

The Irish Catholic

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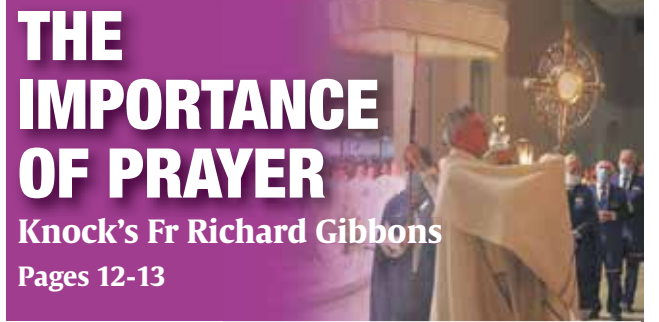
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More religion please say school children

Brandon Scott

It flies in the face of everything Catholics have been told by the media and those who purport to speak on behalf of children but the evidence is in, school children want more religion in their classrooms and not less, and a survey by the Children's Ombudsman backs this up.

The survey revealed that 34% of 1,036 young people surveyed desired more religious education in schools while also indicating that only 3% wished to see religious education removed entirely from the curriculum.

Two leading figures in Catholic education, Alan Hynes of the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) and Fr Patrick Moore PP of St Michael's Parish Castlepollard, voiced their support for faith-based education in the country and argued that the young people's responses need to translate into a new appreciation for religious education, where its "life-essential element" is recognised anew.

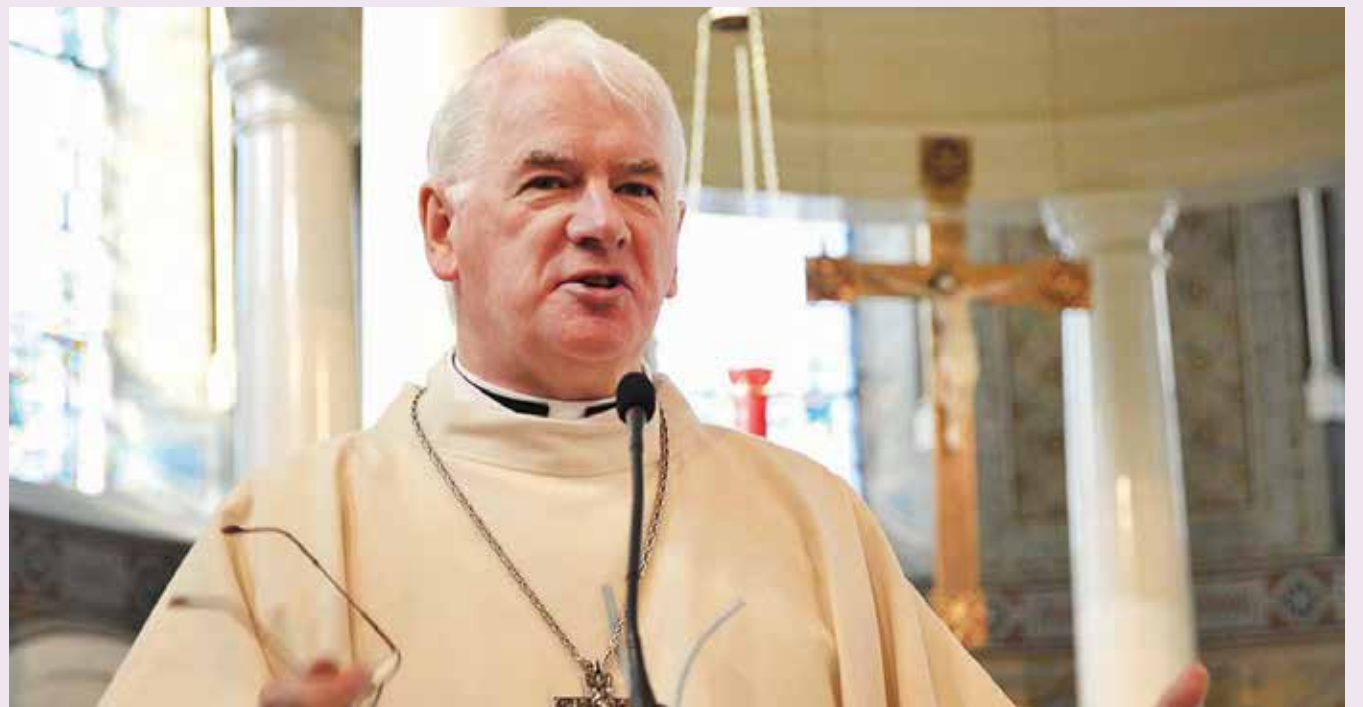
Mr Hynes hoped the findings will combat the "downplaying" of religious education which has "become vogue" and led to it being "shoved aside" in classrooms.

Mr Hynes, CEO of the CEP, welcomed the results of the survey.

"I found it very interesting because these were the voices of young people," he said. "It's positive

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A great man has fallen - Tribute to Archbishop Noël Treanor



Former Irish Catholic editor leads tributes on page 6

DO PUPILS REALLY WANT MORE RELIGION?

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SR NABILAH AND THE GAZA TRAGEDY

Luca Attanasio

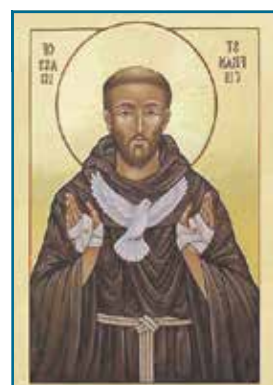
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More religion please say school children

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from our point of view. This idea that young people are interested and intrigued by these things and why wouldn't they be?

"The downplaying of religion in the education system that's becoming vogue, not just among the patrons but you would commonly see people arguing that religion shouldn't have any place in schools. I think that's a mistake."

Mr Hynes added: "For people who are religious, which is still the great majority of people in Ireland and even the world, religion is not a phenomenon but a lived experience," he said. "To try and simply rob it of that life essential element that so many people hold it to be, I don't think that it will promote respect in the end between people of different faiths."

"Here in the Catholic Education Partnership, we've been in dialogue trying to promote a view that we believe that religious education is an integral and

important part of the education system and it should be understood on the basis of how it interacts with other subjects."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Patrick Moore PP of Castlepollard, who has been on an Education and Training Board for a number of decades and who featured in last week's edition of the paper speaking out passionately against the push to remove faith formation in schools, describing it as "terrible negligence", said that he felt vindicated by the findings of the survey and that the insights needed to be built on in the future.

"Yes I do [feel vindicated by the findings]," he said. "I think there is a tendency to search for spirituality – a strong tendency. We should be building on them [the insights from the survey] very strongly. It's an awful lacuna in education if the spiritual is neglected or put to one side. It has to be core in education – it's holistic education. It's the whole person: Body, mind and spirit."

Bishop Duffy pays tribute to late Canon Joe Mullin

Renata Steffens

The Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy has paid tribute to the late Canon Joe Mullin, who died on August 8 aged 81. Canon Mullin, former PP of Lisnaskea-Maguire'sbridge (Aghalurcher Parish) and late of Fintona, was also director of the Clogher Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes for many years.

Bishop Duffy said the canon "reached out to people wherever they were and brought

to them the love and tenderness of God's grace and mercy throughout his priestly service" in geographically diverse parishes.

The bishop also said Canon Mullin's pastoral style "coupled with his devotion to Mary our Blessed Mother, was manifested to thousands of people across the diocese during his many years of service as Director of the Clogher Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes."

"Canon Joe was also a man

'More things are wrought by prayer than this world realises,' says Fr Richard Gibbons

Renata Milán Morales

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world realises," said Fr Richard Gibbons, rector at Knock Shrine, speaking with this paper preceding the annual Novena at Knock Shrine, that began on August 14.

The event is expected to draw over 130,000 faithful, as it has done for the last 47 years. However, as the world changes, so does the way people engage with their faith. Fr Gibbons acknowledges these changes.

"The way people attend nowadays is different. Our attention spans have shortened. You have to adapt and make

it fit into people's lives," Fr Gibbons explains. This idea has led to innovations in how the Novena is presented, adding new approaches without compromising its message.

Despite these changes, the essence of the Novena remains the same - showing the importance of prayer in the lives of the faithful. "Prayer is important. That's it. Without prayer, we don't have the connection with God that we strive for," Fr Gibbons explained to *The Irish Catholic*. The Novena is a necessary reminder of the eternal side of existence, offering a moment to pause and reflect in this fast-paced world.

This year, attendees can also participate in seminars, guided walks, and Family Day events, among other activities. These options are designed to meet the needs of a contemporary audience, encouraging a deeper connection in a way that resonates with today's faithful.

"The Lord simply wants us to live the best life we can, and he wants us home," Fr Gibbons says, emphasising the profound spiritual guidance the Novena provides. Fr Gibbons reminds the faithful that, in a world "often dominated by material concerns, prayer and reflection remain central to a fulfilling life."

See more on pages 12-13

Couple arrested for praying rosary in North plead not guilty

Brandon Scott

Pro-life protestors who were arrested in Northern Ireland last October for violating UK buffer zone laws are speaking

out amidst their ongoing court battle. The protestors had their first hearing on July 29, wherein they both entered a not guilty plea.

"I believe I have done absolutely nothing wrong," Claire Brennan stated in a recent Live Action report: "If the courts find that I have and decide to convict me then we are in a very dark place indeed".

Ms Brennan was arrested along with David Hall, last

autumn for praying in an alleged buffer zone outside of Causeway Hospital in Coleraine. According to the report, police officers approached Brennan while she was praying the rosary and holding a pro-life sign that said 'Pray to End Abortion'.

In a video of the incident, Ms Brennan stated: "Officer, you have a duty to uphold the law, I have a duty to uphold God's law. This is where we pray. We are not

committing any offences".

The officer then told her that "in the eye of the law", she was, in fact, committing an offence, and further accused her of "harassment, alarm, and distress".

The officer and his colleague later arrested Ms Brennan and Hall and charged them, without a police interview, with violating the UK's Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act, according to Christian Concern.

Foxrock church voices annoyance at rugby club from altar

The row over the sale of a very valuable site in south Dublin to a local GAA club has escalated with the local church publicly accusing a local rugby club of deliberately undermining the sale.

Foxrock Parish, which manages the site – conservatively valued at €10 million – on behalf of a diocesan trust recently decided to sell the land to the local GAA club.

However, St Brigid's rugby club officials have called the deal a "land grab" by the GAA. It sent a solicitor's letter to the parish calling on the church to stop the sale.

The parish issued a letter to all parishioners and raised the matter from the altar at Masses last weekend saying that allegations by the rugby club "are at variance with the facts and the evidence".

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'It will pass': Bishop McKeown comments on Derry conflicts

Renata Steffens

Last Saturday, Derry saw another conflict between nationalist youths and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), leaving ten officers injured. The violence following a peaceful Apprentice Boys' Relief of Derry parade lasted a few hours.

The Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown told *The Irish Cath-*

olic, "there tends to be an annual build up to some form of confrontation between the police and nationalist youths between the Apprentice Boys' march and the big bonfire in the Bogside on August 15."

According to the bishop, "most people are very upset that this took place. Derry has come a long way since our Troubles." He said that "there is a small minority which does not accept the post Good Fri-

day Agreement arrangements in NI.

"These dissident voices tend to encourage children to get into confrontation with the police to show that they have not gone away."

Bishop McKeown said he was watching the parade and the city was "full of tourists and enjoying the hospitality". With such a peaceful march during the day, no one would have guessed hours of conflict

would happen afterwards.

These conflicts do not affect the relations between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. "These riots are not between the nationalist and unionist communities – but by a small number of nationalist youths who tackle the police and cause extreme annoyance to most. But it will pass, as it does every year" Bishop McKeown concluded.

The Northern Ireland's Jus-

tice Minister, Naomi Long said the violence in Derry streets over the weekend is "disgraceful, dangerous and senseless." Ms Long also said "There is absolutely no place in our community for such disorder and those responsible will be pursued and held accountable in our courts."

"I would urge all involved, including those young people who are being manipulated, to seriously consider the impact

of their actions on themselves and their community and walk away from any further disorder", Ms Long pleaded.

In another statement, Northern Ireland's First Minister and deputy First Minister said these incidents "are disgraceful manifestations of criminality and have absolutely no justification." "This senseless violence and intimidation has no place in our society and we would appeal for calm."

Limerick diocese remain fuzzy on future of Bishop Casey's remains

Staff reporter

The remains of Bishop Eamonn Casey, which have been interred in Galway Cathedral since his death in 2017, could be relocated after child sexual abuse allegations were revealed in the RTÉ documentary *'Bishop Casey's Buried Secrets.'*

The Diocese of Limerick, where the bishop first served in the late 1950s, told the *Irish Daily Mail* they are "willing to take the remains". A spokesperson has said "this is not a matter for Limerick Diocese to decide but in the event that all relevant parties were to make such a decision, Limerick Diocese would fully coop-

erate to facilitate such a move."

The Irish Catholic contacted the diocese, who said they "had nothing further to add on the matter."

Many of the bishop's relatives were buried in Limerick.

The Casey family has strong links with Co. Limerick. The bishop was born in Fies, Co. Kerry, but later moved to

Adare, Co. Limerick, and he was first ordained for the Diocese of Limerick.

The RTÉ documentary revealed the Diocese of Galway had in its files multiple allegations of child sexual abuse against the bishop when the decision to bury him in the cathedral's crypt in 2017 was made.

Bishop Casey was removed from

ministry in 2006 with the ban reiterated in 2007 after multiple allegations of abuse were received, but the documentary did not reveal if the accusations were the reason for his removal from ministry.

Following the revelations in the documentary, the mention of the bishop's death was removed from RIP.ie

Sr Briega McKenna's vision about the priesthood-crisis realised

Renata Milán Morales

Sr Briega McKenna, Catholic nun, mystic and author of *Miracles Do Happen*, during her current visit to Ireland

shared a vision of a crisis within the Church - one she believes has already begun. Sr Briega described an image she received:

"I saw this image of a vast

desert and people were crying... And He said, 'A time is coming when there will be a great famine in the Church... When many priests will see it as humility to deny my

power,'" Sr Briega described. This vision has only deepened her commitment to support priests and encourage them to embrace their vocation fully. vision highlights the need

for priests to recognise and exercise the power given to them, rather than softening it in a mistaken sense of humility. "Father, you have 15 minutes to market the best product any-

body ever could... You have 15 minutes to market the gospel. It's alive, it's real," she urged, emphasising the importance of the homilies.

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Sr Briège, Dana and St Brigid



Martina Purdy

This is supposed to be the year of St Brigid. But with six months to go to the 1500th anniversary of her death, I was thinking there was a dearth of celebrations

when a text came through about Brigid 1500.

To mark the year, Dana has just written and recorded a new song for St Brigid. It has a contemplative air and begins with the most beautiful line: "I choose Jesus!"

The Eurovision star is to debut it on Friday August 16 at St Brigid's shrine, Faughart, where the saint was born. Faughart, County Louth is the birthplace of St Brigid, and her namesake, Sr Briège McKenna, the author of *Miracles Do Happen* and internationally renowned for her powerful healing

ministry and intercession for priests. Sr Briège, and Fr Pablo are going to be at the shrine for the event which has been organised by the local people. God bless the laity!

It was Sr Briège - horrified by idolatrous attempts to "rebrand" the saint as a pagan goddess - who asked Dana to write the song. "I told her that other people had asked me to write the song," said Dana, "and I couldn't get any inspiration. But I told her I would try and you know the next day the whole song came to me."

"My husband Damien asked me to play it for Sr Briège and she loved it and didn't want to change a thing."

"She said so many people lose that element of St Brigid - that she chose Jesus over everything else. For a religious, that is the starting point."

That indeed is the starting point for us all - and one of the most painful aspects of our modern Church is the failure to recognise the importance of religious women who have prayed, served and spoken the truth.

Too often initiatives and prayers for vocations to the priesthood neglect to mention religious life for women, whose prayers give birth to, nourish and sustain this vital call.

Thank God for all the efforts so far to recognise St Brigid over the past six months. I attended a beautiful service at St Patrick's Church, Downpatrick, last February, organised by the Catholic Guides of Ireland, Northern Province, spearheaded by women from St MacCartan's Loughinisland Branch. Tradition holds that St Brigid is buried in

the town, with St Colmcille and St Patrick, who had great respect for women and began his mission in Ireland in 432AD.

In Armagh, this weekend August 18th, the parish of Loughgilly is hosting a family fun day and liturgy in celebration of Brigid 1500. May many more parishes do likewise.

St Brigid, a woman of prayer, a woman of generosity and great virtue, a woman who gave all for Jesus, is a wonderful model for Irish women in a world that no longer knows what a woman truly is.

I have a cousin whose wife is rather house-proud and was highly amused when a mother and several wild children came to visit. His wife sat in horror, as the children jumped, kicked and climbed all over the furniture, coffee table included, while their mother, in between easy-going puffs of her cigarette, would say in a soft Belfast twang. "Staaaap that." The children of course paid no

heed to this appeal to "stop that" and I was reminded of the story as I listened to one Stormont politician in particular on radio appealing to those engaged in racially-motivated sporadic violence to stop. Homes and businesses were targeted by people who will not listen to reason.

I was also struck by an interview that BBC's Stephen Nolan did with a man on Belfast's Sandy

Row, a traditionally loyalist stronghold, where the kerb stones are primitively painted in red, white and blue. The man told Nolan that this was a "white" area and should remain that way. Nolan's interview was typically robust as he challenged this man. But I was sorry that Nolan did not ask him if he would accept Catholics living there. I wonder what he would have said. Racism is

another form of sectarianism, which is deep-rooted and has festered for centuries, causing not just pogroms and church burnings but bloody murder on "both sides".

I remember one unionist politician during the Troubles, war weary himself, could no longer be bothered to formulate words to express his horror. "Put me down for the usual condemnation."

More than 25 years after the Good Friday Agreement, sectarianism has yet to be seriously tackled. We have only paid lip service to this evil. I used to wonder what would happen when the Troubles ended and people from different nationalities arrived on our shores.

The vast majority of people are very welcoming but there is a petty small-mindedness. As a Belfast-born expat I endured a few barbs

in the 1990s about "coming here taking our jobs". When I said: "Let me get this straight, millions of you go to North America for jobs and one comes back and you are complaining?"

Anti-racist marches, like peace marches, come and go but the hatred lingers. Racism, like sectarianism, requires a Christian response. As Ven. Fulton Sheen used to say, there is no brotherhood of man without a Father.

The worst aspect of modern femininity is that we neglect our own amazing gifts in a cheap attempt

to imitate men. Hence, the headline in the Daily Mail the other day: "Why shouldn't we women ogle Olympic hunks in trunks?"

Maybe because we women, having experienced leering looks and uncomfortable remarks, don't want to objectify men?

Sorry to hear of the untimely death of Archbishop Noel Treanor, who was an authority on St Columbanus. When he came to visit our Falls Road convent, there was

great craic over coffee and cake and if I wanted to prolong the festivities, a quick question on the famous Irish saint would seal the deal. May Archbishop Noel rest in peace.

Kilmore prepares for less priests

Renata Steffens

The Diocese of Kilmore is having to rearrange and redistribute priests due to the declining number of available priests in the diocese.

"There are simply not enough ordinations in Kilmore Diocese to keep pace with the current and projected number of retirements in accord with the current organisation of our parishes," the Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes said in a statement.

The average age of the diocese's priests is 71 years, which means more and more priest retiring. The bishop said the diocese had "one ordination thankfully this year and two in the past four years. We are grateful for those who are prepared to try their vocation to priesthood."

The Kilmore Diocese had only eight ordinations with four

incardinations (priests applying and being accepted into the diocese) since the year 2000. That "means an average of one new Kilmore priest in the diocese every two years over the past 24 years."

To supply the parishes' needs, the diocese welcomed priests from abroad and the bishop said the diocese is "most grateful to them for their generous service."

Recently, the diocese welcomed the ordination of Fr Jordan MacGabhann who will be CC Urney & Annagelliff. Bishop Hayes thanked the two priests retiring, Fr John McTiernan and Fr Brian Flynn for their years of service in the diocese, welcomed Fr MacGabhann and expressed his gratitude for the priests still working in the diocese.

Talking about the opportunity of cooperation between neighbouring parishes, and the involvement of clergy and lay

people in Team Ministries, the Bishop said that in the "latest diocesan changes, parishes are being called into a closer partnership while still retaining their identity as distinct parishes with their respective Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Committees."

With the number of priest ordinations dropping drastically in the last decades, and parishes having to plan ways to keep operating, a reduction in the number of Masses is in focus.

"Thankfully, the number of lay people actively involved in parishes in our diocese has remained steady, though the overall Mass attendance figures are down", the Bishop said. "We cannot continue to maintain a system that has become ineffective with the same schedule of Masses, less attendance and fewer available priests."

He said it is "best to have full

churches, and fewer Masses and to have a wholesome celebration of the Mass with maximum participation".

The bishop also mentioned the need for more vocations in the diocese. "We continue to pray for vocations to Diocesan Priesthood which are the fruit of the faith-life of our parish communities and most especially of prayer in our family homes."

The new plan for the diocese also included the relaunch of the permanent diaconate. "Over the past year we have launched the promotion of the Permanent Diaconate for men who are willing to give of their time in the service of the Diocese of Kilmore", Bishop Hayes said. However, "The ministry of the Permanent Diaconate is not intended to substitute the indispensable ministry of priests nor to replace that of lay ministry."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clerical changes in Kilmore Diocese announced

Bishop Martin Hayes announced new diocesan changes in Kilmore to take effect from October 5. The changes are as follows:

- Very Rev. Fr John McTiernan Adm. Annagh to retire and reside in Cavan.
- Very Rev. Fr Brian Flynn CC Castlerahan to retire and reside in Lavey.
- Very Rev. Fr Gerard Comiskey PP Drumlane to commence a Sabbatical Period until Easter 2025.
- Very Rev. Fr Sean McDermott PP Ballintemple and Adm. Kilmore to be PP Annagh and PP Drumlane.
- Very Rev. Fr Gabriel Kelly PP Kilmainhamwood-Moybologue to be PP Ballintemple and Adm. Kilmore and remain as Chancellor of Kilmore Diocese.
- Very Rev. Fr Ultan McGoohan PP to remain as PP of Killann and to become Adm. of Kilmainhamwood-Moybologue.
- Rev. Fr Thomas Small CC Urney & Annagelliff to be CC Kilmainhamwood-Moybologue.
- Rev. Fr Jordan MacGabhann, newly ordained to be CC Urney & Annagelliff.
- Rev. Andrew Brady, Permanent Deacon, Urney & Annagelliff to minister in Castlerahan Parish.

