimenting with different structures is a great way to add science to that tradition.

Also, making sand wet changes the way it behaves. Wet sand is much stronger than dry sand because the particles stick together. Tell

your kids to experiment with different levels of wet and dry sand, and different techniques like dripping.

Another way to take a closer look at the grains is to put a bit of sand in a bowl or container and shake it. The larger grains will naturally rise to the top when shaken. This is called the Brazilian Nut Effect, and it's another great way for kids to explore sand and the beach.

If you look closely enough at sand, you can even see that some of it isn't really sand. Bring a magnet with you to the beach, and let your kids run it over sand. It's very likely that granules will stick onto it.

This is because there are little pieces of iron and other metals in sand. Letting the kids search through the sand themselves gives them the opportunity to explore their environment and see the complexity and variety in even the smallest things around them.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Spotlight on the danger of moral blindness

As a Catholic, you'd want to be sure your Faith was primarily in God and not in individual Catholic clergy. Too often, in striving for perfection, we assumed that those in the clerical state had already succeeded. Did we not really believe it when, at Mass, we heard them confessing their sins along with ourselves?

These thoughts were prompted Wednesday night of last week when I watched **Spotlight** (RTÉ1), a challenging film that outlined in dramatic form the *Boston Globe's* investigation into child sexual abuse by priests in that diocese and the subsequent cover-up by Church authorities. The film's approach was restrained, but of course the abuse highlighted was appalling and any discomfort of Catholic viewers pales into minor significance by comparison.

On an artistic level the film was absorbing as the newspaper's 'Spotlight' team forensically investigated the abuse and how it was handled by Church authorities. Civil society, including journalism, didn't escape lightly either – there was considerable reluctance in police circles to bring abusive priests to book, lawyers facilitated confidential settlements, and even staff at the *Boston Globe* ignored or missed information sent to them years previously.



Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo and Brian d'Arcy James in *Spotlight*.

The film proceeded almost thriller-like with its investigation of the facts, and certainly there was no cheap voyeurism or melodrama. And yet the crusading narrative was somewhat simplistic at times – too often it felt like 'journalists good, priests bad'. At one stage it was suggested that 6% of priests were likely to abuse, but we got to see precious little of the 94%. I thought there was little of broader context or insight into the phenomenon, e.g. in a throwaway remark it was suggested without evidence that celibacy was at the heart of the problem, and there was no sense that abuse figures for non-Catholic clergy

and other professions are similar. There was one scene where an elderly priest tried to rationalise his behaviour to one of the journalists but this intriguing conversation was cut short by the priest's sister who shut the door on the journalist.

Salutary tale

The film should act as a salutary tale to faithful mature Catholics, a warning against moral blindness, lust, arrogance, clericalism and abuse of power. For others, especially younger viewers, I fear the effect will be to increase prejudice and alienate from this community of sinners we call the Church.

In related news, I wrote last week about how we were in danger of messing up the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) and the papal visit, not thinking I'd get another example so soon afterwards. On Wednesday of last week it was reported that Archbishop Diarmuid Martin had said time was tight in relation to the Pope meeting with survivors of clerical child abuse. This was bound to raise hackles and so we got several days of negative coverage for the Church and WMOF.

On last Thursday's **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ Radio 1) abuse survivor Colm O'Gorman was understandably frustrated, and thought it would be "galling" if all we got was the usual "set piece" of the Pope meeting survivors privately and expressing sorrow for the abuse. He thought the Pope should take responsibility for cover-ups in high



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

PICK OF THE WEEK

BRAVERY UNDER FIRE

EWTN Sunday, August 12, 4 pm, Thursday, August 16, 9 am

EWTN docudrama about Fr Willie Doyle SJ, an Irish Jesuit priest killed in action during World War I.

INVITED TO COURAGEOUS LOVE – THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY

EWTN Monday, August 13, 9 pm, Tuesday, August 14, 8 am

Members of Courage share their personal stories about same-sex attraction and living chastely.

