

# The Irish Catholic

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## Warning bishops' controversial addiction strategy risks minimising abuse of drugs

Chai Brady

### EXCLUSIVE

A former drug addict-turned-counsellor, who was chosen to share with Pope Francis the devastating effects of addiction on his life, has warned that Church leaders are wrong to back the decriminalisation of drugs.

The bishops' support for decriminalising a person found to possess illegal drugs for personal use has been criticised as "minimising drug use" by Damian Richardson, a man who has dedicated his life to helping those affected by drugs after overcoming his own addiction.

He said such a move "is opening the gateway to mind altering substances".

However, Bishop Michael Ruter has defended the controversial position recently adopted by the hierarchy, insisting to *The Irish Catholic* that backing decriminalisation is a very different stance to pushing for the legalisation of drugs.

"One of the things that developed over time is the whole stigma that's attached to drug usage, no one should be using drugs, but unfortunately the type of person who gets into trouble very often comes from a very socially-deprived background and once they're found in possession of drugs they are criminalised," the

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### The pro-life generation...



Pro-life supporters turned out in droves for the Rally for Life on Saturday, July 1, Dublin, with several thousand marching down O'Connell Street.

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## Warning that bishops' controversial addiction strategy risks minimising drug abuse

» **Continued from Page 1**  
auxiliary bishop of Armagh said.

"If it goes through the legal system their chances of ever improving their lot after that is very, very difficult," he warned.

"If somebody is found in possession of drugs just for their own use that should be a health issue, they should be directed towards treatment, or for their education around the effect of drugs or whatever it may be, rather than starting a criminal process, a legal process that's probably going to blight their lives effectively, and gives them very little chance of improving," the prelate, who is vice chair of the Church's drugs initiative, insisted.

The Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative (IBDI), along with the Family Addiction Support Network (FASN), said in a joint submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use that the current criminalisation approach to drug policy has been ineffective.

The submission says that "drug use should be addressed as a social and health issue rather than a justice issue". The bishops claim that "research shows that decriminalisation does not increase drug use and other crime".

However, Mr Richardson warned about the potential of giving a 'green light' to drug addiction by such a stance.

"Everyone has different views on it, and my view after 15 years of drug abuse would be to educate people that this is not the way to go forward.

"I can see where they [the bishops] are coming from: it's compassionate, that this individual is sick – a heroin addict for example – why should they be getting arrested? But, we're minimising drug addiction, we're giving a green light," Mr Richardson said.

Working out of Cuan Mhuire's addiction centre in Athy, Co. Kildare, Mr Richardson – who addressed Pope Francis in Croke Park

during the World Meeting of Families in 2018 – said he meets many young people struggling with substance abuse, insisting there is "an epidemic out there, we need to find out why the young people of Ireland need to take drugs to block the world out, to take mind and mood altering substances, we should be putting all our resources into finding out why".

See pages 16-17.

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## Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return in the autumn

## New father for Down and Connor...



Fr Robert McMahon is pictured with Bishop Michael Router, auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, and his family and friends after his ordination to the priesthood for the diocese of Down and Connor, which took place in Sr Peter's Cathedral, Belfast on Sunday, July 2.

## SDLP's Claire Hanna refuses to endorse Catholic university's autonomy

**Jason Osborne**

Multiple attempts by this paper to get a response from SDLP MP Claire Hanna to the question of whether or not she accepts the right of St Mary's University College to continue to be an autonomous Catholic university have gone unanswered after she appeared to support the "cancelling" of the institution.

Despite multiple attempts to reach Ms Hanna initially via email and then by phone, the query received no answer. Staff in her office described the South Belfast parliamentarian as being "unavailable" on numerous occasions over a two-week period, despite being informed of the media query.

A dispute arose following comments Ms Hanna made

at the Shared Island Forum which appeared to regret that St Mary's University College in West Belfast hadn't been "cancelled" and replaced by a campus of Queen's University Belfast.

This comes as fears grow in the North among Catholic educationalists about a growing narrative that seeks to portray Catholic schools as divisive, contributing to segregation and even responsible for sectarianism.

It also comes as the auton-

omy of Catholic schools in Northern Ireland is coming under fire, with MPs voting June 28 to bring in regulations which will force secondary schools in Northern Ireland to teach children aged 11-16 that they have a right to abortion.