What does it mean to be Irish today?

What does it mean to be Irish today? In the increasingly multi-ethnic nation that Ireland now is, that's a question that will be pondered over. Olympic athletes like Rhasidat Adeleke and Daniel Wiffen demonstrated that a person representing Ireland may now have come from backgrounds not traditionally rooted in Ireland. (Wiffen's family were from Yorkshire, and Adeleke's from Nigeria.)

Identity

National identity in the past was based on a kind of tribal, or clan, identity. My parents would have identified their Irishness from remembered family traditions linked to clan and soil – usually of a particular county. Language, faith and patriotic allegiance were all parts of the threads of our national identity – as were surnames.

Even at school, I once learned: "By Mac and O, you'll surely know/An Irishman, they say/But if they lack that O or Mac/No Irishman are they!"

But it's no longer like that. Irishness now may be attested through a document: a new Irish diaspora has emerged through the grandchildren of Irish people accessing Irish passports. Some have an affectionate attachment to Ireland – one Englishman



Mary Kenny

I know waxes lyrical about Kiltimagh, his grandmother's home place – while others have scant knowledge of Ireland. For some, the passport is just a flag of convenience.

Yet there are also residents of this country who have earned their Irish citizenship and feel proudly part of their adopted land.

“Being Irish is changing: but the foundations of national identity must still have stable roots”

If the old tribal identity is no longer valid, then what is the definition now of Irishness?

I would say it is this: a meaningful awareness of Irish history and culture over the development of the nation. An intelligent appreciation of

how a sense of national sovereignty grew and flourished, through music, poetry, prose and art. A grá for the Irish language, even where proficiency isn't always attained. And a grasp of the 1500 years of Irish Christian tradition.

You don't have to be Christian or Catholic to be Irish, but you should understand how deep Christianity is in the collective DNA. The best book I always recommend for this is Kevin Whelan's "Religion, Culture, Landscape and Settlement in Ireland from Patrick to Present." Every square mile of Ireland bears the mark of its past.

Multi-ethnic societies can be united in a shared identity – America has been – but they must agree, broadly, on the national narrative, which usually includes respecting the host religion. Being Irish is changing: but the foundations of national identity must still have stable roots.

“Multi-ethnic societies can be united in a shared identity – America has been – but they must agree, broadly, on the national narrative”

I have seen it suggested that only well-educated people should have the vote – because ignorant, under-educated people make bad choices. (This suggestion had some traction in the wake of Brexit, which indicated that better-educated folk voted against the Britain's EU exit.)

Yet the historian Richard Evans' new study of the Nazis – "Hitler's People", for which he researched the lives of the most significant characters in Hitler's circle – reveals that the top Nazis were often well-educated, refined and brainy personalities.

Many of the leading Nazis had PhDs – Goebbels wrote his thesis on

romantic drama and was dedicated to the performing arts. The odious Nazi governor of Poland, Hans Frank, was an outstanding pianist. Joachim von Ribbentrop, the foreign minister, was an accomplished violinist, a cultivated French speaker and a figure-skating ace.

The truly awful Jules Streicher, publisher of hateful anti-Semitic propaganda, was a lyric poet and painted sensitive watercolours (and was an uxorious husband). Goering was highly intelligent and had a refined appreciation of art – he looted mountains of it from the Nazis' victims. Leni Riefenstahl, film director and actress who adored and promoted Hitler, was a clever, talented and pro-

gressive feminist.

The historian's theme is that the Nazis, who perpetrated some of the most terrible crimes of the 20th century, were not stupid thugs or mindless jobs. They were mostly from cultivated, educated, middle-class backgrounds and had benefited from Germany's excellent educational opportunities.

But education is worthless without a moral compass. That has to be imparted by an understanding of moral values, and the awareness of right and wrong. A person can be very brainy and clever, yet devoid of any moral framework – as the history of the Third Reich's personalities evidently shows.

A woman in Dublin told me she attended a funeral for a neighbour who was an atheist. It was held at the Unitarian Church in St Stephen's Green, and the secular service was performed gracefully. I was aware that the Unitarian Church "does not have a set of beliefs or doctrines", as it states on its


website, and religious belief is not a condition for services. To be honest, there are now very few Unitarians (originally, Protestant Christians rejecting the Trinity), so it makes sense to open the church to anyone who wishes to use it.


And maybe it does provide a kind of spiritual space even for an atheist's departure.




Rhasidat Adeleke. Photo: Sam Barnes, Sportsfile

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A great man has fallen - Tribute to Archbishop Noël Treanor

Michael Kelly

It was with a mixture of disbelief and shock that the news of the untimely death of Archbishop Noël Treanor emerged on Sunday morning as Mass goers gathered to celebrate the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. From his native 'stoney grey soil of Monaghan' to the sprawling housing developments of his adopted home in Belfast, the words of the King in the Prophet Samuel seemed appropriate: "a great man has fallen today".

Dr Treanor's status as the Vatican's chief diplomat to the institutions of the European Union (EU) meant that messages from the great and the good flowed quickly. Vincent Guérend, outgoing French ambassador to Ireland described the prelate as "a man of peace and a friend". A social media posting from the northern Executive said that both First Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly were "deeply saddened" by the news.

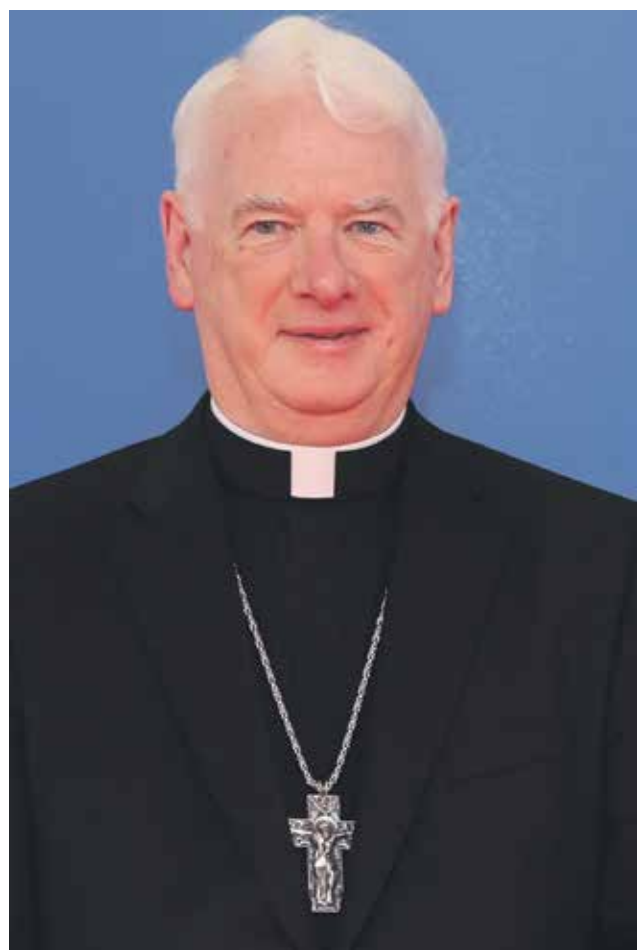
Impact

Prof. Sir Ian Greer, president of Queen's University Belfast described Dr Treanor as "a man of great integrity and intellect...Noël had so much to give and had profound impact on the many lives he touched, his passing is a terrible loss, may he rest in peace."

And that he indeed touched many lives, was evident by the warm social media responses from ordinary parishioners all across Down and Connor Diocese where he served as bishop from his appointment in 2008 by Pope Benedict XVI, until Pope Francis called him in November 2022 to serve in Brussels.

He was no stranger to the European capital, and he was a passionate believer in the process of European integration. Born in the border county of Monaghan on Christmas Day in 1950 just five years after the end of the Second World War that saw somewhere between 70 to 85 million people lose their lives, about 3% of the population of the world.

“He will be sorely missed first and foremost by his brother John, his sister Mary, his extended family and wide circle of friends in Ireland and across Europe”



He grew up in the parish of Tyholland Co. Monaghan – just a few kilometres from the border, where he attended Leitrim National School and Saint Brigid's National School before completing his early education at Saint Mary's Christian Brothers School, Monaghan.

He pursued his third level education at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth and in Rome.

“He had a clear vision of the Second Vatican Council and the universal call to holiness and what this meant”

He was ordained a priest in 1976 for service in the diocese of Clogher in St Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan. In his years of service in Clogher he

served as curate and hospital chaplain in Monaghan town and in Enniskillen, as director of adult education and in 1986 as coordinator of the diocesan assembly of clergy.

In these latter two roles, he had a clear vision of the Second Vatican Council and the universal call to holiness and what this meant in terms of co-responsibility within the Church between priests, people and religious.

Vision

He brought this vision to Down and Connor though an ambitious listening process and the launch of the 'Living Church' programme. Part of the mission of Living Church was to empower already-existing parish pastoral councils and to assist in the setting up of new ones.

Before there was much talk of synodality in the Church, Dr Treanor had correctly identified that the only way for the Church to grow is to have laypeople central to the life of the parish. Down and Connor, for example, is now to the fore in having trained lay funeral teams preparing for the time when priests will not always be available to celebrate funeral rites.

From a young age, he saw European integration as the most effective vehicle for breaking down barriers between people – divisions that had seen tens of millions of young Europeans lose their

“Archbishop Noël served most of his ordained ministry in working to forge positive relations with partner countries of the European Union and to help nourish the Christian heart and soul of Europe”

lives in bloody wars and conflict.

He used to remark how the EU is, perhaps, the most effective peace process the world has ever seen. He was a long-serving member of the Council for European Affairs of the Irish Bishops' Conference, and was appointed to the staff of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) in 1989, and four years later asked to lead this body which is the chief liaison between the Church and the EU institutions.

He was not blind to the failings of these institutions, nor was he naïve about the form of aggressive secularism that characterised a lot of EU policymakers. He was disappointed when the attempt to draft an EU constitution remained entirely jaundiced to a so-called 'invocatio Dei' or acknowledgement of Europe's Judeo-Christian roots.

“He was respected across the divide, and saw the need for the Church to offer prophetic leadership in communities that have traditionally been excluded”

However, he saw in the eventually adopted Lisbon Treaty a clear pathway for the voice of Faith to be at the heart of EU debates. Article 17 of that treaty obliged the Union – and the Member States – to maintain an open dialogue with the Church and other confessional and non-confessional organisations. Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern sought to put flesh on the bones of that ideal with the so-called 'structured dialogue' process, but it would be fair to say it has not yet fully realised the potential of the process.

In paying tribute to Dr Treanor this week, Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon

Martin recalled his presence at the plenary assembly of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences in Serbia in June.

“Archbishop Noël served most of his ordained ministry in working to forge positive relations with partner countries of the European Union and to help nourish the Christian heart and soul of Europe.

“At our meeting in Belgrade, bishops reflected on the future of the Christian faith in Europe, and Archbishop Noël's keen intellect, insight and leadership provided an invaluable contribution to our discussion,” Archbishop Eamon said.

When Benedict XVI asked him to go to Belfast as bishop in 2008, it was to a city that was reaping the rewards of the peace dividend, ten years on from the Good Friday Agreement. But it was a city that was still deeply divided. He worked hard to try to overcome these divisions, and was deeply committed to ecumenism and following in the footsteps of Church leaders who showed courageous leadership at a time when it was lacking in politics. He was respected across the divide, and saw the need for the Church to offer prophetic leadership in communities that have traditionally been excluded.

Service

He knew too that only a peace that was based on justice and faced the difficult moments of the past would endure. He sat side-by-side with the families of the victims of the Ballymurphy Massacre, shot dead by British troops in 1971, when they finally got justice at an inquest 40 years later.

“These families have sat through and listened to the harrowing and graphic evidence about how their loved ones died as well as how they were treated both before and after their deaths.

“These same families can now say with one voice that the truth has been heard. History will forever record the innocence of their loved ones,” he said of the 2021 process.

Dr Treanor was a disciple of the model of the Church espoused by Pope Francis long before the Argentine

Pontiff ascended the Throne of St Peter. He had no time for a Church that was overly self-referential or confined itself to the sacristy. He believed that the Church had to walk alongside accompanying families and communities, as evidenced by his passionate commitment to the Episcopal Commission for Social Issues and International Affairs, the Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs (NIC-COSA) and to the Church's marriage care agency ACCORD. His enthusiasm and commitment to Trócaire showed his deep compassion for those suffering, particularly marginalised communities around the globe.

“His death cuts short what was surely destined to be a blossoming in Church-EU relations”

Though passionately a man of the Second Vatican Council, Noël Treanor had a broad and generous vision of what it means to be Catholic: he surprised some by his warmth and openness to the Latin Mass community in Belfast, but for him it was just another expression of the rich tapestry that makes up the Church.

Pope Francis' choice of Noël as chief Vatican diplomat to the EU was a sign of the confidence the Pontiff has in him. It was a role that played to all of Dr Treanor's strengths, and one in which he was already excelling at just 18 months into the role. His death cuts short what was surely destined to be a blossoming in Church-EU relations.

He will be sorely missed first and foremost by his brother John, his sister Mary, his extended family and wide circle of friends in Ireland and across Europe.

Michael Kelly is Director of Public Affairs for Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland and a former editor of The Irish Catholic.

SEPTEMBER
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A little bit raucous – but not riotous – may not be a bad thing



Dualta Roughneen

Recently caught up with some back issues of *The Irish Catholic* and I was struck by a comment from Senator Ronan Mullen in his *View from the Seanad* on June 28th. In attempting to discern a Christian way to protest, he finds that 'People have been too passive to date of the anti-culture that the Government and agents of the state are pushing at us. Perhaps, more than I used to, I welcome the raucous'.

I admit to enjoying that. Senator Mullen attempts to articulate the need to protest – and I sense he supports a protest that is quite loud – but within the boundaries of Christian standards of respect for others.

I dare say that this is an evolution for the Senator, and others, who are part of the establishment, but as voices that are now crying out from the wilderness. Ronan has been one of the most active, vocal, but also propositional, conservative – dare I say, common sense – voices in the Seanad. And he has found out repeatedly where this gets him. Nowhere, in the main.

Commentators

And it is the same for other commentators and activists who attempt to bring what were once mainstream views into discussion in established Ireland. There is little in the form of critical engagement with ideas or issues. There are no genuine attempts to engage with points made and points raised. The government view is what goes. The Seanad, like the Dail, is loaded and controlled by the whip. Debates are pointless. They have little to no impact unless it is in agreement with the Government agenda. Ministers responding to issues Senators raised don't even bother to answer the questions. They feign outrage and offence.

That's where we are going as a society as well. We are a Twitter society. We hear what we want hear. We talk at cross-purposes. We shout each other down. We are bunkered in our views and driven by agendas. We are protected by our echo chambers from having to critically engage with our ideas. Our opponents are not considered to be just wrong, they are considered to be evil, and their

ideas making them sub-human. The nonsense slogans that 'free speech has consequences' (then it isn't free), that 'speech is violence' are everywhere. Ronald Dworkin once claimed Rights are Trumps – but now offence is the trump card. Whoever claims to be most outraged or horrified holds the key card. And it can be used anywhere, anytime, no matter what the words are, or what the intention was. Micro-aggressions (and you never know what they are) are considered to be intolerable and sacking offences.

Depeche Mode once sang: 'Words like violence. Break the silence. Come crashing in. Into my little world. Painful to me. Pierce right through me.' Replace 'silence' with 'echo-chamber' and they are relevant today. Long-established Christian beliefs are increasingly considered to be 'unsafe' and can't be uttered in the public square. Even in private they will soon be considered hate-speech. And politicians, as well as Christians, have been unable to withstand the primal scream of offence-taken.

Politicians are protected by following that they feel is the respectable *zeitgeist*, the path of least resistance, and forming what they feel are centrist coalitions within an unanswerable system. Pre-election manifestos are meaningless as they are torn up to accommodate other parties, particularly smaller ones with policies and agenda that are supported by only the smallest of votes. The right policy, targeting a few niche, well-to-do, protected localities can make you the most powerful party in government.

“Roderic O’Gorman of the minority party is determined to force his minority will for the betterment of the people the people of Ireland”

And for the rest of the population? Polite complaints and going through the motions of pretend government consultations are rendered meaningless. The pre-referendum family and care consultation was a farce, as discovered by *GRIPT*. The hate-speech legislation consultation was a farce. And continues to be so. Green Party leader Roderic O’Gorman of the minority party is determined to force his minority will for 'the betterment' of the people of Ireland. Micheal Martin and Simon Harris have the power to stop him, but they would have



to sacrifice Minister for Justice Helen McEntee and the others who have publicly defended the indefensible.

It isn't to say this form of governing is not new. Increasingly, it is the conservative positions that are sidelined. And these are most often also Catholic positions. It didn't start in 2012 but the death and its subsequent shameless instrumentalisation, of Savita Hallapanavar ushered in an era of conservative views being dismissed and ignored in Oireachtas circles. The wind was blowing in one direction and has barely paused for breath since.

Lambasted

Who remembers Senator Jim Walshe being lambasted by the horrified for describing the realities of abortion? Senator Sharon Keoghan received the same form of adolescent response when describing the realities of surrogacy. Lucinda Creighton was forced out of Fine Gael for being the most articulate defender of the right to life in government in 2013 when the first legislation that led to the eventual removal of the 8th amendment to the Constitution was introduced – the Orwellian-titled 'Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act'.

Since then, what have we had? Removal of the 8th where those fighting abortion were interrogated in a manner that supporters avoided. The introduction of gay marriage – and the same approach taken. More recently, there has been the Regulation of Assisted Human Reproduction that will allow for embryo testing and destruction and for surrogacy, rendering children commodities. No questioning of the Bill was entertained. Hardly any debate. The almost complete lack of respect for the seriousness of the issues at hand was laughable. If the current government has its way, euthanasia under the name of assisted dying will be intro-

duced come hell or high water. A high quality Joint Oireachtas consultation over months was simply ignored in its content as the Committee members reverted to their pre-consultation positions. No one's views were changed, which renders the question: why bother?

Argument and reason has no place in politics at the moment. This is why getting a little raucous is becoming necessary. Recent events have shown that this is the only course of action that gains any traction. Of course, this is not to advocate for rioting. It is about protesting and getting a little raucous in a Christian manner. Protests don't always go this way. Often they are hijacked by a small number of people who want to see them turn violent and want to provoke a reaction.

“The government has no confidence that consultation will yield any good fruits – or outcomes that it has pre-ordained in advance”

If there were no protests at all on immigration there would be no conversation. Irrespective of your views on the subject, the refusal of government to engage the public has forced the issue underground and manifest in peaceful protest that were co-opted for violence. This is the failing of government, not a failing of protestors.

I worked overseas on refugee programmes for many years in different places. And one important success factor was local consultation with host communities. This practice is good for Cameroon, good for Ethiopia, good for Sudan – but not good for Ireland? The government has no confidence that consultation will yield any

good fruits – or outcomes that it has pre-ordained in advance. The government doesn't believe it can engage local populations of its arguments, in its vague and non-specific talk of moral and international obligations. Hence, there is no consultation. This is a problem of government.

Without genuine consultation, the government is forced to take on authoritarian approaches. The issue of two-tier policing is a live one in the UK right now. It is an issue in the US. It is an issue across Europe. It should be an issue in Ireland as well because, if it is not a factual reality, it has the perception of reality. But it isn't just about two-tier policing. It is about establishment entities – governmental and non- with near-monopolies on 'facts' aligning with political perspectives and insulating government and the arms of State from criticism when it does not act impartially and treat protests from different sides of the track, differently.

Rejection

The rejection of the family and care referendums reminded the government that there are a lot of voices out there that they do not hear. In this instance they were a 75% minority. They chose not to hear them through their perfunctory consultation; they have insulated themselves via 'Citizen's Assemblies' – letting 100 unelected and unrepresentative individuals make policy recommendations, the job they are elected to do.

But then the European and Local elections results have started to bear their fruits. The referenda are forgotten. 'Progressive' legislation is being pulled out of the bonfires now that fires have not been lit.

While the popular view is that the Tories in the UK were ejected from government because of the lack of seriousness that they took in the job for too long, the reality is that

it is because they failed to prioritise the solving of problems, preferring to avoid facing-down issues that were building for years, until it was too late. Too few believed they had solutions that they simply didn't implement.

In Ireland, Simon Harris has made some efforts to move beyond governing by virtue signalling and the promotion of luxury beliefs. The sleeves are up and the walk is fast. But, as in the UK, the problems are mounting and the solutions proffered are knee-jerk and reactionary. When they fail to satisfy, when they fail to deliver, the path of least resistance will be to distract by waving more progressive legislation and revert to form. Unless there is a genuine interest in moving from government by diktat and expenditure, to management and cleaning up the mess of past policy decisions instead of doubling down, the frustrations will continue to build.

As the policy and legislative arena continues to move further from any resemblance to Catholic teaching, when the public square is dominated by a secular outlook that treats minority rights as paramount but minority views – Christian views – as unworthy of consideration, there may be a need to be a little more raucous – within the bounds of Christian decency and respect, of course.

“A little raucous might may be the only way. At least until we start – as Catholics – to vote for less of the same”

Catholics may have to accept we are a minority – a large one – but that does not mean that we can accept being ignored, and vilified while the tradition, legacy and great works that Catholics – both lay and ordained – have contributed to over the centuries be cast to the dustbin of the past and ridiculed in the process.

Politely asking the philistines to desist has not worked so far. Twitter hasn't really worked. Contributing to government consultations hasn't even worked. Voting hasn't even worked when the PR-SVT system allows a minority party to call the tune. Being a Senator hasn't even worked. Being a Government Minister didn't even work. Pastoral Letters don't work. A little raucous might may be the only way. At least until we start – as Catholics – to vote for less of the same.