FAITH BEHIND BARS

BBC 1, Tuesday, August 14, 10.45 pm

Prison chaplains in Edinburgh give spiritual guidance and religious support to offenders.

levels of Church authority. He has some valid points, but I found his high moral ground stance lacking in credibility considering he had recently campaigned to make it easier, legally, to inflict the worse kind of abuse on unborn children.

Shortly after, on **Today With Seán O'Rourke** (RTÉ Radio 1) abuse survivor Marie Collins thought the Archbishop was pushing the Vatican, and thought it would be "shocking" if Pope Francis didn't address the issue at all.

She wanted proper accountability and an effective penal process for bishops involved in cover-ups. She felt resistance in the Roman Curia and yet found "some very good people" in the higher levels of the Church.

On that evening's **Drive-**

time (RTÉ Radio 1), *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly said he wasn't surprised there hadn't been definitive word from the Vatican about any meeting as these were usually acknowledged after the event to avoid media spectacle.

He thought the Archbishop was red-flagging the issue, issuing a "cry for help" to push the Vatican – a strange way of doing business if true. He felt there was an inability to wrestle with institutional issues and thought there was a "piercing need" to address the pain and wider sense of betrayal among Irish Catholics.

Another red flag there!

boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Missed opportunity in a case of déjà vu all over again

The Image You Missed (PG)

The idea was good: dovetail the idea of a fractured fraternal relationship with a fractured country. Unfortunately, this Donal Foreman feature, which tenuously examines his relationship with his father, the late American documentarian Arthur MacCaig, against the backdrop of the Troubles, is far too skimpy and *staccato* to justify the tantalising potential of its title.

The 'missing image' we're promised doesn't appear, which means we get neither the thick rain of Ireland's past nor the personal story of the



Donal Foreman, maker of *The Image You Missed*.

Fair

★★

father Foreman never really got to know.

His cut-and-paste job is so lacking in imagination you wonder why he bothered. Was it just to use up some archival footage of his dad's that was lying around the place and tenuously thread it onto a socio-political story

which is past its sell-by date?

One should never be smug enough as to imagine the Northern conflict is over – the security massed around the recent visit of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle knocks that notion on the head – but the guns are largely silent now, which means that this

kind of thing can be of little more than quaint interest to armchair historians.

Who's interested in watching yesterday's news presented in the ho-hum manner we get here? Maybe it will do well in the US, where the market isn't as saturated with fly-on-the-wall docu-dramas about Gerry Adams and his apparatchiks on both sides of the sectarian spectrum. But I doubt it.

Structuring a film of this nature, chapter-like, from a poem by Seamus Heaney struck me as pretentious. It ends as it began – in a kind of psychic limbo.

Foreman is a good filmmaker but he needed to inject some drama into the

proceedings, either by speaking directly to camera or having his father do so instead of having them as disembodied voices or silent facial images. That way the film could have become a visual history of a country caught in the eye of the storm – like MacCaig's *The Patriot Game*.

Treatment

The treatment of the Troubles is too text-book. We mainly see the aftermath of bloodshed. Foreman seems more at home (no pun intended) showing us childish games being played with toy guns. In the end we feel like children ourselves, let off school for the day to get a ready reckoner on what it was like

between 1969 and the Good Friday Agreement – at least from a bird's eye view.

We listen to men in balaclavas reading mission statements in pubs. We see graffiti-laden walls with messages like 'You are now entering Free Derry' on them.

The 'again' is the problem. There are too many recycled images. The family theme is earnest but it gets suffocated under a welter of agitprop clichés.

The film will probably sustain the fanbase Foreman already has but I doubt it will increase it unless he re-cuts it and gives it some 'topspin'. As it is it's far too soporific and self-important.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Marilynne Robinson: voice for our times

What Are We Doing Here?

by Marilynne Robinson
(Virago, £18.99)

Patrick Claffey

Born in 1943, Marilynne Robinson is a celebrated American novelist and essayist, a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2005, a National Humanities Medal and the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2016 – the year she was also named in *Time* magazine's list of 100 most influential people. So she certainly qualifies as a voice of our times.

