

# The Irish Catholic

**A SPARK OF FAITH CAN LIGHT A FIRE**

Martina Purdy  
Page 9



**THE IRISH 'ER' DOCTOR WHO RECENTLY BECAME A PRIEST**

Renata Milán Morales  
Page 3



Thursday, August 8, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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## Push the Gospel in schools regardless of 'popularity' – education priest

Chai Brady

The continuous push to remove faith formation from post-primary schools in Ireland must be resisted so young people are not "neglected" and receive no pastoral care, a priest involved in education for 20 years has said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Fr Patrick Moore PP of Castlepollard in Co. Westmeath and Vicar Forane said it would be "terrible negligence" to allow children not to receive faith formation regardless of changing demographics.

"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," Fr Moore said.

Fr Moore said that in his experience under the Education Training Boards (ETBs), established in 2013, there has been an "appalling lack of

» Continued on Page 2

**Celebrating 100 years of mission**



Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary with Archbishop Valerian Okeke from Onitsha Archdiocese in Nigeria, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly and friends outside Cavan Cathedral on Saturday August 3. Photo: John McElroy

**WOMEN'S SAFETY IN BOXING**

Colette Colfer

PAGE 6



**FAITH NEEDS COMMUNITY TO BLOSSOM**

Breda O'Brien

PAGE 11



**KNOCK WITNESSES 'SAINTS' SAYS GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER**

Renata Steffens

PAGE 16



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## Push the Gospel in schools regardless of 'popularity' – education priest

» Continued from Page 1

faith formation” and the idea of mindfulness is “rubbish”.

He said: “It’s a very serious matter, I’m very passionate about the pastoral care of the youngsters and it has been neglected very, very much I think.”

Asked about the fact that in the 2022 census, when over 3.5 million people living in the State reported that their religion was Roman Catholic accounting for 69% of the population – a huge decrease from 78% in 2016 – Fr Moore said despite the reduction in Catholics, people “must hear the message. We were told it would be difficult and we would be persecuted and so on. So we just have to be prepared, to be strong in the Faith and keep going, with very good strength but also with great compassion and mercy of course. I don’t think we should sit down and say, ‘Oh, it’s all over now’”.

Fr Moore does not believe that there should be a focus on downsizing regarding the amount of Catholic schools, saying “I don’t like to see people going to the wall and not being cared for pastorally, I think it is terrible negligence to say

‘Oh, let them go to heck, they don’t matter, let them go’.

“The commercial world penetrates society every day with their ‘Good News’, which is totally different, and make no apology for it.”

He said: “You have to impinge on them, the Lord himself impinged on them. The message of the Acts of the Apostles is that you give the Good News welcome or unwelcome, popular or unpopular, so we’re supposed to penetrate society with the Good News of the Gospel whether they want it or not.”

Fr Moore said that bishops and priests should not “throw in the towel” and that he tells parents from the altar “they should have a passionate interest in their children’s formation in the Faith and they should inquire about what formation they are getting in the school”.

He added: “You have to stimulate it in the community as well. I feel very passionate about it because I feel it’s a pastoral vacuum, and I don’t think there should be a pastoral vacuum and I would not let the Government dictate my spiritual standards to me under any circumstance.”

## Veteran broadcaster not a fan of Ignatian methods

Brandon Scott

Speaking on the bank holiday Monday episode of the Pat Kenny Show on Newstalk, veteran broadcaster Pat Kenny spoke to director Neil Jordan about his memories attending annual retreats held in Manresa House, a Jesuit retreat centre in Dublin, which according to him was a mandatory excursion for the boys attending his secondary school.

The boys were required to detach themselves from the outside world and engage in unstinting silence, prayer and contemplation and this period spent in introspection did apparently not agree with Mr Kenny, who described the time spent at the centre in his schoolboy days as “desperate”.

When Mr Jordan was asked if he was a “tearaway” as a young man as he referenced stealing apples from an orchard, Jordan responded “No! There was a place called Manresa House where we used to pick the apples”.

Mr Kenny responded by saying: “Oh, I know it. As a schoolboy, we were sent there on retreats. I went to O’Connell School and every year they would decide to send the boys off on a retreat which meant very thin gruel, rations, lots of prayer and silence in-between. It was desperate.”

# Extraordinary demand for Miraculous Medals in Dublin

Renata Milán Morales

Since the world was on pause because of the COVID pandemic in 2020, there has been a notable uptick in demand for Miraculous Medals, a symbol of faith and divine intervention that dates back to 1830.

Sr Anne O’Neill of the Daughters of Charity runs the office responsible for distributing these medals in Dublin and notes a significant increase in the distribution of medals during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, recalling the past when people turned to the medal for comfort and healing during cholera out-

breaks in the 1800s. “Each weekend, thousands of these medals are distributed from Dublin, Ireland, where they are assembled and blessed by dedicated volunteers, including retired sisters,” Sr Anne told *The Irish Catholic*.

Each week, volunteers led by the Legion of Mary hand out Miraculous Medals to those passing by, sharing the story and prayer associated with the medal.

The Miraculous Medal’s story began in 1830, when the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St Catherine Labouré, a novice of the Daughters of Charity, in Paris. During the apparition, Mary

instructed Catherine to create a medal promising grace and blessings. Despite initial disbelief, the medal quickly gained a reputation for miraculous healings and protection, especially during the cholera epidemic that struck Paris in 1832, claiming over 20,000 lives. The medal’s popularity increased as stories of its protective powers spread among the people of Paris.

Today, the Miraculous Medal continues to offer solace and hope to those seeking divine intervention.

The continued demand for Miraculous Medals shows a universal longing for faith and consolation during challenging times.

## 100 years of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary



The book of the Gospels being brought to the altar in song and dance following a Cameroon tradition. Photo: John McElroy

Staff Reporter

The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, founded in March 1924 in Killeshandra, Co. Cavan celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for the Centenary of their foundation on August 3

in the Cathedral in Cavan.

Having just completed their 16th General Chapter, all the delegates to the chapter who came from different parts of the world were in attendance. There were about 700 people present as they celebrated with joy,

love and gratitude God’s blessings on their congregation.

The main celebrant was Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore Diocese. The host of the occasion was Sr Franca Onyibor, the Congregational Leader of the MSHR.

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, [chai@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:chai@irishcatholic.ie)

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, [renata@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:renata@irishcatholic.ie)

Brandon Scott, [brandon@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:brandon@irishcatholic.ie)

Renata Milan, [renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie)

Newsroom: [news@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:news@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, [books@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:books@irishcatholic.ie)

Advertising: [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874027

Accounts: [accounts@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:accounts@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874095

Magnificat: [magnificat@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:magnificat@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874024

General inquiries: [info@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:info@irishcatholic.ie)

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105.

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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# Doctor who became priest saved lives but wanted to save souls too

**Renata Milán Morales**

A young newly ordained Dominican priest has described how the call of vocation never leaves and can even turn up in the most stressful of circumstances. Fr Chris Gault OP was a doctor in the emergency room in a Belfast hospital. "It explains instances like the one I experienced in a Belfast hospital's emergency department late one night, in my third year after qualifying as a doctor. Despite struggling with understaffing and a high volume of patient presentations, everything was put on pause when an ambulance crew rang ahead into the emergency room, warning the staff about the gravely ill patient they had just picked up. The man was young and asthmatic, suffering from an attack which was surely threatening his life. When he was wheeled into the 'resus' area of the ED, he was unconscious and grey. As one of only two doctors in the department at that hour of the night, I took my place at the head of the gurney to tend to the man's airway, and listened as the paramedic recounted the details and the treatment he had received thus far. As we worked to bring the man back from the brink (which thankfully we did), I found it strange that there was only one thought in my mind: "I could do so much more for this man now if I were a priest."

Fr Chris says the explanation for this is "that the priesthood is not



merely a job or career, like being a doctor or a lawyer or a professional footballer. Rather, the Lord has 'chosen' His priests from the very first moment of their existence in the womb."

Writing in this week's *The Irish Catholic* Fr Chris admits that he had "years of vocational angst" but "in fact I had always known that I was called to be a priest. Despite broadcasting widely that I was praying for signs of a priestly vocation, in truth I was praying for signs in the opposite

direction, because I was afraid."

He says that once he accepted the reality "it brought with it immense peace, and although there have been ups and downs, I have never looked back. I loved training for the priesthood, especially in the context of the adjacent vocation to religious life in the Order of Preachers, and I am immensely happy now in my new priestly ministry."

[Read Fr Chris' full story on page 30](#)

# Catholic athlete's creative way to glorify God at Olympics

**Brandon Scott**

Rayssa Leal, a 16-year-old Brazilian skateboarder competing in the Paris Olympics, used sign language to quote Scripture before winning the bronze medal in the competition.

Leal, a Christian, won the bronze medal in the women's street skateboarding final on July 28. At one point during the competition, Leal smiled into the camera and signed John 14:6, which reads: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'".

The expression of faith was noteworthy given that French Olympians are barred from displaying religious symbols due to France's secularism principle. In fact, Rule 50 of the International Olympic Committee charter states the importance "on both a personal and a global level, that we keep the venues, the Olympic Village, and the podium neutral and free from any

form of political, religious, or ethnic demonstrations".

Speaking to reporters following her win, Leal recounted her dreams "of becoming a skateboard athlete" from a very young age.

"And here I am, with a second Olympic medal from the Games," she continued. "Once again, thank God I won a medal. I'm very happy to be here."

The skateboarder often thanks God and cites Scripture on her Instagram page. Her July 29 post featured a section of Joshua 1:9: "Didn't I command you? Be strong and courageous! Don't get carried away or discouraged".

Regarding her religious gesture at the games, Leal told the Brazilian media outlet UOL that "I did it because I do it in every competition".

"For me it is important; I am Christian, I believe a lot in God," she stated. "There I asked for strength and sent a message to everyone, that God really is the way, the truth, and the life."



Catholic skateboarder Rayssa Leal celebrating her bronze medal at the Paris Olympics. Picture: Daily Citizen.

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# Church apologises to priest abuse survivor

Renata Steffens

The Catholic Church has apologised for its treatment of a priest who was sexually abused as a young adult in the 1980s by a fellow member of the clergy.

Fr Paddy McCafferty gave evidence in the trial of former priest James Martin Donaghy, who was jailed in 2012 for 10 years. In a statement, the Bishop of Down and Connor, Alan McGuckian, said the priest was “not believed and supported by

the diocese when he should have been”.

He said he apologised “most sincerely” to Fr McCafferty. He said of the priest, “He showed courage and leadership in the face of incredulity, disbelief and animosity on the part of many, including clergy of the diocese”.

Donaghy from Lisburn, who is now in his 60s, was jailed for sex crimes against multiple victims. A review into the handling into the cases of Donaghy’s abuse by the late Bishop Patrick Walsh and the dio-

cese, was carried out last year.

In his statement, Bishop McGuckian said the diocese received a report in February. He said: “At the time of the abuse Fr McCafferty was a vulnerable young adult.

“It is clear now that the report of his abuse was eclipsed by the diocese’s focus on child sexual abuse. This should not have occurred. What Fr McCafferty reported in extensive written detail, in 2003, was clearly criminal.

“In contemporary Church law the sexual abuse of a vulnerable adult

victim is of no less magnitude than the abuse of a minor. This was not recognised at that time in the case of a dominant adult abuser and a vulnerable young victim.”

Extending the apology to all of Donaghy’s victims, the bishop added: “When James Donaghy was finally convicted there was a lack of demonstrable regret in the apology from the diocese for the wrongs done to his victims.

“I want to take this opportunity now to apologise sincerely to all the victims in that case and all cases.”

## Church needs to challenge media message on abuse

Staff reporter

Speaking on Joe Duffy’s Liveline programme last week, Deacon Frank Browne, a permanent deacon attached to Rathfarnham Parish, lamented at what he sees as a common “message that’s continually in the media” surrounding the Church and abuse; a message he believes the Church needs to robustly counter by outlining the successes of its safeguarding systems and the rigorous procedures currently in place.

Addressing misconceptions about the rates of abusers in the Church, Deacon Browne admitted that he gets wound up by some people’s ignorance when it comes to the estimated rates of abuse in the Church and that these misconceptions need to be challenged with facts.

“What really winds me up is when I’m at work and I talk to my younger social work colleagues or at my local GAA pitch and I ask how many priests do you think abused?” he said. “They never, ever have less than 30%. So there’s this notion that 30%, that’s basically one in three, abused. Bishop Diarmuid Martin

believed at the time of the Murphy Report that this figure was around 7%.

“I’ve certainly argued on my safeguarding committee that there does come a point where the facts need to be proactively promoted because when it’s a bad report they get publicised nationally, quite rightly.”

Speaking from his experience as someone who’s actively involved in the life of the Church, Deacon Browne explained that he believes the safeguarding procedures the Church has introduced are more robust when compared with those in any other community organisation he’s been involved in or even experienced in his career as a social worker.

“I get Garda vetted every three years in my voluntary role in the diocese,” he said. “If you go into a sacristy, you have to sign a sign-in book and now it’s not just for children but it’s also for vulnerable adults. The Church had to get its act together and all I’m saying is it certainly has.

“There’s this message that’s continually in the media and the Church has to be more robust in saying, these are the actual facts.”

## Church leaders condemn anti-Islamic protests in North

Brandon Scott

Church leaders in Northern Ireland say they are “appalled” by calls for “anti-Islamic” protests last weekend.

A number of social media posts were shared asking for people to gather and block roads in the greater Belfast area and elsewhere.

It came after two nights of violent protest in English towns last week, following a fatal knife attack on children in Southport.

The Bishop of Down and Connor, Alan McGuckian, said that in recent days there had been “disturbing scenes of violence, rioting and protest, often motivated by Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, organised and mobilised by social influencers”.

“It has come to my attention that there are also those in Northern Ireland, often cloaked with the anonymity of social media, that are similarly stoking the coals of fear and mistrust against Muslims,” he added.

“I make an appeal calling for all to remain calm, to seek peace and to promote community harmony.”

Rev Trevor Gribben, clerk of the

General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said “the pursuit of such hatred, and the incitement of others to hate and instil fear” was “abhorrent”.

Mr Gribben added that it was his “prayer” that people “seeking to undertake this misguided course of action think again”.

Rev Dr John Alderdice, president of the Methodist Church in Ireland, also joined the criticism of those calling for protests.

“The shocking knife attack in Southport last Monday where three children were killed and many others injured, saddened, and horrified us all.

“However, to use this attack as a pretext for anti-immigration protests is abhorrent.”

## Sr Briega McKenna begins tour around Ireland

Renata Milán Morales

Sr Briega McKenna, OSC, a renowned Catholic author and speaker, has started her tour across Ireland on August 5. Known for her books *Miracles Do Happen* and *The Power of the Sacraments*, she will visit Dundalk on August 16 and 17, before concluding her tour at St Patrick’s College in Maynooth on August 23.

Born in Ireland, Sr Briega joined the Sisters of St Clare at the age of fifteen. Despite suffering from rheumatoid arthritis for over three years, she experienced a miraculous healing when she was 24 during a Eucharistic celebration after being transferred to her community in Tampa, Florida. This event marked the beginning of her spiritual journey, as she later received the gift of healing through prayer.

In 1974, Sr Briega experienced another profound moment during prayer when she gained a deep spiritual insight into the priesthood’s sacred calling. Since then, she has been invited to speak and minister at retreats and conferences worldwide, sharing her insights with bishops and priests across many continents.

See next week’s issue for full interview with Sr Briega McKenna

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New clerical appointments in the Archdiocese of Armagh

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin announced clerical appointments for the diocese to take effect from Saturday, September 7. The appointments are as follows:

- Rev Callum Young CC, to conclude his role as assistant to the Rector of the Redemptoris Mater Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary, Dundalk, and while exercising pastoral responsibilities for the *Missio ad Gentes* community in Dundalk, to continue as CC, Saint Patrick’s, Holy Redeemer, and Holy Family Parishes, Dundalk.
- Rev Stephen Wilson CC, Saint Patrick’s and Holy Redeemer Parishes, Dundalk, also to be CC, Holy Family Parish, Dundalk.
- Rev Francesco Campiello, newly-ordained, continuing licentiate studies at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, Rome, also to be CC, Ardee & Colton Parish.
- Rev Davis Haberkorn, newly-ordained, to be assistant to the Rector, Redemptoris Mater Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary, Dundalk, and to provide Sunday supply cover in Lower Killeavy Parish.
- Rev James Adawai SMMM, on loan from the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy Congregation, Nigeria, to be CC, Saint Patrick’s Cathedral Parish, Armagh.
- Rev Kingsley Idoghor SMMM, on loan from the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy Congregation, Nigeria, to serve in the Diocese of Dromore.

### First Fr Willie Doyle Pilgrimage takes place in Knock

This year, for the first time, a special pilgrimage to Knock in honour of Fr Willie Doyle will take place on Sunday August 11 presided over by Bishop Tom Deenihan, Bishop of Meath. Knock Shrine, Ireland’s International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine, has granted permission for this official pilgrimage to take place each year on the second Sunday of August.

The pilgrimage will follow the traditional station: the Stations of the Cross, Rosary, Sacrament of the Sick for those who need it, and the Pilgrimage Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland, at 3pm, presided over by Bishop Deenihan.

Confession is also available, and adoration is ongoing at the Shrine’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel. The Association will also host an exhibition of Fr Willie’s relics, and information and devotional materials will be available. Members of the Association will be available to speak to pilgrims, as will the Postulator of the Cause.

## Sam at St Patrick’s



Fr Barry Matthews, Armagh captain Aidan Forke, Bishop Michael Router and Ciaran McKinney, teacher in the local Catholic school, stand outside of St Patrick’s Cathedral in Armagh with the newly-acquired Sam Maguire cup. Picture: Armagh Parish.



# Open conversation, yes, but some deterrent should remain...

Celebrities can often shine a light on a personal, or social, problem, and bring more focus to a troubling issue. And this, it seems, is what Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, intends when she speaks about suicide.

She has been publicly reflecting on her own experience of having suicidal thoughts when she was expecting her first child, Archie (during her time enfolded within the strictures of the British royal family). She told a TV interviewer on CBS that she wanted to be open about her experience so as to offer "healing" to those having similarly dark thoughts.

## Encourage

"I would never want someone else to feel that way.... If me voicing what I have overcome will save someone, or encourage someone in their life to really genuinely check in on them and not assume that the appearance is good, so everything's okay, then it's worth it." Meghan and Harry are involved in a supportive organisation called The Parents' Network, for those who have suffered loss.

Almost simultaneously, a study has emerged from Trinity College Dublin, headed by Dr Ronnie O'Toole, suggesting that



Mary Kenny

suicide in Ireland is probably 25% higher than recorded. Like Duchess Meghan, he wants a more open conversation about suicide, because "we are underestimating one of the leading causes of death...among men in particular." Suicide has risen from 2 to 2.5 per 100,000 people.

**“Ronnie O’Toole regrets that there is still a stigma associated with suicide – though, ‘hopefully that is diminishing’. But that’s tricky terrain as well”**

Under Irish law, a suicide verdict must be "beyond reasonable doubt", which means a degree of certainty. In other jurisdictions, suicide may be pronounced "on balance of probabilities".

I have indeed wondered if some of the single-vehicle car crashes, where no one else was involved, might involve a suicide.

Making suicide more eas-

ily labelled, however, can be tricky. I know of several cases – not just in Ireland – where the bereaved family did not want a verdict of suicide, preferring the ambiguity of uncertainty. They wanted to cling to the hope that an overdose had been a mistake, or the accident a mishap, because those bereaved by suicide can feel their loved one rejected them.

## Deterrent

Ronnie O'Toole regrets that there is still a stigma associated with suicide – though, "hopefully that is diminishing". But that's tricky terrain as well. If we want to reduce suicide, there has to be some deterrent or discouragement. The huge decrease in cigarette smoking has been achieved by depicting cigarettes as negative, unhealthy, even loathsome. Reducing suicide would also involve underlining its negativity, and awful impact on others.

Duchess Meghan and Dr O'Toole are right to emphasise the open conversation needed around this painful subject. But reducing the statistics, or even amending the verdicts, may prove much more challenging.



Meghan, Duchess of Sussex  
Photo: Fuzheado

## Irish priests and the diaspora

**A** propos Edna O'Brien, whose death has been widely marked, one of the most striking short stories she wrote was called 'Shovel Kings' (in the collection *The Love Object*). It is almost an exercise in reportage, plainly chronicling the life and hard times of an Irish labourer, and his ilk, working in the building industry in London and other English cities in the 1950s and 60s. These men reconstructed so much of England after the devastation of the Second World War, and their lives were often tough and insecure.

Edna alludes to the "big, white chapel" the labourer would attend, "where the Irish

priest gave thunderous sermons on a Sunday." I'm sure there were a few thunderous sermons, but there's another side to this story too. Brian Harvey, a noted historical archivist, has been researching the scores of Irish priests who looked after Irish emigrants during these decades. They set up entertainments, organised ballad sessions, and other social events for lonely emigrants. They acted as welfare personnel as well as chaplains in hospitals, prisons and psychiatric units. They helped with housing and social benefits. Most were associated with the Oblate order.

A measure of the service Irish emigrant priests gave



is indicated by the number of Masses said at the popular Kilburn Church of the Sacred Heart in Quex Road in the mid-1950s. 13 Masses each Sunday, attracting 13,000 Irish parishioners.

Hopefully, Brian Harvey will publish his account of the Irish priests who looked after emigrants at a time when the state showed no interest whatsoever in the diaspora.

**S**ummer being a time of lighter attire (though much depends on the clemency of the weather), there has been some discussion on social media about suitable and unsuitable dressing for attendance at Mass. Does it matter? I'm not sure, even though those worshippers in the flimsiest apparel – shorts, t-shirts, spaghetti-strap sundresses – make themselves

more noticeable.

But then, back in former days, much attention was paid to who was wearing a fetching hat at Easter, or who was appearing in a new ensemble on a special occasion. In my Dublin childhood, Catholics and Protestants even vied for fashionable competitiveness as they prepared to appear in 'Sunday best'.



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# The right reason



Imane Khelif celebrates after winning her quarter-final. Pic: AP.



Angela Carini leaving the ring after her fight with Khelif. Picture: John Locher/AP



Colette Colfer

Controversy has erupted at the Olympics over two competitors in women's boxing. Imane Khelif from Algeria and Lin Yu-Ting from Taiwan were disqualified from the International Boxing Association Women's World Boxing Championships in New Delhi last year after failing gender tests. However, both were cleared to compete in the Paris Olympics.

## Controversy

One journalist with RTÉ Prime Time, Jack McCarron, attempted to explain the controversy away claiming it had all arisen following 'a single statement from a Russian official'. However, the minutes of the March 2023 International Boxing Association (IBA) meeting (available online) says two separate laboratories in two separate countries found the boxers failed to meet eligibility rules and the decision to disqualify them was approved by a majority vote.

