

The Irish Catholic

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Parishes warn of Dublin city's 'menacing' decline

Chai Brady and Jason Osborne

Priests based in Dublin's inner city have decried the daily violence, church vandalism and prevalent drug dealing they witness in their communities.

For Fr Kieran McDermott, the administrator of St Mary's Pro Cathedral in the north inner city, security and safety in the area has continued to descend over the last five years.

"Once it gets dark there is a menacing, edgy feeling around," he said, adding that they used to close the cathedral at 6pm but they have moved to 4pm.

"We have people who come into the cathedral sometimes to pilfer from the shrines, many of them are clearly people who are on substances and they're trying to finance the next purchase," Fr McDermott said.

He added that there has been "a substantial failure of civic and Government policy in the Dublin 1 area".

The administrator of North Wall parish in the inner city, Fr Robert Colclough, told *The Irish Catholic* drug dealing and violence are a daily reality, but the Church must reach out to those who are lost in that world.

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Confirmed in the Faith...



Aoife McKee, Charae Watson and Chloe Mallon from St Patrick's Primary School wait prayerfully in the church of St Patrick's Parish, Belfast, ahead of their Confirmation ceremony with chief celebrant Fr Eugene O'Neill and Fr Tony McAleese.

Missionaries praise Pope's 'morale boosting' African visit

Ruadhán Jones

Pope Francis's ecumenical visit to South Sudan was a "morale booster" that united the country in happiness, according to Irish missionaries.

Hundreds of thousands gathered in Juba, the capital, to greet the Pontiff. He was joined by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Rev. Ian Greenshields, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland for their visit from February 3-5.

"There was a fantastic atmosphere in Juba," Loreto Sr Orla Treacy told *The Irish Catholic*.

"It was like the feeling you get after a great concert – people danced and sang on the streets and were united in happiness," she added.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation and has until recently been wracked by civil war and tribal divisions.

Sr Treacy said she hopes the Pope's visit and witness with the other Christian leaders will have "a significant impact" in healing divisions in the country.

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return next week

Church must review doctrines without losing communion, synod told

Brandon Scott in Prague

The Church needs the courage to review doctrines and pastoral strategies without losing communion, the Irish delegation to the European assembly of the global Synod has claimed.

Delegates from the continent are meeting in Prague, Czechia from February 5-12. The Irish delegation is led by Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Addressing delegates at the assembly, Limerick-based Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon expressed the view that "the Church is called to discern with the all-embracing compassion of the body of Christ.

"This will demand the courage and wisdom of the Spirit to review and inspire any necessary doctrinal, structural, canonical and pastoral changes without destroying communion or losing sight of the person and teaching of Jesus," Fr Fitzgibbon said.

He insisted that "Communion requires a proclamation of the Church's teaching, particularly *Laudato Si*. This calls for the life of the Church to be a face of compassion and inclusion. For an enlarged appreciation and equal valuing of a richness of ministries – not only the ordained ministry".

The issue of abuse and Church cover-up formed a large part of Fr Fitzgibbon's address. This was also true of the input from the Irish synodal pathway general secretary Julieann Moran.

"The painful legacy of

Julieann Moran and Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon.



clerical and institutional abuse and involvement of Church bodies in the harsh institutionalisation of women and children have had a profound effect on the Church in Ireland," Ms Moran told delegates.

She said that "we recognise that abuse is an open wound and will remain a barrier to communion, participation and mission until it is comprehensively addressed. However, if there is clear action, with the courage to go deeper and to fully understand the causes, the Church in Ireland and universally, can become the field hospital that Pope Francis desires us to be.

"There is an anger, a sadness, a sense of loss – including in some cases a loss of faith which is felt most acutely by those who were abused. But it is also felt by the lay Faithful, by priests, bishops, religious men and women, by those who have remained and by those who

have left because they no longer hear the Good News in a Church that failed so many," she said.

Referring to the synodal consultation process in Ireland, Ms Moran said that "many women communicated their pain of being denied their agency in the life and mission of the Church and spoke of feelings of exclusion and discrimination in the Church.

"Women play a critical role in the life of the Church but so many men and women have spoken of the Church excluding the fullness of the gifts of women. Many submissions called for women to be admitted to the diaconate and priesthood," she said.

Ms Moran continued: "Those who are in loving relationships that do not accord with Church teaching, including people identifying as LGBTQI+ and those in second unions also spoke of their hurt – particularly

around harmful and offensive language used in Church circles and documents".

Another group that Ms Moran identified as being hurt are devotees of the traditional Latin Mass. "Some of those who loved the pre-Vatican II liturgy also spoke of their exclusion," she told delegates.

Fr Fitzgibbon finished his remarks by invoking the Irish missionary movements. "The mission of evangelisation must be as important to the synodal Church and communion and participation. Synodality is emerging as the style for this hope.

"The Church in Ireland rejoices in this moment of universal synodality as we journey together in faith, hope and love," he said.

As well as the four in-person attendees in Prague, a further ten Irish delegates joined online including Ursula Halligan from We Are Church and Helena O'Shea from Youth 2000.

Priests warn of Dublin city's 'menacing' decline

» Continued from Page 1

He said: "In the inner city unfortunately we have a drug epidemic. With the drug issues comes violence, with violence comes beatings, threatening, knife crime, gun crime, it all stems from something that is broken. And there's a lot of brokenness there."

While there are talks at Government and local council level in relation to these issues, Fr Colclough questioned their effectiveness, saying "the reality of my life is that I see drug addiction outside my door 24/7, I see violence at all different levels every single day".

Fr Jim Campbell who heads the Blessed Sacrament Chapel on Bachelor's Walk in Dublin 1 said they get targeted by groups of people asking for

money from people praying or who try to steal from collection boxes.

While these incidents are caught on camera, Fr Campbell says: "We do report it to the police but they say unless we find them with money in their hands from the box, there's very little that they can do about it, so that's a wee bit demoralising. We do have a wee bit of staff then who do try to keep an eye on things, but some of them feel a bit intimidated going out to people, you know."

Fr Campbell added: "Very often while we're saying Mass and somebody is kicking off in the chapel, I often think to myself, 'I wish I had a panic button here at the altar that I could press', because I can't do anything from the altar at that stage."

See pages 12-13

IRISH CATHOLIC BUMPER CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD 22/12/2022 SOLUTION

Across

1 Archbishop 6 Falsehoods 11 Detract 14 Camel 15 Inedible 17 Do They Know it's Christmas? 19 O Holy Night 20 Scouser 23 Ash 24 Enhance 25 Owe 26 Ely 28 Sues 30 Angels 33 Amos 36 Bluish 37 Raise 38 Flair 39 Interpol 40 Lemons 43 Alcove 45 Jaw 46 Mackerel 48 Blame 49 El Nino 50 Norm 51 Sleigh 54 Topping up 56 Jokers 57 Iodine 58 Vast 59 Asset 61 Rio 62 Helen 65 Yam 66 Ham 67 Games 68 Roe 74 Disc 77 Wirral 78 Toscanini 79 Deacon 80 Taxi 83 Gnomes 84 Offal 86 Emmanuel 88 UFO 89 Big Top 93 Potato 95 Rollmops 97 Fairy 98 Aorta 100 Author 101 Lies 103 Remark 105 Sped 106 Arc 108 Log 110 Hurtled 111 His 112 On trial 113 Skips 116 Little Drummer Boy 117 Disgrace 118 Melon 119 Surfeit 120 Blancmange 121

Down

2 Composer 3 Bellow 4 Shiny 5 Oversee 7 All is calm, all is bright 8 Eddy 9 Oats 10 Scythe 11 Donkey 12 Town hall 13 Aston Villa 14 Celestial navigation 16 Irons 18 Mesh 21 Robin 22 Sea 23 Anon 27 Large 29 Sago 30 Asleep on the hay 31 Nee 32 Linings 34 Mince pies 35 Steer 41 Manger 42 Deep and crisp and even 46 Magi 47 Laptop 52 How 53 Might 54 Term 55 Gallivant 59 Amber 60 Tan 63 Israel 64 Praise 65 Yeti 69 Fad 71 Good for nothing 72 Crimea 73 Mass book 76 Yell 77 Winsome 81 Carol 82 Pulse 85 Fox terrier 87 Molar 90 Gets 91 For 92 Mango 94 Tar 95 Roulette 99 Apostles 100 Ache 102 Sly 103 Ruing 104 Mallard 106 Advent 107 Cherub 109 Kismet 113 Sieve 114 Omen 115 Trim

IRISH CATHOLIC BUMPER NEW YEAR'S CROSSWORD 29/12/2022 SOLUTION

Across

1 Solemn mass 6 Backpacker 11 Lobster 14 Jonah 15 Slippery 17 Croix de Guerre 19 Meets 20 Polaris 23 Fly 24 Masonry 25 Cue 26 Ewe 28 Airs 30 Usurps 33 Balm 36 Sneeze 37 Keanu 38 Tours 39 Blue flag 40 Wetter 43 Tattoo 45 Fez 46 Upstairs 48 Omagh 49 Ring in the new year 50 Emus 51 Clouds 54 Buttercup 57 Oppose 58 Echo 59 Basin 61 Ayr 62 Shrew 65 Tie 66 Aim 67 Noose 68 Ova 70 Papal blessing 75 Mayday 77 Porter 78 Tennessee 79 Magpie 80 Stun 83 Pardon 84 Lucky 86 Scorpion 88 Joy 93 Ballot 95 Carousel 97 Aside 98 Refit 100 Hip-hop 101 Plea 103 Helper 105 Swig 106 Ant 108 Lea 110 Lioness 111 Rue 112 Calling 113 Broke 116 Civil engineer 117 Solitary 118 Query 119 Gleaned 120 Cantaloupe 121 Fearlessly

Down

2 Landmark 3 Mahler 4 Moses 5 Skipper 7 Aurora Borealis 8 Puck 9 Crow 10 Red-eye 11 Legume 13 Tarantella 14 Jack and the Beanstalk 16 Pills 18 Tyne 21 Scorn 22 Web 23 Full 27 Wafer 29 Sent 30 Unworthy 31 Sue 32 Preview 34 Abyss 35 Mural 36 Saw 41 Tenant 42 The Power and the Glory 44 Touchdown 46 Undo 47 Saturn 48 Odessa 52 Spy 53 Moral 54 Beam 55 Carpenter 59 Beryl 60 Nip 63 Remedy 64 Boasts 65 Tame 69 Jam 71 Primordial soup 72 Bridal 73 Leinster 76 Yam 77 Placate 81 Crisp 82 Sidle 85 Compromise 87 Crown 90 Iris 91 Yap 92 Isaac 94 Ore 95 Comedian 96 Elle 99 Tweezers 100 Holy Spirit 102 Ale 103 Heidi 104 Luggage 106 Ascend 107 Tragic 109 Mosque 113 Buyer 114 Deft 115 Oral

Ireland 'ripe' for vocations says order opening mission house

Ruadhán Jones

Although Ireland is seeing a shortage of priests and religious, it is "ripe" for vocations according to an order who have opened a new lay missionary house.

Two young women have already entered the house of mission opened by the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal (CFR) in Drogheda in January.

Anywhere the order sets down roots has "the potential for a missionary programme like this, but Ireland's ripe for it,"

the order's mother superior told *The Irish Catholic*.

It is "fertile ground for all the work we do", said Mother Clare, adding that young women are attracted by their way of life.

"An intensive prayer life, communal life in the convent and the hands-on work, they seem to be attracted to that."

The order arrived in Ireland 10 years ago at the suggestion of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, and the invitation of Bishop-emeritus of Meath Michael Smith.

Mother Clare says the new missionary house is a "natural outgrowth" of their work in Ireland because people are "asking us, they're looking for discernment through us".

"We've put down deeper roots and... people are coming and asking for this sort of thing. It goes together."

The order hopes the house can become a European hub, with women in countries like France and Spain having expressed an interest.

Mother Clare stressed that the mission-

ary house is not a formal entry into the order, but it is a way for young women "to see and to test a call".

"It's very much a lay programme. We would see it as a service for the Church so that young adults can have an opportunity for closer contact with the consecrated life," she said.

"It's a very safe way to ask the question, to work alongside with no real commitment – you haven't slipped the application in yet."

See pages 18-19

Church must defend vulnerable against euthanasia – bishop

Chai Brady

The Church's mission is to care for the vulnerable and stand against a culture that seeks to make euthanasia socially acceptable, according to the auxiliary bishop of Armagh.

In response to Pope Francis' message for the World Day of the Sick, which takes place on February 11, Bishop Michael Router said that for some, "illness can bring an experience of isolation and abandonment, which the Pope calls inhumane".

Bishop Router, who is the chair of the Council for Healthcare of the Irish Episcopal Conference, said Pope Francis drew attention to the

modern day "pervasive culture of efficiency" which leaves no room for frailty and seeks to marginalise the vulnerable.

The bishop said: "The Church must stand against such a culture which allows such practices as euthanasia and assisted suicide to be presented as acceptable in a civilised society. The mission of the Church is manifested in acts of care and through such outreach she becomes a true 'field hospital' where no one is forgotten or disposable."

This year's theme for the World Day of the Sick is 'Take care of him: compassion is a synodal exercise of healing', and is inspired by the parable of the good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke.

Celebrity sings praises of Christ's joyful suffering in viral video

Jason Osborne

American actor Shia LaBeouf has appeared in a viral clip in which he speaks about how there aren't enough joyful depictions of Christ on the cross.

"You know, the story of Christ is that God became man for our betterment," Mr LaBeouf, 36, says in the clip, continuing,

"so that means he is the ultimate example, the supreme priest."

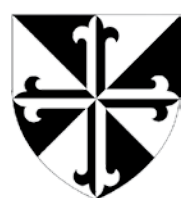
Christ is "fully in his purpose" on the cross, Mr LaBeouf said, adding that if you can "tap into how you can use your suffering to help other people, that is maximum joy".

"That's what Christ represents for me," the Hollywood star said. "Meaningful suffering."

Joy in Juba...



Irish Loreto Sr Orla Treacy, director of a school in Rumbek, South Sudan, is pictured with some of her students before Pope Francis' meeting with bishops, priests, religious and seminarians in St Theresa Cathedral in Juba, South Sudan, February 4. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring



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Church plans for semi-permanent hubs for Ukrainian Catholics

Ruadhán Jones

Plans to establish semi-permanent hubs for Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland are ongoing, a Ukrainian Catholic bishop has said.

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski told *The Irish Catholic* that he is working with the Irish bishops to identify areas to establish pastoral and sacramental care.

Liturgical services

So far, “we have been having perhaps not regular liturgical services, apart from Dublin where we have our permanent parish there,” the Ukrainian Catholic bishop said.

“But we also have been able to work with some of the bishops to have our other priests... start serving the people in areas in Cork, Waterford and a few other places.

“Over the Christmas sea-

son, we had a priest from Ukraine and he was able to provide pastoral care and services in Limerick for a month and we’re trying to see how we can continue that as well.”

However, the situation is “fluid” due to uncertainty regarding when the war in Ukraine will end. Since it began almost a year ago, Ireland has taken in more than 70,000 refugees.

“In general, when you’re talking to the displaced Ukrainian person, they’re hoping to be able to go back,” Bishop Nowakowski said.

“So the pastoral care that we’re to provide means establishing parishes where maybe in six months to a year that’s not where Ukrainian’s are going to be – it is very much a challenging thing.”

Identifying areas to establish hubs is also prov-

ing difficult as it’s unclear where people will settle.

“But long term, meaning over the next two or three years – if we can say that’s long term – that’s when we will be able to identify better,” Bishop Nowakowski explained.

Housing

He added that while it would be wrong to say there were no concerns over a shortfall in housing for refugees, “we are grateful for the way the Government is handling this.”

Dr Nowakowski is bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Holy Family of London and was appointed Apostolic Visitor to Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland by Pope Francis last year.

See page 10.



Fr Vasyi Kornitsky, chaplain to the Ukrainian Catholic parish in Donnycarney, joins with the Kurochka family to baptise baby Alexander in the Church of Our Lady of Consolation on Sunday, February 5.

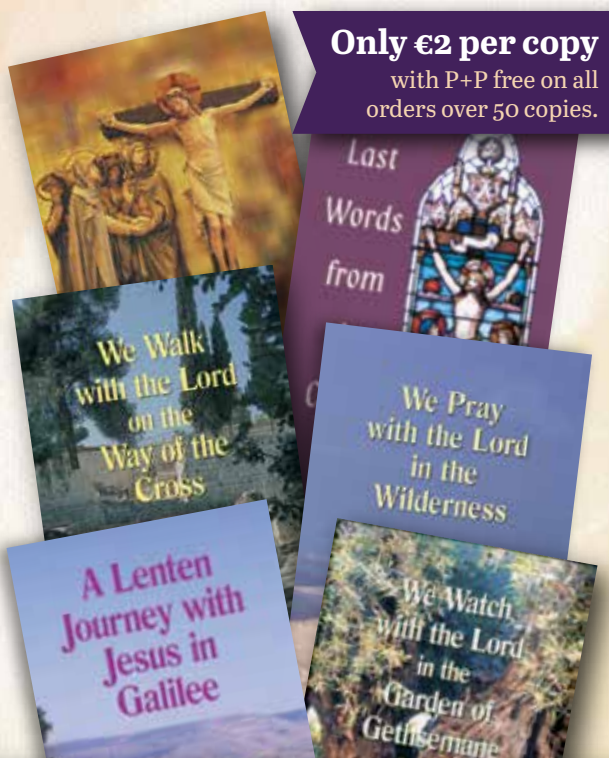
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Priest criticises Orange Order grand master appointment as ‘sending the wrong signals’

Jason Osborne

Fermanagh-based priest Fr Joe McVeigh has said that the promotion of Stephen Fulton to grand master in the Orange Order shows “bad form” as the country grapples with violence against women and girls.

The appointment of Mr Fulton as district master of Cookstown generated outrage after it emerged that he has a conviction for killing his wife.

Mr Fulton shot his wife Corien Fulton in the head in 1999 and was later convicted of manslaughter.

The 77-year-old was jailed for five years.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr McVeigh said that “naturally, a man who is guilty of killing his wife shouldn’t be in any position of power or authority or responsibility”.

“It shows bad form on the part of the Orange Order to even consider him for a senior position in their organisation,

but then again, they haven’t such a good record when it comes to all kinds of issues,” he said.

Violence against women is a “major issue” in the times we live, Fr McVeigh said, especially for women who have been abused.

“It’s a very lively issue here, and in all of Ireland. It sends out all the wrong signals,” he said.

As of the time of writing, the Orange Order had not yet issued any comment regarding the decision.

Archbishop Eamon pays tribute to deceased deacon

Staff reporter

Archbishop Eamon Martin has paid tribute to Deacon Martin Barlow, who died recently aged 54.

Deacon Barlow, who was one of the first married men to be ordained to the diaconate in

Armagh, died just four weeks after being diagnosed with cancer.

His funeral Mass was held on Monday in St John the Baptist Church, Drumcree. Fr Michael Sheehan told mourners there had been a “huge wave of disbelief, shock and

grief” at the news of Deacon Barlow’s death.

Having worked as a graphic designer, he was one of five married men ordained as deacons in 2013, taking up the position of permanent deacon in the Parish of Keady and Derrynoose.

A statement from the

Armagh Diocese read: “Archbishop Eamon extends his sympathy and that of Cardinal Seán, Bishop Michael, the clergy and people of the Archdiocese to Martin’s wife, Ursula, and to his sons, Shéa and Oisín and the wider family circle.”

Missionaries praise Pope’s ‘morale boosting’ African visit

» Continued from Page 1

“People were joyous and united in the welcoming of the Pope,” she said.

For Spiritan missionary Fr John Skinnader, the visit was a “morale booster” for everyone.

“Even though he is frail and in a wheelchair people saw the

effort he made to be with us,” said Fr Skinnader. “It gives us hope for the future.”

The papal visit marked an “epoch change” for the Church in Africa, the Irish missionary continued, as it grows locally and the presence of European missionaries declines.

“The Church is very

dynamic in Africa which could be seen with all the young people involved,” he said, adding, “No Church crisis here!”

The Church in Africa doesn’t carry the same “baggage” as its European counterparts, said Fr Skinnader. “It is seen by young people as modern, dynamic and very supportive.”



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Holy Matrimony – the good and the bad news...



Mary Kenny

The good news about marriage is that it improves health. Mary Johnston, an Irish relationship counsellor, has endorsed studies published by the Universities of Luxembourg, and of Ottawa, which found that people between the ages of 50 and 89 had better health than singletons. Marriage can have the effect of diminishing diabetes – even a troubled or quarrelsome marriage can be supportive of both psychological and physical health.

The less good news is that, increasingly, marriage is becoming the purview of the rich and affluent. In Britain, the Marriage Foundation, has found that wedlock is no longer “for richer, for poorer”, but more likely to be “for richer” alone.

Organisation

The organisation found that 70% of new parents who were married were in the upper income bracket.

- It was delightful to hear a grand piano being played by a young woman at a side altar, just before Sunday morning Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Donnybrook, Dublin 4, and then later, after Communion. The music was sacred and soothing and the pianist was clearly gifted. She played some classical music, and also hymns like *Morning Has Broken* and *Hail Queen of Heaven*.

Afterwards I discovered that the pianist is Dr Jennifer Porter, associate professor of surgery at Trinity College Dublin, and an anaesthetist at Dublin’s St James’s Hospital. Donnybrook parish certainly is blessed to have such a distinguished medic providing such lovely music for its Sunday morning congregation. Live music in church adds such emotional warmth.

Stranger danger?

The word *xenos* in Greek, meaning ‘stranger’ gives us that unlikeable term xenophobic – disproportionate dislike of foreigners. And yet a child psychologist explained to me that a certain elemental distrust of ‘strangers’ is part of the psychology of human survival: the child may turn away from someone he or she

doesn’t yet know.

I experienced this recently when a cousin’s toddler grandchild refused to greet me – he hadn’t met me before. I wasn’t offended – time and familiarity are needed to establish trust.

As the ‘stranger’ needs time to integrate into a host society, so the host society



Nicola Peltz and Brooklyn Beckham.

Only 30% – one in three couples – who got married to have a child (or already had one) were in the lower income bracket.

“The less good news is that, increasingly, marriage is becoming the purview of the rich and affluent”

Marriage is declining across the spectrum of society, but Sir Paul Coleridge, who set up the Marriage Foundation (having witnessed so many cases of children torn apart by divorce proceedings), says that the trend to reject marriage is far more advanced among lower-income households. The poor are just not marrying. He criticised the benefits system for not supporting marriage, and politicians for not upholding it as representing the best

framework for children’s development.

But if marriage is increasingly seen as being for the rich, perhaps it may acquire the value of a status symbol? Perhaps the fashionistas and ‘influencers’ will thus be the promoters of marriage? Perhaps they are already doing that: consider the fashionable focus on the wedding of

young Brooklyn Beckham and his American heiress wife, Nicola Peltz.

Yet Sir Paul also criticises over-lavish wedding parties because they can be a deterrent to tying that knot: his mission is to convince those of more modest means that matrimony is for them, too.

“The organisation found that 70% of new parents who were married were in the upper income bracket”

needs time to adjust to the ‘stranger’.

Irish society is not inherently racist, in my view, even though sociologists like the late Fr Michéal MacGréil found that there was ‘intolerance’ of the unfamiliar in his research. One person in six in Dublin city is now non-Irish and my experience is that

is accepted and often welcomed.

But time, and sensible limitations, too, on the number of incomers that can be accommodated, literally and metaphorically, are a necessary part of the process that the young child rehearses in accepting the presence of a ‘stranger’.

- A carton of Avonmore Slimline milk now comes with a dose of Prince-Harry-type psychotherapy. *Focus on BEING ME in 2023*, goes the wording. “Being me in 2023 is about being true to yourself and doing what feels right for you. It’s about improving your positivity, happiness and confidence. It’s about set-

ting realistic goals and prioritising your health and wellbeing. We’re all a work in progress but let’s focus on being the best version of ourselves, that we can be!”

I guess there’s no harm to a message about ‘wellness’. But isn’t there an element of overly subjective narcissism in this exhortation to do

“what feels right for you”? Supposing ‘what feels right’ to one person is offensive or even deleterious to another? What if ‘being me’ is being a pain in the neck to someone else?

Or am I applying too much moral philosophy to mere words on a milk-carton probably just designed to flatter the customer?

JOE WALSH TOURS



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HSE struggles to produce evidence of pro-life protest harassment

Jason Osborne

In reply to a Parliamentary Question from Cork South West TD Michael Collins, the HSE revealed that it had compiled a list of 21 events since the introduction of abortion in January 2019 that had taken place in the vicinity of abortion centres.

Responding to Deputy Collins' inquiry, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said that the HSE has advised that most of the feedback they've received in relation to protests has

been provided "verbally by members of the Termination of Pregnancy, Clinical Advisory Forum, on an *ad hoc* informal basis".

In this regard, Minister Donnelly related protests the HSE has "heard of" outside the Coombe, Cork University Maternity Hospital, University Maternity Hospital Limerick and the National Maternity Hospital at "various intervals".

The response went on to say that the list "should not be taken as exhaustive" as it was likely that more events of a similar nature had taken place.

