

The Irish Catholic

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New Dáil motion will include plight of persecuted Christians

Move comes after criticism of earlier 'outrageous' motion

Paul Keenan

The Dáil is set to debate a full motion condemning the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, *The Irish Catholic* has learned.

Just weeks after the failure of politicians to include Christians in a motion attacking the treatment of Iraq's Yazidi minority by so-called Islamic State (ISIS), an omission described as "outrageous" by Bishop John McAreevey, it has been confirmed to this newspaper that Fianna Fáil's spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Trade, Darragh O'Brien TD, will this week circulate a draft motion specific to Christian suffering.

"This is a matter of grave concern," Deputy O'Brien said, "and we want to work with other parties so that the Dáil can speak with one voice in condemning the persecution of Christians in the Middle East."

The deputy added that he and party colleagues are "very conscious that other nations such as the United States, Britain, and the European Union" have already adopted resolutions and motions condemn-

ing the genocide and continued suffering of Christians at the hands of religious extremists. "That makes it all the more urgent that we do this too," he said.

While not seeking to overstate the impact a successful motion could have in tackling the excesses of groups like Islamic State against religious minorities, Deputy O'Brien nevertheless stressed that "this must be a priority for the Dáil".

Deputy O'Brien explained that once feedback on the draft motion is received from party representatives, the process for a debate would be set in motion, hopefully seeing the subject of Christian persecution raised in the Dáil chamber in late January or early February.

The passage of a motion on behalf of Middle Eastern Christians would be a major step forward from the earlier motion on Yazidi suffering. Prompted by a meeting Deputy O'Brien and party colleagues had with a Yazidi woman who had endured sexual slavery at

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Bearing gifts we traverse afar...



Three Wise Men from the Scoil Íosa primary school Christmas pageant in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. Photo: Stephen Farragher.

DAVID QUINN

A new poll reveals changing attitudes to political correctness PAGE 10



LESSONS IN THE FAITH

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FR RON ROLHEISER

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Features Editor: Mags Gargan, mags@irishcatholic.ie

Reporter: Greg Daly, greg@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874029

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

Accounts: Elaine McNamee, elaine@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: Marian O'Meara, marian@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874028

Office Manager: Geraldine Kellett 01 687 4095

Managing Director: Garry O'Sullivan

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Pope Francis' visit – keeping the focus on the family

This year will see preparations for the 2018 World Meeting of Families in Dublin intensify. Much focus around the event – so far – has centred on whether or not Pope Francis will attend the gathering. All of the signals are indicating that the Pontiff will indeed be in Dublin in August 2018. No doubt, Irish bishops will discuss it further with Francis when they meet him in Rome on January 20.

A papal visit to a country always arouses excitement – that's understandable. Many Catholics are keen to hear what message Pope Francis will have for Ireland. But, it'll be important for the fruitfulness of the World Meeting of Families that we prioritise the fact that the Pope is coming to Ireland precisely for the World Meeting of Families, and not allow the event to become a sideshow to a wider papal visit.

Priorities

'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World' is the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the event. The theme is drawn from the two Apostolic Exhortations of Pope Francis: *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) published in November 2013 and *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*) published in April 2016.

Since his election almost four years ago, Pope Francis has made the family one of his key priorities.



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

He has correctly understood that the family, in many ways, is in a crisis and, crucially, when the family is in crisis, the world is in crisis since the family is the basic building block of society.

The family has also been described as the 'domestic Church', so any crisis facing the family also becomes a crisis for the Church. It is in families where children hear the first murmurings about faith. It is also in the family where children learn the values that will guide their lives for decades to come.

“Any crisis facing the family also becomes a crisis for the Church”

Amoris Laetitia is the fruit of a process of reflection led by Pope Francis on the situation of families in today's world.

Two sessions of the Synod of Bishops were devoted to the issue, one on the situation of families across the world and the other on how to respond to the challenges facing family life today.

Some of the themes highlighted in *Amoris Laetitia* are:

- The love and joy of family is a light

to the Church and to the world;

- the family is a living reflection of the communion of love of the Triune God;
- Christ bestows on marriage and the family the grace to be a prophetic witness to hope;
- through the Spirit, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things;
- through marriage, love is fruitful in generating life and caring for others;
- the Church is the family of families.

Organisers of the World Meeting of Families will be working hard between now and August 2018 to help guide reflection, thought and action about these issues in parishes and communities across Ireland.

One of the remarkable things that everyone said after the 2012 International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin was how impressed they were with the thirst that there is for faith and catechetics amongst Irish Catholics.

This is a hopeful sign that the World Meeting of Families can play a key role in the reform and renewal of the Church here.

Dáil motion to include persecuted Christians

» Continued from Page 1

the hands of ISIS, the motion became the subject of lobbying by rural Independent TDs dissatisfied with its narrow scope in failing to highlight similar experiences meted out to Christians. In early December, TDs led by Mattie McGrath proposed an amendment that

would highlight that, among other things, "Christians, Yazidi and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria will be exterminated or forced to migrate solely for their religion by the Islamic State and other militant extremists".

As the amendment was proposed, Bishop John McAr-

vey of Down & Connor called for an expression of "solidarity with Christian communities all across the world that are subjected to persecution and discrimination at so many levels".

Word of the Dáil motion comes as new figures look set to confirm that Christians

were the most persecuted faith group of 2016. Figures gathered by the Centre for Study of Global Christianity at the Massachusetts-based Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, reveal that over 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in the past year – a rate of one every six minutes.

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Facebook founder tells followers religion is 'very important' to him



The founder of social media giant Facebook has asserted the importance of faith in a Christmas message to followers.

The previously avowed atheist took to social media over the festive period to wish one and all a "Merry Christmas and Happy Hannukah", prompting one viewer to pose the question: "Aren't you an atheist?"

Zuckerberg was quick to reply: "No. I was raised Jewish and then I went through a period where I questioned things, but now I believe religion is very important."

Audience

Zuckerberg's words on faith come just months after he and his wife Priscilla attended a private audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican, a meeting which had a profound effect on the industry leader.

"We told him how much we admire his message of mercy and tenderness, and how he's found new ways to communicate with people of every faith around the world," Zuckerberg wrote later. "It was a meeting we'll never



Pope Francis with Mark Zuckerberg.

forget. You can feel his warmth and kindness, and how deeply he cares about helping people."

From humble beginnings as a computer programmer, Zuckerberg became a universally recognised individual when, along with fellow college students in 2004, he came up with the idea of an online networking site, Facebook. The site is used today by one billion people. Zuckerberg is currently ranked by *Forbes* magazine as the 10th most powerful individual in the world.

Together with his wife, the Facebook founder is responsible for the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation, an initiative tasked with donating some \$45 billion of his internet earnings to charitable causes focused on education and curing diseases.

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Immediate action urged to save family homes

Greg Daly

Immediate action is needed to protect families at risk of losing their homes through repossession, following comments from the Master of the High Court, leading campaigners have urged.

Edmund Honohan, who has previously called on the Government to 'nationalise' repossessed homes and use them as social housing, said this week that thousands of repossession orders may be open to legal challenge owing to a failure to apply European law.

Repossession

He argued that county registrars should not be dealing with repossession cases, noting in particular that consumers rights are being breached by failures to apply properly the 1993 EU directive on unfair contract terms in consumer contracts.

Welcoming these comments, Focus Ireland's Mike

Allen told *The Irish Catholic* there would be "huge consequences for the banks as well as for families" if Mr Honohan was correct in saying that "the entire process adopted for house and home repossession is actually flawed in European law".

Pointing out that such repossessions could have knock-on effects on the many families who become homeless, not as former owner-occupiers but as tenants of buy-to-let landlords, he added, "there's a whole range of things that are coming out about families who have lost their home because they were given the wrong tracker mortgage, things like that.

"Though people were blowing their whistles at the time, if it comes out a year or more later that in fact people were correctly warning that this was happening, it's too late for those families, he said.

Mr Allen called on the leading barrister's comments

to be addressed as soon as possible, saying, "these are issues that need to be taken seriously at the moment that families are losing their home, because there's no recompense that can be made in years to come for unfairly depriving someone of their home."

Support

William Prior, of the Portlaoise-based Phoenix Project, which offers advice and support to borrowers and homeowners in distress, agreed, saying, "really what the banks are doing is that they're reneging on people and saying you've kept the house lovely and cosy for us, now let's sell it and we'll get the market value on it.

"As long as they get their money, it's damn the rest of the people in the country," he said.

Portrait of the Blessed



Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe with Navan-based artist Agnieszka Ryan and her portrait of Blessed John Henry Newman, which Tuam Council of Priests had commissioned as a gift for the bishop, a former priest of the Archdiocese of Tuam. Bishop Monahan has long been an admirer of the 19th-Century cardinal, about whom his licentiate thesis was written.

Core role of religion in schools defended

Paul Keenan

The head of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) has defended the "core role" of religion in faith schools amid renewed suggestions that Religious Education could be side-lined in a curriculum shake-up.

With the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment consultation ongoing towards a new primary curriculum, reports over the Christmas period suggested

that religion could lose its core status in favour of 'flexible time' outside a 60% dedication of school time to maths, English and Irish.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week on such a proposal, Seamus Mulconry, general secretary of the CPSMA insisted there was very little support for religion to be side-lined in such a way, and far more to be gained in retaining the centrality of religion in the teaching day.

"There remains parental demand for the transmission

of their faith to their children," Mr Mulconry pointed out, adding that there is "consistent demand" from parents for sacramental preparation of their children.

Important role

"Not alone that," he went on, "religion continues to have an important role in teaching in other areas." From a contribution to something like drama through nativity plays, he explained, "there is also an understanding of history, and issues such as the refugee

crisis and homelessness and the crisis in the Middle East. These are subjects that can be explored with pupils through Religious Education."

While Catholic primary schools continue to devote 30 minutes per day to Religious Education, and have the right to do so under the 1998 Education Act, religion has been repeatedly singled out as one area to be sacrificed in order to gain more time for literacy, numeracy and newer subjects such as coding.



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Character, not just facts, is the essence of early education

The proposal to remove religion from the core curriculum of primary schools has been greeted by secularists as “a progressive step for Irish education” and “an acknowledgment of the value of fact-based learning”.

Removing faith from the curriculum will, it is suggested, help to instruct young children in the discipline of evidence-based facts and equip them with “the tools of philosophical enquiry”.

This has prompted me to cast my mind back to my own primary school days and what I learned through religious instruction. Perhaps I ‘imbibed’ more than I learned, since I don’t recall any very heavy learning beyond the *Catechism* and the Ten Commandments.

The most vivid lessons were more about example under duress than about the recital of mere facts (which did not compel me much as a young child). There was a lot about the



Mary Kenny



saints, and I could identify with young girl saints like Joan of Arc and Bernadette of Lourdes.

Message

The message transmitted by the saints’ lives emphasised faith and endurance. There were stories, too, of missionaries who had been tortured to death but did not betray their faith. What I learned from this was that you should stand up for what

you believe in, without fear or favour.

Far from emphasising submission, the message I picked up was about not conforming to received ideas. Do what you believe is right. Defend your values. Do not be afraid.

I remember being hugely impressed by the story of St Catherine of Siena – a doctor of the Church, it was stressed

– who drank a cupful of leper’s pus just to show that she feared nothing. Respect!

My early convent school education gave me something for which I’ll always be grateful: the conviction that I am entitled to form my opinions through reason and experience, and entitled to stand up for them. When a child claimed that “everyone else does it”, a nun would respond “and if everyone else throws themselves off a cliff, would you follow like a lemming? Think for yourself!”

The cardinal virtues stressed fortitude.

The early lessons imparted to children are probably more about character and attitude than about “fact-based evidence” – although mathematics soon leads a school student to prove a mathematical fact, a lesson in itself. But without character – endurance, courage, and even self-denial – philosophy and fact-based evidence are of little avail.

Debbie’s eternal smile

The death of Debbie Reynolds indeed signals the end of the era of the big MGM musical, like *Singin’ in the Rain*. I was about 10 when I first saw it and I still remember the sense of rapture that the title song imparted. And it never loses that essence of joy.

Debbie Reynolds, the fresh-faced ‘girl next door’, elicited much public sympathy when her husband Eddie Fisher left her for *femme fatale* Elizabeth Taylor. Debbie’s daughter Carrie Fisher – dying, tragically, just a day before her mother – made a comedy career out of ridiculing her father for his weak-willed ways, the punishment for adultery no longer being fire and brimstone, but being held up as an object of satire.

Life does not always imitate art, and the inspiring and uplifting mood of *Singin’ in the Rain* was somewhat in contrast to Miss Reynolds’ own life, with three failed marriages and money problems too.

But ever the trooper, Debbie Reynolds kept a smiling face to the world and tried to see the best in everyone.

Not so much republican as Christian

When President Higgins visited the excellent Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin, he described it as “the stuff of a real republic”.

It was, he said, “so impressive to be able to come and share life as Bro. Kevin [pictured] is making possible with the children on Sunday, the young mothers on Monday, the parcels that go out and the people who break bread and eat food here together with dignity



– that is the stuff of a real republic”.

The Capuchins’ work is absolutely terrific and compels all our admiration. But surely it should be said that “this is the stuff of real Christianity” rather than “the stuff of a real republic”?

A republic may act with charity towards the dispossessed, or it may not. Assad’s Syria is a republic. The US is a republic. The original republic, the template of them

all, Switzerland, though not without virtues, is best known for its favourable policies towards the very rich who like to hide their money.

Republics are as variable as the humans who constitute them. The same could be said for any other form of constitutional arrangement.

The Capuchin Order of Friars are an offshoot of the Franciscans, founded to serve the poor by seeing in each individual the person of Jesus Christ. That was the order’s purpose. But President Higgins seldom seems to ascribe public virtues to the traditions of Christianity.

Fr Leo Morahan RIP

The funeral has taken place of Fr Leo Morahan, the well-known figure in GAA circles and founder of Ireland’s longest running parish magazine, *An Coinneal*.

In addition to his long service as a priest of the Archdiocese of Galway, Fr Morahan maintained strong links to the GAA and served as chairman of Mayo GAA Board. A keen Irish speaker, he was known for his writings both in that language and English. In 1959 he became the founding editor of the Louisburgh magazine, *An Coinneal*, which continues to publish today.

Fr Leo passed away in Louisburgh on Christmas Day.

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Limerick is the 'exemplar' on World Day of Peace – Bishop

Paul Keenan

Limerick city has been lauded as an exemplar of "active non-violence" during New Year peace messages.

As Irish bishops issued homilies for the 50th World Day of Peace on January 1, and after a year of extreme gangland violence in some quarters, Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick hailed the role of nonviolence in a renewed city that offered hope to others.

"Thanks to the contribution of many to active non-violence, Limerick is now a city that is beginning to sing a song of co-operation and regeneration, new vitality and effective management, artistic, sport and cultural renewal," Bishop Leahy said in his message delivered at Corpus Christi Church in Moyross.

'Extra mile'

In that parish, he added, as well as others such as Southill, Ballinacura Weston and St Mary's Park, people had gone "the extra mile in non-violence and non-retaliation in the face of violence" to



Bishop Brendan Leahy.

make Limerick a place where "crime...is way down, murder is rare and communities are

safer...regeneration is now being given a chance and social justice is now winning out over anti-social neglect. Houses are being repaired, some building has been done and more is under way. The services for children have improved."

He added: "Let's acknowledge that what's going on in Limerick has something to say to other areas in our country where violent crime now seems to dominate.

"We can think of the appalling year that Dublin has witnessed."

For his part, Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin used his New Year homily to address the violence wrought by the city's "drugs barons" in 2016.

"Will these people ever

learn or are they totally blinded by their own selfish interest in the drug trade, a trade in death which is of such enormous financial interest that it leaders feel that they must kill to keep their power?" he asked.