Just hours after the Prime Time article was published, the IBA issued a statement

saying the boxers did not meet eligibility criteria and were found to have a competitive advantage in the women's category. The IBA stated that Lin Yu-Ting did not appeal the decision and that Imane Khelif initially appealed the decision but withdrew the appeal during the process.

**“The rare DSD XY 5-ARD, for example, impacts development of external male sex organs and many therefore are registered female at birth”**

The IBA did not give further details about the tests. However, speculation is rising that the athletes have an XY chromosome (male) and possibly also a difference/disorder in sexual development (DSD). DSDs, sometimes called 'intersex' conditions, can impact hormones, external genitalia, reproductive organs, and/or chromosomes. The rare DSD XY 5-ARD, for exam-

**“The IBA stated that Lin Yu-Ting did not appeal the decision and that Imane Khelif initially appealed the decision but withdrew the appeal during the process”**

ple, impacts development of external male sex organs and many therefore are registered female at birth. The condition is often unknown until the child goes through puberty and male hormonal changes lead to the development of secondary sex characteristics.

Award-winning sports writer, Alan Abrahamson, says he has seen a letter sent by the IBA to the International Olympics Committee on June 5 2023 which says that Khelif's DNA is that of a male with XY chromosomes and that the tests found that both Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting have a 'male karyotype' (chromosomes).

## Rules

It is up to individual International Sports Federations (IFs) to establish rules for their sports in the Olympics. The IBA had been a recognised International Sports Federation but the International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended the IBA in 2019 and completely withdrew recognition of the IBA in June 2023 following concerns about IBA financing and governance.

IBA rules state that boxers can only compete against boxers of the same gender

**“They were probably going to be sued no matter what they did and so it was ‘better to be sued for the right thing rather than the wrong thing’”**

and that women competitors must have XX chromosomes. However, the IBA had no say in the rules for the 2024 Olympics. The IOC, instead, created the Paris 2024 Boxing Unit in order to take charge of Olympic boxing.

**“Other sports federations have taken steps to ensure fairness and safety in women's sports”**

A joint statement issued by the Paris 2024 Boxing Unit and the IOC says the gender of athletes in the Olympics is based on their passport. One IOC publication defines woman as 'a gender identity'. Another IOC Framework says that no athlete should be targeted for testing for their sex. Interestingly, the IOC do carry out tests for eligibility in weight categories.

Research shows that the performance advantage of males over females becomes significant at puberty with a

gap of 10-50% depending on sport. Males have, on average, 61% more muscle mass and about 90% greater upper body strength than females. Males also have up to 162% greater arm muscle-power.

Other sports federations have taken steps to ensure fairness and safety in women's sports. World Rugby is the recognised IF responsible for Olympic rugby. Their regulations state that anyone who has 'experienced the biological effects of testosterone during puberty cannot safely or fairly compete in women's rugby'.

The rules for Olympic swimming are decided by World Aquatics (previously known as FINA) who say they are committed to the separation of athletes into men and women's categories based on biological sex. They require all athletes to certify their chromosomal sex.

## Evidence

At the time of writing, both Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting are guaranteed an Olympic medal after progressing through the early rounds. Khelif's first round

match against Angela Carini ended after 46 seconds with a tearful Carini saying she had never been punched so hard.

Many people argue in favour of Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting competing in the women's category. Some say there is no evidence that the boxers have XY chromosomes. A straightforward and simple cheek swab followed, if necessary, by further tests would clear up this issue. Why are these tests not happening? And why do the IOC not recognise that males have a performance advantage over women?

**“They concluded that player welfare was their number one priority”**

Sports scientist Ross Tucker has explained that World Rugby, in drawing up their eligibility rules, realised they were probably going to be sued no matter what they did and so it was 'better to be sued for the right thing rather than the wrong thing'. They concluded that player welfare was their number one priority and therefore any male who had gone through male puberty would not be eligible to compete in the women's category. It's time for the IOC to follow their lead. Women's safety in Olympic boxing is on the line.



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# Unwanted babies being remembered at Mass



Dualta Roughneen

I hear it quite often at Mass now as part of the Prayers of the Faithful or the General Intercessions: 'We pray particularly for the unborn...' It struck me recently about how increasingly important this is becoming in a secular world. There are a shrinking number of areas where the unborn child is considered as a human person, requiring protection or support.

Yes, almost all reasonable people wish for a healthy pregnancy for themselves or for their friends or family. Even a stranger they come across carrying a child, a particular sense of warmth and good wishes are evinced.

But the caveat now is that this sense of goodwill towards the unborn child comes with a caveat: it is only when the child is a wanted child. Choice, parental choice, of whether they want their unborn child is the paramount consideration.

The General Intercessions are not couched in any caveats. We do not pray only for the unborn child that is desired and wanted by his/her parents. We pray for them all. But in particular, we dedicate these Intercessions towards people who particularly need our prayers.

## Numbers

In the current cultural climate, here in Ireland and across the 'developed' world, the unborn child is at particular risk. In Ireland in 2023 there were 54,678 births and there were 10,033 abortions carried out.

Year on year, the number of abortions has increased from 2,911 in 2018, the year Ireland voted to remove the 8th amendment to the Constitution. This is more than a three-fold increase in reported abortions and is likely to be much higher through the use of abortifacients that are much more readily available than previously.

Campaigners warned in 2018 that the abortion rate would increase to over 10,000 and that it would likely compare to the UK where one-



A speaker addresses the crowd at this year's March for Life. Photo: Ellis Mulroy.

fifth of all pregnancies end in abortion. Ireland is not there yet but at 15% in 2023 compared to 5% in 2018, the trend is only in one direction, with government and campaigners looking for ways to further liberalise access and increase abortion numbers.

**“What this means is that the death of an unwanted baby is being normalised”**

At the same time, France voted to include a right to abortion into its constitution. The EU continues to seek to avenues to make abortion a fundamental right in Europe. Everywhere you turn, there is a growing clamour for more rights to abortion. Everywhere the unborn child turns, there is only danger.

**“While infant mortality has been brought down to 0.3% - or 3 deaths per 1,000 live births, our abortion rate is almost identical to the scandalous infant mortality rate of the 1900s”**

This is why the prayers of intercession for the unborn child are so important. Outside of faith in a greater being, very few care. Many within the Faith voted to remove the 8th Amendment to the Constitution, maybe through a sense of compassion because of the difficult cases that were given prominence in the media, but we do not really know.

Abortion is becoming commonplace. It is being normalised. What this means is that the death of an unwanted baby is being normalised.

The infant mortality rate in Africa is 4% or 40 out of every 1000 live births. Huge amounts of money are being invested in bringing this rate down. It was estimated at over 300 - or 30% - in 1950. That is huge progress to save the lives of babies.

In Ireland, infant mortality in 1900 was somewhere around 150-170 per 1000 live births. It was particularly bad in the squalor and tenements of Dublin. The irony is

now, while infant mortality has been brought down to 0.3% - or 3 deaths per 1,000 live births, our abortion rate is almost identical to the scandalous infant mortality rate of the 1900s.

## Threats

It is not a trope to state that being in the womb is now the most dangerous place for a child. At its most vulnerable, earliest, stages, it is particularly dangerous as the majority of abortions are carried out in the first trimester - 9,876 terminations took place in early pregnancy under section 12 of Ireland's abortion act.

It was risky already. Early miscarriages occurred for many reasons. But now the baby at foetal stage is a target. It is a threat. How can such a small powerless entity be any threat at all, even infants are not a threat, I hear you ask?

They are a threat to our modern lives. Our best laid plans of career, convenience and prosperity. They risk upsetting our life plans when they emerge at the most unexpected of times. We plan families for when we want them.

But being inside the womb is possibly no longer the most dangerous place for a baby at its earliest stages even with these statistics. Being outside the womb when the developing child is at its smallest is

**“To lose a wanted child is tragedy. To get rid of an unwanted one, a right - and in some extreme circles, a moment of celebration or liberation”**

becoming increasingly dangerous.

Whereas once there was a very open and contested debate regarding the status of the embryo in Ireland, the introduction of the Assisted Human Reproduction Act in 2024 has essentially determined - if the repeal of the 8th Amendment had not already - that official Ireland now views the embryo as a non-person.

**“Its value determined solely by the extent to which it is wanted or desired”**

The act regulates but explicitly allows for the experimentation and destruction of embryos by approved facilities. In a live case where a couple whose fertilised eggs had to be destroyed due to contamination at a fertility clinic, the solicitor for the defendant outlined that the contention that “these are or were or could ever have been babies” was at the heart of the

issue.

The Catholic Church affirms the position of modern embryology that the human embryo is a living, complete, whole, integrated, self-directing member of the human species who will, if given the proper environment, move itself along a trajectory of development to the next mature stage.

With each passing day, through acts of legislation, through cultural and social commentary, attitudes and practices, the humanity of the unborn child, whether embryo or foetus, is being eroded to the stage that it is now thought of in passing as bunch of cells, as a commodity, its value determined solely by the extent to which it is wanted or desired.

To lose a wanted child is tragedy. To get rid of an unwanted one, a right - and in some extreme circles, a moment of celebration or liberation.

With such changes happening rapidly, the need for our intercessions for the unborn becomes particularly important and urgent.



# Only a spark of faith can light a fire



Martina Purdy

A tweet from a Dubliner caught my eye the other day. “I’m an atheist,” he declared, “who grew up under the horrible yoke of Irish Catholic fundamentalism. Except here’s the thing: it was fine. Every Christian brother and priest I interacted with was perfectly decent.”

He also declared that he much preferred the Ireland of his youth to the modern nihilistic nation of today.

His remarks about “decent” priests and Christian brothers certainly challenges the present narrative, that our faith is a dark horror story of child abuse, repression, and control. Discussing the issue with a former “wildchild” from the “repressed” 1950s I got this response: “The Catholic Church never interfered with me having fun!”

## Patrick

As he is now back at Mass, we discussed the solutions to Ireland’s present faith crisis, where census figures show a sharp drop in those identifying as Catholics. I suggested we should be looking to St Patrick for inspiration. It was Patrick after all, who lit the fire of faith here. “The problem with Patrick,” said

my friend, “is that he is just too far back. People cannot relate.”

I beg to differ! Patrick was once a baptised youth who had little or no interest in faith. His message of faith, hope and love remains as relevant today as ever. What is more, as a saint, Patrick is eternal and as Apostle to the Irish, he has a special connection to us.

And, when you strip away all the legend, Patrick left us a great gift: a very personal account of his faith journey, his struggles, remarkable words, laced with scripture and God’s love, that echo down the centuries. Indeed his *Confessio* is easily accessible online.

**“Patrick’s path to true freedom began even before his miraculous escape - after which he returned to us in a spirit of forgiveness to teach us how to be truly free”**

He endured persecutions (pagans with swords), run-ins with corrupt Church authorities and betrayal. In an attempt to smear him, a friend broke the seal of confession.

Patrick, so human, had committed a grave sin before his conversion, when he finally woke up to his need for God.

*The Confessio* is quite inspirational and despite some puzzling cultural remarks, highly relatable.

Patrick reveals how he did not believe as a young man, and was not listening to his priests. It was only when he was trafficked in the most brutal way, and was taken to Ireland as a slave and had given up all hope of ever seeing his family again that he turned to God. Patrick, in trauma, began to pray. And that made all the difference, strengthening him and shielding him from the pains of cold and hunger.

Patrick’s path to true freedom began even before his miraculous escape - after which he returned to us in a spirit of forgiveness to teach us how to be truly free.

Patrick, for me, is the original culture warrior.

## Parallels

Ireland was then Hibernia (the land of winter), a pretty dark violent place: a place of human slavery, human sacrifice, a place where only the strong were free and outsiders were treated with suspicion.

Indeed when Patrick returned here as a bishop in 432AD, he was met by a man wielding a sword. Is modern Ireland, where atheism and all kinds of strange doctrines are taking root, so very different?

We devalue lives when we practise abortion and call it healthcare; many of our sons and daughters are enslaved to drugs; and there are growing tensions between the native

Irish and new arrivals.

Patrick’s was a revolution of tenderness. He shed no blood in his bid to convert the Irish. But Patrick, whose name means noble, was an authentic man of prayer on fire with God.

**“Our challenge as Christians is that many are now longer aware of their profound need for God”**

In Patrick’s time, the idols were pagan gods, as the Celts worshipped nature: the wind, water, sun and fire. In some ways that made it easier for Patrick: these people already knew their need for God because they were vulnerable to the elements. So he was pushing at an open door. Our challenge as Christians is that many are no longer aware of their profound need for God.

Patrick was on my mind as I set out on Sunday for an outdoor *Light the Fire* Mass, rosary and Eucharistic healing service in Ballintubber Abbey, the place where Patrick baptised the first Christians in Ireland. As pilgrim guides, Elaine Kelly, and I had a 30-strong busload of fervent souls. This new movement led by singer-songwriter Dana and her husband Damien Scallon was inspired by her new song for Patrick, *Light the Fire*. It reminds us how Patrick kindled a flame of faith, hope and love when at

Slane in 433AD, he lit the Paschal fire in defiance of the High King.

## Spark

In the past year, we have enjoyed inspired missions in parishes and last August, 4,000 pilgrims gathered with Archbishop Eamon Martin for *Light the Fire* at Slane.

As we set out from St Michael the Archangel in Belfast for Ballintubber there was a yellow weather warning. The morning office reading from Ezekiel should have been a clue as to the Lord’s intentions (despite our pleas for dry weather). “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will clean you from all your impurities and from all your idols.”

Archbishop Francis Duffy

spoke only to a drenched remnant of souls on Sunday. But he touched on something profound, the spiritual famine of our day and the three hungers: to know there is a God, to know God loves and cares for us, and to know that death is not the end.

These hungers, he said, can only be nourished by the flame of faith.

The Archbishop had to make several attempts to light the symbolic flame, and I was reminded of how hard it is to light a fire in the rain.

But it is not impossible. Certainly, no more impossible than a faithless teenager becoming the great apostle of faith.

It only takes a spark to light a fire.



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Archbishop Francis Duffy with three deacons (l-r) Deacon Pat Butterly, from Co. Louth, Deacon John Taaffe, Co. Louth, and Deacon James McLoughlin of the Tuam Diocese. Photo: Louis Walsh.



# Young mother gives birth after abortion pill reversal treatment

**Andy Drozdziak**

Catholic pro-life doctor Dermot Kearney is celebrating after a young mother gave birth to a healthy baby boy following abortion pill reversal treatment.

When the policy of allowing home abortions by taking pills was introduced in March 2020, many women expressed regret after taking the first of two pills, mifepristone, and searched for a reversal process. Dr Kearney, a cardiologist based in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead, prescribes progester-

one in an attempt to save the baby.

He said: "Wonderful news. Another baby (a beautiful boy) was born on July 31 to a beautiful courageous mother in the East of England who sought help with abortion pill reversal treatment in early pregnancy after regretting taking Mifepristone at 7 weeks gestation".

Since the legalisation of DIY home abortion telemedicine services in 2022, there has been a rise in women who quickly regretted taking the first abortion pill and are seeking urgent help.

At least 62 babies have been born in the UK after progesterone was prescribed, with Dr Kearney assisting in 29 such cases. He added that 'several more births (are) due in the coming weeks'.

Dr Kearney was blocked by the General Medical Council (GMC) from providing Abortion Pill Reversal treatment (APR) for up to 18 months in April 2021, but the ban was lifted in March 2022 after the treatment was found to be safe and the GMC found no evidence of any professional misconduct.

Worldwide, 5000 babies

are believed to have been born through APR, with the APR service in the UK beginning in 2020.

Dr Kearney has faced significant backlash on social media, with pro-choice activists labelling him a 'disgrace'. Dr Kearney accused abortion providers like BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service) of 'actively misinforming women that abortion pill reversal is not possible and that it is dangerous for women.'

In contrast, he said that 'the pro-life movement...is built upon truth, courage and love.'



Dermot Kearney

## UK cardinal writes letter in protest of Olympic opening ceremony



Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

**Staff reporter**

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has written to Monsignor Eric de Moulins-Beaufort from the Bishops' Conference of France to share his deep regret at the "scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity" during the Olympics' opening ceremony in Paris.

Archbishop de Moulins-Beaufort had already issued a statement expressing the French bishops' 'regret' at the controversial content during the opening ceremony on July 19, to which Cardinal Nichols gave his support.

The section in question closely resembled the biblical scene of Jesus Christ and his apostles at the last supper as depicted by Leonardo da Vinci. It included drag queens, a transgender model and a naked singer who played the role of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

The scene caused a widespread backlash from Christians, with Bishop of Paisley John Keenan sharing his 'shock' at the ceremony. The Bishops' Conference of France said, "This ceremony unfor-

tunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret.

"We are thinking of all the Christians on every continent who have been hurt by the outrageousness and provocation of certain scenes. We want them to understand that the Olympic celebration goes far beyond the ideological biases of a few artists."

Now Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the President of the Catholics Bishops' conference of England and Wales, shared his support for the bishops' position. He stated in his letter that the aim of the Olympics was to bring people together in a common ideal, but the ceremony's depiction of da Vinci's *Last Supper* had had the opposite effect.

Archbishop de Moulins-Beaufort responded by thanking the cardinal for the support of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and told him that his letter had been forwarded to the Olympic Organising Committee.

The Vatican has also criticised the opening ceremony. In a communiqué, the Holy See said that 'there should be no allusions ridiculing the religious convictions of many people'.

## Priest appeals for calm as violent protests grip UK



A police van set alight as trouble flares during a protest in Southport. Pic: PA.

**Staff reporter**

A Catholic priest has said that "violence is never the answer" after further scenes of unrest and anti-immigration protests took place across the UK.

The violent scenes in several towns and cities, including Middlesbrough, Rotherham, Bolton, Belfast, Liverpool and Southport, were sparked by the killing of three young girls in Southport at a Taylor Swift-themed dance event.

Cars and businesses were set alight in Belfast, whilst a Holiday Inn hotel which seeks asylum seekers in Rotherham was attacked. In Southport itself, garden walls were pulled down, bricks were thrown at police officers and windows at a local Mosque were smashed. Over 140 people have been arrested across the country.

Liverpool priest Fr Chris Thomas, who was a priest in Southport in the 1990s, spoke out against the violence.

"Violence is never the answer even in dreadful circumstances," Fr Chris told *The Irish Catholic*. "Violence simply breeds violence and damages already broken people. It frightens good people".

False information was spread across social media that the man who killed the three children was an Islamic asylum seeker. However, Police shared the news that Axel Muganwa Rudakubana, 17, born in Cardiff to parents from Rwanda, was charged in court with murder and attempted murder. Research showed that Rudakubana is not linked with Islam.

In several cities, following violent scenes, communities have come together to clean up and rebuild damaged property. In Southport, local residents gathered to fix the broken windows at the Al-Rahma Mosque.

Fr Chris Thomas said: "I have been so impressed by the people of Southport, who have broken the cycle of vio-

lence by reaching out healing one another. It can be our only response to violence."

Archbishop of Liverpool Malcolm McMahon, and Bishop Tom Neylon, Auxiliary Bishop of Liverpool, signed a joint statement expressing their 'shock, sadness and horror' with other local Christian leaders in Churches Together in Merseyside. "We commit ourselves afresh to standing against brutality and violence in every form and doing all we can to build safe, caring and strong communities," they said. Islamic and Jewish faith leaders also called for unity and peace in Liverpool.

Nationally, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer condemned the 'thuggery' and promised that rioters would 'regret' being involved. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said there would be a 'reckoning' for rioters as well as for those 'who whipped them up on social media.'



# Faith needs community to blossom



Breda O'Brien

Without wishing to re-hash the controversial tableau of the Last Supper at the Olympic Opening Ceremonies in Paris, at least we can be thankful that it has focused attention on how important the Eucharist is to Catholics. Knowledge of the Catholic faith is shallow indeed in Ireland. But perhaps one of the most striking illustrations of lack of knowledge came from a retreat giver, who organised a time of adoration of the Blessed Eucharist during a school retreat day. He carefully placed the Eucharist in a monstrance and thought he had done a good job of explaining the significance of Eucharistic adoration. One of the students came and said quite seriously to him that it was brilliant. The fact that they had to stare at a clock with no hands for that long had really changed his ideas about time.

Many people believe that all that is needed is knowledge of the Real Presence for people to appreciate it. But for faith to blossom, it needs to include being part of a community that connects faith to every aspect of life.

The recent US Eucharistic Revival, which began in 2022, and Eucharistic Congress, which concluded on July 21, are an interesting experiment in doing things differently, in a way that brings knowledge, faith, reflection and service together.

## Revival

Deeply concerned at research that appeared to show abysmal levels of knowledge about the Eucharist (although regular massgoers had much deeper insight) the US Catholic Bishops decided to institute a multi-pronged approach to revival.

For example, in May, 48 pilgrims set out from San Francisco, California; Bemidji, Minnesota; New

Haven, Connecticut; and Brownsville, Texas, to meet with tens of thousands of pilgrims at significant points along the way to Indianapolis for the Congress itself.

There were striking scenes along the routes of people falling to their knees as the Eucharist was venerated in procession. It generated not only media coverage but also inquiries from people wondering what this strange event was.

Pilgrimage is an ancient practice that involves both body and soul. *America* magazine describes how it encompassed everything from 'when Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York blessed the city with the Eucharist from a boat near the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor May 27 [to] hidden moments like when a man got out of a truck in the middle of Oregon, far away from any towns, and genuflected as the Eucharistic caravan passed.'

**“There was such unity at the Congress. Groups emphasising different spiritualities were present together as brothers and sisters, not rivals or enemies”**

It was a living, active, witness to faith but was also accompanied by parish programmes to increase faith and knowledge.

The Congress itself had 50,000 participants. My daughter and her fiancé were among them.

(They both work for 5 Stones, a small US creative agency, warehouse and customer service team that supports Catholic organisations. 5 Stones was responsible for designing the email marketing, social channels, web development, shipping/fulfilment, and the main logo for the events. But both would have been present at the Congress even without that connection.)

They described the moment when the Blessed Eucharist was finally carried into Lucas Oil Stadium, Indi-

anapolis, as spine-tingling. Bishop Andrew Cozzens, chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress, instituted a thirty-minute period of silent adoration when the only sounds that could be heard were those of the small children present.

Anecdotally, my daughter heard that it caused a minor panic among the sound technicians, who had never heard such silence in the stadium before.

Both my daughter and my future son-in-law were profoundly moved by the fact that at a time when both US society and the US Church can appear fractured and divided, there was such unity at the Congress. Groups emphasising different spiritualities were present together as brothers and sisters, not rivals or enemies.

## Service

There was a wealth of content. My US correspondents picked out in particular, Sr Josephine Garrett, a licensed counsellor, who with wit and wisdom incorporated psychology and spirituality. They also highly recommended Bishop Robert Barron and Anna Carter of Eden Invitation. The whole Revival epitomised moving from cultural Catholicism to intentional discipleship. It aimed to touch the heads, the hearts and the hands of people, to move them to service.