Members of the Oireachtas have claimed previously that pro-life presence outside of abortion clinics amounts to harassment, and that "exclusion zones" are needed in light of this.

Responding to the HSE's list, spokesperson for the Pro-Life Campaign Eilís Mulroy said that "we already knew that exclusion zones which discriminate against pro-life citizens were being formulated on the hoof and without a solid evidence base.

"But the release of the HSE's slapdash list further confirms that there is no evidence

of any intimidatory protests."

Ms Mulroy described the list as "remarkably light on details", saying that in some cases the location of the protest "isn't even known", and that there is no evidence of the specific date or numbers involved in any such protests.

The lack of context provided means that one or two people silently praying could be construed as a 'protest' under the "ambiguous criteria" of this list, Ms Mulroy said.

"Such a careless compilation of data to underpin a drastic policy measure is inadequate," she said.

Local demand not Church slowing down divestment

Ruadhán Jones

The slow divestment of Catholic schools is down to local demand and not the Church, a senior official in the Department of Education has said.

The reconfiguration of school patronage is a "slow burner", Mr Hubert Loftus told the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Skills.

However, he added that this "is not necessarily because of the Department or even the Church".

"It is more about looking at where the demand is among local school communities," said Mr Loftus, who has headed the Department for Education's planning and building unit since 2017.

His comments came in response to a question from Green Party Senator

Pauline O'Reilly.

Ms O'Reilly claimed that projects aimed at developing multid denominational schooling have run into problems when it comes to "funding of the Catholic Church".

"I am not saying there is not work done," the senator said. "I am talking about whether we are hitting the targets [for multid denominational schools].

"Somebody has to buy into these projects. The Catholic Church has to agree to it. The Catholic Church has to be paid."

Meanwhile, a pilot scheme exploring local demand for multid denominational schools is ongoing.

One school of the 63 schools involved has divested so far. Reports on the other schools are expected at the end of March.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Charities assist after earthquake devastation

Numerous NGOs are responding to the devastation caused by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake which struck southeast Türkiye and northwest Syria. Multiple aftershocks were recorded after this, the most severe measuring 7.5.

The earthquake occurred in the early hours of Monday morning, February 6, and since then thousands of casualties have been recorded.

Concern Worldwide is providing emergency supplies and shelter to those impacted, including blankets and heaters to emergency shelters in Sanliurfa, close to the epicentre of the earthquakes.

"The biggest priority for people affected by these earthquakes is shelter as it's currently below freezing (-4 degrees Celsius) in the areas hit by the earthquakes," said Fiona Gannon, regional director with Concern.

Senator praises 'richer' Catholic vision of healthcare

Staff reporter

Irish healthcare services would be "much better" if there were more of the Catholic ethos today, an independent senator has said.

Responding to the revelation that 95% of parents whose babies are diag-

nosed with Down's syndrome at the Rotunda Hospital choose to have an abortion, Senator Rónán Mullen said that "something has happened in our country".

Quoting from the late Pope Benedict XVI's a phrase about each person being the result of "a thought of God",

Senator Mullen said that he couldn't help but think "how much richer that vision is".

"How much more noble it is compared with the cold and sterile words coming from the medical profession or some branches of it and how much better would our healthcare system

would be if there was more of that vision but welcoming each person in his or her individuality and rooting for him or her right from the get go," Mr Mullen said.

"Our health service would be much better if there was more of that spirit around."

Blessing of the throats...



Fr David Vard blesses the throats of parishioners in St Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, on the feast of St Blaise, February 3. Photo: Agnieszka Kaczmarek

UK Education Secretary: Children would be 'learning less' without faith schools

The UK's Secretary of State for Education has praised the work of faith schools across Britain.

Speaking at the Church of England's education conference, Gillian Kegan described the Church of England as one of the department's "most valued partners".

She also noted the impact faith schools had on her own development, listing all the Catholic schools she attended, before admitting that they left a mark on her life.

"All of those faith schools, which were fantastic schools, they got me where I am today. But they also instilled faith in me. And it's a core part of who I am today."

Breda O'Brien

The View



Attempts to co-opt St Brigid are offensive

Our new public holiday created to commemorate Imbolc/St Brigid has come and gone. In Leo Varadkar's announcement last January, the emphasis was already clear.

"This will be the first Irish public holiday named after a woman. It marks the half-way point between the winter solstice and the equinox, the beginning of spring and the Celtic New Year."

No mention of Brigid of Kildare at all. Perhaps to make up for it, an Taoiseach visited Solas Bhride in Kildare recently and recorded a video message endorsing the 'Pause for Peace', initiative of the organisations, IntoKildare and Solas Bhride. (The latter was founded by the Brigidine sisters and lay collaborators.)

Peace

An Taoiseach said: "By pausing for peace we are asking people to come together to oppose war and to be inspired by St Brigid of Kildare, a peacemaker, a protector of the natural world and a formidable force for justice."

Perhaps Minister for the Environment, Eamon Ryan's tongue was firmly in his cheek when he recently presented an image of St Brigid to Leo Varadkar. According to Miriam Lord of the *Irish Times*, Leo Varadkar had requested something to represent the Green Party in his office, as he already had portraits of Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera.

"A 'Pause for Peace' is certainly justified, as stories abound about Brigid attempting reconciliation"

Ryan thought about it and decided that a famous image of St Brigid by Kathleen Verschoyle, originally commissioned by Cuala Press, would fit the bill.

It is a beautiful image of St Brigid minding three lambs, with a dandelion in the foreground. (The dandelion was often known as Brigid's flame, particularly in Scotland.)

Not only is it a beautiful, traditional image, but it also is a timely reminder for Cuala Press, run by Elizabeth

and Susan Yeats, the sisters of the much better-known W.B. Yeats and Jack B. Yeats. The legacy of these enterprising sisters, known as Lolly and Lily, is completely overshadowed, sadly, by the famous brothers.

Strangely, Elizabeth was known as Lolly, and Susan as Lily, even though Lily is often a diminutive of Elizabeth. They promoted arts and crafts, including illustrations and embroidered banners, and also were the first publishing house in Ireland run entirely by women. Lily had been trained by Mai Morris, daughter of William Morris, the celebrated designer and craftsman of textiles, while Lolly was almost entirely self-taught. They both played a large part in the Celtic Revival.

The print dates from 1920 and helps to illustrate the place that Brigid of Kildare held in the Irish imagination – not a trace of the Goddess to be seen, although Maud Gonne, for example, was interested both in the Celtic goddess and the saint.

Is it cultural appropriation to use St Brigid as an image of the Green Party? If we want to represent her as a saint who cared for the earth, the abundance of stories about her that concern her working hard with animals, including cows and sheep, rescuing foxes, and saving the harvest might offer a justification.

Reconciliation

A 'Pause for Peace' is certainly justified, as stories abound about Brigid attempting reconciliation, and there is also the famous story of how she gave her father's prized sword away.

Other attempts to co-opt Brigid, however, are offensive, not to mention anachronistic. In the continuing erasure of Christian women, Herstory.ie, which claims to be responsible for the new public holiday, has this to say: "In the 21st Century, Brigid re-emerged as an inspirational heroine of the marriage equality and Repeal the 8th referendums – both extraordinary victories of compassion. Ireland's matron saint is our first recorded abortionist, compassionately 'restoring a nun's chastity', as recorded by early Christian monks in *The Annals*. She was also a lesbian, 'sharing her bed with a woman'. Brigid may be an anomaly for Catholicism but one thing is



for sure, she represents true Christianity."

It is hard to know where to begin with this. Firstly, there is the lack of irony in celebrating a miracle recorded by Cogitosus that focuses on "restoring a nun's chastity". Neither of the movements mentioned by Herstory.ie would seem to be particularly keen on the virtue of chastity, that is, sexuality oriented towards the transmission of life as well as love.

"It is a beautiful image of St Brigid minding three lambs, with a dandelion in the foreground"

Her beloved companion, Dar Lughdach, who was Brigid's student and successor as Abbess of Kildare and who shares her feast day on February 1, is co-opted to collaborate in the erasure of female friendship, one of the most sustaining aspects of any woman's life.

People are entitled to worship Brigit the goddess, scant though the historical sources may be. They can decide that Brigit was a Druidic priestess, even if the evidence for female priestesses is scarce and male Druids may have practised human sacrifice. But could we please be allowed to venerate St Brigid of Kildare in peace, without having her erased in favour of the other two aspects?

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Dublin Diocese praises God during joyful Laudate Festival

Jason Osborne

The Laudate Festival was celebrated for the fifth time in Dublin archdiocese this week.

A diocesan celebration

of Catholic primary schools that brings children, schools communities, families and parishes together to praise God and take time for reflection, a choir of hundreds of children from 25 Catholic primary schools in the archdiocese led singing as

parents, friends and parishioners joined them in each of the three venues.

The celebration took place in the Church of Our Lady of Victories on Ballymun Rd, Church of St Therese in Mount Merrion and the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills.



Boys and girls from Ballyroan Boys National School and Loreto Primary School Rathfarnham, left to right Jane Hayden, Riona Mc Guire, Conor Dent, Aifric Treston, Erin Diffney, Conor Joyce and Isi Frain at the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills Thursday night during the Laudate Festival 2023. Photos: John McElroy



Children leading their parents, and parishioners, in song at the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills.



A young boy reacting to the music at the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills.



Ava Delaney, Zofia Rogozik, Eva Byrne and Mia Delaney from Loreto Primary School Crumlin Rd.



Boys from Ballyroan Boys National School at the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills on Thursday night.



Girls from Loreto Primary School Rathfarnham at the Church of the Holy Spirit Greenhills.

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Church must be 'field hospital' for Ukrainian refugees



Plans are underway to develop more permanent hubs for Ukrainian Catholics, Ruadhán Jones hears

I've rarely met anyone who has come over [to Ireland] saying this is where we see our life permanently," Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski tells me. "Many are really saying, I just want to go home when I can."

It's almost a year now since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In that time, Reuters estimates 55,000 people have been killed while a further 14 million have been displaced.

Ireland has taken in over 70,000 refugees fleeing the war, many of whom belong to the Ukrainian Catholic Church. They were particularly visible during their Christmas celebrations, which took place both on December 25 and also on January 7 in Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, Cork and around the country.

Return

However, while many of them prayed for a chance to return home, when they will be able to is "anybody's guess", says Bishop Nowakowski. Last year, Pope Francis appointed him Apostolic Visitor for Ukrainians on the island of Ireland.

“The situation is fluid and complex due to the uncertainty around the end of the war”

"Even if the war were to end tomorrow – and please God that it would – reconstruction would be massive and so many of the people who have fled to Ireland have left behind nothing. Their homes have been destroyed," he adds.

For that reason, the Ukrainian Catholic bishop is making plans for semi-permanent pastoral hubs, in addition to the official Ukrainian Catholic parish in Dublin. Bishop Nowakowski has been in regular communication with his Irish counterparts to move these plans forward over the past eight months.

So far, "we have been having perhaps not regular liturgical ser-



Ukrainian children perform a Nativity play during celebrations for Christmas in the Church of Our Lady of Consolation, Donnycarney, Dublin, on January 7, the day Ukrainian Catholics traditionally celebrate the birth of Christ.

vices, apart from Dublin where we have our permanent parish there, with Fr Vasyl Kornitsky currently the official priest for the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ireland.

"But we also have been able to work with some of the bishops to have our other priests... start serving the people in areas in Cork, Waterford and a few other places. Over the Christmas season, we had a priest from Ukraine and he was able to provide pastoral care and services in Limerick for a month and we're trying to see how we can continue that as well."

Complex

However, the situation is fluid and complex due to the uncertainty around the end of the war.

"In general, when you're talking to the displaced Ukrainian person, they're hoping to be able to go back," he says. "So the pastoral care that we're to provide means establishing parishes where maybe in six months to a year that's not where Ukrainians are going to be – it is very much a challenging thing."

Assumption

For now, Bishop Nowakowski is working on the assumption that the refugees may be here for a number of years. This raises the question of identifying hubs and making sure a priest is assigned there.

"A lot has to do with where the jobs will be, where the schools will be and how we can provide them with pastoral care in that way without necessarily heavily

investing in brick and mortar," he explains.

Identifying the areas where Ukrainian refugees will eventually be able to settle is not as easy as it seems due to the wider housing crisis in Ireland.

"Right now, it's still very fluid," Bishop Nowakowski says. "Wherever has been able to accommodate people, that's where we need to be looking at today. But long term, meaning over the next two or three years – if we can say that's long term – that's when we will be able to identify better."

“The situation has worsened of late, with a predicted shortfall of 600 places for refugees in the next four weeks”

"I think first of all it will be to do with the social housing that's available to people currently and secondly, to be able to move people out of hotels, tourist places and student housing into other areas – that's not going to be that easy, because we know in general that housing is a challenge in Ireland for everyone."

Shortfall

The situation has worsened of late, with a predicted shortfall of 600 places for refugees in the next four weeks. Bishop Nowakowski admitted that it would be wrong to say there were no concerns over these kinds of problems, but added that "we are grateful for the way the Government is handling this."

"They haven't closed their eyes, they realise there are challenges. And I know they are working very hard to find not just temporary stop-gap solutions, but solutions

for housing and for where children can go to school," he says.

"And because this all happened so quickly, I think first of all everybody needs to be given top marks and realise that even if the war were to end tomorrow, the need for continued temporary shelter and housing will continue for some time."

The challenge of forming hubs for pastoral and sacramental care is further complicated by the difficulty of finding Ukrainian Catholic priests available to serve. There are a limited number of exemptions to the rule that men between the ages of 18-60 must remain in Ukraine and being a priest isn't one of them.

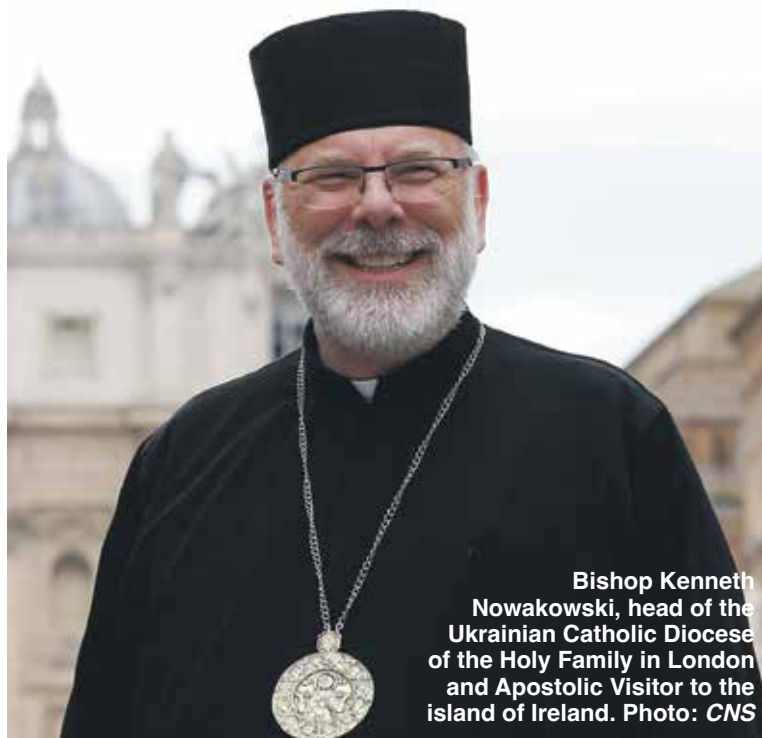
Aim

However, though the situation is complex, Bishop Nowakowski says the Church's response must be guided by a simple aim – to become the "field hospital" described by Pope Francis.

“A lot has to do with where the jobs will be, where the schools will be and how we can provide them with pastoral care”

"We must try to see where the people are, what are their needs pastorally, both with the sacramental ministry and just being there for them, listening to them, hearing their stories and letting them know there's a place they can come to that's safe," he says.

"Again, the Roman Catholic bishops, the priests and the parishes themselves in the Roman Catholic Church have been so generous and accommodating. I can't emphasise that enough, it's just been overwhelming."



Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of the Holy Family in London and Apostolic Visitor to the island of Ireland. Photo: CNS

Why popes still warn against witchcraft



Pope Francis warns that an addiction to the occult still plagues Africa, writes **David Quinn**

Pope Francis was in Africa last week visiting two very troubled countries, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, the newest nation on the continent.

Congo has the biggest Catholic population in Africa, numbering 45 million in all. Africa is, of course, where the Catholic Church is growing fastest, and it is also the part of the world with the fastest growing population, full stop.

Congo is resource-rich, and that means it is wide open to exploitation by Western countries and companies, as well as China. It is formerly a colony of Belgium, which was a particularly cruel colonial master.

Fighting over its resources has killed millions of people in recent decades.

South Sudan was only created ten years ago out of the Sudanese civil war. It is mostly Christian, and an estimated 400,000 people have been killed there since it gained nationhood because the civil war hasn't really stopped in many ways. We hear all about the Ukraine war because it is relatively close to us. But we know almost nothing about the bloodshed in South Sudan. Irish nuns continue to work there, sometimes in very dangerous conditions. They are unsung heroes.

“A community that hits bad luck can easily imagine it has been caused by a curse”

While in Congo, Pope Francis addressed some of the problems facing the country, including exploitation by outside powers, internal divisions and tribalism, corruption, and something else that might be unexpected to Westerners, namely “addiction to the occult and witchcraft”. He warned that “this form of



Pope Francis celebrates Mass at Ndolo airport in Kinshasa, Congo, February 1. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

dependency imprisons us in fear, vengeance and anger”.

When Pope Benedict visited Angola in 2009, he said something similar. Many Africans, he stated, “are living in fear of spirits, of malign and threatening powers. In their bewilderment, they end up even condemning street children and the elderly as alleged sorcerers”.

Practice

The practice of turning to self-styled witches and witch doctors to improve your fortunes or to bring misfortune to a rival is far more widespread than we think.

We might imagine also that witch hunts are a thing of the past. This is far from the case. They are relatively common in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of India, the Amazon basin and Papua New Guinea.

A community that hits bad luck can easily imagine it has been caused by a curse and then go seeking the person they think is responsible.

A recent article in *The Sunday Times* showed how completely out of hand things can become. It detailed examples of human sacrifice in Uganda, including of children. In the years 2019 to 2021 alone, Ugandan authorities reported 132 incidents in which people were murdered in witchcraft ceremonies.

It is unimaginable to us that such things can happen today, but in all ages, people have believed that a very powerful way to recruit spirits to your cause, or to appease one, is to offer them a human sacrifice, with a child being seen as especially potent.

Sometimes parents will even sell their own child to a witchdoctor. Writing in *The Sunday Times*, Annie Ikpa, who has campaigned in Uganda against child sacrifice gives the hypothetical example of “a mum with maybe seven children who cannot feed them all, who is

visited by a witch doctor, saying, ‘Look, if you sell me your child, I will sacrifice it and you’ll be better off and so will your other six children.’”

Witchcraft practices are not confined to Uganda. If they were, Pope Francis would not have had to decry them in the Democratic Republic of Congo last week, or Pope Benedict in Angola in 2009.

Throughout its history, Christianity has fought (sometimes brutally) against people turning to witchcraft and the occult. This is because everywhere it has gone, it has encountered the practice and we can see, it can become extremely dark.

“Fighting over its resources has killed millions of people in recent decades”

The Church has always told people to turn to God and not the occult when in need. If you suspect your neighbour has paid a witch to lay a spell on you, this induces the most incredible paranoia and you may pay a witch or witchdoctor to retaliate.

It is why Pope Francis said last week that “this form of dependency imprisons us in fear, vengeance and anger”. Things can spiral out of control very fast.

Convert

But when people convert to Christianity and turn to God in need, and you learn that your neighbours are doing the same, then levels of paranoia and fear can diminish rapidly and practices like human sacrifice will become far less common.

Of course, mainstream religion can cause problems of its own, for example sectarian violence. Unfortunately, everything can be corrupted and turned to evil. That is

human nature and evidence of the endemic nature of sin.

But there is still a very big difference between turning to God when in need, and turning to the occult, because prayer never involves trying to lay a curse on an enemy. No-one has to worry that if their neighbour is praying to God, their family will be cursed as a result. The whole dynamic is totally different.

The job of the Church in various parts of Africa such as Congo, Angola and Uganda, is to try and ensure those who are already Christian are not tempted to turn to the older practices of the occult because of their cultural prevalence.

“There is still a very big difference between turning to God when in need, and turning to the occult”

We might imagine that here, in the ‘rationalistic’ West, we are gone well past all that. In fact, belief in the occult persists. As detailed in this newspaper recently [*The Irish Catholic* – September 22, 2022], on the social media platform, TikTok, videos with the hashtag #WitchTok have been viewed billions of times. Teenagers post videos of themselves performing ‘spells’. In the vast majority of cases this will be harmless enough, but if you are impressionable it might be a different story, especially if you come to believe some

people are casting spells against you.

Only a few weeks ago in Britain, five pig hearts were found on a stone platform surrounded by a ring of 20 candles near a 12th century church. Two similar incidents had also happened nearby the church in recent months.

Rationalistic

We might imagine that as Western societies become less Christian, they will become more rationalistic. But this is not necessarily the case at all. In fact, as Christianity fades, we might find more people turning to much more ancient practices and deciding there is salience in them.

History can take all sorts of strange twists and turns, many completely unexpected. As GK Chesterton is reported to have said, “When men stop believing in God they don’t believe in nothing; they believe in anything”.

We have already seen this in the rise of murderous ideologies in the 20th century such as communism and fascism. It would be an even stranger twist if the occult continues to re-emerge and rise in popularity and influence.

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Parish fears as Dublin inner city awash with drugs and violence



Some churches should consider hiring security guards as parishioners must feel safe when worshipping, Chai Brady hears

Parishes in inner city Dublin have expressed concern about the extent of open drug dealing and violent crime on the streets which has created a “menacing” atmosphere in communities.

Challenging areas

Priests in challenging areas across Dublin told *The Irish Catholic* of how churches have been vandalised, young people are being “killed off” by new synthetic drugs and there appears to be little accountability.

For Fr Kieran McDermott, the administrator of St Mary’s Pro Cathedral in the north inner city, security and safety in the area has “descended” in the last five years.

“Once it gets dark there is a menacing, edgy feeling around,” he said, adding that

they used to close the cathedral at 6pm but they have moved to 4pm.

“We have people who come into the cathedral sometimes to pilfer from the shrines, many of them are clearly people who are on substances and they’re trying to finance the next purchase,” Fr McDermott said.

“I’ve had to ask staff not to approach people like that but to go back into the sacristy and phone the guards on Store Street. This is a regular, daily reality in the Dublin 1 area.”

At the end of November last year a man who Fr McDermott described as being “strung out” entered the cathedral and caused nearly €10,000 in damage in the sanctuary. The ambo, brass candle holders, the PA system and more fell victim to the assault. Fortunately, no staff were there at the time.

“There has been a substantial failure of civic and Government policy in the Dublin 1 area,” said Fr McDermott.

“The last major intervention that made any change was the Tony Gregory deal and that’s going back a long time. But since then drugs are awash. One young guard asked me if I had noticed anything in the last year, I said there’s young people on scooters in their teens and 20s, they’re wearing Canada Goose jackets – how does a 16-year-old boy who has left school and is not employed afford a Canada Goose jacket?”

It’s well known by An Garda that certain gangs, sometimes referred to as ‘Gucci gangs’, will use teenagers to deliver drugs, tempting them with designer products such as Canada Goose jackets which can cost around €1,000. One of the reasons children are used is that they are less likely to face a jail sentence – but the main purpose is to separate the actual drug deal-

ers from their crime, making it harder for authorities to catch the real culprits.

For the first time in Irish law the Criminal Justice *Engagement of Children in Criminal Activity Bill 2023* will recognise specific offences where an adult compels, coerces, induces or invites a child to engage in criminal activity. This was signed off by Government on January 18, and could see those involved facing 12 months on summary conviction or up to five years on indictment.

“The priest said that he remembers decades ago when Dublin became ‘awash’ with heroin use, but now there are many more synthetic drugs freely available”

While Fr McDermott praised the legislation, he said there still appears to be no “joined up thinking” in resolving many of the inner city’s issues.

“The solutions are not easy but it strikes me that intervention at a very early age in a young person’s development is key to how they understand and envision their own futures, a future with an education, with a vocational occupation, a future without crime,” he said.

“The area has become difficult for everybody. Even myself, as an adult male, if I’m going to function on the other side of the city and I’m coming back to collect my car or going back to the house or cathedral, I walk with purpose. You don’t hang around.

“There are significant social

problems. Cathedral Street, and particularly the lane behind it called Thomas Lane – that effectively has become a public toilet. On warm days in the summer, the stench can be overwhelming. Sadly the area of Dublin 1 is in trouble,” he added.

The priest said that he remembers decades ago when Dublin became “awash” with heroin use, but now there are many more synthetic drugs freely available. “Now it’s everything, from amphetamines to this ‘ice’ [crystal meth] that they talk about – this synthetic

stuff that is manufactured. Before it was hidden, now it’s open. The guards might come along and move them on, but then the guards will move on and they’ll come back.”