The result was a source of dismay among pro-life activists in the North, as well as among supporters of Catholic education.

Both SDLP MPs, Claire Hanna, and party leader Colum Eastwood, voted in

favour of the regulations, along with Alliance MP Stephen Farry.

Mr Farry, a close friend of Ms Hanna's, previously led a campaign to see the Catholic teacher-training college closed during his stint as Employment Minister in 2015. He threatened to cut the £1.1 million specialist institution premium funding at the time, which would have seen the long-standing Catholic institution forced to close its doors.

## Protecting against predators study 'no surprise' as Ireland struggles against child trafficking

**Staff reporter**

The revelation that children in State care are being targeted by sexual predators due to a lack of national policy and training on exploitation "wasn't a surprise," according to an organisation tackling child trafficking in Ireland.

The *Protecting Against Predators* study interviewed 21 staff from 14 agencies working with vulnerable children and found that trafficking and sexual exploitation of teenagers was a common feature, particularly among children in residential care settings.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, JP O'Sullivan of MECPATHS said that while the report wasn't a surprise, it was "welcomed" as it's an area that needs "further investigation".

"We've been echoing the need for a number of years for all frontline professionals to receive training on the identification of vulnerable children at risk of being trafficked," Mr O'Sullivan told this paper.

"It was good to see what we've been hearing anecdotally for a number of years in print," he said, describing it as evidence highlighting the sexual exploitation of children in Ireland.

"I know this report focused specifically on children in care but we would be saying that

it's a wider piece that needs further investigation. It's not just children in care, this report just happens to focus on the data that was available, which was around children in care," he said.

There will be "an awful lot more eyes looking for these children going forward," Mr O'Sullivan said, describing it as a "timely report" in that there are legislative amendments coming that will see more State agencies assuming responsibility for the identification of child victims of trafficking.

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# Staff morale at 'all time low' as Mary Immaculate cancels interviews

**Ruadhán Jones**

Staff morale is at an "all time low" as Mary Immaculate College (MIC) announced it has cancelled the third round of interviews for the Head of Theology role.

Interviews for the third round of the recruitment process were to take place on Thursday, July 6. Last week, MIC announced that the interviews were cancelled, this paper has learned.

The recruitment process is now suspended indefinitely pending investigations into three

formal complaints the college received regarding the process, a source told *The Irish Catholic*.

There were "substantive issues" with the process, including the shortlisting for interviews, this paper understands, with three complainants contacting the college through their union.

Communications between staff and senior management were already reported to be "extremely poor", while morale was "very, very poor", this paper reported last week.

The latest move has further dented morale, leaving it at "an all time low", sources have said.

*The Irish Catholic* contacted MIC for comment, but they did not respond to our query. A spokesperson from the college previously told this paper that it "does not comment on any recruitment and selection processes that remain in progress".

The spokesperson also slammed "unwarranted attempts" by any party to seek information that would have the effect of "unduly influencing the course or outcome of such processes".

Beyond the complaints, staff were "frustrated" that they had little opportunity for input into the recruitment process, sources

said.

They were also "shocked and concerned" at the manner in which the recruitment process was conducted.

The department of theology has now been without a head for a year, with three rounds of interviews, the first of which commenced in September 2022, failing to find a suitable candidate.

In the first round, two candidates were interviewed, but neither were deemed appointable. The second round also saw two candidates interviewed and again neither was appointed, this paper reported last week.

# Jim Caviezel describes new movie as 'weapon of mass instruction' to end child trafficking

**Jason Osborne**

Known best for his iconic portrayal of Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Catholic actor Jim Caviezel has said that a new movie he's starring in aims to moti-

vate millions to end child trafficking.

Directed by Alejandro Monteverde, *Sound of Freedom* is based on true events and stars Jim Caviezel as former special agent Tim Ballard who spent more than a

decade working for the US Department of Homeland Security combatting child exploitation before forming the 'Operation Underground Railroad' foundation to tackle the problem globally.

Speaking to *OSV News*,

Mr Caviezel and producer Eduardo Verástegui said they drew from their Catholic faith to bring the story to screen.

The film presents a real example of good triumphing over evil, while acting as a "weapon of mass instruction and inspiration" to address a problem that affects over two million children around the

world, said Mr Verástegui.