Was it perfect? Of course not. But Bishop Cozzens encouraged each of the pilgrims to walk with just one person when they got home, to help one person to deeper appreciation of the Christian message. If each of the participants takes him seriously, the Congress will not end but expand outwards in every increasing circles of grace.

It was hard not to contrast the tackiness of the Olympic Opening Ceremonies with the reverence of the Eucharistic Congress. Although Emmanuel Macron declared that the opening ceremonies in Paris will be remembered for 100 years, the Eucharistic Congress has much more chance of being truly life-changing.



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# Former parent representative exposes HSE's problematic child disability service



Matt Letourneau

If your child had a disability, wouldn't you want to give them the best treatment, support and services available? According to the *Disability Federation of Ireland*, over 1.1 million people in Ireland have a disability – 22% of the population – and this group encounters more health, educational, employment and housing problems than the general public. However, in Ireland, getting help for this vulnerable population may be harder than expected. In fact, recent criticism has been mounted against the HSE over the organisation's practices and treatment of disabled children and their families. This comes after the implementation of HSE's 'Progressing Disability Services' (PDS), a relatively

new model that some claim isn't backed up by evidence and may have negative effects on families. Like any government initiative, the model has its pitfalls, causing organisations like Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) to call for "immediate and substantial reform." However, problems stemming from HSE's new model run much deeper than one would initially expect, and finding solutions will not be a simple task.

## An experimental model

To investigate the cracks in PDS and figure out how they can be fixed, one must first understand what the model entails and why it was conceived in the first place. PDS was first theorised and created by HSE to improve the equity and efficiency of the disability support

system, making sure every disabled child and their family would have help. To do this, the Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) created a national steering group, consisting of three parent representatives, social and healthcare professionals, consultants and policy-makers to improve this model and ensure everything runs smoothly. Rebecca O'Riordan, a mother of a disabled child, an activist and a recently resigned CDNT Steering Group parent representative, told *The Irish Catholic*: "The services were going to be provided by 91 children disability network teams, which were local to the children. They were going to provide a needs-based service, not a diagnosis-based service. It would provide more equitable access and there would be no therapists in the schools. The

**“Although there have been suggestions from both individuals and organisations, there are no clear-cut solutions to the problems Ms O’Riordan divulged”**



children would access all their services within the community. However, there was absolutely no evidence or research to suggest that that was a good idea."

Before this model, there were experts in schools to help these children multiple times a week. Now, with a shortage of staff on the Children's Disability Network Teams (groups of experts assigned to help specific children in PDS), there are allegedly not enough resources to cater to each child. According to Ms O'Riordan, special needs kids are "competing with 600 other children for the attention of three therapists." When PDS was first proposed, the HSE had high hopes for this new, experimental model. However, without enough expert staff, it is faltering in practice. "We have a load of academics theorizing about what utopia might look like, but they've no idea what the actual ground looks like or how it might be delivered," Ms O'Riordan illustrated, "Equality isn't equity. Some children need more, you know."

## Voicing concerns

Along with Aisling Byrne, another parent representative in the CDNT Steering Group, Ms O'Riordan resigned from her representative position in July. "The reason for our resignation was that we knew that progressing disability wasn't working because we had personal experience with [disabilities]. There was a problem with the model itself, and they were refusing to accept that, even though we've now got the evidence," Ms O'Riordan said. Although she would address systematic problems during meetings, Ms O'Riordan said her concerns were always swept under the rug by the administration. Frustrated, she felt there was nothing left to do but leave.

When she stopped working for the steering group, Ms O'Riordan went public with many of the organisation's wrongdoings, claiming they

did everything from breaking the Disability Act to initiating unnecessary, costly court cases. However, one of the most disturbing claims was that families in the system were retaliated against and threatened if they criticised the organisation's methods. For example, if a parent advocated for their child by calling the system out, the organisation would threaten to withdraw their services or refer the family to Tusla. "It was just used as another form of intimidation and bullying," Ms O'Riordan said, "The relationship has broken down, and they'll just move you to another team to start all over again. And then, you lose all the years on the waitlist that your child had."

**“It's important for me, as Minister, to also maintain an open channel with parents on the issues they are raising”**

Furthermore, behind closed doors, the organisation allegedly didn't take responsibility for their actions and, instead, blamed it on the parents of disabled children. "In the meetings, we were being told the real reason that they can't deliver this kind of a program is because families keep speaking to the media, and it's creating a negative narrative," Ms O'Riordan revealed. Undoubtedly, parents felt stuck, as the organisation meant to help them was allegedly treating them as the enemy. The fact that parents felt like they had to turn to the media shows the extent of their desperation under the boot of this system.

From these accounts, it may seem that the HSE doesn't regard parental input, but the

**“They were going to provide a needs-based service, not a diagnosis-based service. It would provide more equitable access and there would be no therapists in the schools. The children would access all their services within the community”**

organisation still maintains that parents play a helpful part in PDS. In a statement from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Minister of State for Disability Anne Rabbitte commented on the resignations. She thanked Ms Byrne and Ms O'Riordan for their help and then stated: "The involvement of parents is an important part of efforts being made to enhance disability services for children and families. I look forward to continuing parent representation under the Roadmap structures as its implementation progresses, and I have received assurances from the HSE of their commitment to having parents represented at future meetings. I am also working to host a meeting of parent representatives in the coming months as it's important for me, as Minister, to also maintain an open channel with parents on the issues they are raising." According to Ms O'Riordan, this meeting has been in the works for seven months now, but a spokesperson from the DCEDIY told *The Irish Catholic* it will happen "in the very near future." Moreover, Minister Rabbitte agreed to hold a meeting later this month with Ms O'Riordan and Ms Byrne to discuss their concerns.

## Reforming the system

Although there have been suggestions from both individuals and organisations, there are no clear-cut solutions to the problems Ms O'Riordan divulged. In a statement from Down Syndrome Ireland, the organisation calls for a review of the entire system, including "families, professionals, and independent bodies" to find a method of reform. Ms O'Riordan also hopes for an investigation, measuring both the effectiveness of PDS and examining how they got to this point. Moreover, she wishes that the issue will stop being politicised and that the HSE will put its ego aside to focus on what's best for children with disabilities. "A lot of these children don't have somebody to advocate for them," Ms O'Riordan said, "So we need to advocate for all of them."

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# The legionary mission of the Miraculous Medal

Renata Milán Morales

**T**he Legion of Mary, a worldwide Catholic lay organisation, operates with firm devotion under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Central to their mission is the distribution of the Miraculous Medal, a small yet powerful sacramental with a history dating back to 1830. For legionaries like Fabiola Amorim, the mission is not just about handing out medals - "it's about encouraging faith and hope in a modern world that often seems lacking both."

## Symbol

The story of the Miraculous Medal begins in the year 1830 in Paris, a time when France was fighting against the devastating effects of a cholera epidemic. The disease took over 20,000 lives in Paris alone and left society in a state of fear and desperation. During this time, a young novice named Catherine Labouré, residing at the Daughters of Charity, experienced a series of apparitions from the Blessed Virgin Mary. In these apparitions, Mary instructed Catherine to create a medal illustrating her likeness, promising that those who wore it with faith would receive numerous blessings, "Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck."

The medal, later known as the Miraculous Medal, became a sign of hope and comfort during a time of suffering and uncertainty. The symbolism of the medal carried a profound message of divine intervention and maternal care. During this period of time, reports of miraculous healings and conversions attributed to the medal began to surface.

Almost 100 years after, on September 7, 1921, in Dublin, Frank Duff founded the Legion of Mary, inspired by the disci-

**“In a world often challenged by uncertainty, the Miraculous Medal is a sign of hope, faith, and charity - a proof of the enduring power of devotion and the mission of the Legion of Mary”**

plined structure of the Roman army and a deep devotion to Mary. The Legion was established with a mission to serve God through prayer and active service, embodying a spiritual warfare in favour of evangelisation and charity. At the heart of this mission is the Miraculous Medal, which legionaries distribute as a tangible symbol of Mary's intercessory power and God's grace.

Fabiola Amorim, a dedicated member of the Legion, exemplifies this mission through her work on the streets of Dublin. Armed with a collection of Miraculous Medals, she and her fellow legionaries engage in what they describe as "actual warfare for Christ." Their battlefield is not a physical one but a spiritual engagement with individuals from all walks of life. "The importance of the Miraculous Medal lies in its ability to touch souls and spread love to everyone, regardless of their religious background," Fabiola explains.

**“For Fabiola, this encounter reaffirmed her commitment to the Legion and her faith, providing a sense of divine reassurance”**

Fabiola's experiences highlight the profound impact that a simple act of offering a medal can have. One notable encounter on Capel Street involved two young men from Portugal, identifying them-

selves as Jehovah's Witnesses. Though they initially declined the medal, they engaged in a meaningful exchange with Fabiola, reading aloud a Bible verse that resonated deeply with her personal journey. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," they quoted from Matthew 6:33. For Fabiola, this encounter reaffirmed her commitment to the Legion and her faith, providing a sense of divine reassurance.

## Dedication

Fabiola's initial hesitation to join the Legion due to her demanding ACCA studies gave way to a renewed sense of purpose after this encounter. She realised that her dedication to God and the Legion would not detract from her studies but rather enhance her life through the blessings of faith. Her success in becoming a qualified accountant is, in her words, "by the grace of Our Lady," illustrating the transformative power of faith and dedication.

The Legion of Mary is structured into local units known as *praesidia*, where members gather weekly to engage in spiritual formation and community service. Young legionaries, trained in virtues through service, prepare spiritual gift packs as tokens of love and devotion. Their contributions are celebrated annually at the 'Acies ceremony', where members consecrate themselves to the Blessed Mother.

In Dublin, Fabiola and her fellow legionaries are a familiar presence, often seen in

pairs along the streets, engaging with passersby and offering the Miraculous Medal as a bridge to faith. "Engaging in conversations with Catholics presents an opportunity to invite them to join the Legion of Mary, as it feels like Mary herself is calling them to join her army," Fabiola remarks. The Legion's persistent presence encourages individuals to reconsider their spiritual paths, fostering a renewed interest in the Catholic faith.

Through the Legion's work, the Miraculous Medal continues to be a powerful instrument of grace, serving as a reminder of the Blessed Mother's intercession and God's abiding love. In a world often challenged by uncertainty, the Miraculous Medal is a sign of hope, faith, and charity - a proof of the enduring power of devotion and the mission of the Legion of Mary. These legionaries affirm the medal's role not just as a symbol, but as a bridge connecting hearts to the power of God's love.



Fabiola Amori and Shevaum (legion of Mary) pictured with Fr James



Fabiola Amori and Shevaum pictured with Fr John



A group of legionaries before starting the street evangelisation



Fabiola Amori and Luca before starting the 'street evangelisation' Photos: Fabiola Amori

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# Lough Derg, A profound journey of penance and renewal

Renata Steffens and  
Renata Milán Morales

St Patrick's Purgatory, also known as 'Station Island' or 'Lough Derg', is a pilgrimage site located in Co. Donegal, Ireland. Known for its rich tradition of penitence and prayer, it offers pilgrims a unique opportunity to step away from the chaos of daily life and immerse themselves in a deeply spiritual experience. This sacred island continues to attract pilgrims from around the world.

Lough Derg is popular for its two main pilgrimage experiences: the one-day retreats in May, August, and September, and the three-day pilgrimage that takes place in June, July, and August. The three-day pilgrimage, in particular, is a journey into personal depth and spiritual enlightenment.

The *Irish Catholic* recently sent two reporters to experience the second day of the three-day pilgrimage. They discovered that Lough Derg is not merely a physical destination but a spiritual retreat where pilgrims can leave behind the mundane world and enter a sacred space dedicated to reflection and renewal.

## Immersion

The pilgrimage begins with an immediate immersion into a sacred experience that transcends physical presence.

Boats run from 10:30am to 3:00pm, transporting pilgrims across the lake to the island, symbolising a departure from their everyday lives.

**“As we found in St Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*, 'For one does not arrive at virtue except through knowledge of self'”**

Fr La Flynn, prior of Lough Derg, explains, “The symbolism of the crossing of the boat, the crossing of the water, is part of that.” The act of crossing by boat signifies leaving behind the ordinary world and stepping into a space dedicated to spiritual renewal. This simple yet profound act marks the beginning of the pilgrims' journey into self-discovery. As we found in St Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*, “For one does not arrive at virtue except through knowledge of self.”

Upon arrival, pilgrims begin the 'Stations', a unique form of prayer that requires physical effort as they walk around 'penitential beds'-rocky outdoor paths - starting at 11:00am. Pilgrims must complete at least three Stations before 9:00 PM, engaging in a spiritual discipline that encourages introspection and deep prayer.

The opening Mass at 6:30pm and the introduction



Fr La Flynn, Prior of Lough Derg.  
Photos: James McLoughlin

to 'The Vigil' at 10:15pm mark significant milestones on the first day. During the vigil, pilgrims recite the rosary and pray Stations until approximately 6:30am the following day. This experience of staying awake through the night, fasting, and engaging in prayer deepens their connection with the divine, providing a powerful immersion into the spiritual activities that define the Lough Derg

experience. Much like Moses removing his shoes before the burning bush, the acknowledgment and healing of our brokenness becomes a key part on our journey towards holiness.

## Camaraderie

Contrary to expectations of fatigue and weariness, the reporters were struck by the joy and camaraderie among the pilgrims on the second

morning. Despite the physical demands of the pilgrimage, many pilgrims wore smiles, highlighting the transformative power of shared faith and community.

“You're never really on your own. You're never alone in that particular sense,” Fr La noted, emphasising the strong sense of community fostered on the island. Pilgrims from various backgrounds come together, forming connections that transcend differences. Many leave with newfound friendships, having bonded through their shared spiritual journey.

**“One of the most transformative aspects of the Lough Derg pilgrimage is its emphasis on vulnerability and spiritual growth”**

James McLoughlin, a member of the Lough Derg team, highlighted the diversity of the pilgrims, noting that from July 26-28, 235 pilgrims made the journey to Station Island. While the majority came from Ireland, pilgrims from England, Scotland, France, Argentina, Brazil, and Nigeria also participated, underscoring the global fascination of this sacred site.

One of the most transformative aspects of the Lough Derg pilgrimage is its emphasis on vulnerability

and spiritual growth. Pilgrims begin their journey by renouncing worldly attachments, embracing a form of vulnerability that Fr La describes as essential to the experience. This act of surrender allows pilgrims to open themselves to spiritual insights and divine guidance.

The pilgrimage's physical demands serve as a metaphor for the spiritual challenges faced by participants. Standing in front of a cross with open arms, a gesture initially met with hesitation, becomes an act of spiritual openness by the end of the pilgrimage. This practice is reminiscent of ancient Celtic monks' 'cross bedroom', symbolising a willingness to let go of the senses and embrace spiritual enlightenment. As Fr La explains, “They say, 'I renounce the world, the flesh of the devil'.”

## Challenges

Despite the challenges posed by the pilgrimage, including physical exhaustion and the notorious midges, pilgrims remain focused on the spiritual rewards. As Fr La emphasised, “People don't come for the stones or the midges. People come because something more important is up.”

Lough Derg embodies the spirit of perseverance, a value supported by Pope Francis as essential in today's world. Fr La reflected on this, noting that the pilgrimage teaches pilgrims to persist through challenges, both physical and spiritual,



Lough Derg Basilica



to attain personal and spiritual fulfilment.

**“Many find themselves drawn back to Lough Derg, captivated by its blend of tradition, community, and spiritual depth”**

This perseverance is evident in the statistics. Approximately 88% of those starting the three-day pilgrimage are returning pilgrims. This significant retention rate speaks to the profound impact Lough Derg has on those seeking to reconnect with their faith

and themselves.

“It’s easier to talk about the difficulties than to talk about the rewards,” Fr La acknowledged. Yet, it is the personal insights, spiritual growth, and sense of renewal that keep pilgrims returning year after year. Many find themselves drawn back to Lough Derg, captivated by its blend of tradition, community, and spiritual depth.

**Metaphor**

The physical journey on Lough Derg is a metaphor for spiritual growth and renewal. The experience invites pilgrims to detach from worldly distractions and embrace a journey that is both demanding and profoundly rewarding.

Whether it’s the act of crossing the water, the

shared prayers, or the connections made with fellow pilgrims, Lough Derg continues to be a place where individuals find peace and renewal. It offers a sacred space where people can find not only a sense of serenity but also a piece of Heaven on Earth.

In the words of Fr La, “Lough Derg is a journey into personal depth and discovery,” a place where pilgrims can leave behind the mundane and embark on a transformative spiritual pilgrimage. Through perseverance, vulnerability, and community, pilgrims experience the profound rewards of this sacred pilgrimage, leaving with a renewed sense of purpose and a closer connection to the divine.



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# The Knock witnesses are saints, says ancestor's great granddaughter



Renata Steffens

**K**nock Shrine is one of those places where you do not need to be very religious to feel that there is a holy presence around. As the story goes, in the late 1870s the figures of Our Lady, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist were seen standing out from the church gable.

"They stood a little distance out from the gable wall, and, as well as I could judge a foot and a half or two feet from the ground", Mary Byrne, considered the chief witness said in her testimony. "The third figure appeared to be that of St John the Evangelist", she explained, "I saw a statue at the chapel of Lecanvey, near Westport, Co. Mayo, very much resembling the figure which stood now before me".

The statement also mentioned the apparition of the lamb that today is part of the shrine logo. "Above the altar and resting on it, was a lamb, standing with the face towards St John."

## Experience

Dolores Lee, great grandchild of Mary Byrne told *The Irish Catholic* Mary McLoughlin, the priest's housekeeper "came to visit them in Mary Byrne's home. She was there about 15-20 minutes and then she said she was going back home.

"They walked over, past the church and Mary Byrne said to Mary McLoughlin. 'I didn't know Archdeacon Cavanagh had got new statues', because there was a bright light around the gable wall, and Ms McLoughlin said 'I don't think he did get any statues. I don't know either, he didn't tell me'". In that moment, Ms Byrne went home, which was just 100 yards from the church and "told her mam Margaret Byrne, her sister Maggie, little niece Catherine Murray, and her brother Dominick Byrne. They all congregated by the gable and they prayed the rosary", explained Ms Lee.

Ms Lee told this paper, that

**“The apparition’s stories were not told every day, but the information was carefully passed down the generations. ‘We accepted it. Really accepted that Grandma O’Connell had seen’ the apparitions”**

during the two hours the apparitions were there, over twenty people witnessed it. However, only fifteen gave testimonies, which were deemed credible. Most of the witnesses "didn't give a witness statement because some people were probably shy, and they didn't speak English as their first language."

Ms Lee's grandmother Mary O'Connell was Mary Byrne's only daughter. "when we were children, my grandmother, Mary O'Connell lived with us. I'm the eldest of five children. My dad was Mary O'Connell's son. And we lived with her in our home here near Castlebar."

**“Every time I’m here in Ireland, I go to Knock and I go to pray. All my family on both sides of my relations, they all go to Knock to visit”**

According to Ms Lee, they used to go to Knock with her grandmother, to visit Jim O'Connell, who was Mary Byrne's eldest son, and every time they were in Knock they would go to the church and pray by the apparition gable.

Today, Ms Lee lives in England, but "every time I'm here in Ireland, I go to Knock and I go to pray. All my family on both sides of my relations, they all go to Knock to visit. One of my cousins, they go once a week, they live in a town called Claremorris."

The apparition's stories were not told every day, but the information was carefully passed down the generations. "We accepted it. Really accepted that Grandma O'Connell had seen" the apparitions.

"We visited Knock and we have a very strong faith in our family. I believe that Mary Byrne is an absolute saint. I totally believe it. We all pray to her when we're in difficulty," said Ms Lee. "We believe that



Descendants of Knock Apparition Witness, Mary (Byrne) O'Connell gathered at Knock Basilica for Mass on July 29, 2024. Photo Sinead Mallee.



Direct descendants of Knock Apparition Witness, Mary (Byrne) O'Connell gathered at the Apparition Chapel, Knock Shrine on July 29, 2024. Photo Sinead Mallee.

all of the witnesses are saints because of what they saw in knock."

"One thing I would like and all my family would like, [is] if the Vatican actually recognised Knock for what it is, like Fatima or Lourdes," she told this paper. "I read about people that have been to Knock and that they feel that they've been cured, it hasn't actually been recognised fully yet. So that hurts my feelings quite a lot."

In 2020, Ms Lee had breast cancer and prayed to Mary Byrne. Two years ago, she "went to Knock and I had the blessing of the sick at the 3pm Mass in the basilica. I actually felt that something very spiritual happened to me that day.

"Because of COVID I couldn't come to Ireland. I had all my treatments, I lost my hair, I had a mastectomy, I had chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and when I went to Knock something happened to me when I had the blessing. I'm not saying I'm cured, but I feel something unreal."

## Connection

Unfortunately, breast cancer is part of the family's history, as according to Ms Lee, "Mary Byrne also had breast cancer, but she did pass away from it at the age of 86. She had it for two years before she died."

But cancer was not the only thing to enter the generations in Ms Lee's family, faith is a

big part of the Byrne lineage. "We all have that a strong connection [to Knock] and faith. I mean, I think it's innate in us, it's in our DNA. Probably from Mary Byrne, probably from Mary.

**“I felt she was sending me a sign that she is a saint”**

"In 2022, I read that the feast of Our Lady of Knock was going to be moved to August 17 instead of when she appeared on August 21," because the Vatican selected August 21 as

St Pius X feast. Ms Lee was very disappointed and decided to pray to Mary Byrne.

"I started praying to Granny O'Connell, I call her 'O'Connell' because she married O'Connell. I said, 'Granny, I wish someday you would become a saint.' And within a few minutes, I took up my phone, I was just flicking through Facebook and a man posted a photograph of Mary Byrne O'Connell with seven of her grandchildren who she lived with in Knock, and the photograph was taken on August 17, 1932 and I was praying to her on the August 17, 1922. So I felt she was sending me a sign that she is a saint. And not just our grandmother, but all of the witnesses."



# Knock witnesses the hope for the future

**Renata Steffens**

**T**he Annual Grandparents pilgrimage to Knock took place on July 28, being “one of the loveliest days at the Shrine,” according to Nóirín Mulhern, Communications and Marketing officer at Knock Shrine.

“There was a lovely atmosphere because it was across the generations we have. To see all the grandparents and their little grandchildren with them, it is a

wonderful day, and it does give you hope for the future,” said Ms Mulhern.

“Grandparents have a huge role to play in the passing on of the faith to their grandchildren,” she said. “Children were encouraged to write prayers for their grandparents, reinforcing the day’s theme of connection.” Many families visited the Knock Museum, where grandparents shared their own childhood memories of the shrine, ensuring the tradition is passed on.



The Burke Family from Newbridge, Co. Kildare during the grandparents pilgrimage.



Angela Atkins, Mariane Fewer and Helen Grace during the grandparents pilgrimage in Knock Shrine on July 28.