"Gangland violence must stop."

Gestures

In delivering his own message for World Day of Peace, Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin chose to quote Pope Francis directly when he stated: "All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers.

"In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home."

Bishop William Crean address

Bishop William Crean will address the annual Diocese of Kerry Clergy Assembly on January 10. The title of his talk is 'From what wells do we drink now? – Reflections on the changing patterns of faith and practice in Ireland today'. The venue is the Gleneagle Hotel, Muckcross Road, Killarney, beginning at 8pm and concluding by 9.30pm. There is no admission fee and all are welcome.

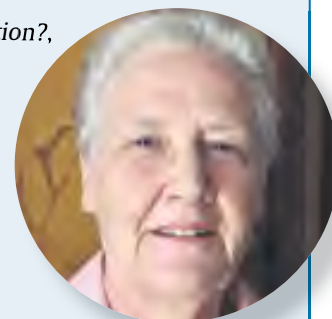
Zero tolerance simply about ministry, advocate argues

Greg Daly

'Zero tolerance' is key to child protection in the Irish Church and should not be confused with how priests are handled when out of ministry, the sole Irish member of Pope Francis' child protection commission has said.

Commenting on the Pope's call to bishops on the Feast of the Holy Innocents for the Church to renew its commitment to tackling clerical abuse and to "adhere, clearly and faithfully, to 'zero tolerance'", Marie Collins [pictured] said: "Zero tolerance is the policy whereby anybody who has abused or who has been found to have abused is not returned to ministry."

In advance of October's RTÉ documentary *Beyond Redemption?*, producer Mick Peelo told *The Irish Catholic* that the Church's 'zero tolerance' approach is harmful, and that it runs a risk of demonising priests found guilty of abuse, but Mrs Collins suggested that there is some confusion around this issue.



Different area

The documentary, she said, "went on to talk about how priests out of ministry are treated, etc. and that's an entirely different area. That's not what zero tolerance refers to."

Zero tolerance simply means, she said, "if there is any abuse, it's the end as far as ministry is concerned, and anybody who has abused their trust and their position by abusing a child or a minor in any way, that they cannot be returned to ministry".

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Striker thanks God for 'scorpion kick' goal

The footballer responsible for a spectacular 'scorpion kick' goal during a New Year's game in the English premier league has said God helped him to carry off the near-impossible shot to bring his team to victory.

Playing with Arsenal in the January 1 face-off against south London's Crystal Palace, French international Olivier Giroud made the most of a pass delivered behind him to flick the ball with the back of his heel and send it on target for what was immediately described by pundits as an early contender for 'Goal of the Season'.

Clearly delighted with the results of his masterly display, Giroud afterwards thanked God for the goal: "I needed God's help to score this goal," he told an interviewer at full time, when Arsenal had beaten Palace 2-0. A proclaimed Catholic – he has stated that he is "a strong believer" –



Olivier Giroud carries a reminder of his faith into every game in the form of a tattoo on his forearm which is a Latin rendering of Psalm 23: *Dominus regit me et nihil mihi deerit* – The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Though he does not cross himself in preparation for competition as so many athletes do, Giroud has said he says a prayer before every game.

Christian leaders offer prayer for 2017

Paul Keenan

The leaders of Ireland's main Christian denominations have joined in praying for a year in which people remember both God and neighbour.

In a joint New Year's message, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, Rt Rev John McDowell, President of the Irish Council of Churches, Rev. Bill Mullally, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, and Rt Rev. Dr Frank Sellar, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland call for "hope in Christ in uncertain times" among those struggling at home and abroad in 2017.

Crisis

"Mindful of people who continue to suffer as a result of conflict, especially in the Middle East, and the humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold in Syria," the leaders write, "we also remember and lift in prayer those in

our own communities who are affected by homelessness and those struggling to make ends meet...It is our prayer that people will look to Him for that comfort and help and see Him move in those who offer much needed practical support."

Mindful too, of political moves closer to home, with implications for all, the leaders write that "it is our united prayer that our political leaders in Belfast, Dublin and London will have wisdom, grace and patience during the [Brexit] process that will have implications for the whole of Ireland".

The message concludes: "As we begin our journey through this coming year, we are reminded of the Greatest Commandment that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength ...' He continued, by giving us a second, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31).

Death of Fr Paddy Foley CSSp

The death has taken place of Fr Paddy Foley CSSp, the last Spiritan of the Irish Province to minister in Nigeria. He was 90. A native of Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow, Paddy Foley entered the Spiritan Novitiate at the age of 19 and took

up his appointment in the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria, in 1955, a year after his ordination. Until his return to Ireland at the end of 2014, he ministered almost continuously in the West African country including some 40

years based in Abwa Rural Training Centre in Benue State.

Fr Paddy's Funeral Mass takes place on January 5 at Kimmage Manor with burial after in Blessington, Co. Wicklow where he grew up.

We are all ministers of the Mercy of God

"Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things." - Pope Francis

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Out&About

O Holy Night



TRALEE: Kerry Choral Union presenting their Christmas concert 'O Holy Night' with soloists Miriam Murphy, soprano and Edel Crowley, soprano at St John's Baptist Church with musical director Sharon Reidy and accompanist Ian Sexton. Photo: John Cleary



CARLOW: The Kildare-based Sr Mary Clavia, Sr Mary Maria & Sr Trinita, members of Ireland's only community of Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, visit Bishop Denis Nulty at Bishop's House, Carlow.



CARLOW: Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin with members of the Poor Clare Community in Graiguecullen.



MEATH: Finian Connaughton, Dolly Maguire, Attracta Ward, Harry Casey (front, L-R) with Eileen Rafferty, Patricia Mc Kenna, Mary Connolly, and Peter Ludlow (rear, L-R) at the launch of Drumconrath parish prayerbook.



CLARE: Mass in Brookvale Manor Nursing Home, Ballyhaunis on Christmas Eve.

Edited by Greg Daly
greg@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



ROME: Fr Tom Dalzell with pilgrims from a Loughlinstown/Ballybrack/Killiney parish pilgrimage to Rome, accompanied by friends from Glasnevin, Tallaght and elsewhere in Ireland.



CLARE: Killaloe's Bishop Fintan Monahan celebrating New Year's Eve Mass with members of Ennis' Neocatechumenal Way group.



DUBLIN: Natalie Doherty, Fr Bryan Shortall and Bryan's father Enda at the launch in Veritas of Fr Bryan's new book, *Tired of all the Bad News*, published by Columba Press.



MELBOURNE: Sr Francesca Slevin, originally from Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, celebrating her 100th birthday in Australia, where she has lived since 1960, a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. She received a blessing from Pope Francis as well as congratulatory greetings from President Michael D. Higgins, Queen Elizabeth II and Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.



LIMERICK: Children who took part in the Doon CBS Nativity play held in Doon parish church.

ARMAGH

Eucharistic Adoration in St Malachy's Church, Armagh daily from 6am to midnight, and all night on Wednesdays. Adoration chapel, Edwards St, Lurgan, adoration weekdays, 9am-9pm.

CLARE

Bishop Fintan Monahan will lead the ecumenical closing ceremony of the Cahercalla Hospice Yellow Ribbon Remembrance Tree Project 2016, in association with Ennis Lions Club and Ennis Rotary Club, at The Oratory, Cahercalla Hospital, on January 6 at 6pm.

First Saturday devotions in honour of Our Lady of Fatima will take place in Ennis Cathedral after 10am Mass on Saturday, January 7, with adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament with Confessions, Rosary & Benediction. The Rosary will also be ongoing after 10am Mass in the Friary Church, Francis Street.

A seminary concert on the theme of 'The coming of the Three Kings' will take place at 7.30pm on Saturday, January 7, at Ennis Cathedral, with families with children being especially welcome. At the end of the concert the Three Kings will come to meet the children.

CORK

A pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares monastery, College Road, Cork at 7.30pm. All are welcome.

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

DERRY

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, in Dungiven parish from 8am to noon, and 3-9pm, Monday to Friday.

DUBLIN

Divine Mercy Mass 7:30pm every Tuesday night in St Saviour's Church, Dominick Street followed by holy hour. Also prayers of Divine Mercy every day at 2.30pm at the shrine with the relic of St Faustina.

Life to the Full (Jn 10:10) book club for young adults meets every Thursday from 7-8:30pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay (Smithfield) to meditate, share and discuss life & faith. Refreshments provided. www.facebook.com/lifetothefullbookclub

Embrace God in nature while building true friendships and getting fit with Ewe Thina: We Walk God's Way, joining other young adults (20s & 30s) for reflective monthly hikes around Dublin area. <https://www.facebook.com/wewalkgodsway> - contact siobhan.tighe@dublindiocese.ie

FERMANAGH

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

welcome. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KILDARE

A centring/contemplative prayer group continues to meet in the Old Baptistry of St Michael's parish church in Athy every Thursday at 8pm. Everyone welcome. For more ring Dolores at 086-3474679.

Suncroft parish church: Eucharistic Adoration each Wed in the sacristy 10am to 6pm.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

LIMERICK

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

MEATH

Trim Prayer Group meeting every Thursday evening, 8-9pm, in Trim Parish Centre. All welcome.

Christ the King Prayer Group, Enfield, meeting every Monday evening, 7.30-8.30pm, Enfield Parish Centre. All welcome.

OFFALY

Eucharistic Adoration in the chapel of Tullamore General Hospital 24/7.

ROSCOMMON

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

SLIGO

Latin Mass in Carraroe on the last Sunday of each month at 3pm

WATERFORD

Monthly intercession for Marriages and Families will be held between 6 and 7pm on Friday January 13 in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, in the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre, Waterford.

WICKLOW

Eucharistic adoration, St Mary & Peter Church, Arklow, every Tuesday & Friday 2-7pm and Sunday 2-5pm.

Holy Rosary for priests, Aras Lorcain, every Friday at 7.45pm.

St Patrick's Prayer Meeting on Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the Scout Hall, South Quay, Wicklow. All are welcome to get together for prayer, scripture, music and a cuppa.

Holy Hour of Adoration, Prayer and Music continues every Wednesday, 8pm-9pm, in St Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town. All welcome. You can also join us on the live stream: <http://www.churchservices.tv/spatrickschurchwicklow>

What a new poll reveals about our attitudes to political correctness



A backlash of stymied voices is developing, writes **David Quinn**

One of the many things highlighted by the victory of Donald Trump in the US, and Brexit in the UK, is that a lot of people are sick and tired of political correctness. Those who are sick of it appear more likely to have voted for either Trump or Brexit. Those who broadly support political correctness



were more likely to have voted against Trump and Brexit.

But what does the public overall think of political correctness? A new poll from Amarach Research answers the question. The

poll is based on identical polls conducted in the US and Canada and basically it shows that we have mixed feelings about it.

Before proceeding, however, let's consider what political correctness is. A lot

of people think it is simply about being polite. It is about not saying things other people will find offensive.

That doesn't quite capture it though, because it is perfectly acceptable to be as offensive as you like about certain groups, Catholics for example, or Evangelical Christians, or white males. They are fair game. Why is that? Why are they fair game but women, non-white ethnic groups, Muslims and gays are not?

Powerless

The reason is that the former groups are all considered to be powerful whereas the later set of groups are deemed to be relatively powerless minorities who must be protected. It is permissible to offend powerful groups, but not powerless groups. So political correctness is, to be more precise, about protecting 'powerless' minority groups from offence.

Surely this is a good thing? It is, up to a point, but clearly it can go too far. Here are some examples of it going too far: calling someone an 'Islamophobe' because they don't go along with the line that Islam is a 'religion of peace', full stop; calling someone a 'racist' because they don't agree with mass immigration; saying someone 'hates' women because they oppose abortion; calling someone a 'homophobe' because they don't believe two fathers are the same as a mother and a father.

Denouncing people as 'bigots' for believing certain things, even eminently reasonable things, is a

shaming tactic and all moral systems everywhere (including Christianity) have used shaming tactics to enforce their moral codes.

People eventually got sick of authoritarian Christianity because it overused the shaming tactic, and now they are growing tired of political correctness for the same reason because it is also overusing the shaming tactic of too readily denouncing people as 'bigots'.

The headline finding of the Amarach poll is that 76% of Irish people agree with the statement, 'political correctness has gone too far'. That is a big warning shot across the bows of those who love to shout 'bigot' at everyone who disagrees with them.

The result was closer when people were asked which of two statements they most agreed with. One was that people should be more careful about the language they use to avoid offending people with 'different backgrounds'. Forty-three percent of respondents agreed with this.

But 57% agreed with the contrasting statement that "too many people are offended these days by the language other people use".

Still and all, even this finding shows a majority of people don't much care for political correctness.

“There is a warning in this poll for politicians, for the media and for the enforcers of political correctness generally”

Supporters of political correctness can take more comfort from the level of agreement with the statement, "People who complain about political correctness just resent that they cannot say anything they want to anymore".

Sixty-two percent of people agreed with that statement versus 38% who disagreed. Overall, I think the poll shows that people agree with political correctness up to a point, but not past a certain point.

That is, they agree that we shouldn't use unmistakably offensive language about minority groups, for example, using the 'N' word about Africans, or displaying

indisputably racist or sexist attitudes, for example Donald Trump's attitude towards women displayed in that infamous tape which turned up in the closing stages of the US presidential election.

On the other hand, people clearly feel that the enforcers of political correctness are far too ready to take out the club and use it to beat anyone they disagree with. They feel words like 'bigot' are used to close down too many perfectly legitimate debates. In this country, there is almost no debate at all about immigration, for instance, because almost everyone who opposes mass immigration is terrified of being called a 'bigot'.

Referendum

In last year's marriage referendum, almost three-quarters of a million people voted No (against the 1.2 million who voted Yes), but out of the almost 750,000 who voted No, only a few dozen were willing to say so publicly. The rest stated silent in case they were called 'homophobes'.

It is, of course, hard to define precisely when political correctness goes too far. When does a legitimate desire to stamp out obviously offensive attitudes become an illegitimate desire to stamp out legitimate debate?

I've already indicated some of them. A person does not 'hate' women simply because they oppose abortion. They do not 'hate' Muslims because they think it is too simplistic to say that Islam is a 'religion of peace', without any further analysis.

There is a warning in this poll for politicians, for the media and for the enforcers of political correctness generally. It is this; despite some support for the general aim of political correctness (protect minorities), there is a clear feeling it has gone too far and a backlash is developing. Politicians and media who fail to spot this will lose support and could be swept out to sea as quickly as their counterparts were in the US and the UK.

The enforcers of political correctness, for their part, ought to heed the warning that they are completely overusing their shaming tactics and if they continue to do this, people will soon pay them no attention at all, even when their warnings of bigotry are warranted.

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Sunday Times columnist, Brenda Fryer

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Echoes of the past from the archives



Peter Costello

State secrets revealed – and hidden

Peter Costello reports from the National Archives of Ireland on the release under the 30-year rule of confidential state files from 1986

This week the National Archives released for public inspection State files from 1986 and earlier. This year some files date back to the 1920s, with large numbers from the 1940s.

Every January government files newly transferred from various departments of state are opened for the use of the public on the first working day of the year. This has become, for the national press, something of an annual event of some importance.

The major matter of interest was the New Ireland Forum, but the papers relating to this cast no new light on what was already known. They contain nothing indiscreet.

As other papers will be reporting on the policies of the day and the events in Northern Ireland, these pages concentrate on a variety of topics, otherwise overlooked by the media.

However, it must again be emphasised that as an exercise in open government and freedom of information these annual releases are something of an illusion. The magicians in the press may seem to draw rabbits from their hats, but they ignore the elephant behind the curtain.