She is best known for her widely read novels *Housekeeping* (1980) and *Gilead* (2004). These are largely based on both rural life and faith in that part of evangelical America from which she comes and is still in many ways attached to but with which she has an uneasy relationship.

Her chosen themes include the relationship between religion and science, nuclear pollution, John Calvin, and contemporary American politics. *Time* magazine again reports she "is a dissident, though she may not sound like one". And indeed she does refer to the great reformer Martin Luther quite often.

Her most recent book is a collection of essays entitled *What Are We Doing Here?*, comprising lectures she has given in churches, seminaries, and universities over the last few years. It includes chapters like 'What is Freedom of Conscience?', 'Theology for This Moment', 'The Sacred and the Human',



Marilynne Robinson.

'The Divine' and 'Mind Science Soul' as well as reflections on contemporary America.

These are not light reading, but are very much worth the effort.

Pastoral context

Her chapter 'Theology for This Moment' is of particular interest in a pastoral context as she is very aware of the 'signs of the time' in which we live. Her view is on a grand scale as she writes of 'this theatre of God's glory we share with those strangers, our neighbours'.

Here, she writes, "love

means awe, and awe means love".

She calls for a Christian way of thinking/theology that would address anything and any relation among things, and give the world a supple, inclusive language, far more adequate to what we know, less restricted in what we acknowledge, than any we have at present.'

For many Catholics this reflects the thing that has emerged in Pope Francis' speaking and writing over the past several years as he looks at the world and looks at the Church in our times.

She is deeply critical of

many modern "systems and ideologies", which she says are "simple and simplifying – the invisible hand, the survival of the fittest, the dictatorship of the proletariat, superego, ego and id". She denounces them as 'antibiotics of the intelligence, killing off a various ecology of reflection and experience in order to eliminate one or two troublesome ideas.'

Impression

What is called for is a way of Christian thinking, a theology "that would embrace rather than exclude". Again one has the impression that

is what we are so desperately seeking within the Church but not always managing to attain as we fight ingrained ways of thinking. At the same time she calls for a departure "from the narrowness and aridity of the secular thinking" that has, to a large extent, displaced theology in our time.

It is here that she comes to the core of her argument, and it is very eloquent when she speaks of the importance in Christian thinking of a language that speaks of "the beauty of holiness", "grace and peace" – phrases that evoke a particular experience, a synthesis of thought and aesthetic response.

“What is called for is a way of Christian thinking, a theology ‘that would embrace rather than exclude’”

This is a language, she argues, that has been excluded in our time because it simply does not fit into the dominant scientific discourse which "cannot acknowledge" such terms. "Yet the celebration of holiness in every form of art has shaped civilisations."

She emphasises the fact that despite its own mistakes and common misperceptions,

"Christian theology uniquely among the forms of Western thought need not proceed by exclusion. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Christ was in the beginning with God and without him nothing was made that was made."

"The categorical blessing put on all that exists raises the problem of evil, certainly, but more important it asserts a very broad, unconditional reality, a givenness that in its fullness reflects divine intent...a theology for our time would acknowledge this reality along with the entire complex of subjective experience – love, generosity, regret, and all their interactions – without a diminishing translation into self-interest. It could create a conceptual space large enough to accommodate human dignity."

This is certainly thinking outside a certain theological box; but, I imagine, it will almost certainly resonate with the thinking of many contemporary Catholics living in that very modern, and often troubling, space that lies between belief and doubt, much like Robinson herself.

There is much of interest in this volume, but it is certainly best read a chapter at a time, and on occasions when one has the leisure to think about it what is said.

Nevertheless it would make for summer reading of a special kind.

Patrick Claffey lectures in the School of Religions and Theology in Trinity College.

Roads untaken in Irish history

Commemoration

by Heather Laird
(Cork University Press, €9.95)

Felix M. Larkin

In Evelyn Conlon's novel *Not the Same Sky*, one of the characters questions the purpose of memorials – and, by extension, the purpose of historical commemorations generally. She asks: "Are they to let us know? To make us accept? Or are they to make us weep?"