On January 26, on the same street as the Pro Cathedral, a man was stabbed in the middle of the day at approximately 12.40pm. The man, who is in his late 20s, was treated at the scene on Marlborough Street then brought to hospital and while his wounds were serious they were not life-threatening.

Fr McDermott decried the use of knives and the intent

behind the decision to carry one, saying: “The carrying of knives is a phenomenon now, why a person would leave their home with a knife beggars belief. If you’re going out with a knife, you’re clearly not going out to peel oranges.”

Daily reality

The administrator of North Wall parish in the inner city, Fr Robert Colclough, told *The Irish Catholic* drug dealing and violence are a daily reality, but the Church must reach out to those who are lost in that world.

He said: “In the inner city



unfortunately we have a drug epidemic. With the drug issues comes violence, with violence comes beatings, threatening, knife crime, gun crime, it all stems from something that is broken. And there's a lot of brokenness there.

"People can be within a big community of the North East Inner City or the North Inner City and feel completely isolated – not feel part of it for whatever reason. The Church's role in this is helping people to realise that we're part of something, that we recognise that the Body of Christ is out there and we have a place in that, and we need to have a relationship with the community that we live in."

“Fr Colclough continued saying the peer pressure amongst young people is ‘humungous’, particularly when tempted by large sums of money and what it can buy”

He added that “there is a lot of violence and unfortunately that is the reality that is out there but that's what comes when we enter into the world of drugs”.

While there are talks at Government and local council level in relation to these issues, Fr Colclough questioned their effectiveness, saying “the reality of my life is that I see drug addiction outside my door 24/7, I see violence at all different levels every single day”.

“The reality is there is still a huge drug issue out there in the inner city and it's not getting any better, it's prevalent, it's in your face, and it's there for everybody to see. What it's doing is this, it's destroying the younger people, it's killing people off.”

Fr Colclough continued saying the peer pressure among young people is “humungous”, particularly when tempted by large sums of money and what it can buy. However, regardless of a young person's situation regarding the world of illegal drugs, he insisted that it's important to see the goodness in them.

“In every single person that's out there selling drugs or getting involved in violence, they all have a story, there's a goodness in them and that is something to believe in, we cannot see just a number,” he said. “The minute we stop seeing the young person and calling them by their name, then we've lost the battle. Programmes won't work, because

you have to see the human being, nobody sets out to do these things but the reality is that if we create an environment where it's easy to do that, and they see that people don't care about them, or if that is their perception because nobody is doing anything to stop this, then that's what the young person imbibes – and that's a dangerous space.

“When we think about it from a Faith context, every single community is frail but the thing is, when we look at the Gospels and we look at the person of Jesus Christ, that's where Jesus wanted to be. He wanted to be in a community and this is where he has chosen to make his home.”

The drug issue in the inner city is spilling into other areas, according to Fr Colclough, whether that be serious crimes of a sexual nature or serious issues around other addictions including alcohol, gambling, pornography, “and all of these things come from the violence and the drug culture within the inner city”.

Security

Right beside the Liffey opposite the Four Courts, is the Franciscan's Adam and Eve church on Merchants Quay. It is three doors down from the Franciscan-founded Merchants Quay Ireland which provides homelessness services and drugs services for those suffering with addiction.

Guardian of the church Bro. Niall O'Connell OFM told *The Irish Catholic* that while there has been a lot of anti-social behaviour around the church over the years they have a security guard employed who has a good rapport with the people who would frequent Merchants Quay Ireland's services.

Bro. O'Connell puts the fact they don't have violent incidents inside the church down to having the security guard – who they've employed for about 15 years. He said if necessary, and possible, other churches should consider getting a security guard.

He said: “I think we're no different from any other business in the area really, security is important because people coming to church need to feel safe as well. Having a security person there reassures them because the Church population at the moment is very elderly. You don't want to create fear, you want to create an atmosphere where they feel welcome. The more we can make our churches places of welcome and safety the better we are.”

Bro. O'Connell added that it is also important to treat people with respect, as this can help dissipate tension.

“We've had the experience that when you actually talk with them, saying ‘this is a church there are people coming to pray’, they tend to say ‘OK we'll stay away’. We've rarely had very violent incidents. Some of them then ask if they can go in and say a prayer or light a candle, we'd facilitate that and go with them, we think that dissipates it,” he said.

It's important to see people struggling with addiction as suffering, Bro. O'Connell added, saying “a lot of the time their addiction brings a lot of pain in their life so the more welcoming we can be, and the more we treat them with respect, then you can actually start a conversation with them”.

Law enforcement

Currently there is a sense in the inner city that justice is not served when a person is found to be breaking the law, according to Fr Colclough who says there needs to be a heightened level of law enforcement in order for people to feel safe.

However, he insisted that often people will direct blame in every direction, whether that be at An Garda, TDs, or the local council, but what needs to be asked is “What am I doing?”

“I always try as a priest to model myself on the person of Jesus Christ, so how does Jesus minister? When Jesus speaks of ministering he speaks of serving in love and meeting the needs of others and that's going to be challenging no matter where you are but that is the core idea for the Church as a community,” he said.

“The core is to try your best to serve in love and in doing that, try to meet the needs of others. There's the material needs within the community here in the inner city, there's the poor, the homeless, the hungry. But there's also the challenge for the Church and for me as a priest to serve the spiritual needs of the people and some of those needs are the ones that are probably neglected more.

“When I talk about the spiritual needs I'm speaking about the need for forgiveness, for guidance, there's a growing hunger for them through all the ups and downs of life. The Church as a community, whether it be in North Wall parish or whether it be the full community of the inner city, the Church tries to communicate God's love, that's what I'd see my role as. I try and inject God's love in the way that I witness to the person of Jesus Christ,” he said.



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“There's the material needs within the community here in the inner city, there's the poor, the homeless, the hungry”

Pope travels to Africa



Pope Francis is greeted by Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi at the Palais de la Nation in Kinshasa January 31. Photo: OSV News/Vatican Media via Reuters



People cheer as they wait for Pope Francis to pass on a road near the international airport in Kinshasa, Congo, January 31.



Cindy Wooden

After flying across the equator, Pope Francis was welcomed warmly – in every sense – to Congo where Catholics make up the majority of the population and where, for decades, the Catholic Church has been at the forefront of efforts to bring peace, education and health care to the people.

With a small crowd cheering and a boy and girl offering him flowers, the Pope arrived at the airport. But the real welcome came on the road leading into the city where thousands of people stood and cheered.

During the seven-hour flight

from Rome to Kinshasa January 31, the Pope told reporters he was happy finally to be able to make the trip, even though “I had wanted to go to Goma” in the east, “but with the war it was not possible”.

Before leaving his residence at the Vatican, Pope Francis met with nine refugees from Congo and South Sudan, where he travelled February 3. The refugees are assisted in Rome by the Jesuit Refugee Service’s Centro Astalli.

About two hours into the flight, when the chartered plane was flying over the Sahara Desert, the Pope led everyone on the plane in a moment of silent prayer for all those who, “seeking a bit of well-being, a bit of freedom,” felt forced to try to cross the desert “but did not make it”.

Too often, he said, they end up being thrown into “lagers,” detention centres in Libya, “and suffer there. Let us pray for them”.

Leaving Italy, the Pope sent a telegram to Italian President

Sergio Mattarella explaining that he was making the trip “moved by a deep desire to meet brothers and sisters in the Faith and the inhabitants of those dear nations, bringing a message of peace and reconciliation”.

In addition to cardinals from the Secretariat of State, the Dicastery for Evangelisation and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, Pope Francis included in his official entourage Congolese Sr Rita Mboshu Kongo, a theologian and member of the Daughters of Mary Most Holy.

Pope preaches to a Congo ‘gasping for breath’

The people of Congo are more precious than any of the gems or minerals found in the earth beneath their feet, yet they have been slaughtered by war-mongers and exploited by prospectors, Pope Francis said.

“This country, so immense and full of life, this diaphragm

of Africa, struck by violence like a blow to the stomach, has seemed for some time to be gasping for breath,” the Pope said January 31 at a meeting with Congo’s President Felix Tshisekedi, other government and political leaders, diplomats and representatives of civil society.

Poverty, internal displacement, crime and violence plague the Congolese people. The United Nations and human rights organisations say more than 100 armed groups are operating in the country, sowing terror particularly in the east.

Yet, according to the US State Department country report, for Africa “regional stability and security is dependent on durable peace” in Congo, “the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa,” one bordering nine other nations and home to diamonds and vast mineral reserves. It also has the largest Catholic population in Africa and has the sixth most Catholics of any nation after Brazil, Mexico, the

Philippines, the United States and Italy.

Tens of thousands of people lined the streets from the airport to the city centre, cheering as the Pope passed by in the popemobile. Many children and teens were dressed in their school uniforms, parishioners proudly held banners welcoming the Pope in the name of their communities and many of the women wore brightly coloured cotton dresses with images of the Pope.

“The people of Congo are more precious than any of the gems or minerals found in the earth beneath their feet”

Speaking to several hundred leaders in the garden of the Palais de la Nation, his official residence, President Tshisekedi told the Pope that the welcome and harmony that had characterised Congo for centuries has, in the past 30 years, “been undermined by the enemies of peace as well as terrorist groups, mainly from neighbouring countries”.

“Indeed,” he told the Pope,

with “the inaction and silence of the international community, more than 10 million people have had their lives taken from them atrociously. Innocent women, even pregnant ones, are raped and disembowelled, young people and children have their throats slit, families, the elderly and children are condemned to brave fatigue and exhaustion, wandering far from their homes in search of peace because of the atrocities committed by these terrorists in the service of foreign interests,” who want to exploit the country’s natural resources.

Pope Francis, responding to the president, added that Congo is suffering from a “forgotten genocide,” one the world must recognise.

Referencing both the loss of life and the term for diamonds mined to finance conflict, the Pope said that “the poison of greed has smeared (Congo’s) diamonds with blood”.

The developed world, he said, “often closes its eyes, ears and mouth” to the tragedy occurring in Congo while greedily buying up coltan, a mineral used in mobile phones, and other natural resources from the country.

“Hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo! Hands off Africa,” Pope Francis insisted



Girls wear their first Communion dresses before the start of Pope Francis’ celebration of Mass at Ndolo airport in Kinshasa, Congo, February 1.



Pope Francis arrives to celebrate Mass at Ndolo airport in Kinshasa, Congo, February 1.



Young people stand on the wing of a retired airplane as Pope Francis celebrates Mass at Ndolo airport in Kinshasa, Congo, February 1.

in bid to promote peace

to applause and the stomping of feet. "Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered."

At the same, the Pope did not let the Congolese off the hook, especially those who promote members of their own ethnic group or political party to the detriment of their neighbours, "thus nurturing spirals of hatred and violence".

Pope Francis also called for greater respect for the environment, including the Congo rainforest, second in size only to the Amazon. The Pope called it "one of the great green lungs of the world".

Over one million gather to hear Pope preach at Mass

In a country where most people are Christian and all are suffering from decades of violence and atrocities, Pope Francis told the Congolese to lay down their weapons and their rancour.

"That is what Christ wants. He wants to anoint us with his forgiveness, to give us peace and the courage to forgive others in turn – the courage to grant others a great amnesty of the heart," the Pope said in his homily February 1 during a Mass on the vast field of Ndolo airport in Kinshasa.

Congolese authorities said more than 1 million people attended the Mass. They arrived as the sun began to rise, dressed up and carrying baskets of food. They sang and danced and prayed as they waited for the Pope. In his homily, Pope Francis spoke to the pain and suffering of the Congolese people, but most of the people in the crowd – like Fr Sylvain, who was rushing to take his place among the concelebrants – said the joy of the Pope visiting their country was all they cared about that morning.

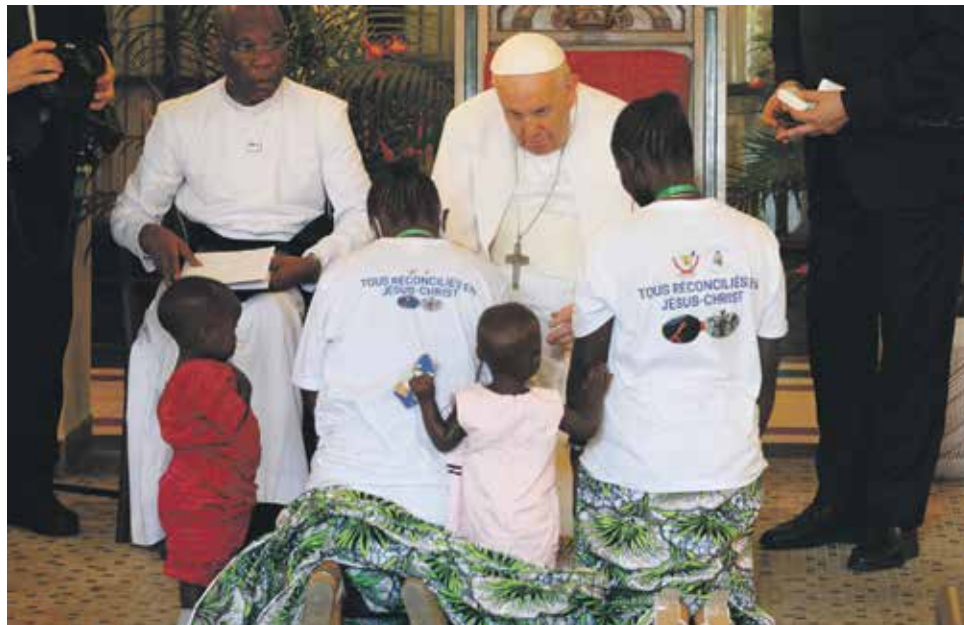
Victims of violence in Congo share their grief with Pope

Victims of violence in eastern Congo told Pope Francis horrifying stories of watching their families be slaughtered or of being kidnapped or raped repeatedly by militia members.

Pope Francis had planned to go to Goma in the violence-torn North Kivu province, but increased fighting forced him to cancel the trip to the East to protect the crowds that would gather to see him.

Instead, the Pope invited about 40 victims of violence in the East to the apostolic nunciature in Kinshasa February 1.

Ladislav Kambale Kombi, 16, said he watched his father being hacked to pieces with a machete and his mother being kidnapped, leaving him alone with his two little sisters. "Mom hasn't come back. We don't know what they did with her."



Pope Francis blesses Bijoux Mukumbi Kamala, her twin daughters and her friend Legge Kissa Catarina during a meeting with victims of violence from eastern Congo in the apostolic nunciature in Kinshasa February 1, 2023.

Fr Guy-Robert Mandro Deholo read a testimony prepared for the meeting by Désiré Dhetsina "before she disappeared without a trace a couple months ago".

“If we bow before God in humility, he makes us become like himself, agents of mercy”

Maiming is not uncommon, Fr Mandro Deholo told the Pope, holding up his left hand, which is missing a finger. As he spoke, two women in the audience raised their arms – one was missing a hand, the other was missing both. The priest accompanied the two women up to the Pope, who touched their mutilated stumps and laid his hands on their heads in blessing.

The testimonies, Pope Francis said, leave listeners without words. "We can only weep in silence."

But he did use the meeting to express his closeness to all the people disappointed that he was not traveling to Goma

and, especially, to "condemn the armed violence, the massacres, the rapes, the destruction and the looting" that continue to sow terror in the lives of the people of Congo.

"Put away your weapons, put an end to war. Enough," he told those responsible.

In a country where sexual violence is a common weapon of war, Pope Francis offered special words of consolation to women and girls and strong warnings to those who would target them.

"I pray that women, every woman, may be respected, protected and esteemed," he said. "Violence against women and mothers is violence against God himself, who from a woman, from a mother, took on our human condition."

Pope to Congolese youth: 'The future is in your hands'

The hands that will save Congo and build a future worthy of its people belong to the Congolese people, to each one of them, but especially the young, Pope Francis said.

The Pope met February 2 with 65,000 screaming, singing, swaying young people in Kin-



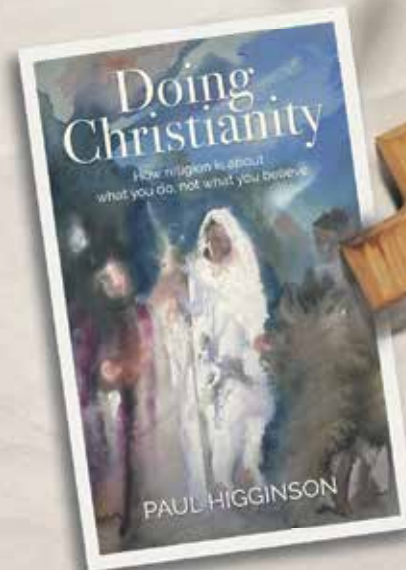
People wait for the start of Pope Francis' meeting with young people and catechists in Martyrs' Stadium in Kinshasa, Congo, February 2.



Pope Francis watches dancers perform during a meeting with young people and catechists in Martyrs' Stadium in Kinshasa, Congo, February 2.

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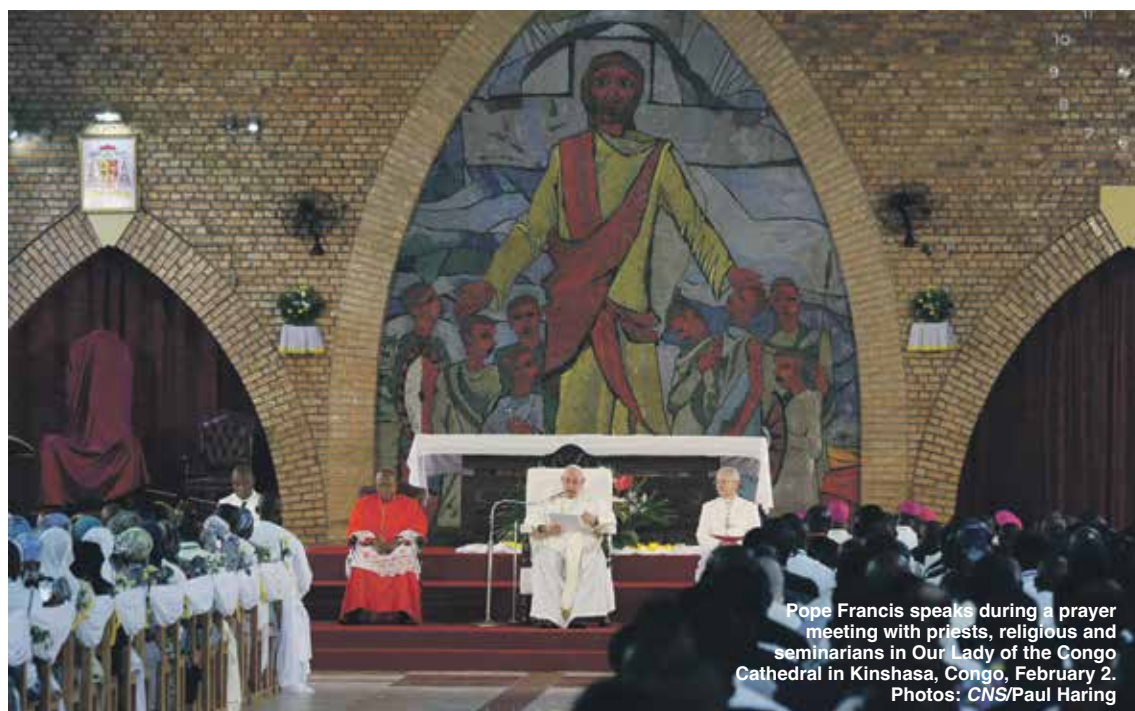
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Fr Guy-Robert Mandro Deholo, whose finger was chopped off, sets an axe at the foot of a crucifix during Pope Francis' meeting February 1, with the victims of violence from the eastern part of Congo. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media



Pope Francis speaks during a prayer meeting with priests, religious and seminarians in Our Lady of the Congo Cathedral in Kinshasa, Congo, February 2. Photos: CNS/Paul Haring

in those hands of yours," he said. "No one has hands just like yours, and that is a sign that you are a unique, unrepeatably and incomparable treasure. No one in history can replace you."

Pope asks Congo's religious to be authentic witnesses of faith and asks bishops to be prophetic

The strength and unity of the Catholic community in Congo and its ability to be an effective force for peace and reconciliation depend in large part on the attitudes, witness and ministry of consecrated women, priests and religious brothers, Pope Francis said.

After an afternoon storm brought wind and rain to the nation's capital, the Pope held an early evening meeting February 2 with some 5,000 priests, religious and seminarians gathered inside and outside the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Congo in Kinshasa.

"If we bow before God in humility, he makes us become like himself, agents of mercy," the Pope said.

Although meetings with priests, religious and seminarians are a standard item on papal trip itineraries, the gathering in Kinshasa had an additional character because it took place February 2, the day the Church celebrates the World Day for Consecrated Life.

Similarly, Pope Francis told the bishops of Congo they must be men of faith and prayer, close to their people and prophetic in their proclamations of hope and denunciations of injustice.

Before leaving Kinshasa February 3 and heading to Juba, South Sudan, the Pope met with Congo's bishops at the headquarters of the episcopal conference. He thanked them for working "twice as hard" preparing for his visit, referring to the fact that they had arranged almost everything for his planned visit in July before it was postponed because the Pope was having trouble walking.

Turning to the ministry of bishops, Pope Francis insisted that "proclaiming the Gospel, enlivening pastoral life and exercising leadership cannot become ideas having little to do with the reality of daily life".

Ministers of the Gospel, he said, "must touch wounds and communicate God's closeness, so that people can realise their dignity as his beloved children and learn to walk with their heads held high, never lowering them in the face of humiliation and oppression".

Pope and Church leaders push for peace in South Sudan

Three Christian religious leaders faced the president and vice presidents of South Sudan and told them it was time for them to get serious about peace, development and democracy.

Pope Francis, Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, made history February 3 when they began an ecumenical pilgrimage to the world's youngest nation, but one that has known war and violent conflicts for nine of the 11 years since independence.

Thousands of people lined the roads from the airport to

the presidential palace, cheering the Church leaders as they drove by. The crowd included many groups of a dozen or more women dressed alike, dancing and ululating as the visitors' motorcade passed.

“Pope Francis said the religious leaders' words might seem 'blunt', but they flow from the heart and from the Gospel the three proclaim”

After closed-door meetings with President Salva Kiir and with Riek Machar and the four other vice presidents – meetings that lasted more than 40 minutes longer than planned – the Christian leaders told the country's political leaders that it is time to stop their violent jostling for power and wealth and to start serving their people.

Speaking first, Kiir told those gathered in the palace garden, "This historic visit of these prominent global Christian leaders must compel us to engage in deep thinking about our recent history, especially on how it relates to the noble task of peace consolidation and the important projects of reconciliation and forgiveness among

our people".

The president used the occasion to announce officially a move rumoured earlier: "the lifting of the suspension of the Rome Peace talks with the Holdout Groups," five political-military groups that did not accept the 2018 peace accord. Kiir pulled out of the talks, hosted by the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio, in November.

In his speech, Pope Francis said the religious leaders' words might seem "blunt," but they flow from the heart and from the Gospel the three proclaim, the same Gospel most of the government leaders and an estimated 60% of the population claim to follow.

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "it's time for peace."

Archbishop Welby recalled the retreat and meeting that he, Pope Francis and the Church of Scotland moderator at the time offered at the Vatican in 2019 for South Sudan's political leaders.

"Pope Francis knelt to kiss the feet of each politician," the archbishop said. "Almost five years later, we come to you in this way again: on our knees to wash feet, to listen, serve and pray with you."

But the archbishop also was pointed about what the politicians had promised at the Vatican retreat and what has happened in the meantime.

"When I remember the commitments made back in 2019, I am saddened" that little has changed.

Rev. Greenshields did not place all the responsibility at the feet of the politicians but pressed for cooperation among all members of society, including local church leaders.

"We need Churches and leaders who are generous of heart, liberal of love and profligate with God's grace," he said. "We need leaders who care about the values by which our countries live, who care about the conditions in which people live, and who act out their faith in work amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised. These things make for peace."

Kiir, 71, and Machar, 70, were leaders in South Sudan's war for independence from Sudan, a dream that became a reality in 2011.

Pope Francis was blunt again when he asked them what they want their legacy to be: heroes of the fight for independence or warlords who failed their people.

"Future generations will either venerate your names or cancel their memory, based on what you now do," the Pope told them.

"We undertook this ecumenical pilgrimage of peace after hearing the plea of an entire people that, with great dignity, weeps for the violence it endures, its persistent lack of security, its poverty and the natural disasters that it has experienced," the Pope said. "Years of war and conflict seem never to end."

In a land bathed by the White Nile, which flows through Juba and north to join the Blue Nile and form one mighty river, Pope Francis told the leaders they must work to make the land a garden again and not a "cemetery".

Walk with those who suffer, Pope tells Churchworkers in South Sudan

When Pope Francis prayed that the bishops, priests and reli-

gious in South Sudan would be "generous pastors and witnesses, armed only with prayer and love," he was, in many ways, preaching to the choir.

At a meeting in St Theresa's Cathedral in Juba February 4, he asked them to let themselves "be constantly surprised by God's grace".

The smiles on the faces of the hundreds of Churchworkers inside the cathedral and the thousands of members of their flocks outside showed that kind of openness.