This year, for instance, there were files from the Taoiseach's department, Foreign Affairs, and Justice. Nothing from such vital and high spending departments as Agriculture, Health, Social Protection, the department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Some departments, it seems, never release anything any year.

“Files are only transferred when they are closed, which can be a very flexible matter for a civil servant”

The release of the files is seen as a move towards a more open and transparent style of government. But there has never been a government of any kind (has the Vatican City included) which has not preferred to keep its secrets as long as possible.

The State Directory, however, lists some 16 government departments, and some 39 state offices. From this it will be clear at once that the annual release, though widely and rightly

reported, is only the tip of the very large and hidden iceberg that is the apparatus of the State.

Several important departments rarely produce files; Agriculture, Defence, Health, Transport, and Education. All these impinge directly on our lives, our homes, and our safety. But we learn little about them.

Limited

Once state records were more limited. The National Archives, established in 1988, combined the old State Paper Office, which had been in Dublin Castle, with the Public Record Office, once housed in a building behind the Four Courts.

Our earliest public records were destroyed in 1922 by a bomb exploded by Peadar O'Donnell and other Republicans occupying the Four Courts: fragments of medieval documents floated away like confetti on the wind along the Liffey.

Other records had been destroyed in 1920 when the IRA burned the Custom House in an attempt to paralyse local government in Ireland. Others were destroyed by the British before Dublin Castle was handed over to the Free State. Others when Fianna Fail first came to power.

Nowadays other dangers beset the records. Some are judged of little value, or are merely administrative, and these are destroyed under Section 7 of the National Archives Act 1986. Others are held back, either for reasons of security, sensitivity, or because they are ongoing. Files are only transferred when they are closed, which can be a very flexible matter for a civil servant.

So what is presented as an exercise in open government is a very limited. But as the National Archives are underfunded, under resourced and understaffed, those directing it are glad that mass transfers do not put too much pressure on the whole system.

With the return of prosperity perhaps now the government can provide the increased funds for the National Archives, along the lines of similar institutions in the US, France, Great Britain and elsewhere.

● **The National Archives is located in Bishop Street, Dublin D08 DF85, beside the Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street. The opening hours are 9.15am-5pm Monday to Friday. The records from 1986 and earlier were available to the public from 9.15am on Monday, January 2. For further information telephone: + 353 (0)1 407 2300; or email: mail@nationalarchives.ie**



Give us back the Annals of Inisfallen

In 1971 a proposal was made by the manager of Muckross House in Killarney that an effort should be made to ensure the return to its place of creation of the manuscript of the *Annals of Inisfallen*.

The book had been created around 1092, with entries from 433 to down to that date by the initial scribe, and further ones by other hands down to 1450. This was on the island of Inisfallen in Lough Leane at Killarney.

A deputation was planned to come to Dublin, to speak with the Minister, who consulted his expert advisers.

The National Library director Patrick Henchy, however told the government that little was in fact known about the history of the manuscript, which was in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (as Rawlinson B53). There were, in fact, some 30 manuscript copies across Europe in various other libraries, three in the National Library alone.

There has been a facsimile edition issued by the Royal Irish Academy in 1933, and a full translation by the Institute of Advanced Studies in 1951. (Though he did not allude to it, there had been an earlier translation made by one Theophilus Flanagan in 1822.)

'Guffaw'

Henchy felt that any request by the Irish government to the directors of the Bodleian would not only be refused but would be met with the English equivalent of “the loud guffaw”.

As the Bodleian had recently lent the volume for a show in Ireland it might also be thought ungracious.

The minster made clear to the local TD, Patrick O'Leary, the sense of the National Library's view. He was unable to meet with a local group.

A copy of the facsimile and some large photographs of high quality would, it was thought, meet the needs of the people in Killarney, rather than the “supposed original”.

But the matter did not die. It came up again in 1983 and letters were exchanged with Dublin between June and September. Mr Cahill, then in charge of Muckross House had not given up.

Again the National Library was called upon – the price would be exorbitant, if even it were on offer. And it would be ungracious after the government to pursue the return of the originals.

The matter was even raised in the Dáil, but again the department reiterated the earlier facts already supplied.

The Bodleian would not sell it and the Muckross venture did not in any case have the facilities for conserving such a manuscript. Dr Lucas, the director of the National Museum and Dr Henchy repeated the earlier views yet again.

The return of St Conall's Bell was another matter of a similar kind. This relic of the 6th Century was held locally until the pilgrimage to

the saint's shrine on the island of Iniskeel was suppressed by the local Catholic clergy – part of the Romanisation of Catholicism in Ireland in the early 19th Century.

Bell

The bell passed through private hands into the British Museum. In 2015 it returned to Donegal on loan and can now be seen in the County Museum.

So all might not be lost for the

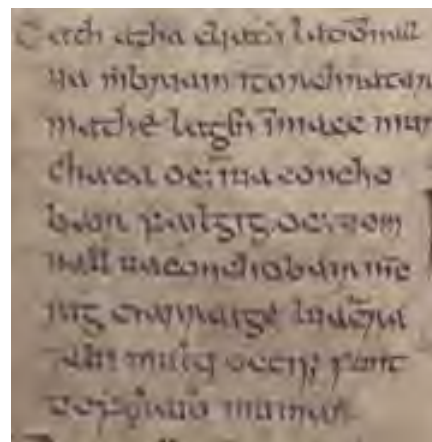
Annals of Inisfallen either.

All of this recalls the frequently expressed the desire of the people in Kells for the *Book of Kells* in Trinity College Library, Dublin, to be returned to its ancient home. This despite the fact that it was not created there, but only came to the place after the dissolution of Iona under the threat of Viking raiders.

Though called the *Book of Kells* it was in fact created in Iona under the influence of Scottish and Northern book illumination.

In 2001, Brian O'Leary, a Fianna Fáil councillor in Killarney, was still asking for the *Annals* to be returned to the town.

A call by Jimmy Deenihan (in reply to a question by Fianna Fáil TD Seán Ó Feargháil) for their return, supported by an editorial in a national newspaper, drew a stern and scholarly reproof that the suggestion was “nothing but an ill-informed gimmick”.



Secrets of the powers that be

A diplomatic view of Seán MacBride

In 1977 Seán MacBride was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. An invitation was extended to the members of the cabinet, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to attend the award ceremony on 20 September. This posed the government with a problem.

MacBride had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1974 (pictured below). The Lenin Peace Prize was seen as the Eastern European counterpart for the "promotion of peace among nations".

An article in the official government paper *Izvestiya* as the time described Seán MacBride as an "active supporter of the ideas of peaceful co-existence, general and complete disarmament and cultural and economic co-operation of states."

It was felt in Iveagh House that to see him as a proponent of "general and complete disarmament" was "accurate and innocuous".

"However, to say that he is the proponent of 'peaceful co-existence' with its special Leninist connotations of international class struggle etc. is tendentious and indicates that the recipients' activities are considered to be in line with Soviet tactics and long term foreign policy goals."

Defence

The writer reminded the Minister that MacBride had given an interview to Tass (the Soviet news agency) on September 2, 1977 in which he was quoted as saying: "The campaign in defence of so-called human rights that is now waged by the Western press against Socialist countries serves the interests of supporters of the cold war. Its end purpose ... is to frustrate *detente*. The mastermind of this campaign is the military industrial complex which has great influence in capitalist countries, par-



Seán MacBride.

ticularly the US."

The considered view in the department was that "notwithstanding the propaganda elements inseparable from the conferring of the prize" there were good arguments in favour of a high level Irish ministerial presence at the ceremony.

Though the prizes were seldom if ever given to person whose activities conflicted with Soviet aims, nevertheless it was "fair to say that the recipients generally have achieved

an international reputation".

This was certainly true of Mr MacBride.

The note concluded that "Mr MacBride is a distinguished Irishman, a former Irish Foreign Minister, and an Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and UN Commissioners for Namibia and Chairman of the International Commission of Jurists."

The Minister went to the party after all.

(File 2016/22/328)



Loose words in clerical circles...

"Some people seem to like giving interviews." These were the words typed on a card from the Pontifical Council for the Family in Rome. It was sent on January 2, 1986 to Geoffrey Keating, the Irish Chargé d'Affaires in Rome, Geoffrey Keating, by Monsignor Diarmuid Martin (as the present Archbishop of Dublin then was).

The subject of this comment was a report in *Il Regno* by Archbishop McNamara, the then outspoken and hence controversial archbishop of the day, who died in office in April 1987.

Keating forwarded the article to Iveagh House with a cover in which he remarked that it was well-informed and reflects accurately – and in more detail – the view of the Archbishop. Msgr Martin had described to Keating the journal that published it as "a left-wing Italian Tablet".

“His advice was accepted by the editor, and the piece appears simply under the Archbishop’s name”

Moreover: "Msgr Martin was particularly struck by the Archbishop's suggestion that whatever form Irish unity took, it was possible to foresee a situation where divorce was permitted in the North but not in the South. He thought this was a new idea and one which had not been heard before from a member of the hierarchy. I reminded him that a former Taoiseach had made similar remarks some years ago in an interview and had encountered some criticism on the matter."

This intervention was followed by a speech by Archbishop McNamara which was reprinted in the English version of *L'Osservatore*

Romano (January 20, 1986). This had originally been delivered at meeting of Family Solidarity, which had provoked criticism due to its reference to pluralism and divorce. The editor of the English language edition Fr Seamus O'Byrne told Keating that the appearance of the article (one of several requested from English speaking bishops) had been delayed and its appearance was therefore of less significance than it seems.

"Msgr Diarmuid Martin of the Pontifical Council for the Family had told me that it would appear and also that he had strongly advised omitting any reference to Family Solidarity, which he thought was a rather extreme group.

"As you can see, his advice was accepted by the editor, and the piece appears simply under the Archbishop's name with no further reference. In any event, as the paper only sells 800 copies a week in Ireland, it may well go unnoticed." Archbishop McNamara had called pluralism "an elusive concept" which would only lead to confusion "when questions of law and morality are concerned".

Earlier (on December 20, 1985) in reporting again to Iveagh House Keating had remarked that "Diarmuid Martin was the person responsible for briefing the English language journalists during the recent Extraordinary Synod. You may have noticed that his brother, Seamus, was covering the event for the *Irish Times* which may explain the lengthy and authoritative coverage of the Synod which appeared in that paper."

These experiences with untimely remarks and the hidden influences on the press may well have shaped Archbishop Martin's own careful treatment of current affairs in more recent years.

An Arab Islamic Institute for Dublin?

Over the last 30 years the Islamic presence in Dublin has grown. I wrote about this then about in my book *Dublin Churches*, for the only mosque on the North Circular Road was making use of a former Presbyterian church.

The first Muslim presence was due to Malayan medical students at the College of Surgeons, later followed by Libyan engineers enrolled with Aer Lingus training schemes.

Now the new developments are largely funded by Brunei (Sunni) and Saudi Arabia (ultra strict Wahabi Sunni). From Iran and Syria have more recently come adherents of Shi'a, some of whom have made a mark on eateries in Temple Bar.

So is interest then to find that among the released files there is



one (2016/22/297) that deals with a proposal to establish an Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, which came to concern the Foreign Affairs, the Department of Education, the HEA and others.

The proposal came to the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey,

from a Dr Denis MacEoin, who was academically interested in the region. He, however, wanted the government to initiate the approaches to the Arab government, which the departments were very reluctant to undertake.

Support

The extent of support for such a venture in the academic world in Ireland was unclear. At UCD lectures were given in Arabic in the School of Semitic Languages, and at the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art there was a long standing involvement in Arab and Islamic studies internationally.

The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs thought that "in the right

circumstances" such an Institute "could in the long run ...foster a regard for Ireland in Arab countries. It might also have economic spin-offs.

But it could not be a profitable investment for Irish interests, and he doubted if the Arab countries (largely Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states) would be quite as generous as Dr Mac Eoin imagined they might be.

Such an institute in Paris or London, with their large Muslim populations was one thing; Ireland quite another. Would there be the students?

The Ambassador in Beirut, Gearóid Ó Cléirigh, found that a knowledge of Ireland was (at that time) very muddled in the Middle East. He realised that such an institute "could bring the effects of

Arab or Islamic problems closer to Ireland".

There would be polite pressure from the door states. Inter-Arab and ideological rivalries would pose their own difficulties for Ireland, but "presumably the Department of Justice would be able to elaborate on such possibilities and also devise ways of handling them".

The proposal faded away. But one has to wonder what could have developed for both good and ill from such an establishment. Certainly Ireland has become involved in Arab and Islamic affairs, but there is still little understanding both of Arab religion and Islamic culture in Ireland.

Echoes of the past from the archives



Dick Spring and Garret Fitzgerald.

The problem of ministerial leaks

When one reads in a newspaper that 'a source close to the Minister says', this can be taken to mean that the Minister himself has been speaking to the correspondent 'off the record'. Such background briefs are better known as 'ministerial leaks' and at times they are the cause of much annoyance to the Taoiseach (or indeed to anyone else in a position of leadership, especially in the Church).

But though it might seem hard to do anything about such a permanent feature of government in a modern democracy, some have tried. Certainly Dr Garret Fitzgerald attempted to do so in the summer of 1983. It was not just a matter of "the danger of premature publicity" but "the release of the text of [a] bill being interpreted as a breach of Parliamentary privilege".

Source

In the words of a memo of July 1975. "Acts such as the release of information about matters the Government had not finalised could be "a source of embarrassment to the Government".

But such disclosures were a constant. The summer of 1983 was slightly different. In May Dick Spring, talking to the press, mentioned details of tax measures and legislation that would "reconstitute" on Bórd Pleanála, which it was hoped would "end scandals" related to developments. Then Minister for the Environment in the Fitzgerald Fine Gael/Labour Coalition, relations between Fitzgerald and Spring were generally harmonious, even if other Ministers were in contention.

But the event brought a stiff memo from the secretary of the Taoiseach's department on the same day. "There appears to be an ever-growing tendency by members of the Government and Ministers of State

to refer to items before the Government or about to come to Government in a short time of proposed legislation."

He gave as examples an increased capital allocation for the Housing Finance Agency, the establishment of a Commission on Social welfare; legislation about the Roads Finance Agency; and (a sensitive area at that date) legislation on Family Planning (or rather the availability in general of contraception).

He advised members of the government and their staff "the reports are most serious in that they could be interpreted as a breach of parliament privilege...members of the Administration would be well advised to steer clear of commenting on issues which awaited government decision and avoiding details in the case of proposed legislation - a passing reference to something approved by Government which requires legislation and is being drafted is in order."

He noted for the Taoiseach that there was "a tendency which it is highly desirable to eliminate - in the government's own interest".

Fitzgerald himself in a memo circulated to all Ministers and Ministers of State that while he greatly appreciated their discretion in defending or publicising long settled policy - he was still concerned about leaks of upcoming matters.

Aside from the matter of parliamentary privilege, such leaks might not only commit the Government to policies before they had properly considered it. "It can create a damaging impression in the public mind of tension or indecisiveness." A copy of this was specially sent to Dick Spring.

That was a generation ago in the days of an earlier coalition. But it could well be repeated today. (2016/51/257)

The first hesitant steps of the Government into the digital age... a word processor for the Taoiseach's Department

The first manned mission to land on the moon in July 1969 was controlled by a tiny computer. It had approximately 64Kbyte of memory, and was more basic than the electronics in modern toasters that have computer controlled stop/start/defrost buttons.

Today electronic media of many kinds and full scale computerisation in all areas of life is taken quite for granted, and complained about it they do not seem to work instantly and to our benefit.

It was very different a generation ago when the Irish government took its first baby steps in the labyrinth of the computer age, by installing a word processor in the Taoiseach's Department.

There was some bewilderment on the part of both civil servants and ministers, revealed in part in one of the newly released files. This was in the summer of 1979. The notion was that staff savings might result from the installation of a single machine in the department or the building. The secretary of the department told the Department of the Public Service that they did not see the need for a second machine in case the first broke down.