In this short book, one of a series under the general title of 'Looking for another Ireland', Dr Heather Laird of UCC suggests another possible purpose – in her view, a more desirable one. It is to draw inspiration from people, events and movements in the past that demonstrate that our society might have evolved in better ways

than it has.

Her book accordingly offers "a critique of existing commemorative practices and mainstream history writing ... [in order] to open up discussion on the roads untaken in history".

Observation

It is premised on the entirely valid observation that nothing is inevitable or predetermined in history. History could have gone off in any number of different ways at almost any point. Our commemorations, however, reflect what actually happened – and so tend to reinforce the *status quo*, with all



its faults and failings.

They don't encourage speculation about whether there might have been outcomes other than the political, social and economic structures that we inherit from the past. Laird argues that we should instead commemorate some of the "roads untaken in history" as to guide us in our

so quest for templates for reforming society today.

A particular "road untaken" that Laird considers worthy of

commemoration is the idea of land nationalisation which Michael Davitt came to espouse in the 1880s and which led to his break with Parnell and his subsequent marginalisation in Irish politics. Such commemoration would challenge current concepts and practices of land and property usage in Ireland.

“This book is required reading for anyone with an interest in the burgeoning field of public history”

In this context, Laird draws parallels between the land insurgency of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries and agitation

today about the housing crisis – for instance, the occupation of Apollo House in Dublin in December 2016 to provide emergency accommodation for homeless people over Christmas.

This is an eloquent book, written with great passion. It is required reading for anyone with an interest in the burgeoning field of public history.

Where perhaps it falls short is in focusing on the value of resurrecting the "unrealised but fully realisable" opportunities of the past without emphasising the need to analyse why these opportunities were lost.

Any reform agenda, if it is to succeed, must take account of the factors that stymied previous reform efforts. It is more important to understand the past than to commemorate it.

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.



Photo: RTÉ Archives

The Cruelty Men
by Emer Martin
(Lilliput Press, €16.00)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This book is about an extended family in the decades following the establishment of the Irish Free State. The family originated in the barony of Iveragh, Co. Kerry, one of the poorest areas in the country.

Under a scheme developed by the Land Commission, Irish-speaking families from Kerry and Connemara were re-located to establish a Gaeltacht at Rathcairn in Co Meath. Each family received a three-room cottage, a farm of 22 acres, a sow, piglets and basic farming implements.

This is the background to the new novel by the prize-winning author Emer Martin.

In her tale among the families re-located were the Ó Conaills of Iveragh. Apart from the parents there were three daughters: Mary, Bridget and Maeve, and three sons: Patrick, Seán and Séamus.

Siblings

The mother did not travel to Meath as she was pregnant. The father returned to his Kerry home after less than two years. Within another few years both were dead.

Mary, the 16-year old eldest, was left with the responsibility of working the farm and caring for her siblings. Her task was not made easier by the fact that the local people refused to speak to the newcomers, whom they resented for getting land free and regarded as 'colonizers and invaders'!

“Mary also excels in recording the life-experiences of her siblings”

Hard-working and remarkably talented, Mary manages to hold the family together. Eventually when her brother Séamus succeeds to the farm and brings a wife into the

household. Mary secures employment as a live-in housekeeper with a solicitor and his wife in the nearby town. Here she continues to care not only for her own family, but also for that of her employers.

Mary has a remarkable gift for story-telling. She also excels in recording the life-experiences of her siblings. Patrick is regarded as a '*duine le Dia*' – never quite 'normal' and has to be committed into the asylum in Mullingar. There he has an accident in which his back is broken and he dies soon afterwards.

Seán, described as quiet and highly intelligent, aged 12 enters the novitiate of the Irish Christian Brothers in Co. Dublin.

Following his graduation, he is a highly esteemed teacher of mathematics at several of the congregation's second-level schools. Séamus at 18 inherits the farm, but makes a disastrous marriage.