Pope Francis told the Churchworkers, "Our first duty is not to be a Church that is perfectly organised, but a Church that, in the name of Christ, stands in the midst of people's troubled lives, a Church that is willing to dirty its hands for people".

Pope, ecumenical leaders urge displaced South Sudanese to be peacemakers

In a twist of fate despite a horrible situation, the millions of displaced South Sudanese people can contribute to rewriting their nation's history by working together and living peacefully side by side in the displaced people's camps that dot the country, Pope Francis said.

"You are the seed of a new South Sudan, a seed for the fertile and lush growth of this country," the Pope told about 1,500 people who had been forced from their homes because of violence or natural disasters.

The new South Sudan will be built by "you, from all your different ethnic groups, you who have suffered and are still suffering, you who do not want to respond to evil with more evil," the Pope told them during a meeting February 4 at Juba's Freedom Hall.

Nyakuor Rebecca, who lives in a camp in Juba, asked Pope Francis to bless all the children of South Sudan, especially those who are born in and grow up in the camps.



Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby, Pope Francis, President Salva Kiir and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, are pictured outside the presidential palace after the Pope's arrival in Juba, South Sudan, February 3.



People line a street as they wait to see Pope Francis after his arrival at the international airport in Juba, South Sudan, February 3.

The Pope said yes, of course, and told her, "that blessing will be very special, since I will be giving it together with my brothers Justin and Iain" – Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, who were making the ecumenical pilgrimage of peace with the pope to South Sudan.

Rev. Greenshields opened the meeting, praying that God's wisdom, grace and peace would "flow into the heart and minds of all who are in transition in this place. Help us all, by your grace to find our way home. To be at peace with one another".

Archbishop Welby prayed that the Holy Spirit would bring "life to the places of darkness, love to hearts of hate, hope to a world of fear and despair. Rest in our hearts today, transform our lives so we might transform our world. May your fire burn away all hatred and bitterness, fear and enmity and set us alight with your love, your justice and your peace".

Praying with South Sudan's Christians, leaders urge new steps toward unity

After scolding South Sudan's political leaders and consoling some of its poorest victims, Pope Francis, Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, rallied their faithful to prayer and action.

In a country where 60% of the population is Christian and where Christian leaders working together provided spiritual and practical support to the long drive for independence, the Church leaders urged all Christians to work together to seek justice, to model unity and to press their divided political leaders to make peace.

"This ecumenical tradition of South Sudan is a precious treasure, an act of praise for the name of Jesus and an act of love for the Church his bride, an example to all for



Children wait to greet Pope Francis upon his arrival for a meeting with bishops, priests, religious and seminarians in St Theresa Cathedral in Juba, South Sudan, February 4.

the advancement of Christian unity," Pope Francis said.

Some 50,000 South Sudanese gathered with the three leaders February 4 for an evening ecumenical prayer service on the grounds of the John Garang Mausoleum, the burial place of the man who led the country to the 2005 peace agreement that set the stage for the country's independence from Sudan in 2011.

Pope to South Sudanese: 'Lay down the weapons of hatred, revenge'

Looking out at tens of thousands of smiling faces, Pope Francis told South Sudanese Catholics that the only way the country will get out of the darkness of violence is with the light of their faith and their commitment to peace.

"In the name of Jesus and of his beatitudes, let us lay down the weapons of hatred and revenge, in order to take up those of prayer and charity," the Pope said February 5 as he celebrated a morning Mass in Juba on the grounds of the John Garang Mausoleum.

Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, attended the Mass, which came at the end of the ecumenical pilgrimage for peace that they were making with the Pope. Some 60% of

South Sudanese are Christian with the Catholic, Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches traditionally being the largest.

President Salva Kiir, a Catholic, and other government leaders also were present.

South Sudanese authorities said thousands of people kept streaming to the site as the Mass began, and by the time of the homily there were close to 100,000 people present.

Exhorting South Sudanese Christians to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world," as the day's Gospel reading called them to be, Pope Francis told the people, "This country, so beautiful yet ravaged by violence, needs the light that each one of you has, or better, the light that each one of you is".

After so much war and violence, with some 4 million people displaced in the country or abroad, with poverty raging and the threat of hunger looming for the majority of South Sudanese, Pope Francis said he understands that individuals may feel small and powerless.

But, he said, the salt that the Gospel calls them to be is also small, as just a pinch makes all the difference.

Arms trade is a 'plague,' Pope says on flight back from Africa

At the end of six days in



Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Pope Francis and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby attend a meeting with internally displaced people at Freedom Hall in Juba, South Sudan, February 4.

African countries bloodied by war and conflict, Pope Francis said aboard the papal flight back to Rome that "the biggest plague" afflicting the world today is the weapons trade.

Tribalism with its ancient rivalries is a problem, he told reporters February 5, "but it is also true that the violence is provoked" by the ready supply of weapons and that making it easier for people to kill each other just to make money "is diabolical – I have no other word for it".



Nuns react as Pope Francis arrives for a meeting with bishops, priests, religious and seminarians in St Theresa Cathedral in Juba, South Sudan, February 4.



Choir members sing as Pope Francis celebrates Mass at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan, February 5.

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Ireland is 'ripe' for vocations



There is a hunger for religious life in Ireland the head of the CFR sisters tells
Ruadhán Jones

The Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal (CFR) are bucking the trend in Ireland. At a time when many orders must contract and retrench as the vocation crisis bites, the CFR sisters have opened a new house of mission in Drogheda, Co. Louth, to allow young women "to test a call" to religious life.

The missionary house is not a postulancy or novitiate explains the order's superior, Mother Clare. It's "very much a lay programme", she stresses to me in an interview at St Mary's Parish Church, Drogheda.



Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan is pictured with the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal and their two lay missionaries, Kate and Anna, in St Mary's Church, Drogheda.

Angelic

There is a great deal of hustle and bustle going on around us, as well as a few angelic voices – the choir preparing for a Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan before the blessing of Our Lady's House. The blessing took place on Saturday, January

21, and there was standing room only as the local Catholic community turned out in force to celebrate the grand opening.

"It's a missionary house for a missionary programme," Mother Clare says. "Young women in their 20s or 30s, they might be discerning, they might be open to the possibility of religious life, but they want to just give a year of their life to grow in prayer, to live in community and to work alongside the sisters.

"So, very close contact with us while being open to the possibility of a call. It's a not a step of entrance into the community necessarily, though it could be for some, but we don't want to give the impression that it's a postulancy or a novitiate.

“We opened in 2013 and this missionary house is very much a natural outgrowth of living her”

"It's very much a lay programme; we would see it as a service for the Church so that young adults can have an opportunity for closer contact with the consecrated life and to serve with us just to see and to test a call."

It's 10 years since the CFR sisters set their roots down in Drogheda in St Anthony's convent, which formerly housed the Mercy Sisters. They came to Ireland at the sugges-

tion of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, and the invitation of Bishop-emeritus of Meath Michael Smith.

"Cardinal Dolan suggested, would we consider coming and we said we'd love to, Ireland's very much in our heart," Mother Clare says. "We opened in 2013 and this missionary house is very much a natural outgrowth of living here. We have a similar missionary programme in the States, again to allow young adults the opportunity for closer contact.

Potential

"Anywhere we are would have the possibility or the potential for a missionary programme like this. But Ireland's ripe for it, because you know our work is to be available to the people, to serve the poor and to evangelise. And this is fertile ground for all of the work we do."

As Mother Clare notes, this is not a notional claim. Two young women, Kate and Anna, are already doing the programme and are going to move in the moment the house is ready.

"Today we're dedicating the house and it's a great event, but it's made all the more exciting that there are actually two women who are prepared to move into

the house. It isn't a field of dreams situation, if we build it they will come; it's already built, we already have the women," she says.

The fact that the order is growing Mother Clare puts down to the Holy Spirit, saying "only the Spirit can cause growth. So we thank God for the growth that we do see. Young women are looking for the way of life that we're living, an intensive prayer life, communal



Sr Rosa and two young volunteers helped to serve refreshments to the many people who joined the sisters in celebrating their new mission house.

life in the convent and the hands-on work. They seem to be attracted to that but only God knows."

Still, the fact that they already have such interest is testimony to the work that the sisters have done in the 10 years since coming to Ireland. In the reception

after the blessing, the parish hall was filled with people, children, parents, grandparents – people from all walks of life. It gave the sense of a thriving Catholic community and the sisters have their part to play in that.

When an order opens a new place in a new location, it takes time to set down roots, to get to know people and to develop an apostolate, Mother Clare explains.

"All of those things develop organically," she continues. "First we move into a place and we just live our life of prayer, we live our communal life. And we see, well, how can we serve here, how is God calling us. You don't start out with a prefab-programme and set it to work – you have to live in a place and it all comes through relationships."

Now that those relationships are established and the CFR sisters are at home in the community, people are "asking us, they're looking for discernment through us.

“When an order opens a new place in a new location, it takes time to set down roots”

"They're looking to come and see. So [opening this house] is both/and. We've put down deeper roots and because people are coming and asking for this sort of thing. It goes together."

The sisters aren't limiting their sights on Ireland either. Mother Clare hopes that the missionary house can become a European hub. Even before the house was set up, if the sisters received expressions of interest from countries like France or Spain, they would have the young women visit Drogheda.

"We would see the missionary programme as serving certainly Irish women, but also other European women who are showing interest. It's a big leap over the pond so to speak to make it all the way to New York, emotionally and even psychologically

and then technically too with visas and everything else. But this way they can come and give service in Europe which is much simpler."

I ask what plans the order has for lay missionaries once the house is open and she



The superior of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal Mother Clare is pictured with Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan, Saturday, January 21. Photos: Bro. Sean Blackwell OP.

reminds me that in fact the missionaries are already at work.

“There’s the prayer component, they’ll have the Blessed Sacrament in the house once it’s blessed,” says Mother Clare. “So they’ll have a schedule of prayer and they’ll be praying with us in the convent. Their life will be made up of prayer and community with the sisters.

“There’s the formation element – they will be formed in certain elements of our life, service and serving the poor, evangelising. There’s ways of going about that and we do it with the CFR brand so they receive that formation.

“But also there’s the hands on work: evangelisation walks, school visits with the sisters, the youth ministry. They’re working side-by-side, helping to participate and thereby learning that ministry.”

Inspired

The ministry of the CFR sisters is inspired by St Francis. They and their brothers the Friars of the Renewal are relatively young in terms of the 2,000-year history of the Church. Founded in 1988, the CFR sisters are part of the greater Franciscan tree, but a renewal of the Capuchin branch.

“Essentially our life is: we’re doing our lousy best to live the vision that Francis had but for the 21st Century,” Mother Clare says. “We have the vows – poverty, chastity and obedience – but we live typically in city environments, particularly in the inner city, to serve people in need and also to evangelise.”

Need

The sisters serve whoever has the greatest need, wherever that might take them. Their evangelisation brings them travelling for parish missions, school visits, leading others in adoration, teaching prayer and discernment.

“You can give a year, not your life, you know, like with Focus or Net and now with us, as you avail yourself to God”

“But wherever we go, that’s what we do. Once we’re planted in a community we seek out those in need to serve them as we would serve Christ and to spread the Gospel through evangelisation,” she says.

Mother Clare believes it’s important that young

A large crowd gathered to witness the blessing of the house of mission.



people know this way of life and the lay missionary aspect to it are a possibility for them. “They can enquire and call the sisters if they want to know more. If they themselves feel stirred to give a missionary year, they can call Sr Agnes and ask how to sign up,” she says.

Hunger

The hunger for this kind of life is out there, Mother Clare continues: “Not many young adults are ready to darken the door of a convent or a seminary, but everybody’s looking for an opportunity to serve and give a year. You can give

a year, not your life, you know, like with Focus or Net and now with us, as you avail yourself to God.

“You’re not quite sure, it’s a frightening prospect to even ask the question [about having a vocation]. But it’s a very safe way to ask the question, to work along-

side with no real commitment – you haven’t slipped the application in yet,” she jokes.

i The Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal are based in Drogheda, Co. Louth. If you are interested, you can contact Sr Agnes on 041-98-30-441.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



FEBRUARY 2023 ISSUE

In an exclusive interview with Cardinal Grech *The Synodal Times* reports on the Cardinal’s views on women and the Church; will doctrine be discussed at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in September and does he think Synodality can survive if Pope Francis dies or retires?

Also we discover why African Catholics really dislike the symbol of a tent which is being used for the Continental Phase of the Synod process

We meet two women who, like St Therese of Lisieux always wanted to be priests. And where to women find hope, Sr Stan spoke to many who find hope in many different ways.

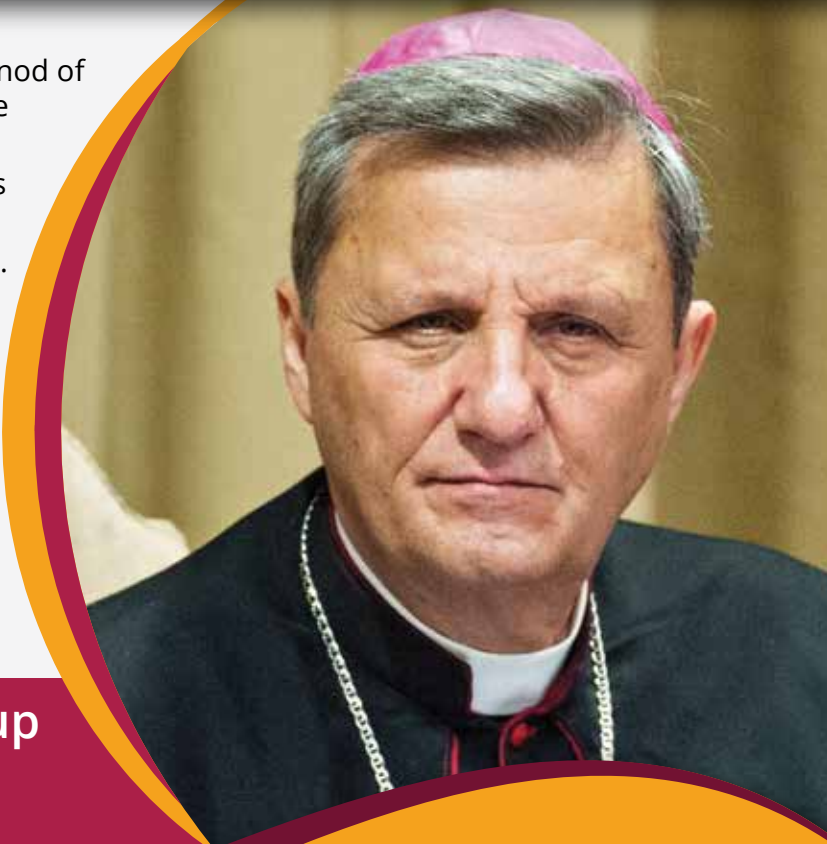
Other articles include exclusive extract from a new book on St Brigid and other amazing female saints; an analysis of the life of Cardinal Ratzinger, Rafael Luciani continues his series on Synodality, and we join with the International Presentation Association to look at their work at the U.N. to support international efforts to reduce violence against women and children.

Read these and other stories in February’s issue of *The Synodal Times*, dedicated to the voices, stories and lives of amazing Catholic women from all over the world.

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Spirit of Catholic education alive in Down and Connor



Pictured (from left) are Joanna Coombe of Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle, Principal Geraldine Duffy, head of RE Geraldine Campbell, students Cara Clarke and Orla McIlroy and head of Ethos and Development Shannyn Doherty and Fr Gerard Fox.

Ruadhán Jones

Some 14 schools in the North received the 'Spirit of Catholic Education' award, January 30, recognising their commitment to promoting the Catholic ethos.

The awards, organised by Down and Connor, paid tribute to the schools for their "inspiring work", a statement from the diocese said.

"These schools are receiving the award in recognition of their outstanding work and commitment to social justice and caring for the environment and for the priority that they give to promoting and delivering the ethos and values of Catholic education," the statement continues.

The recipients were as follows, first in the nursery school category: St Teresa's Nursery, Belfast.

Primary schools who received the award were: Moneynick PS; St Mary's PS, Aughlismnafin; St Mary's on the Hill PS, Glengormley; Our Lady and St Patrick's PS, Downpatrick; St Patrick's PS, Pim Street, Belfast; St Comgall's PS, Bangor.

The post primary recipients were: All Saint's College, Belfast; St Dominic's Grammar School, Belfast; St Mary's CB Grammar School, Belfast; Blessed Trinity College, Belfast; Rathmore Grammar School, Finaghy, Belfast; Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle; Edmund Rice College, Glengormley.



Acting Principal Bronagh Carey (right) and Senior Leader Sean Ennis (left) of St Comgall's PS with pupils Elijah Bassnett and Nina Carlin.



Edmund Rice College, Glengormley, teachers are (left) Ruairi Small, Head of Learning for Life and Work and (right) Cormac Wylie, Head of RE with students Matthew Girvan and Danielle McQuade.



Blessed Trinity College, Belfast, Acting Principal Bernadette Lyttle (left) and Vice Principal Orla McCarthy (right) accept the award with students Philip Garry and Rachael Peak. Also pictured are Joanne Combe and Fr Fox.



Rathmore Grammar Vice Principal Patrick O'Callaghan (left) and Head of RE Maeve Wright (right) are pictured with students Nola Wilson and Olivia Frazer. Also pictured is Aidan Donaldson and Fr Fox.



Our Lady and St Patrick PS, Downpatrick, RE co-ordinator Philomena Rice (left) and Principal Simone Prenter (right), along with pupils Rory Ferguson and Isla Venny, received the Spirit of Catholic Education award on behalf of the school. Also pictured are Sinead Beare and Fr Gerard Fox.

Out&About

A flock of shepherds...



KILDARE: Bishop of Achonry Paul Dempsey joins some of the seminarians from St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth, January 29 for their days of recollection.



LIMERICK: Pupils from Doon CBS Primary School, display the St Brigid's Crosses they have made ahead of the saint's feast day.



LAOIS: Deacons from Dublin Archdiocese are pictured during their weekend retreat in January at Mount St Annes Retreat Centre Portarlinton.

IN SHORT

Pro-life TD to head Oireachtas committee on assisted suicide

Kerry Independent TD Michael Healy-Rae has been appointed chair of the special Oireachtas Committee on assisted suicide and euthanasia.

It was recommended in 2021 that the Committee be established to undertake an in-depth examination of the topic after an earlier piece of legislation, proposed by Gino Kenny TD, was shelved.

The appointment of Deputy Healy-Rae as chair of the new Committee is based on the rotation system regarding chairmanships that operates in the Oireachtas between the various political parties and groupings.

Fr Kearns bike run raises thousands for cancer

The annual Fr John Kearns memorial bike run raised €3066.52 last year, the proceeds of which were donated to the cancer unit of Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry.

Eileen and Frank Kearns as well as Bikers' Memorial Treasurer Ciarán Myres presented a cheque to cancer Nurse Sylvie Cole and Dr McNicholl on behalf of the Bikers' Memorial Committee, Border Lords MCC and the Kearns Family, Corcaghan, Co. Monaghan.

Dr McNicholl explained the impact Fr Kearns had in his time in the unit. To this day he uses positive quotes with his patients that Fr Kearns regularly used.

Fr John Kearns was co-founder of an annual memorial church service for bikers who lost their lives in motorcycle collisions. He died in December 2021.

New prayer room for Cork school

Bishop Fintan Gavin blessed the recently opened prayer room in Christ King Secondary School, Cork, during a pastoral visit.

Following a student-led prayer and reflection service, the bishop of Cork and Ross prayed a prayer of dedication before blessing the room. He was joined in this by Fr Noel O'Sullivan Adm. of Turners Cross Parish.

In an address, Bishop Gavin urged the stu-

dents to live out their faith in unison with the theme of Catholic Schools Week – 'Walking Together in Faith and Love'.

He encouraged them not be afraid to step away from the crowd, to have courage and to believe in themselves.

Bishop Gavin asked students to allow Christ to develop a special relationship with them through their practice of daily prayer and reflection with him.

To conclude the visit, Principal Richel Long thanked Bishop Gavin for his message of faith and encouragement to the student body during Catholic Schools week. She assured him of the commitment of the school to its Catholic identity.



TIPPERARY: Fr Liam McCarthy OFM speaks at the civic reception that took place in Clonmel to honour the Franciscan Friars on the sad occasion of the closure of the Clonmel friary, founded in 1269.



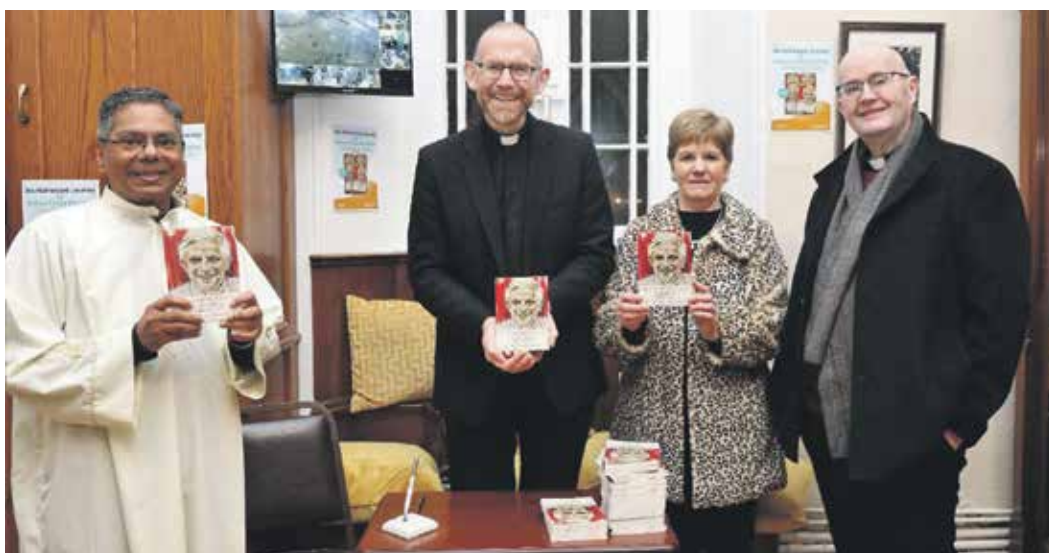
WESTMEATH: Bro. John O'Brien of the Camillian Community, Killucan, Sr Consilio Rock of the Sisters of Mercy, Navan, and Fr William Coleman PP Rochfortbridge are pictured at Solemn Vespers in Mullingar Cathedral to mark the World Day for Consecrated Life.



AVLAOIS: To celebrate Catholic schools' week, Killeshin NS' second class walked together in faith, in hope and in love, January 29.



KILDARE: Brigid of Ireland played by Breda O'Farrell is pictured in the Cathedral Church of St Brigid, Kildare, where she founded a monastery in 480AD. The project was Commissioned on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan



ENNIS: Fr Joy Njarakattuvely, Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan, Ms Tina Whelan and Fr Brendan Quinlivan at the launch of Bishop Monahan's book, *His Homeward Journey - The Life and Works of Pope Benedict XVI*.



DERRY: Eileen and Frank Kearns and Bikers' Memorial Treasurer Ciarán Myres present €3066.52, the proceeds of the Fr John Kearns Memorial Run, to cancer nurse Sylvie Cole and Dr McNicholl in the specialist cancer unit of Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry City, January 26. They presented the cheque on behalf of the Bikers' Memorial Committee, Border Lords MCC and the Kearns Family, Corcaghan, Co. Monaghan.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LIMERICK: Pakie O'Brien is pictured with his five grandsons, pupils at Doon CBS: Charlie Hyman, Fionn O'Brien, Harry Butt, Pad Og O'Brien, and Paddy O'Brien.



LIMERICK: Kathleen Ryan Simon joins her grandson Tommy Murphy at grandparents' day at Doon CBS during Catholic schools week.



LIMERICK: Mike Sheehy pictured with his two grandsons Cormac and Eoin Murphy at grandparents' day at Doon CBS.



MEATH: Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan is pictured with altar servers from Trim and Boardsmill who received Confirmation at the first ceremony in the diocese for 2023 on Friday, January 27 in Trim.

ANTRIM

Beloved Disciples Programme for over 60s begins Friday, February 10 at 11am at Living Church 120 Cliftonville Road, Belfast and will conclude Friday, March 3. Each session lasts one hour, a chance for listening and learning over a cup of tea.

ARMAGH

Mass for the sick will be celebrated in St Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday February 11 at 11am, the World Day of the Sick and the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

CARLOW

Graiguecullen-Killeshin parish invites all couples to a special Mass in St Clare's Church on Tuesday February 14 at 7pm to receive a special blessing.

CAVAN

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

CORK

A weekend of prayer, praise and healing with Mass takes place February Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 in Charleville Park Hotel. Guest speaker Ros Powell UK. Commences 9.30 am. For more information contact Pat at 0872505528.

First Saturday devotions take place in the Church of the Ascension, Guranabraher with Fr Marius O'Reilly. Begins at 9.30am. Rosary, Mass, meditation for 15 minutes and Confession.

A Youth 2000 prayer group for young adults aged 18-35 meets Mondays at 7.30pm for prayer followed by refreshments in Ladysbridge parish.