Pupils want to learn more about religion



David Quinn

This is one of those man-bites-dog stories. A survey has just been released by the Ombudsman for Children which shows that secondary school children want more, not less religion taught in class. This is the precise opposite of what we've been led to believe, which is to say, that secondary school pupils want less religion taught, if any at all.

One of the questions asked of the more than 1,000 pupils who took part in the online survey was what new subjects they would like to see added to the curriculum and 34pc said 'religion, drama and psychology'. This was the top answer while 23pc said they would like more time given to languages, another 23pc said they want more time devoted to 'practical life skills', while only 11pc said computer science and engineering.

Meanwhile, 33% want less time given to Irish, 14% want less time given to science and 12% want less time devoted to history.

Predicted

If you had asked me to guess the results of the survey in advance, I'd have predicted that many would want less time given to Irish alright, but I would also have predicted that a lot of students would also want less class-time given to religion.

Admittedly, they also say they want more time devoted to drama and psychology, but even allowing for that, the result is a surprise, especially given how secular Ireland has become and how few young people attend religious services.

You would like to be able to dig in more to the motivation behind the answers. We are not really told why a lot of pupils want to learn more about religion. Mind you, the survey does give individual answers that were given to the pollsters.

Here is one: "Both children and teachers can be misinformed or uninformed on topics such as gender, sexual



orientation, disability, religion, nationality, culture and race. A better education on these traits would lead to more understanding and less ignorance. Access to a safe space to talk freely should be provided for those discriminated against."

There were a couple of other answers along these lines. Taken at face value, they seem to mean that religion should not really be seen as a subject in itself, of value in itself, but rather as part of a broader education in diversity and multi-culturalism.

“One student said she did not want a concentration on Christianity, but lots of time spent on other religions as well”

It is very hard to say whether these individual answers were representative of the students as a whole. Do they all see religion mainly as a subset of multi-culturalism or do they want to learn about religion because religion is interesting in itself, something that shows us how to live and provides a

“Do students want to learn about religion in a sort of arms-length way, or is there a desire to see if religion has something viable to offer them, something better than consumerism and materialism and careerism?”

sense of meaning and purpose in life? This is why it would have been good for the survey to dig a little deeper into some of the answers.

Notably, one student said she did not want a concentration on Christianity, but lots of time spent on other religions as well.

This could easily mean that what a lot of students want is their schools to teach them a bit about Christianity, a bit about Islam, a bit about Hinduism or Buddhism and so on.

Expected

Schools ought to teach about different religions, but a Christian school can hardly be expected to teach about Christianity as though it is simply one more religion. A Christian school should teach that Christianity is actually true. A Christian school should teach that 'Jesus is Lord'. If it can't do that, it's hard to see the real point of its existence.

Dr John Murray of Dublin City University (and Chair of The Iona Institute of which I am CEO) has written a very useful primer on this topic called 'Will Modern Ireland Tolerate Catholic Schools?', which can be found online. He argues that Ireland will actually become less diverse if faith-based schools cannot teach that their

own faith is true and must all bow the knee to a relativistic approach to religion instead.

“I'm told they have civics classes in which they talk about world religions, you might as well be talking about various species of butterflies. It has little impact on Faith practice”

But again, we don't know for sure what the respondents to the Ombudsman for Children survey have in mind when they say they want more religion taught in school.

Fr Patrick Moore also gets to the heart of the matter in remarks he made to *The Irish Catholic* last week. He said it would be "terrible negligence" to allow children not to receive faith formation regardless of changing demographics.

Pulling no punches, he added: "I think it is absolutely appalling that the young people... have no formation in Faith whatsoever. I'm told they have civics classes in which they

talk about world religions, you might as well be talking about various species of butterflies. It has little impact on Faith practice – it's pretty serious”.

Mindfulness

He thinks 'mindfulness' classes are no substitute for proper faith formation.

Nor does he think we should reduce the number of Catholic schools in the country to reflect the true level of demand for them. On this point, I disagree, because I think by trying to hold on to everything the pressure to water down what is taught in religion class only intensifies.

But I totally agree that we need to be strong about what does get taught in RE class and not make Christianity just one more religion among others.

I regard the push to make

formation in a specific faith somehow unacceptable as part of the same mentality that in the new curriculum for primary schools wants to ditch the aim of "fostering a sense of Irish identity". It appears that the State wants to relativise "Irishness" as well.

The Catholic Church should consider doing a follow-up survey of some kind to the one conducted by Amarach Research on behalf of the Ombudsman. Do students want to learn about religion in a sort of arms-length way, or is there a desire to see if religion has something viable to offer them, something better than consumerism and materialism and careerism? And above all, are some of them willing to believe that Christianity, specifically, might be true after all?

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Has God ever given a gift that is not perfect?

A conversation with Sr Briega McKenna



Renata Milán Morales

In the town of Newry, Northern Ireland, a girl named Briega McKenna entered the convent of St Clare at the age of 15. Religious life was a calling she felt deeply. At just 17, Sr Briega began to experience pain in her hands and feet. What was initially thought to be growing pains turned out to be something much more serious - rheumatoid arthritis. "They put me into casts for two years to see if they could stop the deformity," she shared in a conversation with *The Irish Catholic*. She remained committed to her vocation, making her final vows at 21, despite the debilitating condition.

The story of Sr Briega McKenna could have ended there but her journey took an unexpected turn during a retreat in 1974, a moment that would change not only her life but also the lives of others around the world. "I was at a weekend retreat, and in that retreat, I didn't pray for healing," she said. "I just asked to fall in love with Jesus." This simple plea led to a profound spiritual experience. "There's a difference in knowing all about Jesus and knowing him personally," she reflected. It was during this retreat that Sr Briega asked Jesus to reveal Himself to her.

Pressure

"I felt pressure on my head... my feet straightened, and my elbows," she described. "I jumped up, and all I remember saying was, 'Oh, Jesus, I believe in you.'" This healing marked a significant turning point in her life. "From being a regular Catholic nun... everything in my life changed." The transformation was not just physical. It was a deepening of her faith and an awakening to the spiritual gifts that would define her ministry in the years to come.

Word of Sr Briega's healing and new ministry quickly spread. She began to receive invitations from around the



Sr Briega McKenna on Intercession for Priests at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, England

world, as people wanted to hear her story and receive her prayers. Her ministry was not limited to the laity. It extended to priests. Over the years, Sr Briega spoke at various conferences, retreats, and gatherings, always emphasizing the importance of the priesthood. She met Pope John Paul II seven times, spoke in Rome, and even shared a stage with Mother Teresa. Despite the scandals that have shaken the Catholic Church, Sr Briega's commitment to the priesthood has never stopped. "I never lost the love and the reverence for the priesthood and for what the priesthood is," she said.

“Have I ever given a gift that is not perfect? Now I'm going to show you from heaven's sight what a priest is”

As her healing ministry grew, Sr Briega noticed a troubling trend. Many people were coming to her for help when they should have been turning to their priests. "I started to think, you know,

it's confession," she said. This realisation led her to a critical view of the priesthood, particularly when she saw priests failing to address the issue of sin. It was a moment of frustration that led to a deep encounter in prayer. "I went into the Chapel one day... I was fed up with the priests. What's wrong with the priesthood?" she asked in prayer. The response she received was clear and undeniable. "What do you mean what's wrong with priesthood? Have I ever given a gift that is not perfect? Now I'm going to show you from heaven's sight what a priest is. The priesthood is not a job, it's a call. It's a vocation."

Experience

This experience was a turning point for Sr Briega. She came to understand that the priesthood is a divine calling, not merely a job or profession. "The priesthood is not a job, it's the priesthood of Christ... It's a vocation," she said. Despite the human flaws that priests may exhibit, the priesthood itself is sacred. "I saw Jesus showing them... I'm going to give you power to make my presence alive. Even

though they're sinful, He still gave them such a trust."

“I want you to encourage them and remind them that humility is to magnify and acknowledge my priesthood”

Sr Briega also had a vision of a future crisis in the Church, one that, she believes, has already started. "I saw this image of a vast desert and people were crying... And He said, 'A time is coming when there will be a great famine in the Church... Many people will reject the priesthood... A time is coming, when many priests will see it as humility to deny

“I have met thousands of great priests, thousands here in Ireland. I'd go to as far away as to Papua New Guinea and there's Irish priests. And you go all over Africa, Irish priests. You go all over Australia, Irish priests”

more critical now than ever, especially in a time when the priesthood is under intense scrutiny.

Over the years, Sr Briega's ministry has taken her to countless countries and communities, always at the invitation of local bishops or priests. She has given retreats to thousands of priests across all continents, always with the goal of deepening their understanding of their vocation. "I have met thousands of great priests, thousands here in Ireland. I'd go to as far away as to Papua New Guinea and there's Irish priests. And you go all over Africa, Irish priests. You go all over Australia, Irish priests," she said. Reflecting on her experiences, she acknowledges the challenges that the priesthood faces but remains hopeful and committed to her mission. "All of that is erased by the media".

“I went to minister to some priests in prison to try and get them to see the mistakes they've made and to repent”

In Sr Briega's view, the key to overcoming these challenges is a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. "90% of the crisis... happens because you no longer have this intimacy with Jesus," she said. She believes that prayer and a close relationship with Christ are essential for anyone, especially priests, to live out their vocation faithfully.

One of the more challenging aspects of Sr Briega's ministry has been her work with priests who have struggled, including those accused of serious offenses. "I went to minister to some priests in prison to try and get them to see the mistakes they've made and to repent," she shared. This work, she

my power...A time is coming when many people will wonder why there's no vocations," she told this paper. This famine, she believes, will be spiritual in nature, coming from a widespread rejection of the priesthood. This vision has only strengthened her determination to support priests and encourage them to embrace their call fully.

Dedicated

Despite the many challenges she has faced, Sr Briega remains dedicated to her mission. "He said, I want you to go into the world, and I want you to speak to my priests and bishops... I want you to encourage them and remind them that humility is to magnify and acknowledge my priesthood," she said. This message, she believes, is



Fr Pablo Escriva and Sr Briega McKenna

believes, is vital to the mission of the Church. “We have hundreds of priests who are broken men,” she said. Sr Briega has witnessed the loneliness and isolation that many priests face, which has only strengthened her determination to offer them support and guidance.

Sr Briega has also been a vocal advocate for the youth. In her view, young people are often misunderstood in their spiritual needs. “We underestimate what the youth want,” she said. “They want to commit their lives to Jesus.” While she acknowledges that the number of young nuns has decreased, she pointed out that there are still glowing religious communities. She also highlighted the importance of the vestments in religious life, “The habit doesn’t make the nun, but we do need to give witness.” The author of *Miracles do Happen* explained that, for the youth to approach freely the priests and religious figures, it is important to visibly show their commitment to the Faith they have dedicated their lives to.

Youth

Sr Briega trusts that priests play a crucial role in engaging the youth, particularly through their homilies. “Father, you have 15 minutes to market the best product anybody ever could... You have 15 minutes to market the gospel. It’s alive, it’s real.”

Central to Sr Briega’s message is the importance of understanding the Catholic faith in its fullness, particularly the Eucharist. “Every day I say to them here in Ireland, for centuries, Jesus has been giving us a blood transfusion of His body and blood... It’s a mystery, but it is the same,” she said. This deep reverence for the Eucharist is something she believes is often overlooked or misunderstood, and

she has made it a key focus of her ministry.

“I never imagined that my life would take this path,” she said. “But I know that everything has been part of God’s plan”

In her interactions with people, Sr Briega often encounters those who are drawn to the Catholic faith but feel disconnected from it. “I said to a woman [protestant], you’re on the wrong ship... You have to get back on the ship that Jesus founded,” she recalled. “I have one foot on the ship. I’m in the RCIA,” the same woman shared with Sr Briega months after. Bringing people back to the

Catholic Church is a mission she takes seriously, though she admits it is not always easy.

Grace

As she looks back on her life and ministry, Sr Briega McKenna sees a journey marked by suffering and profound grace. From the young girl who entered the convent at 15, to the nun who was miraculously healed and called to a global ministry, her story is one of faith and dedication. “I never imagined that my life would take this path,” she said. “But I know that everything has been part of God’s plan.”

“Jesus is alive, the gospel is real, and the priesthood is a sacred gift.” It is a message that, shared by Sr Briega, has echoed in thousands of lives and keeps inspiring those who hear it.



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Knock Shrine reminds us of the importance of prayer in 2024 Novena



Renata Milán Morales

Every year, thousands of faithful gather at Knock for the National Novena, making it a central event for spiritual reflection, prayer, and community from August 14 to 22. Fr Richard Gibbons, the Rector of Knock Shrine, in a conversation with *The Irish Catholic*, has offered insights into the Novena's lasting relevance.

The Knock Novena has been a spiritual support for Catholics in Ireland since the late 1970s. It was officially inaugurated by Archbishop Joseph Cunnane, marking a significant chapter in the shrine's history. The Novena was created in response to a profound need for communal prayer and reflection.



Fr Richard Gibbons told this paper about the Novena's significance throughout the years, saying, "Since 1977, the general Novena has been here. Like any other novena, attendance numbers have dropped

over the years. You couldn't maintain the numbers from the 1980s and 1990s. But it's still very well-attended. We get about 130,000 to 140,000 people over the course of the nine days."

These numbers show the lasting interest of the Novena. Despite cultural shifts and changes in religious practice, people continue to gather at Knock, drawn by the promise of spiritual renewal and communal prayer. The event is more than a religious obligation. It's a pilgrimage that reconnects people with their faith and with one another.

Pressures

In today's world, where attention spans are short and the pressures of modern life often distract from spiritual pursuits, the Knock Novena has adapted to meet the needs of contemporary worshippers. Fr Gibbons acknowledges these challenges, saying that the Novena's success lies in its ability to resonate with people across generations.

"Well, it all depends on how people react to it," he explains. "All you can do is organise the Novena in a way

that helps people focus on the importance of taking a little spiritual time out, reconnecting with God through talks, seminars, and workshops. Hopefully, something in there might help people reconnect with prayer if they haven't prayed in a long time. It's about taking a little time out."

“Our attention spans have shortened. You have to adapt and make it fit into people's lives, considering how much time they're willing to engage”

The Novena offers a program that extends beyond traditional prayer sessions. Attendees can participate in seminars, workshops, and guided walks, catering to var-

ious interests and age groups, ensuring the Novena remains accessible and engaging.

Fr Gibbons acknowledges the changes in how people engage with spiritual activities today compared to the past. He notes, "The way people attend nowadays is different. Our attention spans have shortened. You have to adapt and make it fit into people's lives, considering how much time they're willing to engage."

Adaptability

This adaptability is evident in the diverse offerings of the Novena. Beyond the two daily sessions, the event includes a range of activities, from Family Day celebrations to guided prayers, all designed to facilitate a deeper connection with faith. Fr Gibbons emphasises the importance of creativity in meeting the spiritual needs of today's audience, "You just have to be creative,

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Fr Richard Gibbons. Photos courtesy of Knock Shrine



which we are. It's not just the Novena sessions. It's also about our seminars, guided walks, guided prayers, Family Day, and all the various ways to help people connect."

Despite these innovations, the fundamental message of the Novena stays the same, 'the vital role of prayer in the lives of the faithful'. Fr Gibbons stresses this point by saying, "Prayer is important. That's it. Without prayer, we don't have the connection with God that we strive for."

“Prayer helps us realise that there’s more to life than just this world. There’s an eternity we look forward to. Whatever happens in this world isn’t the end of the story”

Prayer is the foundation of the Novena, providing a moment of pause and reflection in a fast-paced world. It's a reminder of the spiritual dimensions of life, offering guidance. Fr Gibbons reflects on the profound impact of prayer, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world realises."

For many attendees, the Novena is an opportunity

to renew their relationship with prayer, whether they are returning after a break or deepening their existing practice. Fr Gibbons explains, "The simple message is that prayer is necessary for our spiritual lives and our lives of faith. The shrine is here to help people with that."

The Novena also encourages attendees to contemplate life's greater mysteries. Fr Gibbons speaks to this profound aspect of the pilgrimage, suggesting that prayer opens the mind to the concept of eternity. "Prayer helps us realise that there's more to life than just this world. There's an eternity we look forward to. Whatever happens in this world isn't the end of the story."

Overshadow

In an era where material concerns often overshadow spiritual pursuits, the Novena reminds attendees of the eternal dimensions of existence and providing a space to contemplate life's deeper meanings. Fr Gibbons captures this sentiment, saying, "The Lord simply wants us to live the best life we can, and he wants us home."

The Novena prayer, composed by Fr Joe Quinn, who later served as a parish priest at Knock, has, once again, been prayed within the walls of Knock Basilica.



Fr Richard Gibbons



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The unity of the People of God, alive within Ireland's Hispanic Mass



Renata Milán Morales

The only weekly Mass celebrated in Spanish in Ireland attracts over 100 attendees, making it a foundation for this community, offering a connection to faith, culture, and community for thousands of people. According to the 2022 census, 48,113 people in Ireland speak Spanish at home, forming a significant part of the country's multicultural structure.

Every Saturday evening, a group of faithful people gathers at this Spanish-language vigil Mass, located in Dublin 1. The congregation includes native Spanish speakers from countries across Latin America and Spain, as well as Irish attendees aiming to improve their Spanish ability. This gathering, led by Fr Atanasio Flórez OP, who has been in Ireland for over a decade, supplies a spiritual home for many.

The community includes young people, families, and single individuals who have made Ireland their home, either temporarily or permanently. "Everyone has their own story and purpose for living in Ireland," explains Fr Atanasio. "Whether it's studies, jobs, or new opportunities... The community has is a human network and a family."

Environment

Fr Atanasio emphasises the importance of building relationships and creating a supportive environment for all members. The community organises various activities, such as retreats, hikes, Bible studies, and informal gatherings at local pubs after Mass. These events offer opportunities for individuals to connect, share experiences, and, most importantly, strengthen their faith.

Aoife Quinn, an Irish native who has found a home in this community, notes the impact of these gatherings. "By attending the Hispanic community, I find it very welcoming and fascinating how we all gather to worship God, to share time with each other, and to connect in such a beautiful, sacred way," she says.

The origin of the Hispanic Mass goes back to over two decades ago, when a small group of friends from Spanish-speaking countries felt the need to come together to share their experiences in a foreign land. They celebrated Mass and shared



Oscar, Gabriela Mota, Fr Frank McAleese, Fr Atanasio and Lili pictured after Mass

stories over tea and coffee, creating a bond that has remained unbroken. "From being a group of families and friends who gathered every Saturday evening, it has developed into an established community of faith with members from every Spanish-speaking country in the world, and even beyond," says Fr Atanasio.

Aoife values the connection between her faith and the rich culture she experiences at the Mass. "I became friends with Hispanic people through other prayer groups, and they introduced me to this Mass," she says. "I have always loved the Spanish language and wanted to immerse myself in their culture. Sharing our faith together here is beautiful for me."

“The Hispanic community in Ireland is that little piece of home. It reminds us that we are not alone”

Aoife's experience highlights the nature of this community. It opens its doors to anyone interested in exploring the rich culture of Spanish-speaking countries. The Mass has grown from a simple gathering of friends to a vital spiritual centre for Spanish speakers across the country.

Moving to a new country is never easy, and the challenges faced by immigrants can be daunting. Language barriers, cultural differences, and even the unfamiliar Irish climate can create a sense of isolation. For many, the Spanish-speaking community at St Saviour's offers a crucial support network. Gabriela Castro, who has attended the Mass since 2013, told *The Irish Catholic*, "When



we first come to a country, we're in a vulnerable position," she says. "The Hispanic community in Ireland is that little piece of home. It reminds us that we are not alone."

Newcomers

Gabriela's words show the importance of such a community for newcomers. The sense of belonging and understanding found within this group helps individuals to go through the complexities of life in a foreign land. "Having a community where they speak the same language as you, a community that offers support is priceless," she adds.

However, while the community offers a refuge for its members, it also recognises the

importance of integrating into broader Irish society. Gabriela highlights the significance of participation in the wider community, stating, "The biggest challenge we face is integration. Participation of Hispanics in the broader community is key to being part of the diversity and inclusion of citizenship."

“Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together”

This emphasis on integration aligns with the teachings of



the Catholic Church, which celebrates the richness of diversity within its global community. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks to this in paragraph 814, "Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together." This principle is alive within Ireland's Spanish-speaking community.

Initiatives

The community's commitment to social responsibility is also clear in its initiatives to support one another. Whether it's offering practical assistance to newcomers or engaging in charitable actions, the community lives out its faith in different ways. "Our community lives faith," Gabriela explains.

"We go in search of Jesus, but we are also concerned about the needs of others."

“I find the choir and musical component to the Mass very fruitful. It adds to the calming spiritual aspect of the message of God”

One of the most outstanding aspects of the Spanish-language Mass is its musical component. The choir, composed of talented individuals from various backgrounds, adds a layer of spiritual enrichment to the service. For many attendees, the music

is a significant part.

Aoife expresses her appreciation for this element, sharing, "I find the choir and musical component to the Mass very fruitful. It adds to the calming spiritual aspect of the message of God."

Optimistic

Fr Atanasio acknowledges the challenges that lie ahead but is optimistic about the community's future. "It is not easy for everyone to leave their own country and settle in a foreign land," he reflects. "But in packaging your luggage, you put in dreams and those challenges you imagine finding on your way of a migrant life. The toughest ones are those you never imagined meeting. Thank God we are in Ireland, the Land of a hundred thousand welcomes."

He also highlights the necessity of a Hispanic community in Ireland, especially

for those newly arrived. "The Hispanic community is constantly encouraged to join their local parishes and fully integrate into Irish culture and faith," he explains. "But a mother tongue is the language of hearts and souls, and faith is celebrated from heart to heart. Having a Hispanic community is a wonderful opportunity, mostly for new arrivals, to walk the first steps of faith and life among their own people."

“I find it so wonderful to see a community of mainly Spanish speakers in a Catholic church in Ireland because it’s so inclusive”

This community is more than just a congregation. It

is a family united by shared beliefs and a commitment to one another. As Gabriela notes, "Our community is a testament to the power of faith and fellowship. We are more than just a congregation. We are a family."