“This is a dark novel, replete with stories of disillusionment, misery and tragedy”

Mary recalls too the lives of her three sisters. On completing her primary education Bridget escapes to New York where she secures employment as a maid in an affluent family in Brooklyn.

Maeve, the youngest sister, highly intelligent and beautiful, acquires a job with a family of shopkeepers in the local town. She is described as "wild" and becomes the unwed mother of twins.

These are sent to an orphanage and because Maeve is charged with attempting to drown them she is consigned to the asylum. Later she enters a Magdalene Home.

The narrative of the woes of the family is continued by Ignatius, the youngest son of Séamus. He records how his father loses first an arm and later a leg in accidents

The darkness over Rathcairn



Some of the first settlers in Rathcairn.

on the farm. Ignatius is so unmanageable that his father commits him to an industrial school.

Here his uncle Seán is a member of the staff and, upset by the misconduct of some of his colleagues, hangs himself in his room. In due course Ignatius leaves the school with a trade, but sim-

ply drifts until he becomes one of the street-people of Dublin.

This is a dark novel, replete with stories of disillusionment, misery and tragedy. It casts a searing light into the social inadequacies, inequalities and injustices of the new Irish State.

However, the narrative all

too frequently morphs into one-sided, angry rants.

These include unfair and unbalanced comments about the orphanages serviced by nuns, a topical target of hate for many young writers.

It is to be hoped that the travails of the Ó Conaills are not representative of the experiences of the other

families who were chosen to create the new Gaeltacht at Rathcairn!

i [Editorial note: The flawed nature of the project is explored by historian Suzanne M. Pegley, in *The Land Commission and the Making of Ráth Cairn: The First Gaeltacht Colony* (Four Courts Press, €9.95).]



Some of the first arrivals to their then-new Gaeltacht colony Rathcairn. Photo: RTÉ Archives

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4094 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

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The Irish Catholic

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For Ireland’s homeless and hungry, Merchants Quay Ireland’s Riverbank Centre is first to open in the morning and among the last to close at night. Those with nowhere to turn can find a good meal, medical care, a helping hand, and a fresh start, thanks to donations and legacies.

Come for Tea and a Tour, in private while Riverbank is closed for a couple of hours. See confidentially how Merchants Quay Ireland uses donations and legacies to bring relief and hope. All welcome, bring a guest if you wish.

Ring Emma Murphy at 01-5240965 to be included on the guest list for the September 13th Tour.

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NOTICE THIS? GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT TO 90,000 READERS!

The Irish Catholic

Leisure time

Crossword Junior Gordius 244



- ACROSS**
 1 This shark is highly dangerous (5,5)
 7 You might find apple trees here (7)
 8 Tiny (3)
 9 It makes a noise when an ambulance is in a big hurry (5)
 10 You shoot it from a gun (6)
 12 A, E, I, O or U (5)
 14 Noisy, highly-dangerous reptile (11)
 16 Their addresses usually begin with www (8)
- DOWN**
 1 Small green fruit (10)
 2 Of the best quality (9)
 3 Snare (4)
 4 Conceals (5)
 5 Rapunzel was locked away in one (5)
 6 Doghouse (6)
 11 Large birds of prey (6)
 12 Come to call (5)
 13 Puts nice paper around a present (5)
 15 Finish (3)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