Full vista

It is clear that this machine was seen merely as some kind of fancy but more efficient typewriter. The full vista of what was in store did not then appear to the civil servants at all.

The machine initially proposed to them by an office supply company was for an Olivetti TES 401.

“One can still smile at the innocence of it all, with its echoes of the first Remington office typewriters”

The civil servants to whom it was demonstrated "were impressed by its capabilities." It would cost £4,243 on purchase, or could be leased for £92.39 a month plus VAT for a period of five years, a total of £5,543.40.



The Olivetti TES 401 – an early word processor.



Albert Reynolds.

It was thought that it would make for a great time saving on agendas and such like. "The machine also had great possibilities for a large range of material, e.g. speeches, briefs, minutes and reports of meetings."

Today, one can still smile at the innocence of it all, with its echoes of the first Remington office typewriters back in the 1870s, a century before.

But one unforeseen result was that the vast stock of agenda paper held would be useless, as new forms would have to be designed for use in the new machine.

Albert Reynolds, the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications, it was reported in a trade magazine,

"has show an increasing interest in computer-based systems. This is not surprising as many predictions of 'the Office of the Future' see word processors in communication with each other from distant terminals."

“There was also the ominous problem of the safe storage of the back-up diskettes generated”

However Mr Geraghty of the Taoiseach's Department in a memo of October 1980 noted the first problem was to train someone, such as himself, to use it. "It is very

hard to make recommendations on extending the use of the machine when I know so little about it but I understand that it would be very useful from the point of view of personnel records." Training the staff now became a matter of urgency.

There was also the ominous problem of the safe storage of the back-up diskettes generated. I understand from the staff of the National Archives that the archival and long term storage of government files in electronic form, which is now the general form in many ways, is still an unresolved issue.

(2016/51/1454; file 1 and 2 of 2)

Secrets of the powers that be

Calls on the Taoiseach's aid



Jack Lynch.

Eager US citizen requested further information about Macha Mongrudha

One of the great disadvantages of achieving high office in Ireland is that it opens a person to all kinds of correspondents, cranks, beggars, and the merely confused. Jack Lynch's files provide an example. In September 1971 his department received a letter from an Irish-American lady, addressed to "The Honorable John Byrnes, Prime Minister of Ireland".

She explained her call on him. "This is the first letter I have ever addressed to someone in the land of my ancestors, and I tremble with joy upon finding myself writing to the honorable Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

She explained that by profession she was a writer and "the history of Éire has interested me for many years".

“The blessings of every American who is a Gael are with you. The British must be expelled from Irish soil”

She was completely enthralled by one of the ancient Ard-righ's of Ireland, Macha Mongrudh, or Macha of the Golden Hair. Her research had revealed that she had been the 76th monarch to rule Ireland (about 377 BC) and was the daughter of Aed

Ruadh. She was the founder of the Palace of Remain.

She lived in New Jersey and in trying to find more information about this ancient Irish queen she had reached "a dead end".

She was unable to start her historical novel until her research was complete.

"My dearest wish is to come to Ireland personally, but that seems to be financially out of the question at the present time. It is a shame that it is impossible to visit Ireland now, particularly with the trouble the British are again causing. If I could only go there to help. Certainly the blessings of every American who is a Gael are with you. The British must be expelled from Irish soil."

She also wished to obtain information about her husband's ancestors, who were descendants of Cummuiscach, son of King Aed MacAinmirech. This too would be researched when she came to Ireland. She seemed to imagine that the position of Taoiseach was not a very onerous one, and that he could look into this matter for her personally. "Thank you for whatever information you can send to me. God speed you in your fight for a united Ireland. It must not be any other way."

The Taoiseach's personal secretary answered her. "The Taoiseach Mr John Lynch has received your letter" and had referred it to the director of the National Library.

"Thank for your good wishes on the outcome of the present troubles in the North of Ireland."

“She also wished to obtain information about husband's ancestors, who were descendants of Cummuiscach”

Jack Lynch was not alone. In 1985 Dr Garrett Fitzgerald received a letter from an Irish American in South Carolina, who sought information from him about his ancestor, whose name had better be left unprinted, from County Monaghan. He provided very full details and requested a copy of the list of passengers who sailed from Newry on in May 1764.

"Not knowing the cost of photocopying documents and postage from there to here, I am enclosing four dollar notes hope it will cover the postage."

The research officer, the now well-known Joycean Vivian Igoe, acknowledged the letter, and passed the whole matter on to Dr Donal Begley, the Chief Herald of Ireland, at the Genealogical Office. What happened the \$4 is not revealed.

Reading letters one wonders would they these correspondents have written in similar terms to the president of the United States. (2016/51/240)

Fr Andrew Greely – A troublesome priest for Ireland

In December 1977 the Irish Consulate in Chicago reported its anxiety about the effect of an article that had just appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* by maverick priest and academic Fr Andrew Greely. This was entitled 'Ulster a Medieval Nightmare'.

He called it "the last bastion of oppression and torture in Western Europe".

In bold letters his column proclaimed "it is the black mark against the world press that torture in Chile and Brazil receive so much attention and torture in Ulster is ignored".

He accepted that power sharing would be the best solution, but when it was tried it was "Protestant extremists brought it down in 1973 with substantial help from the Protestant majority".

Mutual friend

Ronan Murphy of the Consul General's office lunched with Greely early in 1978 along with a mutual friend. Despite his good will

towards Ireland Murphy thought he had become bitter about relations between Ireland (represented by the Consul) and Irish-Americans.

His comments on Northern Ireland were mainly cynical. He was under the impression that an opportunity had been lost for "Irish solidarity" focused it seemed in his mind on the publication of Leon Uris's novel *Trinity*.

His wife Jill also wrote *Ireland: A Terrible Beauty*, which had appeared in 1975.

Uris, as much as Greely, was not a writer to let mere historical facts get in the way of a violently dramatic tale. He had scripted *Gun Fight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), a Hollywood film notorious for its complete disregard for mere historical fact.

Greely was offended by a display of anti-Americanism at the Merriman Summer School. Yet Greely also told Consul Murphy that he had recently been doing research about alcoholism among Irish-Americans but he was "not

anxious to publish these findings as they would confirm prejudices which he says exist towards the Irish in America".

Greely was refused tenure at the University of Chicago because he was a priest and a Catholic; but others thought it was because he was cantankerous colleague. His weekly columns were widely syndicated and, therefore, influential as he was also seen as progressive and hard done by the hierarchy in Illinois.

The consulate thought they should "maintain friendly relations with Fr Greely" even though he had become less than friendly to the diplomats.

The journalism and writing of Greely and the Uris reveals only too clearly the great difficulties which Irish diplomats had in maintain relations with influential people abroad over the troubling events in Northern Ireland.

Old prejudices and legends obscured for many the path to peace. (2016/22/593)



Echoes of the past from the archives

The mystery submarines off the coast of Ireland

In the mid-1980s a constant source of anxiety were the reports of supposed foreign submarines off the coast of Ireland. Many fishing boats had encounters with some mysterious vessels that might be called USOs (unidentified submarine objects). They were stopped or pulled backwards till they cut their nets clear.

There were several sinkings. And fishermen became outspoken about the matter. The papers relating to the matter fill three large bulging files; but cast little light on what was really happening. This was not surprising as it had happened elsewhere.

Controversial

Since about 1962 there have been constant reports of "foreign submarines" intruding into Swedish territorial waters. The latest



was in 2014. But it has also been claimed that the boats involved belonged to NATO countries. The mystery remains unclear and seriously controversial in Sweden.

In Ireland the sinking of the *Sherlaga* in April 1982

was the most notorious of similar incidents around the Irish coast. But these incidents have been attributed to NATO boats too. The fishermen involved receive a certain amount of compensation five years later. The latest incident

concerned the *Karen* out Ardglass in Co. Down.

The skipper of the *Karen* told the press: "It was a submarine, it had to be, it could not have been anything else," Mr James said.

But others suggested

that these incidents might be caused by large whale or even giant squids, both commons enough off the Irish coast.

There were even suggestions (by writers like Ivan T. Sanderson) that "aliens" might be involved.

But these incidents, as a released files are a serious matter.

The most recent spade was only last year when Co. Down-based trawler *Karen* almost sank. What went on in the early 1980s is covered by three very thick folders of reports and reactions released this year; but again little real light is cast on the matter.

Fears

There seems reluctance on the part of the Irish government to get too involved with the affair, while sympathising with

the fishermen over their genuine fears, the loss of life and the destruction of property.

But the files reveal that Inveigh House made discreet inquiries with countries around the world to learn of similar incidents, among them Argentina, Greece, Japan and Canada. But this revealed only concern, not hard data.

The mystery USOs remains one of those shadowy matters that have a long life in the files. there will be more in the files three years from now, for the matter was raised in the Dáil in March 1989 by Hugh Byrne FF TD for Wexford. He was later Minister of State for Marine and Natural Resources in the late 1990s, but is now happily out of politics. (2016/22/112; three files)

"Fighting for Ireland's freedom drove me mad", claimed convicted murderer

That the events across Europe between 1912 and 1924 damaged the minds of a generation of European is widely accepted by historians. The "shell shock" and "neurasthenia" suffered by those who fought on all sides is well documented. The troubles politics and social life of the 1920 and 1930s had its origins here.

But in Ireland the "shell shock" of those who fought in against the British and then in the Civil War has been largely ignored. It is still for many an unacceptable facet of the decade of commemoration which has yet to be faced up to.

One of the newly released files casts some light on this shadowy area of Irish life and history.

On August 9, 1935, the Executive Council of the Irish Free State exercised its prerogative of mercy and commuted to life imprisonment the sentence of death for murder that had been passed on Cmdt. Leo O'Brien by the Central Criminal Court and maintained by the Court of Appeal.

This was the result of a petition signed by some

60,000 people including the Archbishop of Dublin. In pleading for mercy many had alluded to Cmdt. O'Brien's national record in the IRA and the Free State Army.

The murder took place on 3 November. O'Brien shot his brother-in-law a man named Stokes, a civil servant in the department of Education, three times. He was tried twice, the jury disagreeing about his sanity at the first trial.

"All of these experts were agreed that I am physically of a neurotic or highly strung temperament"

At his trials he had pleaded not guilty, and his defence team, headed by the distinguished Cecil Lavery KC, put forward a plea of temporary insanity on his behalf.

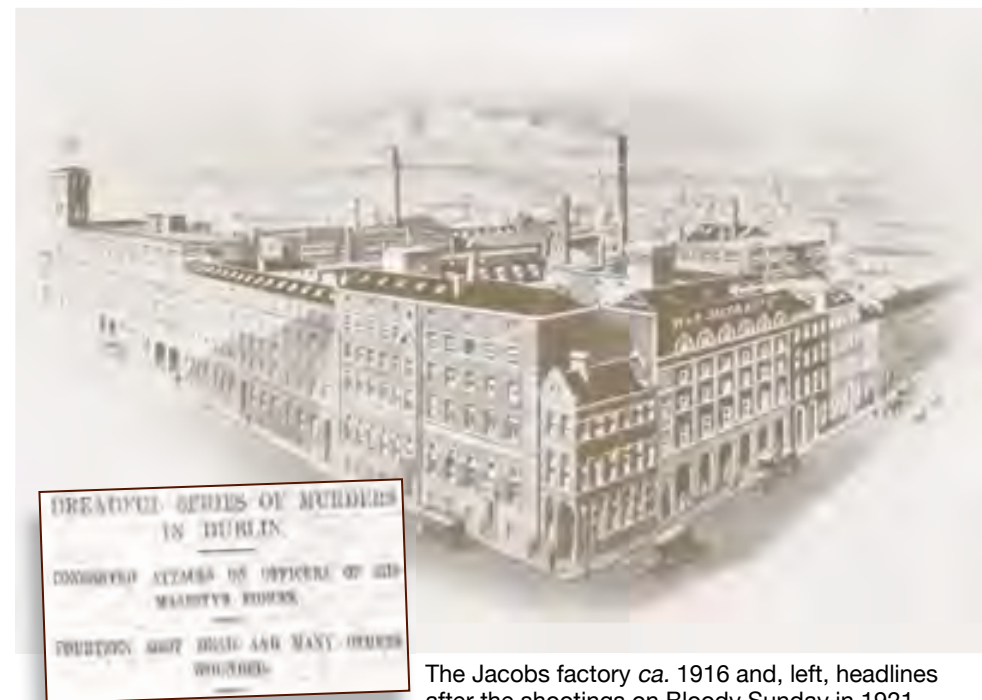
As part of this matter the government formally dismissed O'Brien from his army commission. In the released files there is preserved his plea in respect of maintaining

his rank as a Commandant. It casts an important light on a neglected aspect of the decade of commemoration.

O'Brien, with the assistance of his legal team, made a representation from prison appealing to retain his rank. He wished instead simply to resign. In the course of the criminal proceedings brought against him, some six mental specialists, one of them Dr Leeper, in charge of the Central Mental Hospital for the Criminally Insane, gave evidence.

"All of these experts were agreed that I am physically of a neurotic or highly strung temperament and, therefore, predisposed to emotional instability and as such I am more liable than another to come under an uncontrollable impulse, and which is most important they also agreed that this abnormality is the result of continued strain for a number of years on my nerve system caused by the sudden and violent death during the period of hostilities 1916-1919-1921.

"Since 1913 when I became a member of Na Fianna Eireann I have unstintingly given



The Jacobs factory ca. 1916 and, left, headlines after the shootings on Bloody Sunday in 1921.

my best service in the fighting forces of our country, and have during that period of over 21 years unbroken service I have never at any time been guilty of any misconduct, or a breach of discipline, also my honour and character both military and otherwise have always been without stain or blemish."

Dismissal

Bearing in mind the opinions of the mental and nerve experts he thought it would be very hard to suffer after his long service ignominious dismissal, and he request that he be allowed to resign his commission.

Further research by *The Irish Catholic* has brought to light aspects of the background of Leo O'Brien that are relevant. He and his victim had married two sisters,

the daughter of a professional photographer in Limerick City.

When O'Brien was arrested by the police, he asked was Stokes dead. He remarked that the [expletive deleted] son of an RIC man "was no loss". It was true that Stokes' father had been in the RIC, though after leaving the police he had been an inspector for the NCPCC.

In contrast to this O'Brien's father was employed as manager of a club. Having lost his mother while very young, he was reared with nine other siblings in a tenement in York Street. He left school at 14½, and had irregular employment.

He joined the Fianna and had found a purpose in life. He was in the Jacob's garrison in the Rising, acting as a messenger to the Citizens

Army men in Stephen's Green. Later he was active with the IRA units in Dublin.

Among the attacks and bombings that he took part in he was one of the party who shot "an enemy intelligence agent" at 28 Earlsfort Terrace. — one of the 14 shot on the morning of Bloody Sunday, November 21, 1921 (Bureau of Military History witness statement 1299, p.11). The victim was RIC Sergt. John J. Fitzgerald.

On the evening that the truce was agreed he was Company Commander of "G" company who were to have taken part in attacks on police and military across Dublin. According to one of the unit if it had not been called off would have been the most sensational and sanguinary action since the Rising (BMH ws 1147). (2016/51/185)

Secrets of the powers that be

Charles Haughey.



Some State files go missing

In 1981 there was some discussion between TCD, the Bank of Ireland and Mr Haughey about the possibility of the National Museum taking over the old Parliament Building on College Green as an extension to the National Museum (a matter now resolved by the opening of Collins Barracks).