Wonderful

Aoife also finds belonging within the community. "I find it so wonderful to see a community of mainly Spanish speakers in a Catholic church in Ireland because it's so inclusive," she says. "And isn't that the whole idea of our belief as Catholics -inclusion?"

Fr Atanasio concludes, "Coming from every single Spanish-speaking country and being together as a community of different backgrounds, we hold and live the same faith, and we grow because of it, learning one from another."



Members of the Hispanic Community pictured after Mass with Fr Atanasio. Photos courtesy of the Hispanic Community



Fr Atanasio Flórez and Fr Eduardo pictured with members of the Hispanic Community



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Fr Willie Doyle's heroism heralded in Knock



Brandon Scott

The first annual Willie Doyle Pilgrimage took place in Knock last Sunday as devotees to the cause were presented with the opportunity to witness the military chaplain to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers' personal items in the flesh and further advance his cause for canonisation. Attendees gathered to recall the Jesuit's heroic ministry which routinely involved attending to wounded soldiers and administering the Last Rites during their final breaths.

Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan presided over Mass in the Basilica while the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, and the Sacrament of the Sick were offered for the congregation. The Association also hosted an exhibition of Fr Doyle's relics, along with other information about his life and devotional materials. Members of the Association and the Postulator, Fr John Hogan ocds, engaged with curious pilgrims, many of whom were encountering the relatively short but remarkable life of Fr Doyle for the first time.

Life

Commenting on the special dimension to the day, Dr Patrick Kenny, President of the Willie Doyle Association, told *The Irish Catholic* that the day was a fantastic celebration of Fr Doyle's legacy and resulted in a wider audience exploring the Association's mission and works.

"It was a fantastic day. There was a lot of interest in Fr Willie Doyle and there were people who came from quite far afield because it was a Fr Willie Doyle pilgrimage. There were people who came from Cork and Antrim specifically because of Fr Willie. There was also some publicity in the US about the event as well. I gave a talk about Fr Willie and there was a good interest in that.

"What we see is that when people come to know Fr Willie, they are very attracted by his personality,

his heroism – especially that heroism in war. There were many people queuing up to get blessings with his crucifix, taking prayer cards and coming to look at the other items that we had belonging to him on display."

When asked if he's noticed an uptick of devotees to the cause since the opening of Fr Doyle's cause for canonisation, Dr Kenny said that people have reported "significant healings" to the Association which are currently being investigated.

"We get prayer requests from all around the world. It's not something limited to Ireland – it's something of worldwide scope," he said. "We get reports of alleged healings, particularly within the last couple of years. These are potentially significant healings and we're continuing to look into them and investigate them."

Fr Willie Doyle SJ was born on 3 March 1873, 151 years ago, to an affluent Catholic family in Dublin. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1891. He taught in two Jesuit schools, Clongowes Wood College and Belvedere College, and was ordained in 1908. He then volunteered as a chaplain in WW1.

Bishop Tom Deenihan, the Bishop of Meath, opened the cause for the beatification and canonisation of Fr Doyle at a ceremony in the cathedral of Christ the King on Sunday 20 November 2022.

The Fr Willie Doyle SJ Association, led by Dr Pat Kenny, have dedicated themselves to promoting Fr Doyle's cause. They have established a website that allows devotees to publish testimonies crediting Fr Doyle for interceding for them during periods of trouble or distress.

Since his death on 16 August 1917, which occurred when he was administering the Last Rites to a stricken soldier, he has developed a reputation for sanctity and intercessory power.

Many draw attention to his sense of humour, positive attitude, and upbeat disposition which supported the soldiers to whom he was chaplain during dark and dangerous times in the trenches.

i The Fr Willie Doyle Association's website can be accessed at <https://williedoyle.org/>



Fr John Hogan, Diocese of Meath, Diocesan Postulator for the Cause of Fr Willie Doyle, blessing Joseph Kenny, Teresa Kenny, Lucia Kenny and Gemma Kenny with Fr Doyle's crucifix in Knock. Photo: Dr Pat Kenny.



A display of Fr Willie's personal items that were exhibited in Knock.



Fr Willie Doyle. Photo: Father Willie Doyle Association.



Devotees of Fr Willie Doyle's cause during the opening of his cause for canonisation in Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar in November 2022. Photo: John McElroy.



Bishop Tom Deenihan leads prayers during the opening of Fr Willie Doyle's cause for canonisation.

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Out&About

Killaloe's Diocesan pilgrimage to Lough Derg



DONEGAL: Bishop Fintan Monahan pictured with pilgrims from Killaloe Diocese in Lough Derg August 5-7



CHELSEA: Dame Sarah Nagle (Westminster), Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster Jim Curry, Dame Karen Singarayer (Westminster), Chevalier Thomas Kilduff (Cavan) and Chevalier Santana Luis (Westminster) at the Allen Hall Seminary Garden Party, Chelsea.



CHELSEA: Dame Sarah Nagle (Westminster), Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster Jim Curry, Dame Karen Singarayer (Westminster), Chevalier Thomas Kilduff (Cavan) and Chevalier Santana Luis (Westminster) at the Allen Hall Seminary Garden Party, Chelsea.

IN SHORT

Young pilgrims from Irish dioceses join Medjugorje Youth Festival

Young pilgrims from the Dioceses of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, and Clonfert have joined tens of thousands from around the world at the 35th International Youth Festival at the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Medjugorje. This annual event, renowned for its spiritual gatherings, commenced with an opening Mass that connected pilgrims in worship and reflection.

The second day began with an early morning walk, where the pilgrims prayed the Rosary on the way to the Apparition Hill. The highlight of the day was an evening Mass attended by 50,000 young people, followed by a special procession of the statue

of Our Lady and adoration.

On Saturday evening, the young pilgrims took part in a moving ceremony of light, symbolising Jesus as the light in the darkness of their lives. The ceremony was a powerful reminder of faith and hope.

The final day of the festival began with a 5:00am climb up Cross Mountain Krizevac. During the ascent, the pilgrims meditated on the Stations of the Cross, led by Fr. John Gerard Acton, who invited them to reflect on the passion of Jesus and its significance in today's world. The festival concluded with a Mass, adoration, and song, leaving the participants inspired and spiritually enriched.

This pilgrimage offered the young attendees an unforgettable opportunity to deepen their faith, connect with others, and experience the global Catholic community in a profound way.

Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre celebrates its annual meeting

On Saturday August 3, 2024, the Westminster Section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem - Lieutenancy of England and Wales held its annual Summer Mass and Garden Party at Allen Hall Seminary, Chelsea.

Allen Hall serves as the principal seminary for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster and is situated on the site of the house that was once occupied by St Thomas More who explicitly denied Parliament's authority to make Henry VIII the supreme head of the Church in England.

On July 6, 1535, More was executed on Tower Hill. His final words were, "I die the

King's good servant, but God's first."

On May 19, 1935, Thomas More was canonised by Pope Pius XI, being declared the patron saint of statesmen/women and politicians on October 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

The famous 'Mulberry Tree' under which he used to think, pray and discuss matters with King Henry VIII is visible still in the grounds of Allen Hall.

A life of service

Fr Ignatius Fennessy OFM, a dedicated Franciscan friar for 80 years, passed away on August 6, 2024, at the age of 98. Born in Waterford in 1926, he served in various friaries in Ireland and St Isidore's College, Rome. Fr Fennessy spent 40 years at Dún Mhuire in Killiney as an archivist and librarian, sharing his expertise with scholars worldwide. He is survived by his twin sister, Mary, and many family members.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



KILDARE: Jacob Morgan, Rebekah Comerford, Katie and Dominic Fillion, members of Youth 2000 at Maynooth Pontifical University College on July 19.



KILDARE: His Beatitude Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa, OFM, The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem meeting with representatives of Catholic youth groups at Maynooth Pontifical University College on July 19.



SPAIN: Meitheal, a youth Leadership peer ministry programme in the Kildare and Leighlin Diocese, is pictured posing in front of the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral after finishing the Camino on August 6



DUBLIN: Rathmines Parish Young Adult group on a retreat on August 2-4, led by Eoin McCormack, parish catechist, in Manresa House, Clontarf.



KILDARE: Representatives of Catholic Youth groups (Alpha Youth, Youth 2000, Mary Immaculate College, Salesian Community, Dublin Diocese, Maynooth Parish) meeting with His Beatitude Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa, OFM at Maynooth Pontifical University College on July 19.



Waterford: A group of parishioners from St Joseph's Church (SMA) Wilton, Co. Cork, who recently visited Mount Melleray Abbey, Co. Waterford, on a three-day retreat. Included in the photo is Br Seamus guest master at the abbey.

ANTRIM

Sunday candlelit Mass with Taizé chant. Re-launching Sunday, August 18 at 6 pm in St Patrick's Church, Belfast. Tea and coffee afterwards in Belfast Jesuit Centre. All welcome.

ARMAGH

Adoration takes place each day in St Malachy's Church from after Mass (8.30am on weekdays) until evening (7pm on weekdays and 5pm on weekends). Please, sign the attendance sheet in the church.

CARLOW

The Community Café in An Gairdin Beo happens every Wednesday during August from 10.30am to 12.30p.m. The usual garden vegetables will also be available. There is no parking available.

CLARE

The Corofin & Belclare Parish main centenary celebration will now take place at the 10am Mass on Sunday, September 1. All are welcome to a cup of tea in the School Hall after Mass. The priests & religious are also invited to lunch in the Parochial House, Corofin at 2pm on September 1.

CORK

Mary's Day organised by Legion of Mary will happen at St Mary's Church, Popes Quay, on September 7 from 11.30am to 4pm. Speakers include Fr Colm Mannion, journalist Ruadhan Jones and member of the Legion of Mary, Barry Dillworth. Donation of €5 to attend.

DUBLIN

Visit the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis in St Patrick's Catholic Church, Blackcourt Road, Blanchardstown, D15 WC90 on September 10-11. On September 10, the reception of the relic starts at 10am. That day will have talks, Mass and adoration. On the following day, Mass at 9.05am and farewell at 1pm.

The conference 'Fan the Spark' for young adults aged 18-40 will happen on August 24 at De Montford House, Morning Star avenue, Brunswick from 9.30am to 5.30pm. The event will include a tour of Frank Duff's house,

talks, food and social and Mass. The ticket costs €15. For more information contact deusetpatria@gmail.com.

FERMANAGH

Blessed Sacrament (Adoration) takes place every Wednesday in St Ninnidh's Church. It begins after 10.00am Mass and will end at 11.30am.

LAOIS

Alanon Family Group for family, friends and anyone affected by someone struggling with alcoholism meets every Thursday night at 8pm in Portlaoise. More information contact 086 870 6017.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock on Sunday, August 11 at 6pm.

MEATH

Adoration of the Eucharist happens every Friday in Athboy Church, after the 9.30 Mass. New adorers are always welcome.

ROSCOMMON

'Elphin Diocese's Morning Pilgrim Walk' from Castlereah to Knock will take place on Sunday, August 18. Gathering will start at 6.30am at St Patrick's Church and register at Church porch. For more information see elphindiocese.ie/walk-2knock

SLIGO

There is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St Colmille's Church, Rathcormack, every Sunday from 4-5pm. Everyone is welcome.

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.30pm and prayer meeting at 8pm. All welcome to come and pray.

WATERFORD

Commemorating the 39th anniversary of the apparitions, from August 16-24, Melleray grotto outside Cappoquin in West Waterford, is celebrating with a week of prayer and remembrance. Everyone is welcome.



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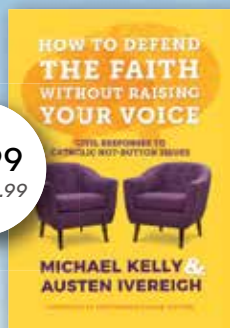


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Our 'Gospel truths' are largely sourced and redacted from the Hebrew Bible. 'The Death of Jesus the Jew' demonstrates how the Passion Narratives have little to do with 'Gospel truth'.



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Hugh MacMahon

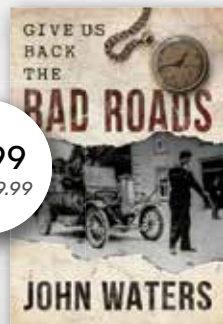
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Fr Pat Collins

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Give Us Back the Bad Roads
John Waters

With his departure from Irish journalism, the author finds himself writing to his father as he looks back over the arc of his life and his escape from the ideological cesspit of Dublin.



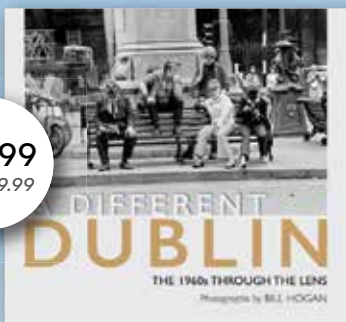
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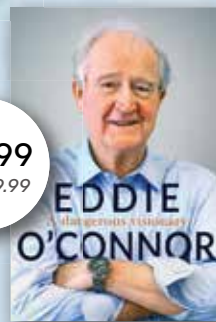
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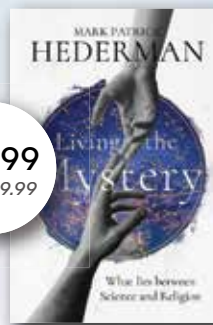
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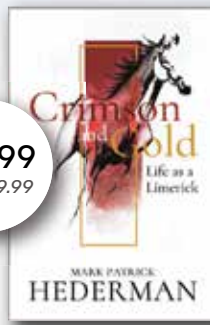
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Vatican urges Iran to avoid ‘in any way’ escalating conflict in Middle East



Iranians celebrate on a street in Tehran April 14, 2024, after Iran's direct attack on Israel. Photo: OSV News/Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via Reuters



Courtney Mares

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's secretary of state, spoke on the phone on last Monday morning with Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, in a conversation that underlined the need for dialogue, negotiation, and peace.

According to Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni, the cardinal “expressed the Holy See’s serious concern about what is happening in the Middle East, reiterating the need to avoid in any way the widening of the very serious ongoing conflict and preferring instead dialogue, negotiation, and peace”.

Retaliation

The August 12 phone call by the Vatican secretary of state to congratulate the Iranian president on beginning his term in office occurred as the threat of a retaliatory attack by Iran looms.

President Pezeshkian reportedly reiterated Iran’s core stance on the need to prevent war and bloodshed and promote global peace

“The Latin Catholic Archdiocese of Tehran-Isfahan has six parishes and approximately 2,000 Catholics”

and security to Cardinal Parolin but he said Iran has the right to defend itself against any act of aggression.

“Lift its blockade and dispatch aid to the war-ravaged people through consultations with international forums and human rights organisations”

He commended Vatican’s support for the establishment of peace and stability in the world and called for its more active role to end Israel’s crimes in Gaza, lift its blockade and dispatch aid to the war-ravaged people through consultations with international forums and human rights organisations.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has ordered a guided missile submarine to the Middle East amid reports that Iran may attack within days, The Guardian reported Monday.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said in a statement on his official website that revenge is “our duty” following the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said Sunday that it is on high alert for potential retaliation from Iran and its proxies. The United States, Qatar, and Egypt have been working to broker an agreement to end the Israel-Hamas war.

Iran

President Pezeshkian assumed office in Tehran at the end of July after winning Iran’s runoff presidential election as a reformist candidate promising to reach out to the West. As president, Pezeshkian is the top elected official and second in rank to Iran’s supreme leader, who wields power as commander-in-chief and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Iran is one of the least Catholic countries in the world. Conversion from Islam to Christianity can be a crime meriting a sentence of more than 10 years of imprisonment.

The Latin Catholic Archdiocese of Tehran-Isfahan has six parishes and approximately 2,000 Catholics. Archbishop Dominique Mathieu serves as the current archbishop of Tehran-Isfahan.

“Search for peace will extinguish strife, love will overcome hatred, and vengeance will be disarmed by forgiveness”

At Pope Francis’ most recent general audience, the Holy Father said he was following the situation in the Middle East with great concern

“I reiterate my appeal to all the parties involved that the conflict does not spread and that there may be an immediate cease-fire on all fronts, starting with Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is very serious and unsustainable,” Pope Francis said on August 7.

“I pray that the sincere

search for peace will extinguish strife, love will overcome hatred, and vengeance will be disarmed by forgiveness,” the Pope continued.

Relations

President Pezeshkian is shaping his cabinet at a time of an increased risk of escalation of the conflict in Gaza into a broader regional war, after the recent killings of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas’ leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut drew threats of retaliation against Israel.

Following the death of hardline President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May, President Pezeshkian won a snap election last month by promising to improve ties with the world, promoting a pragmatic foreign policy, and to ease social restrictions at home.

President Pezeshkian’s proposed cabinet lineup requires lawmakers’ approval and parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that parliamentary

“Relations between the Vatican and Iran began during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, when the Persian embassies visited the Pope”

commissions were reviewed on Monday last.

Tensions between Iran and the West have increased over Tehran’s fast-advancing nuclear programme and its threats to “harshly punish” Israel over the assassination of Haniyeh.

“The two countries have had formal diplomatic relations since 1954, since the pontificate of Pope Pius XII”

Tehran and Hamas accuse Israel of carrying it out, though it has not claimed or denied responsibility for the killing.

Early relations between the Vatican and Iran began during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, when the Persian embassies visited the Pope. The two countries have had formal diplomatic relations since 1954, since the pontificate of Pope Pius XII.

Relations have been maintained during the Iranian Revolution. Iran has a large diplomatic corps at the Vatican, with only the Dominican Republic having more diplomats accredited to the Holy See.

Pope confirms desire to visit China, says criticisms are 'always helpful'



Elise Ann Allen

In a new interview with the Jesuit province of China, Pope Francis expressed his desire to visit the country and spoke of his admiration for the faith of the Chinese Church and culture, as well as various aspects of his papacy, including criticism and opposition. Asked by Jesuit Fr Pedro Chia, who conducted the interview, about potentially visiting China, the Pope said, "yes, I really want to."

Should he visit, Francis said he would visit the Marian shrine of Sheshan and meet with the bishops and the People of God, "who are faithful, they are faithful. It is a faithful people who have gone through so much and remained faithful." Asked if he had a special message to Chinese Catholic youth, the Pope said, "Always a message of hope."

Tautological

"It seems tautological to send a message of hope to a people who are masters of waiting. The Chinese are masters of patience, masters of waiting, you have the 'virus of hope.' It's a very beautiful thing," he said. Noting that he used to work with a group of Chinese immigrants while still archbishop of Buenos Aires, the Pope told his interviewer that the Chinese "are descendants of a great people, a great people." "From the noodles of Marco Polo until today, you are a great people. Don't waste this heritage, pass it on with patience, this heritage of great people you have," he said, saying he has a statue of Our Lady of Sheshan, Mary Help of Christians, in his private apartment.

The interview with Pope Francis took place May 24, the feast day of Our Lady of Sheshan, and was conducted by the communications office for the Jesuit province in China. It was published August 8 on the province's YouTube channel.

At the conclusion of the 16-minute video was a list of acknowledgements, including special thanks to the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific; Jesuit Cardinal Ste-



Pope Francis sits down for an interview with Jesuit Fr Pedro Chia, director of communications for the Jesuit's Chinese Province, in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 24, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

phen Chow of Hong Kong; Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, undersecretary of the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education; Jesuit Fr Fernando Azpiroz; Jesuit Fr Elton Fernandes, and Victoria Wu.

“You have to wait, endure, and often correct oneself, because behind some resistances there can be a good (constructive) criticism”

During the interview, Pope Francis also spoke about his daily routine, challenges and crises he's faced, and how he handles criticism and opposition, even from within the Church. Speaking of the criticism he faces, Pope Francis said it at times hurts, but that he believes "Criticisms are always helpful. Even if they are not constructive, they are always helpful, because they make one reflect on one's actions." "Then, consulting

helps me a lot, consulting and listening," he said, saying oftentimes when there is resistance, "you have to wait, endure, and often correct oneself, because behind some resistances there can be a good (constructive) criticism".

Francis lamented that not all of the criticism he faces are against him personally, but are also "against the Church", pointing, for instance, to a small group of faithful who only recognise papal authority up to Pope Pius XII.

He recalled how a Spanish-language magazine recently showed a list of some 22 groups that currently believe the papacy is vacant, but said these groups are small, and voiced his belief that "over time they will integrate (into the Church)".

Delegation

Pope Francis also spoke of the importance of collaboration and delegation in getting through his busy schedule, saying he depends a lot on the prefects of Vatican dicasteries and delegates a lot of tasks, "because if one

tries to do everything alone, things don't work out. Know how to delegate". "Collaboration, listening, consulting," are all essential to getting the job done, he said.

Francis said he has received many moments of consolation throughout his papacy, and that "the Lord shows his presence through consolation." However, he also said there have been several significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of wars that continue to rage, including the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Myanmar.

“A crisis, in a way, is like a labyrinth, you walk and walk and never seem to get out. You emerge from a crisis by rising above”

"I've always tried to resolve them through dialogue, and when this doesn't work, with patience. And always with a sense of humour," he said,

saying that for more than 40 years he has recited daily the prayer of St Thomas More, "Grant me, Lord, a sense of humour".

Asked how he handles moments of crisis, Pope Francis said, "crises have to be overcome with two things: First, you emerge from a crisis by rising above, like from a labyrinth. A crisis, in a way, is like a labyrinth, you walk and walk and never seem to get out. You emerge from a crisis by rising above." "Second, you never get out alone. You get out with help or through companionship. Letting yourself be helped is very important, isn't it?" he said.

Discernment

He also offered advice to those considering joining the Jesuit order, telling anyone considering the option to "enter into discernment" and to find someone to accompany them along the way. The Jesuit order, he said, must never lose "the missionary spirit. It's a missionary order...The difficulties and resistances that St Ignatius faced at the beginning were conflicts with people who looked inward

and lost their missionary spirit. It's interesting".

“The pope said his dream was for a Church free from “the plague of clericalism and the plague of spiritual worldliness”

Referring to the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, the Pope said he depends on them daily, and that the most important aspect of the exercises, for him, is "to look for accompaniment in listening first before deciding. To have someone accompany me so I don't make mistakes. Discernment is important".