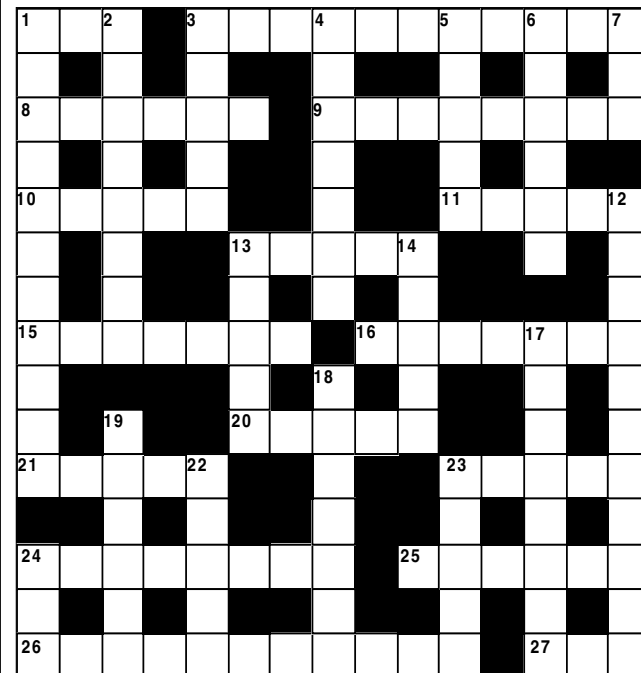
GORDIUS No.362

- Across** – 1 Awe 3 Out of season 8 Decide 9 Trounced 10 Choir 11 Leech 13 Attic 15 Updated 20 Three cheers 21 Yearn 23 Issue 24 Junction 26 Brain teaser 27 Son
- Down** – 1 Audaciously 2 Enclosed order 4 Outwits 5 Equal 6 Secret agent 7 Nod 12 High treason 14 Clyde 17 Trustees 18 Organza 19 Narnia 22 Not on my watch 23 Ichor 24 Job

CHILDREN'S No.243

- Across** – 1 Barrel 4 Warm 8 Newspaper 9 Aid 10 Bandage 12 Daddy 14 Dew 15 Nil 16 Image 19 Medium 21 Queue 22 Tents
- Down** – 1 Bunk beds 2 Raw 3 Explain 5 Afraid 6 Monday 7 Speed limit 11 Nowhere 13 Dog 17 Amen 18 Ears 20 Ice

Crossword Gordius 363



- ACROSS**
 1 Harbour vessel (3)
 3 The doggedness of some sincere pest (11)
 8 Insular location (6)
 9 Somewhat aged, sire? I beg to differ (8)
 10 Contusions caused by a British politician in public transport (5)
 11 Noticed a sound (5)
 13 The thank-you letter from Greece (5)
 15, 16a & 24a It takes considerate people to provide this dairy product (3,4,2,5,8)
 16 See 15 across
 20 Tiny (5)
 21 Glare thus, being in royal form (5)
 23 Add this to get the child out of bed (3,2)
 24 See 15 across
 25 Looking-glass (6)
 26 Somehow, mingle into a historic defensive barrier (7,4)
 27 Twenty-four hours (3)
- DOWN**
 1 Won't rebirth upset one's womb-mate? (4,7)
 2 Dig lemon out of this source of wealth (8)
 3 Trousers (5)
 4 Calmed by use of drugs (7)
 5 Educate (5)
 6 There's no right route to this European country (6)
 7 Female sheep (3)
 12 Social occasion that is not for d'outer political organization, it seems (6,5)
 13 Stories (5)
 14 It's legal to be decapitated? How dreadful! (5)
 17 Sounds like it was a condiment that gathered the troops (8)
 18 Umbrella-like protection from the sun (7)
 19 Milk punch (6)
 22 Material made from flax (5)
 23 On two occasions (5)
 24 Ms Kardashian appears in the Waikiki montage (3)

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Sudoku Corner 244

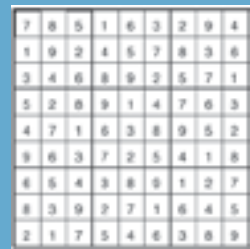
Easy



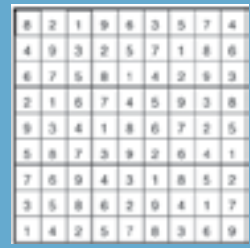
Hard



Last week's Easy 243



Last week's Hard 243





Fr. Conor McDonough

Notebook

Youth show the way to reconfiguring the Church

ARCHBISHOP DIARMUID MARTIN recently spoke with candour about the Church's outreach to young people, describing it as "an area where I have failed". If he has, he's certainly not alone in the Irish Church.