"The power of this is that your heart gets on fire," Mr Caviezel said. "Why does it get on fire? Because they feel the love of Jesus. ... You're not afraid anymore."

On another occasion, Mr Caviezel described *Sound of Freedom* as the "best film I've done since *The Passion of the*

*Christ*".

The movie follows Tim Ballard, who, after rescuing a young boy from traffickers, learns that the boy's sister is still captive.

Quitting his job, he puts his life at risk as he embarks on a journey through the Colombian jungle to save the child.



Jim Caviezel stars as Tim Ballard in a scene from the movie *Sound of Freedom*. Photo: OSV News/Angel Studios.

# Gogglebox Ireland searches for 'elusive' priests and nuns

**Chai Brady**

Gogglebox Ireland has put out a call for nuns and priests to be a part of their TV show, which focuses on friends and families across the country watching television and filmed to see their reactions.

Series producer Gareth McGreevy has said they are hoping to cast clergy and religious as their new 'Gog-

gleboxers'.

Speaking on RTÉ's *Drivetime* on Monday Mr McGreevy said they are looking for the "elusive clergy, people who have always escaped us in recent series – so nuns, priests".

Asked why the show is looking for priests and religious, he said: "We just want a broad spectrum of opinions from across the country and I think that's what so interest-

ing about the show... people like to see themselves reflected back and that's the joy of Gogglebox, it's normal people sitting in their house watching television.

"And we are a nosy nation, we like to get a look inside people's living rooms, so why not inside a monastery or a nunnery?"

He also said: "If you're a nun on TikTok, we'll welcome you with open arms!"

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# Any loss of Vatican focus on abuse dubbed 'very concerning'

**Chai Brady**

The Pope's direction to the newly-appointed head of the Vatican department which deals with discipline and defending the Faith to commit "more directly" to areas other than dealing with child abuse has been described as "very concerning".

Pope Francis appointed Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández of La Plata, Argentina, head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) at the

weekend.

In a letter to the new prefect, on July 1, the Pope said: "Given that for disciplinary matters – especially related to the abuse of minors – a specific section has recently been created with very competent professionals, I ask you as prefect to dedicate your personal commitment more directly to the main purpose of the dicastery which is 'keeping the Faith'."

Marie Collins, who resigned from the Pontifical Commission for the

Protection of Minors due to alleged resistance in the Vatican to the commission's recommendations, told *The Irish Catholic* the direction was a worry.

## Concerning

"It would be very concerning if the Pope deems that that area needs less attention. I'd be very surprised and very concerned that would be done, I don't know what the justification for that would be, that area is and should be a priority. It's not as if the Church now

has it all dealt with and we can move on, the situation is still in grave need of attention, so any diminution or any moving away from it being a priority would be concerning," Ms Collins said.

Archbishop Fernández said in a Facebook post over the weekend that he originally declined the position as prefect of the DDF partly because he feels incompetent in handling the clerical abuse crisis.

He has previously been criticised for his handling of

allegations of abuse against a priest in 2019, who later took his own life after leaving active ministry.

## Papal texts

Longtime friend of the Pope, Archbishop Fernández is thought to be behind many key papal texts including the encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'*, the Pope's exhortation on the family *Amoris Laetitia* and *Evangelii Gaudium*.

See page 6.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Aontú overtakes Labour in recent polling

A *Sunday Independent*/Ireland Thinks poll has revealed that Aontú is now polling ahead of Labour, after the latter party saw its worst ever showing in the *Sunday Independent*/Ireland Thinks series.

Aontú remained unchanged at 3pc, which sees it level with the Green Party, while Labour dropped one point to 2pc.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin support dropped by a point to 31pc, while Fine Gael fell to its lowest ever rating in the *Sunday Independent*/Ireland Thinks series, reaching 19pc, down one point on last month.

### St Michael's College endures 'darkest' tragedy following death of two pupils

Two teenagers from St Michael's College in Dublin have died in separate incidents while on holiday on the Greek island of Ios, with the school describing the tragedies as "one of the darkest we have ever experienced".

In a statement, The Spiritan Education Trust, said: "Our thoughts are with the parents and families of these two young men who today are suffering immeasurable loss."

"We extend our deepest sympathy and support to their grieving families, to all in their wider circle of friends and fellow classmates who will be mourning their passing and to the Board of Management, the school leaders and all our colleagues on the staff of St Michael's College."