Asked how he envisioned the Catholic Church 50 years from now, the Pope said his dream was for a Church free from "the plague of clericalism and the plague of spiritual worldliness," two things he frequently condemns as harmful to the life of the Church. Pope Francis also said the best advice he could give to his successor was to pray, "because the Lord speaks in prayer".

World Report

IN BRIEF

Nicaragua: 7 priests leave country and arrive 'safely' at the Vatican

● Rosario Murillo, wife of dictator Daniel Ortega and vice president of Nicaragua, announced that seven priests left the Central American country and have arrived "safely" at the Vatican.

Without further explanation, Murillo announced that on August 7 "seven Nicaraguan priests left Nicaragua for Rome and arrived safely and were received by the Holy See".

The audio communiqué was aired by Channel 4 Nicaragua and other pro-government media. Murillo mentioned the priests' departure twice in her nearly 13-minute news briefing, without specifying their names.

Since July 26, a total of nine priests have been detained in the dioceses of Matagalpa, Estelí, and Juigalpa, to be later held in the Interdiocesan Seminary of Our Lady of Fatima in Managua.

South African bishops warn of growing ISIS threat

● Amid a background of mounting terrorist threats in neighbouring nations, Catholic bishops in southern Africa have sounded an alarm that governments don't seem sufficiently concerned by ISIS-related military and financial operations in the region.

The concerns were expressed during an August plenary assembly of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, which brings together prelates from Botswana, South Africa and

Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland).

"Concerning is the recent news about the presence and financial operations of individuals linked to ISIS in South Africa. I have not heard much reaction from the government about this; perhaps it deems it insignificant," said Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of Mthatha in South Africa, president of the conference, during his opening address at the August 5-9 gathering.

Holy Land's top prelate urges prayers for peace

● As the death count from a deadly Israeli strike on a refugee school in Gaza continues to climb, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem has issued an appeal for prayer on the upcoming feast of the Assumption of Mary. In an August 10 statement, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa lamented that several months after the beginning of the war in Gaza, "the suffering caused by this conflict and the dismay at what is happening are not only unabated".

Rather, the suffering experienced by the people, he said, seems "to be fuelled again and again by hatred, resentment and contempt, which only intensify the violence and push away the possibility of finding solutions", he said.

Brazilian bishop praises Family Pride Parade held last weekend

● The first Family Pride Parade took place on Saturday, August 10, the day before Father's Day in Brazil, on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro. The parade is an initiative of the National Network in Defence of Life and Family and aims to celebrate the sacredness of the family.

The archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Cardinal Orani João Tempesta, emphasised in a video that "it is very important for those who seek to be a family, and especially a Christian family, to come together and show the world how we want to live and be". For him, the Family Pride Parade "is our freedom of expression".

Southport stabbing victim (9) remembered at Catholic funeral

● Family and mourners of Alice da Silva have gathered for the first of three funerals to come following the Southport stabbing tragedy.

Alice da Silva Aguiar's parents Sergio and Alexandra were joined by 300 people at St Patrick's Catholic Church on 11 August. Among those in attendance were the paramedics, police officers, and firefighters who tried to save her life.

After the service, Alice's family released a photograph of the nine-year-old eagerly waiting to attend the Taylor Swift dance class on 29 July. Her mother Alexandra described Alice as their "perfect dream child" during a tribute to their daughter.

Political strife in Venezuela and a 'reticent' Pope

Many people in Venezuela are currently paying particular attention to what the Pope and representatives of the local church are saying. While the position of the Venezuelan Church leaders is clear, Francis is being diplomatic.

For more than a week now, Venezuela has been experiencing another serious national crisis following the announcement of President Nicolas Maduro's highly questionable election victory. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated again at the weekend against the official result and demanded proof from the government.

Meanwhile, the EU is calling for an independent review, while the USA and some Latin American countries are even recognising the conservative opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez as the winner of the election.

In the midst of this crisis, many people are paying particular attention to the country's Catholic Church, which has repeatedly spoken out publicly. A letter signed by Cardinals Baltazar Porras and Diego Padron received a great deal of attention in the Latin American media. However, there is no official confirmation or denial as to whether the letter is genuine.

The letter states that the Venezuelan people have



Pope Francis waves to visitors gathered in St Peter's Square at the Vatican to pray the Angelus August 11, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

voted overwhelmingly against the incumbent president and in favour of a change in the government's course. It is absurd to declare the incumbent Maduro the winner of the election despite this.

The Venezuelan Bishops' Conference had previously spoken out: "We join all those inside and outside Venezuela who are calling for a review of the ballot papers with the active and full participation of all relevant political actors", it said in a statement.

Pope Francis also made

a statement. In his address at the Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square on Sunday, the Argentinian spoke out against all forms of violence and called for dialogue for the benefit of the Venezuelan people. The Pope's reticence, not only on this topic, has been criticised on social networks and by parts of the opposition in Venezuela.

Even before the controversial election victory, Venezuela's former interim president Juan Guaido demanded in an interview with the Catholic News Agency (KNA): "With all due

respect, I have to say that we expect more from Pope Francis".

According to Mr Guaido, who was Maduro's best-known opponent at times, the Vatican should publicly back clerics who are in direct conflict with dictators more. In fact, the local church does valuable social and humanitarian work to alleviate people's suffering. "But I am sure that on a political level, the Vatican can do much more for the oppressed peoples," said the opposition politician living in exile.

US philosophy professor recently converts to Catholicism

David Solomon, a longtime professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame and founder of what is now the de Nicola Centre for Ethics and Culture, recently entered the Catholic Church, according to a former student writing for Word on Fire.

Solomon, who arrived at the university in 1968, came into the Catholic Church earlier this year in what Word on Fire's Christopher Kaczor called "a culmination of a life of study [and] a

consolation to his many friends", as well as "an intensification of the union with his wonderful wife, Lou", who became Catholic at the same time.

In a lecture several years ago, Solomon said that he started at the university "not only not a Catholic" but also "as innocent of any real understanding of Catholicism as one could be".

"My view of all things Catholic, such as it was, grew out of a combination of ignorance and prejudice in about equal

measure," he said.

The philosophy professor retired in 2016 and holds the title of professor emeritus at the school. At the time of Solomon's retirement, Notre Dame law professor Rick Garnett wrote that it was "impossible to overstate the importance of [his] contributions not only to the formation and education of thousands of Notre Dame students but also to the university's Catholic character and mission".

Polish shrine shattering records

Poland's most popular shrine could receive a record number of pilgrims in 2024, according to local media.

The shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, at Jasna Góra Monastery in southern Poland, received as many as 4.5 million pilgrims a year before the COVID pandemic, when annual visitors

dropped below 1 million.

But pilgrim numbers have bounced back since 2020, rising to 2.5 million in 2022 and 3.6 million in 2023.

The Polish Catholic news agency KAI reported that the shrine could be on course to set a new visitor record this year.

The shrine's press office

said that since the pilgrimage season began in May, 112 walking groups consisting of 14,000 pilgrims had arrived at the site containing the revered icon of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa.

More than 160 cycling groups with a total of 6,000 pilgrims have also visited the shrine, which has played

a vital role in Polish history since the monastery was founded in 1382.

Groups of foot pilgrims from all over the country will converge on Czestochowa for the August 15 feast of the Assumption. Some pilgrims cover almost 400 miles over several weeks, sleeping in tents.



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Calm amid the chaos



A Venezuelan woman living in Colombia reacts during a protest at the Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá, Colombia, August 3, 2024, held in support of the opposition amid the disputed Venezuelan presidential election. Photo: OSV News/Nathalia Angarita, Reuters.

Brazil and Nicaragua cut ties over President Ortega's persecution of clergy

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva cut the diplomatic ties between the two countries with the mutual expulsion of their ambassadors to Managua and Brasília, carried out over the past week.

Long-time allies who take part in international left-wing organisations like the São Paulo Forum – that gather Latin American progressive and socialist parties – Ortega and Lula had been freezing the relations between their nations over the past few months, after the Nicaraguan leader refused to talk to the Brazilian president about the

persecution of priests in the Central American state.

According to a story published in April by Brazilian newspaper *O Globo*, Pope Francis and other high-ranking Church officials like Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, had been asking Lula to mediate the crisis with Ortega. The subject was discussed during Lula's visit to Rome in June of 2023, and on other occasions through phone calls and letters.

This gained special relevance after Bishop Rolando Alvarez of Matagalpa was detained in August of 2022. He was kept under custody

with no charges for over 100 days, until he was formally accused of conspiracy and remained in prison until January of 2024, when he and other clergy members were released and sent to the Vatican.

Bishop Alvarez, like other priests and bishops, publicly criticised the government's wrongdoings. He condemned Ortega's regime for the brutal repression during the 2018 wave of protests, when thousands of Nicaraguans – many of them young – took to the streets and staged large demonstrations against the Sandinista administration.

During Bishop Alvarez's

time in prison, Lula attempted to discuss the issue with Ortega, apparently during a visit of Parolin to Brazil. But the Nicaraguan leader did not even answer the phone. The Brazilian leader then ordered the ambassador in Managua to avoid taking part in several public events, including the July 18 Sandinista Revolution. Ortega allegedly became enraged with the Brazilian diplomat's attitude and then decided to expel him.

In 2023, 151 priests and 76 sisters were expelled from the country – and the number continues to grow.

US diocese pauses 'healing services' ministry due to 'canonical concerns'

With no explanation other than "canonical concerns have been raised", the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, and a local ministry it supports that holds national "healing services" have agreed to pause the ministry's operations until the concerns have been adequately addressed.

The Diocese of Des Moines announced on August 7 that the diocese and the local Prairie Fire Ministries have agreed to pause all of Prairie Fire Ministries and the ministry of affiliate organisations

until the canonical concerns have been adequately addressed.

"Canonical concerns have been raised to the Diocese of Des Moines and Prairie Fire Ministries Leadership regarding the exercise of ministry within the Prairie Fire Ministries organisation," the Diocese of Des Moines said August 7.

"Due to the nature of these concerns, the Diocese and Prairie Fire Ministries have mutually agreed to pause all Prairie Fire ministries and the ministry of affili-

ate organisations until these concerns have been adequately addressed."

Founded by Tim Jameson and approved by Bishop William Joensen in 2021, Prairie Fire Ministries has ministered to people from across the country through its monthly healing service, which it describes on its website as "offering them a transformative encounter with the living God".

Vatican approves India's Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health

● The Vatican has approved devotion at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health in Vailankanni, India, the site of reported apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the 16th century.

One month before the September 8 feast day of Our Lady of Good Health in India, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) confirmed in a letter to Bishop Sagayaraj Thamburaj of Thanjavur that the action of God is present at the shrine.

"Through the centuries, Mary has continued to act in this place," DDF prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández wrote. "The millions of pilgrims who travel here out of faith, and the many spiritual fruits that are produced at this shrine, make us recognise the constant action of the Holy Spirit in this place."

Animal rights activists plead with Pope Francis to end bullfighting

● Two animal rights activists connected to PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) temporarily interrupted Pope Francis' Wednesday audience in Vatican City, calling on the 87-year-old Pontiff to take action against bullfighting.

The female activists, wearing white shirts with the slogan "Stop blessing corridas", jumped over a barrier that separated a seating area from the

central walkway within the Paul VI Hall and waved banners that read "*la corrida e peccato*" ("bullfighting is a sin") before the Pope and approximately 6,000 pilgrims.

PETA claims that tens of thousands of bulls are killed each year in a sport it describes as a "bloodbath" that celebrates animal cruelty.

Cardinal Gregory stresses need for unity at Outreach LGBTQ conference

● Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the archbishop of Washington, DC, speaking at the 'Outreach' Conference for Catholics who identify as LGBTQ, stressed the need for unity in what he called "an extraordinary if not risky moment for our Church and country".

In his homily, Gregory said that "the presence and the pastoral needs of our LGBTQ sisters and brothers may often be viewed as a volatile topic, but they must be faced with sincerity and genuine compassion".

He called the conference "an opportunity for people to listen to one another in love, knowing full-well that we might see another's position as difficult to understand and to accept." He went on to share his hope that the event would advance the goal of making the Church "stronger, holier, and more welcoming".

By presiding over the Saturday Mass in Georgetown's Dahlgren Chapel, Gregory became the first cardinal to participate in the conference.

Vatican announces theme for World Day of Peace 2025

● The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has announced the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the 58th World Day of Peace 2025, which will be celebrated on January 1: "Forgive Us Our Trespasses, Grant Us Your Peace".

The theme, the dicastery explained, "manifests a natural consonance with the biblical and ecclesial meaning of the jubilee year and is inspired in particular by the encyclical letters *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, especially around the concepts of hope and forgiveness, the heart of the jubilee" called by Pope Francis for the year 2025.

According to the Vatican office, the theme represents "a call to conversion, not oriented toward condemnation but toward reconciling and being reconciled".

Letter from Rome

Vatican loosens stance on food, water for patients in vegetative state



Elise Ann Allen

Last week the Vatican's Academy for Life issued a new text on a series of bioethical issues, including the provision of food and hydration for patients in a vegetative state, which marks a modest departure from the Vatican's previously held position on the issue. Published Thursday by the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV), the volume is titled, *Small Lexicon on End of Life*, and covers a variety of bioethical issues.

According to an introduction by Italian Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the PAV, the volume has the aim of "reducing at least that component of disagreement that depends on an imprecise use of the notions implied in speech". Namely, Archbishop Paglia referred to "the statements that are sometimes attributed to believers and which are not rarely the result of clichés that have not been adequately scrutinised."

Dignity

Among other things, the 88-page text reaffirms a blanket "no" to euthanasia and assisted suicide, but it also shifts toward a new openness from the Vatican when it comes to so-called "aggressive treatment," specifically the requirement to provide food and hydration to patients in a vegetative state.

In section 13 of the volume, which deals with this issue of food and hydration, a reference is made to the recently published declaration of human dignity from the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), *Dignitas Infinita*. In *Dignitas Infinita*, the DDF reiterated the need to avoid "every aggressive therapy or disproportionate intervention" in the treatment of patients with serious illnesses.

Likewise, the PAV's new volume also invoked the July 2020 letter *Samaritanus Bonus*, which among other things mentioned "the moral obligation to exclude aggres-



Pope Francis greets Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, during an audience with members of the academy, who were having their general assembly at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

“Doctors, the text said, are ‘required to respect the will of the patient who refuses them with a conscious and informed decision, even expressed in advance in anticipation of the possible loss of the ability express oneself and choose’”

sive therapy” treatment plans. The volume noted that the food and hydration prepared for vegetative patients are prepared in a laboratory and administered through technology, and thus do not amount to “simple care procedures”.

“When food and hydration are suspended, death is not caused by the illness but rather by those who suspend them”

Doctors, the text said, are “required to respect the will of the patient who refuses them with a conscious and informed decision, even expressed in advance in anticipation of the possible loss of the ability express oneself and choose”.

They noted that for patients in a vegetative state, there are some who argue

that when food and hydration are suspended, death is not caused by the illness but rather by those who suspend them. This argument, the PAV said, “is the victim of a reductive conception of disease, which is understood as an alteration of a particular function of the organism, losing sight of the totality of the person”.

“This reductive way of interpreting disease then leads to an equally reductive concept of care, which ends up focusing on individual functions of the organism rather than the overall good of the person,” the volume says.

Technology

To this end, it quoted from a November 2017 speech from Pope Francis to members of the PAV in which he said that technical interventions on the body “can support biological functions that have become insufficient, or even replace them, but this is not equiva-

lent to promoting health”.

“Therefore, an extra dose of wisdom is needed, because today the temptation to insist on treatments that produce powerful effects on the body, but which sometimes do not benefit the integral good of the person, is more insidious,” the text said, continuing the quotation of Pope Francis.

“Even in a situation where there’s moral certainty that a patient will never recover, it was not permissible to withdraw food and water”

The PAV insisted that this position does not conflict with the position previously taken by the DDF on the issue of food and hydration,

which was issued in 2007 in response to bishops in the United States on the moral obligation to provide food and water to patients in a vegetative state, even through artificial means.

In their brief response, the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith held that even in a situation where there’s moral certainty that a patient will never recover, it was not permissible to withdraw food and water, as doing so would effectively allow the person to die of dehydration or starvation.

Suspension

The position taken in the PAV’s new document marks a shift toward a new openness from this position, however, in their volume, the PAV insisted their stance does not mark a departure from the 2007 decision and, to this end, cited “ethically legitimate” reasons for suspending treatment included in the

“The position taken in the PAV’s new document marks a shift toward a new openness from this position, however, in their volume, the PAV insisted their stance does not mark a departure from the 2007 decision”

then-CDF’s response.

Among other things, the PAV noted that the then-CDF said it was possible to suspend treatment when it was no longer seen as “effective from a clinical point of view,” meaning when bodily tissues are “no longer able to absorb the administered substances,” and when it causes the patient “an excessive burden or significant physical discomfort linked, for example, to complications in the use of instrumental aids”.

In a bid to illustrate continuity in the Vatican’s position on the topic, the PAV volume said this last point from the 2007 response refers to the question of proportionality in the administration of treatments, and it argued that the DDF’s new document *Dignitas Infinita*, published in April, “moves along the same lines”.

“Dialogue is possible among those with differing views of the issue”

The PAV’s new “lexicon” suggested that *Dignitas Infinita* be interpreted in a “long-term and broad-based perspective”, and it notes that the DDF text “does not elaborate an overall reflection on the relationship between ethics and the legal sphere”.

On this point, “the space therefore remains open for the search for mediations on the legislative level, according to the principle of ‘imperfect laws’”, the PAV said. In terms of legal mediation on the issue, the PAV said, “In addressing the issues evoked by individual words, this lexicon takes into account the pluralistic and democratic context of the societies in which the debate takes place, especially when it enters the legal field”.

“The different moral languages are not at all incommunicable and untranslatable, as some claim,” the PAV said, insisting that dialogue is possible among those with differing views of the issue. By allowing the space to be kept open for research on legislative mediation on the topic, Archbishop Paglia in his introduction said that “in this way, believers assume their responsibility to explain to everyone the universal (ethical) sense disclosed in the Christian faith.”

Letters

Letter of the week

Keep your lamps lit

Dear Editor, I have just finished reading the history of the Catholic Church, and how the early Christians and Christianity in general, survived the persecutions of the first 300 years, is a testament to the words of Jesus to St Peter, "On this rock I will build my Church".

The Church of Christ has been under attack since its foundation, whether by open persecution, deliberate misrepresentation, undermining,

or peoples enacting laws that allow evil to prosper. Christianity is the most persecuted religion worldwide.

Why, you might think, is a religion that proclaims that all of us are made in the image of God. Why is it that a religion that urges charity, meekness, humility, chastity, temperance, mercy, compassion and forgiveness, so ruthlessly oppressed. It appears that we humans do not like to be reminded of our little

weaknesses, or where we fall short. We like our autonomy, the cult of the individual.

So we Christians should understand, in spite of our good news and the good message we want to share, that there are sections of society who do not or will not listen. The undermining of the good news continues here in our own country, subtle at times, with no offence intended, by the way.

The removal of religious objects from some schools is a good example of pushing religion to the margins. This does not mean that we should

be any less committed to our faith, but rather it should strengthen our resolve to be a presence in the market place.

As we read in St. Luke's Gospel, 3:2-12, keep your lamps lit, stoke up the fire of faith, especially at the present time when it's a chilly time in this country, for Catholics, As Jack Charlton used to say about the other team, "keep them under pressure", whether the good news is welcomed or unwelcomed.

Yours etc.,

Donnchadh Mac Aodha,
Roosky, Co. Leitrim.

In need of repentance

Dear Editor, When we find pro-life columnists and politicians question the action of Fr Burke in refusing Communion to a politician who voted to bring in abortion, it reminds us again that many high profile people did little to foster a movement on the ground.

The high profile people don't own the pro-life movement, and too often they seemed to betray it by playing by the rules

of the metropolitan media.

Fr Burke was not excluding the politician from Communion, just indicating that he himself was not, in his situation, going to give it.

Surely his argument about the need to repent, and then show up at the altar rails, is sufficient justification.

Yours etc.,

Gerald O'Carroll
Ballylongford, Co. Kerry



A life centre instead of an abortion centre

Dear Editor, The figure of 10,033 abortions in Ireland in 2023 is alarming and deeply saddening. What drives so many mothers to abort their babies?

The Government shell out millions of taxpayers' euros every year to pay doctors to carry out life ending procedures and on abortion pills. Not one cent goes towards the promotion and funding of alternatives to abortion, a key part of Government proposals

put to the electorate prior to the 2018 abortion referendum.

As residents of Cavan, if we break an arm we are sent to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda for treatment. If we want an abortion why should the same referral system not apply?

A life centre in Cavan dedicated to providing comprehensive support for both women with an unplanned or crisis pregnancy and women and their families suffering from post-abortion

trauma would clearly demonstrate the Government honouring its commitment to help mothers to choose life for their babies.

On the other hand, the opening of another abortion centre in Cavan will demonstrate that the focus of the Government is solely on increasing the size of the abortion service in Ireland.

Yours etc.,

Anna O'Donoghue,
Mullahoran, Co Cavan.

Strictly a private matter

Dear Editor, The contrasting viewpoints of Fr John McCallion and Deacon Frank Browne on the controversy following Fr Gabriel Burke's refusal of Holy Communion to a known Irish pro-abortion politician raises many questions (IC Letters Page, August 1).

On occasions I have seen communicants refused Com-

munion in the hand and on other occasions refused Communion on the tongue. I have also seen communicants wear what many might consider inappropriate sloganised clothing as they approached the sanctuary.

An issue I have not seen addressed is how the most recent incident came to be

captured on video. Over recent years I have seen several televised Masses attended by very senior Irish politicians and on most occasions I have seen well known pro-abortion politicians offered and receiving the Body of Christ, including by bishop celebrants.

Reception of the Body of Christ should surely be a per-

sonal act and I would like to see it respected as such. It might be helpful that wherever Mass is broadcast every effort should be made to ensure that the distribution of Communion to members of the congregation is given the utmost privacy.

Yours etc.,

Alan Whelan,
Killarney, Co. Kerry.

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.