Therese Madden from Downpatrick, Co. Down and Brigid Byrne from Dublin.



The Mediela Family from Poland during the grandparents pilgrimage.



John and Rose Maughan from Mayo with daughter Ruby on the grandparents pilgrimage.



The Griffin Family from Ballyhaunis and Manchester attended the grandparents pilgrimage.



Holy Cross Dominican Group from Tralee during the grandparents pilgrimage.



The two sisters, Noreen Mulholland and Breidge McDonald from Co. Down went to the Grandparents Pilgrimage in Knock together.



Gerry and Ann Williams during the Grandparents pilgrimage in Knock Shrine on July 28.



Roisin Doherty from St Johnston, Co. Donegal during the grandparents pilgrimage.



Mary and Peter Murray from Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone on the grandparents pilgrimage.



Mary and John Goldsberry from Tipperary.



Vincent and Mary Hartnett from Rylane, Co. Cork.

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# Out&About

## A glorious graduation in Kerry



**KERRY:** Graduation of the May 2024 Clinical Pastoral Education Group at University Hospital Kerry on July 23.



**CLARE:** Fr Martin Shanahan with Inagh Tidy Towns members Ray O'Shaughnessy, Eileen Ryan, Angela Malone and Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer Barry O'Loughlin. Members of the ten Clare parishes working together on the 'Return to Nature Clare Church Biodiversity Project'. Photo: Rocket Science Media.



**CLARE:** Clarecastle Tidy Towns with Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer at Clarecastle Church, members of the 'Return to Nature Clare Church Biodiversity Project'. Photo: Rocket Science Media.

### IN SHORT

#### Armagh team received rosaries before All-Ireland win

On July 25 the Dromintee and Jonesborough Rosary Group presented over 70 single-decade and ten full rosary beads to Paul McArdle, chairperson of the Armagh County GAA and Ms Bridget McGeeney, mother of Kieran McGeeney, Armagh manager, so they could give each player a rosary ahead of the All-Ireland win by the county.

The handover of the rosaries happened at the Carrickdale Hotel, where members of the Rosary Group have been meeting to say the rosary since May 24. Una and Deidre Goss, Carmel Daly, Ethna Woods, Peadar and Cathy McKewon, and Deacon George Kingsnorth are some of the members present.

Saying the rosary together has been an

achievement and a form of meditation for the group. During the meeting on July 25, the group shared experiences about Medjorgorie and their faith.

The group meets every Thursday from 8pm to 9.30pm in the Parish Pastoral Hall in Jonesborough. Everyone is welcome to participate, to pray and have some tea, biscuits, chat and learn techniques in making rosaries.

#### Clare churches embracing nature

Ten parishes got together with Clare County Council and Local Biodiversity Action Fund administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to carry out biodiversity actions on twelve church grounds across the county with a project called 'Return to Nature Clare Church Biodiversity Project'.

In 2023, the Irish Bishops' Conference agreed

on a policy that parishes would return 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030.

Last September, Barry O'Loughlin, Clare County Council's Biodiversity Officer gave a presentation of the potential biodiversity actions that could be undertaken on church grounds to Laudato Si' Working Group member, Jane Mellett and the Bishop of Killaloe, Fintan Monahan.

The Diocese of Killaloe and Clare County Council signed up ten parishes to the 'Return to Nature Clare Church Biodiversity Project' through the diocesan network. The project also aims on training community and parish priests with training on biodiversity.

Local parish priests and community members are working together to deliver biodiversity actions on church grounds, such as implementing a pollinator plan for each church yard, erecting bat roost boxes on trees, installing bird tables, bird feeders and more.

#### Kells Priory's ancient voice

The event entitled 'Ancient Voices at Kells Priory' had its inaugural evening on Saturday, July 27. The event connected the community to their local history through contemporary performances.

The first show featured Ben MacCaoilte and Éire Ní Fhaoláin. Mr MacCaoilte is a bilingual poet and performer who writes both in Irish and English. He performed his poetry accompanied by the harp and fiddle of Éire Ní Fhaoláin, and saxophone of special guest Cuan Duignan from Johnswell.

"We knew we were onto a winner when the event sold out in advance", organiser Liam O'Sullivan told *Kilkenny Live*. "It's a very special place, visually jaw dropping yet serene and peaceful. Kells Priory oozes 800 years of history and stories to be told. We know artists will want to experience what it's like to perform here", he concluded.



Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LOUTH:** Dromintee and Jonesborough Rosary Group presented over 70 single-decade and ten full rosary beads to Armagh GAA club representatives.



**DONEGAL:** Toni and Niamh from the Diocese of Derry group on their second day of the three-day pilgrimage in Lough Derg on July 27.



**DONEGAL:** Veronica McKenna and Colette Rogers from Co. Derry on their second day of the three-day pilgrimage in Lough Derg on Saturday, July 27.



**DONEGAL:** Dylan, Ciaran, Niamh, Niall and Luca, from the Diocese of Derry group on their second day of the three-day pilgrimage in Lough Derg on July 27.



**LOUTH:** Paul McArdle and Bridget McGeeney receiving rosaries for Armagh GAA club from Dromintee and Jonesborough Rosary Group.



**DUBLIN:** Bishop Paul Dempsey attended talk 'The Way of Wonder' in Rathmines with American speaker Bill Donaghy on Friday July 26. The event was organised by local youth group and Pure in Heart.

**ANTRIM**

Sunday candlelit Mass with Taizé chant. Re-launching Sunday, August 18 at 6pm 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 12.30pm. 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.

**DERRY**

Mary's Meals are organising a 'Two Bridges Walk' on August 11 over the Foyle Bridge and Peace Bridge. Meet in Sainsbury's car park at 11.45am to begin the walk. You can register at [Bit.ly/stepbystepwalk](https://bit.ly/stepbystepwalk). For more info contact Helen Quinn on 078 1444 1701. To find out more about Mary's Meals please visit <https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/>

**DUBLIN**

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](mailto: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.

**KILDARE**

Youth 2000's 'Summer Festival' happens from August 15-18 in Clongowes Wood College. The festival will have some great talks and offers an opportunity to meet other young Catholics and explore your faith. It will have free buses and the payment is donation only. Everyone aged 16-35 is welcome.

**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.

**LOUTH**

Divine Mercy Prayer Chaplet in Church of St James, Grange every Sunday evening from 7.30pm 8.00pm. Everyone welcome.

**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 9.30am Mass. New adorers are always welcome.

**ROSCOMMON**

'Elphin Diocese's Morning Pilgrim Walk' from Castlereagh 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](https://elphindiocese.ie/walk-2knock)

**SLIGO**

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

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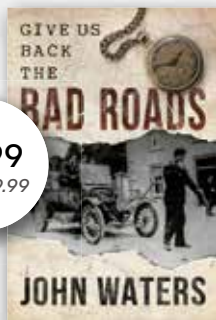


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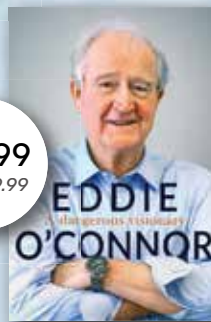
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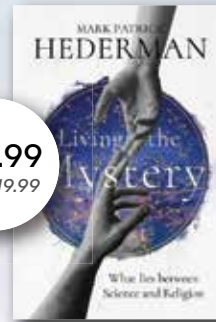
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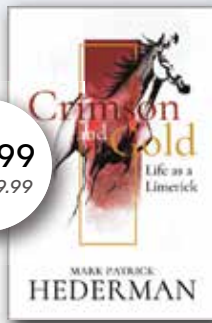
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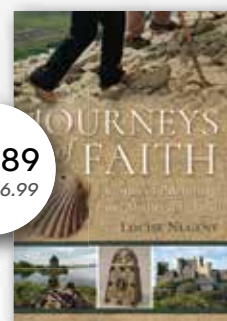
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# Eduard Habsburg on Faith, empire and family



Theo McDonald

**H**ungary's current Ambassador to the Holy See is a descendant of the Catholic European Royal House the Habsburgs.

Eduard Karl Joseph Michael Marcus Koloman Volkhold Maria Habsburg-Lothringen or Eduard Habsburg for short recently released a new book entitled *The Habsburg Way* in which he provides seven principles, or what he calls rules for turbulent times, that the notable family lived by for generations that he seeks to impart to the rest of the world.

Spanning the 13th to 20th centuries the Habsburgs, with origins as mere Swiss nobles, gained vast territories stretching from Eastern Europe to the Americas with Catholicism central to their rule. The family dynasty even lay claim to land closer to home as Spanish King Philip II, also a Habsburg, was provided with Offaly, or King's County in his name, following a plantation also of neighbouring Laois or Queen's County named after his wife Queen Mary.

Encompassing various dukes, archdukes and emperors from the Holy Roman Emperor at the height of the reformation Charles V to the beheaded Queen Consort of France during the revolution Marie Antoinette iconic figures and portentous events throughout European history are related to the Habsburgs without you even realising.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Ambassador Habsburg says Catholicism was "crucial" to the dynasty maintaining their power for so long.

"It [Catholicism] really shaped the Habsburgs and everything they did," he says.

## Legacy

While there were a few rulers who did not share the faith or only provided lip service to it Eduard says the vast majority were devout and that shaped everything they did.

Speaking candidly to this newspaper he says his knowledge of and respect for the scion's history and legacy is what inspired him to write the book: "While I was

compiling the list and going through all my Habsburg history books and picking out all the examples for these principles, I realised 'hang on, these things have sort of gone today, they've disappeared in our world today.'"

So what are those rules?

Rule number one is to get married and have lots of children.

"One of the core elements of understanding the Habsburgs is that they had huge families with lots of children."

He insists that their philoprogenitive nature was inherently tied to their faith: "They had lots of children because they were Catholic," he says.

Without such fecundity amongst generations of Habsburgs, their rule could not have lasted for as long as it did for over 600 years.

His full title, Archduke Eduard Habsburg, immediately stand out denoting a symbolic and antiquated meaning.

**“Eduard doesn't exude Ambassador: he is a renowned social media influencer who adopts Millennial/Gen Z vernacular”**

Eduard says that every one of his namesakes is entitled to the arch-dukedom: "Well, if you are cynical, you would say it's a title that the Habsburgs invented in the 15th century because every Habsburg is an archduke, and it's a title that only exists in our family."

He notes that a recovered document written by Julius Caesar in the 15th century in "clumsy handwriting" conferred the title but mentions the scepticism among Renaissance scholars who claim it's a forgery.

"It's our private title. You couldn't compare it to any other Dukes or counts or whatever, because it only exists within our family," he says.

As well as being Hungary's Ambassador to the Holy See he is also a Sovereign of the Order of Malta.

At first glance, Eduard doesn't exude Ambassador:



Hungary Ambassador to the Holy See, Eduard Habsburg.

he is a renowned social media influencer who adopts Millennial/Gen Z vernacular posting memes to his over 80,000 followers on X thus making the centuries old dynasty more familiar to modern audiences.

"I'm very present on Twitter. I interact and I have lots of fun. I think it's a rather wholesome and nice account. I don't take big fights and I'm never nasty."

He never misses an opportunity to debunk the theory that the Habsburg enlarged chin is a result of inbreeding.

'I'd like to point out, once more, that the Habsburg jaw was NOT "a result of intermarriage/inbreeding", but present in the family at least two generations before Spanish Habsburgs began marrying Austrian Habsburgs. There, another myth gone' he recently posted on X.

## Faith

The 57-year-old German born Habsburg refers to the Vatican diplomatic posting as "very rewarding", adding that, "This is the job where I really can bring everything that interests me: my faith, my historical knowledge, my, I hope, diplomatic talents, my love for protocol and style, I think this is all very important to the Holy See."

"This is not a diplomatic post like any other," he adds. Rule number two is to be

Catholic and practise your faith.

For Eduard, Christianity is essential for any ruler to live by: "A ruler, a political leader, who believes in God, and who believes that he's a sinner, and who tries to better himself by living a Christian life will be less tempted to be corrupt, to do horrible things during his work as a ruler, because one day God will ask."

He worries about the decline in religiosity in Europe presently: "We are in the last waves of a crisis that began in the 1950s in Europe and exploded after the 1960s... I have the impression that in many ways the Catholic hierarchy is incredibly weak, crumbling in many places and helpless at the same time."

**“Despite the weakness of the Catholic hierarchy he notices a strong rebounding of faith driven mainly by young people”**

Ireland is not immune to this phenomenon with "the Irish Church in a crisis," he

says

"There seems to be something like a backlash against a perceived over-dominance of the Catholic Church in the last centuries in Ireland."

He recalls his father living in Ireland in the early 1960s near Shannon Airport. "Ireland is always on the back of my mind," he adds.

Despite the weakness of the Catholic hierarchy he notices a strong rebounding of faith driven mainly by young people: "I see a very strong rebirth of Catholic faith among the young in small numbers but very strong."

"When young people discover the Catholic faith in its fullest form, with sacraments, with devotions, with rosary with all of that in an attractive way, they will never leave again... that's why I believe that the Church is being reborn from the grassroots right now."

## Dynasty

Rule number three of the book, which holds a contemporary resonance, is a belief in the Empire but also subsidiarity.

For many, the Habsburg dynasty's rule over Europe has all the hallmarks of an overbearing empire seeking to rule over the affairs of individual countries.

In 1867 Hungarian nationalists declared autonomy by

revolting against the Habsburg dominated Austria which subsequently led to the creation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which inspired Irish nationalist Arthur Griffith to advocate a similar dual monarchy model between Ireland and Great Britain.

But according to Eduard, the Habsburgs respected the particularisms of each country they ruled over in stark contrast to those who attempt to globalise the world today.

"Globalism is the opposite of subsidiarity... people are afraid of globalism; they are afraid because they feel that we humans are fiercely local."

"We belong to a local community. We belong to a city to a town perhaps to a region, perhaps you belong to a nation."

**“The Habsburgs tried to centralise their multicultural empire and force one language, one standard one something onto all those countries there was trouble”**

"That's what is missing in the European Union today."

Quoting the infamous Habsburg Emperor Charles V in a letter to his son Philip II: "If you rule over an empire with different countries, you better respect their laws, their rights, their Parliaments, their languages, and their special situations."

Eduard mentions that while "that was in the 16th century" it still holds true today.

"Whenever the Habsburgs tried to centralise their multicultural empire and force one language, one standard, one something onto all those countries, there was trouble, there was revolution. But when the Habsburgs respected the different countries... then the Habsburg Empire went really well."

Other rules include "Be Brave in Battle" and "Die Well."

**i** The Habsburg Way is available on Amazon.



# Faith must challenge child abuse in Church and State



Fr Shay Cullen

The shocking testimonies of 2,300 victim-survivors of childhood physical, psychological and sexual abuse representing 200,000 children that suffered in government care centres and Church orphanages and institutions over the past 70 years have just been released in a New Zealand report that took six years to compile.

The investigative report, Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, discovered that more than 200,000 vulnerable people, most of them minors from impoverished communities and indigenous Maori and Pacific Island people living in New Zealand, were taken into institutional care by government and religious institutions, and there, they were abused and suffered torture, rape and sexual assault.

The heads of schools, institutions, bishops and civil authorities denied all reports of abuse and covered up the crimes for years by transferring abusers to other jobs, schools and parishes. The report found that there was more sexual abuse of children in Church-based institutions rather than state care homes.

The foster care system was worse than the institutions, the report says. Foster homes had higher rates of child sexual abuse than in the faith-based or government institutions, the investigation found. Few of the people responsible, torturers and sex offenders, were ever brought to justice because the victims were not believed or were ignored.

## Protected

The Church and civil institutions protected the child abusers. They covered up evil crimes against children. In many churches, the Philippines included, cover-up and denial of child abuse is the greatest crime of all.

In the Philippines, a Unicef report says one in every four children experience child abuse or neglect



Pope Francis greets children in St Peter's Square at the Vatican July 30, 2024. About 50,000 altar servers from 20 countries were on a pilgrimage to Rome. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

in their short lifetime. The Philippines is the hub of online child sexual abuse, too. According to Cameleon Philippines, about 7,000,000 children are sexually abused every year in the Philippines. More than 70 percent of sexually abused children are between 10 and 18 years old. Among those victims, 20% are under 6 years old.

**“Besides the few Filipino brave bishops and priests that fight for human rights, most bishops and priests are silent”**

Is this the way the Philippines wants to be seen and judged by the international community? New Zealand is suffering severe damage to its reputation by the revelations of Church and civil systematic child

**“The Philippine hierarchy is leading a campaign against a new law allowing divorce but are silent on child abuse because there are many accused paedophile priests active in dioceses. One bishop called them his “sons”**

abuse. That is just the tip of the iceberg of abuse that goes on in society, in homes and also in institutions like the Church and schools and unsupervised care homes. It is child abuse that is unseen and unheard.

The Philippine Catholic Church is campaigning to block a law allowing divorce but is silent about the pandemic of child abuse in the Church among priests, religious and lay people. New Zealand and other churches have faced up to the shame and clerical crimes against vulnerable children. Besides the few Filipino brave bishops and priests that fight for human rights, most bishops and priests are silent. Is this the silence of consent or indifference?

## Truth

The Catholic Church in Guam is facing the painful truth and paying for it. Vatican investigators ordered by Pope Francis uncovered in 2019 that as many as 220

child abuse victims, boy scouts, altar boys and students, were sexually abused by at least 35 identified, credibly accused priests, teachers and scout masters of the Archdiocese of Agaña. For sure, many more were undetected.

**“The archdiocese has refused to release the names of the accused priests and is trying to reach out-of-court settlements with the victims”**

The Vatican investigators of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith found that the former archbishop, Anthony Apuron, 73, was guilty of several child sex abuse allegations committed when he was

a parish priest. He denied the charges and appealed the verdict but the original guilty verdict was upheld and he received a severe sentence but will not be charged in court.

The archdiocese has refused to release the names of the accused priests and is trying to reach out-of-court settlements with the victims. It is likely to cost €106M and the archdiocese has declared bankruptcy, according to an AP report. It has to sell its properties to pay the compensation.

## Fear

This is the main fear for the Philippine hierarchical Church represented by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) if the clerical child abuse scandal becomes public and victims fight back for justice. Many priests will go to jail and big compensation must be paid to the victims.

The Philippine hierarchy is leading a campaign against a new law allowing divorce but are silent on child abuse because there are many accused paedophile priests active in dioceses. One bishop called them his “sons”.

Many more are hiding out in the Church-funded Tagaytay rest house for

clerical child abusers. They are hidden away by bishops from their victims when they should be in jail. The abusers are rightly scared of the millstone that Jesus said should be hung around their necks and they be thrown into the deep sea (Matthew 1-7) and held accountable before the courts.

Can this writer forget the time when his bishop and 23 fellow clergy signed an affidavit and letter that testified and gave support to a convicted Australian paedophile accusing me of having falsely accused him? There are too many paedophiles and their protectors and defenders and too few child defenders among the clergy and bishops.

The People of God have many great and good true Catholics and Christians of all denominations who believe that Jesus of Nazareth taught by word and example and that Christianity is an active way of living and believing in action that goodness, truth, justice and love of neighbour will overcome evil and corruption in society.

**“We all need to be ‘Washers of Feet’ as was Jesus of Nazareth, not robed leaders of rites and rituals, pomp and ceremony”**

These are the true disciples building a society by working together and individually to build a just and loving society. They are humble washers of feet, servants of the poor, friends of Jesus of Nazareth. They do as Jesus did and have the greatest love of giving their lives in service for the poor, the abused, the down-trodden victims of human rights violations. As Jesus said, “No greater love can anyone have than to give their lives for their friends. I call you my friends, not servants.”

We all need to be “Washers of Feet” as was Jesus of Nazareth, not robed leaders of rites and rituals, pomp and ceremony. Besides, He said (Matthew 18.6), “Whoever accepts a child such as this in my name, accepts me.”





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Cardinal O'Malley steps down in Boston

● Capping more than twenty years as one of American Catholicism's most influential leaders, Cardinal Sean O'Malley's tenure as the Archbishop of Boston ended on Monday as the Vatican announced Pope Francis has accepted his resignation and named Bishop Richard Henning of Providence as his successor.

Bishop Henning now becomes a metropolitan archbishop, with direct authority over Boston and an indirect supervisory role over six other dioceses in Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

The Vatican's August 5 statement confirmed rumours first reported by Rocco Palmo, a veteran Catholic writer, indicating that Cardinal O'Malley, who turned 80 earlier this summer and is no longer able to vote in the next conclave, was retiring and being replaced by Bishop Henning.

A Capuchin Franciscan, Cardinal O'Malley has served as the Archbishop of Boston since 2003. Prior to Boston, he served as bishop of Saint Thomas in the American Virgin Islands, then as bishop of Fall River, Massachusetts, and then as bishop of Palm Beach, Florida.

### 'I was deceived': Bishop in Nigeria revokes ordination of deacons

● The bishop of Nigeria's Diocese of Lokoja has withdrawn the ordination certificates of four men he ordained as deacons July 12 after it was revealed he had been presented with allegedly forged documents claiming the men were qualified for holy orders.

In a statement issued July 30, Bishop Martin Dada Olorunmolu revoked the four men's certificates and suspended their activities as "deacons".

After the ordinations, it emerged that everything Bishop

Olorunmolu was presented with - including the existence of the congregation the men supposedly belonged to called the 'Paraclete Missionaries' as well as the congregation's superior general - was fraudulent.

"I was deceived," the bishop said. "On account of so much falsehood about the said diaconate ordination, I hereby decree that ... the 'diaconate ordination certificates' issued by me to the four men named above are hereby withdrawn with immediate effect," the bishop's statement said.

### Prominent priest reportedly abducted by dictatorship in Nicaragua

● Fr Frutos Constantino Valle Salmerón, administrator *ad omnia* of the Diocese of Estelí in Nicaragua, has been "abducted, interrogated", and placed under surveillance in a Catholic Church formation house by the Nicaraguan National Police, according to lawyer and researcher Martha Patricia Molina, who shared the case on X on July 27.

Ms Molina is the author of 'Nicaragua: A Persecuted Church?', a report of over 300 pages that in its last update cited at least 667 attacks against the Catholic Church since April 2018.

"I don't doubt that during the transfer from [the town of] Somoto to [the capital] Managua he was interrogated and surely psychologically tortured, as is the custom of the Sandinista guard. Then they took him to a formation house where he remains imprisoned under police surveillance," Ms Molina said.

### Italian priest, Catholic schools leader arrested for sexual abuse of a minor

● A well-known priest, who is also a former school director and former head of a federation of Catholic schools in northern Italy, was arrested last week on charges of sexually abusing an adolescent boy, and is being detained while an investigation continues into the alleged grooming of several others.

The priest, Fr Andrea Melis, 60, was arrested Friday, August 2, after being accused of sexually abusing a young boy for more than three years, beginning when the boy was just 12.