DONEGAL

An ecumenical contemplative outreach retreat takes place February 10-12 in Ards Friary. A time of contemplative prayer, stillness, solitude and reflection in peaceful surroundings. Facilitators: Rev. Ruth Patterson and Michele Berry.

DUBLIN

A lecture on 'Titus Brandsma: Ethical Resistance in Turbulent Times' takes place February 15 at 7.30pm

in Trinity College Dublin, Thomas Davis Lecture Theatre. The lecture will be delivered by Fernando Millán Romeral O.Carm (Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid), a world leading expert on Fr Brandsma.

Evangelium Catholic apologetics conference for young adults takes place Saturday, March 25 from 9am-6pm in DCU All Hallows. Booking now open. Visit evangelium.ie or search Evangelium Ireland on Eventbrite.ie. Cost €38, includes dinner, refreshments and social.

GALWAY

A weekly gathering for young adults (18-35 years) takes place on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Cathedral. An opportunity for adoration, silence, prayer, music, Scripture and reflection, followed by refreshments. Contact youth@galwaycathedral.ie for more information.

KERRY

Tralee area mission led by the Redemptorists takes place Sunday, February 26, until Friday, March 3. It is a mission for the parishes of St John's, St Brendan's and The Spa. The theme is 'Dream, Hope and Celebrate'.

LIMERICK

Glenstal Abbey to host 'Opening to the Divine Light', a conference exploring the Transfiguration, Saturday, February 11 from 10am-5pm. Lunch and refreshments provided. Suggested donation €70. Contact events@glenstal.com.

LOUTH

Mass for the African Community takes place in St Nicholas' Church the third Sunday of each month at 2pm.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal novena takes place on Mondays at 10am (except holidays) in Holy Redeemer parish, Dundalk.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Extraordinary Form will take place in Our Lady's Shrine Knock on Sunday, February 12 at 5.30pm.

MEATH

St Mary's Parish choir, Navan, is working to build

up the tenors and basses among their number. Music and training provided every Wednesday evening from 8-9.30pm in St Anne's Resource Centre.

SLIGO

Retreat for women at Star of the Sea Retreat Centre, Mullaghmore takes place February 10-12. Facilitators are Deacon Frank and Louise McGuinness. Cost for full board €250. Contact staroftheseacentre@gmail.com or 071 917 6722.

TIPPERARY

Renewal workshop for RE teachers of Waterford and Lismore diocese takes place February 25 in Glencomeragh House, Holy Family Mission, Kilsheelan. Cost is €20.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meet in the pastoral centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.40pm, followed by prayer meeting at 8pm.

WATERFORD

A 'Theology of the Body' study group takes place Tuesdays 11am-12.30pm in Foyer of Charity, Dunmore East. It begins February 21. Registration is essential, contact Helen 086 167 8027 or hellywilliams@gmail.com.

St Anthony's Novena and blessing with the Relic of St Anthony held on Tuesdays in Waterford Cathedral after 10.30am Mass. The Franciscans have asked that the cathedral continue the Novena. The Mass will conclude with the prayer and hymn to St Anthony followed by blessing with the relic.

WESTMEATH

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, Monday to Friday from 2-7pm.

WEXFORD

Divine Mercy devotions take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in Wexford Friary, including Mass and blessing with the relic of St Faustina.

Rosary and devotions at the Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford take place every Tuesday at 2.30pm.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Cardinal Zen hospitalised in Hong Kong

● Cardinal Joseph Zen has been hospitalised in Hong Kong after his health deteriorated upon returning from Benedict XVI's funeral in Rome.

The 91-year-old cardinal wrote on his blog on January 31 that he is receiving treatment in the hospital after experiencing difficulty breathing.

Cardinal Zen said that the doctors have already conducted many examinations and ruled that he does not have a bacterial infection in his lungs as he experienced in 2016 when he was hospitalised for three weeks.

"You have not heard from me as I have been staying in the hospital. Please rest assured, Hong Kong's most senior doctors are taking care of me," he wrote.

Pope Francis meets Order of Malta leadership

● Pope Francis met with the Order of Malta on Monday, January 30, as the sovereign state and religious order turned a new page in its history.

On January 25-29, 111 members of the Order of Malta assembled to elect new leadership in an extraordinary chapter general convened by Pope Francis last year.

"You have written a very important page of history for the Order of Malta; thank you, you can be

proud of it," the Pope told the capitulars in a January 30 audience at the Vatican.

The Order of Malta held elections to choose nine councillors of the Sovereign Council as well as the four High Offices: grand commander, grand chancellor, grand hospitaller, and receiver of the common treasure.

The leader of the Order of Malta remains Lt Grand Master Fra' John Dunlap, who was appointed by Pope Francis.

German bishop rebukes Pope for criticism of Synodal Way

● Bishop Georg Bätzing has criticised Pope Francis and dismissed the Pope's recent words that the controversial German Synodal Way is unhelpful, damaging, and ideologically poisoned, saying the Germans had "fundamentally different views of synodality" from Rome.

In an interview published January 27, the president of Germany's Bishops' Conference said he considered the Pope's "way of leading the Church by way of interviews" as "extremely questionable," reported *CNA Deutsch*. Bishop Bätzing was referring to comments Pope Francis made about the Synodal Way, among other subjects, in a wide-ranging interview with the Associated Press.

Dr Bätzing, the bishop of Limburg, noted that the German bishops had their ad limina visit with Pope Francis in November.

"Why didn't the Pope talk to us about this when we were with him in November?" Bishop Bätzing asked.

Bishop on trial in Nicaragua created 'secret' rights office

● Exiled Nicaraguan priest Fr Uriel Vallejos recounted how the Bishop of Matagalpa Rolando Álvarez, who has been held under house arrest since August 19, created a secret human rights office to address the persecution coming from the dictatorial regime of President Daniel Ortega.

In an interview with the Spanish Catholic weekly *Alfa y Omega*, Fr Vallejos first clarified that there is no international warrant for his arrest.

He then said that Bishop Álvarez called together his priests and told them that he would open a secret human rights office to help people suffering at the hands of President Ortega's regime and make their cases known.

Woman arrested for praying at UK abortion clinic sees charges stall

Authorities in the UK have dropped charges against a woman arrested for silent prayer in a "buffer zone" that bans pro-life advocacy outside an English abortion clinic.

However, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce says the charges still could be revived, leaving her in an ambiguous legal situation.

"It can't be right that I was arrested and made a criminal, only for praying in my head on a public street," Ms Vaughan-Spruce said in a February 3 statement.

"So-called 'buffer zone legislation' will result in so many more people like me, doing good and legal activities like offering charitable support to women in crisis pregnancies, or simply praying in their heads, being treated like criminals and even facing court," she added.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce was arrested December 6, 2022, in Birmingham, England, outside an abortion facility that was closed at the time.

Video footage of her arrest shows an officer asking her if she was praying, to which she answers: "I might be praying in my head." She was charged December 15 with four counts of breaking Birmingham's Public Space Protection Order around the abortion facility.

The order is intended to stop antisocial behav-



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, who was arrested last December for praying silently outside an abortion clinic in the UK.

our. The terms of the order include prayer under "protest," which is banned within the "buffer zone" around the clinic.

For standing still and praying silently inside a buffer zone, she was accused of "protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users".

Ms Vaughan-Spruce is the director of March for Life UK.

The Crown Prosecution Service dropped the charges in late January and Ms Vaughan-Spruce did not have

to appear in court, as previously scheduled. However, she can still be prosecuted if the charge is reinstated.

Her case has the support of ADF UK, a religious freedom legal group.

Jeremiah Igannubole, legal counsel for ADF UK, said in a February 1 statement that Vaughan-Spruce faces "significant legal uncertainty". She aims to "obtain legal clarity on what, if any, liability she may incur in the future based on the charges laid against her".

Ms Vaughan-Spruce said she will pursue a verdict in court to clarify her legal situation.

"It's important to me that I can continue my vital work in supporting women who'd like to avoid abortion if they only had some help," she said. "In order to do so, it's vital that I have clarity as to my legal status. Many of us need an answer as to whether it's still lawful to pray silently in our own heads."

TV station rediscovers interview with Big Bang priest

A Belgian television station has rediscovered a 20-minute video in which Fr Georges Lemaitre, considered the father of the Big Bang theory, explains what the origin of the universe may have been like.

Fr Lemaitre was a Belgian astrophysicist known for being the first academic to propose the theory of the expansion of the universe from a massive explosion of what he called a "primordial atom" or "cosmic egg".

Until now, only photographs of Fr Lemaitre were preserved, the most popular being the one where he appears

alongside Albert Einstein.

However, the VRT television station recently found a video in which the father of the Big Bang explains his theory.

Kathleen Bertrem of VRT's archives mentioned in late December 2022 that finding this historic material was like "looking for a needle in a haystack" due to the company misclassifying its extensive files.

Nevertheless, the television channel found among its archives the tape of an interview in French that producer Jerome Verhaeghe conducted with Fr

Lemaitre on February 14, 1964, and broadcast then.

Fr Lemaitre points out in the interview that the expansion of the universe was not accepted at first because it made the idea of a creation necessary.

In the video, the astrophysicist explains that "before the theory of the expansion of the universe, some 40 years ago [in the 1920s], we expected the universe to be static, because nothing changes."

However, discovering expansion made the idea of a static universe "out of the question".

Catholics, Anglicans discern 'Spirit at work' in US

Anglicans and Catholics in the US are continuing to discern "the Spirit at work" in each other, a number of ecumenical experts told *OSV News*. Over the past several years, the US Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Anglican Church in North America have

moved from an initial "meet and greet ... to really looking at theology together," Fr Walter Kedjierski, executive director of the USCCB's Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, told *OSV News*.

A long history of dialogue,

as well as common efforts on social justice and shared devotions, shows "we have so much more in common than what divides us," said Fr James Loughran, a Franciscan Friar of the Atonement and director of that order's Graymoor Ecumenical and Interre-

ligious Institute in New York.

"Yet we know that we are separated at the Lord's table ... and that's something we want to heal."

ACNA Bishop Eric Menees told *OSV News* that the USCCB and ACNA have been in conversations since 2009.



Edited by Jason Osborne
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A nation mourns...



Rev. Al Sharpton introduces the family of Tyre Nichols during his funeral service at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, February 1. Mr Nichols died in a hospital on January 10, three days after sustaining injuries during his arrest by Memphis police officers. Photo: OSV/Reuters.

Australia bids farewell to 'lion of Church' Cardinal Pell

The Catholic Church in Sydney bid farewell to its former archbishop, Cardinal George Pell, in a funeral at times solemn, reverent, defiant and sorrowful, shot through with wry Australian humour, and attended by mourners from all walks of life.

The cardinal remained a sign of contradiction until the very end, with protesters' shouts of "George Pell, go to Hell" clearly audible inside St Mary's Cathedral at several points, and the congregation bursting into spontaneous applause and shouts of "hear, hear" during the homily and eulogies.

After the February 2 Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial at St Mary's, the cardinal's remains were interred in the cathedral crypt alongside his predecessors.

In his homily, Archbishop Anthony Fisher, Cardinal Pell's successor as archbishop of Sydney, described the cardinal as a "lion of the Church" – a "giant of a man with a big vision," who proclaimed the Gospel "shamelessly, vehemently, courageously to the end."

"He had a big heart, too, strong enough to fight for the Faith and endure persecution, but soft enough to care for

priests, youth, the homeless, prisoners and imperfect Christians," Archbishop Fisher said.

"Ultimately that heart gave out, but only after more than 80 years of being gradually conformed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

Cardinal Pell's brother, David Pell, gave the principal eulogy, describing him as "a prince of the Church, a good and holy man, and a proud Australian".

Mr Pell told mourners about the toll "the relentless campaign to smear George's life" had taken on his family, and spoke for a final time in his brother's defence, saying

his "regularly reported lack of sympathy for victims is simply untrue".

"We sympathise with the legitimate victims and are in complete abhorrence at the criminals. Our own family has not been immune to this evil," he said.

Cardinal Pell died unexpectedly on January 10 in Rome at age 81 due to complications from hip replacement surgery. On January 14, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, celebrated the Requiem Mass in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican with Pope Francis present.

Religious freedom 'under assault' across the world

"Tragically, religious freedom for many is increasingly under assault around the world," Rep. Michael McCaul said at the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit, which took place in Washington, DC, last week.

Faith leaders from across the world – including Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others – gathered at the summit to address the ongoing persecution against people of faith, which has been increasing in many nations and has resulted in the deaths of millions.

Mr McCaul, a Republican congressman from Texas and a Catholic, invoked the teachings of both Pope Francis and St John Paul II in upholding religious freedom as the "cornerstone" of human rights.

Some leaders at the summit, including Naomi Kikoler of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, cautioned that the persecution of people of faith in some countries already amounts to genocide and could lead to genocide in others if immediate action is not taken.

"We know from studying the Holo-

caust that genocide and related crimes against humanity, persecution, is never spontaneous," Mr Kikoler said. "There's a wide range of early warning signs, and if detected and their causes are addressed, it could be possible to prevent catastrophic loss of life."

"The right to practice one's religion of choice is so frequently violated by governments all over the world," said Rep. Jim McGovern, a Catholic Democrat from Massachusetts, while speaking at the summit.



New head for Vatican body overseeing selection of bishops

● Pope Francis has chosen Chicago-born Bishop Robert Prevost of Chiclayo, Peru, to succeed Canadian Cardinal Ouellet as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

The Vatican announced on January 30 the retirement of Cardinal Ouellet and the appointment of Bishop Prevost, whom Pope Francis named an archbishop.

The archbishop, who is 67, holds degrees from Villanova University in Pennsylvania and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a doctorate from the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

An Augustinian friar, he joined the Augustinian mission in Peru in 1985 and largely worked in the country until 1999 when he was elected head of the Augustinians Chicago-based province.

From 2001 to 2013, he served as prior general of the worldwide order. In 2014, Pope Francis named him bishop of Chiclayo, in northern Peru.

As prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, Archbishop Prevost will lead the Vatican body responsible for recommending to the Pope candidates to fill the office of bishop in many of the Latin-rite dioceses of the world. Recommendations made by the dicastery are typically approved by the Pope.

Archbishop Prevost has been a member of the dicastery since November 2020. He will also oversee the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, established in 1958 by Pope Pius XII to study the Church in Latin America, where nearly 40% of the world's Catholics reside.

Scholars, diplomats reflect on Church's Holocaust response

● More than three-quarters of a century after the largest genocide in history, the United States and the Catholic Church are still making sense of their response to the Holocaust.

Scholars and diplomats discussed the historical legacies of the responses of the United States and of the Church at a screening of segments of Ken Burns' documentary *The US and the Holocaust* at the University of Notre Dame Rome Global Gateway on International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

In his opening remarks Joe Donnelly, US ambassador to the Vatican, underscored the joint efforts of the US government with the Vatican to combat religious persecution worldwide, particularly in the face of a global rise in antisemitism.

"At a time when people choose to forget or deny the past, it is all the more important to celebrate International Holocaust Remembrance Day," the ambassador said.

The German and Israeli ambassadors to the Holy See also attended the screening and expressed the need to ensure study of the Holocaust remains relevant in academic circles and the wider culture, particularly as the last Holocaust survivors age and die.

Mr Burns' three-part, six-hour documentary critically looks at anti-immigrant and antisemitic sentiment in the United States during the 1930s which made immigration possible for only a small fraction of European Jews seeking asylum in the United States.

One focus of the film is the role of Christians in fomenting resistance to immigration.

It estimated that 85% of Protestants and 84% of Catholics opposed legislation that would allow greater numbers of European refugees into the United States as World War II began. The film also tells the story of Fr Charles Coughlin, a Michigan-based Catholic priest whose radio sermons from 1926 to 1940 often included antisemitic rhetoric and attracted up to 40 million listeners at their peak.

"There was a lot of anti-immigrant sentiment in the US that made legislation impossible to pass, but when we think about the Catholic Church in Rome it's even more complicated in the sense that the pope is a head of state but he is also the vicar of Christ on earth," said Suzanne Brown-Fleming, director of international academic programs at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Mandel Centre during a panel discussion following the screening.



Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Top ten practicing Catholic countries: It's an African story

Even in the purest democracies, it's a myth that elections are determined by the people. In reality, they're determined by the people who actually vote – which, in the recent midterms in the US, was about 47% of those eligible to cast a ballot.

Of course, the Catholic Church is not a democracy. Pope Francis, however, clearly wants it to be more of a Synod, premised on the idea of listening to everybody. Yet once again, that's not really "everyone," but everybody who shows up to be heard.

When we tick off the world's largest Catholic countries, we generally focus on overall population size, i.e., the number of baptised Catholics in those places. By that standard, here's the current Top Ten list.

1. Brazil (120 million)
2. Mexico (90 million)
3. Philippines (80 million)
4. United States (67 million)
5. Italy (47 million)
6. Democratic Republic of Congo (45 million)
7. Colombia (35 million)
8. Poland (33 million)
9. France (32 million)
10. Spain (30 million)

Overall, that's three nations out of Latin America (including Mexico), one in North America, one each for Africa and Asia, and four in Europe.

However, what if we change the focus to what we might call "practicing" Catholics, meaning those who go to Mass at least once a week?

“When we tick off the world's largest Catholic countries, we generally focus on overall population size”

Thanks to the World Values Survey (WVS), we have data on Mass attendance rates from around the world, which allows us to put together a Top Ten list for countries with the most practicing Catholics. The WVS does not contain data for many sub-Saharan African nations, so here we're using an average of the two countries we do have, Nigeria and Kenya, which works out to a Mass attendance rate of 83.5%.

1. Philippines (47 million)
2. Mexico (45 million)
3. Democratic Republic of Congo (37.5 million)
4. Nigeria (30.5 million)
5. Uganda (28.4 million)
6. Colombia (20.5 million)
7. Poland (17.2 million)
8. Tanzania (17.1 million)



People wait for the start of Pope Francis' meeting with young people and catechists in Martyrs' Stadium in Kinshasa, Congo, February 2, 2023. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

“Pope Francis, however, clearly wants it to be more of a Synod, premised on the idea of listening to everybody”

9. Angola (16.7 million)
10. Italy (13.6 million)

Now the picture looks quite different. Overall, there are five sub-Saharan African nations in the top ten, with one from Asia, two from Latin America (again including Mexico) and two from Europe. Brazil disappears altogether, with a Mass attendance rate of just 8%, as does the United States, where the in-person Mass attendance rate of 17% translates into 11.4 million practicing Catholics.

Turnout

Anyone looking at that list could conclude that in terms of turnout, if not census rolls, Catholicism today is largely an African enterprise. Given trends in both population growth and also Mass attendance, this African domination will only increase as the century wears on.

There are at least a couple of immediate conclusions to be drawn.

First, pay careful attention to Pope Francis's six-day trip to Congo and South Sudan, which took place last week and which marked his third

voyage to sub-Saharan Africa. Listen not just to what the pope said to the Africans, but what the Africans said to him.

This trip was not just an Africa story. It was a Catholic story, because no matter where you live, if you belong to the Catholic Church, Africans increasingly will be setting the tone based on the simple fact that they're the ones who show up.

Second, it will be interesting going forward to gauge to what extent the ongoing Synod of Bishops on Synodality reflects what African voices are saying. Pope Francis recently criticised the "synodal path" in Germany for being an exercise "made by the elites". By the same token, it will be important that his own synod not be open to the criticism of being something "made by the west".

Recently the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa, which includes Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Benin, Mali, Togo, Ghana, Senegal, Mauritius, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and Sierra Leone, held a press conference

to present the results of its own synodal deliberations.

“One wonders if the Nigerian voice will, therefore, be ten times as prominent as Germany's when the dust settles on the synod process”

"The people insisted that there is need for the Church to redefine her values and this redefinition of values in a changing world should be based on the word of God and the living tradition of the Church and not on feelings and sentiments," said Fr Vitalis Anaehobi, a Nigerian priest who serves as secretary general of the regional conference.

Noting that the Vatican-issued "Document for the Continental Stage" of the synod features the image of the Church as what Americans would call a "big tent," drawing on Isaiah 54:2, "enlarge the space of

your tent," Fr Anaehobi said Catholics in West Africa prefer another scriptural image – John 14, "in my Father's house there are many mansions".

"When we say the central idea is inclusiveness, they prefer a house where there are rules and principles and not just a tent where anybody can just come in," he said.

Headcounts

While right and wrong aren't determined by headcounts, it's still an arresting exercise to compare the numbers of practicing Catholics in two representative Catholic nations.

In Germany, there are 22.1 million Catholics and a weekly Mass attendance rate of 14%, which works out to 3.1 million practicing German Catholics. As we've already seen, Nigeria has ten times that total at 30.5 million.

One wonders if the Nigerian voice will, therefore, be ten times as prominent as Germany's when the dust settles on the synod process.

Beyond those relatively obvious points, there are undoubtedly many other insights to be gleaned from comparing overall Catholic populations to practicing Catholic totals. Thanks to the World Values Survey and to Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for providing us with the raw material.

i John L. Allen Jr. is editor of *Crux*.

Ukraine's embattled religious orders keep faith and hope alive amid war



Jonathan Luxmoore

Catholic religious orders have played a major role in channelling life-saving humanitarian aid across Ukraine since Russia's February 2022 invasion, keeping hopes alive while continuing to minister to the country's much-depleted Catholic communities.

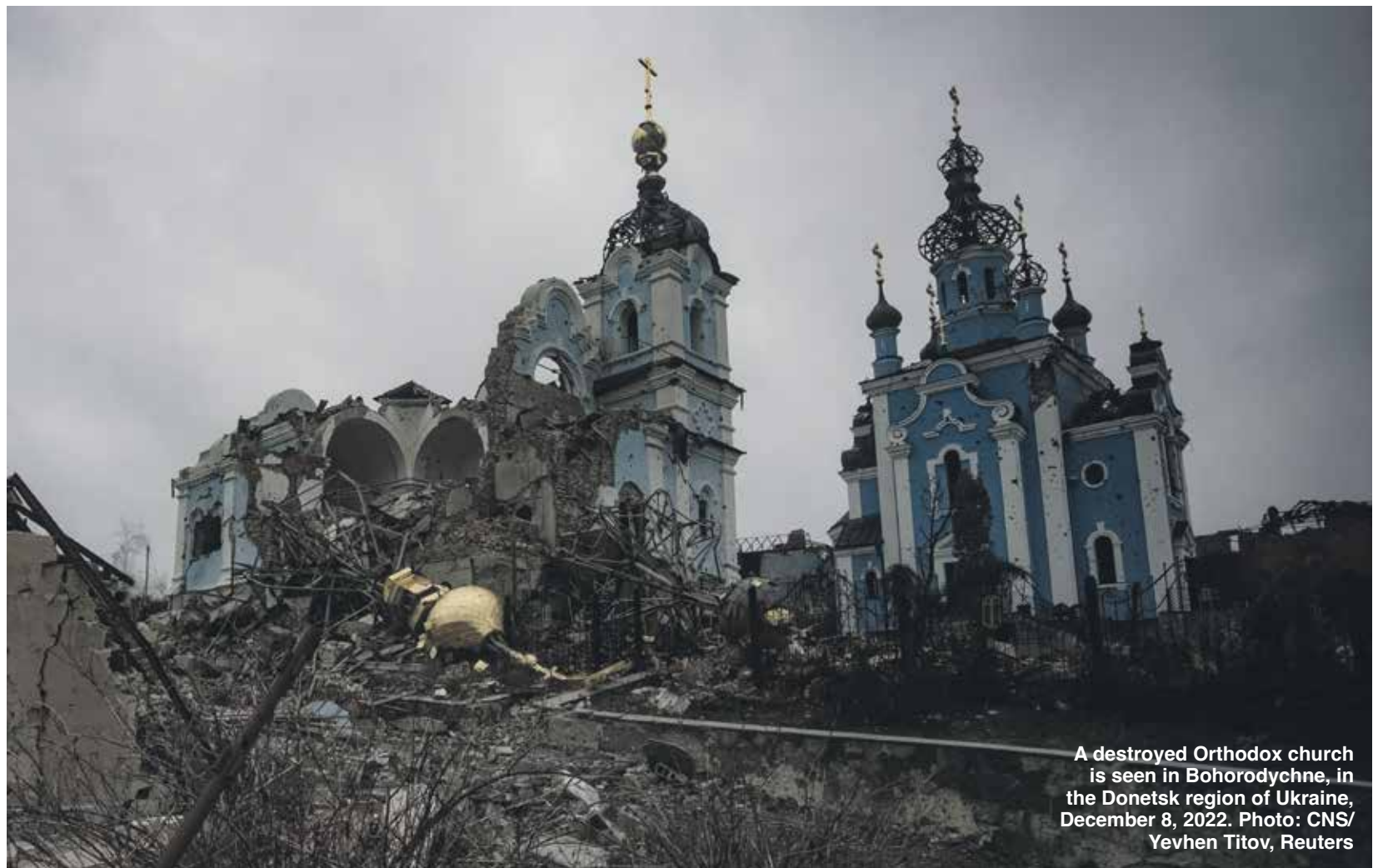
"Although some have had to leave, most religious priests and sisters have stayed on – and their witness has been very important for Ukrainians," Dominican Fr Jaroslaw Krawiec, superior of the country's Dominican order, told *OSV News*. "(In addition to their) regular pastoral work, most religious houses and convents are distributing supplies and sheltering refugees. In today's dramatic conditions, their presence among those they were sent to serve has earned the Catholic Church great respect."