### Abortion 'safe zones' to be introduced in September

So-called 'safe access zones' around facilities that provide abortion will be introduced in the North in September, the Department of Health has announced.

The move comes after legislation was passed by the North's assembly, which will ban pro-life efforts within 100 metres of the entrances of healthcare settings providing abortions.

"The zones will include the premises where these services are provided, as well as an area between 100m-250m from entrances or exits of the protected premises," the department said in a July 3 statement.

The department is finalising a policy statement on 'safe zones' as part of the preparations for their introduction.

## Irish community in Paris joins in prayers for peace

**Staff reporter**

The Irish community in Paris has joined in prayers for peace following days of protest across France after the shooting dead of a 17-year-old by a police officer.

Nahel M., who is Algerian and of

Moroccan descent, was shot during a traffic stop in Nanterre, a Paris suburb on June 27. Violent protests broke out after the killing which rocked certain parts of the country, mainly in parts of Paris and Marseille.

Chaplain of the Irish Chaplaincy, Paris, Fr Jim Doyle of the Diocese of

Ferns welcomed the French bishops' prayer for peace which was published on their website and called for "the return of calm and peace to our country" on July 1.

Speaking of the prayer that was sent to churches in Paris to be said at Mass, Fr Doyle told *The Irish Catholic*: "It was a very balanced prayer,

praying for the victim and his family and praying for the protestors, the police force and praying for calm, peace and wisdom.

"The prayer was a serious one, I had a French person pray the prayers so that everyone would appreciate it at Mass," he said.

## Popular radio host ordained a priest in Derry

**Ruadhán Jones**

Fr Shaun Doherty, a former radio host who gave up his chatshow to give his life to God, was ordained a priest for Derry diocese on July 2.

The priest was one of Ireland's most popular radio hosts, spending 30 years on the airwaves for Donegal's Highland Radio.

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown ordained Fr Doherty in St Eugene's Cathedral on Sunday, six years after the priest surprised his friends and relations with his decision to pursue a vocation.

On the eve of his ordination, Fr Doherty said he wanted to help people who are suffering from addiction and those who have issues with anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

"I particularly feel that I would like to be with people on the margins. There are so many issues and problems today, so many feeling hopeless," he told *The Net*, Derry diocese's newspaper.

"Hopefully, my story will be a source of encouragement for people that there is always hope because of the goodness of God."



Fr Shaun Doherty (right) is pictured after his ordination on July 2 with country music star Dominic Kirwan, who knows the priest from his work as a DJ with Highland Radio.



# In search of times past?

Some people enter a theatre of war and never see battle. I was in Paris last week, at the height of the reported violence, and witnessed nothing amiss. Wherever I went in central Paris, it was untroubled: the Etoile area, the Louvre, the Comedie-Française (playing to full houses), Montparnasse, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Latin Quarter, the bookshops, the department stores, the churches - all entirely normal.

## Violent

Quite evidently, there were violent scenes across the country, prompted by the killing by a police officer of a young Muslim teenager driving without a licence.

**“The street possessed a grisly notoriety having been the headquarters of the French Gestapo, known as the ‘Carlingue’, from 1941 to 1944”**



Mary Kenny

Protests, riots, arrests, destruction and more death followed. France is a country of deep social divisions, with marginalised populations - often Muslims - living in “ghettoised” suburbs. And President Emmanuel Macron’s administration is rattled.

Yet personal experiences vary, and most of Paris was unaffected, with revellers merrily, but peaceably, spilling out of restaurants and bistros at all hours.

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I was on something of a mission to explore the past,

ever present in our great European cities. More than 60 years ago, my mother loved to visit a small, modest but charming hotel in the Sixteenth Arrondissement, called the ‘Hotel Cimarosa’. It was situated on the corner of the Rue Cimarosa and the Rue Lauriston - the nearest Métro stations being Kléber and Boissière.

## Old-fashioned

Parisian hotels then were rather old-fashioned: if my memory serves, the rooms had a pitcher and a china bowl for personal washing, not a shower or bath, and lifts were unknown. But the morning café au lait, with baguettes and croissants, so fresh and delicious, and the gallant courtesy of the old gentleman who ran the hotel since 1937, so endearing, that a stay at the Cimarosa was a much-relished yearly treat. In those days,

you made a hotel reservation by letter, confirmed by return post, and paid with the cash that you brought along.