From the mouths of babes

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children Office marked its 20th anniversary this year with a survey – and given their focus, they decided: "who better to ask than those we work for, the children of Ireland, how that future should look and what we, as defenders of children's rights, should be prioritising?"

Yes, it is useful to listen to children and youth. But there has been a growing fetishisation of 'children & youth' voices as being omniscient in their opinions on their lives. Youth organisations are particularly guilty of this – but do they ever really take the youth voices on board? Only when it suits pre-existing positions.

But any discerning adult should remember: all adults were children too. All adults have 18 years of experience of childhood. They can look back with experience and see what they have learned since their follies of youth. But it is not easy to say that without upsetting people.

That said, it is useful to understand what children are saying about being young today. But it is important to look at the representativeness of the survey. Only 257 of all the secondary schools were invited – we don't know if the 257 were randomly selected or not. Only 23 of the schools responded. And then 1,036 students self-selected to respond. Selection bias is already problematic at each stage. It is not a randomly sampled survey.

But even notwithstanding that, some of the results are interesting. Only 39% of students said the voting age should be reduced to 16. It demonstrates an element of maturity. Climate Change only comes 10th on a list of issues of importance for youth on 12%, with LGBT issues 15th with 6% importance. These areas adults in power assume are priorities of youth yet – if the survey is to be believed – these youth are not as obsessed as our politicians.

36% of respondents said they experience discrimination – yet we are never told what type of discrimination (age?sex?race?height?hair colour?) and under what conditions. It leaves more questions than answers if the question was posed as stated.

The report states: "When it comes to the scourge of bullying, it is truly upsetting to see that almost half (47%) of our children have experienced bullying and this holds steady across all age groups." It is equally disturbing to read the report claiming 'our' children for its own, or for the nation. Parents are almost absent from the survey - only mentioned twice where they need more education and -maybe- fall under the group 'other adults'.

40% state they would make use of a therapist at their school if they had access to them, with 52% saying they would be unlikely to. Abigail Shriers' latest book *'Bad Therapy: Why the Kids Aren't Growing Up'* ends with a warning, for parents, but pupils alike about the iatrogenic risks of therapy: "They watch a rising tide of adolescent suffering and present themselves as its solution. Most of them ought to be fired on the spot."

The majority of children surveyed (59%) want less emphasis on exam results and 75% want less homework. Some things never change. Yet in hindsight, many adults change their views on the values of homework and the discipline of exams. Structure is never appreciated in its time. In relation to online safety, no respondents suggested giving up their smartphones – or were not given that option – the most effective intervention, though 19% refer to laws on when children can access phones.

When asked what new subjects they would like to see, Religion, along with Psychology and Drama are top of the list of subjects students would like to see brought in to the curriculum – but the breakdown or overlap between the three is unclear.

Surprisingly, for many, would be that the majority of respondents are happy with the level of religious emphasis in schools. 40% would like to see no change, and 17% would like to see more. On the face of it, this is positive – or at least a back-handed compliment, given that the recent GRACE Report highlighted the substantive gaps in religious education in schools. It may be a case of teenagers saying the amount is right because it is quite limited.

At the same time, only 3% would like to see religion removed from the curriculum. This is a definite positive to take from the report as cultural commentary often gives the impression that religion as a subject is a waste of children's time and an imposition from a bygone era (Irish is the least liked, a perspective that will likely change with hindsight).

Sr Nabilah Saleh and the Gaza tragedy



Luca Attanasio

Catholics and more generally Christians in the Holy Land have long since begun to raise the tone of condemnation of Israel's brutal methods against the unarmed civilian population. Very harsh, in this vein, is the position of the Holy Land Justice and Peace Commission: "As Catholics of the Holy Land who share Pope Francis' vision for a peaceful world - stated the body in early July in the aftermath of yet another bombing of civilians - we are outraged that political actors in Israel and abroad are using the 'just war' theory to perpetuate and legitimise the ongoing war in Gaza." The Catholic body's pronouncement is echoed by another, this time from Caritas Internationalis, which, by the word of Alistair Dutton, the general secretary, after specifically condemning the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bombings adds, "After nine months of war the atrocities continue. Nowhere is safe in Gaza". On July 7, after the bombing of the Holy Family school in Al-Remal, Gaza, operated by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate also made its voice heard: "The Holy Family School and the surrounding area in Gaza - reads a note - were devastated by a raid, resulting in the tragic loss of hundreds of innocent lives. The school served as a sanctuary for displaced families, offering them a place of safety amidst the chaos... The Latin Patriarchate condemns in the strongest terms attacks on civilians or any belligerent action that fails to ensure that civilians remain outside the scene of combat".

The devastation of Gaza, of the individuals who live there and of places, even the most traditionally inviolable such as schools, hospitals, and refugee camps, continues at such a sustained and undisturbed pace that it no longer seems to make the news. Between early and



mid-July 2024, raids took place on various refugee camps in Khan Younis, Bureij and Nuseirat, resulting in hundreds of deaths including, of course, many children.

“When I left, the situation was very tough because the shelling never stopped, not even for a day”

The Irish Catholic, in order to better understand the situation of the entire population of Gaza and, specifically, that of Christians, reached by phone Sr Nabilah Saleh, an Egyptian religious from the Rosary congregation in Jerusalem. She lived in Gaza for 13 years and served as principal of the Rosary Sisters school in the north of the Strip. She currently lives in Beirut, forced away from Gaza by a complex health situation.

Sr Nabilah what situation did you leave and what news are you hearing from Gaza?

"I left Gaza at the end of April, just before Israel conquered Rafah on the Palestinian side. Unfortunately, as there are no functioning health facilities I could not have stayed because of my health, but my heart remains there and I look forward to going back. When I left, the situation was very tough because the shelling never stopped, not even for a day. In every place, even in those places that are considered safer

and calmer people are terrified. Nowhere in Gaza is safe, absolutely nowhere.

“Israeli soldiers have returned to the Zaitoun neighborhood and others in the northern area where most of the remaining Christians live”

Christians have stayed

in the north and are living daily uncertainty combined with enormous needs, there is a lack of food, water, electricity, now nothing comes to the north. When I left, I thought it couldn't get any worse but I can tell you for sure, from the news I constantly get from our parishioners and volunteer teachers, that now the situation has worsened, in the last two weeks (between beginning of July and mid July, ed.) Israeli soldiers have returned to the Zaitoun neighborhood and others in the northern area

where most of the remaining Christians live."

“What is the point of bombing schools, hospitals? It means snatching away any possible future for our people, even when this war ends”

Recently the Holy Family School in Al-Remal, run by the Latin Patriarchate, was bombed while in early November your Rosary School was destroyed by an Israeli raid. By now there are no safe havens and places such as schools and hospitals are being struck regardless....

"It is a frightening aspect, in the Holy Family school there were almost 400 refugees, about 45 people

“We had 1,250 students, a school chock full of life. Now we don't hear from our kids, we know that about 20 of them died with their families. It was a beautiful experience of coexistence between a minority of Christian kids and a majority of Muslims, which now has been all physically and morally destroyed”

“The veil has been unveiled, human rights are gone in Gaza, you can no longer see the dignity of the person, there is no respect. I ask those in charge to empathise with our situation for a moment: what if those starving children were their own?”

died or maybe more. In November, on the other hand, they literally razed our school to the ground. At that time there was nobody there because from the 11th day since the outbreak of the war our whole area was declared ‘red’ and we had to close, we all had to leave. When the situation calmed down a little bit, I went to see and it was all destroyed. I felt a pang in my heart, what is the point of bombing schools, hospitals? It means snatching away any possible future for our people, even when this war ends. Just think that we had 1,250 students, a school chock full of life. Now we don’t hear from our kids, we know that about 20 of them died with their families. It was a beautiful experience of coexistence between a minority of Christian kids and a majority of Muslims, which now has been all physically and morally destroyed.”

Speaking of bombed schools and inaccessibility, is the academic year off for all Gaza students of all grades?

“Since October 7, all schools have been closed and never reopened. All our students in Gaza have missed the year. And I don’t know what will happen because the fire does not cease and we don’t know what will happen for the next school year. There are teachers in our communities from our schools, who voluntarily do some lessons and activities to distract and vent the children, some do psychological support. The activities are also difficult because the presence is reduced, only the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, the parish priest of the Holy Family Church and his deputy, Fr Gabriel and Fr Yusuf, remained”.

How is it possible to continue to hope in such a situation?

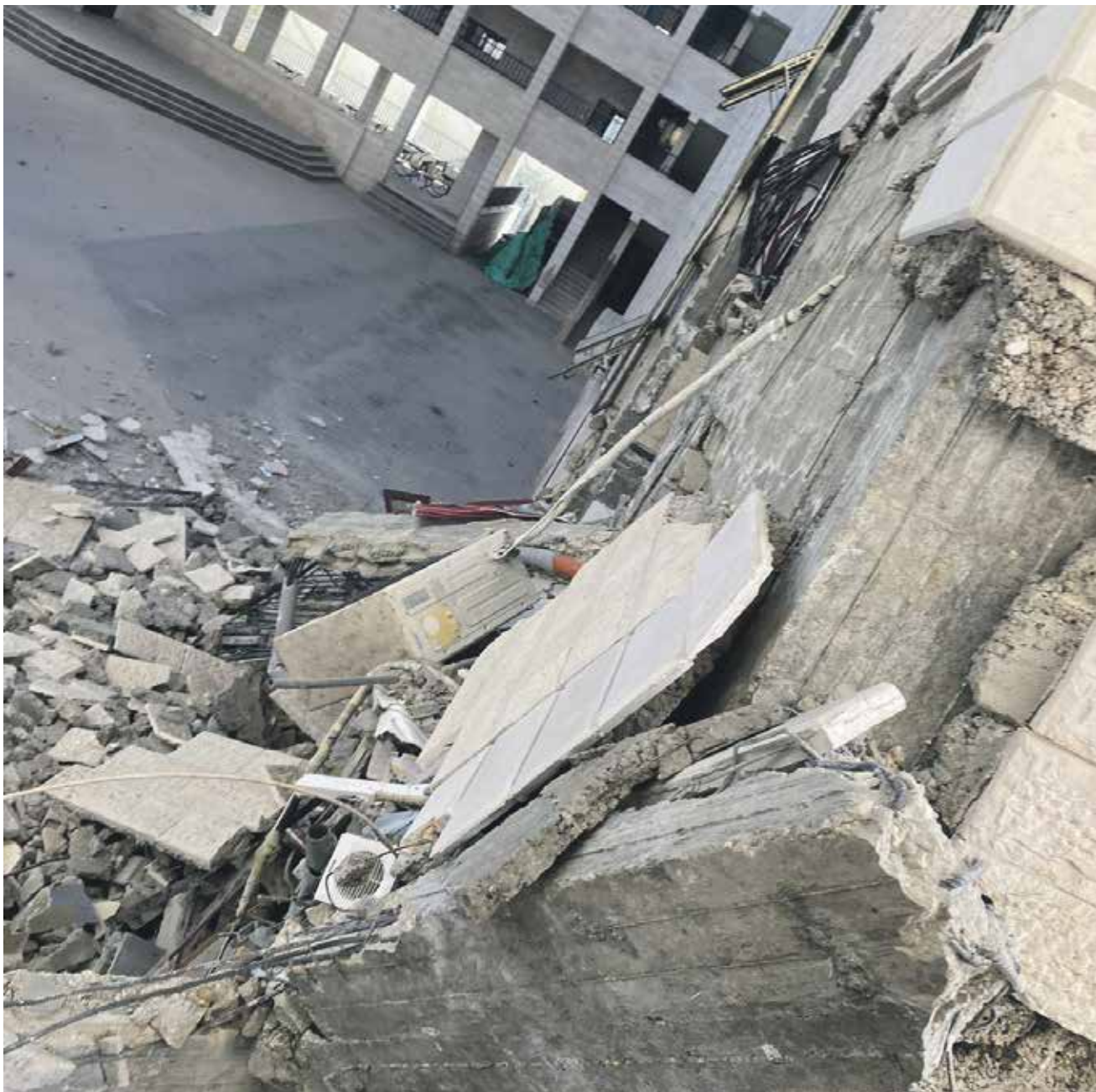
“When there is God, the God of history, there is always hope. The hope is that soon people will be able to go back to thinking about the

future, to breathe the air of the future, now you can’t breathe it at all. I have been there for a long time and I know what the population suffers, you always live in tension, you don’t know if there will be a tomorrow, and that was even before the war. I can tell you, though, that the most beautiful experience I have had with the Christians in Gaza is to see that they still have so much faith.”

“What if those old people dying of hardship, those fathers, those sisters, those brothers...were their own? This is my cry, and I hope the Lord will grant tenderness to hardened hearts to say enough is enough, people are out of breath”

What is your appeal to the world’s Christians and the international community?

“I hope that in Europe you can make your cry heard by your rulers, make it understood that what is happening in Gaza is the death of human rights, and for those who refer to rights this should be unacceptable. The veil has been unveiled, human rights are gone in Gaza, you can no longer see the dignity of the person, there is no respect. I ask those in charge to empathise with our situation for a moment: what if those starving children were their own? What if that mother who lost her whole family, what if those old people dying of hardship, those fathers, those sisters, those brothers...were their own? This is my cry, and I hope the Lord will grant tenderness to hardened hearts to say enough is enough, people are out of breath”.



Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, August 15, 2024

Start at home, but don't stay there

Laure Kelly Fanucci

Page 32



Into the desert with St Anthony of Egypt

The invitation that Jesus gave to the rich young man in the Gospel of Matthew to “go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” is one that has echoed throughout the history of the Church. While the wealthy young man in Scripture walked away from the call, it has been taken up in dramatic ways by holy men and women over the centuries. In the fourth century, St Anthony of Egypt, known as the ‘Father of all monks,’ answered this call in a simple and literal way. After hearing this Gospel read in Church, he sold the wealth he had inherited from his parents and eventually went into the desert of Egypt for a life of prayer and fasting.

The Life of St Anthony of Egypt, written by St Athanasius, his contemporary and friend, tells the story of this great Desert Father.

Temptations

After selling all his possessions, St Anthony began a life of poverty, prayer and hard work near his village and conquered temptations from the devil. When many marvelled at the great discipline he subjected his body to in order to be on guard against temptation, he quoted the words of St Paul that “when I am weak, then I am strong,” saying that “the fibre of the soul is then sound when the pleasures of the body are diminished.”

St Anthony went into the desert, training himself in solitude and warring against demons, and inspired others to follow in his footsteps. They did to such an extent that St Athanasius wrote, “the desert was colonised by monks.”

St Anthony exhorted the monks, “as though making a beginning daily let us increase our earnestness. For the whole life of man is very short, meas-



St Anthony offers a timeless challenge, says Laretta Brown

ured by the ages to come, wherefore all our time is nothing compared with eternal life.”

He spoke eloquently to them of the things they must aspire to in this life in order to prepare for the life which is to come. He pointed out that every man leaves behind his possessions at the end of his life anyway and called on them to give up possessions in this life voluntarily for the sake of virtue.

“St Anthony repeatedly gave the powerful exhortation to ‘live as though dying daily’ as a way to order one’s life toward its final end”

“Let the desire of possession take hold of no one, for what gain is it to acquire these things which we cannot take with us,” he said. “Why not rather get those things which we can take away with us - to wit, prudence, justice, temperance, courage, understanding, love, kindness to the poor, faith in Christ, freedom from wrath, hospitality? If we possess these, we shall find them of ourselves preparing for us a welcome there in the land of the meek-hearted.”

St Anthony repeatedly gave the

powerful exhortation to “live as though dying daily” as a way to order one’s life toward its final end.

“As we rise day by day we should think that we shall not abide till evening; and again, when about to lie down to sleep, we should think that we shall not rise up,” he said. “For our life is naturally uncertain, and Providence allots it to us daily. But thus ordering our daily life, we shall neither fall into sin, nor have a lust for anything, nor cherish wrath against any, nor shall we heap up treasure upon Earth. But, as though under the daily expectation of death, we shall be without wealth, and shall forgive all things to all men.”

Demons

Despite battles with demons in his life that could have provided ample content for horror movies today, St Anthony spoke of the forces of evil with great contempt, telling Christians that they need not “fear their deceitful displays. For they are nothing and quickly disappear, especially if a man fortify himself beforehand with faith and the sign of the cross.”

“You know the treachery of the demons, how fierce they are, but how little power they have,” he said. “Wherefore fear them not, but rather ever breathe Christ, and trust Him.”

He advised that a communication is from the Lord if “your fear is immediately taken away and in place of it comes joy unspeakable, cheerfulness,

courage, renewed strength, calmness of thought” for “joy and a settled state of soul show the holiness of him who is present.”

“But if at the appearance of any there is confusion, knocking without, worldly display, threats of death,” he warned, “know that it is an onslaught of evil spirits” from which arise “fear in the heart, tumult and confusion of thought, dejection, hatred towards them who live a life of discipline, indifference, grief, remembrance of kinsfolk and fear of death, and finally desire of evil things, disregard of virtue and unsettled habits.”

“Do not be astonished if an emperor writes to us, for he is a man; but rather: wonder that God wrote the Law for men, and has spoken to us through his own Son”

Many valued St Anthony’s wisdom and would travel to receive his guidance. “He was able to be of such use to all,” St Athanasius wrote, “that many soldiers and men who had great possessions laid aside the burdens of life, and became monks for the rest of their days. And it was as if a physician had been given by God to Egypt. For who in grief met Antony and did not return rejoicing?”

When the emperor Constantine wrote St Anthony seeking advice, he did not reply immediately and told the monks, “Do not be astonished if an emperor writes to us, for he is a man; but rather: wonder that God wrote the Law for men, and has spoken to us through his own Son.”

He wrote to Constantine, advising him “not to think much of the present, but rather to remember the judgment

that is coming, and to know that Christ alone was the true and Eternal King.”

What can the modern reader learn from this reluctant advisor to emperors, fearless foe to demons and disciplined hermit? St Anthony offers a timeless and clear challenge to use our time on Earth to perfect virtue rather than store up treasure that will be left behind. The stories of his confrontations with demons, rather than being the stuff of nightmares, illustrate the joy and love that come from God driving out the chaos and confusion that come from the forces of evil.

Influential

The work was hugely influential in spreading the concept of monasticism in Western Europe through its Latin translations.

Pope Benedict XVI, in a 2007 General Audience, quoted *The Life of St Anthony of Egypt*, saying that “from whence into Spain and into Gaul, how into Rome and Africa, was the man heard of who dwelt hidden in a mountain, unless it was God who makes his own known everywhere, who also promised this to Anthony at the beginning? For even if they work secretly, even if they wish to remain in obscurity, yet the Lord shows them as lamps to lighten all, that those who hear may thus know that the precepts of God are able to make men prosper and thus be zealous in the path of virtue.”

The lives of St Anthony, St Athanasius and countless other saints, Pope Benedict concluded, show us that “those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them.”

Laretta Brown is culture editor for OSV News. Follow her on X (formerly Twitter) @LarettaBrown6.

Holiness is simple



Bishop Robert Reed

Here's a question for you. Is holiness complicated or is it simple?

Jesus tells us that holiness shows itself in simplicity, in acts such as giving a cup of cold water to a little one (Mt 10:42), or even in just sitting quietly in trust, like lilies of the field (Mt 6:28).

But if holiness is so simple, why does it seem so elusive? This is a critical question for people of Faith because we are universally called to holiness. In *Lumen Gentium*, we read, "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love."

Well, 'the perfection of love' is complicated, too, right? Or is it? We rarely plan on loving, after all. We slip into it as a natural thing, an extension of goodness - our own and what we see in another. But perhaps the simple desire to be loving encourages simple holiness.

Simplicity

Recently, I was blessed to observe (and experience) the simplicity of lived holiness during a visit to the Abbey of Our Lady of Ephesus in Gower, a small town in the middle of corn fields near Kansas City, Missouri. There, Mother Abbess Cecilia Snell and the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Apostles live, pray, work, and provide generous hospitality to all comers. I had arrived to give the sermon. I received far more than I expected.

Of course, the absolute highlight of my visit was the Mass, accompanied by the storied, angelic music that is foundational to these Benedictines. It was

“The Benedictines need no such sign. According to their Rule, they receive everyone as Christ - with great joy, gratitude and simplicity - and their home seems to shimmer with holiness”



Auxiliary Bishop Robert P. Reed of Boston visiting with the Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles at the Abbey of Our Lady of Ephesus Photo: OSV News

as if I had been transported beyond that space and time to something eternal, and that was, for me, a form of Eucharistic revival!

“The sisters unearthed her grave only to discover that - quite astoundingly - Sr Wilhelmina's un-embalmed remains were incorrupt, and her habit still pristine”

That evening, I was invited to pray Compline,

the final prayer of the day, with the sisters, and I took a seat next to the mortal remains of their foundress, Sr Wilhelmina Lancaster.

Pristine

In May of 2023, seeking to transfer her body to a shrine within the abbey's oratory, the sisters unearthed her grave only to discover that - quite astoundingly - Sr Wilhelmina's un-embalmed remains were incorrupt, and her habit still pristine though covered with moss. Such a phenomenon is rare. The Church recognises that such things can occur in nature, but also considers that sometimes incorruptibility may be viewed as a

sign of holiness and divine favour in preparation for the resurrection of the body. An investigation is ongoing, but this event only adds to the otherworldliness of this beautiful place on Earth.

“They know their space on Earth to be a gift from God, that their time is likewise a gift, all of it meant to be shared. And as a guest, I have never experienced such generosity”

Benedictine hospitality forms the women of Ephesus. It is part of their spiritual DNA to make room for a guest. The Rule of St Benedict requires it, but so does the context of their life together. They know their space on Earth to be a gift from God, that their time is likewise a gift, all of it meant to be shared. And as a guest, I have never experienced such generos-

ity and joy in a setting of such simplicity. To talk and laugh with the sisters, their golden retriever at my feet while I enjoyed chocolate ice cream made in-house that very day (and with milk from their own cows) was the essence of simple joy and holy Christian fellowship.

Answer

I gleaned an important answer to our question at the abbey in Gower. That holiness IS simple - that indeed, a holy life is marked by simplicity grounded in love of God! One need not be called to the monastic life to find this, either. Our lives, our homes, our parishes, our communities can likewise embrace such a path if we hold on to frequent prayer and remember the presence of Jesus - who promised to remain with us, always. They can become places where we recognise signs of God's goodness, and how we have been made in the likeness of God, and so we live as Christ, giving ourselves as a gift to one another.