According to various Italian media reports, an order for Fr Melis's arrest stated that he would ask for things such as kisses, cuddles, and other sexual favours in exchange for electronic cigarettes, prepaid cards, name brand clothing, dinners out and videogames, among other gifts. Fr Melis is currently under house arrest in an undisclosed location. He is also being investigated by the Public Prosecutor's Office in Genoa for child prostitution and aggravated violence.

## Judo priest spiritually tends to athletes at Paris Olympics

Fr Jason Nioka was ordained a Catholic priest one month ago, and his very first assignment is to spend his summer in Paris in charge of the Catholic contingent of Olympic chaplains - the largest group of chaplains at the Olympics - made up of 40 Catholic priests, religious, and lay faithful.

In an interview with Catherine Hadro on 'EWTN News In Depth' on July 26, Fr Nioka, who is from France, called this opportunity a "very wonderful gift from God to be part of this adventure".

Olympians are invited to gather at the Multifaith Centre located in the athletes village in an area for Christian athletes - Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants - where they can read the Bible together, take part in *lectio divina*, and worship, Fr Nioka explained.

Daily Mass is also offered at a nearby Catholic church with liturgies offered in different languages such as French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

The former Judo champion turned Catholic priest feels uniquely qualified for this assignment because of his experience as an athlete.

"I think for me it's a great challenge because I know the sport," he shared. "The athletes do not need to hear something special. The first mission of the chaplain is just



Fr Jason Nioka. Picture: OSV News/Fr Nioka.

to listen."

"First we invite the Holy Spirit to be in charge," he said. "Some will have success. We know that some will have some difficulty as well, but if we give them the word of hope and strength, maybe this will help them to give [their] best and to be the best athlete during the Olympics."

Building bridges in society is important, the priest said.

"When priests and even bishops play sports, they build bridges," he remarked. "This leads me to give thanks for my sporting past, and it will help me to live out my ministry as a priest wherever I am sent on mission."

After the Olympics, Fr Nioka will start university studies in theology and canon law at the Institut Catholique de Paris. He hopes to be able

to practice judo there too.

"My experience as a sportsman has always taught me to give the best of myself," he concluded. "That is what I want to do today, whatever the circumstances. The rest is up to Providence!"

Fr Nioka said first and foremost his job "is to pray for the athletes and to look after them as well" and that he considers the role "a grace".

## Weightlifting champion decides to enter seminary

Will Heller, a 21-year-old from Toledo, Ohio, is a two-time Junior National Medalist and All American, a state record holder in Ohio and Michigan, and the 2023 University National Champion in the 102 kilogram class in weightlifting. However, the weightlifting phenom now has his sights on a more soul-intensive goal - becoming a Catholic priest.

At the age of 17, Mr Heller was introduced to the sport of weightlifting by his high school strength and conditioning coach. He quickly excelled in the sport and earned a plethora of achieve-

ments, including being invited to represent Team USA in the 2022 and 2024 FISU America Games, the 2023 U20 Pan-American Championships, and the 2023 U20 World Championships.

Weightlifting consists of two lifts: the clean and jerk and the snatch. Heller shared in an interview with CNA that his heaviest weight for each is a 324-pound snatch and a 388-pound clean and jerk.

A recent graduate of Northern Michigan University, Mr Heller is a cradle Catholic and attended 13 years of Catholic school - the first seven at a diocesan

school and the last six at a school run by the Oblates of St Francis de Sales.

"I can't say I was ever much of a practising Catholic," he admitted. "I went to Mass on Sunday but I didn't go to adoration ever. I didn't really pray the rosary. I went to one of those schools that was kind of Catholic in name ... So I actually fell away from the faith when I got up to Northern."

Now, thanks to a FOCUS missionary he met while in college, he will be entering the St Paul Seminary in Minnesota at the end of August.

## Vatican belatedly joins chorus of protest over Olympic Last Supper parody

Belatedly joining a global chorus of outrage and condemnation, the Vatican last Saturday reacted to an apparent parody of the Last Supper during the July 26 opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, saying it was "saddened" by the display.

Freedom of speech, the

Vatican said, shouldn't be called into question, but it must be balanced against respect for others.

The brief, 90-word statement was released in French. "The Holy See is saddened by some scenes of the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympic Games and cannot

but join the voices that have been raised in recent days to deplore the offense done to many Christians and believers of other religions," it said.

"In a prestigious event where the whole world comes together around common values, there should be no allusions that ridicule

the religious convictions of many people," the statement said. "Freedom of expression, which is obviously not called into question, finds its limit in respect for others," it said. The statement comes eight days after the opening ceremony sparked a wave of international backlash.





Edited by Brandon Scott  
brandon@irishcatholic.ie



## Fuelled by Faith



Phoebe Bacon of the United States reacts after winning the women's 200-meter backstroke August 1, at Paris La Defense Arena, and advancing to the semifinals. Ms Bacon has been outspoken about her Catholic Faith, saying that it is "important" to her. Photo: OSV News/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters.

# Rupnik's former studio defends disgraced priest's artwork

As Church leaders and Catholic groups around the world increasingly call for the removal of sacred art created by Fr Marko Rupnik, the art institute founded by the disgraced former Jesuit is punching back, saying Fr Rupnik's art is being subjected to "cancel culture".

"In the face of growing pressure for the removal of the works of art created by Centro Aletti, we feel obliged to express our great concern regarding the widespread diffusion of the so-called 'cancel culture' and of a way of thinking that legitimises the 'criminalisation' of art," Centro Aletti Director Maria Campatelli contends in a letter addressed to friends of the institution.

In the letter, Ms Campatelli says the centre continues to face a "time of trial" while the allegations of sexual abuse by

more than two dozen women, mostly former nuns, against Fr Rupnik continues to be investigated by the Vatican.

"The removal of a work of art ought never to be thought of as a punishment or a cure," Ms Campatelli continues. "While pastoral care for suffering persons if of course necessary, this cannot become justification for the removal or covering of works of art."

In the letter, Ms Campatelli also reiterates that Fr Rupnik "has always firmly denied, in the appropriate forums, having ever committed the abuses described by those accusing him".

Fr Rupnik has faced numerous allegations of sexual misconduct since 2018 and in recent years has faced repeated allegations of past sexual abuse.

During a June visit to

Atlanta, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication Paolo Ruffini also expressed reservations about removing Fr Rupnik's art in places of worship.

That same month, Cardinal Seán O'Malley, the archbishop of Boston and outgoing head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, sent a letter to heads of the Holy See expressing hope that "pastoral prudence would prevent displaying artwork in a way that could imply either exoneration or a subtle defence" of those of accused of abuse.

Last month, Bishop Jean-Marc Micas of Tarbes and Lourdes issued a statement and expressed his personal opinion to remove Rupnik's mosaics affixed to the entrance of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Many people who were victims of sexual violence and abuse at the hands of clergy have in fact expressed their suffering and the violence that this exposure now constituted for them," he wrote in the statement.

The Knights of Columbus last month temporarily covered Rupnik art at the St John Paul II Shrine in Washington, DC, as well as at the fraternal organisation's headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut.

Pope Francis ordered the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith to begin a judicial process to investigate the sexual abuse allegations against Fr Rupnik after backlash arose in the aftermath of Fr Rupnik's incardination into a diocese in his native Slovenia in October 2023.

# US bishop wants Catholics to become more educated on immigration

A recent survey that reveals a mixed-bag of Catholic perceptions on immigration, including responses that don't align with Church teaching, brings Bishop Mark Seitz back to the question that Church leaders often grapple with in this age of secularisation: How can they form the conscience of their members, and shape them according to Christ's message?

"That gets down to the very basis, the very foundation, of how we as a Church can help people to live a Christian life, and the truth is that we are very limited in that, especially now that people are losing the conviction that part of being a Catholic/Christian is worshipping on Sunday," Bishop Seitz, the bishop of El Paso and Chair of the US Bishops' Conference Committee on

Migration, told Crux.

"As we lose that conviction, we don't even have them for that 50 minutes to an hour on Sunday, but that is such a bare minimum," Bishop Seitz explained. "So where do Catholics/Christians turn? Where can they turn to really hear how the gospel should be impacting their daily lives?"

## Vatican judge under investigation for allegedly favouring the mob

● Prosecutors in the Sicilian community of Caltanissetta announced that they've placed Giuseppe Pignatone, currently the lead judge for the Vatican's civil tribunal, under investigation for allegedly favouring the mafia after a 1992 probe.

At the time Mr Pignatone, who took up his Vatican post in October 2019, and who recently presided over the Vatican's "trial of the century" for various forms of financial crime, was an assistant prosecutor in Palermo. He's been named in the current probe along with Gioacchino Natoli, who led the prosecutor's office in Palermo, and Stefano Screpanti, a senior official in Italy's financial police.

Mr Pignatone has professed his innocence and vowed to cooperate with the investigation. Last Wednesday, he appeared at the prosecutor's office in Caltanissetta for a deposition.

## Pope sends blessings to Catholic LGBTQ event

● Pope Francis greeted Jesuit Fr James Martin on the occasion of the "Outreach" Conference for LGBTQ Catholics, that took place at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, on August 2-4. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, celebrated Mass for participants, marking the first time a cardinal has appeared at the event.

Fr Martin, who carries out his apostolate among the LGBTQ community, wrote to the Pope, asking if he would like to send his greetings to the conference. Pope Francis sent a brief response, which was released on Thursday, saying he was pleased by

the fact that Cardinal Gregory would be celebrating Mass for them.

The Pope said he is "united in prayer" with those participating in the conference: "May Jesus bless you and the Holy Virgin care for you".

This is the fourth time that Pope Francis has sent his regards to an 'Outreach' event. On other occasions, the Pope has invited the Jesuit priest, whom he has named a Consultor of the Dicastery for Communication (Vatican News' parent organisation), to transmit God's "style" of closeness, mercy, and affection to the LGBTQ community.

## Seoul holds youth ceremony to set stage for WYD 2027

● With three years to go until the next global World Youth Day (WYD) gathering, officials in the Archdiocese of Seoul, which will host the event, have launched an official preparation process, voicing hope that it will empower young people from across the world.

The local path of preparation for WYD 2027 in Seoul was officially launched by the Archdiocese of Seoul July 28 with a special youth event and Mass titled, 'Hope Ignites in Seoul. Success for WYD Seoul 2027'.

Attended by some 1,000 young people from throughout South Korea as well as top Catholic leaders and Vatican officials, including Archbishop Giovanni Gaspar, apostolic nuncio to South Korea, and Brazilian layman Gleison De Paula Souza, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

Archbishop Peter Soon-taick Chung of Seoul celebrated an opening Mass for the event, during which he voiced hope that the path toward WYD 2027 would empower young people.

## Top cardinal calls for more dialogue on women deacons issue

● One of the leading protagonists in organising Pope Francis's Synod of Bishops on Synodality has addressed the issue of women, calling for further dialogue and condemning what he said was an effort to "lobby" for one position or another.

Speaking to Crux, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg addressed the issue of women and calls for their increased involvement in Church leadership and governance, including calls for the women's diaconate and women's priestly ordination.

When discussing hot-button issues such as women in the Church, Cardinal Hollerich said it is important not to be "a lobby group. Lobbying is not part of Church culture; it should not be. We have other tools, like prayer, discussion, listening to each other, etc".



# Letter from Rome

## Turkey's Erdogan calls Pope, urges joint opposition to Olympic 'immoral displays'



Elise Ann Allen

Last week Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a phone call to Pope Francis in which he urged a collective condemnation of what he said was the "ridicule" of moral and religious values at the Olympic opening ceremony. News of the call was published in an August 1 statement published on the Office of the President's official account on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

According to the statement, President Erdoğan during the call insisted that "the immoral displays performed at a section of the opening of the Paris Olympic Games have caused outrage and provoked reactions President Erdoğan apparently argued that "religious and moral values have been ridiculed and that the honour of humanity has been trampled upon under the guise of freedom of expression and tolerance".

### Division

"Challenging the religious values and spreading perverse propaganda during the Olympic Games, which are actually held to unite... humanity, act as an alarm bell against the moral decay the world is drifting to," the statement said. During the call, President Erdoğan also condemned Israel's military offensive in Gaza, calling it a "genocide" that is causing a "major humanitarian crisis."

He also accused Israel of "perpetrating massacres under the diplomatic, economic and military umbrella provided to it by some countries." The recent killing of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh and attacks on Lebanon, according to the statement, were also mentioned by President Erdoğan as what he said amounts to proof that "Israel is a threat to the entire region as well as the entire world and humanity".

He argued that "the alliance of humanity must take



Pope Francis talks with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan during a private meeting at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Alessandro Di Meo via Reuters.

action before it is too late in order for Muslims and Christians, particularly those living in Palestine, to find peace." President Erdoğan, the statement said, voiced his belief that it would be helpful for Pope Francis to hold talks with countries supporting Israel with the aim "of stopping the attacks and achieving lasting peace before the political, security and social structure of the region and the world sustains a permanent damage. According to the statement, Pope Francis on his part thanked President Erdoğan for "his efforts towards peace and for his sensitivity against the desecration of religious values".

The call between President Erdoğan and Pope Francis came after the July

26 opening ceremony for the Paris Olympics sparked backlash for featuring a drag parody of the Last Supper and a scantily clad man in blue, reportedly representing the Greek god Dionysus, singing while appearing to be naked as he performed.

**“They insisted that the performance was in reference to artistic depictions of the Feast of Dionysus”**

After broad backlash from prominent Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, representatives of the International Olympic Com-

mittee later apologised for the performance, saying, "Clearly there was never an intention to show disrespect to any religious group".

They insisted that the performance was in reference to artistic depictions of the Feast of Dionysus, however, drag performers themselves stated in media interviews and on social media that it had, in fact, been a reference to the Last Supper.

### Controversy

Fresh controversy erupted at the Olympics again Thursday, after Italian boxer Angela Carini forfeited a match against Algerian Imane Khelif, who was disqualified from the women's world championships in 2023 for failing gender eligibility tests, in the women's boxing competition just 46 seconds into the fight.

Khelif is not transgender, but reportedly has higher than usual levels of testosterone, and has presented with the male "XY" chromosomes. Ms Carini, who received two punches from

**“French bishops deplored the scenes at the opening of the Olympic Games. While the ceremony was a “marvellous display of beauty and joy, rich in emotion and universally acclaimed,” they said, it “unfortunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret”**

Khelif to the face before opting to withdraw, said she had never been hit as hard as she had then, and that she was struggling to breathe after being hit twice in the nose.

**“The Olympic celebration, they said ‘goes far beyond the ideological biases of a few artists’, the bishops stressed”**

She was later consoled by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, saying on her Instagram page, "I know you won't give up, Angela, and I know one day you

will win what you deserve with effort and sweat. In a competition that is finally equal." The Vatican has not confirmed the occurrence or contents of phone call between Erdoğan and Pope Francis.

In a statement July 27, the French bishops deplored the scenes at the opening of the Olympic Games. While the ceremony was a "marvellous display of beauty and joy, rich in emotion and universally acclaimed," they said, it "unfortunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret." The Olympic celebration, they said "goes far beyond the ideological biases of a few artists", the bishops stressed.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### ETB schools neglecting faith formation

**Dear Editor,** The article by Fr Martin Delaney in the July 4 edition of *The Irish Catholic* was very apt, articulate and welcome. It was most timely for many of us: pastoral leaders, concerned parents and board of school management members, who are trying our best, to convince the ETBs about holistic education.

True education is holistic; it addresses and deals with body, mind and spirit. If the spiritual is left out, it is not true education, whatever it is. So, formation in faith and morals, of our dear young people is not part of the current ETB regime.

This is pastorally painful for concerned priests, parents, teachers and faith community members, as well as the youngsters themselves in parishes where these schools are situated. The ETB needs to

wake up.

In the past when VECs were in charge of the post-primary vocational schools, an arrangement was copper fastened with the bishops, whereby each student had three classes a week in faith formation. This worked admirably.

I and many other priests and trained catechists worked alongside the delighted staff, in these schools, with great joy and fruitfulness. This involvement resulted in good school discipline and in the eventual outcome of fine young men and women of calibre, entering the wider community and making a mature, adult, holistic contribution of worth. Why can this arrangement not be repeated?

Well being and wellness are being dealt with in civic-like classes in the space

that should be for faith formation. This is balderdash as it has nothing to do with the faith and spirituality and more to do with new age clap-trap.

I am a reluctant member of the BOM for 20 productive years beforehand, but I see myself working on the inside, to try with others to change the scene as soon as possible. Can we plead for help from concerned parents, teachers and indeed pupils, who know that faith formation is the only way forward in the context of education?

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Patrick Moore PP VF,  
St Michael's Parish,  
Castlepollard,  
Co. Westmeath*

## Actions and consequences

**Dear Editor,** I agree with Fr John McCallion that Fr Gabriel Burke has done his job and I thank him for it. On the other hand I do not agree with Deacon Frank Browne's statement that Fr Burke has "undermined all of us in ministry who want to create a more inclusive Church that welcomes all".

Minister of State Colm Burke was not being made unwelcome to attend the funeral. Rather it was he who created the issue in presenting for Holy Communion when he had already been refused before on, reportedly, two occasions.

It was rather convenient that a photographer was present to take the up-close photograph. The Minister was not simply a supporter of abortion, the slaughter of the innocents in the womb, but an active promoter in voting for it to be legalised.

Deacon Browne asks if politicians should "legislate for the few who share their values or the many they serve". I would contend that legislators have a duty to support the common good and what serves their people best and it certainly cannot be said that abortion does either.

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



### When God's mercy is absent RTE's blatant bias

**Dear Editor,** The public discourse following the recent RTE programme on Bishop Eamonn Casey, is regrettably lacking in mercy.

It is quite astonishing how many, describing themselves as Catholics are willing to launch into a tirade about him without any mention of forgiveness, the very essence of the Gospels and our most basic prayers: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive ..." and "I detest my sins above every other evil ..."

Pointing the finger at someone is not the way of Jesus. He told us "Do not judge". Doing so only gets us embroiled in a Pharisaic

'holier-than-thou' mentality of condemnation.

Television made Bishop Eamonn Casey into a celebrity, a cleric that was 'modern', 'open' 'with it' and then spectacularly he was pulled down from this pedestal, amid much gloating over the scandal uncovered.

Each of us must ask ourselves: How long shall we cling to our outrage and our identity as victims, and its associated unhappiness? Only God's mercy can unburden us and set us free.

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

**Dear Editor,** RTE's Liveline programme has spent the whole week lambasting the Catholic Church, its doctrine and its traditions.

Every single caller spoke out against the Catholic Church. This level of bias would not be allowed in any other country. RTE and Liveline have a long history of prolonged programmes condemning the Catholic Church.

If such programmes were aired about Muslims or any other religion there would be an outcry and it could be labelled hate speech.

RTE should apologise for this programme.

*Yours etc.,  
John F. Hyland,  
Killiney, Co. Dublin.*

## Standing up for disability

**I**n 2018, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities after over a decade of procrastination. The argument was that the Government did not want to make international commitments until it was ready to do so.

Since then, progress on disability rights has been, to say the least, miserable. On January 24 this year, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters launched its report, towards harmonisation of national legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Looking somewhat like a school report, some 'good progress' is noted initially, but then it appears like the government lost interest along the way. Progress has been made on mostly what would be considered as areas of signalling intent – equality, women with disabilities, and awareness raising. No progress is made on substantive areas such as the right to life, accessibility and mobility. Regression is highlighted in areas of significant individual importance: health and independent living.

Ireland has also failed to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Convention which would allow people with disabilities to take their case to the UN if they felt their rights under the Convention have been violated by the Government.

No good reason has been provided for this but the number of cases being brought by people with disabilities and their families or carers who have seen a failure by the government to meet their basic needs is indicative of how vulnerable the Government would be to any cases that would be brought to the UN under the Optional Protocol.

It appears that the approach taken by the government under 'Progressing Disability Services' has been a failure because of a lack of resourcing and poor design. Representative organisations for people with disabilities, including Down Syndrome Ireland, have called for significant reforms.

The feeling is that the government does not want to listen. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters has struggled to get its colleagues with Ministerial responsibilities and those who hold the public purse to put disability rights front and

centre.

If this cross-party group of elected representatives cannot do it, then what chance have people with disabilities, and their families and carers – and even their under-funded representative groups – of being heard, when they are forced to struggle beneath an umbrella of inadequate support services?

Independent Living Movement of Ireland (ILMI) – a group of people with disabilities – launched their 'Manifesto for Change: Disabled People Taking Control of State-Funded Disability Services' last week. They are calling for people with disabilities to have far more say – indeed the final say – in how state funds for disability are spent.

As it stands, over €2.2bn in expenditure on disability services is provided by and decided by able-bodied people. ILMI is calling for disabled people to be in control of the organisations that the State funds to provide disability services. Until that happens, they feel State-funding will continue to be used to provide segregated services that limit choices, paternalise them and deny their rights to agency.

No other group would stand for their choices being decided by others. In an era of equality and choice, every identity groups calls for representation, for 'nothing about us, without us'. If disability rights carried the same weight as the rights of other identity groups, the government – or able-bodied people – would not get away with monopolising and controlling services for disabled people.

But it appears to be worse than that. It is disturbing to hear of the government taking costly court cases and against families of children with disabilities and using the threat of court action and discontinuation of services to prevent criticism by parents and families of the government approach to disability services.

This is something at odds with the social contract between people and their government. When the State uses its unlimited resources to either threaten or wear down vulnerable citizens who have had their rights violated by arms of the State, the best result is justice delayed. And as the saying goes, that is justice denied.

## 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.



# Letter of his Holiness Pope Francis on the role of literature in formation

The Pope issued a letter in eight languages saying that reading novels and poems is valuable and should be encouraged in the training of priests, and he reveals his own love of tragic stories



Pope Francis

I had originally chosen to give this Letter a title referring to priestly formation. On further reflection, however, this subject also applies to the formation of all those engaged in pastoral work, indeed of all Christians. What I would like to address here is the value of reading novels and poems as part of one's path to personal maturity.

Often during periods of boredom on holiday, in the heat and quiet of some deserted neighbourhood, finding a good book to read can provide an oasis that keeps us from other choices that are less wholesome. Likewise, in moments of weariness, anger, disappointment or failure, when prayer itself does not help us find inner serenity, a good book can help us weather the storm until we find peace of mind. Time spent reading may well open up new interior spaces that help us to avoid becoming trapped by a few obsessive thoughts that can stand in the way of our personal growth. Indeed, before our present unremitting exposure to social media, mobile phones and other devices, reading was a common experience, and those who went through it know what I mean. It is not something completely outdated.

Unlike audio-visual media, where the product is more self-contained and the time allowed for "enriching" the narrative or exploring its significance is usually quite restricted, a book demands greater personal engagement on the part of its reader. Readers in some sense rewrite a text, enlarging its scope through their imagination, creating a whole world by bringing into play their skills, their memory, their dreams and their personal history, with all its drama and symbolism. In this way, what emerges is a text quite different from the one the author intended to write. A literary work is thus a living and ever-fruitful text, always capable of speaking in different ways and producing an original synthesis on the part of each of its readers. In our reading, we are enriched

by what we receive from the author and this allows us in turn to grow inwardly, so that each new work we read will renew and expand our worldview.