So I went on an exploration to see if the quaint old hotel was still there, and if the Rue Lauriston was still the same. The street wasn’t exactly the same, but it was recognisable in its solid old buildings, mostly dating from Baron Haussmann’s re-construction of Paris in the 1850s. There were now more Chinese and Japanese commercial establishments, I noticed.

And there was the old hotel site at Number 79. But now it is called the Hotel Pastel. It is much smarter, glossier

and modernised. The young man at the front desk hadn’t even known it was once the Cimarosa - it had had another name since, the Ambassade. All trace of its former identity was gone.

## Blissful

I accompanied my mother - as did several other family members - on her blissful trips to the Rue Lauriston, originally named after one of Napoleon’s marshals. But we didn’t know then what I know now: that the street possessed a grisly notoriety having been the headquarters of the French Gestapo, known as the ‘Car-

lingue’, from 1941 to 1944. At Number 93, victims were tortured, on behalf of Hitler’s Reich; and a criminal doctor, Marcel Petiot, disposed of the bodies on the spot. Neighbours nearby reportedly heard the screams of the tormented.

Perhaps it is just as well we weren’t aware of the Rue Lauriston’s macabre historical association, and Ma could savour her coffee and croissants in innocence of its reputation. Down memory lane brings many reflections.

## Suspicious steaks

An inviting dinner of steak in France may sometimes derive from the horse rather than the heifer, or bullock. A late journalistic pal of mine, Joe Steeples (his mother was an O’Brien, and he was an expert on the racing industry) used to murmur “Shergar” when he suspected a French

entrecôte was equine rather than bovine in nature.

Partaking of steak and chips at a famous Parisian bistro last Saturday, I asked myself - “Shergar”? Horse-meat is gristlier and hasn’t the flavour of beef.

Shergar was the Irish Thoroughbred stolen from

a Kildare stud in 1983, and a ransom of £2 million demanded. It wasn’t paid, and the nag was never found, but it was rumoured his remains ended up in a *boucherie chevaline*.

Poor Shergar. His legend lives on.



A French police officer stands guard next to vehicles burned during a night of clashes between protesters and police, following the police killing of a 17-year-old teenager during a traffic stop, in the Paris Suburb of Nanterre on July 1. Photo: OSV

● French state universities, back in the 1920s, did not admit women as students. But the Institut Catholique de Paris (the Catholic University of Paris) did. Thus Simone de Beauvoir, the French feminist, obtained her degree at this Catholic institution, because as a woman she was barred from those run by the republican state.

The ICP - founded in 1875 - is an attractive campus on the Rue d’Assas, in the heart of the Sixth Arrondissement, near St Sulpice. It claims continuity with the “long Christian and humanistic” tradition of learning, “promoting dialogue between cultures and religions”. It has 900 professors, and 10,000 students, a third being international.

Sadly, because of security, the campus itself isn’t open to the public at large, but the chapel is, and it’s a beautiful one.

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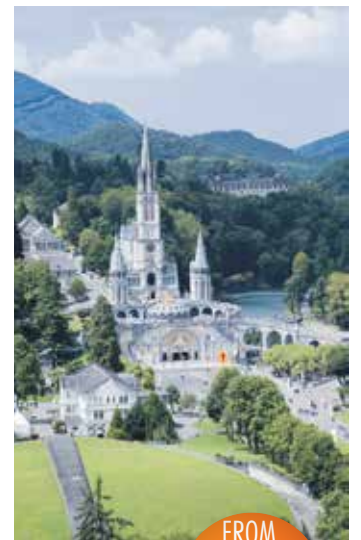
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# Putting doctrine firmly at the service of mission



Vatican emphasis is no longer to be on controlling theologians but on promoting and supporting them to do their job properly, writes **Prof. Eamonn Conway**

**F**ew theologians have ever gone out of their way to meet with the Vatican's doctrinal watch body, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, preferring, with good reason, to give it a wide berth. That is precisely what I did, however, in my capacity as president of the 800 member European Society for Catholic Theology (ESCT) back in 2009 on the occasion of the society's 20th anniversary.