In my grandmother's modest dining room there

was a plaque bearing these words, "Christ is the head of this home, the unseen guest of every meal, the silent listener to every conversation."

“God is holy, and he is never outdone in generosity”

The Benedictines need no such sign. According to their Rule, they receive everyone as Christ - with great joy, gratitude and simplicity - and their home seems to shimmer with holiness. Perhaps that is why they are bursting at the seams with vocations and establishing three (three!) foundations with scant funds and complete trust. Because God is holy, and he is never outdone in generosity.

How simple is that?

i Bishop Robert P. Reed is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, pastor of St. Patrick and Sacred Heart parishes in Watertown, Massachusetts, and president of the CatholicTV Network. He is chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Communications.

Start at home, but don't stay there



Laura Kelly Fanucci

“We can see ever more clearly the deep and desperate need that our world has for the love of Christ. May we not keep it locked up at home but go out to share what we have been given”

You may recognise these often-quoted words from St Teresa of Kolkata, “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.”

Beautiful, right? Except - does that really sound like the Mother Teresa we know? The one we saw in the streets and slums of Kolkata, bending down to those covered in filth, lifting up the dying from the gutters?

No. It doesn't. Because she never said it.

These famous words from Mother Teresa are a twist of what she actually said, in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1979:

“And so, my prayer for you is that truth will bring prayer in our homes, and the fruit of prayer will be that we believe that in the poor, it is Christ. And if we really believe, we will begin to love. And if we love, naturally, we will try to do something. First in our own home, our next-door neighbour, in the country we live, in the whole world.”

Message

The movement of her message is essential. We don't go home, yank the curtains closed, and shut ourselves safely inside with our families. We don't go back to our parishes, lock the doors and concern ourselves only with the people inside.

We are called to start first in our own homes, certainly. But then, fol-

lowing in the footsteps of our Lord, who went out to the people - over and over, every day of his life, ministering to messy humans in all their sin and suffering - we are called to go out to our neighbours, to strangers, even to our enemies.

We are called, by the power and grace of our baptism, to love and serve a broken, sinful world.

I hope I don't scandalise your faith by revealing that the saints did not say all the words we often attribute to them. (It always helps to Google before you quote Augustine or Aquinas or anyone!)

“The formation we receive at home is not meant to stay at home. It is meant to prepare us to go out into the world”

But what we do know for certain is what Jesus Christ said to us. Thank God for the abundance and richness of the Gospels. Because when it comes to the relationship between faith and family, home and world, Jesus offers us challenging words.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies” (Mt 5:43-44).

“If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26).

“And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother’” (Mt 12:49-50).

God loves families, of course. This most intimate and important community of human life is where we begin our days on Earth and where we first learn how to love.

Yet the formation we receive at home is not meant to stay at home. It is meant to prepare us to go out into the world, a world that desperately needs our truth and service but will also reject our Christian witness. So, we must start with home and those closest to us, in our efforts to be peacemakers. But then we must go out - as St Teresa said (truly said), from our home to our neighbours, then to our country, and ultimately to the whole world.

Right now, we can see ever more clearly the deep and desperate need that our world has for the love of Christ. May we not keep it locked up at home but go out to share what we have been given.

i Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

What are the steps to receive Communion after divorce and remarriage?

Q: I am baptised Catholic and was married in a Catholic church. Then I was divorced and remarried in a Methodist church. She is a baptised Methodist. Then she recently did RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults] and joined the Catholic Church. How can I receive Communion again? What are the steps?

A: For complex marriage scenarios like the one you describe, there are many factors and specific nuances to take into account. Each case needs to be addressed individually. Therefore, it's not that there is one set of steps to follow, as much as it is that there are different pathways to resolving this kind of complicated situation.

For some general background, we as Catholics do not believe that divorce is truly possible in a real sense. Of course, a person might find themselves civilly divorced for a variety of reasons, but the Church would see a secular divorce decree as ultimately a sort of legal fiction. At the end of the day, while there might be civil effects like division of property or child custody arrangements that need to be honoured, a divorced person would still be bound spiritually to their 'ex' spouse in marriage.

Following this line of reasoning, a Catholic who divorces and then remarries civilly cannot have a valid second marriage, because they are still actually married to their original spouse. And while most divorced-and-civilly remarried Catholics would not subjectively view their own situation this way, living as husband and wife with a new person while still married to someone else is, technically 'on paper', living in adultery. Because this kind of adultery is by nature public and ongoing, a divorced and remarried Catholic cannot receive Communion (See Canon 915 of the Code of Canon Law for reference).

This can be a hard truth, but it is good to understand that this inability to receive Communion is part of a consistent theological rationale, as opposed to being something arbitrary.

One possible way forward in your situation is to approach a Catholic marriage tribunal to investigate whether your first mar-

riage was valid in the first place. It is theoretically possible that there could have been some problem in your first marriage that was so serious, that it prevented a true marriage bond from being contracted. If that seems to be the case, the tribunal can begin the formal process for investigating your first marriage and possibly declaring it null, which would then leave you legitimately free to marry your current civil wife.

However - again, depending on a lot of specifics - the marriage nullity process can often take a year or longer. And since the Church presumes that a marriage is valid until proven otherwise, there is no guarantee that you will be granted a declaration of nullity (popularly called an 'annulment') at the end of the process.

Another option, albeit a challenging one, for potentially returning to the sacrament more quickly is to resolve to live a chaste life as 'brother and sister' (i.e., abstaining from marital relations). Depending on the local spiritual needs and the feasibility of avoiding scandal, parish pastors can allow divorced and civilly remarried Catholics who are committed to this kind of chastity to receive Communion again.

All that being said, one interesting wrinkle that you mention in your own situation is that your second, civil wife went through a formal process of initiation to enter the Catholic Church after your Methodist wedding. Usually, when a person seeks to become Catholic as an adult, there is some effort made to ensure that their marriage situation is fully in accord with Church teaching. So, it could even be that you are farther on your way to resolving this than you realise.

In any case, my advice would be to speak with your parish priest about your marriage and your desire to return to the Eucharist. A priest who knows you in real life would be best able to help discern your own most appropriate 'next steps'.

i Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

Loving your own church and your neighbour's church as well



I teach Spirituality at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. Fifteen years ago, we began offering a PhD in Spirituality. In the fifteen years since we have had doctoral students from many different Christian denominations – Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Episcopalians/Anglicans, and Roman Catholics. During those fifteen years we have not had a single conversion of someone from one denomination to another. Rather, every student has left here with a deeper commitment to his or her own denomination and a deeper understanding of every other Christian denomination. We take a healthy pride in that. That's one of the aims of our program.

Suspicion

Since the Protestant Reformation, Christians have lived through five hundred years of misunderstanding and mutual suspicion. Each of us tended to work from the assumption that we belonged to the one true (or at least the purest) expression of Christianity and we looked for conversions, namely, having someone leave his or her denomination and join ours. Happily, things are changing, even while the old claims of being the one true expression of Christianity and the old defensiveness regarding denominational boundaries are still being clung to by many. A new vision is taking hold and we are beginning to see each other in a different light.

We are beginning to realise that the path to unity does not lie in saying, 'You are wrong, and we are right', even as we remain conscious of the issues



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

that separate us. Rather we are looking at what we share in common as Christians and human beings and are seeing that what we share in common dwarfs what separates us.

What do we share in common that dwarfs any dogma, ecclesiology, authority structure, or historical misunderstanding that separates us?

“We are to judge another religion or another Christian denomination not by its aberrations or its worst expressions, but by its best expressions, by its saints”

We share this in common: one beginning, one nature, one earth,

“After working as a Christian missionary among the Muslims, he suggested that ‘it will take all religions of the world to give full expression to the whole Christ’”

one sky, one law of gravity, one fragility, one earthly mortality, one desire, one aim, one destiny, one road, one God, one Jesus, one Christ, one Holy Spirit. And that brings with it both an invitation and an imperative: love your own church and love your neighbour's church as well.

Protest

But, one might protest, what about all that's wrong in my neighbour's church? Admittedly that's an issue. However, admittedly, there are also things wrong in our own church, no matter our denomination. Moreover, as the renowned scholar of religion Huston Smith, affirms, we are to judge another religion or another Christian denomination not by its aberrations or its worst expressions, but by its best expressions, by its saints.

If this is true, then all of us can

look to other churches, their saints, and their particular riches to enrich our own discipleship in Christ. In an insightful new book *To Love Your Neighbor's Church as Your Own*, Peter Halldorf, a Swedish/Evangelical/Orthodox Christian, asks the question: “What does it mean to love my neighbor's church as well as my own? Can a Pentecostal see a Roman Catholic as someone who may enrich his or her own faith experience? Can the Roman Catholic see a Pentecostal in this same light?”

“We are all still journeying, hopefully in all sincerity of heart, toward the full truth, toward a fuller discipleship, and toward giving a fuller expression to the Body of Christ on this earth”

If we are honest, we need to admit that we have much to learn from each other. Thus, we should no longer distance ourselves from each other and more and more begin to speak of ‘convergence’ rather than ‘converting’. The Spirit is inviting us to come together in respect and in a shared humility, without attitudes of suspicion or triumphalism. In that place, mistrust can be overcome.

How can we come together in that way? Already a generation ago, the renowned theologian, Avery Dulles suggested that the path to

ecumenism is not by way of conversion. Unity among Christian churches is not going to happen by all the various denominations converting and joining one existing Christian denomination. That, Dulles submits, is not just unrealistic, it is not the ideal because no one Christian denomination possesses the full truth. Rather we are all still journeying, hopefully in all sincerity of heart, toward the full truth, toward a fuller discipleship, and toward giving a fuller expression to the Body of Christ on this earth. All of us are still journeying toward that.

Ecumenism

Hence, the path to ecumenism, to oneness as a Christian church, to oneness at a Eucharistic table, lies in each of us, each denomination, converting more from within, in growing more faithful within our own discipleship, in giving a truer expression to the Body of Christ, so that as each of us grows more faithful to Christ we will find ourselves progressively coming together, converging, growing more and more together into one family.

Kenneth Cragg once suggested something similar vis-à-vis the question of interfaith among world religions. After working as a Christian missionary among the Muslims, he suggested that “it will take all religions of the world to give full expression to the whole Christ.”

It's time to move beyond five hundred years of misunderstanding and embrace each other again as fellow pilgrims, struggling together on a common journey.

We become what we receive

Prv 9:1-6
Ps 34:2-7
Eph 5:15-20
Jn 6:51-58

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



This Gospel puts me in a New York state of mind.

Encountering this Sunday's passage from John's Gospel, I can't help but think back to a stretch of West 31st Street in New York City where, not far from Madison Square Garden, you can find the Church of St Francis of Assisi and, just outside, on any given morning, you'll see the legendary St Francis Breadline.

It began during the Depression, when hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers needed some form of assistance. Many needed help just to find something to eat or a place to live. So, the breadline was born. Since that time, for nearly a century, the Franciscan friars have been passing out sandwiches, coffee and compassion on 31st Street.

"We only have one rule," the Franciscans say, "no questions asked. We take people as they are, our brothers and sisters in Christ."

Gesture

This simple gesture assures those in line that they won't go hungry - at least for a little while - and offers a sense of comfort, maybe even a feeling that they are loved.

In the simplest and most basic form, what strangers receive from that breadline is, in so many ways, the bread of life. It helps keep them alive.

But John's Gospel reminds us that what we hunger for is more than food to fill our stomachs. So often, we hunger for hope to fill our hearts. We desire something richer. Mercy. Dignity. Grace. Maybe what we really want is a sense of closeness to God. Which, of course, connects us powerfully to Christ and the bread he offers, the Eucharist.

This Sunday's Scriptures are especially timely, as the United States has embarked on a Eucharistic Revival. The media has been full of stories of processions and liturgies, of monstrance raised and heads bowed, as Catholics have reaffirmed faith in the Blessed Sacrament. We've seen dramatic images from around the country of people falling to their knees in devotion.

It's helped to remind us that the bread of life is also the bread of love. We have been blessed these months with many opportunities to realise anew the singular power of this extraordinary gift: Christ himself,

coming to us in something as simple as bread.

"This," Jesus explains, "is the bread that came down from Heaven."

But as much as this Sunday's readings are an affirmation of faith, they are also an invitation.

"Taste and see," the psalmist says, "the goodness of the Lord."

"The one who feeds on me," Jesus adds, "will have life because of me ... whoever eats this bread will live forever."

In Jesus' day, of course, his listeners were bewildered, angered and even scandalised. Many just couldn't believe it. Even now, people have a hard time accepting the idea of consuming Christ's flesh and drinking his blood. It is a mystery too many find just incomprehensible.

“In spite of everything, we ask to be fed. And then something that sounds impossible becomes possible, in a heart-rending gift of grace”

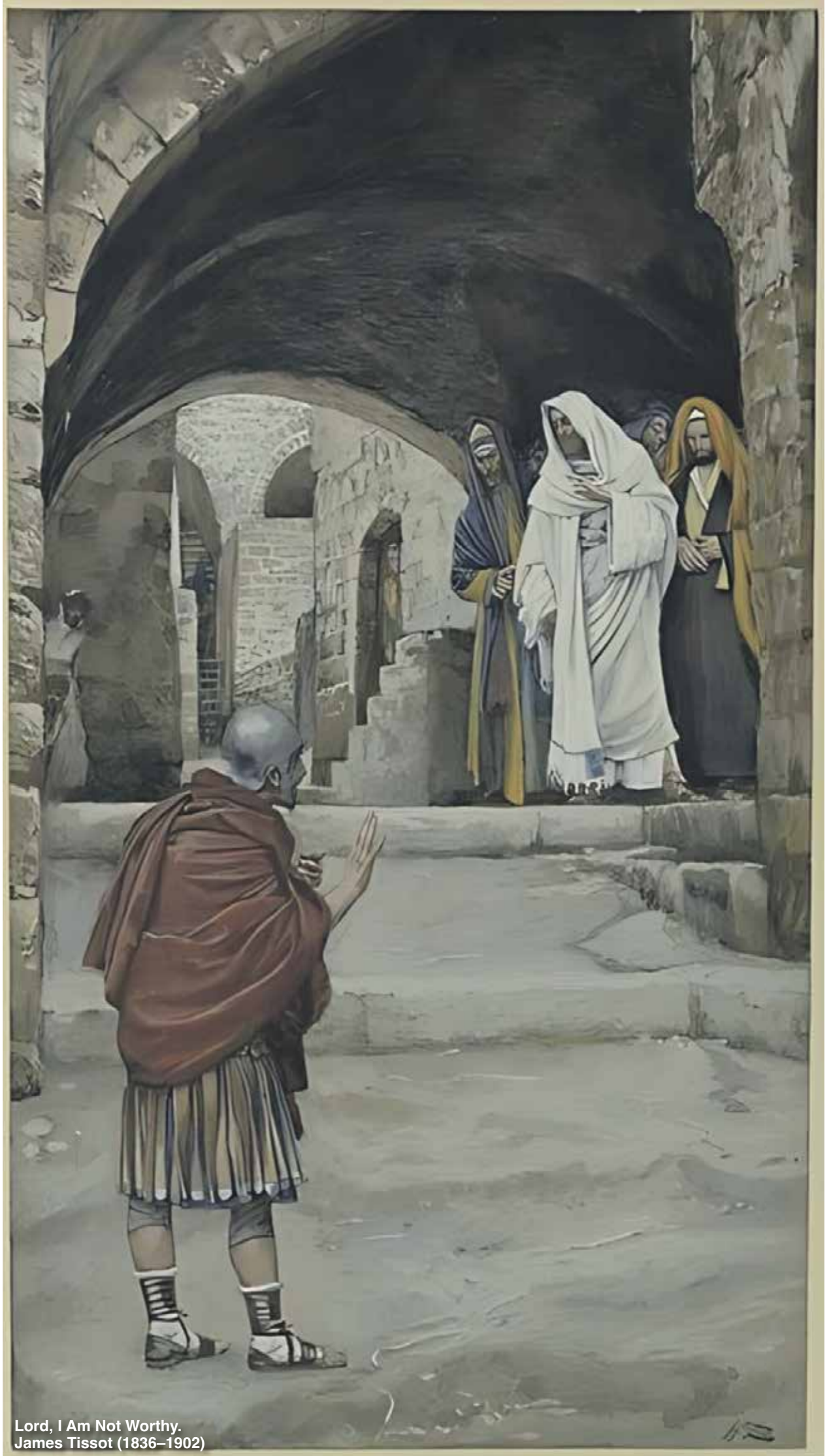
But maybe that's the point.

God's overpowering love - his generous giving of himself through his Son, who then gives himself to us again and again through something as humble as bread - can seem frankly incredible, just too hard for any of us to understand. Yet as he does so often, our God astonishes us. We pray at every Mass, "Lord, I am not worthy." In spite of everything, we ask to be fed. And then something that sounds impossible becomes possible, in a heart-rending gift of grace.

As St Augustine put it, we become what we receive. We partake of the bread of life. We taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

And with that, we are not so different from the needy souls who line up outside the Church of St Francis. We become part of the greatest breadline in human history.

i Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog *The Deacon's Bench*.



Lord, I Am Not Worthy.
James Tissot (1836-1902)

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The quest for moderation in our modern times

Modern Ireland, conceived by many in positions of power and influence as a secular entity that has thrown off the shackles of religion, is more complex than one might think.

This Ireland has its heroes, heroines and gurus, including the late Sinead O'Connor and recently deceased writer Edna O'Brien. It is ironic that both of these had a strong affinity with religion, though not in a conventional or orthodox sense. It was timely that last week we got a repeat of Edna O'Brien's appearance on **The Meaning of Life** (RTE One, Tuesday), originally broadcast in 2010, when she was 78. She was in a thoughtful mood, was surprisingly unsure about lots of things. I found her distinguishing between religion and spirituality the least convincing aspect, rather tired, typical and unimaginative, but there was a lot to learn from her. She still prayed to a God whose existence she was unsure of, and believed prayer shouldn't be robotic. She was inclined to believe in the Real Presence, hoped that Jesus was the Son of God and found Mass too noisy and distracting these days – too much like kindergarten she said! For her, religion seemed to be overly meshed with fear, a product of her upbringing perhaps. It was a salutary warning



Edna O'Brien

to those tasked with introducing young people to religion, though I think the pendulum has swung very much to the other extreme since then – we don't do moderation very well!

I thought the apparent conflict between the content of her books, some of which were banned, and genuine Catholic values could have been teased out more by the presenter, the late Gay Byrne. The programme felt like it had been edited from a longer version – inevitable I suppose but I felt like we were missing out on something

important. But we did get an answer to the question posed at the end of every episode – what would you say on meeting God at the pearly gates? For Ms O'Brien it was 'Bless me throughout eternity'. I hope that has now come to pass.

From the small church of Tuamgraney, Co. Clare the **Funeral Mass** (RTE News, Saturday) was broadcast live, and it was more low-key than many celebrity funerals, which was for the better. This was partly because they just used the parish webcam rather than it being

a full scale outside broadcast. Also, there was no commentator to interpret for us. The music was serene, classical or traditional in style for the most part – the singing was particularly good. The prayers were simple and direct. Yes, famous people were present, but there was little fuss.

Fr Donagh O'Meara's homily was more of a eulogy. He stressed how Ms O'Brien had been 'finding her voice'. He called her a 'speaker of truth' in what was a 'narrow time' in Ireland, to the shame of Church and State, though I suspect the story is more complex and nuanced. Her commitment to her craft as a 'wordsmith' was central – she was writing about T.S. Eliot right up to May of this year. He spoke of the importance of 'searching' in her life, referencing her openness to Buddhism – I thought the presenting of a Buddha as part of the procession of symbols was rather unusual, to say the least. I wondered if searching would be ultimately satisfying if there was no finding. Fr O'Meara concluded in hope – maybe now she realised how she was 'infinitely loved' by God. On the whole it was a graceful, dignified and respectful occasion.

Sometimes we like to think that we have left 'narrow times' behind. The recent

PICK OF THE WEEK

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE

EWTV Sunday August 18, 9am and Wednesday August 21, 7am

The true identity of ghost, along with his Catholicism reveals he is a soul in purgatory, destined for heaven. Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet is discussed – is she innocent or does she share blame for her fate?

PILGRIMAGE: ROAD TO THE SCOTTISH ISLES

BBC ONE Sunday August 18, 10:45am

Seven celebrities of differing faiths and beliefs set out in search of St Columba, an Irish monk born 1,500 years ago who helped spread Christianity from Ireland to Scotland. (R)

SISTER BONIFACE MYSTERIES

RTE ONE Sunday August 18, 1:10pm

Convinced that events catastrophic to the Cold War are being planned at the British Open Chess Championships, Sister Boniface brushes up her chess skills and joins the tournament.

violence in Belfast, which had sectarian and paramilitary elements as well as the anti-immigrant sentiments, might make us rethink. On **Mornings with Wendy** (Spirit Radio, Friday) Reverend Trevor Gribben (Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church) spoke to Wendy Grace of his experiences. He described "racist, hate-filled wanton violence and destruction", none of which could be regarded as legitimate or lawful protest. There was, he said, 'no

right to riot'. Further, he reckoned counter protests could be counter-productive, when what was needed was de-escalation. With Wendy Grace he agreed on the great contributions the 'New Irish' made in our churches. He said many were people of "strong vibrant faith", part of our worshipping communities.

Welcoming and belonging, he said, were vital – it's not "them and us", it's just "us".



Pat O'Kelly

Music

Irish composer, William Wallace, revived at the National Concert Hall

Time was when William Vincent Wallace was a household name with his music gracing many an operatic stage and concert venue and being played and sung in many a homely parlour. However, time and fashions change and what is enjoyed by one generation may well be relegated to obscurity by the next.

With soprano Rachel Kelly in the title role, last month's performance at the NCH of Wallace's opera *Lurline* proved a highly agreeable occasion under Hungarian conductor Péter Galász. This revival followed considerable research into the composer's output by Rachel Kelly's mother – pianist and musi-



William Wallace
cologist Una Hunt.