Young people today will not adopt the faith by osmosis, but need clear arguments, joyful testimony, strong community and sustained personal accompaniment. Ask yourself whether you can identify any parish or Church community near you which faces this new challenge adequately, or at all.

There are indeed some very worthy activities for young people in Irish parishes – serving at the altar, scout troops, youth clubs – but these are rarely carried out in a way that is intentionally evangelical.

Paralysis

It's hard to avoid the sense, then, that youth ministry in Ireland is in a state of paralysis, and short on new ideas.

All of this is quite understandable, for all sorts of unfortunate reasons, but it's not a situation we should ever get used



Two NET volunteers at work in Ireland.

is doing in the small pockets of innovation and excellence that do exist.

I had the pleasure recently of visiting the head office of NET Ministries (netministries.ie) in Ballybofey, Co. Donegal. Apart from a core staff, NET consists of 50 or so young people who give up a year of their lives to spread the Gospel in Ireland.

Split into teams, some criss-cross the country, leading workshops and retreats in schools, while others are based in a single parish and run a year long programme for the young people there.

Where have these young missionaries appeared from? Some are from abroad, but most are Irish. Some are lifelong Catholics, but many have at some

point wandered from the Lord, before a joyful return. They're a diverse bunch but what unites them is a desire to build the Kingdom on our little island.

The atmosphere in the NET office is bright and light-hearted, but what struck me most was how seriously these volunteers take their mission. They know how important it is that their contemporaries hear the Gospel and they are willing to leave the comfort of home and to give generously of their time and energy for the sake of that mission.

They work with great professionalism, training and re-training, planning and assessing their missions meticulously, and evidently aiming for excellence in all their work.

Challenges

These young missionaries know the challenges facing young people: they live them. They don't need to learn the language of young people: they speak it. And, most importantly, they know with the assurance of personal experience that Jesus is the key to the problems faced by their generation.

It's encouraging for us all to know that NET, and others like them at the cutting edge

of youth evangelisation, are hard at work, but knowing this shouldn't make the rest of the Church complacent, as if it's time for us to retire, and for old institutions to disappear. Rather, it's time for the whole structure of the Church – parishes, schools, religious communities, Catholic charities and social services – to be renewed, reconfigured and made fit for evangelical purpose in post-Catholic Ireland.

The older generation of Irish Catholic leaders can do better than merely hand on the baton to these young missionaries, before collapsing in a heap: we can listen to them, challenge them, learn from them, be changed by them and work by their side.

Our work is not over, our mission is still urgent and unexpected help has just arrived.

to, and if we're to get beyond our current paralysis we need to pay attention to what the Holy Spirit

● Mass last Sunday in Ballybofey was impressive, with many young families joining the older faithful. A few dozen NET volunteers were conspicuous in their midst, and I got the impression that this missionary presence has had a real impact on the local congregation. It's very difficult to get Irish congregations to sing, but in Ballybofey last Sunday the closing hymn was sung with great gusto by all, young and old, foreign and Irish.

The words on everyone's lips: "And the Lamb will conquer, and the woman clothed with the sun will shine her light on everyone." Amen to that!



A DIOCESE IN KENYA NEEDS OUR HELP

The Little Way Association helps many large rural parishes in Africa where the dangerous terrain and the number of small Christian outposts require well-trained and dedicated Catechists to supplement the ministry of the priests in charge.

Father Julius writes to us from Malindi Diocese, Kenya: "Currently we are two priests and one seminarian working in this parish, which was first established in 2006. Our parish is near the border with Somalia and we often have problems with terrorist invasions from Boni Forest, which is close by.

There are nine outstations, or prayer chapels in the parish so we are reliant on our catechists for help with our pastoral work, spiritually supporting our Catholics and encouraging people of good will to learn more about the faith. We want to provide some monthly upkeep for full time catechists, as well as spiritual retreats and on-going formation, to enable them to fulfill this most important service."

Can you spare a donation, large or small, to help train and maintain good catechists working in dioceses in Africa? The future of the Catholic Church in many areas is in their hands.



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