**“On a profound level literature engages our concrete existence, with its innate tensions, desires and meaningful experiences”**

For this reason, I very much appreciate the fact that at least some seminaries have reacted to the obsession with “screens” and with toxic, superficial and violent fake news, by devoting time and attention to literature. They have done this by setting aside time for tranquil reading and for discussing books, new and old, that continue to have much to say to us. Regrettably, however, a sufficient grounding in literature is not generally part of programmes of formation for the ordained ministry. Literature is often considered merely a form of entertainment, a “minor art” that need not belong to the education of future priests and their preparation for pastoral ministry. With few exceptions, literature is considered non-essential. I consider it important to insist that such an approach is unhealthy. It can lead to the serious intellectual and spiritual impoverishment of future priests, who will be deprived of that privileged access which literature grants to the very heart of human culture and, more specifically, to the heart of every individual.

With this Letter, I would like to propose a radical change of course. In this regard, I would agree with the observation of one theologian that, “literature... originates in the most irreducible core of the person, that mysterious level [of their being]... Literature is life, conscious of itself, that reaches its full self-expression through

**“Literature is often considered merely a form of entertainment, a “minor art” that need not belong to the education of future priests and their preparation for pastoral ministry”**

the use of all the conceptual resources of language”. [1]

Literature thus has to do, in one way or another, with our deepest desires in this life, for on a profound level literature engages our concrete existence, with its innate tensions, desires and meaningful experiences.

## Faith and culture

Literature also proves essential for believers who sincerely seek to enter into dialogue with the culture of their time, or simply with the lives and experiences of other people. With good reason, the Second Vatican Council observed that, “literature and art... seek to penetrate our nature” and “throw light on our suffering and joy, our needs and potentialities”. [3] Indeed, literature takes its cue from the realities of our daily life, its passions and events, our “actions, work, love, death and all the poor things that fill life”. [4]

How can we reach the core of cultures ancient and new if we are unfamiliar with, disregard or dismiss their symbols, messages, artistic expressions and the stories with which they have captured and evoked their loftiest ideals and aspirations, as well as their deepest sufferings, fears and passions? How can we speak to the hearts of men and women if we ignore, set aside or fail to appreciate the “stories” by which they sought to express and lay bare the drama of their lived experience in novels and poems?

The Church, in her missionary experience, has learned how to display all her beauty, freshness and novelty in her encounter – often through literature – with the different cultures in which her faith has taken root, without hesitating to engage with and draw upon the best of what she has found in each culture. This approach has freed her from the temptation to a blinkered, fundamentalist self-referentiality that would consider a particular cultural-historical “grammar” as capable of expressing the

**“We can recognize the presence of the Spirit in the variety of human experiences, seeing the seeds of the Spirit’s presence already planted in the events, sensibilities, desires and profound yearnings present within hearts and in social, cultural and spiritual settings”**

entire richness and depth of the Gospel. [5] Many of the doomsday prophecies that presently seek to sow despair are rooted precisely in such a belief. Contact with different literary and grammatical styles will always allow us to explore more deeply the polyphony of divine revelation without impoverishing it or reducing it to our own needs or ways of thinking.

**“Paul reveals that he is a ‘reader’ while also demonstrating his method of approaching the literary text, which is an evangelical discernment of culture”**

It was thus no coincidence that Christian antiquity, for example, clearly realized the need for a serious engagement with the classical culture of the time. Basil of Caesarea, one of the Eastern Church Fathers, in his *Discourse to the Young*, composed between 370 and 375, and most likely addressed to his nieces and nephews, extolled the richness of classical literature produced by *hoi éxōthen* (“those outside”), as he called the pagan authors. He saw this both in terms of its argumentation, that is, its *lógoi* (discourses), useful for theology and exegesis, and its ethical content, namely the *práxeis* (acts, conduct) helpful for the ascetic and moral life. Basil concluded this work by urging young Christians to consider the classics as an *ephódion* (“viaticum”) for their education and training, a means of “profit for the soul” (IV, 8-9). It was precisely from that encounter between Christianity and the culture of the time that a fresh presentation of the Gospel message emerged.

Thanks to an evangelical discernment of culture, we can recognize the presence of the Spirit in the variety of

human experiences, seeing the seeds of the Spirit’s presence already planted in the events, sensibilities, desires and profound yearnings present within hearts and in social, cultural and spiritual settings. We can see this, for example, in the approach taken by Paul before the Areopagus, as related in the Acts of the Apostles (17:16-34). In his address, Paul says of God: “In him we live and move and have our being”; and as some of your own poets have said, “We too are his offspring.” (Acts 17:28). This verse contains two quotations: one indirect, from the poet Epimenes (sixth century B.C.E.), and the other direct, from the *Phaenomena* of the poet Aratus of Soli (third century B.C.E.), who wrote of the constellations and the signs of good and bad weather. Here, “Paul reveals that he is a ‘reader’ while also demonstrating his method of approaching the literary text, which is an evangelical discernment of culture. The Athenians dismiss him as a *spermologos*, a ‘babbling’, but literally ‘a gatherer of seeds’. What was surely meant to be an insult proved, ironically, to be profoundly true. Paul gathered the seeds of pagan poetry and, overcoming his first impressions (cf. Acts 17:16), acknowledges the Athenians to be ‘extremely religious’ and sees in the pages of their classical literature a veritable *praeparatio evangelica*” [6].

What did Paul do? He understood that “literature brings to light the abysses within the human person, while revelation and then theology take over to show how Christ enters these depths and illumines them”. [7] In the face of these depths, literature is thus a “path” [8] to helping shepherds of souls enter into a fruitful dialogue with the culture of their time.

## Never a disembodied Christ

Before exploring the specific reasons why the study of literature should be encouraged in the training of future priests, I would first like to say some-

thing about the contemporary religious landscape. “The return to the sacred and the quest for spirituality which mark our own time are ambiguous phenomena. Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus”. [9] The urgent task of proclaiming the Gospel in our time demands that believers, and priests in particular, ensure that everyone be able to encounter Jesus Christ made flesh, made man, made history. We must always take care never to lose sight of the “flesh” of Jesus Christ: that flesh made of passions, emotions and feelings, words that challenge and console, hands that touch and heal, looks that liberate and encourage, flesh made of hospitality, forgiveness, indignation, courage, fearlessness; in a word, love.

It is precisely at this level that familiarity with literature can make future priests and all pastoral workers all the more sensitive to the full humanity of the Lord Jesus, in which his divinity is wholly present. In this way, they can proclaim the Gospel in a way that enables everyone to experience the truth of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that, “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”. [10] This is not the mystery of some abstract humanity, but that of all men and women, with their hurts, desires, memories and hopes that are a concrete part of their lives.

## A great good

From a practical point of view, many scientists argue that the habit of reading has numerous positive effects on people’s lives, helping them to acquire a wider vocabulary and thus develop broader intellectual abilities. It also stimulates their imagination and creativity, enabling them to learn to tell their stories in richer and more expressive ways. It also improves their ability to con-



## “This is a definition of literature that I like very much: listening to another person’s voice. We must never forget how dangerous it is to stop listening to the voice of other people when they challenge us”

concentrate, reduces levels of cognitive decline, and calms stress and anxiety.

Even more, reading prepares us to understand and thus deal with various situations that arise in life. In reading, we immerse ourselves in the thoughts, concerns, tragedies, dangers and fears of characters who in the end overcome life’s challenges. Perhaps too, in following a story to the end, we gain insights that will later prove helpful in our own lives.

In this effort to encourage reading, I would mention two texts by well-known authors, who, in a few words, have much to teach us:

Novels unleash “in us, in the space of an hour, all the possible joys and misfortunes that, in life, it would take us entire years to know even slightly, and of which the most intense would never be revealed to us because the slowness with which they occur prevents us from perceiving them”. [11]

“In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do”. [12]

However, it is not my intention to focus solely on the personal advantages to be drawn from reading, but to reflect on the most important reasons for encouraging a renewed love for reading.

### Listening to another person’s voice

When I think of literature, I am reminded of what the great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges [13] used to tell his students, namely that the most important thing is simply to read, to enter into direct contact with literature, to immerse oneself in the living text in front of us, rather than to fixate on ideas and critical comments. Borges explained this idea to his students by saying that at first they may understand very little of what they are reading, but in any case they are hearing “another person’s voice”. This is a definition of literature that I like very much: listening to another person’s voice. We must never forget how dangerous it is to stop listening to the voice of other people when they challenge us! We

immediately fall into self-isolation; we enter into a kind of “spiritual deafness”, which has a negative effect on our relationship with ourselves and our relationship with God, no matter how much theology or psychology we may have studied.

T.S. Eliot, the poet whose poetry and essays, reflecting his Christian faith, have an outstanding place in modern literature, perceptively described today’s religious crisis as that of a widespread emotional incapacity. [15] If we are to believe this diagnosis, the problem for faith today is not primarily that of believing more or believing less with regard to particular doctrines. Rather, it is the inability of so many of our contemporaries to be profoundly moved in the face of God, his creation and other human beings. Here we see the importance of working to healing and enrich our responsiveness. On returning from my Apostolic Journey to Japan, I was asked what I thought the West has to learn from the East. My response was, “I think that the West lacks a bit of poetry”. [16]

### A “training in discernment”

What profit, then, does a priest gain from contact with literature? Why is it necessary to consider and promote the reading of great novels as an important element in priestly *paideia*? Why is it important for us, in the training of candidates for the priesthood, to recover Karl Rahner’s insight that there is a profound spiritual affinity between the priest and the poet? [17]

Let us try to answer these questions by listening to what the German theologian has to tell us. [18] For Rahner, the words of the poet are full of nostalgia, as it were, they are like “gates into infinity, gates into the incomprehensible. They call upon that which has no name. They stretch out to what cannot be grasped”. Poetry “does not itself give the infinite, it does not bring and contain the infinite”. That is the task of the word of God and, as Rahner goes on to say, “the poetic word calls upon the word of God”. [19] For Christians, the Word is God, and all our human words bear traces of an intrinsic longing for God, a tending towards that Word. It can be said that the truly poetic word participates analogically in the

Word of God, as the Letter to the Hebrews clearly states (cf. *Heb* 4:12-13).

In light of this, Karl Rahner can draw a striking parallel between the priest and the poet: the word “alone can redeem that which constitutes the ultimate imprisonment of all realities which are not expressed in word: the dumbness of their reference to God”. [20]

Literature, then, sensitizes us to the relationship between forms of expression and meaning. It offers a training in discernment, honing the capacity of the future priest to gain insight into his own interiority and into the world around him. Reading thus becomes the “path” leading him to the truth of his own being and the occasion for a process of spiritual discernment that will not be without its moments of anxiety and even crisis. Indeed, numerous pages of literature correspond to what Saint Ignatius calls spiritual “desolation”.

### Attention and digestion

As far as content is concerned, we should realize that literature is like “a telescope”, to use a well-known image of Marcel Proust. [26] As such, it is pointed at beings and things, and enables us to realize “the immense distance” that separates the totality of human experience from our perception of it. “Literature can also be compared to a photo lab, where pictures of life can be processed in order to bring out their contours and nuances. This is what literature is ‘for’: it helps us to ‘develop’ the picture of life” [27], to challenge us about its meaning, and, in a word, to experience life as it is.

Another striking image for the role of literature comes from the activity of the human body, and specifi-

cally the act of digestion. The eleventh-century monk William of Saint-Thierry and the seventeenth-century Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin developed the image of a cow chewing her cud – *ruminatio* – as an image of contemplative reading. Surin referred to the “stomach of the soul”, while the Jesuit Michel De Certeau has spoken of an authentic “physiology of digestive reading”. [28] Literature helps us to reflect on the meaning of our presence in this world, to “digest” and assimilate it, and to grasp what lies beneath the surface of our experience. Literature, in a word, serves to interpret life, to discern its deeper meaning and its essential tensions. [29]

### Seeing through the eyes of others

In terms of the use of language, reading a literary text places us in the position of “seeing through the eyes of others”, [30] thus gaining a breadth of perspective that broadens our humanity. We develop an imaginative empathy that enables us to identify with how others see, experience and respond to reality. Without such empathy, there can be no solidarity, sharing, compassion, mercy. In reading we discover that our feelings are not simply our own, they are universal, and so even the most destitute person does not feel alone.

The marvellous diversity of humanity, and the diachronic and synchronic plurality of cultures and fields of learning, become, in literature, a language capable of respecting and expressing all their variety. At the same time, they translate into a symbolic grammar that makes them meaningful to us, not foreign but shared. The uniqueness of literature lies in the fact that it conveys the richness of experience not by objectifying it as in the descriptive models of the sciences or the judgements of literary criticism, but by expressing and interpreting its deeper meaning.

When we read a story, thanks to the descriptive powers of the author, each of us can see before our eyes the weeping of an abandoned girl, an elderly woman pulling the covers over her sleeping grandson, the struggles of a shopkeeper trying to eke out a living, the shame of one who bears the

brunt of constant criticism, the boy who takes refuge in dreams as his only escape from a wretched and violent life. As these stories awaken faint echoes of our own inner experiences, we become more sensitive to the experiences of others. We step out of ourselves to enter into their lives, we sympathize with their struggles and desires, we see things through their eyes and eventually we become companions on their journey. We are caught up in the lives of the fruit seller, the prostitute, the orphaned child, the bricklayer’s wife, the old crone who still believes she will someday find her prince charming. We can do this with empathy and at times with tenderness and understanding.

As Jean Cocteau wrote to Jacques Maritain: “Literature is impossible. We must get out of it. No use trying to get out through literature; only love and faith enable us to go out of ourselves”. [31] Yet can we ever really go out of ourselves if the sufferings and joys of others do not burn in our hearts? Here, I would say that, for us as Christians, nothing that is human is indifferent to us.

### “Judgement must never issue in a death sentence, eliminating persons or suppressing our humanity for the sake of a soulless absolutizing of the law”

In reading about violence, narrowness or frailty on the part of others, we have an opportunity to reflect on our own experiences of these realities. By opening up to the reader a broader view of the grandeur and misery of human experience, literature teaches us patience in trying to understand others, humility in approaching complex situations, meekness in our judgement of individuals and sensitivity to our human condition. Judgement is certainly needed, but we must never forget its limited scope. Judgement must never issue in a death sentence, eliminating persons or suppressing our humanity for the sake of a soulless absolutizing of the

law.

The wisdom born of literature instils in the reader greater perspective, a sense of limits, the ability to value experience over cognitive and critical thinking, and to embrace a poverty that brings extraordinary riches. By acknowledging the futility and perhaps even the impossibility of reducing the mystery of the world and humanity to a dualistic polarity of true vs false or right vs wrong, the reader accepts the responsibility of passing judgement, not as a means of domination, but rather as an impetus towards greater listening. And at the same time, a readiness to partake in the extraordinary richness of a history which is due to the presence of the Spirit, but is also given as a grace, an unpredictable and incomprehensible event that does not depend on human activity, but redefines our humanity in terms of hope for salvation.

### The spiritual power of literature

I trust that, with these brief reflections, I have emphasized the role that literature can play in educating the hearts and minds of pastors and future pastors. Literature can greatly stimulate the free and humble exercise of our use of reason, a fruitful recognition of the variety of human languages, a broadening of our human sensibilities, and finally, a great spiritual openness to hearing the Voice that speaks through many voices.

Finally, the spiritual power of literature brings us back to the primordial task entrusted by God to our human family: the task of “naming” other beings and things (cf. *Gen* 2:19-20). The mission of being the steward of creation, assigned by God to Adam, entailed before all else the recognition of his own dignity and the meaning of the existence of other beings. Priests are likewise entrusted with this primordial task of “naming”, of bestowing meaning, of becoming instruments of communion between creation and the Word made flesh and his power to shed light on every dimension of our human condition.

The affinity between priest and poet thus shines forth in the mysterious and indissoluble sacramental union between the divine Word and our human words, giving rise to a ministry that becomes a service born of listening and compassion, a charisma that becomes responsibility, a vision of the true and the good that discloses itself as beauty. How can we fail to reflect on the words left us by the poet Paul Celan: “Those who truly learn to see, draw close to what is unseen”. [32]

**†** Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 17 July in the year 2024, the twelfth of my Pontificate.

FRANCIS

## “By acknowledging the futility and perhaps even the impossibility of reducing the mystery of the world and humanity to a dualistic polarity of true vs false or right vs wrong, the reader accepts the responsibility of passing judgement, not as a means of domination, but rather as an impetus towards greater listening”



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, August 8, 2024

**What shapes a soul?**

Fr Rolheiser

Page 33



## The gift of Vocation

“It’s just who I am.” So came the simple response with which I was met on an evening around 10 years ago, sitting in the living room of my student house with my friend and housemate – now himself also a priest – after exasperatedly imploring him to tell me how he had decided to enter the seminary. The ‘problem’ of vocation had been one I had wrestled with for several years at that point. I was in the final stages of my studies to become a doctor (as was that same friend), but all throughout my time at university, and even before it, the thoughts of a priestly vocation had never left me. When this friend mentioned quite matter-of-factly that he would be pursuing a priestly vocation, I was dumbfounded and indignant. How had it been so apparently easy for him? How had he made up his mind?

“It’s just who I am.” This response struck me, because it caused me to realise at that very instant that the same was true for me. Despite years of vocational angst, in fact, I had always known that I was called to be a priest. Despite broadcasting widely that I was praying for signs of a priestly vocation, in truth I was praying for signs in the opposite direction, because I was afraid. However, once I accepted the reality, helped by that providential realisation, it brought with it immense peace, and although there have been ups and downs, I have never looked back. I loved training for the priesthood, especially in the context of the adjacent vocation to religious life in the Order of Preachers, and I am immensely happy now in my new priestly ministry. Yes,



**I could do so much more for this man now if I were a priest, says Fr Chris Gault OP**

there are sacrifices, but this is true in every vocation, and living out my own while being graced with good friends living out different ones (namely marriage, family, and single life) has given me vital perspective. It has only reinforced my certainty about the particular vocation given to me, a certainty which has now (thank God) been ratified and solemnised by the Church, at priestly ordination.

### **Aspirations**

Without doubt, that is the moment I (together with my two Dominican brothers) became a priest, really, truly, theologically. Once the hands of the Archbishop had been laid on our heads and the prayer of priestly consecration been pronounced, we were changed forever. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, at this point the ordinand is “configured to Christ” and enabled to act *in persona Christi* (see para. 1581). However, as for every priest who comes to that sacred moment, there had been a lifetime of preparation beforehand. Many priests can recount stories from their childhood when they voiced priestly aspirations, sometimes seemingly out of nowhere. I can remember attending Mass at a young age and noticing a

vague ‘identification’ with the priest on the sanctuary. Most children do not typically experience this. Certainly, not many boys tell their parents they wish to become priests when they are only 5 or 6 years old.

**“The Lord shapes and moulds His priests from the first moments of their lives”**

The explanation for this is that the priesthood is not merely a job or career, like being a doctor or a lawyer or a professional footballer. Rather, the Lord has ‘chosen’ His priests from the very first moment of their existence in the womb (see Jeremiah 1:5). This is because it is through His priests that the Lord desires to draw His people to Himself. It is through the priest that Christ becomes truly present for His people in the Eucharist. It is through the priest that they are reconciled to Him in the confessional. It is through the priest that children are baptised and given the gift of sanctifying grace, that marriages are blessed and that the sick and dying are brought strength through Holy Anointing. In short, the Lord desires to use His priests as instruments. Yes,

the priest works in the community, leading them in prayer and reaching out to those in need. But far more than this, it is through the sacred priesthood that a whole new vista – one of ‘grace’, beyond what is merely natural – is opened up for God’s people. To do this, the Lord shapes and moulds His priests from the first moments of their lives, because this instrumentality – that of bringing about salvation – is something He takes seriously.

### **Calling**

This explains why many future priests play at saying Mass while they are boys. It explains why thoughts of priesthood and a certain identification, that he is ‘one of them’, do not leave the young man, even as he pursues studies or goals in other areas. It explains instances like the one I experienced in a Belfast hospital’s Emergency Department late one night, in my third year after qualifying as a doctor. Despite struggling with understaffing and a high volume of patient presentations, everything was put on pause when an ambulance crew rang ahead into the emergency phone, warning the staff about the gravely ill patient they had just picked up. The man was young and asthmatic, suffering from an attack which was surely threatening his life. When he was wheeled into the ‘resus’ area of the ED, he was unconscious and grey. As one of only two doctors in the department at that hour of the night, I took my place at the head of the gurney to tend to the man’s airway, and listened as the paramedic recounted the details and the treatment he had received thus far. As we worked to bring the man back from

the brink (which thankfully we did), I found it strange that there was only one thought in my mind: “I could do so much more for this man now if I were a priest.”

**“The priest, by the gift of his ordination, heals the soul, and accepting that as my own role has given me indescribable joy and gratitude”**

What we do follows from what we are. The desire to do priestly things – like offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass, or free people from their sins in the confessional, or prepare a dying man to meet his God – exists because the one who desires to act as such has been chosen by God to do so. He has been instilled with a mission from heaven to tend to the wayfarers here in this life, while remaining himself a wayfarer in need of tending. In short, he has been given a vocation. He has done nothing to earn it. This is the heavenly plan. It is how God has intended to bring about the salvation of His people, and it goes above and beyond good – though merely natural – desires to help others in a career such as medicine. The priest, by the gift of his ordination, heals the soul, and accepting that as my own role has given me indescribable joy and gratitude. Thank God for His Church and for the priesthood. Thank God for the gift of a vocation. Thank God that He formed me to be His priest.



# The desire for truth and beauty in a world led by noise and distraction



Renata Milán Morales

**I**s the world craving the good, the true and the beautiful more than ever? On July 26, more than 200 attendees, including bishops, clergy, religious figures, and laity from all over the country, gathered at the Church of Mary Refuge of Sinners in Rathmines, Dublin. A location designed for a remarkable moment that reignited a sense of wonder within the hearts of its attendees.

Hosted by the Theology of the Body Institute, in collaboration with 'Young Adults Rathmines' and 'Pure in Heart', youth groups, 'The Way of Wonder' promised to be an immersive experience celebrating the profound aspects of human existence led by Bill Donaghy, an acclaimed international speaker, author, and Senior Lecturer from the TOB Institute, whose mission is to share the teachings of St John

Paul II's masterwork, 'Theology of the Body'.

The day before the event, Mr Donaghy engaged with young Catholics, discussing the importance of wonder - an English term originated from the old English 'wunder', meaning miracles and marvels. His presence ignited a spark of curiosity and reflection among those present, setting the tone for the larger event.