The file itself is of little substance, except for a final paragraph in a department memo dated 14 September 1981. "There is a reference on this file to a file entitled 'Bank of Ireland', College Green - opening of new premises as museum.' Registry are unable to locate this file and the last record of it is that it was marked to Mr O hAnnracháin. Mr Aylward

suggested that it was likely that Mr Haughey took these papers with on leaving office. " (Haughey left office 30 June 1981.)

It seems surprising that Ministers could simply walk out with state files containing documents of which there may be no other copies. But inquiries suggest it not so odd.

Foundation

Since the foundation of the state files have often gone missing. Some were destroyed on the arrival of a new administration, as in 1932. Others were simply taken away.

When Garrett Fitzgerald left office he removed all the papers

from his private office; these eventually found a home in UCD Archives department. Haughey's papers are now in 350 archive boxes in Dublin City University, to which they were donated gratis by his family. But these will not be open to researchers until 2022.

The carrying away of papers is not usual. John Bowman says that in his archival researches over the years it was common to find, in say, the papers of Lloyd George, official papers. It was, he suggested, a matter of the British Prime Ministers "taking office work home". One might well believe that of Garrett Fitzgerald, but not of Charlie Haughey. (2016/51/1407)

The chancy survival of early Christian relics in Ireland

Visitors to the national Museum are often astonished by the relics of early Christian Ireland that are on show there, from the Derrynaflan hoard and the Brighter boat, to the Ardagh Chalice and the Cross of Cong. But what many do not realise are the hazards of survival that make such finds a rarity.

One of the new files (2016/1/1296) reveals what has to be done in some cases to ensure the survival of cultural relics in Ireland.

The file concerns the discovery in June 1986 of a Book Shrine on the bed of Lough Sheelin. The allocation to the museum was raised by an exceptional £90,000 to cover the costs involved in the find.

The museum was alerted to the existence of the shrine in November 1986. They met with the legal representatives of the finders and were presented with a formidable and restrictive agreement to sign. They were prepared to give a receipt for the actual shrine which needed urgent conservation, but would not sign the agreement.

Trouble

The trouble was that the State Property Act of 1954 did not cover the so call larger "state lakes", and right to them had become contentious in recent times. The matter, according to a government memo never published, is very complicated.

The Shrine, according to a confidential report prepared for the Taoiseach's Department by Assistant keeper Éamonn Kelly, had already been shown to a foreign dealer who had made an offer for it. But the finder suspected he would have

to offer it to the Museum, so they wanted to approach the museum themselves first.

They had an elevated idea of its value and were seeking £100,000. The legal advice from the Attorney general office was that a ex-gratia payment should be made which would not preclude the State's right of ownership, as it had been found in a "state lake".

The matter was urgent. The museum was well aware from previous experience that items can simply disappear, being melted down for the gold value. "It will be clear



that it is in the national interest to bring this transaction to a satisfactory conclusion at the earlier possible opportunity."

The find was also stated to be "of immense importance having major implications for the dating and provenancing of other metal work and manuscripts of the period." They thought the sum sought "was entirely reasonable". On the open market it might have been worth 2 million pounds. The find place was indicated to the museum, but the finders undertook not to interfere

further with it.

As a matter of urgency the matter of an allocation to cover the costs was pushed through the Cabinet.

In the papers released the shrine is assigned to Lough Sheelin. In actual fact it was found on the bed of nearby Lough Kinale, Co. Longford, beside a small crannog.

It is now recognised as the largest and oldest of Irish book shrines. It was in parts and there is a suggestion that it was looted in Viking times and an attempt made to strip it of its decorative elements.

After its acquisition by the National Museum of Ireland it was decided that the find-place would be re-examined to see if any components had been overlooked by the finders and to search for clues which might elucidate the circumstances surrounding the deposition of the shrine. No additional components of the shrine were found. The crannog dated from the first half of the 12th Century - the home of some local chief on the eve of the Norman invasion.

Although in a dismantled state most of its components survived and the object can be almost completely reconstructed.

The Shrine is 30.5cm long, 28cm wide and is 11cm in depth. It consists of a wooden box to which metal plates are nailed, with the whole being strengthened by tubular binding strips along the corners and sides. It is the earliest and largest example of Irish book shrines and enough detail remains to enable it to be dated to the eighth century.

It is hoped to have it restored to its original splendour in the near future.

Benedict Kiely.



Back from the seminary - and convent - to the nation's service

This year saw the release of a backlog of files of various kinds going back to the 1920s. Many dealt with dismissals from the public service, the army, the guards, and the civil service generally.

Most of these reveal little stories of incompetence and misbehaviour as often as not due to alcohol. These are of little interest to the general public as this date: personal tragedies remain, even 70 years on, just that, personal.

But one revelation (at least for this commentator) was the fact that male and female civil servant could then be released on extended leave to entry a seminary or a convent. But more than that, provision was made for those who found a life of religion was not for them to return to the Civil Service and have their old job back.

Terms

They could be reinstated in the Civil Service under the terms of subsection 2 of section 6 of the Civil Service regulation Act, 11924 (No. 5 of 1924), as amended by section 3 of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1926 (No. 41 of 1926).

In those less enlightened days a candidate who did not stay the course in the seminary, or was

later laicised, used at least in rural parts to be referred to a little heartlessly as "a spoiled priest" - it is a term I have not heard used since the 1960s, at least in the circles in which I move. Not that some notable people were not in that category; the name of the distinguished author Benedict Kiely springs to mind.

These released papers relate to the years 1940-1943. The English writer Tom Rolt, writing about his travels by canal through Ireland in 1946, encountered one such. His comments have long stuck in my memory. These men wearing the old black clerical suits were partly shunned by people, or at least were under a cloud of suspicion. But Rolt remarked that a man who went in the priesthood and found it was in the end not really for him showed great moral courage (at least for that time) in leaving.

People of education and integrity often enough the "spoiled priest" - and "spoiled" nuns too - seem to have faced a sad life of social waste. It is good to know then that the Irish Government was more enlightened and retrieved a good number of them for the nation's public service. (2016/51/118)

📷 Around the world



CHINA: A retired bishop waits to hear confession from members of the congregation before Mass at an unofficial Catholic church in Youtong village, Hebei Province.



CHILE: A woman takes a photograph of a section of a road that was severely damaged by a magnitude 7.6 earthquake in Tarahuin, on the island of Chiloe. There were no reports of major damage, but some 21,000 homes lost power, officials reported.



EL SALVADOR: A woman holds a figurine of the Christ Child during a traditional procession celebrating the feast of the Holy Innocents in Antigua Cuscatlan, El Salvador. All Photos: CNS



IRAQ: People flee the Islamic State stronghold of Bartella.



THE PHILIPPINES: A government worker repairs a toppled electric post after a typhoon swept through Iriga. Typhoon Nock-Ten packed 115-mph winds that downed power lines, uprooted trees and knocked out communications infrastructure.



UNITED STATES: Members of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal carry an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe during a procession from the Church of Holy Innocents in New York City to an abortion clinic several blocks away, where they and other pro-life advocates recited the rosary.

Favourite books of 2016



Fr. Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

So much of life, particularly today, constitutes an unconscious conspiracy against reading. Lack of time, the pressure of our jobs, and electronic technology, among other things, are more and more putting books out of reach and out of mind. There is never enough time to read.

The upside of this is that when I do find time to pick up a book this becomes a precious, cherished time. And so I try to pick books that I read carefully: I read reviews, listen to colleagues, and keep track of my favourite authors.

I also try to make sure that my reading diet, each year, includes some spiritual books (including at least one historical classic), some biographies, some novels, and some essays.

Among the books that I read this year, these are the ones that touched me. I cannot promise that they will touch you, but each of them left me with something.

● Among books in spirituality:

Gil Bailie, *God's Gamble, The Gravitational Power of Crucified Love*. Bailie again takes up Rene Girard's anthropology to shed some new light on how the cross of Christ is the most monumental moral and religious event in history. The text is very dense and (truthfully) a tough read, but its insights are exceptional.

Heather King, *Shirt of Flame, A Year with Saint Therese of Lisieux*. This book will make

for a very good, private retreat for anyone struggling with an addiction or obsession, or just with mediocrity in his or her spiritual life.

Christophe Lebreton, *Born From the Gaze of God, The Tibhirine Journal of A Martyr Monk, 1993-1996*. This is the diary of one of the Trappist monks who was martyred in Algeria in 1996. It is the intimate journal of a young man which chronicles how he moves from paralysing fear to the strength for martyrdom.

Kathleen Dowling Singh, two books: *The Grace in Dying* and *The Grace in Aging*. According to Singh, the process of aging and dying is exquisitely calibrated to bring us into the realm of spirit. In these two remarkable books,

she traces this out with the depth that, outside of the great classical mystics, I have not seen.

Christine M. Bochen, Editor, *The Way of Mercy*. This is a

series of remarkable essays on mercy, including some by Pope Francis and Walter Kasper.

***The Cloud of Unknowing*.** I finally had the chance to study this classic in some depth and it is, no doubt, the signature book on contemplation and centering prayer.

● Among biographies and essays:

Marilynne Robinson, *The Givenness of Things, Essays*. These essays are dense, deep, robustly sane, and are Marilynne Robinson, the gifted novelist, at her religious best.

Michael N. McGregor, *Pure Act, The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax*. This is the biography of the man who was Thomas Merton's closest soul-friend, lived out his life as a secular monk, and who carried his solitude at a very high and noble level. It will help re-awaken your idealism.

Fernando Cardenal, *Faith and Joy, Memoirs of a Revolutionary Priest*. This is a great read about an exceptional man, a priest and a Jesuit, who played a leading role in Daniel Ortega's government in Nicaragua and was commanded by John Paul to step down. It is a private journal that tells the other side of what much of history has one-sidedly recorded about the struggles for justice in Latin America.

Daniel Berrigan, *Essential Writings, Edited by John Dear*. Daniel Berrigan died in late April of this year. His writings set the



compass for what it means to be a Christian prophet, and this is an excellent selection of his writings.

● Three books that deal with facing aging and dying:

Michael Paul Gallagher, *Into Extra Time, Living Through the Final Stages of Cancer and Jottings along the Way*. A man of faith and letters, Gallagher shares the journal he kept during the last nine months of his life, when he already knew he was dying.

Katie Roiphe, *The Violet Hour, Great Writers at the End*. How did a number of great writers, including Sigmund Freud, John Updike and Susan Sontag, face terminal illness? This book tells us how.

Paul Kalanithi, *When Breath Becomes Air*. This is a remarkable journal of a young doctor facing a terminal diagnosis that documents his courage, faith, and insight.

● Three novels that I recommend:

Paula Hawkins, *The Girl on the Train*. This didn't make for a great movie, but the book is a page-turner.

Ian McEwan, *Nutshell* and *Edna O'Brien, The Little Red Chairs*. The pedigree of these two authors alone is enough of a recommendation, but neither will disappoint you here.

● A wildcard:

Kenneth Rolheiser, *Dreamland and Soulscapes, A Prairie Love Story*. Full disclosure, Kenneth is my brother and I lived through many of the stories he shares, so there is admittedly a huge bias here. But the book delivers on its title and will give you a more realistic sense of what it was like to grow up in a Little House on the Prairies.

Happy reading!

Heather King.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 5, 2017

Youth space
The joy of
retreats, the
power of prayer

Page 22



Lessons in the Faith



Talk about 'out of the mouths of babes'. I was over with some parishioners who had been recently bereaved and we were to plan the funeral liturgy. Naturally there was sadness in the household as they were coming to terms with their big loss.

The house was full with relations and neighbours calling in to sympathise – indeed there was a large group of people gathered inside and outside the house. There were kettles on the boil to make pots of tea and coffee and plates of sandwiches that friends and neighbours brought to cater for the visitors.

I am continually amazed by the goodness and generosity of our people to one another in times of sadness. Despite the sorrow, there was also laughter, tears, and stories, as they all shared their own memories with each other. The best therapy in the world is to give time to hear



Christian faith can rest with the youngest and oldest among us, Fr Bryan Shortall explains

and share each other's pain and struggles at a time of tragedy.

This occasion was particularly poignant as the one who died was barely in middle age and the body was laid out in the living room of the family home.

There were some small children there who brought a degree of distraction to the situation and their innocence helped the older ones to cope. One of the young lads, maybe about five years old, looked at me before the prayers and pointed to the coffin and said, "Is that yours?" In other words, did I own the coffin? I didn't know what to say. What does one say?

But another child, again about four or five years old and sporting a pair of glasses, quite like a junior Harry Potter, was running in and out and came over to me and said, "You sent my Nanny up to Heaven." All the theology in the world couldn't prepare me for what came out of that child's mouth; I was speechless. The only reply I could manage was: "That's a lovely thing to say, thank you."

And it was a lovely thing to say. I have known this particular family and indeed their neighbours for the last few years and I have been with them for baptisms and funerals. One of the

grown-ups would have told the child that I offered the funeral Mass for his grandmother and the phrase "that priest sent your Nanny up to Heaven" must have been used. And the little boy remembered.

Honoured

Priests are honoured to stand at the baptismal font to welcome a new member of our Christian family. In Ireland it is still mostly infant baptisms.

We are there to solemnise a marriage between a man and a woman and we stand at the foot of the altar to welcome a coffin and sprinkle it with holy water. These are three big occasions in the life of a family, intimate and emotional occasions, which people will always remember and we are the privileged ones to be allowed inside.

To be seen as someone whose prayers and Masses help to bring another close to God or

to send someone 'up to Heaven' is something I feel will take a lifetime for me to understand. To be *In Persona Christi* as a priest is awesome. Perhaps this child was spot on. And there's no doubt that I was reminded of the responsibilities that go hand in hand with it too.

Jesus exclaimed: "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children." (Mt 11:25)

Working in a city centre parish, one of the nicer things I get to do is to make what we call the 'First Friday' visits. Here we visit elderly and housebound parishioners to bring them the sacraments and to pray together with them.

These people have lived in the parish all their lives and

» Continued on Page 21

Children's Corner

ERIN FOX

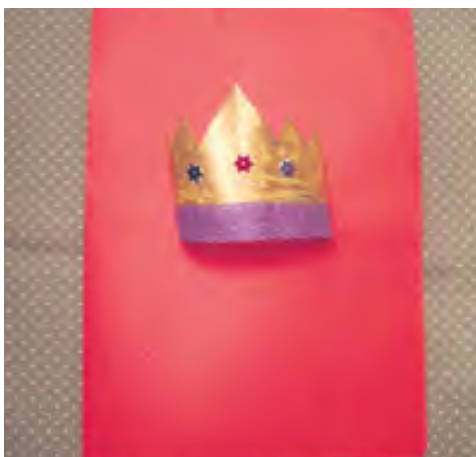


You can send cards for Christmas until feast of the Epiphany

Whoever said it was too late to send Christmas cards, forgot that Christmas doesn't end until the feast of the Epiphany or the Three Wise Men on January 6th.

Little Christmas is surrounded with tradition. As the official last day of Christmas, the tree is taken down, and the decorations are stored away for next Christmas. It's also the last chance to enjoy some other festivities before we look forward to the arrival of Spring and the promise of Easter.

While it may well be too late to send a traditional Christmas card, you can make a Little Christmas card to gift to a friend or family member this weekend.



Traditional Christmas cards feature images that best represent the festive season, from Christmas trees to snowmen, angels, and the nativity scene.

For a Little Christmas card, design something that best represents the feast of the epiphany. The Three Wise Men brought the baby Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh so you could design a card with these three gifts.

When we think of kings, we picture gold crowns atop their heads. The three kings who visited Jesus might not have worn crowns, and the baby Jesus didn't wear one, but a gold crown on a card makes a fitting greeting for the occasion.

For the card you will need some coloured paper card, gold metallic paint, scissors, glue, sparkly beads or sequins, pritt stick.

First cut out the crown from yellow paper. Leave two long tabs on either side of the crown. Paint this with gold metallic paint and leave to dry for several hours.