**“ Archbishop Fernández and Pope Francis go back together to when Dr Fernández was the top theological adviser to the Meeting of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) at Aparecida in 2007”**

The ESCT had been founded not only to unite Catholic theologians East and West after the collapse of the Iron Curtain but also in reaction to the increasing tightening of the reins on academic freedom in Catholic theology faculties prevalent at that time. Top of the agenda at our meeting was lingering concern about the withholding, and occasionally, the withdrawal, from theologians of permission to teach at universities, especially in German-speaking countries, without due process. This, we argued, lacked transparency and was contrary to natural justice. Those affected were seldom afforded the opportunity to present their case directly or even granted permission to appeal what they believed to be an unjust decision.

Over the weekend, the Catholic world was stunned to learn that Pope Francis had appointed Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández as the head of the (now) Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, a man who experienced first-hand what it

was like to be on the receiving end of just such a lack of due process. In his case, it was at the hands of the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE). Jorge Bergoglio, then Archbishop of Buenos Aires, appointed Fr Fernández as rector of the Catholic University of Argentina (UCA) in 2009. Despite several attempts both by Fr Fernández himself and his archbishop, the Vatican would not confirm him in his post. Pope Francis solved the problem six weeks after his election, however, by appointing Fr Fernández a titular archbishop while retaining his role as rector.

Archbishop Fernández and Pope Francis go back together to when Dr Fernández was the top theological adviser to the Meeting of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) at Aparecida in 2007.

## Key document

Together, they drafted the key document emerging from that conference, a document, which has come to have global influence during the pontificate of Pope Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel, 2013), the charter for Francis' pontificate, mentions Aparecida ten times. *Evangelii Gaudium* also footnotes Dr Fernández, who is widely believed to have edited it, if not actually ghost-written it, for Francis. He is also understood to have played a key role in the drafting of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Sí* (2015), as well as the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, (The Joy of Love, 2015).

This latter document contains the controversial text that opens a door for people in irregular unions in certain circumstances to receive Holy Communion. After *Amoris Laetitia* was published, various bishops' conferences were offering their own and at times contradictory interpretations of it. The bishops of the Buenos Aires pastoral region, among them Archbishop Fernández, offered a detailed account of their interpretation, to which Francis responded immediately and enthusiastically: “*No hay otras interpretaciones!*” – there are no other interpretations. It is widely believed that Dr Fernández was instrumental in choreographing both the bishops' letter and Pope Francis' response.

A similar choreography may well be evident in the announcement of Archbishop Fernández' appointment last Saturday as prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was accompanied by the publication of a letter effectively re-defining, if not the purpose of this key Vatican department, the manner and style in which that purpose is to be fulfilled. Archbishop Fernández spent the previous week with Pope Francis. If he played a hand in the drafting of his own job specification, it wouldn't be a surprise.

Pope Francis wants what he calls “a synodal style” to imbue every aspect of the Church's operative culture; this should manifest itself as much in Vatican dicasteries as in parish and diocesan councils. It is Archbishop Fernández' task to ensure that a synodal style defines



Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez and Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk from Ukraine talk as they arrive for a session of the Synod of Bishops on the family at the Vatican in 2015. Photo: CNS

the operative culture of the DDF into the future. Referring to *Evangelii Gaudium* (n. 271), which is, in effect, the Aparecida document writ large, Francis urges that the DDF is to continue to safeguard doctrine but to do so by giving reasons for Christian hope and not merely by criticising and condemning accounts of it that are deemed to be dubious.

**“ Less easy to take issue with than Archbishop Fernández's writings, however, is the placing of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on a missionary footing”**

The emphasis is no longer to be on controlling theologians but on promoting and supporting them to do their job properly. Theologians are to be encouraged to move beyond a mere 'desktop' type theology and instead actively underpin the task of missionary discipleship by demonstrating the reasonableness and attractiveness of the Gospel to a world that is both troubled and sceptical.

Conservatives see the appointment of Archbishop Fernández as, to put it mildly, provocative. This is based not only upon his proximity

to and influence upon Pope Francis but also concerns about some of his previous writings, the same writings that impeded his appointment as rector back in 2009. Less easy to take issue with than Archbishop Fernández's writings, however, is the placing of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on a missionary footing.

This was long overdue. Those concerned that now heresy will flourish unimpeded need to consider whether, apart from anything else, condemnation of unorthodox views serves any useful purpose in a culture that tends to treat those censured by Church authorities as veritable celebrities, generally without considering in any depth important points of principle that may be at stake. Moreover, isn't it better to form the People of God authentically and with an adult faith so that they can arrive at intelligent judgements in regard to what accords with Truth, rather than try to protect them from disagreement and debate, if, in any case, such were still possible?