## Wonder

On the day of the event, Rathmines Church, known for its overwhelming architecture and rich history, was filled with enthusiasm. The atmosphere was palpable with anticipation as attendees awaited an evening dedicated to exploring the depths of God's creation through art, music, poetry, and contemplation.

As the clock pointed 7pm, Bill Donaghy took the stage, greeted by an audience that listened in reverent silence. His words resonated deeply as he invited everyone on a journey of wonder. A journey that challenges the mundane

and renews our innate longing for the infinite.

**“It's essential to adopt a sacramental vision that allows us to see beyond the surface and into the heart of God's creation”**

“Wonder is the Holy pause,” Mr Donaghy began. He explained how, in today's fast-paced world, people often forget to pause and appreciate the beauty that surrounds them. This “Holy pause,” as he described, is an invitation to experience life in its fullness and to recognise the divine presence woven into the context of our existence.

Mr Donaghy delivered a clear message, in a society that tends to “box God” to limited understandings, it's essential to adopt a sacramental vision that allows us to see beyond the surface and

into the heart of God's creation. He presented inspiring questions to the audience, challenging them to recognise the fruits of true contemplation and to seek the answers within themselves. By quoting G.K. Chesterton, “It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy. For we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we,” Mr Donaghy emphasised our call to remain open to God's surprises.

## Inspiration

Throughout the evening, Bill Donaghy's words delivered powerful reflections on Ireland's spiritual journey. He remarked on the challenges that the country has faced, saying, “Ireland has been through a crucifixion. The snakes have come back to Ireland. But beauty will throw away the evil. The only alternative is death. We need to learn how to ‘see’ again.”

These words echoed the idea that Ireland's rich cultural and spiritual heritage, marked by periods of trial and renewal, still holds the potential to inspire a new era of faith and wonder. Mr Donaghy highlighted that beauty is a powerful antidote to despair, a force capable of driving out darkness and reig-

niting hope.

As the evening continued, the audience was surrounded by an atmosphere of awe and gratitude. The event was a true celebration of God's Word, the Church, and artistic expressions filled with divine truth. The power of music, poetry, and art combined with Bill Donaghy's insights resonated within every heart present.

**“A sense of inspiration infused the crowd. Conversations remained in the church, as attendees shared their reflections and new perspectives with one another”**

The success of 'The Way of Wonder' was not just measured by the number of attendees but by the profound impact it left on each participant. As the event concluded, a sense of inspiration infused the crowd. Conversations remained in the church, as attendees shared their

reflections and new perspectives with one another.

## Desire

The collaboration between the 'Young Adults Rathmines' group and 'Pure in Heart' youth group played an instrumental role in bringing this event to life. The event was a witness of the power of community and the collective desire to seek truth and beauty in a world often overshadowed by noise and distraction.

“We need to open our ache for the infinite,” said Mr Donaghy concluding his talk. These words captured the essence of the evening. A call to embrace the yearning within each of us for something greater, something beyond the tangible, and to recognise that this yearning is ultimately a longing for God Himself.

“The Way of Wonder’ in Rathmines was not just an event. It was a reminder that in our daily lives, we are called to rediscover the beauty that surrounds us and to awaken our hearts to the divine presence in all things. Through wonder, we find the courage to journey into the depths of our faith, guided by the light of beauty that leads us closer to the heart of God.



# Is every Sunday a wasted opportunity?



Greg Erlandson

It's not every day that *The New York Times* runs a story about Catholics and Eucharistic Adoration. Yet the National Eucharistic Congress held in July in Indianapolis caught the attention of the *Gray Lady* and many others.

The five-day gathering in Lucas Oil Stadium, years in the planning with a \$14 million budget, attracted 50,000 participants. It was prompted by a Pew Institute survey in 2019 that suggested a majority of Catholics did not believe that the Eucharist was the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Though doubts have been raised about the accuracy of Pew's results (a pollster's wording of such a question is critical and often challenged), the data followed other warnings that Catholics may be under-appreciative of what the Second Vatican Council called the "source and summit" of our faith.

## Practicing

Mass attendance is down, with even self-described practicing Catholics attending less than weekly. In addition, many more Catholics are leaving the faith, becoming 'nones' or 'spiritual but not religious'. Younger Catholics, but not only, are often disaffected by the Church's teachings on LGBTQ and other issues. The clergy sexual abuse crises have also taken a toll. While some frustrated Catholics remain only because of

the sacraments, a sizable number, apparently, are no longer reluctant to walk away.

In light of all this, a multi-ethnic, multi-generational gathering in America's heartland to celebrate the Eucharist is considered a win by Church leaders and those who attended or who followed it on Catholic media.

Organisers cheered by the Congress' success may want to duplicate it in 2033, deemed the 2,000th anniversary of the crucifixion and resurrection. There is also talk of a Eucharistic pilgrimage to go from Indianapolis to Los Angeles in 2025.

It is hard to predict what the fruits of this Eucharistic enthusiasm might be. After the 1993 World Youth Day in Denver, a wave of priestly vocations followed, a small but substantial result that benefited many dioceses.

**“Is there time before or after Mass to give nuggets of instruction? Can parish missions and demonstration Masses be encouraged?”**

Yet the challenge remains that most Catholics, adult Catholics, are under-educated in the faith, in the liturgy, in the Church's social and moral teachings. There are many reasons for this, but placing blame or making excuses doesn't solve the problem. For most of us, the adult faith formation we receive, at best, is the weekly homily (which means that four out of five Catholics who don't

show up for Mass don't even get that). This time at Mass is precious not only because of the Real Presence. This time is precious because of our presence. Yet the opportunity to take advantage of our presence is often squandered by weak homilies and little else.

A number of Catholic universities have recently received generous grants from the Lilly Endowment's Compelling Preaching Initiative to improve homilies. May God bless this work.

## Priority

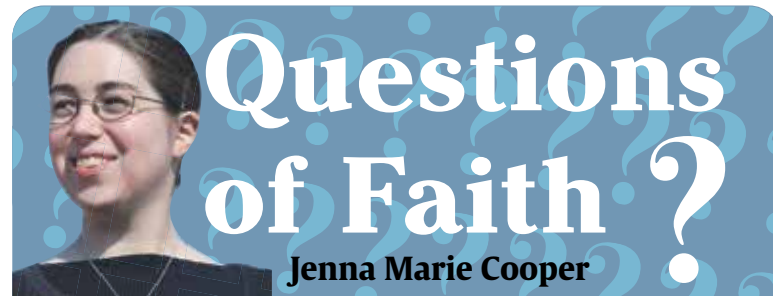
This should be a huge priority of the bishops, who should also be asking if there are other ways to encourage a national, parish-based effort at faith formation.

Is there time before or after Mass to give nuggets of instruction? Can parish missions and demonstration Masses be encouraged? Are there materials, videos and speakers that dioceses can help diffuse through their parishes?

Some of this is happening, often driven by lay speakers and lay organisations. Yet this should be a priority of all Church leaders.

The goal should not be to cater to political agendas or theological ideologies. The goal should be to help average adult Catholics know what it is they profess to believe, what it is they are participating in each Sunday, and what it means to be a baptised Christian in today's world. Indianapolis may have been a good start. But the parish is where such formation must take place, because it's where the people are.

**i** Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.



Jenna Marie Cooper

**What level of involvement in abortion carries the canonical penalty of excommunication?**

**Q: I've heard that a Catholic who is involved in an abortion is automatically excommunicated. But where do you draw the line in terms of what makes a person involved? Like if a person drove a woman to the abortion clinic because he wanted to try to talk her out of it at the last minute, would he be excommunicated if the woman had an abortion after all?**

**A:** It is true that abortion, besides being a grave sin, is also a canonical crime that carries the penalty you mention. However, like so many things in canon law, there are nuances that need to be taken into account.

Canon 1397, Paragraph 2 of the Code of Canon Law tells us that, "A person who actually procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication."

For reference, *latae sententiae* is a Latin technical term which is usually translated as 'automatic'. When a crime has a *latae sententiae* excommunication attached as a penalty, this means that offenders are excommunicated by simply committing the crime, essentially excommunicating themselves by their own actions. This is as opposed to a *ferendae sententiae*, or imposed penalty, which is meted out as the result of a canonical trial or similar judicial process.

Looking at the crime of abortion specifically, one meaningful phrase in the relevant canon is that the penalty applies to those "who actually procure an abortion." We can read "actually procure" as meaning, 'directly and intentionally bringing about an abortion in a specific instance'.

To illustrate, a doctor who performs an elective abortion is 'actually procuring' one, as would a pregnant woman who seeks out an abortion for herself. In some circumstances, a person who was more peripherally involved might be 'actually procuring an abortion' if they wanted the abortion to happen and somehow made it practically possible. For example, if a man coerced his pregnant girlfriend into having an abortion, arranged for her transportation to the clinic, and paid for it himself, he could be understood as actually procuring the abortion in question.

But there are other ways of being

involved with or supporting abortion which, while gravely immoral, would not be considered as 'actually procuring' an abortion and therefore would not qualify for the automatic excommunication. For instance, a pro-choice politician's support of pro-abortion policy is not the same thing as bringing about an abortion in real life. (Although, depending on the specifics of the situation, this kind of support for abortion might have other canonical consequences - e.g., they might be prohibited from receiving holy Communion as per canon 915, a situation which is different from excommunication.)

Additionally, there are some scenarios where even a person who did directly procure an abortion in the way that Canon 1397, Paragraph 2 envisions would, nevertheless, not incur the stated penalty. In particular, Canon 1323 tells us that "no one is liable to a penalty" if, among other things, they are under the age of 16, they are committing the act as a result of force or fear, or if, through no fault of their own, they were unaware of the penalty attached to the crime they were committing.

In the situation you describe, it seems very unlikely to me that a person who drove a woman to her abortion appointment in the hope that it would give him an opportunity to dissuade her would be committing the crime of direct procurement of an abortion since his intention was directly the opposite. While the prudence of his course of action might be debated, a person does not incur the penalty for a crime they did not commit, so therefore the driver would not be excommunicated.

If a Catholic has concerns about whether his involvement in an abortion has made him excommunicated, the best thing for him to do is talk to a priest in real life. A priest would be able to assess the person's situation, offer them the sacrament of penance, and if necessary, resolve the excommunication.

**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.



# What shapes a soul?

In a section of her poem *The Leaf and the Cloud*, Mary Oliver describes her feelings as she stands by the gravesite of her father and mother. She reflects on how both their virtues and faults influenced her life. Then she ends the reflection with these words:

*I give them – one, two, three, four – the kiss of courtesy, of sweet thanks.*

*May they sleep well. May they soften.*

*But I will not give them the kiss of complicity.*

*I will not give them the responsibility for my life.*

## Mother

What shapes our souls? How much is mystery? How much is genetics? How much is the influence of others? How much is our own responsibility? For instance, when I reflect on what helped shape my own soul, the influence of my parents looms large.

Part of me is my mother. She was a sensitive person, someone who sometimes couldn't say no when it was called for. So, she often found herself over stretched and tired. Today some would say that she didn't keep proper boundaries. She had sixteen children. Her critics can rest their case.

She was a generous person, always giving things away. As a child I was sometimes angry with her for that. I didn't want a generous mother. I wanted things. What she wanted was harmony in her family. I remember her com-



Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

ing to tears one Saturday morning as she was cleaning the house and trying to keep peace and order in a family that, on that particular day, was given over to disorder and arguments. She told us how disappointed she was that our family wasn't like the Holy Family.

**“They understood each other without having to explain themselves. In all my years of growing up, I cannot ever recall them having a single misunderstanding or even being angry with each other”**

We weren't the Holy Family and she was sometimes frustrated, not so much with us as with the plain inadequacy of life. Beyond this, she was a happy person, more naturally buoyant in spirit than my father. She danced more easily than he, laughed more spontaneously, and was an easier touch for us as kids. She took life less reflectively than

he, though not as unreflectively as we naively supposed. During one period of her life, she kept a diary and it testified to the fact that she'd thought more deeply about things than we'd supposed.

## Father

Her deepest longing was for a true home and here she got lucky. She met my father. From soon after they met until they day he died, they became soulmates in every sense of that word. She didn't have to tell him her secrets or share with him her frustrations, and neither he in reverse. They understood each other without having to explain themselves. In all my years of growing up, I cannot ever recall them having a single misunderstanding or even being angry with each other.

My father died of cancer and

she, who had been strong until his death, died three months later of pancreatitis and a loneliness nobody could cure. Today some would look at that and say she was a co-dependent. But she would laugh and tell you that she got what she wanted from life. She died of missing my father, died happy. There's something to be envied in that.

**“There was a reticence here that could sometimes look like coldness, but you had to read his actions and his eyes. They told a different story”**

I'm her son and when I contemplate these things, my own soul becomes less of a mystery, as do my struggles, my faults, my longings, and my strengths. I even understand why I'm tired a lot!

And then a good part of me is my father. There's a lot in me that can be explained by my genes. My

father didn't dance easily, though he was a deeply affectionate man. Dancing was too public for him. He preferred to express affection in private. He loved my mother, his family, and most everyone, but his way was not to trumpet this in public. There was a reticence here that could sometimes look like coldness, but you had to read his actions and his eyes. They told a different story. He had an abhorrence of all exhibitionism, hated long ceremonies, and loathed cheap public displays of anything. He also disliked excess in anything. His was the way of moderation, proper restraint in everything. Our family likes to quip that moderation was his only excess.

He was the stubborn uncompromising moral principle in my upbringing. He agonised over all that was not right in the world and his patience didn't always meet the test. I feared his eyes at those times when I disappointed him. I also feared, and still do, ever disappointing him. He was one of the most moral people I've ever met and he had a sixth sense that was nearly infallible. He knew right from wrong in a way I couldn't doubt. He instructed me on that – often against my protests. If I end up in hell, I can't plead ignorance. My father equipped me, faith-wise and morally, for life. But I have the faults that come with that too, his faults, compounded by my own.

So much of us, our strengths and weaknesses, take root in our upbringing – but still, we are responsible for our own lives.

**“So much of us, our strengths and weaknesses, take root in our upbringing – but still, we are responsible for our own lives”**



# A gift for spiritual nourishment



Elijah in the Desert, Moritz Berendt

1 Kgs 19:4-8  
Ps 34:2-9  
Eph 4:30-5:2  
Jn 6:41-51

**F**ood advertising is everywhere. From television to social media platforms, in grocery stores and restaurants, from food commercials to nutrition labels, we are surrounded with information about food.

The marketing of food is a billion-dollar industry that encourages brand loyalty, even as consumers are invited to try the new and latest food products. Certain foods evoke memories and connect us to people, places and events. Food shapes and transmits culture and is an essential

## The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



part of the fabric of daily life.

### Bread

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus say, "I am the bread of life come down from Heaven." Those who first heard him were puzzled by his teaching. In our food-saturated world, Jesus' words may be puzzling as well. As we think about food that satisfies our physical hunger, do we pause to reflect on our spiritual hunger? As we enjoy healthy foods, do we search for the spiritual food that will satisfy the deepest human longings for peace, love and union with God and one another? Does

the concern for food that nourishes the body match the desire for spiritual food that sustains the soul?

**“In this divine love we find our peace, security, and the origin and goal of eternal life with God”**

The Eucharist is a gift that transcends all forms of

**“Jesus, the bread that came down from Heaven, draws close to us in his sacred body and blood in every Eucharist so we might taste and see the goodness of the Lord”**

spiritual nourishment.

### Taste

With eyes of Faith, we see and taste the goodness of the Lord in the gift of heavenly bread. In Faith we recognise that Jesus offers to us the gift of his very self, his life given to the point of death on the cross for love of the world. Jesus, the bread that comes down from Heaven, offers to each one of us nothing less than God's abundant love. In this divine love we find

our peace, security, and the origin and goal of eternal life with God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that God alone satisfies the deepest hungers of the human heart. Jesus, the bread that came down from Heaven, draws close to us in his sacred body and blood in every Eucharist so we might taste and see the goodness of the Lord, as the psalmist acclaims in today's responsorial psalm.

Just as our bodies need nutritious food, we need divine, spiritual food for the journey of Faith. Today's Gospel invites us to hear Jesus' words and to respond in Faith as we long for and receive the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist that leads us to pray in confident Faith, "Speak to me, Lord."

### Question

Question: How does the experience of Jesus' presence in the Eucharist change your spiritual life?

**i** Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.



## TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



# What is our role in the Church?

Last week I finished the good, the bad and the ugly of the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Since then, I've enjoyed the genuine sportsmanship and especially the impressive achievements of the Irish competitors.

Watching **Paris Olympics 2024**, on RTÉ 2 for the most part, I've found it noteworthy to see so many participants blessing themselves before and after events or appearing to thank God or 'the heavens' or some 'higher power' for their success across so many disciplines. I found it prominent in those from Latin countries, though, to a lesser extent I've seen Irish competitors show this gratitude also. Among the most prominent examples, the great Novak Djokovic blessed himself in an untypical exuberance of emotion after winning that elusive gold medal in that gripping men's tennis final.

I enjoyed the camaraderie between opponents even after very competitive events, including boxing. I'm not a great fan of competitors being interviewed by the media after a defeat, but many have been graceful – e.g. Jodie McCann after losing out in 5,000 m. Of course, winners celebrate – rowing champions Paul O'Donovan and Fintan



Novak Djokovic

McCarthy are an interviewer's delight with their witty banter and casual homespun wisdom. I loved their interview with Darragh Maloney hours after their victory. I loved the modesty and grace towards fellow competitors shown by gymnast Rhys McClenaghan after his gold medal victory on the pommel horse – such great role modelling. The boxing produced fine wins for Kellie Harrington, but also controversy, whether because of questionable decisions or those fights where boxers previously deemed ineligible by the International Boxing Association on chromosomal/sex/gender grounds were allowed by

the International Olympics Committee to fight in the women's competition.

Back in more overtly religious territory I was also impressed by the interview with Deacon Frank Browne of Ballyroan parish in Dublin on **Liveline** (RTÉ 1, Thursday). Many people do not understand the role of the deacon in Church life, but I'd suspect we'll be seeing lots more of them as they perform tasks previously carried out by priests. Mr Browne gave clarity on what they can do (e.g. baptisms, funerals, weddings) and what they can't do (e.g. Eucharist, Confession). The item arose in the context of that programme stretch-

ing coverage of the Bishop Casey controversy into a second week. Mr Browne made a useful point about perception – approx. 7% of priests were abusers, with most of it in the past, yet he finds that when asked, people's estimates are never less than 30%. He reminded us that "a small number abused an awful lot of children", and that the governance around the issue was a "disaster". Further, he thought priests needed some sort of safeguarding to deal with the 'lingering cloud of suspicion'. It was an engaging, informative and non-confrontational interview.

However, it was confrontation all the way in England last week and last weekend in the aftermath of that awful stabbing incident in Liverpool. When we have a child allegedly murdering other children society has a major problem. Violent knee jerk reactions dominated media for a week, doing dishonour to victims, grieving families and communities. As many commentators pointed out it was worryingly reminiscent of the aftermath of the Dublin stabbing and subsequent rioting. It seems false assumptions were made on social media (a common complaint) about the ethnicity, status, and/or reli-

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY

**BBC Radio 4 Sunday August 11, 7am**

Covering a wide variety of topical religious and ethical issues.

#### MOVIE: BEN-HUR

**Channel 4 Sunday August 11, 11.20pm**

(2016) Jack Huston plays Judah Ben-Hur, a Jewish nobleman who's reduced to being a galley slave. He becomes a convert to nascent Christianity, Jesus (Rodrigo Santoro) himself having offered Judah solace on his way to the galleys.

#### THE KNIGHT

**EWTV Wednesday August 14, 9.30pm**

The story of Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Catholic priest who sacrificed his life to save a fellow prisoner at Auschwitz. His selflessness was a triumph of compassion over adversity.

gion of the suspect leading to attacks on mosques and hotels where asylum seekers were living and consequently on the police. A guest on **Henry Bonsu** (Times Radio, Friday), trying to instil some sense and reason into the controversy, pointed out that native English are perfectly capable of committing horrible murders – e.g. Fred West, Myra Hindley, including cases of children murdering children.

By the weekend the violence had come closer to home with rioting in Belfast, as if they hadn't had enough of that over the years. It was a 'Day of Shame', according to Justice Minister Naomi

Long (MLA, Alliance Party) on **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ Radio 1) last Monday.

Finally, a quick word of praise for **The Turkish Detective** (BBC One, Mon) which came to a very satisfying end last week. It was a crime drama set in Istanbul with a detective transferred over from London following a case involving his old girlfriend. Like many good drama series, I felt the creative team liked and understood people – we had three-dimensional characters we could root for despite their flaws. I hope we'll see a second series.

## Film

Aubrey Malone



# Diverse melange of quirkily appetising features

A man goes to a concert with his teenage daughter. It looks like the formula for a fun night – right? Wrong. *Trap* (12A) is an M Night Shyamalan film so you won't be surprised to learn that it morphs into something of a Kafkaesque nightmare.

Josh Hartnett plays the main role. Shyamalan's daughter Saleka is the singer giving the concert. Hayley Mills also appears. How refreshing to see the former child star still treading the boards at 78.

In *Radical* (12A) an idealistic teacher in an elementary school in an impoverished part of Mexico goes against the grain to try and inspire

his pupils. By pushing the pedagogical envelope in the eccentric way he does he both bewilders and enrages the authorities by turns. The pupils are also discombobulated – but intrigued by his inventiveness.

It's based on a true story. Starring Eugenio Derbez as the teacher, it's like a Mexican version of *Goodbye Mr Chips* crossed with *Dead Poet's Society*.

*Kneecap* (16) is that rare thing: the first Irish language film to premiere at the Sundance film Festival. Rich Peppiatt's super-energised semi-fictional biopic of the anarchic Belfast rap group of the title doesn't pause for breath. Its hip-hop aspirations will make it ideal fod-



Rob Peace (2024)

der for younger audiences. African-American musicians, to whom it also gives multiple nods, will also rally to the call. As will disenfranchised folk everywhere.

Both written and directed by Chiwetel Ejiofor, *Rob Peace* (15A) is a heartfelt drama

about a Yale university graduate. He took to drug-dealing to try and raise the funds necessary to defend his father on a murder charge he was facing. Also based on fact, it ends tragically – I won't say how.

On a lighter note, Eli Roth's *Borderlands* (12A) charts the

(mis)adventures of an extra-terrestrial bounty hunter (Cate Blanchett, of all people). She recruits a motley crew of over-the-top assistants to try and locate the missing daughter of a powerful businessman called, appropriately, Atlas (Edgar Ramirez).

Jack Black plays a robot. Jamie Lee Curtis does one of her familiarly kooky roles as a mad scientist. Don't take it too seriously. Even Roth calls this a "popcorn" movie.

*Only the River Flows* (15A) is a multi-faceted neo-noir thriller charting the path of a police investigation into a murder case in China in the 1990s. Showing at the Irish Film Theatre, it's more a 'why-they-dunit' than a

'whodunit' so expect varying layers of character portrayals.