Take an A4 sheet of card and fold in half. Unfold the card and lay it down on a cutting mat. Cut two vertical slits on one side of the card. Write your greeting inside the card before you proceed with the next step.

Glue the sequins or beads to the crown and then taking the tabs, push these through the slits you made in the card. Open up the card and fold the slits inside, and glue into place.

When you look at the front of the card, the crown should have a slight curve to it.

When the glue has finished drying on the card, it's ready for you to give away to a loved one.



Watching out for a silent threat

Prostate cancer, a once largely silent disease that was often diagnosed in its more advanced stages has become increasingly identified and treated at an earlier phase in men today.

A greater awareness of disease symptoms coupled with improvements in detection and diagnosis, as well as treatment options has led to a huge benefit in survival over the past few decades.

Each year there are over 3,000 new cases of prostate cancer in Ireland (about two thirds occurring in those over 65) and overall it accounts for about 500 male deaths annually. Despite this, prostate cancer in its early stages has about a 90% five year survival. However, this reduces to about 30% where there is distant spread highlighting the potential benefit of earlier detection.

The prostate is a small gland that lies under the bladder and from which the urethra (tube which drains urine from the bladder) passes.

Hesitancy

From the age of about 40 onwards, benign enlargement of the prostate occurs in most men. Indeed, up to 50% of men at 50 and nearly 75% at 70 will have some degree of urinary symptoms due to benign prostate enlargement.

This includes increased frequency of urination, hesitancy with initial flow or dribbling and waking at night to empty the bladder. The symptoms of early prostate cancer are similar, though in most cases the tumour originates in the periphery of the gland and therefore may go unnoticed.

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



If you have prostatic urinary symptoms, you may have a rectal exam performed by your GP to exam the prostate and also have a blood test to check your PSA level. The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is not specific for prostate cancer and is elevated in benign prostate enlargement and with urinary tract infections and prostate inflammation.

However, if your PSA level is higher than expected or if tests raise concerns, your GP can refer you to a urologist or a Rapid Access Prostate Clinic where further tests can be done.

“The most important prognostic factors include the extent of disease at diagnosis”

The diagnosis of prostate cancer is ultimately made after a biopsy of the gland. This is done under ultrasound guidance (via the rectum) and usually as an outpatient. If cancer is confirmed, imaging will be done to determine the extent of the tumour and to determine whether it has spread.

The most important prognostic factors include the extent of disease at diagnosis

(whether it has spread or not), the PSA level and the tissue grade (how aggressive the prostate tissue looks).

In many cases, prostate cancer is a slow growing tumour that may not shorten life expectancy. However, detecting it earlier in some men may result in curative therapy being instituted and/or other treatments that can slow disease progression and delay or prevent complications.

Minority of men

This is particularly true in a minority of men who get a more aggressive cancer. Detecting this type of disease in your 50s or 60s or in those with a good life expectancy has the potential to offer life saving treatment.

Despite this, routine screening of all men for prostate cancer is not recommended as it has not been shown to improve overall survival.

Indeed, after a diagnosis is made treatment is not immediately necessary for most men. For early low grade disease, an approach of active surveillance over several years may be taken, whereby the tumour is closely observed with the goal of avoiding early or unnecessary treatment that can have serious and permanent side effects.

For early high grade disease, particularly in those who are younger or are otherwise healthy cure can be achieved with a radical prostatectomy involving complete removal of the gland.

This probably offers the best chance of cure though can lead to urinary incontinence and impotence.

An alternative option for men with local disease is radiotherapy which achieves

similar cure rates. With brachytherapy, radiation is delivered within the gland itself, sometimes with the use of radioactive seeds.

It has fewer immediate side effects and can be done over one to two days with a quick return to usually daily routines. However, it can also cause urinary difficulties and impotence.

In addition, in high risk early prostate cancer, hormonal therapy can also be given following brachytherapy. Finally, in more advanced cases where there is distant spread and cure is not possible, disease can be contained for several years with hormonal therapy and/or chemotherapy.

“Routine screening of all men for prostate cancer is not recommended”

From a risk perspective, obesity and poor diet have been linked to prostate cancer while having a first degree relative (brother or father) increases the risk by twofold, rising to fivefold with two close family members.

Importantly, treatment options for prostate cancer have improved survival greatly. While in many cases there are no early symptoms, getting checked out with routine PSA testing and a rectal examination can detect disease earlier. However, this needs to be carefully considered on an individual basis as can it lead to investigations that prove negative or that don't alter treatment.

If you have concerns, you should discuss with your GP.

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Fr Bryan Shortall and Sr Mary Louise PDDM at an event celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life in Dublin.

they have a wealth of knowledge, experience, and history which they love to share.

Listening to them is sometimes like going back in time to a different Dublin and a different church.

They have recollections of the joys and sorrows, the hardships and the laughter of their childhood and when they were rearing their families. Calling to see them, all of them in their late eighties or nineties, I can see they have great inner strength and great faith.

They are not theologians in the formal sense, but they have a relationship with God that has stood the test of time.

This is the faith that they first heard of at the fireside and in the cradle. And they themselves often tell me of their mothers and grandmothers who taught them how to say their prayers.

I appreciate how they easily merge their relationship with God with their own lived lives.

It's as if their relationship with Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Lady and the saints seamlessly crosses over into their day-to-day lives with their children, who are now often grandparents themselves.

“I appreciate how they easily merge their relationship with God with their own lived lives”

And when the kids call to see nanny or granddad, often they are the great-grandchildren. The Ireland of the kitchen table has been portrayed in times gone by with the pictures of the Sacred Heart, Pope John XXIII and President John F. Kennedy on the walls. This may be a quaint image that can raise all sorts of lively opinions about where we want to be as a nation into the future. Sophisticated society may say that this is not the real Ireland anymore.

When I call to see these people who have given the best years of their lives to the growth of our nation, I see that one of the main ingredients of their endeavours was the old Faith. And one still sees a picture of the Sacred Heart or a

statue of their favourite saint over the fireplace.

On the first Friday of each month, they are waiting for me to call. RTE's Sean O'Rourke or Newstalk's Pat Kenny might be on the radio or Jeremy Kyle might be on the television.

We take a moment and turn the sound down. One woman holds her late husband's rosary beads in her hand, her link to the relationship they had which spanned almost sixty years. Another elderly man prays with me as we look across at happy family photographs on the mantelpiece that tell many stories of times gone by. One couple in their 80s have some children's toys around the living room, waiting for the next high-energy visit to nana and granddad.

“The Holy Family of Nazareth, the model for all families, knows the struggles and sadness”

The reality of age and ill health is never far away and despite some of these people being dependent on medication, and while oftentimes a caregiver is present when I call, there is still a smile on their faces. “Father, there's worse off than me,” they would say.

Whenever I hear of another bad news story locally, or further afield, I think of the many people who are painfully able to look beyond their own troubles and think of another's. This is true Christianity and true humanity and I will never fail to be evangelised by these people of simple, yet sterling Faith.



The feast of the Holy Family can be seen as a sign of contradiction. Let's not get too caught up with the popular images of the Holy Family in that almost clinical and sterile way they can perhaps be portrayed.

They had their struggles and fears. Just look at the infancy narratives of Luke's Gospel.

They must be held up as a model for families today all over the world. Jesus, Mary and Joseph identify with the highs and lows of family life with all its complexities.

Look at the images coming from airports and ferry ports as families are joyfully reunited for Christmas. There's so much joy and excitement around the Christmas dinner table and the living room fireside. Yet, there can be tension and stress too, especially as families make that extra effort. The Holy Family know that struggle.

“I am also conscious of the families who will have an empty chair at the Christmas table”

And as surely as our young people come back to the family for Christmas, there are also the looming departure gates. I really pray that very soon our young people especially will be in a position to return home to Ireland if that's what they want. For those that have made a new life and formed relationships overseas, may we always find new ways to make our world a smaller place.

I am also conscious of the families who will have an empty chair at the Christmas table: families broken by emigration, unemployment and death.

The Holy Family of Nazareth, the model for all families, knows the struggles and sadness, and Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are with all families as they face the new year with hope or fear. May this Christmas time and this coming year be blessed for all.

1 The above are extracts from *Tired of all the Bad News*, by Fr Bryan Shortall, published by Columba Press, with a foreword by Joe Duffy.



Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

Around the baptistry in our church there are beautiful wrought iron railings depicting flowing waters. In the midst of the waves there is another symbol, a spiral. The spiral is a symbol of life and energy, of growth and change. It is about being drawn back to the centre, to a place of truth and then moving outwards again strengthened by that truth, not just once but as many times as we need to.

I find it particularly appropriate that the spiral is there amidst the flowing waters of life at our baptistry. To me it is a sign that we are drawn back time and again to explore the meaning of our own baptism.

This Sunday, January 8, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. We have been here before and there is a danger that we get weary of repetition, that we stop listening. If we are invited to renew our own baptismal promises are we doing so with energy and conviction? Are we thinking about what we are committing to? Or are we just going through the motions? What are we being asked? What is this baptism about? I would suggest that baptism is:

- The source of our belonging within the Christian community.
- The call to be the Body of Christ in our world – lived out in the daily bits and pieces of life.
- The root of discipleship and ministry – not just for priests and religious but for every baptised person and that means you and me.
- The call to build community, to work for justice and to treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- The affirmation of the family as the first place of encounter with God.
- The foundation of our joy and the place where our liturgy begins.
- Core to our identity and a statement of who we are throughout our lives.
- The beginning of a journey, growing in love and relationship with God.
- The entry point to all the other sacraments and to a life of faith.
- A touchstone that gives moral direction to our lives.

When we are invited to renew our baptismal promises

this is what we are saying yes to. It is easy to say we believe in something – words do not cost a lot. I can tell you that I believe we should protect our natural environment but still run the tap and waste water every time I brush my teeth. I can tell you that I believe we are all created in the image and likeness of God, while walking down the street trying desperately to avoid making eye contact with that person I have decided is a bit odd.

At some point words need to be translated into action. That is what happens at the baptism of Jesus. God's voice from heaven affirms 'This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him'. Baptism marks the start of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus lives out his 'yes' to God.

“We want the children to take ownership of their baptism”

Everything that Jesus does, his preaching and teaching, his healing and reconciling, the meals he shares with people and the relationships he builds – everything is built upon his baptism, his acceptance of his



own identity as the Son of God.

So too in baptism we are invited to accept who we are as sons and daughters of God, accept it not just in the words we say but in the lives we live.

In the parish, when we are working with children and young people, preparing them for First Eucharist and Confirmation, we always begin with baptism because this is where our identity as Christians first takes root. We want the children to take ownership of their baptism not as a once off event, in their past, but as a reality to be lived each and every day.

The spiral form of the liturgical year brings us all back to this point, to reflect upon baptism. We are offered anew the opportunity to live our 'yes' to God in the bits and pieces of our everyday lives.

Daily prayer proves to be the most perfect tonic!

 **Michelle Burke** reflects on the annual Youth 2000 Christmas Retreat

Amid the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, over 800 young people gather to prepare themselves spiritually for Christ's coming. The annual retreat, organised by Youth 2000 in Newbridge Co. Kildare, draws hundreds of young people between 16 to 35 from all over Ireland and even further afield.

A warm, festive and spirited atmosphere is felt by all as they make their way to Newbridge College. It is hard not to get caught up in the excitement of this event as there is much to hear, see and experience.

Youth 2000 was established when Pope John Paul II challenged the young people of the Catholic Church to step out of their comfort zone and bring Christ to others. With this challenge in mind Youth, 2000 runs a variety of retreats regionally and nationally throughout the year. The Newbridge Christmas retreat is one of the national retreats which always draws the crowds.

I still remember my first Christmas retreat in 2008 when I was starting to rediscovering my faith. My family always encouraged me in my faith but as I grew older and surrounded myself with poor influences I became half-hearted and disengaged.

After attending the Christmas retreat when I was 19 I was left with many questions. I struck by the sincere joy and genuine happiness that the other young people had. What did they have that I didn't? Why are they so

happy and I am not?

Since that retreat, Youth 2000 has provided me with opportunities to develop and understand my faith in a deep and profound way.

Retreat

The Christmas retreat has become my favourite retreat of the year. What better way to celebrate Christmas and prepare for the birth of Jesus than with people my age who encourage and challenge me to open up to the wonders of what our God has to offer.

The Christmas retreat never fails to meet expectations. Those attending the retreat are treated

to a range of talks and workshops covering an array of topics such as the Eucharist, Our Lady, the pro-life cause and the use of media in evangelisation to name just a few. These talks are designed to encourage and inspire young people to live out their faith in the world and to be Christ's disciples.

As always at the heart of Youth 2000 is the Eucharist. Those on retreat are offered opportunities to spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the retreat, both day and night. Despite the tiredness, when I attended adoration in the small hours of the night I found a deep sense of peace as it provided me with quiet,

personal time with Jesus.

“There are over 40 prayer groups throughout the country all of which meet weekly”

The highlight of the retreat is the reconciliation and healing service. Despite having hundreds of people around you, the atmosphere remains intimate. It is hard not to relax into the spirit of peaceful prayer and reflection. The number of youth seeking Confession is astounding but it does not faze the priests as they are willing to hear Confessions for up to four hours.

The healing service sees people reverently gather round Jesus in the Eucharist seeking spiritual, emotional and physical healing. The night concludes in joyful celebration. Songs of praise and worship are heard throughout the building for hours after the healing service finishes.

I have often heard comments about the lack of young people involved in the Church and how they are uninterested because the Church does not relate to them and their needs. Attending Youth 2000 has helped me see how this could not be any further from the truth. From attending events like the Christmas retreat, it can be seen that the Church is still very much alive and our Faith should be joyfully celebrated.

More can be done

However, it goes without saying there is much more can be done. At retreats we are equipped with the tools needed to go out into the world and become disciples of Christ. Many people become involved in Youth 2000 because they were invited to a retreat by a friend, which is what Youth 2000 is ultimately about “youth leading youth to the heart of the Church”.

Youth 2000 welcomes all newcomers and is one of biggest Catholic initiative that hosts under 18s. There are over 40 prayer groups throughout the country all of which meet weekly providing more opportunities for spiritual growth. I have been involved in my local prayer group since attending my first retreat. Going to pray with other young people once a week helps me keep the joyful spirit of the retreats alive and provides the support I need to be a disciple of Christ in the world today.

For further information about upcoming retreats or to find your nearest prayer group visit www.youth2000.ie or find us on Facebook at Youth 2000 Ireland.

Michelle Burke, 27, is a religion and business teacher from Mitchelstown, Co. Cork.



The Youth 2000 group at the Newbridge event.

A serious case of 'mixed messages' on the net

A male friend of mine has been in a lot of contact with me online recently, we have a lot in common and we are both single. I think there is a spark there, yet when I suggested meeting up he said he was too busy, yet continues to stay in contact with me. I feel I'm getting mixed signals what should I do?

It is clear that you have a connection with this person, however having things in common doesn't necessarily mean a romantic connection. I can't help but think of the phrase “he is just not that into you”.

You might be analysing every conversation and looking for deeper meaning but don't torture yourself or waste your time waiting to see how things play out. Even if someone is incredibly busy, if he wanted to meet up in person he would make the time to do it. Everyone can fit in a coffee – we can always find

time if it is something we really want.

Chasing someone generally doesn't end well. If you have casually suggested a meet up and he hasn't bitten I would leave it at that. As the old saying goes actions speak louder than words. Sure maybe his messages or contact to date seems to say one thing but if there is no follow through then it's time to move on.