“The order has provided help for homeless children since the 1990s in Kharkiv”

Fr Krawiec is one of 20 Dominican priests, half from Poland, who have continued ministering in Ukraine, celebrating Masses, administering sacraments, and making regular deliveries of food and medicines, collected abroad, from their house at Fastiv, 30 miles southwest of Kyiv.

Throughout the war, friars from Ukraine have been sending letters to their Dominican communities across the globe, and to journalists, describing efforts by fellow clergy to sustain Church life amid scenes of devastation and despair from Lviv in the west to Izyum and Kherson in eastern Ukraine.

In the letter dated February 25, 2022, a day after the war outbreak, Dominican Fr Petro Balog wrote: "All Dominican brothers stay in Kyiv". On April, 5, the day after the world learned about the atrocities unleashed on civilians in Bucha, Fr Krawiec wrote about the little town in the outskirts of Kyiv: "Until recently, it had been an oasis of peace. Now



A destroyed Orthodox church is seen in Bohorodychne, in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, December 8, 2022. Photo: CNS/Yevhen Titov, Reuters

this beautifully located town has become part of the history of human wickedness."

The Polish periodical *W drodze* is now publishing letters of the friars in a book, *Letters from Ukraine*, coming out prior to the anniversary of the war.

Farther north in Kharkiv, just 25 miles from the Russian border, Sr Renata Jurczak from the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity, popularly known as Orionine Sisters after their founder, St Luigi Orione, agrees the religious orders have been vital in maintaining morale.

The order has provided help for homeless children since the 1990s in Kharkiv, where it opened a home for single mothers in 2008.

Witnessed

Serving in Ukraine for 29 years little prepared her for what she has witnessed in recent months.

On the eve of Russia's invasion, fearing the worst, Bishop Pavlo Honcharuk of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia instructed Sr Jurczak, her fellow religious sisters and the 40 children in their care to leave for western Ukraine.

"When the war started, there was little ammunition and defensive equipment, and the Russians looked set to take Kharkiv. The bishop feared there'd be scenes of rape and

murder similar to those (we later saw) in Bucha," Sr Jurczak told *OSV News* from Nowy Sacz, Poland, February 1.

"There was panic, fear and confusion, as well as shock and incomprehension that we were being bombed and shelled. The presence of priests and sisters – praying, suffering, even crying with them in the cellars and metro stations – gave people enormous hope," Sr Jurczak told *OSV News*.

Catholic clergy from Poland are a major presence in the seven dioceses that make up Ukraine's Latin-rite Catholic Church, while virtually all Ukrainian-born clergy speak Polish as a second language or received training in Poland.

Under communism, Poland's persecuted but officially operating Church provided lifeline support for Ukraine's underground Catholics. When Ukraine became independent from the Soviet Union in December 1991, Polish priests and women religious helped make up for its post-communist shortage of native clergy.

And while some orders, such as the Franciscans, now rely on local vocations, others such as the Dominican and Ursuline sisters, are largely made up of Poles with motherhouses in Poland.

Benedictine sisters in Lviv and Zhytomyr have sheltered

over 700 refugees since the war started.

"They've come from the eastern war zones of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and elsewhere – and with their homes bombed and demolished and their relatives killed, they've nowhere to go back to," one of the Benedictines, Sr Bernadeta, told Polish *KAI* agency in December.

Opportunity

When the invasion was heralded by missile strikes and artillery barrages, Polish clergy were given an opportunity to leave – and some, such as the Pauline Fathers of Mariupol, were forced to evacuate, leaving their house in the besieged city's Lady of Czestochowa parish to be commandeered as a Russian headquarters.

With many choosing to stay on, however, stories of courage and self-sacrifice became common.

A Polish Salesian working in Odessa, Sr Anna Zajackowska, related to *KAI* how she and others had packed emergency provisions and taped up their convent windows to prevent injury from flying glass.

A Sacred Heart priest from Lubien Kujawski in central Poland, Fr Tadeusz Wolos, told *Vatican Radio* his parishioners in Irpin, Ukraine, had buried family members in gardens and backyards, while attempt-

ing to protect their newly built church, dedicated to St Teresa of Lisieux.

Poland itself has remained the first destination for Ukrainian refugees, with 5.7 million crossing its borders between February and August, and many finding shelter in Catholic parishes, convents and monasteries.

And while Polish religious orders have set up bank accounts and launched aid appeals throughout the conflict, lay movements also have been key.

“With many choosing to stay on, however, stories of courage and self-sacrifice became common”

Poland's branch of the Knights of Columbus, with more than 7,000 members spread across 33 dioceses, has sent over 100 trucks of food and other supplies to Ukraine with over \$20 million worth of emergency aid, while the Order of Malta collected and donated a similar sum during 2022, much of it distributed through religious orders to the people of Ukraine.

They also have worked closely with the Ukrainian Catholic Church, headed by

Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych. The Eastern-rite Church's own orders – such as the Basilians of Kherson, Redemptorists of Berdyansk and Incarnate Word Fathers in Skadovsk – also have played heroic roles.

When a Ukrainian Catholic priest, Fr Vitaliy Zubak, and Sr Darija Panast, of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph, were injured by Russian artillery fire while delivering Caritas aid near Kharkiv January 24, Archbishop Shevchuk paid tribute to clergy who daily risked death "helping those whose lives have been broken by the Russian occupier".

Fr Krawiec, the Dominican superior, says he's grateful for the "great wave of solidarity" shown from the first days of the war by church communities in Poland, in the US and elsewhere, who have donated aid, including winter heaters and power generators, which can be passed on for the sick, elderly and destitute.

He told *OSV News* that "no one can know all the stories of sacrifice and dedication this war has brought about, but they'll be told one day in the histories of our religious orders".

i Jonathan Luxmoore writes for *OSV News from the United Kingdom*.

Letters

Letter of the week

Brave bishops needed to counter wave of secularism

Dear Editor, Starting off with a bang, the new bishop of Ossory Niall Coll said it would be a “dreadful mistake” to secularise Catholic or other faith-based schools [*The Irish Catholic* – January 26, 2022].

It is a blessing we have received a bishop of his calibre, who has extensive experience in education, and who is hitting the ground running in the defence of Catholic schools. The bishop makes an excellent argument when he points out that while Ireland is becoming more secular, there are many more people of different faiths, who are practicing and feel very strongly about their religion, arriving

on our shores. They have no interest in secularism no matter how much secularists try to argue that Muslims or Hindus are offended by Catholic imagery in public spaces. This is absolute nonsense as many Muslim leaders in Ireland have pointed out.

In Muslim countries they are proud of their religion and would certainly not pander to a secular agenda.

In addition, Bishop Coll argues for a pluralist society, saying “religious education has never been more important in Ireland, north and south – because these large numbers of people of faith are coming in and

we need to learn about their faith, because faith is central to who they are and central to their culture”.

“Anything that would help increase religious knowledge should – in a good caring, educational context – lead to greater empathy and greater appreciation of these people and their faiths and their cultures.”

Very well said.

We need brave bishops, priests and laity who are unafraid to speak out to counter Ireland’s destructive wave of secularism.

*Yours etc.,
Phil Foley
East Wall, Dublin 3*

Clarity on conscientious objection

Dear Editor, While Enoch Burke’s stance may seem strange to many people, it is refreshing to see one man standing up for his beliefs, even if against the might of the State.

There are clear parallels between his case and that of the Ashers’ bakery couple in Belfast, a case which had a positive victory for Ashers in the UK Supreme Court. I hope that this case will eventually make its way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, if necessary, in order to give clarity to the subject of conscientious objection.

*Yours etc.,
Brian Mac a’Bhaird
Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan*



Let’s be courageous and contagious for Christ

Dear Editor, Thank you for *The Irish Catholic*. I trust its contents.

Just a thought. Fr Rolheiser’s January 12 article on ecumenical and interfaith relations left me with a question. He states that we should not try to evangelise others into the Catholic Church, but grow in our own faith beliefs and

allow others to do the same. My question is, why not?

Each day, by God’s grace, I say an ‘Amen’ in response to the priest, at the Communion of the Mass, holding a tiny host in front of me and saying, “The Body of Christ”.

Another pointer. At the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest, in *persona*

Christi, says, I, (God) absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, in these two sacraments I receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in one, and receive his forgiveness in the other. Wow! Why wouldn’t I want to share this Good News and shout it from the house tops. Why wouldn’t I

want others to be in union, with this communion of believers. What other body can offer me these divine gifts? I renew the Creed, in these beliefs and others, at Sunday Mass, as I do now.

Let’s be courageous and ‘contagious’ for Christ.

*Yours etc.,
Lorraine Doran
Marino, Dublin 3*

No philosophy among the apostles chosen by Christ

Dear Editor, Fr Brendan Purcell [*The Irish Catholic* – January 19, 2023] quotes Cardinal Pell on the Eucharist: “I understand the Eucharist in accordance to a system of metaphysics. It was spelled out by the Greeks before Christ came, which we have adopted, that is, there is a substance which is the core of a being and it is revealed to us through what we call accidents. Now I believe that the core of the being becomes the bread, becomes the body

and blood of Christ and continues to look exactly as it was. We believe that in the Catholic Church.”

Do we have to be philosophers to believe in the real presence?

St Paul warns against this, “When I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. In my speeches and sermons there was none of the arguments that belonged to philosophy. I did this so that your faith

should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God”. (1 Cor 2: 6-10).

The apostles chosen by Christ to walk with him were fishermen, just ordinary folk, not philosophers.

In the Mass after the consecration the priest says “The mystery of Faith”, no philosophy there.

*Yours etc.,
Daithi O’Muirneachain,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9*

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

Congratulations to Ireland’s newest priest – Fr Michael McCaul

Congratulations and thank you for your ‘Yes’ to God. May God and his Blessed Mother be your best friends forever. – **Irene Carden Moran**

May the Holy Spirit guide you and give you an abundance of grace in God’s work. – **Mary Deane Duggan**

May God bless your ministry and guide and protect you always. – **Winnie McDonagh**

Congratulations. May God guide you on your journey through life. – **Myra Grennan**

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

A day to celebrate Ireland’s female patron saint

Dear Editor, St Brigid’s Day is Ireland’s first holiday to celebrate a woman.

The Government has established a new bank holiday, St Brigid’s Day, which also marks the Celtic festival of Imbolc, or rebirth and the coming of spring. The day is also seen as a way to celebrate women, with the Government’s website describing the Celtic goddess’s heritage as a “symbol of feminine energy”. It was also known as the feast of the pre-Christian Celtic goddess Brigid, one of the founding goddesses of the Tuatha Dé Danann. St Brigid’s Day – Lá Fhéile Bríde – celebrates Ireland’s only female patron saint on February 1 and most Irish Catholic readers will be familiar with the popular tradition of making crosses in St Brigid’s honour.

Brigid is credited with founding a school of art, including metalwork and illumination. The Kildare scriptorium produced the Book of Kildare, a beautifully illuminated, interlaced work and the harmony of the colours leaving the impression that it is the work of angelic, and not human skill. This feast day is shared by Dar Lugdach who was her student, close companion, and successor. As Brigid is synonymous with healing and compassion, Melanie Lynch, the head of Herstory.ie – the group that initiated St Brigid’s Day campaign – wrote to then Taoiseach to argue that Brigid’s “healing powers and compassion for the sick and poor” was a reason to mark the day publicly. The St Brigid’s Day holiday will bring the number of bank and public holidays in Ireland to 10, two more than England, but in line with Northern Ireland.

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

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.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, February 9, 2023

Questions of Faith

What's the idea behind Lent?

Page 32



The great Doctor of the Church...



You could graduate today with first-class honours in divinity in most universities knowing next to nothing about Thomas Aquinas. On the other hand, 50 years ago, in Catholic colleges and seminaries, you might have heard of no one else: an even worse state of affairs.

Apologetics

There was always more of interest in Aquinas than just his apologetics and natural law ethics. The narrow picture of his work that suggests otherwise derives from the textbooks simplifying Aquinas' ideas that the authorities in the Church imposed on seminarians, from the 1870s, as the hoped-for antidote to the subversion of the student clergyman's faith by the



Why does the theology of this Dominican priest who died in 1274 still carry so much influence today, asks Fr Fergus Kerr OP

allurements of 'modern thought' (Protestant private judgment, fideism, Cartesian consciousness, German idealism, Marxism etc.).

This kind of Thomism was already being challenged in Catholic circles in the 1920s by what would come to be called Transcendental Thomism: Jesuits like Joseph Maréchal and Pierre Rousselot. Enthusiasm for Aquinas shown by lay philosophers such as Etienne

Gilson and Jacques Maritain helped to renew Catholic thinking about metaphysics, aesthetics and political theory in advance (as it turned out) of the Second Vatican Council.

One result of the reorientation of Catholic theology after the Second Vatican Council, however, was the disappearance of Thomist apologetics and natural law ethics: the new emphasis on biblical and early-Christian

studies, existentialism and phenomenology in philosophy, the social sciences, and so on, eclipsed Aquinas. Now, however, due especially to North American scholars, but with antecedents in the work of lay Catholics before Vatican II, there is a remarkable return to the thought of Aquinas, at least in some areas.

Historical context

Building on scholarly research on the historical context, David Burrell shows that, instead of his focus lying mainly in demonstrating God's existence as in pre-Vatican II apologetics, Aquinas has a phased or layered conception of the One God. God as source and goal of all that exists, the God of whose reality knowledge was attained by the

pre-Christian philosophers – literally 'wisdom-lovers' and effectively themselves religious; secondly, that same God self-revealed as the Lord whom the people of the Law of Moses were commanded to obey; and thirdly, the very same God, of whom knowledge has been communicated by Christ to the Apostles and thus to Christian believers: God as Trinity.

This takes for granted a certain reading of ancient Greek philosophy as itself religious and virtually theological. Moreover, centuries before Aquinas, Jewish philosophers such as Philo of Alexandria (c.20BC-c.50AD) envisaged God as the metaphysical first principle of the universe: perfectly simple, unchangeable, and so

» Continued from Page 29

on. Aquinas' One God may be approached, that is to say, not as the first step towards 'the God of the philosophers', oblivious to Scripture, but as a late moment in the long tradition of considering the God of the Septuagint in the light of a Platonising metaphysics that dates back at least to Philo. In short, in the context of interaction with Jewish and Muslim thinkers, David Burrell shows how Aquinas fashioned his doctrine of God and of creation by drawing on the work of Ibn Sina (980-1037) and Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), retracing the immense effort of conceptual clarification in the three traditions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as it comes together in the Middle Ages. Burrell offers not mere historical scholarship but an invitation to rethink the doctrine of God as such, in what we might, somewhat anachronistically, call an 'ecumenical' and 'inter-religious' way.

“Now that belief in divine law has been largely abandoned, so she contended, concern with such notions as duty, obligation and the like, had become senseless”

A second way of learning from Aquinas was inaugurated by the lay Catholics Elizabeth Anscombe, in her *Intention*, in which she demythologises modern notions of will; and Peter Geach (her husband), who did the same for notions of mental states in his *Mental Acts*, in which he was openly contemptuous of “decadent Scholasticism” and the work of “many of [Aquinas'] professed followers”.

The assumption in mainstream philosophy since the 17th Century has been that there were – are – two major centres of interest: first, the 'Cartesian' conception of the self, with direct access by means of introspection to our interiority and thus tending towards solipsism; and second, if we are to have knowledge, the need to posit intervening entities of some kind – mental images, sense data or whatever – that stand between our minds and the objects that exist in 'the external world', thus laying us open to the charge that we have no direct knowledge of the world around us.

In contrast, Aquinas thinks of the objects in the world as potentially intelligible and becoming so as our intellectual potentialities are realised, so there is nothing intervening between the mind and the world (neatly put in Latin: *intellectus in actu est intelligibile in actu*). While it would be exaggeration to claim that this turn to Aquinas is transforming current debates about the relationship between mind and world, there is at least this plausible third position on the table between out-and-out Cartesian mind/body dualism, and the much more common and indeed



St Thomas Aquinas is seen in stained glass at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Guelph, Ontario. Photo CNS Gene Plaisted, *The Crosiers*

dominant physicalist/materialist brain/mind identity theories.

Under the heading of Analytical Thomism, this position has been labelled the 'mind-world identity theory' by John Haldane; of course we can often be mistaken or misled but most of the time how the world seems to us is how the world really is.

Virtue ethics

Thirdly, consider the advance of 'virtue ethics', increasingly engaged with Aquinas. The key intervention originally was Anscombe's attack on modern moral philosophy in 1958. Back then, when moral philosophers were split between utilitarianism and Kantian duty for duty's sake, Anscombe dismissed the former as barely worthy of being called moral philosophy at all, and concentrated on exposing the latter as continuing surreptitiously to feed off reverence for divine command ethics as promulgated in Scripture.

Now that belief in divine law has been largely abandoned, so she contended, concern with such notions as duty, obligation and the like, had become senseless. While Protestants at the time of the Reformation did not deny the existence of divine law, their most

characteristic doctrine was that the law was given by God, not to be obeyed, but to show sinful humankind's incapacity to obey it, even by grace: this applied particularly to the requirements of 'natural law'.

“On the other hand, we need not write off natural theology. One of the major achievements in recent Anglo-American philosophical theology is the reading of Thomas's *Summa contra Gentiles* that is offered by Norman Kretzmann”

Anscombe's proposal in her ground-breaking essay was that the best course was to abandon any further attempt to make sense of duty or obligation, and to return instead to Plato and Aristotle. Should we do this, we would then find that “philosophically there is a huge gap, at present unfillable as far as we are concerned” – a gap which needs to be filled, she

proposed, by “an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic a virtue is, and above all of human 'flourishing'”.

While not explicitly mentioning Aquinas, Anscombe's provocative sally signalled the return to Aristotle (rather than Plato, as it turned out) and the massive expansion of interest in 'virtue ethics', particularly since the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, who recognised her essay as the catalyst. Instead of treating the happiest outcome for the greatest number of people as the criterion for the right course of action to follow, or alternatively submitting to the imperative call of duty, we should focus on describing the virtues that go to making the kind of people whose character would invite us to trust and consult them.

Major achievements

On the other hand, we need not write off natural theology. One of the major achievements in recent Anglo-American philosophical theology is the reading of Thomas's *Summa contra Gentiles* that is offered by Norman Kretzmann. In that book, we have not just a monumental achievement of medieval philosophy, but a

vast thought experiment that should be studied on its own, for itself (and so independently of the *Summa Theologiae*): a great work of philosophy that offers the best available natural theology in existence. Kretzmann holds that, prescinding from appeals to divine revelation as evidence and justification, it remains possible, desirable, indeed inescapable, for us to investigate by means of analysis and argument, the question of the existence and nature of God and the relation of everything else to God considered as reality's first principle. For Kretzmann, there is nothing misguided in reasoning about God: on the contrary, it is now, as it was before the birth of Christianity, and quite independently of personal religious allegiances, a worthwhile and enjoyable intellectual endeavour.

There is a good deal else one could mention but these are some of the debates in which appealing to Thomas Aquinas seems worthwhile.

Dr Fergus Kerr OP is a Dominican priest and founding director of the Aquinas Institute.

A film matching reverence with dignity

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

The *Song of Bernadette* is a Hollywood classic, probably its the best effort to capture a saint's life on film. The black and white drama from 1942 tells the story of young Bernadette Soubirous. Bernadette – now a saint – is depicted as a slow but sincere young girl, who is given the remarkable gift of a vision of Our Lady. In the vision, the Mother of God declared “I am the Immaculate Conception”.

“Bernadette is a sickly child, falling behind in her catechism. But as she and her sisters are out gathering wood, she has a vision of the Virgin Mary. Few believe her at the start, even the local priest is sceptical. One local councillor, played excellently by Catholic convert Vincent Price, is particularly dismissive and staunchly disbelieving.

Holiness and miracles, even though they take place in the physical world, are so confounding that attempting to credibly show them on film is difficult. For Hollywood, it often tends towards sentimentality – soaring angelic choirs, white light and cherubic children looking on.

But sometimes, this approach can work, as *The Song of Bernadette* is evidence. The all-but illiterate peasant girl from Lourdes Bernadette Soubirous is played here by Jennifer Jones, quite a few years older than the saint, but perfect for the role.

As the story begins, the Soubirous' are a poor family in a small



French town. Bernadette is a sickly child, falling behind in her catechism. But as she and her sisters are out gathering wood, she has a vision of the Virgin Mary. Few believe her at the start, even the local priest is sceptical. One local councillor, played excellently by Catholic convert Vincent Price, is particularly dismissive and staunchly disbelieving.

But as the apparitions continue, more and more people come to believe and eventually the Church hierarchy launch an investigation. Throughout all this, Bernadette remains calm and gentle, joining a religious order and continuing her saintly life. In the convent, she comes into conflict with the novice master, who believes she is just trying to draw attention to herself – but even she is won over in the end.

There are a few reasons this film works where others failed. Firstly, it's subtler; secondly, the perfor-

mances are excellent; and finally, it stays mostly true to life.

The subtlety of the filmmaking almost slips by. The film doesn't shy away from representing the miracles directly. We see the Virgin Mary, bedecked in white and with a golden girdle round her waist. She is all aglow, lit with soft, white light and casting a gleam onto the face of Bernadette. Whenever she sees the Virgin Mary, her face is lit softly so that she radiates Our Lady's holiness.

Light and shadow

But this isn't the only time light is used symbolically. The film constantly uses light and shadow to suggest the spiritual and psychological states of the characters. Director Henry King began his career directing silent films and was a successful director during the 20s and 30s.

Watching the film, it struck me how much he owes to the likes of Carl Theodor Dreyer, a European con-

temporary, and the German Expressionists of the 20s. He seems to have learned from them how he can use lighting to represent holiness, doubt also or a sinister element.

The acting compliments the externals very well. Jennifer Jones received the part due to her relationship with producer David O'Selznick, but she earned her Oscar for best actress through an excellent performance. She treads a fine line between mawkish and simpering, and innocence and simplicity, and does so well. She is ably supported by Charles Bickford as Fr Peyramale, and the impassive Gladys Cooper as Sr Marie Therese.

But it couldn't have worked without a convincing villain, played to perfection by Vincent Price. Known later mostly for camp performances in B-movie horrors, here he conveys just the right amount of pride, just enough sleaze, but also a certain vulnerability. He presses Bernadette, convicts her of deceit and yet

suggests a certain desperation. In a soliloquy delivered late in the film, even he will confess his admiration for the little saint.

The last element is that sense of truth which is the sum of many parts. It can't quite be broken down because when it is, it falls apart – it can only be truly appreciated by watching the film and becoming enveloped in it. When I say the film is true to life, I don't mean that it is 'real' or that it sticks exactly to the facts. It doesn't and the film is based on a fictional account in the first place, one which changes the nature of characters in order to create a dramatic narrative.

“In real life, Sr Marie Therese disagreed with the decision to canonise St Bernadette and asked that the Vatican at least wait until she was dead so that she wouldn't see it happen!”

One of the elements it changes quite significantly actually is Sr Marie Therese. I wasn't sure how credible her plot seemed, the fact that a nun so close to St Bernadette could so fundamentally misunderstand her. That part it turns out is true – what isn't is her final realisation of the young girl's sanctity. In real life, Sr Marie Therese disagreed with the decision to canonise St Bernadette and asked that the Vatican at least wait until she was dead so that she wouldn't see it happen!

But aside from that, *Song of Bernadette* does convey that overall sense that we are in a French village, even if a on Hollywood set; that we are witnessing the flowering of a saint; that we recognise the hurt of her family and the fear it causes the social and ecclesial powers; that, ultimately, we believe St Bernadette has come to life in her simplicity and sanctity. That is its effect, reverence with dignity.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Josephine Bakhita.
Photo: CNS

St Josephine Bakhita: From slavery to freedom in Christ

It's with good reason that Pope Benedict XVI drew attention to the story of St Josephine Bakhita in his encyclical, *Spe Salvi (In Hope we Were Saved)*, for her's is a story of the “hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God,” as the late pope put it in that same encyclical.

Born around 1869 in Darfur, western Sudan, the terrified young girl was kidnapped at the age of nine by Arabic slave traders – an event of such trauma for her that she forgot her name and those of her parents'.

'Bakhita', then, was not her birth name, but was given to her as a cruel joke by the slavers, as it meant 'lucky' or 'fortunate' – when she was clearly anything but. Treated as an object and a commodity, Bakhita was bought and sold many times over the next few years in the slave markets of El Obeid and Khartoum.

One of her owners, a Turkish general, set her to work serving his mother-in-law and his wife, both of whom were exceedingly vicious with their slaves. Recalling those days later, Bakhita

said that she didn't remember a day in that house that she wasn't beaten, and no sooner did a wound heal than she was given more.

It was here that she was tortured at knife point, with 114 cuts inflicted on her, which were filled with salt to ensure that the marks would remain.