*Ozi: Voice of the Forest* (PG), finally, is an animated tale of an excitable orphan orangutan trying to save a forest from deforestation. (The film world has always been crying out for a film about an excitable orphan orangutan, hasn't it?)

Many well-known Hollywood stars do the voices, Laura Dern and Hugh Bonneville among them. Shed a tear when you hear that of the recently deceased Donald Sutherland.

I always felt he was underrated as an actor. Who else could go from M\*A\*S\*H to Kluge to Casa-nova? May he rest in peace.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Why we should read Pascal today

**A Summer with Pascal**, Antoine Compagnon, translated by Catherine Porte. (The Belknap Press / Harvard University Press, £19.95 / €23.60)

**Pensées**, by Blaise Pascal, translation edited by Pierre Zoberman with an introduction by David Wetsel, with notes by both (Catholic University of America Press, £29.99 / €35.50)

Frank Litton

Pope Francis published an Apostolic Letter in June 2023 marking the 400th anniversary of the birth of Blaise Pascal. As commentators noted, here we had a Jesuit Pope endorsing and praising one of the Jesuits' most famous critics.

Pope Francis did not commend Pascal for his Provincial Letters published in 1667 and still in print. (I noted five English editions in Amazon.) The work commands attention as a classic of French prose; a work that extended the possibilities of the language with its wit, satire and rhetorical force.

I doubt many read it for its excoriating criticism of 17th century French Jesuits for their casuistry that reduced the tension between moral teaching and social practices, making the world a comfortable place for the rich, the powerful, and the well-to-do. Though some may be attracted by the intricacies of the relationship between nature and grace in the economy of salvation that lay behind Pascal's dispute with the Jesuits.

Nor was it for his mathematical genius and skill as an experimental physicist that placed him in the forefront of the scientific revolution that together with religious and political upheavals gave us the modern world.

**“It is only in the order of charity that we can understand the gap between what we are and what we could be. It is only there that we can learn how we can work to close it”**

### Teachings

The world that this displaced had given us a home in the natural order. Happiness lay in recognising that order, worshiping its Author and obeying its imperatives. In the new world, we are not part of nature but its observers. We should learn from Pascal because he makes the message of the Gospels compelling in this new landscape.

Pascal tells us that we find ourselves in three orders, each distinct, each with its own dynamic, each with its own motivations. These are the carnal order, the order of the intellect, and the supernatural order of charity. The carnal is the world of power; its heroes are kings, generals, the rich. In these egalitarian times, we may think of it as the everyday world where we follow the scripts that win us the esteem of our fellows, all the while, fixated, with a mixture of envy, jealousy and hatred, on the celebrities whose doings fill the media.

**“He resolved to make this world real for those indifferent to God, contemptuous of Christianity”**

The order of the intellect answers our need to understand the world. In it we rejoice in the achievements of the scientists, the philosophers, the scholars who direct us towards the truth, valued for its own sake.

On the night of November 23, 1665 Pascal had an intense experience of the order of charity where the gift of grace brings us into the presence of God and his realm of unconditional love. He resolved to make this world real for those indiffer-

ent to God, contemptuous of Christianity, who supposed all that human life could offer was to be found in the other orders.



ent to God, contemptuous of Christianity, who supposed all that human life could offer was to be found in the other orders.

He set about compiling notes, reflections, observations, to this end. Suffering from ill-health for all of his life, he died on the August 18, 1662, aged 39, the treatise for which, we suppose, the notes were assembled uncompleted. They were, however, eventually published in what became his most famous work, *Pensées* in 1670.

### Wretched

The wretchedness of the human condition is a central theme of the *Pensées*. Look at the expanding shelves of self-help books in our bookshops, observe the mushrooming growth of the therapy industry for contemporary evidence. We seek diversions in the vanities of the carnal order or in the pointless curiosity of the

intellectual.

Yet our dissatisfactions with ourselves, our relationships, our world, keep surfacing. Pascal invites us to recognise in our wretchedness a sorrow at the absence of a fulfillment we sense could be ours. It is only in the order of charity that we can understand the gap between what we are and what we could be. It is only there that we can learn how we can work to close it.

**“Its forty one short chapters are an insightful read for those acquainted with Pascal and an excellent introduction”**

I suspect many find the *Pensées* a challenging read. Certainly, I did, even with the help of the translation

**“It is, I suppose, rather like being presented with the ingredients of a cake, each of which is excellent; what is missing is a sense of the cooked cake”**

of the definitive French edition, with its background information, notes and guide.

It is not that the individual thoughts are difficult to decipher. Pascal's prose is crystal clear. It is, I suppose, rather like being presented with the ingredients of a cake, each of which is excellent; what is missing is a sense of the cooked cake.

This is where Compagnon's short book makes a valuable contribution. Professor Compagnon is professor of French and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, Profes-

sor emeritus at the Collège de France and a member of the Académie Française. He was commissioned by the radio station France Inter to present a series of fifteen minute programmes to run throughout the summer.

Now published as a summer with Pascal, its forty one short chapters are an insightful read for those acquainted with Pascal and an excellent introduction for those taking up Pope Francis's recommendation to attend to this great thinker who speaks to the spiritual needs of our time.



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.

## Irish city life and the lack of religion

**Dublin from 1970 to 1990: The city transformed,**  
by Joseph Brady  
(Four Court Press, review of Joe Brady, €24.95 / £18.50)

**Peter Costello**

**T**his new book by Joseph Brady marks the conclusion of a series devoted to the development of Dublin city, or perhaps we might say the Dublin region, since circa 900 AD, Joseph Brady is a geographer and formerly Head of the UCD School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy. He is also, with Ruth McManus, the overall editor of *The Making of Dublin City* series.

The author has long been engaged with the changing engagement of people with their environment, which is what geography is really about.

### Dublin

This book is about the emergence of the urban region we call Dublin, but in the course of what Dublin has recently become, the author casts inadvertently and indirectly, light on the decline of the Church as an institution and the reduced presence of religion in our modern city.

Some years ago when writing a book about Dublin's Churches, a sort of gazetteer of religions in the city, I was strongly taken by a few things.

One of these was the development of Churchtown, and a little earlier, of Marino.

Churchtown illustrates better what I mean. When one looks at the plan of the district, one is struck by the total overall social basis of it. It was designed for living, and not merely for some developers' overall profit.

For some years in the 1950s and 60s the Catholic Diocese published a directory of parishes which contained a fold-

out Ordnance Survey map on which the parish boundaries were drawn in red.

In Churchtown one could see how the Church, schools, and shops formed an essential social core to the place, and how the streets with the new homes spread out from that in an ordered way.

The place was planned for the people to live, to rear their children, all within a deliberate scheme. Here there was room to both play and pray.

**“Anyone wanting to understand modern Dublin will have to read and digest this book - and indeed the other in the series. But it also leaves much unsaid”**

These days as this book clearly illustrates, development despite the constant talk about planning, is merely an attempt to take control over rich international developers, largely interested only in increasing the rentable floor space, rather than creating a place to live.

Indicatively in the index book of 450 pages there are no entries for Church or religion. Today in a development such as Cherrywood - readers can visit the scheme online - many features are presented, largely the benefits of its connection with other places, with the city centre offices that are deemed central to life. There is no allowance for churches, for convents, gospel halls, a central building for meetings, a thea-

tre for amateur dramatics, or a library / bookshop.

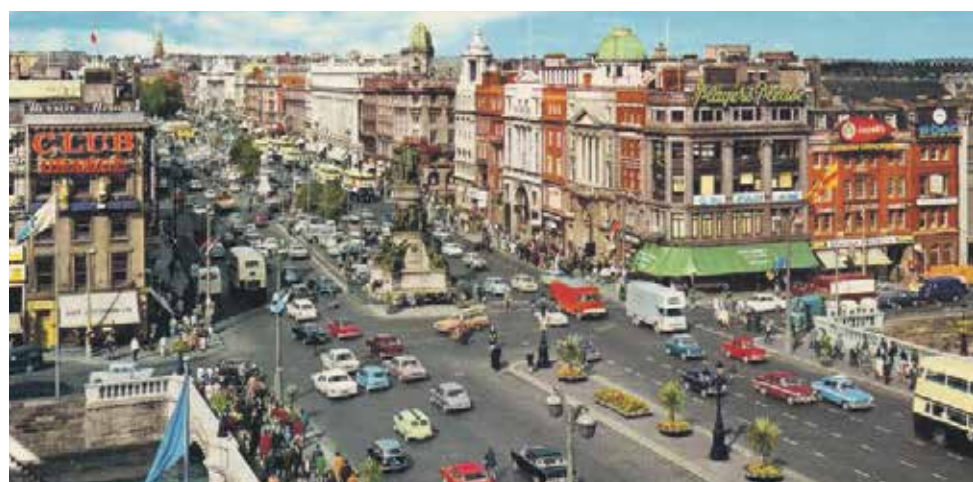
The place becomes somewhere to eat and sleep, but not to grow one's mind, body, or spirit. There is a park, but no swimming pool. We can see that what was once thought essential, a church or two is disregarded, as are small shops, places of entertainment for young people not dependant on drink.

As Joseph Brady describes, the city has been transformed, but has it been improved? But walking around the city these days, one may well be dismayed at the condition of many churches - Westland Row for instance, and those semi-closed inner city churches such as St Paul's.

But one then notices that religion is not quite dead, though the new amenities are not the Catholic or Anglican fanes of yesterday, but small places of worship and prayer which are part of the focussed life of our new neighbours, a small mosque, a Sikh temple, a Chinese evangelical meeting place.

In the 1940s and 50s Dr Charles McQuaid desired to build great basilicas as part of his urban transformation, Basilicas for the future. But now that future has come, we find that what might really be needed are not basilicas, but "a small upper room" where a new start of some kind might be made, or rather an original continuity, smaller places for greater faith, heralds perhaps of another kind of transformation.

This is an important book, important not only for it tells us in great and admirable detail, but also for what it passes over in silence. Anyone wanting to understand modern Dublin will have to read and digest this book - and indeed the other in the series. But it also leaves much unsaid.



O'Connell Bridge and Street in the 1970s. Picture: Photos of Dublin.

## A chance to reread, or read for the first time a significant Catholic writer



Daniel-Rops. Photo: Wikipedia

**The History of the Church of Christ,**  
by Pierre Daniel-Rops  
(Cluny Media, in ten volumes, priced from \$US 27.95/€25.50)

**Peter Costello**

**B**ack in the post-war decades in Ireland, for many Catholics two authors stood out. One was the Jesuit Fr Frederick Copleston with his volumes of *A History of Philosophy*, which was perhaps a little too academic for the casual ordinary reader. The other notable series was the books of the French author who used the pen name Daniel-Rops. It should be noted that he was not a priest, but a lay *litterateur*.

The first of his books that came my way was *Jesus in his Time* (first published in 1945). A copy of this much reprinted book was given to me as a present the first Christmas after I left school. It was, as I recall, the first book of its kind that I read, not for a course or for school work, but from pure interest.

To this day I still remain deeply interested in the theme, for *Jesus in his time* is surely the key to so much else.

### Significance

Between 1948 and 1963 Daniel-Rops published the ten volumes that make up his influential *History of the Church of Christ*. It will be seen that these titles coincide with the thinking and the Catholic social developments that led up to Vatican II. These facts are significant because at the conclusion of a period

**“To toss away concepts of charity and justice and love of neighbour that have supported European civilisation for over two thousand years is very foolish”**

of research and editorial development Cluny Media has brought the whole series in translation into English back into print in a finely designed edition.

I suspect these books played an important part in the development of the ideas of many of those who once taught the rising generation, but more than that they contained the materials on which other placed their faith, and if not their faith, at least their respect of what is best in Catholic thinking.

**“They ought to bear in mind that the complex issues which are tied up in the historicity of Jesus cannot be avoided or neglected”**

One is surprised that though they have meticulously brought back into print the volumes which deal with *The Church of Christ*, they have not as yet thought to bring *Jesus in His time* and its companion volume, *Israel and the Ancient World*, about the peoples

of the Bible, back into print too.

Yet the history that Daniel-Rops develops in his long series, was for him founded in those two earlier books. One cannot have *The Church of Christ* without attending to the biblical background and to the historical Jesus.

So while allowing people to make their acquaintance of the series, they ought to bear in mind that the complex issues which are tied up in the historicity of Jesus cannot be avoided or neglected.

### Clarification

These days people have very strange ideas about the history of the Church, which a perusal of Daniel-Rops might change. Others have even more weirder ideas about Jesus in his historical context.

These books might be a way to make people better informed. In a debate one can only dismiss what one has at least attempted to understand and come to terms with. To toss away concepts of charity and justice and love of neighbour that have supported European civilisation for over two thousand years is very foolish.

**i** The details of the series can be found on the Cluny Media site, where orders above a certain price are shipped free.



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**MALE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY LOCATED IN DUBLIN 6, SEEKS A HOUSEKEEPER** Monday to Friday. The work involves preparing a midday meal for 4/6 people as well as cleaning, preparing rooms for guests/colleagues. A flexible fulltime job, with good salary. For details contact: [nthuksscc@gmail.com](mailto:nthuksscc@gmail.com)



# Leisure time

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Email: [fundraising@rehab.ie](mailto:fundraising@rehab.ie)



For further enquiries contact:

Fundraising Department  
Rehab Group Head Office

10D Beckett Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin D12 K276

Charity number: CHY 4940

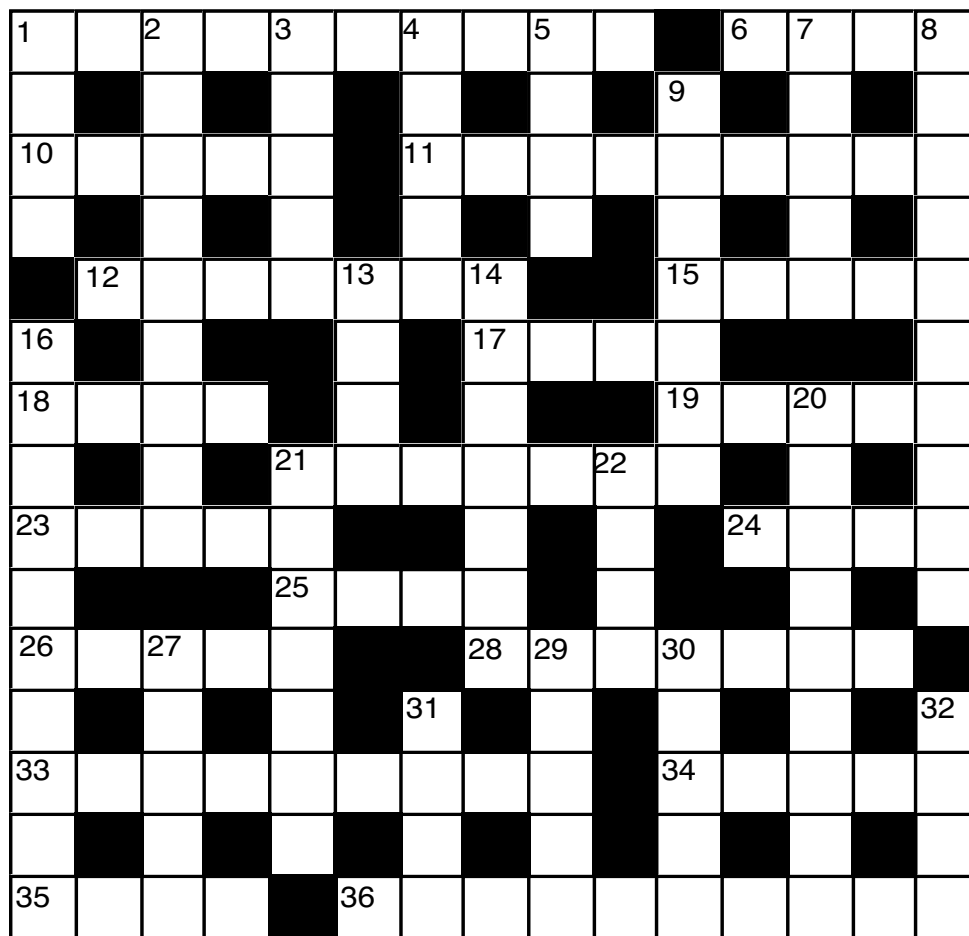
Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20006716

## Crossword

Gordius 675

### Across

- 1 One who rides in National Hunt races (4,6)
- 6 Follicles (4)
- 10 & 11 The first words in the Book of Genesis (2,3,9)
- 12 Disagreement, an expressed difference of opinion (7)
- 15 Tremendous, huge (5)
- 17 Tributary of the Rhine - a major area of heavy industry in Germany (4)
- 18 Nautical cry (4)
- 19 Birdlike (5)
- 21 Act, do (7)
- 23 Regal, kingly (5)
- 24 Top up (4)
- 25 Cain's brother (4)
- 26 Criminal (5)
- 28 Beg earnestly (7)
- 33 Legal venue (9)
- 34 Din (5)
- 35 Area in the West End of London (4)
- 36 Air currents historically important regarding sailing ships (5,5)



### Down

- 1 Prison (4)
- 2 The sacrament of marriage (9)
- 3 Taunts (5)
- 4 Hut, room on a ship (5)
- 5 Ova (4)
- 7 Not dead (5)
- 8 Ninety degrees (5,5)
- 9 Puzzle in which letters are jumbled (7)
- 13 Convenience, comfort (4)
- 14 Underground mushroom (7)
- 16 Poker hand (4,2,4)
- 20 It's said to be the sincerest form of flattery (9)
- 21 There are eight of them in our solar system (7)
- 22 It is formed by the weathering of iron (4)
- 27 Chuckle (5)
- 29 Identified (5)
- 30 Reinvigorate, revive (5)
- 31 Sixty minutes (4)
- 32 Place where the officers eat (4)

## SOLUTIONS, AUGUST 1

### GORDIUS No. 674

#### Across

- 1 Bubble-wrap 6 Room 10 Robin 11 Apprehend 12 Leveret 15 Repel 17 Hope 18 Used 19 Cross 21 Mercury 23 Bathe 24 Scam 25 Ache 26 Elvis 28 Thrills 33 Archetype 34 Leash 35 Earl 36 Jet-setters

#### Down

- 1 Bird 2 Bible belt 3 Lance 4 Whale 5 Amps 7 One up 8 Meddlesome 9 Secrecy 13 Ruse 14 Thicket 16 Jumble sale 20 Oscillate 21 Measles 22 Roar 27 Vicar 29 Heeds 30 Inlet 31 Tyne 32 Thus

## Sudoku Corner 545

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 544

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

### Last week's Hard 544

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



Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# Tombstones are signposts to eternal life

**I think it was former Taoiseach,** Albert Reynolds who said in his resignation speech; "it is the little things that can trip you up". I'm sure President Biden might agree. He mixed up the names of a few world leaders and it cost him his chance of a second term. But perhaps the incident also says something to us about the importance of names.



Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay, Wisconsin, stops to pray at the grave of Adele Brise, to whom the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in 1859. Photo: OSV News/Sam Lucero

Names are very sacred and important and nowhere more so than in a place of remembrance like a cemetery. A short distance from where President Biden lives in Washington DC is the Vietnam War Memorial. The monument is a long black granite wall with thousands of names of those who lost their lives in the war.

On a visit a few years ago while walking slowly through the memorial a few things struck me. Firstly, it was the silence. Even though there were crowds of people a hushed reverence imbued the atmosphere.

## Searching

Secondly, I noticed some people obviously searching for a particular name. When they found their loved one, they moved slowly as if approaching something very sacred and would then touch the name. As if to embrace their loved one, they very gently moved their fingers over the

letters. Some just wept while others even knelt in prayer.

As I reflected on this scene and the sacred intimate rituals that were unfolding before my eyes, I wondered about the relationship that had existed between the living person and the name on the wall. It had to be very special, or it would not have created such a reaction.

There were hundreds of people at the memorial that day, most of them just spectators or tourists like me. They could touch lots of names and have no reaction whatsoever. But to others, those names, or rather, this name was a cause for emotion and

many tears.

We are in the Cemetery Mass season or in some parts of the country it is simply called 'the blessing of the graves'. Locally we have had four and another four to go. Whatever the ritual is called it brings hundreds of thousands of people from home and abroad to cemeteries all over Ireland every summer.

## Masterminding

Pat McFadden is the political strategist from Glasgow credited with masterminding Labour's landslide victory in the recent British General Election. After the election Mr McFadden when asked what his summer looked like he responded that the only definite plan was to be in Donegal for the Graveyard Mass where his ancestors are buried.

It all comes back to the name. The goal of the journey is to stand at the spot, marked by a stone slab which bears the name of a loved one buried there. Depending on how close the person visiting, and the person being visited are, and how long it has been since the death has taken place, seeing that name on the gravestone can be very emotional.

For many, going to a cemetery

can be a comforting thing to do. It is a place where you can be close to your loved ones, to re-connect with them at the spot where you said a final farewell to them. For others, the visit can be painful and yet there is a compulsion, a summons to come.

During this summer of graveside remembrance rituals let us be conscious that, cemeteries are not just repositories of a community's past. For Christians, they are also the cradle of our hopes as well. All these uniquely different, tombstones are signposts to eternal life. We therefore pray there for our dead – not in sorrow, but in anticipation. Our faith allows us to know that the death of those we love is not the end of their story or our relationship with them.

## A Thought

"Yet if you should forget me for a while

And afterwards remember, do not grieve:

.....Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad."

Christina Rossetti

## Confessions of a grandfather

"I know I shouldn't have done this, but I am an 83-year-old grandfather and I was in the McDonald's drive-through this morning and the young woman behind me leaned on her horn and started mouthing something because I was taking too long to place my order. So, when I got to the first window, I paid for her order along with my own. The cashier must have told her what I'd done, because as we moved up, she leaned out her window and waved to me and mouthed "Thank you." obviously embarrassed that I had repaid her rudeness with kindness. When I got to the second window, I showed them both receipts and took her food too. Now she must go back to the end of the queue and start all over again."

The moral of the story is.....Don't blow your horn at old people, they have been around a long time.



## 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 from 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."

**Can you spare a donation for the Sisters?  
Even the smallest donation will help them.**

*Every euro that we receive in response to this Appeal will be sent, without deduction, to the Sisters for this project or a similar Health Clinic project in Ethiopia, run by Sisters, in need of help.*



*"Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing." - St Therese*

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### MISSION CHAPELS

St. Therese, our patroness, wished to spread the Gospel throughout the world "until the end of time". We receive many requests for help from bishops and priests to build, renovate or complete their mission chapels. We are often asked for funds to provide a permanent roof for a chapel. In many places the only roofing chapels have is made of straw or other flimsy material which, as you may imagine, is easily damaged or destroyed in bad weather.

**Your donation will help a priest in a mission country to provide a decent chapel for his congregation, a fitting place for the celebration of Holy Mass.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

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- €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state number of Masses ....)  
We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass
- €..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewaysassociation.com](http://www.littlewaysassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement  
Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

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