If you want to pursue this friendship by all means do, but I wouldn't hold onto hope that there is a chance for romance. There are a few reasons why he might be sending you mixed messages. Sometimes we send out these misleading signals without the follow through because we like all of the emotional attention without

any real commitment, keeping you interested while maintaining the boundaries of the friend-zone. What this comes down to is being subtly used and it's not fair. He might be interested but he doesn't know what he wants. If he doesn't recognise your value and how amazing you truly are then why waste your time?

Asking

Perhaps the answer is in the asking. If you have to wonder if this person is interested, chances are they're not, so really is there mixed messages at all? The failure to act is a clear signal. When someone is really interested in you it will be clear – when it's the right person it will be natural.

If you are becoming emotionally invested and don't think you can separate a friendship from romantic feelings from developing, it's probably best to break ties. If you decide to do this I would be honest about your reasons, say you think there could possibly be an attraction there but it's not reciprocated and that's ok, it's also OK to not want to have to make time for a new friend when you are looking for something more.



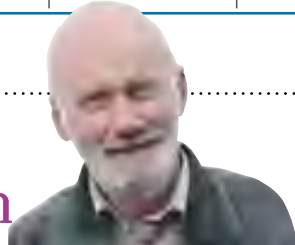
Love Notes

Wendy Grace



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Great stories from a significant Irish shrine

One of the most interesting programmes shown over the Christmas period was the film **Strange Occurrences in a Small Irish Village** on RTÉ 1.

This documentary told the story of Knock Shrine, mainly through interviews with some of the people involved in that parish. Parish priest Fr Richard Gibbons was a central focus of attention, with one contributor comparing him favourably to Msgr James Horan, pioneer of the development of the shrine and of Knock airport.

The pilgrimage from the diocese of New York, led by the gregarious Archbishop Timothy Dolan, figured large, and there was a strong implication that such pilgrimages were key to the future of the shrine. Its place in Irish culture was central, but Fr Gibbons didn't want Knock seen as some sort of last bastion of Irish Catholicism. His vision was infinitely wider than that.

While there were some dodgy superstitious elements (e.g. the idea of burying a statue of St Joseph upside down in the garden to ensure the sale of a house), and while some of souvenirs seemed tacky, there were some strong moments. I was intrigued by the insight into the workings of the Knock Marriage Bureau, as staff sorted through the various applicants – possible



Some of the souvenirs on sale at Knock shrine.

pairings were summarily dismissed on various grounds, including age and even size difference.

Most inspirational of all was the ceremony towards the end where people in costume represented each of the 15 witnesses to the apparition, leading up to the dramatic unveiling of the newly commissioned and strikingly beautiful mural depicting the apparition.

Downsides

Also based in the West of Ireland, the film **Calvary**, shown on RTÉ on St Stephen's Day,

had quite a bit going for it but many downsides as well, a bit like the flawed humanity it portrayed.

Brendan Gleeson gave a powerhouse performance as a priest in the West of Ireland who is told in the opening and quite crude Confession scene that he will be murdered in a week.

Gleeson's Fr Lavelle is portrayed as a good man, surrounded mostly by crude and/or vain locals. He goes about his priestly work with empathy and care for his parishioners though there's little of the support structures

that priests usually have in a parish, and most of the surrounding characters are quite off-putting. It was an interesting twist that the priest was previously married and had a troubled daughter.

There were lots of anti-Catholic jibes, especially about paedophile priests, which was a central theme, but one could argue that these came from the obnoxious characters and therefore may not form part of the overall vision and viewpoint of the film.

Themes of forgiveness and redemption were woven into the plot and if anything the film had a very favourable view of the work of a priest.

There was a beautiful sequence where the priest anointed a foreigner who had been fatally injured in a car crash, and consoled his wife

immediately afterwards.

The local doctor's cynicism seemed all the more ugly in this light. There were *cliché*d and melodramatic scenes (e.g. the pub shoot-up) contrasted with some beautifully filmed scenery, making for an interesting but unsatisfying whole. Its heart was in the right place but a dose of subtlety wouldn't have gone astray.

I was glad to see **Leap of Faith** back on RTÉ Radio 1 with a Christmas special. It was a leisurely programme for Christmas morning, with some seasonal music, including a lovely 'Little Drummer Boy' instrumental from David Agnew and a group from Trinity College.

Presenter Michael Comyn spoke to army chaplain Fr Paul Murphy on duty with Irish peacekeepers on the Golan Heights. In the land of Jesus' birth they carried out their routine duties, attended Christmas Mass, had a charity run and had Skype time with families at home.

I was particularly impressed by an item on modern day Bethlehem, where tourists haven't been as plentiful because of recurring violence, and where Christians are now about a third of the population.

An icon writer described Bethelhem as looking like a prison because of security walls. She wished it was easier to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, a



Brendan Gleeson as Fr Lavelle in *Calvary*.

PICK OF THE WEEK

Film: WALES: MAN OF HOPE

BBC 4, Tuesday, January 10, 10.00 pm (2014)

Robert Wieckiewicz stars in this film biography of Polish anti-communist activist Lech Walesa; directed by Andrzej Wajda.

THELMA'S BIG IRISH COMMUNIONS

TV3, Wednesday, January 11, 8.00pm

Ellie and Cody Keogh who have different feelings towards their extravagant Holy Communion outfits. The Connors sisters see a dress design featuring Our Lady.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

RTÉ Radio 1, Friday, January 13, 10.02 pm

Topical religious issues with Michael Comyn.

short distance away, but now with erratic permissions and unpredictable checkpoints it could be quite an ordeal.

She hoped that new icons, commissioned for Lichfield Cathedral, would help people to pray and act as powerful meeting points between Heaven and Earth.

boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Current and forthcoming attractions on the film front

Silence

Martin Scorsese, who studied for the priesthood as a young man, has divided his directorial career between mainstream dramas and revisionist religious works like *Kundun* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Silence falls into the latter category. It's been in gestation for many years and chronicles the fortunes of a 17th-Century Jesuit missionary called Sebastiao Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) who has his faith challenged during a visit to Japan to try and locate a missing mentor, Fr Cristovao Ferreira (Liam Neeson), who's said to have committed apostasy after being tortured.

The cast also includes

Adam Driver as another Jesuit. Ciaran Hinds plays a priest and the Japanese actor Tadanobu Asano is an interpreter. Catholicism was outlawed in Japan at the time in which the film is set and that obviously adds to its dramatic import. It was filmed in Taiwan and premiered in Vatican City last month.

Scorsese said: "It deals with spiritual issues in a concrete world which inevitably throws up the worst of human nature". Many have spoken of the thriller-like elements of it. Garfield went on a 30-day retreat to prepare for the role, under the guidance of an actual Jesuit. He described the experience as being akin to "walking with



Lewis McDougall features in *A Monster Calls*, a far more gentle movie than the title suggests.

Jesus imaginatively from his conception to his resurrection".

Monster Trucks

A bored High School student (Lucas Till) builds a truck from the remnants of battered old cars and finds an interesting friend when a subterranean creature emerges from the ground to accompany him on his new enterprise after an accident at an oil drilling site.

Hidden Figures

The three African-American women of this film (Taraji Henson, Octavia Spencer and Janelle Monae) are the unsung heroines of inter-planetary travel. They possessed incredible mathematical skills and used them to their full potential in helping NASA launch many of its early space missions, including one involving the recently-deceased John Glenn. It's amazing their story

hasn't been filmed until now.

Sleepless

This re-make of the French film *Sleepless Night* concerns a policeman who infiltrates the criminal underworld to try and locate his kidnapped daughter.

Collateral Beauty

Will Smith negotiates an arduous trek back to mental stability after losing his daughter in this soft-centred tale of emotional regeneration, being helped along the way by Kate Winslet and Ed Norton.

Underworld: Blood Wars

Sad to see the talented Kate Beckinsale wasting her time on yet another exploitative venture like this, which involves a violent set of con-

licts between warring vampires.

A Monster Calls

This is a more gentle film than it sounds. It features a boy (Lewis McDougall) who seeks the aid of the eponymous monster (Liam Neeson) to help him try and cope with the trauma of having a terminally-ill mother (Felicity Jones).

The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

A widowed architect (Jason Sudeikis) helps a homeless young teenager (Maisie Williams) build a raft so she can sail across the Atlantic but the journey is fraught with so much danger it becomes almost suicidal.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The great hero of America's awful day

Father Mychal Judge, An Authentic American Hero

by Michael Ford
(Paulist Press, £15.99)

Anthony Redmond

Fr Judge, an Irish American Franciscan, died in the attack on the World Trade Centre as he gave the Last Rites to a dying fireman. During the last weeks of his life, Fr Mychal Judge had been reading the biography of the spiritual writer, Henry Nouwen, entitled *Wounded Prophet*, written by Michael Ford. The book had clearly made a huge impression on him.

As a consequence of this, Paulist Press invited Michael Ford to write a portrait of the now legendary New Yorker. The result is a moving and painstaking account of a truly human and compassionate priest, a man who left no stone unturned in his efforts to help and encourage those in trouble.

The book is an impres-

sionistic portrait drawn from many interviews with Mychal Judge's friends, offered both as a tribute and a testimony to a one-time alcoholic who could never shake off his strongest addiction: a love for other people.

He also happened to be homosexual by orientation and, as Michael Ford says, many people pointed out that Mychal Judge's sexuality was subordinate to his witness as a priest and a Franciscan. He ministered across the spectrum of city life.

“This remembrance also falls during what Pope Francis has declared ‘a Holy Year of Mercy’”

What marked out his holiness was precisely his refusal to occupy any niche of conventional sanctity. Just as Francis of Assisi had challenged the Church of his day

Fr Mychal Judge is carried dead from the ruins of the World Trade Centre by New York firemen.



and become a saint, so Fr Judge is emerging as something of a hero of the post-Christian era.

Here was a friar who dared to be himself. He was a prayerful, spiritual man, with a special devotion to Our Blessed Lady.

Mychal Judge has received numerous posthumous honours. The Pope blessed his white chaplain's helmet in Rome, and he was one of the knights of the New York Fire Department to be awarded the Legion of Honour by President Jacques Chirac of France. There is to be a Mychal Judge Scholarship for the children

of firefighters killed in the tragedy.

At his funeral, which was attended by thousands, a firefighter remarked: “I just think God wanted somebody to lead the guys to heaven.” The New York firefighters had a special affection for their charismatic chaplain.

Nervous world

In his Introduction to this fascinating book, Michael Ford writes: “The Fifteenth Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington comes at a time when a nervous world is only too aware that ISIS terrorists – and oth-

ers – can strike anywhere at any time, as the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando illustrated.

“Yet this remembrance also falls during what Pope Francis has declared ‘a Holy Year of Mercy’ – a time of grace, peace, conversion and joy. On the one hand, the forces of evil continue to terrify, kill and maim; on the other, the power of goodness seeks to heal, save and reconcile. ‘There are no walls or distances which can prevent the Father’s mercy from reaching and embracing us,’ the Pontiff reminds us.”

Visiting the Ground Zero

memorial in September 2015, Pope Francis said: “This place of death became a place of life too, a place of saved lives, a hymn to the triumph of life over the prophets of destruction and death, to goodness over evil, to reconciliation and unity over hatred and division.”

Those wonderful firemen rushed to save lives in the World Trade Centre without any thought of themselves, or the fanatical hatred and cruelty of the terrorists who flew the planes into the buildings with the intention of causing mass death and destruction.

Christmas old, new... and abused

Christmas in the Cross Hairs: Two Thousand Years of Denouncing and Defending the World's Most Celebrated Holiday

by Chris Bowler
(Oxford University Press, £20.00)

Peter Costello

In this first week of the New Year it may seem a little late to be reviewing a book about the history of the holiday that we have just got safely through here in the West. But it ought to be remembers that in many parts of the world, where perhaps ancient traditions are more respected, Christmas actually falls tomorrow.

This is in countries and communities largely in the East and among Oriental Christians who still follow the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar, introduced into the world by Pope Gregory in 1583.

At that time many Protestant countries, notably England (and, because of the Anglo-Irish, parts of our own island) refused to accept it.

That is until 1750, when the change was finally made in these islands, followed by protests of the reactionary kind that we are still familiar with from those demanding that the king “give us back our 11 days” – the time difference between the two.

This is only one of the numerous rows that have encrusted the feast, ever since it was introduced (largely to replace a pagan mid-winter celebration).

Author Gerry Bowler is a Canadian academic historian. He is the author of *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, but long interested in

that conflicted area where religion meets popular culture, he has published *The World Encyclopedia of Christmas and Santa Claus*:



A Biography. So this a serious book, but one with a light touch as appropriate.

Our present day festival is the

product largely to the last two centuries. In the 19th Century, writers like Charles Dickens and Washington Irving (an influential American writer whom we should all know more about) sentimentalised the feast day, as we can see in *A Christmas Carol* and some of the chapters of *Bracebridge Hall*.

Non-believers

Today, of course, it often seems to many people, even to some non-believers, that Christmas has turned into a giant shopping spree, carefully manipulated by commercial interests largely American, like Coca-Cola.

The introduction of the concept of ‘Black Friday’ is surely an absurd novelty which the press should not promote.

Earlier Christmas had been famously banned by the English Republicans in the time of Cromwell – much as I suppose their modern counterparts would ban Christmas for fear of offending Muslims and Jews.

Gerry Bowler, in this most fascinating and fully sourced history, deals with all of this in detail. In answer to those who complain that “Christmas is not what it was” he suggests it never was.

This book is great post-Christmas read, confirming all ones worst fears. But it might enable us next Christmas to see just exactly what is ‘traditional’ and what is not. Indeed to get a clearer idea of what exactly tradition is. Forewarned in this case would certainly be forwarded. Here is a celebration of a feast, the true source of which in the Nativity, the world needs to be aware of in ways it isn't today.

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

The progress of a man who wanted change

Walter Carpenter: A Revolutionary Life
by Ellen Galvin RSC
(East Wall History Group, €5, or a donation to Cycle for Suicide charity; contact East Wall History Group at eastwallhistory@gmail.com)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This little biography of Walter Carpenter is an authentic expression of Pietas. Written by a granddaughter, a retired nun based in Dublin, it was published in connection with the unveiling of a plaque honouring him by the East Wall History Group.

Walter Carpenter was born in Lewisham, Kent, England on April 3, 1871. He married Ellen Walsh in 1894. According to the 1901 census they were residing in Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire), where he conducted his trade as a chimney sweep.

Carpenter was a life-long campaigner against inequality and social injustice. He co-founded the Socialist Party of Ireland in 1904 and became its Secretary in 1911. The Party was a merger of a remnant of the Irish Socialist Republican Party founded by James Connolly in the US and a dissident faction calling itself the Socialist Labour Party.

“He led a campaign to better the conditions and treatment of domestic servants”

One of the leading orators in the Irish Labour Movement in the first quarter of the 20th Century, Carpenter was jailed in 1911 after addressing a rally protesting against the proposed visit of King George V to Ireland. As a representative of the Independent Labour Party he stood for election to Dublin City Council in 1914 and 1920.

He was not successful on either occasion but he was not unduly disappointed, as it had given him an opportunity to highlight the appalling living conditions in the Dublin



Eamonn Carpenter, a grandson of Walter, with a reproduction of Walter's 1914 election material.

slums, responsibility for which he laid at the doors of the landlords and some members of the Council.

Carpenter was first and foremost a trade unionist. He was an organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union from 1911 onwards and served as secretary of the Tailors, Machinists and Pressers Trade Union, also known as the 'Jewish Union', from 1913 to 1925.

Propagandist

He stood shoulder to shoulder with James Larkin and James Connolly during the 1913 Lock Out. Described at that time by Connolly as “an excellent propagandist”, Carpenter in 1914 undertook a lecture tour of England to inform the British Labour Movement of the situation in Dublin.