She survived this ordeal, and soon some respite began to enter the picture. Callisto Legnami, the Italian Vice-Consul, bought her at the Khartoum markets, and when the Italian functionary was obliged to return to Italy because of the Mahdist wars in Sudan in 1884, she worked up the courage to ask him if she could join him. He agreed, and she journeyed to Italy with him.

She became a nanny of the child of the Legnami family friends', and when the couple she worked for left for Africa in 1888, Bakhita and the child in her care, Alice, were left with the Canosian Sisters of Venice. With them, she received the spiritual nourishment that she'd needed for so long.

She came to develop a personal relationship

with Jesus, learned about the Catholic Faith, and on January 9, 1890 she received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion from the Patriarch of Venice, along with the name Josephine Margaret Fortunata (the latter is the Italian translation of the Arabic “Bakhita”).

In 1893 she entered the novitiate of the Canosian Sisters. Three years later in 1896 she professed her vows and spent the following 45 years as the cook, sacristan and doorkeeper of their convent at Schio.

When Sr Josephine Bakhita died of pneumonia in 1947, the entire region mourned. She lived up to the name she'd been given so cruelly all those years earlier, “fortunate,” as she said herself: “If I were to meet those men who abducted me, or even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for it that hadn't happened, I would not be a Christian and a religious today.”

The Church celebrates St Josephine Bakhita February 8.

How to get out of a faith slump



**Fr Stuart
Wilson-Smith**

A faith slump can happen to anyone. Prayer isn't working or we don't feel motivated. When we do make it to Mass, we struggle to focus or we don't feel God any more near to us than when we went in. God seems distant, or we may wonder if God is even there at all.

My faith

I have had more than a few slumps in my faith myself, both before and after I entered religious life and became a priest. Here are a few tips I have picked up along the way.

For one, resist the urge to blame yourself. Lots of things can do harm, temporary or lasting, to our faith lives. My faith has been challenged by things like hypocrisy among leaders of the Church, or a sense that my experience as a single young adult was not valued at my parish, or I simply didn't fit.

It is not a faith or character weakness on our part to struggle with the oftentimes stark difference between the reality of the Church in front of us and what Jesus calls us to. Go gentle with yourself and remember that God

will faithfully be present to us whether we feel it or not.

Turning inward, while prayer may not be the only way out of a faith slump, how we spend our time in conversation with God is critical. On this, one of my biggest helps over the years has been simply appreciating that our approach to prayer may change over the years, certainly between the major stages of life. This is normal.

Looking up new ways of praying is always a worthwhile exercise. You might try, for example, an Ignatian Examen (reviewing the day reflectively with an eye toward God's action) or *lectio divina* (reading Scripture prayerfully, listening for God's voice speaking to you).

“Service to those with whom Christ has so closely identified may take a variety of forms and there is no need to necessarily reinvent the wheel”

Bearing in mind that prayer is about being in relationship with God, what our prayer life may need most is a retreat. A retreat in Catholic terms is time set apart for reflection, prayer and resting with God. Some retreats may be guided or there will be an option to meet with a spiritual director. Look around your region and see if there are any Catholic retreat

centres near you.

As much as a slump in our faith may seem to be an internal matter, I have found that it is best not to approach it this way alone. Getting out of a faith slump often means directing our hearts and minds outside of ourselves.

Matthew 25 lays out this point for us well: The hungry and thirsty, the stranger, the imprisoned – how we treat these least in our midst is how we treat Christ himself.

To jumpstart our faith, we need to encounter Christ and spend time with him, in the gift of the Eucharist, yes, but also in the eucharistic life the Blessed Sacrament calls us to. The solidarity and self-gift we receive in Christ must be shared.

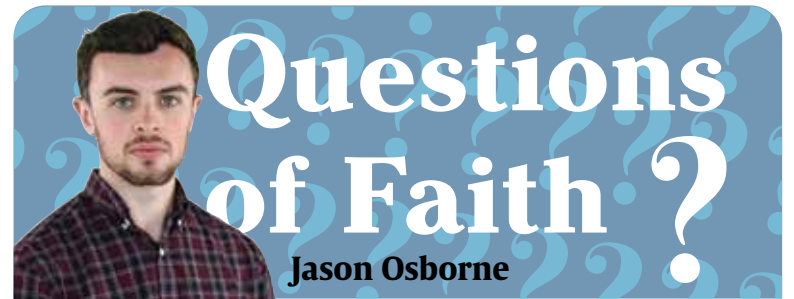
Service to those with whom Christ has so closely identified may take a variety of forms and there is no need to necessarily reinvent the wheel. Wherever we are, there tends to be those already doing the work.

Local parish

Yours or another local parish may have organised a regular food bank that requires assistance. The diocese may have a prison ministry that needs volunteers to spend a few minutes on the phone with a returning citizen or to write letters to those still incarcerated.

To whomever we minister, we will meet Christ, and faith in him and his kingdom of perfect peace, justice and love can only increase.

i Fr Stuart Wilson-Smith is a priest of the Paulist Fathers and associate pastor of Old St Mary's Church in Chicago.



What's the idea behind Lent?

For many of us growing up, there wasn't much more to Lent than a certain dourness and less chocolate. I remember in school the main focus was, "What are you going to be giving up?" The answers were generally things that it would be a nuisance to do without, but things that weren't too great a sacrifice – like sweets, crisps or ice-cream (but never sweets, crisps and ice-cream).

I think this notion of Lent is still at-large. One of the ways in which I know the spirit of Lent largely eludes us is that we're so shocked by the Islamic month of Ramadan, which sees many Muslims devoutly avoiding any form of food or drink from sunrise to sunset, while increasing their adherence to prayer and good behaviour. It is an intensely austere time, and one that sends shivers down many of our spines.

While Ramadan is an impressive spiritual feat no matter what we think or do, I feel we'd understand it better if Lent were better understood, as they're similar in some key ways – particularly in the focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

The basic idea behind Lent is that it's an imitation of the 40 days Christ spent in the desert before beginning his public ministry. During this time, he endured deprivation and difficulty in the wilderness, as well as temptation directly from Satan, who tried to entice him to doubt God's provision and protection, as well as trying to encourage him to seize worldly power. This episode ends with the Devil leaving him, and angels coming to minister to him (Matthew 4:11).

There's a lot of symbolism that goes into Christ's 40 days in the desert, and therefore into Lent, but the bottom line is that Catholics are asked to, like Christ, pray, fast and follow God more closely. These spiritual disciplines are intended to make us more like Christ, and prepare us to go forth into the world empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach God's Kingdom and proclaim the Risen Christ.

During Lent, Catholics are expected to practice prescribed fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and every Friday of Lent. The Church's exhor-

tations to fasting are biblically-based, with Jesus himself expecting his disciples to fast (Mt 9:14-15) and issuing instructions for how they should do so (Mt 6:16-18). During Lent, we attempt to follow these instructions and imitate the Master.

Apart from fasting from food and drink, Catholics traditionally give up practices that may be distracting them from serving God and others. Spending too much time on social media, to the detriment of your faith and family life? Finding yourself saying, 'Just one more episode,' before going to bed rather than casting your mind to God or paying attention to your loved ones? These are precisely the kinds of things that Lent is intended to help us with, that we might pursue 'the Good' without hindrance.

If this all sounds too difficult, that's where the emphasis on prayer comes in. As Jesus himself told us, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The Catechism of the Catholic Church also tells us that, "By the solemn 40 days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert".

Prayer is fundamentally about establishing and maintaining a two-way relationship with God, and during Lent we need that more than ever to help us with the extra challenges we've taken on. Only with God's help can we leave behind the old attachments that separate us from greater love of him and others. Only with God's help can Israel (the Church) be freed from slavery (sin). We get the support we need for this journey in the prayer we're encouraged to partake in.

Every Sunday throughout Lent is considered a small feast day, in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and so those observing Lent are allowed to break their fast in celebration.

While fasting and abstinence are important, the most important thing to remember is that without inward transformation, or conversion as the Church often calls it, our practices are in vain. The end goal is to become more like Christ, and Lent is another one of the tools at the Church's disposal to make that happen.



Our over-burdened planet



Creating the human race may be the single biggest mistake that evolution made. Douglas Abrams writes this in *The Book of Hope*, a book he co-authored with Jane Goodall. While that is a rather despairing view, in the end, this book is a book of hope, though not without it issuing a dire warning: There are now over eight billion people on this planet and already we are using up nature's limited resources faster than nature can replace them. In less than 30 years from now, there will probably be ten billion of us and if we carry on with business as usual, that could spell the end of the earth as we know it.

“We must eliminate corruption and economic self-interest”

What do we need to do to turn this around? Goodall and Abrams suggest four things:

Poverty

First, we must alleviate poverty. When people are hungry and desperate, their thoughts are not on the big picture, namely, the long-range future and the overall good of all humans and the planet. Understandably, their thoughts will be focused on survival and there will be no hesitation in cutting down the last tree to grow food or catching that last fish still alive. Desperation and concern for the big picture generally don't go together.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Second, we must reduce the unsustainable lifestyles of the affluent. Mother earth is not a limitless resource and cannot continue indefinitely to sustain our present lifestyles. Moreover, this is true not just for the lavish lifestyles of the rich, but for all of us in most countries. We haven't faced the fact that everything is limited and hence, we continue to buy in excess, consume in excess, use electrical energy in excess, waste food in excess, use gasoline in excess, and create garbage in excess. This cannot continue much longer. Already millions of desperate refugees on borders everywhere and dramatic shifts in climate most everywhere are telling us that we must make changes, and soon. Our planet is big, but it is finite, and it cannot sustain the limitless demands of unexamined consumption.

Corruption

Third, we must eliminate corruption and economic self-interest. Without good government and honest leadership that focuses on the big picture rather than on its own self-interests, it is impossible to solve our enormous social, economic, and environmental problems. As a Barbara Kingsolver character quips in her recent novel, *Unsheltered*, the free-market has the same morality as a cancer cell. The entrepreneurial spirit that drives our economies serves us well in many ways and affords us comforts, freedoms, and opportunities that few in history have ever had. However, generally it is to the big picture what a cancer cell is to the body, a single cell growing on its own without connection to the overall health of the body. Like a cancer cell, the free-market (with

some exceptions) does not take the big picture and the long-range health of the whole body into account.

“Creating the human race was not a tragic mistake that evolution made!”

Fourth, we must face up to the problems caused by an ever-growing population. For most of history, religious and moral voices have literally commanded people to have children. Increase and multiply. This was a sacred duty, owed to God and the human race. However, for a large part, this was predicated on fears that the human race, like any species, was perennially in danger of becoming extinct. Indeed, there was the constant threat that this might happen. Diseases, famines, war, high infant mortality, a short life span, and disasters of all kinds constantly threatened the human species. Humans, like every species, needed to ensure that the species went on. That made sense, in every

way, until this present century. Now, with the looming prospect of ten billion people on this planet, the threat of extinction arises more from our sheer number than from some external threat. The planet can only accommodate a given number of us at one time. Granted there are soul issues, moral issues, and religious issues involved with any talk of limiting human growth. Nonetheless, however complex these issues, unexamined growth must now be examined.

Evolution

Abrams is wrong. Creating the human race was not a tragic mistake that evolution made! Creating the human person was not an accidental and undesired product of blind evolution. God is the author of the process of evolution and God doesn't make mistakes. God intended from the very beginning for us, human persons, to emerge from the process. Even more, God intended us to have a very special role in the process, namely, to be that place in the process where nature finally becomes conscious of itself and can then proactively help God shape the process towards a final peace and unity (the Kingdom of God) that will include all of us and the planet itself.

Humans weren't a mistake, though admittedly much of our stewarding has been because we tend to think of the world as something we can strip mine in any way that benefits us rather than as a garden, with limited resources, which we have been asked to care for with love.

“Mother earth is not a limitless resource and cannot continue indefinitely to sustain our present lifestyles”

The commandments are guidelines to virtue

Jesus proclaimed that his mission was to bring people back from evil ways to the reign of God in their lives. His words were backed up by healing people and casting out evil spirits.

The charter of his kingdom was set out in the Sermon on the Mount. Today's Gospel (Matthew 5:17-37) is about getting back to the true meaning of the commandments.

There are two ways of studying the commandments. The first way is to regard them as rules which are to be studied and analysed to see where there can be exceptions to the rule or where the basic rule needs to generate further sub-rules. At the time of Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were the great legalists. Hundreds of minute rules squeezed the joy out of religion. St Paul admitted that in his earlier days as a Pharisee, he knew all these rules but could not find perfection in them. But everything changed for him when he came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Abolish

Jesus made it clear that he did not come to abolish the basic Law of the commandments but to complete them by returning to their original purpose. This is the second way to observe the commandments. He asked the question, what is the virtue or ideal that this commandment is designed to protect and promote? "For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes or Pharisees," people will never understand the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.

“Jesus made it clear that he did not come to abolish the basic Law of the commandments”

He chose three of the "thou shalt not" commandments... thou shalt not kill... or commit adultery... or bear false witness under oath. "But I say to you..." and he proceeded to the ideal or virtue which each commandment was intended to nurture: the sanctity of life; the sacredness of marriage; a kingdom of truth.

Looking for what is positive in the commandments reminds me of Fr Hilary McDonagh who was our professor of moral theology. He was a scholar but came to us from years

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap.



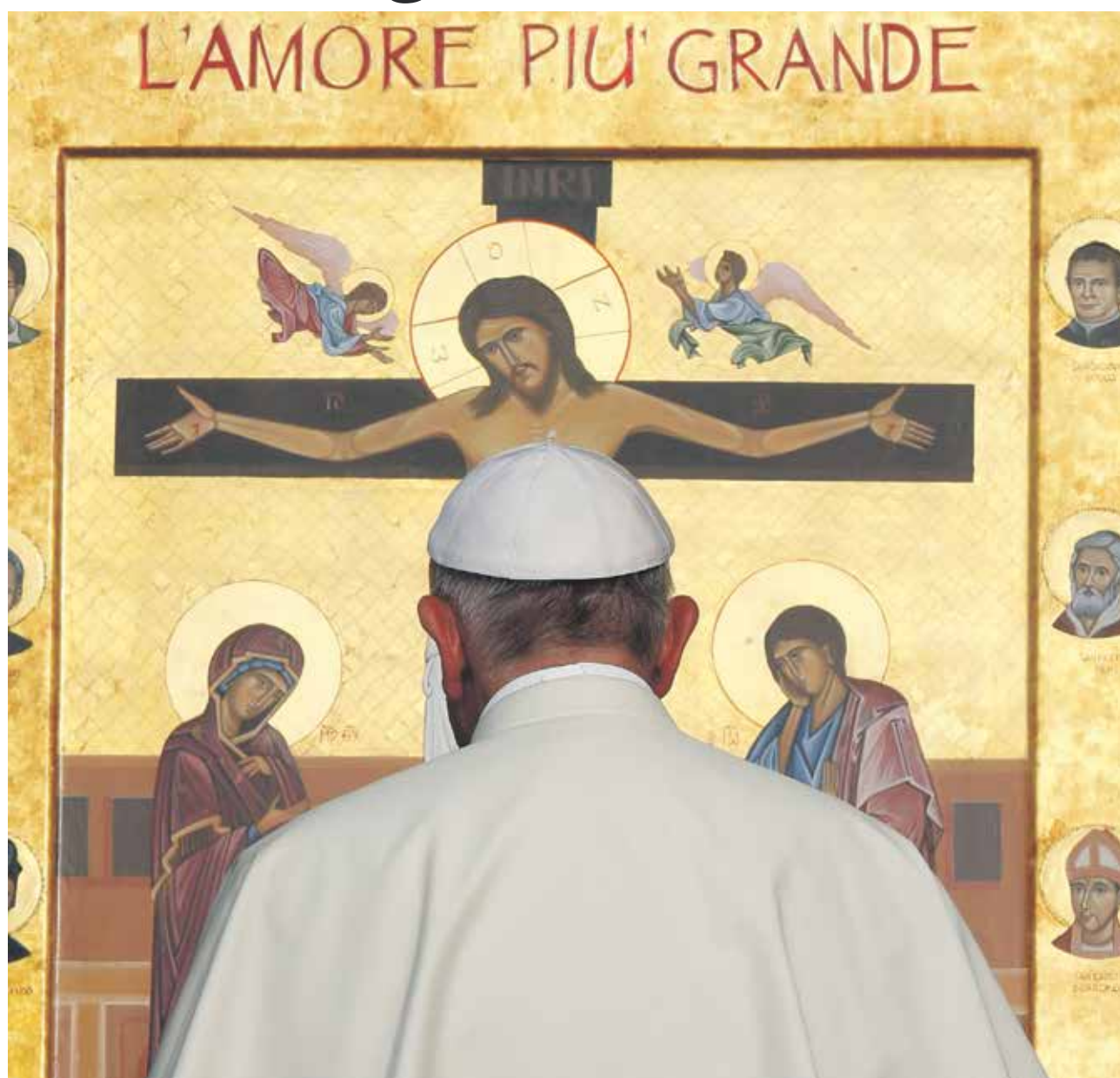
of pastoral work. Our text books were in Latin. When we came to the chapter, *De Castitate*, on chastity, he closed the book in disgust because there was only a half-page on the virtue and 30 pages on sins against chastity. No wonder that there are still people confessing nothing else but impurity. No mention of failing to feed the hungry or helping the poor. Even in the chapter on the Eucharist, there was a paragraph in small print debating the number of serious sins a priest might commit in the celebration of Mass. And there are people who want to go back to pre-Vatican II days!

Any rule written in human words is open to interpretation. Sharp legalists found areas where exceptions were allowed. It became legitimate to stone a person for blasphemy, or for adultery, or if a son cursed his father. Jesus was condemned to death by people who recited "thou shalt not kill"! He proclaimed the sacredness of life in a way that one should control anger, or avoid killing someone's good name by name-calling, and working on reconciliation as soon as possible after falling out with somebody. Reconciliation should precede worship. This commandment was intended to protect the sacredness of life from the womb to the tomb.

Monks

Ages ago there were two monks on a journey when they came to a river where they would have to wade across. On the river bank stood a young lady afraid of the water. Promptly the young monk took her on his shoulder and brought her across. At the end of the day, the old monk said how shocked he was at what the young man had done. But he replied that he had carried her across the river for a minute or so but the pious monk made such a big issue of impurity that he carried her in his mind for the rest of the day. That is what a fixation does to the mind. Uncontrolled lust commits adultery of the heart which is a contradiction of the Beatitude, "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."

The definition of adultery was very complicated



Pope Francis prays in front of an icon during a gathering with young people in Piazza Vittorio in Turin, Italy.

and differed from place to place. A man could issue a writ of divorce to his wife for a fairly trivial reason and he was then free to marry again. But the wife was not free to remarry, so she was regarded as an adulteress if she remarried. There is a case in the Gospel where they tested Jesus whether he would join in stoning a so-called adulteress or not. His reply was a score for equal rights for the woman. The same law should apply to the husband as to the wife. Jesus told the woman whom he had saved from being stoned to death, "Neither do I condemn you. Go away and sin no more" (John 8:11). He protected the sanctity of marriage. His focus was more on the virtue than on the sin.

Truth

People go to court and swear on the Bible, to tell the truth, the whole truth

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thy kingdom come in respect for the sacredness of life, the sanctity of marriage and the light of truth.

Come Holy Spirit, once again breathe life upon the valley of dry bones. Enkindle within us the fire of your love.

and nothing but the truth, and they haven't the remotest intention of telling the truth. It seems to have been more or less the same in Christ's day. He wanted his people to belong to a kingdom of truth. Let your 'Yes' mean yes, and your 'no' mean no.

“I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice”

When Jesus faced Pilate he replied, "I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice". Pilate replied disdainfully, "What is truth?" Truth is the first

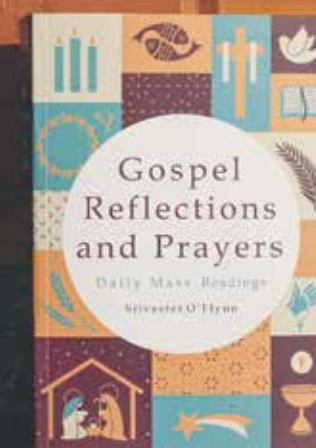
victim of war. Marshal McLuhan, in 1967, published a book called *The Medium is the Message*. It seems that he foresaw how the electronic media of our time would radically change the meaning of truth through fake news, conspiracy theories, the power of slogans, the bait

of a half-truth to cover up some lie, like claiming compassion to justify abortion.

One of the most important rules of life is the law of common sense. Jesus restored the commandments to be guidelines to the virtues of the Kingdom of God on earth.

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Getting triggered by too many trigger warnings

I was triggered too much last week so I'm edgy. I get triggered when I hear stories about trigger warnings being added to innocuous or even worthy material. Last year it was the (trenchantly anti-racist) novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, last week it was *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen!

Lunchtime Live (Newstalk, Tuesday) took a long hard look at the controversy, sparked by the actions of the University of Greenwich. They obviously have a super fragile Students' Union that called for the trigger warnings to be attached to the Austen novel. Most callers I heard disagreed with this and I agreed with them.

That novel wasn't the only target. On **Drivetime** (RTE One, Friday) we heard about the banning of the Tom Jones song 'Delilah' by official Welsh rugby authorities. Sean Holly of BBC Wales saw it as just another of the Welsh team's woes, but reckoned it wasn't the murderous lyrics that the fans liked, rather the spirit.

Tradition

The song is in a long tradition of murder ballads, none of which glorified or promoted murder. In fact, they existed, as, for example Shakespeare's murder stories did, in a moral universe. So, if Delilah has to bite the dust, they'll be coming soon for the 'Green Green Grass of Home' (also from Tom Jones), 'Banks of the Ohio', 'Long Black Veil' and the big



Welsh singer Tom Jones, whose song 'Delilah' has been banned by Welsh rugby authorities due to its lyrics.

monster of all murder songs 'Weela Weela Walya'.

Also irritating is the frequent discussion about the decriminalisation of drugs. On that *Drivetime* programme we heard from James Lawless TD who argued for the decriminalisation, and Colin O' Gara of UCD, who was singing from a similar hymn sheet – so, how come two in favour and no-one against?

Presenter Cormac Ó hEadhra did raise some challenging questions, e.g. about legitimising harmful drug use and the dangers of psychosis, but the framing by *Drivetime* was most unsatisfactory on this occasion. Also worrying

was Mr Lawless' mention of a Citizens' Assembly on the topic – this approach seems to be the go-to strategy for contentious issues – feels like a Pontius Pilate deflection job.

Assembly

Mr Lawless is already a member of the country's most important citizens' assembly – Dáil Éireann. The fact that a Fianna Fáil TD was proposing this shows how far they have come from their roots, though to no great effect on their vote I suspect.

I also found the annual debates about St Brigid rather tiresome, triggering my irritation again. The goddess stuff is

familiar, but in the last year or two she has even been claimed by some as an abortion activist! What kind of appropriation could we call this? Answers on a postcard please.

Finding Brigid (RTE One, Tuesday) was interesting, but trod pretty familiar ground, balancing between the goddess/saint approaches. Siobhán McSweeney (the long-suffering Sr Michael from *Derry Girls*) was an amiable presenter and breezed through history and legend with an approach that was generally axe-free. I thought she hit the nail on the head (rather more times than was necessary) when she suggested that St Brigid was like

PICK OF THE WEEK

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER

EWTN Saturday February 11, 8am

Fr Brian Mullady addresses Catholic teaching on the value of work, just wage, and how Catholic social teaching differs from both Marxism and laissez faire capitalism.

SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

BBC One Sunday February 12, 10.30 am

Sean Fletcher and Holly Hamilton get to the heart and soul of the issues of the day.

FILM: A HIDDEN LIFE

Channel 4 Sunday (night) February 12, 1.05 am

(2019) The story of Franz Jägerstätter (August Diehl), a conscientious objector. During the Second World War, he decides allegiance to Hitler is against his values and strong Catholic faith.

a mirror, with her devotees seeing their own sense of self reflected in aspects of her story.

Melanie Lynch, of the Her-story initiative was involved in projecting beautiful light shows about Brigid onto public buildings – it seemed to me that this was (unintentionally?) a symbol for the way people project their own concerns and agendas onto the real life saint or onto the goddess of myth – I didn't find the conflation helpful.

Buzz words

And so, the buzz words of our days – diversity, inclusion, patriarchy, misogyny etc. were scattered liberally throughout the programme. But so also were the terms and qualities that are never just the whims of word-fashion – like compassion, kindness and hospitality.

The most interesting parts of the programme were those that concentrated on the history, and there's little enough of that about St Brigid. Her strength and influence as an abbess in Kildare were impressive, and, in that context, I thought the contributions of Dr Niamh Wycherly of Maynooth University were particularly interesting.

Also, I hadn't heard before of the saint's connection to Glastonbury, UK site of the famous music festival. Maybe she visited there but more likely according to historian Brian Wright, it was just that relics were sent over from her monastery in Kildare. Now her memory is thoroughly appropriated for a goddess festival in the area, though a stained-glass window in the local church is testimony to her Christian faith.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Audrey Hepburn's Feelings about 'The Nun's Story'

It's hard to believe Audrey Hepburn is dead 30 years this year. I loved her as an actress since I was a child, having been enthralled by her beauty and grace. She'd lost neither of these qualities when I interviewed her in 1988 at the Burlington Hotel, as it was then called. But at this stage of her life, age beginning to assail those elfin features, the slimness that was once so beguiling now made her look simply unhealthy.