William Wallace was born in Waterford's Colbeck Street on March 11, 1812 to a protestant Mayo-born father Wil-

liam Spencer Wallace, who was a sergeant bandmaster in the Royal 29th Worcestershire Regiment, and a Catholic mother Elizabeth McKenna, who hailed from Limerick.

William showed unusual talent as pianist, violinist and clarinetist as well being highly proficient on a number of other instruments. Following a period in Ballina, the Wallaces returned to Waterford in 1825 but on learning of his regiment's planned transfer to Mauritius, William Spencer purchased his and his son's discharge. Moving to Dublin, they joined the Theatre Royal orchestra.

Appointed organist at Thurles Cathedral when he was eighteen William also

accepted a teaching post at the Ursuline Convent in the town. A budding musician among the novices – Isabella Kelly of Frascati House in Dublin's Blackrock – fell in love with him. This was much to the consternation of Isabella's father and her sibling – Sister Vincent – who was then a professed nun in Thurles. The young organist found a way through the dilemma by becoming a Catholic and adding Vincent to his name.

After their marriage in 1831, the young couple returned to Dublin where Wallace rejoined the Theatre Royal orchestra as violinist and conductor and also led Dublin's Anacreontic Society. He made his debut as a

composer with this mainly amateur orchestral group premiering his well-received violin and piano concertos with them.

Hearing Niccolò Paganini play at the Theatre Royal in 1832, Wallace became obsessed with violin technique to the virtual detriment of his health and sanity. Isabella took matters in hand by deciding to emigrate to Australia.

The family settled in Sydney in January 1836 and within a month Wallace gave his first acclaimed concert under the patronage of the Dublin-born governor general Sir Richard Bourke, who had strong Limerick connections and was a distant relative of

the political theorist and philosopher Edmund Burke.

When a recession hit the Australian economy and the Wallace finances, the strong-willed Isabella decided to return to Ireland in 1838. Wallace, leaving considerable debts behind him, took a ship to New Zealand. Natives wrecked it en route killing a number of its passengers and crew. Wallace escaped and landing on the South Island soon infatuated a Maori maiden and went through a form of marriage with her to save his life! His 'bride' engraved a cross upon his chest in the hope of securing his fidelity!

More on the interesting Wallace anon.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The city of Jerusalem and its unfinished history

Jerusalem Through the Ages: From its Beginnings to the Crusades.

by Jodi Magness
(Oxford University Press,
£30.99/€36.50)

Peter Costello

Author Jodi Magness is a distinguished archaeologist at the height of her career who specialises in ancient Palestine from its beginnings up the Middle Ages. Over several years she had to be persuaded to write this book, but many readers will find her account of Jerusalem's long journey through time as she reveals it quite fascinatingly and absorbingly.

She is currently engaged in directing an extended excavation of a small village since 2011 Huqoq, a little to the north of Tiberias, near the Sea of Galilee, where layer by layer the cultural history of a region can be traced back in time.

In this book she applied the same archaeological technique to the city of Jerusalem. Most accounts of the city use archaeology to illuminate the ancient texts and historical accounts. But Prof. Magness works on the principle that the texts may, or may not, as the case may be, illustrate what the archaeology demonstrates.

Jerusalem being important in the thinking of some four faiths, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze, archaeology can often be quite as controversial as politics, very often is a form of politics. People are prepared to fight over what they believe, to defy any authority, and to ignore the wider world.

History

In all of this it is worth remembering that it was really only in the course of the 19th century that truly scholarly investigation began in Palestine. To many it seemed unchanged since Old Testament times.

The evocative lithographs of David Roberts from the 1850s seemed also to provide a setting for King David and Jesus and the Apostles. But time has shown how much older they really are. The ear-



Christians walk the traditional path that Jesus took on his last entry into Jerusalem during the Palm Sunday procession on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem March 24, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Debbie Hill.

liest date given here is 3,500 BCE when bronze age Jerusalem was settled.

Magness, keeping within her professional area, ends her narrative abruptly with the city's surrender by the Crusaders to Saladin. They had held the city since 1099 - a mere 88 years. Yet as she says the Crusaders had imposed themselves on the city in a lasting way in that short time.

“To ignore this is to leave out a very important aspect of the city's history”

She has a brief coda with the victorious entry of General Allenby on 11 December 1917, which was pure political theatre for the photographic media of the day.

But I was surprised by this arrangement. She leaves aside the half a millennium

of influence on the city which was provided by the Ottoman Empire. The Palestine that those first scholars, artists and photographers recorded in the Victorian era saw a city that the Turks had also had a large hand in shaping. To ignore this is to leave out a very important aspect of the city's history.

After all, while the Ottoman Empire was supposedly tottering, it still survived. Indeed, the Crimean War of 1853-56 was fought over the city of Jerusalem and the rights there of the Russians as opposed to the British and French, it was a matter of Orthodox versus Protestant and Catholic.

Religion

A sort of rehearsal for a world war, the battles were fought in the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Far East; but the object of the war was Jerusalem. To understand the British Mandate one has to always keep in mind the Ottomans. Today Russia and Turkey are still involved in the area.

But this lament probably carries little weight with the

author, for her interest is in the Jerusalem of the Jews, the Christians and the early Muslims - as are the interests of most visitors today.

Indeed, she reveals chapter by chapter aspects of the city many visitors may never see. She wants to describe what can be seen over ground along with what has been found underground. The text and the illustrations take the readers into many strange places and curious corners.

“She unravels the complicated story stage by stage in a very detailed but understandable way”

I think it is a book to sit on your shelves beside William Foxwell Albright's classic *From Stone Age to Christianity*: When Israel invaded

the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem in 1969, an Israeli archaeologist observed that the Christians had had their say for too long. Now it was Israel's turn. Archaeology is at the heart of the Jewish perception of the city.

However, the development of Jerusalem has to be centred on what was created on what is now called the Temple Mount, which is the essential holy place for Jews and Muslims. It is a place of constant friction and periodic rioting. But she unravels the complicated story stage by stage in a very detailed but understandable way. For some these chapters will be the heart of the book.

Jesus

But over a series of four chapters (covering 64 BCE to 634 CE) she covers the archaeology of the New Testament and early days of Christianity in some detail. (In the course of all this she even has some paragraphs on RAS Macalister, the Irish archaeologist, who had worked in Palestine before becoming Professor of Celtic Archaeology in UCD in

1909. Alas, she is quite brisk with him for "digging hastily and carelessly". He and others might have, I imagine, a robust retort or two to such a sweeping remark. He made many discoveries at Gezer, and wrote a book about it, and was the first to apply the new methods Flinders Petrie developed in Egypt based on pottery dating sequences to Palestine.)

In her seventh chapter, however over pages 182-191, she explains why there are no archaeological remains relevant to Jesus: he was simply too poor to leave any traces of his life. She disposes as she does so with such media controversies as "The James Ossuary" and "The Talpiyo Tombs".

She also discusses the circumstances, which might perhaps have been filled out more, of the execution and burial of Jesus, and with the death and burial of James "the Brother of the Lord".

“What it was in the past, what it is today, are not necessarily what it will be tomorrow”

This is a book for everyone interested in Palestine and Jerusalem for scholarly reasons, but one which those with a more general interest will greatly enjoy.

It reveals aspects of life and history in Palestine, often in smallest details, that enlarge one's ideas about the city and its region. But it is a book that requires careful reading nevertheless.

Jerusalem is an important place and has been for millennia. But it is still changing and evolving. Its history is by no means finished. Like all places and all peoples it does not need to be bound to what happened in the past - or was supposed to have happened. What it was in the past, what it is today, are not necessarily what it will be tomorrow.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

The bright side of a brooding nature



Marlon Brando.

Brando - The Fun Side,
by Aubrey Malone
(Bear Manor Media,
€32.95)

Peter Costello

Famously we are advised by Monty Python to look on the bright side of life. And so we ought to. But the bright side of Marlon Brando? He made his first impact as an actor playing a sullen angry young man in films that were often challenging, from *The Men* (1950) onwards, through much of his career.

But then we can for-

give a great deal of all that for the entertainment he provided in *Guys and Dolls* (1955) based on the Broadway tales of Damon Runyon. His characterisation of Sky Masterson still retains its appeal.

Alas Brando the actor-turned-director who lingered on a cliff overlooking the Pacific in Mexico while making *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961), waiting for 'the waves to become more dramatic', allowed his early training at the Actors Studio to dominate a comedic skill that we ought to have had a great deal more of.

This book covers much

more than the occasions when Brando, the fun-loving prankster, smiled, and is really a full biographical account of his career.

The author is the film critic of this newspaper and all those readers who have enjoyed his critiques and followed his advice about what to see, may not be aware that he is a well-recognised film historian as well, with many titles to his credit that explore many aspects of moviedom since 1896 when the first moving images were projected for a startled French audiences.

Reanimating our valiant medical heroes

Irish Doctors in the Second World War,
by PJ Casey, KT Cullen,
and JP Duignan
(Merrion Press,
€29.99/£25.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a comprehensive account of the Irish doctors who served with the Allied forces in World War II. This is for all intents and purposes an untold story, but one that needed to be told for what it reveals about what Irish people really did in that formative universal conflict.

There were 2,003 of them in all. 435 were trained in Queen's University Belfast, 357 in Trinity College Dublin, 80 in the Royal College of Surgeons, 133 in University College Dublin, 83 in University College Cork, 30 in University College Galway and 42 elsewhere. These Irish doctors served in a number of British forces: the Royal Army Corps, the RAF, RN and VR (Voluntary Reserves). They were active in Europe and North Africa.

Of the doctors who died, 22 in the RAMC were killed and 18 died in service. Six were killed in action in the RAF and three died in service. 11 were killed in the RN and six died in service. Five died in other services. In all 79 lost their lives.

Irish

John Noel Corcoran, a native of Dún Laoghaire and a graduate of TCD, was the first to lose his life. He was killed in the earlier period of the war as the British Expeditionary Force retreated from central France back to Dunkirk.

Hundreds of Irish doctors were captured by the German and Japanese forces. Those held by the Germans were interned in POW camps across Central Germany and were treated in accordance with the appropriate protocols. But those held by the Japanese were cruelly treated. As a result, following the war, the administrators of those POW camps were convicted of war crimes, and either

“For years afterward, people continued to die from the long lingering effects of burns, radiation sickness, and other injuries, made worse by lack of food and rampant illness in both of the bombed cities”

hanged or sentenced to a life-time in prison.

290 Irish doctors received medals and awards for service and/or valour. The authors provide the citations granted to some of them. Among them was Dr Frank Murray.

He was captured by the Japanese in Singapore on 15 February 1942.

Firstly, he was interned in Changi camp, one of the more notorious Japanese POW camps. Subsequently he was transferred to prison camps in Hokkaido, the Japanese mainland. His fellow-prisoners were over 400 service-men from the British Army, Air Force, Navy, Mercantile Marine and the US Army and they elected him to be commandant of the camp.

“It was managed by a drug addict and sadist who was convicted at the end of the war and executed for his treatment of Allied prisoners”

Subsequently they presented him with a Memorial which recorded his 'quiet and indomitable struggle for our health and welfare in the face of obstructive and often vicious Japanese inhumanity'.

Dr Aidan McCarthy, of Castletownbere, Co Cork, was also captured by the Japanese. In 1941 he began his amazing prisoner of war odyssey in Java, in what was

then the Dutch East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia).

His first POW camp was in Batavia (now Jakarta) in a former Dutch army barracks. It was managed by a drug addict and sadist who was convicted at the end of the war and executed for his treatment of Allied prisoners.

In June 1944 the Japanese transferred their POWs to Japan itself. McCarthy found himself in Nagasaki, where he and his fellow-prisoners were forced to work in the shipyard until the end of the war. When the US dropped the atomic bomb on the city on 9 August 1945 he escaped death, as he was in an underground shelter. Most of his fellow-prisoners, however, who were over-ground were incinerated along with some 40,000 of the city's population.

For years afterward, people continued to die from the long lingering effects of burns, radiation sickness, and other injuries, made worse by lack of food and rampant illness in both of the bombed cities. (The effect of the atom bombs was described by John Hershey in the now classic *Hiroshima*, a book that has never been out of print since 1946.)

Honours

The book includes an excellent summary of the progress of the war across Europe and Asia. There is a list of medals and awards which were presented for service and gallantry in action.

Besides a roll of honour of those who served in World War II, there are profiles of thirteen Irish doctors who were honoured for their gallantry and professionalism.

The book is meticulously illustrated. This publication will be warmly welcomed particularly by the entire Irish medical community and will be cherished by the relatives and friends of those gallant and persevering Irish doctors who joined what became, in effect, a crusade to defend Western democracy.



An Irish medical unit at work on a wounded casualty of WWII. Care and healing in a time of war.

“Of the doctors who died, 22 in the RAMC were killed and 18 died in service. Six were killed in action in the RAF and three died in service. 11 were killed in the RN and six died in service. Five died in other services. In all 79 lost their lives”

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www.mscmissions.ie

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It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on **01 629 3333**, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

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The Irish Catholic

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The Irish Catholic

Crossword

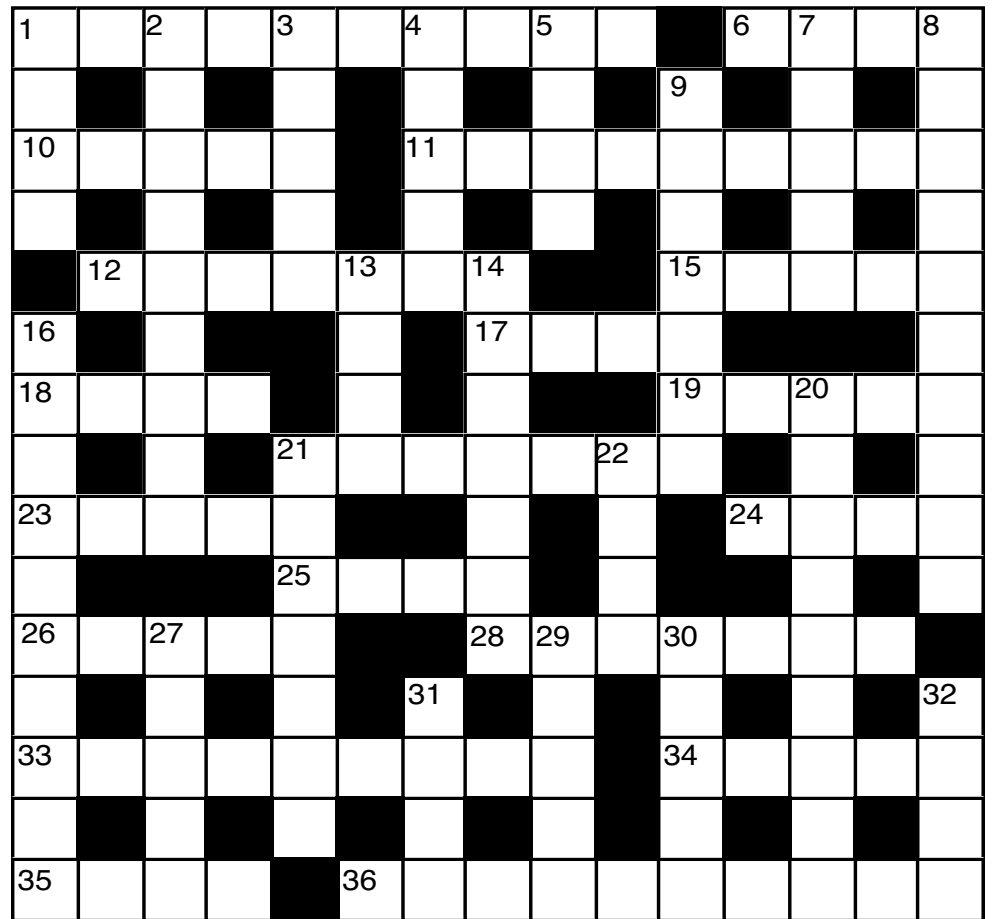
Gordius 676

Across

- 1 Moves goods or people (10)
- 6 Animal tooth (4)
- 10 & 11 PR campaign (5,9)
- 12 Tasty pastries whose name comes from the French for 'lightning' (7)
- 15 The English Derby is run here (5)
- 17 Piece of money (4)
- 18 Greet (4)
- 19 Begin (5)
- 21 Bill (7)
- 23 The language of ancient Rome (5)
- 24 Verifiable (4)
- 25 Conflagration (4)
- 26 Exactly the same (5)
- 28 Allow back in (7)
- 33 Mat placed in front of a fire (9)
- 34 Subsequent; following (5)
- 35 Unassertive (4)
- 36 The world's highest cataract, also known as Kerepakupai-merú (5,5)

Down

- 1 Diplomacy, sensitivity (4)
- 2 One who works against systems of law and official order (9)
- 3 Latin American dance (5)



- 4 A smell (5)
- 5 Lovers' quarrel (4)
- 7 Astray, mistaken (5)
- 8 Cells associated with brainpower (4,6)
- 9 Fragrant powder burnt in church (7)
- 13 Holy image particularly associated with Orthodox churches (4)
- 14 Type of motorcycle (7)
- 16 Great race festival in Gloucestershire (10)
- 20 Type of handgun (3,6)
- 21 Pump up (7)
- 22 The largest island in the Caribbean (4)
- 27 Employment of an object or tool (5)
- 29 Bird of prey (5)
- 30 One of Snow White's companions (5)
- 31 A measure of herrings landed (4)
- 32 Greek god of love (4)

SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 8

GORDIUS No. 675

Across

- 1 Jump jockey 6 Hair 10 In the beginning 12 Dissent 15 Great 17 Ruhr 18 Ahoy 19 Avian 21 Perform 23 Royal 24 Fill 25 Abel 26 Felon 28 Entreat 33 Courtroom 34 Noise 35 Soho 36 Trade Winds

Down

- 1 Jail 2 Matrimony 3 Jeers 4 Cabin 5 Eggs 7 Alive 8 Right angle 9 Anagram 13 Ease 14 Truffle 16 Pair of aces 20 Imitation 21 Planets 22 Rust 27 Laugh 29 Named 30 Renew 31 Hour 32 Mess

Sudoku Corner 546

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 545

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

Last week's Hard 545

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

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



What is a Co-PP?

I have in my possession a copy of the *Irish Catholic Directory 2018*, printed just before COVID. There are over 4,000 priests named in its index, but only a handful of Co-PPs. An *Irish Catholic Directory 2024* (if there were one) would include quite a few more. I am one myself, since 2022. But what is a Co-PP? There are two schools of thought. For some, the Co-PP who lives in a particular parish is to all intents and purposes a parish priest in the traditional sense, with all the rights and duties linked to that office. So though I am titled Co-PP living in Castlehaven & Myross, they would contend that I am really the PP of Castlehaven & Myross, in the ways that its parish priests always were.



equals, who 'keeps the whole show on the road', organises a rota so that every Mass and other event is covered and sees that each priest has time off and holidays.

“The much spoken-of shortage of priests has become a reality, even if a priest still resides with them”

The other school of thought disagrees: for them, the moderator is key, he is in fact the new PP of the multiple-parish grouping, though

this new designation is unstated. Those titled Co-PPs then are really only curates, helping the moderator, their boss, to staff and run this new multi-parish organism. According to this school of thought, the moderator alone acts in the person of the parishes, not the Co-PPs, whose role is significantly less than that of PP.

Assess

How can we assess which school of thought is correct? Canon law is checked – here there is no such thing as a co-PP, though there is provision for several priests to have the care of number of parishes together with

When the Poor Clares recommend a YouTube video, it's time to sit up and take notice! My Poor Clare friends who live in community on College Road in Cork city recommended "The Chosen" to me, and I pass their recommendation on to you. Google the title of the series and you get 24 episodes over four series, all professionally filmed and scripted (you can view the episodes free on YouTube.) This presentation shows that the Christian message never gets old, there is always a new generation of talented professionals ready to take up the torch and share the Good News.

● I watched - and enjoyed - the opening ceremony of the Olympics. I was intrigued by the horse apparently running up the Seine, and loved the fire floating over Paris as its Olympic flames. As to the rest, it seemed odd, outlandish – and very typically French. It was only later that I discovered that I should have been outraged, that I had witnessed Christianity being mocked. The trouble is that hadn't spotted that at all. Should I have changed my view? A Facebook meme gave me the answer I would incline to:
"A mature Christian is someone who is very hard to offend".

a moderator, who acts in the name of the parish or parishes cared for by the group. Whichever school of thought is followed, it is the parishioners who feel the difference. Once a Co-PP is appointed, they no longer have a "priest of their own" but one shared with at least one other parish. The much spoken-of shortage of priests has become a reality, even if a priest still resides with them. If all this seems clear as mud, here is my suggestion: when a Co-PP is appointed to your parish, ask him what his role is and how it differs from that

of PP. And if you happen upon a moderator of a group of parishes, ask him a similar question: is he the boss of the parishes and their clergy, or is he there to keep everything running smoothly?

And when you discover, let me know....



Parishes

According to that school of thought, it's in the parishes that no longer have a resident priest that Co-PPs come into their own. Two parishes in our family of five parishes (pastoral area) are in that category: that means that the three of us who are Co-PPs are communally in charge of those parishes, all equally responsible, working as a team to guide them.

According to that school of thought, the moderator is the first among



Funds are urgently needed for Metahara Clinic in Ethiopia

Sr Fikrte Motto of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady has contacted The Little Way Association for Metahara Health Clinic which is run by the Sisters with many lay helpers. She tells us that the Catholic Mission in Metahara began providing health care to the community in 1981. Despite difficulties, a clinic was established to help the sick. Now, 60 to 80 new patients visit the clinic daily for various conditions which include malaria, eye diseases, typhoid and typhus, as well as skin infections.

Sister writes: "We urgently need financial help, and that is why I am turning to The Little Way Association. Prices of medicine and our running costs have risen unexpectedly. We lack funds to reach needy communities in the district, we have no ambulance, we need to tackle the malnutrition and chronic diseases of many of those who come to our clinic. These, and other, reasons make me turn to you and your friends and supporters with confidence. Please help us. Many needy people, as well as our Sisters, will be eternally grateful."

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