Donal Nevin, the Labour historian, described Carpenter as “a most self-sacrificing man”. He did not exaggerate. Apart from his socialist and trade-union activity, Carpenter

championed many other causes. He served as secretary to the Irish Anti-Vaccination League from 1905 onwards.

“Ill-health caused Carpenter to retire from his public activities in 1925”

A life-long teetotaler, he was an active and vocal committee member of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance. He led a campaign to better the conditions and treatment of domestic servants. Typically, he was a strong and effective supporter of the Garden City Movement, which promoted the establishment of garden allotments.

The Socialist Party of Ireland morphed into the Communist Party of Ireland in 1911 with Roderick Connolly as president and Carpenter as secretary and editor of its paper *The*

Workers Republic.

However, in 1922 he resigned as secretary of the Party stating “the CP is my first love, but my union claims all my time and I cannot under present circumstances neglect my union”.

Ill-health caused Carpenter to retire from his public activities in 1925. His wife had predeceased him and until he died in the manner of a pious Catholic on February 25, 1926 he was mostly in the care of the Irish Sisters of Charity.

He left two sons, Walter and Peter. Both were members of the Irish Citizen Army, both were in the GPO during Easter week 1916 and both were active in the War of Independence.

This is an admirable publication bringing into focus a true hero of the Labour Movement during the revolutionary years who for too long has been overshadowed by James Connolly, Jim Larkin and Countess Markievicz.

The World of Books

By the books editor

New year resolution: Write one's memoirs

How often do people involved with the book trade meet people parties, who say “I would love to write a book about my life, or even a novel, but I haven't the time”.

Of course that is the difference between wanting to do something and doing it. Those that really want to do it, do it.

But what kind of time is really involved? There is the physical task of actually composing a book. Readers of books do not realise how big a book is. The average book is about 60,000 words – novels are often as little as 40,000. That sounds like a lot of words, and it is. A thousand words typed up runs to about three pages. A thousand words can be written out in about half an hour. So your book might take up something over 180 typed pages, say 200. At a thousand a day it would take 60 days to write, say 10 weeks.

But that is not how it works in reality. I am just pointing out that, with application and the rate of three pages a day, it takes no time at all.

The real problem is not the time, but the material. What do you put in your book? Well you will certainly need to do a little planning.

Let's say what you want to write is a memoir of your life. Now no one will want to read every little tiny thing about you. You have to select, but what? Robert Graves in writing his famous autobiography *Goodbye to All That* to had no intention of telling everything. He recommends you make a list of all the famous people you have met. Then all the best dinners you ever had!

“Making a start can be a problem still, as many of the people at those parties will tell you”

After fame and food, other topics would follow. That sort of a list of things, people, places and events is certainly a good thing to make. But how do you lay it all out?

Think of it this way. According to the Church we reach the age of reason, the age when we can begin to sin, so to speak. So divide your life up in the sections of seven years: birth to first communion; first communion to 14 – the age at when many people began work – so that would be early education. The seven years for secondary school and college or first job, and so on. In, say, 12 sections you will soon have an outline of your life.

You see that some places, some people, some events were of greater importance than others. They're the ones to write about.

But making a start can be a problem still, as many of the people at those parties will tell you. Here you could borrow a device from Stalin's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva. When she defected to the West in 1967 she brought with her a volume of memoirs called *Twenty Letters to a Friend*. It was exactly that, a series of 'letters' or chapters on the course of her life written to a friend.

This device enabled her to imagine a reader for her book, a reader who was interested in her and whom she was eager to tell the truth to.

Imagine you are writing to a friend, or a child, or a grandchild or a relative; some specific person. This enables you to imagine the reception of what you say, allow you to realise the questions such a person might ask to gain more information or to understand properly. By making them understand you will come to understand yourself.

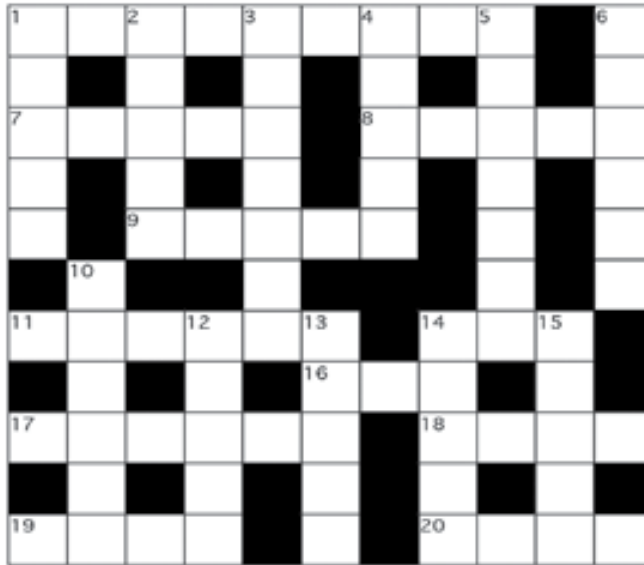
You will see now that you will have already gone a very long way into the creation of your books, without writing a word. But how to start? Do you take the classic advice to begin at the beginning and go on to the end. Or take a hint from the earliest European work of literature, and begin, as Homer does the *Iliad*, *in media res*, in the middle of events, catching a reader's attention at once. But Homer was not telling the whole history of the Trojan War – others did that – but only the tale of the anger of Achilles with Agamemnon; it is not a chronicle of the war, but an account of personal growth. And that surely is what any memoir, whoever by, should be about.



Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 163



ACROSS

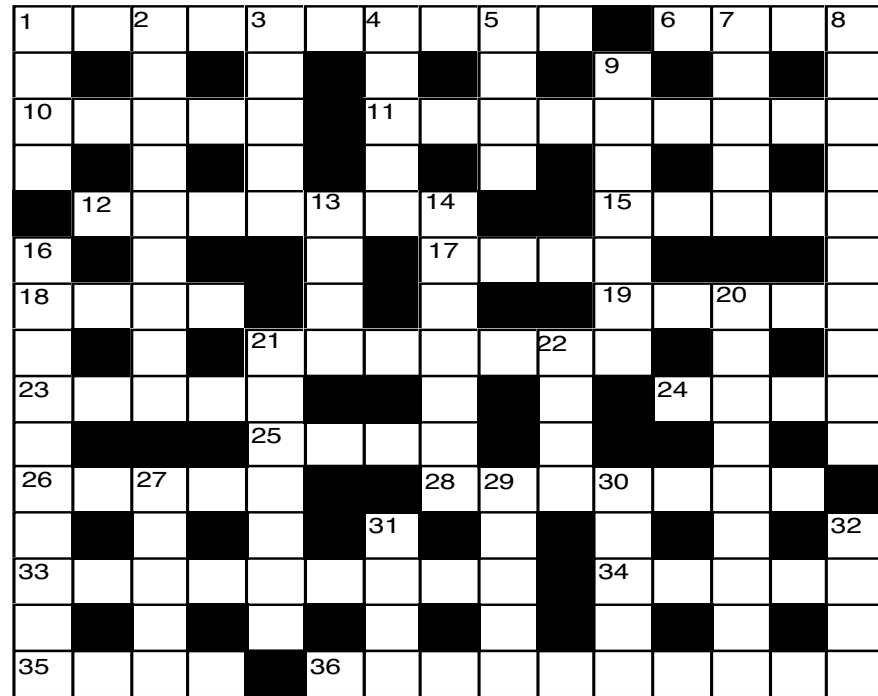
- 1 Storm with very strong wind (9)
- 7 Turn these when you read a book (5)
- 8 Move the way a soldier does (5)
- 9 Sail this for pleasure (5)
- 11 Most pleasant (6)
- 14 A hen lays it (3)
- 16 Sing without using words (3)
- 17 This sign of the Zodiac is also called 'The Twins' (6)
- 18 Points a gun at a target (4)
- 19 You go to church to attend this (4)
- 20 When you do this to something, you can't find it (4)

DOWN

- 1 The short name of a big animal that likes to wallow in mud (5)
- 2 Score tries in this sport (5)
- 3 Creepy-crawlies (6)
- 4 Own up (5)
- 5 This piece of jewellery is usually part of a pair (7)
- 6 Where pupils and teachers learn together (6)
- 10 Movies are shown here (6)
- 12 Ways out (5)
- 13 Use your brain (5)
- 14 A message sent on the internet (1-4)
- 15 They're fun to play (5)

Crossword

Gordius 280



ACROSS

- 1 Might the valet stoop to exercise the franchise in this manner? (6,4)
- 6 Ready money (4)
- 10 Highland attire, quietly put down (5)
- 11 It would take some operation to remove this cataract! (9)
- 12 Experienced sailor whose condiment is nothing new (3,4)
- 15 Ledge (5)
- 17 Striped insect (4)
- 18 Trundle (4)
- 19 The English Derby is run here (5)
- 21 Danced a Viennese dance (7)
- 23 Of greater breadth? How weird is that? (5)
- 24 Make the leader of Jordan sicken for prison (4)
- 25 Eyot (4)
- 26 & 36a Girl from Lourdes, canonised in 1933 (5,10)
- 28 Strengthened, recovered after a setback (7)
- 33 Did Monaco's late princess touch down at Elvis Presley's Memphis home? (9)
- 34 Selected (5)
- 35 Bird found in the corner of a chessboard (4)
- 36 See 26 across

DOWN

- 1 Pontiff (4)
- 2 When working with horses, this chap can belt salad away! (6,3)
- 3 South American mountain range (5)
- 4 One of a group of five letters (5)

5 On-course betting service (4)

- 7 No longer asleep (5)
- 8 Jesus, Mary and Joseph (4,6)
- 9 Clutched or understood (7)
- 13 The acreage of part of peninsular East Africa (4)
- 14 Style of social media that is for the birds, by the sound of it! (7)
- 16 A grub's worn out? How sweet is that!

(5,5)

- 20 One given the blame (9)
- 21 Inscribed (7)
- 22 Wickedness (4)
- 27 The adult stage of an insect, eg butterfly (5)
- 29 Lindisfarne's saint has Diana in a state (5)
- 30 Stiffened a drink (5)
- 31 Salute the whitecap (4)
- 32 In this place (4)

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Sudoku Corner

163

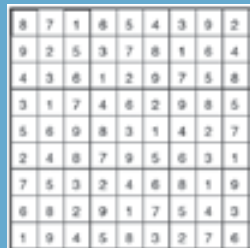
Easy



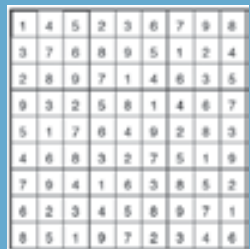
Hard



Last week's Easy 162



Last week's Hard 162





Fr. Conor McDonough

Notebook

THERE IS SOMETHING immensely moving about the feast of Epiphany: bearded old men leave their dusty old books and journey by the light of a star to a site of utter newness, the birth of a child, 'God with us'.

Decay is a feature of our fallen world: civilisations grow decadent, institutions crumble, bodies fail, 'things fall apart'. If our field of vision is limited to these phenomena, logic leads us to what St John Paul II called "the culture of death". If life is a rocky road to nowhere, why preserve it, why protect it?

But the world is more than just decay. It is a place also of birth, of new beginnings, of 'newness in every stale thing'. In the beginning, God created the world, and created it with this capacity for its own renewal, but after the Fall he redeemed it, offering the life of grace in the midst of decay. And it is no surprise that this redemption was first shown to us in the form of a newborn child.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt had a special term for the human capacity for newness: 'natality' (from the Latin term for birth). Instead of viewing us as beings that tend towards death, and live always in the shadow of death, Arendt viewed human life in the light of birth. Natality is 'the

Human life in the light of a birth



miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin'.

For Arendt, natality is the source of hope, since it is this capacity for renewal at any given moment that delivers us from determinism and decay.

It's a strange word, but we all know the reality it refers to: when a child is born, when a sinner converts, when a smoker gives up cigarettes or a drinker gives up the bottle, when a scientific experiment gives a new perspective on the world, when an ancient grudge is

set aside and forgiveness is offered and received. All these are examples of natality, outposts against the conventional cynicism that says, in well-worn words: 'There is nothing new under the sun'.

Of course, any humanist with their eyes open can appreciate that natality is something built into human nature, but the Christian ought to be even more sensitive to it, since we know God not only as Creator, but as Redeemer: we live every moment of our lives in the light of two births, our natural birth, and our supernatural birth in baptism.

In contemporary Ireland, we have a complex attitude towards natality. In some contexts, we are united in affirming the value of life.

In our work against suicide, for example, we happily affirm that life is always worth living, that hope is possible even in difficult

circumstances, that something new is always just around the corner. And yet, in public discourse on abortion and euthanasia we often qualify this affirmation: 'Life is worth living unless...'

So, at the start of 2017, as we celebrate the worship by the Magi of the newborn Jesus, I want to salute the ambassadors of natality, the frontline defenders of hope: the activists, volunteers, and supporters of the pro-life movement in Ireland, who refuse the 'unless' of popular opinion, and affirm again and again that life is always worth living. I know how much it costs many of these courageous men and women to carry out their work in the face of opposition, apathy, and derision.

They get little thanks, and little recognition, and they need our collaboration and support. 2017

● How to exercise hope in the face of war and savagery? Our Dominican brothers and sisters in Iraq are united in their response: in the face of war, you educate. Following the advance of ISIS, our sisters became refugees and were forced to relocate to the camp in Ein Kawa. There, with the aid of Catholic charities, they have already built a school for the displaced children, helping them move on from trauma by activating their curiosity and creativity. In Baghdad, our brothers run an 'Academy of Human Sciences' where 5,000 Iraqi students (80% Muslim) keep alive the fundamental questions of human existence. In the face of physical violence, the mind can become a zone of freedom. And to take on the task of inspiring

will be a crucial year for the culture of life in Ireland. Why not make this the year you take a stand for hope?

● **JOHN HALLIGAN'S UNIQUE 'CHRISTMAS' CARDS:** Not everybody has the same taste in Christmas cards. Some like kitsch and cute, others go for sober solemnity. Some could never countenance a card that lacks a Nativity scene, others are content with a few seasonal shapes and colours. But Waterford TD John Halligan's alien-themed Christmas cards are surely unique. Isn't it interesting that he chooses to replace imagery of the Incarnation with extra-terrestrials, as if these aliens represented a non-divine promise

of hope? In 2011 his card explicitly made this connection, showing a variant on the famous creation scene from the Sistine chapel, but with the hand of God replaced by the slender fingers of a blue ET. Some hope: if aliens do exist, they are creatures just like us, bound to the same natural patterns of decay, offering no salvation, no escape from creation's groaning. Hope is traditionally counted as a 'theological virtue', because it has *God (theos in Greek)* as its object – only the creator of the world can offer hope to a world gone wrong.



YOUR NEW YEAR'S GIFT COULD SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE

The Little Way Association receives numerous requests from missionaries throughout the world asking for help to feed, support and educate needy, deprived children. They tell us of families so poor that they cannot afford to send their children to school, of orphaned children left alone with no one to love or care for them, and of street children, totally abandoned, hungry and homeless, experiencing much anguish and hardship during their most tender years. The whole future of these children often depends upon whether a missionary can find sufficient funds to care for them.



We wish all our friends and benefactors a very happy and peaceful New Year.

May St Therese reward you in a special way for the sacrifices you make to support our work, and may she obtain many graces for all our benefactors during 2017.

In our modern age of materialism and selfishness when so many are searching for an authentic spirituality, Therese's little way of simple love for God and others has a powerful appeal. Perhaps we too can join her on the 'little way'.

Could you help to save a poor helpless child?

Your New Year's gift will mean a chance of health and happiness, perhaps even the difference between life and death, for a suffering child.

Every euro you send will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to the missions to enable a missionary priest or sister to carry the love, care and compassion of Christ to a deprived, abandoned or orphaned child.

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www.littlewayassociation.com

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