She was at the hotel to talk about a recent visit to Ethiopia in her capacity as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador. At times during her lecture she looked eerily similar to some of the famine victims that appeared on

a set of slides she showed the assembled gathering to let us know how horrific things were in that corner of the globe. One was reminded of the acerbic critic John Simon's description of her: "A walking X-ray."

Lecture

I was given a half hour of her time after the lecture. She talked to me of breaking four vertebrae in her back during the filming of John Huston's *The Unforgiven* after she fell from a horse, of William Holden falling in love with her, of her various marriages and the strain they put on her career.

It was with especial fondness that she referenced *The Nun's Story*, Fred Zinne-



A scene from *The Nuns Story* (1959).

mann's 1959 film in which she played a Dominican nun who struggles with issues of obedience and in the end

leaves her order.

"The producers felt my leaving would turn religious people against it," she said,

"but it didn't. It became my most successful film."

She learned Latin prayers to get the feel of the liturgy and met Sr Habets, the nun on whom the novel was based. She taught her how to do things like kiss a crucifix and don her habit. "She even nursed me when I was recovering from my riding accident," she revealed.

Difficult

Was it difficult playing a nun? "I only had my eyes to show expressions with," she said, "because the veil took up so much of my face."

I saw the film as the story of an unquenchable spirit refusing to be quelled. "On the surface it was," she said, "but on a deeper level it

concerned the struggle of Sr Luke, my character, to be true to herself. In one scene my Mother Superior says, 'You can cheat us, your sisters, but you cannot cheat yourself or God'. That's what it was really about."

Was there any part of it that stuck out particularly for her? "Yes," she said, "The scene where Sr Luke wants to avenge her father's death at the hands of the Nazis. That really resonated with me."

A tear came into her eye as she spoke. It was only after our meeting that I learned she'd been a courier for the Dutch Resistance during World War II and that her uncle had been executed by the Nazis.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Harvesting the wisdom of maturity from our grandparents

When I Was Your Age: Ireland's Grandparents Share Memories and Wisdom

by Valerie Cox
(Hachette Books, Ireland, €21.00/£18.50)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a compelling collection of interviews with grandparents, some well-known, some not so well-known. The collection will be immensely interesting to those of a certain vintage, both those who are and who do not happen to be grandparents.

Former RTÉ journalist Valerie Cox prompts her interviewees to reminisce of what it was like for them when they were growing up in Ireland. Among the participants in the exercise were Mary Kennedy of *Nationwide*, former Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, Peig MacManus, a former resident of Dublin's Central City tenements, Bernadette MacDonough, a settled traveller, jazz and blues singer Mary Coughlan and broadcaster Séan O'Rourke.

Almost invariably they all claimed that their parents were very devout and that, as Tom McGrath of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions noted, their religion brought a calmness, direction and peace into their homes and their lives.

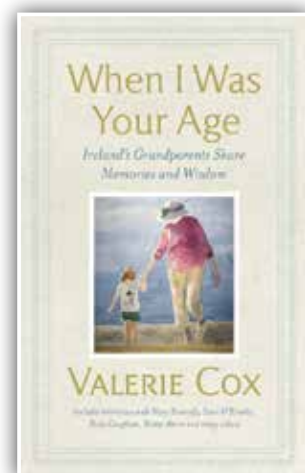
In another of the interviewees, Mary O'Rourke, the former Fianna Fáil politician, her grandchildren have an excellent role model. She served as a minister of state and as leader of Seanad Éireann.

Breaking barriers

She recalls in the book how her desire to break barriers in a world of men stemmed from an overheard conversation in her Athlone home involving Éamon de Valera, following an evening of electioneering. Still firmly believing in "a serious work ethic", she advises young people to "be true to themselves and to who they are, and your parents and what they taught you".

Game of Thrones and *Derry Girls* actor, Ian McElhiney, expresses concerns echoed by the other grandparents. He acknowledges that life for children today is better than heretofore – better access to education, better career and job opportunities and an enlightened spirit of tolerance across society – yet he warns against the children becoming "wrapped up in electronics, gadgetry and mobile phones" and not going out, playing and enjoying the outdoors.

Bertie Ahern also wishes that his grandchildren would not lose touch with nature and reality. He stated his determina-



tion that they would not think that "food grew on supermarket shelves, already wrapped". To this end he rented a couple of allotments in north Co. Dublin, where they grow vegetables and even grapes. Bertie also expressed his concern that his two daughters seemed to be spending half their lives driving the grandchildren to a myriad of 'activities'.

Exhibiting the wisdom garnered over the years, the grandparents present Valerie Cox with some memorable quotations. Some are most revealing, not least one attributed to Louis Copeland, the well-known Dublin master tailor. Reflecting on the contribution priests and religious made across the last two centuries to this polity, that is Ireland, he exclaimed "I hate when I hear people giving-out about the nuns and priests".

One of the most interesting grandparents listed is Yann Goulet. A renowned sculptor, he is described by his daughter, Armelle, herself a grandparent. Goulet, a Breton nationalist, was invited to play the bagpipes at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. While there, he was photographed shaking hands with the notorious Dr Goebbels.

Subsequently Yann was accused of collaborating with the Nazis during World War II and had to flee to safety in Ireland. According to Armelle, he was a "very, very strict grandfather". His is still a controversial name.

In signing off Valerie Cox, herself the grandmother of Brian, Henry, Ellie and Michael, stresses that true wealth comes not from material things, but often from love, compassion and kindness, and the life values the older generation wish to pass on.

She concludes that "while there is concern for the future of the upcoming generation, there is also great hope and faith in young people to navigate the special challenges of this era, and find creative and sustaining solutions".

St Dymphna: The tragedy of an Irish princess



Goossen Van der Weyden, *Dymphna's Father Proposes to Her*. The Phoebus Foundation.

Crazy about Dymphna: The Story of a Girl who Drove a Medieval City Mad

by Sven Van Dorst and others
(Antwerp: Hannibal Publishing / Phoebus Foundation, €63.25/£55.00)

Exhibition in the National Gallery of Ireland, runs until May 28

Davnet and Dympna: a single cult

by Seosamh Ó Dufaigh
(Clogher Historical Society, €30.00)

Peter Costello

In 2016, the Phoebus Foundation, a trust from the collection and preservation of Belgian art, undertook a large-scale restoration project focused on an altar screen by Goossen van der Weyden (1455-1543) in their collection. This creation

with a remarkable historical connection with Ireland, is now on exhibition in Dublin.

It will be of very special interest to anyone interested in the history of the cross-border Clogher region. It will also engage the attention of hagiologists, indeed of anyone at all interested in early and medieval religion, through its revelation in physical form of the strange permutations of Irish religious tradition in a wider European context.

Hagiology

St Dymphna through her cultus casts light on the complicated and often opaque hagiology of early Christian Ireland. But her real fame is in Belgium, in the city of Geel, where the saint herself is now more honoured as the patroness of the mentally ill than she is

in Ireland (hence the spelling variations in her name).

Here in Ireland Dymphna is a legendary sixth or seventh Century Irish saint who was the daughter of a Celtic king. Her story as presented in this show relates that when Dymphna grew to resemble her mother, her widowed father decided to marry her himself – this was an Ireland still partly pagan.

“St Dymphna through her cultus casts light on the complicated and often opaque hagiology of early Christian Ireland”

To escape his incestuous intentions, Dymphna fled Ireland to Geel in Belgium, with

her personal priest confessor Gerebernus. Dymphna's father pursued and killed them, and their bodies were buried on the spot by angels.

The Church of St Dymphna in Geel, consecrated in 1247, still holds relics associated with the saint. The altarpiece featuring scenes from the life of St Dymphna is the only work of its kind to focus on the life of an Irish saint.

This time last year (in the issue of 24 February 2022) we reviewed in these pages *Davnet and Dympna: A Single Cult* by Seosamh Ó Dufaigh (Clogher Historical Society, €30.00; website: www.clogherhistory.ie). The author is perhaps more widely known as Bishop Duffy.

In his large book Duffy investigates the saint with scholarly detail. It is beautifully illustrated, and a prime example of what local history

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.



Jesus Before Pilate, the first interview, water colour by James Tissot (1886-1894). Photo: Brooklyn Museum.

I Judge No One: A Political Life of Jesus

by David Lloyd Dusenbury
(Hurst Publishers,
£25.00/€30.50)

Frank Litton

The horrible costs of the Ukrainian war in human lives and material destruction are agreed. One expert analysis reports that an estimated 180,000 Russian soldiers, 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers, plus 30,000 civilians have been killed, putting it in the top ten of the deadliest wars since 1812.

What we do disagree about is the context in which these facts belong. Some propose that Putin's war, if not justifiable, is understandable as a response to United States' aggression in attempting to push NATO forces right up against Russian borders. States do respond when they perceive their security is threatened. And the United States has a long history of military adventurism.

Support

Others point to Putin's need to win support for his faltering regime with a narrative that extols Russia's glorious past, laments its humiliation by western powers, and promises to restore it to its rightful place as a great power. The malign consequences of aggressive nationalism are a historical commonplace.

My purpose is neither to defend or attack either position. I mention the debate as a reminder of the vital role context plays in our understanding and to raise the question "what would we find if we placed the war in the context of the Gospels?"

David Lloyd Dusenbury helps us find an answer.

Dusenbury is a philosopher and historian of ideas, whose books include *The Innocence of Pontius Pilate* (also published by Hurst). He currently holds a joint chair at the University of Antwerp's Institute of Jewish Studies and University Centre Saint-Ignatius.

He does not address the question directly. As a historian of philosophy and a student of ancient history, he places the Gospels in their time and place and the history of philosophy. The passion and death of Jesus is cast in a fresh light where we can perceive its significance as a crucial moment in world cultural history.

“So Jesus refuses the political and legal roles that could so easily have been his”

We live out our lives playing the roles that society provides and culture scripts: mother, daughter, teacher, politician, lawyer, judge.... What role did Jesus play?

He was recognised by all as an exceptional teacher [Rabbi], and as prophet by others. Some later commentators counted him among the philosophers in the company of Pythagoras and Socrates who like him were “without honour in their own land”; Pythagoras and his followers were attacked and escaped into exile, Socrates was executed.

Some saw him as a zealot, fighting against Roman rule, disparaging him as a failure, a “terrorist” rightly executed. Later commentators have given

his purported zealotry a positive reading, co-opting him into a Marxist narrative.

Placing him among the philosophers, Dusenbury observes, reveals his unique message; while they taught metaphysics and ethics, he taught forgiveness as he moved among sinners. Casting Jesus as a Zealot, a political activist, is a profound error he emphasises.

Tempted

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness the temptation was triumph in the political game of power and domination. Jesus, as Dusenbury points out, was tempted again in the episode of the ‘woman caught in adultery’.

On this occasion the temptations were to engage in the business of Judean law and politics and cancel a statute of the sacred law given by Moses. Jesus resists, he does not judge, No one without sin steps forward to cast the first stone, the crowd melts away.

So Jesus refuses the political and legal roles that could so easily have been his. He was, of course, caught up in the legal and political machinations of others. Dusenbury is particularly helpful in guiding the reader through the complexities of the trials of Jesus, which has always been a difficult topic to untangle.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy before the Temple court before being brought before Pilate and charged with sedition. Both trials combined the political with the sacred. The Roman court was in no way secular as is sometimes supposed. The emperor was seen as a god, and sedition

The complexity of ‘politics’ and ‘justice’ in the Gospels

was as much an offence against the sacred, as was blasphemy.

In neither trial, did Jesus play the standard role of defendant, strenuously denying the charges and mustering evidence in his defence. So our attention is moved away from the drama of guilt or innocence, to the courts themselves and the political expediency and legal contrivance that drove them. Not for the first time, the combination condemned an innocent man to death. This time it is different. The mechanisms, once cloaked under “justice”, are exposed.

“Jesus was accused of blasphemy before the Temple court before being brought before Pilate and charged with sedition”

Jesus replies to Pilate. My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this cosmos my subjects would have struggled so that I should not be handed over to the Judeans; but for now my kingdom is not from here.

A new perspective opens, the sacred is disentangled from the political, the idea of the secular enters history with enormous consequences. From now on the Christian is called on to see the ‘City of Man’ from their place in the ‘City of God’.

Not always an easy task as the Ukrainian war exemplifies. At the very least, I suppose we should refuse to see it as a melodrama, throwing our support behind the ‘good’ to defeat the ‘evil’. The war is evil, a tragedy, one more manifestation of human wickedness, one more reason to pray ‘thy kingdom come’.

Our sights should be on the human suffering, our efforts directed towards peace and not victory.

It is impossible in as short a review as this, to do justice to the depth and subtlety of Dusenbury's analysis as he teases out the implications of the Gospels' accounts of an innocent man crucified because he loved and did not judge. This book will challenge and transform your understanding of the interplay between politics and Christianity.



C. Vandermeiren, Martyrdom of St Dymphna and her Confessor Gererbarnus, 1742. Gasthuismuseum Geel.

in Ireland can achieve. It will give visitors to this exhibition a larger and more detailed insight into the very complicated legendary and historical background of the saint.

Devotion

He discusses the devotion to the saint that developed in Belgium as an extension of the Irish cultus. But in becoming naturalised in Europe St Dymphna took on a new aspect.

This is a reminder to us how the traditional ideas about our saints can change with translocation in curious and interesting ways. I suspect that St Dymphna/Dymphna deserves more attention from our own historians, to explore further the ground broken for cultiva-

tion by these two books and the restoration of the Geel altarpiece.

Sven Van Dorst and the Belgian team take an up-to-date view of the saint's relevance. “The story of Dymphna sounds like a fairy tale,” they write, “but if you read between the lines it's more relevant than ever before. It's about incest, #MeToo, the right to self-determination, emancipation, corruption, the refugee problem, in short, Dymphna is timeless.”

🔗 *The catalogue of the exhibition, an elaborate compendium of articles by Sven Van Dorst and others involved in the project is available in the Gallery Shop (or from the online shop, see nationalgallery.ie).*

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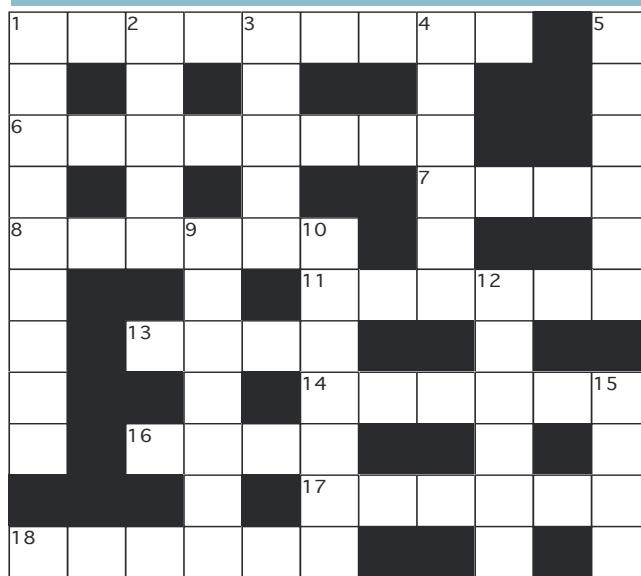
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 469



Across

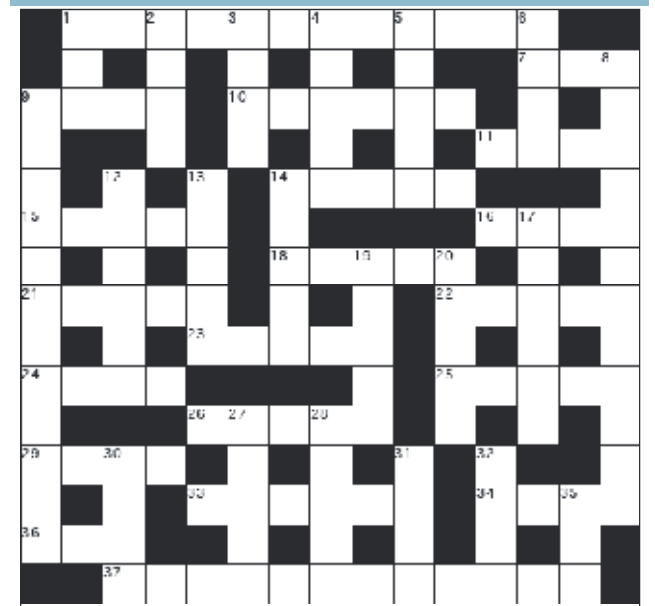
1. It has two wheels and an engine. (9)
6. Put it on if you go out when it's wet. (8)
7. Snare. (4)
8. Help. (6)
11. Book that comes out once a year. (6)
13. Ache. (4)
14. Chit-chat about local news between neighbours. (6)
16. The waiter hands you this at the end of a meal. (4)
17. Goes in. (6)
18. Unlocked. (6)

Down

1. It's made from oranges, and looks a bit like jam. (9)
2. Two children born together. (5)
3. Boulders. (5)
4. Baby cat. (6)
5. Small church. (6)
9. Coming from Rome or Milan, perhaps. (7)
10. Jumbled up - some string, perhaps. (7)
12. Donegal and Antrim are in this province. (6)
15. Shove. (4)

Crossword

Gordius 597



Across

- 1 As yet unproven (12)
- 7 The mixture of gases we breathe (3)
- 9 Encounter (4)
- 10 & 27d The male parent of one's spouse (6-2-3)
- 11 Church benches (4)
- 14 Baby kangaroos (5)
- 15 An examination of one's business records by accountants or tax officers (5)
- 16 Acreage (4)
- 18 Bring upon oneself (5)
- 21 The charging of excessive interest on a loan (5)
- 22 Not married (5)
- 23 Woodland deity such as Pan (5)
- 24 Solemn vow (4)
- 25 Sailor's sleeping-place (5)
- 26 Larger than life person (5)
- 29 Retail, vend (4)
- 33 Yellow-spotted flatfish (6)
- 34 As healthy as hot beer (4)
- 36 Tree whose wood was used to make longbows (3)
- 37 Conifer whose name includes that of a country (6,6)

Down

- 1 Organ of sight (3)
- 2 Part of a citrus fruit immediately beside the rind (4)
- 3 Split, schism (4)
- 4 The Paris Underground (5)
- 5 Poor, in want (5)
- 6 Alleyway (4)
- 8 Traditional wake-up cry (4,3,5)
- 9 Musically, our arrangement appears by some miracle (12)
- 12 Tweak (6)
- 13 Remains (5)
- 14 Supporting beam (5)
- 17 Bounty (6)
- 19 A measure associated with gold (5)
- 20 This sport has codes called Union and League (5)
- 27 See 10 across
- 28 Loud, boisterous (5)
- 30 Grassy garden feature (4)
- 31 Assistance (4)
- 32 Old-fashioned way of writing "you" (4)
- 35 Fib (3)

SOLUTIONS, FEBRUARY 2

GORDIUS NO. 596

Across – 1 Backgammon 6 Vets 10 Delta 11 Colourful 12 Kneecap 15 Synod 17 Rota 18 Ague 19 Taser 21 Forbade 23 Evade 24 Pint 25 Abet 26 Focus 28 Eminent 33 Layperson 34 Reiki 35 Sled 36 Prospector

Down – 1 Body 2 Calendula 3 Graze 4 Mecca 5 Owls 7 Elfin 8 Solidarity 9 Pulsate 13 Cato 14 Probate 16 Waterfalls 20 Scientist 21 Feasted 22 Dali 27 Clyde 29 Mints 30 Nurse 31 Tsar 32 Liar

CHILDREN'S No. 468

Across – 1. University 7. Ballerina 8. Mad 10. Engine 11. Ape 12. Steve 13. Beak 14. Spindle 17. Amen 18. Calendar

Down – 1. Umbrella 2. Illness 3. Evergreen 4. Science 5. Team 6. Red 9. Appeared 13. Bear 14. Sea 15. Ice 16. Dad

Sudoku Corner

469

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 468

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

Last week's Hard 468

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Reflecting on Oscar-nominated *An Cailín Ciúin*

LAST WEEK, a phonecall changed the course of the day. A friend told me he had gone to see *An Cailín Ciúin* the previous evening and encouraged me to go. I said I would. Later, speaking with another friend, I mentioned this to him and wondered if he'd be free to go along with me. He said he was, and we did! I am so glad that happened.



A scene from *An Cailín Ciúin*.

The film is amongst the incredibly long and impressive list of Irish nominees for Oscars this year, but I really knew nothing about it, apart from seeing a short clip one time and a little girl stepping out from the back seat of an E Type Cortina! I almost connected more with the car, to be honest, and remembered what a sought-after car that was 'back in the day'. I knew nothing of the girl's journey in the back of that car, where it began or ended. I know more now and, for those who don't yet know the story, I will do my best not to spoil it for you but I would encourage you to see it for yourself.

Reviews

Later that night, I read some reviews of the movie and, without exception, they were full of praise. The only actor I knew in the film was Carrie Crowley and one critic said she was "never better" and I would

totally agree. There was something very refreshing in the fact that the actors were not the regulars you see in films here (no disrespect to the other Oscar nominees, many of whom who feature so often in any film linked with Ireland) but the sense of not knowing these actors from other films or TV made them somehow so believable. It was as if you had never seen them before and, for that reason, were not comparing them to other roles or familiar characters they may have played elsewhere. Even Carrie Crowley seemed different. It made

it all so much easier to relate with an unfolding and powerful story, as Gaelge, that was enhanced by the scenery and music that breathed Ireland into it.

Memory

I could see so much of memory in the views presented, from the E Type Cortina and Vauxhall Viva to the rusty gates that had to be lifted just a little to open. They all reminded me of scenes so familiar. It was a recognisable glimpse of Ireland presented in Irish and by the Irish. No thatch cottage smoke, donkeys and carts or little men dragging out of clay pipes. It was authentic and sad but not just for the sake of sadness. The film is a truly powerful portrayal of the ups and downs of life, family and the difficulties people encounter and the little glimpses of kindness that give justifiable cause for hope.

In the cinema, my friend and I sat in the very front row. I was not happy there as the screen seemed so huge during the ads and trailers but the cinema was well filled and these were the seats allotted to us. As time went on, I loved those seats. There was nothing and no one between me and *An Cailín Ciúin* – the quiet girl – who had so

much to tell us, even in and from her quietness. There was a scene in the kitchen and I honestly felt I was sitting there in the space they occupied, wanting things to be well and that the girl would have her moment. I witnessed, almost at first hand, a little act of kindness that even in itself, evoked memories and the taste of a biscuit! I will say no more!

Every day, we are told, is a learning day and I hope that I learned something in the seeing of this film. Something about the need to search for kindness and to realise that when it is genuinely shared, acknowledgement is the only response. I hope I retain some of that sense of wanting things to be right for people and an awareness of how difficult life can be for all too many people who live in places of hurt, are surrounded by it and held back because of it. The lifting of the old rusty gate is maybe itself a metaphor, that sometimes the little lift is needed to allow the opening to take place.

I truly hope this movie gets an Oscar. The little girl was incredible and deserves one herself but there would be something even more rewarding if all involved are recognised as one.

Another moment in cinema

Watching a Western in the cinema, one man said to a friend as John Wayne was in hot pursuit of a 'baddie', "I bet you €20 that John Wayne will be thrown off his horse". The other accepted the bet immediately. Within minutes, Wayne was wiping the dust from his clothes after an unceremonious fall from his steed. The man handed his friend the €20 but the other refused: "I cannot take it from you", he said, "I saw the movie before and knew what was going to happen."

"No", the other insisted "you must take it. I saw the movie too but didn't think John Wayne would be silly enough to make the same mistake twice!"



YOUR GIFT COULD SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE

Millions of children throughout the world are suffering from hunger and malnutrition due to conflict, disease, displacement, and other factors. And the situation in Africa is only getting worse. Millions of women and children are struggling with inadequate diets which can lead to stunting and other health problems. Countless children are dying of malnutrition each day.

The Little Way Association is receiving requests from missionary priests and Sisters who urgently need funds to purchase sacks of wheat flour, sorghum, maize and beans for their people and for medical needs of their clinics such as intravenous feeding of children and babies. For a helpless child, prolonged hunger is a devastating, bewildering, intensely painful experience.

Your gift will assuredly help a missionary to relieve a child's suffering. It could save a life. Whatever you can spare will be sent WITHOUT DEDUCTION and will be gratefully received.



"Insofar as you did this to one of the least of My brethren, you did it to Me".



"It is love alone that matters."
- St Therese

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Also, the poor and deprived people, whom the clergy serve so faithfully, often turn to their priests for assistance. Thus, your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €6 or more for each Mass

Our benefactors will be glad to know that a Mass is offered each day for their intentions.

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk around three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Can you help provide a well?

Please consider making a gift to The Little Way Association's fund for children

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction, to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

Thank you, and may God reward your generosity.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

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Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

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DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.