## Theological debates

Around the time we visited the then Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2009, Cardinal Walter Kasper had cautioned the CDF about intervening too early in theological debates, shutting down what he felt could be fruitful disagreement that would eventually deepen and

strengthen Church teaching rather than weaken or threaten it. The CDF, he felt, should be the court of final instance only. In the first instance, he suggested, theologians should have the courage to challenge and remonstrate with each other publicly as necessary.

**“ For these reasons, then, this week's re-orientation of the mission of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be welcomed”**

What is heretical, is, after all, also by definition untrue, and is open to being exposed as such through reasoned argument and debate. A Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith that from now on is to be characterised by a synodal style requires all who hold and teach the Catholic Faith to operate to a new standard of openness, accountability, honesty and maturity. For these reasons, then, this week's re-orientation of the mission of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be welcomed.

**i** Fr Eamonn Conway is a priest of the Archdiocese of Tuam and Professor of Integral Human Development at the University of Notre Dame Australia.



# Faith in the future: new miracle innovations could save thousands of lives from climate disaster

As climate change brings the worst drought in 40 years to the Horn of Africa, Concern Worldwide supporters are helping local farmers use new climate-resilient techniques to save their families and communities from starvation.

In some parts of the Horn of Africa, there hasn't been a single drop of rain in three years. Dead cows lie decaying by the road, overcome by dehydration. Across Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, the dust-filled plains are so bare of vegetation that they don't attract any animals. The villages are just as quiet. The hustle and bustle of families cooking or working has fallen silent. Children who haven't eaten for days do nothing but sit still in their huts, too tired and sick to move – they just don't have the energy.

It's the same dire, drought-ravaged situation across all the countries in the Horn of Africa. Right now, 16 million people are acutely food insecure. It's estimated one person dies of hunger every 36 seconds. And as climate change causes more extreme weather patterns, experts predict that droughts like these will become even more frequent, and last even longer, with devastating effects for future generations.

## Living in hunger

Ahmed, a farmer in Somalia, and his children, live on the frontline of the climate crisis. He inherited his trade and his land from his father who was a farmer before him. But with each year that has gone by since he was a boy, he has seen less and less rain falling on the family farm. The soil has become so dry that he can no longer grow the nutritious corn and sorghum that once helped him put food on the table for his family.



Somalian farmer Ahmed has the tools and training to feed his family, even amid the worst drought in four decades.



Whole communities face the threat of mass starvation as the climate crisis worsens.

Seeing his crops wither before his eyes, Ahmed did everything he could to save them, but without water, it wasn't enough. He had nothing to eat and nothing to sell at the market. The pain of hunger began to take hold of his children. Even if his family were to survive the current crisis, he could only wonder how his children would ever live through the more formidable droughts of the future.

**“With the seeds Concern provided, I was able to harvest a lot more and help my family, it changed everything.”**

Ahmed, Somalia

## Miracle innovation

It was in this desperate situation that Concern Worldwide, Ireland's largest international aid charity, and their generous community of supporters, were able to provide a lifeline for Ahmed. For 55 years, the charity has been helping people from the world's poorest communities to build lives free from hunger.

In Ahmed's case, escaping hunger meant achieving something that seemed impossible to him – finding a way to turn his dusty fields green again despite the onslaught of the current drought. But thanks to supporters who left a gift in their Will to the charity, Concern has the

resources to build climate-smart agricultural programmes that can support Ahmed and families like his. They provide the tools and training that, even in the driest conditions, help farmers grow nourishing food.

Together, Concern and their supporters were able to provide Ahmed with a wide range of drought-resistant seeds, and training on how to grow them. The results have been nothing short of miraculous – today, his once-barren land is sprouting thousands of vibrant, fruit-bearing trees. With the income he's earning from selling the produce, he can afford to feed



Before Concern supporters stepped in, the drought was killing all of Ahmed's crops. But today, there are fruit trees sprouting on his land, including orange, citrus and guava.

his children again. And when they're old enough, they will learn these life-changing skills from Ahmed, which they, in turn, can pass on to their own children, ensuring future generations live a life free from hunger.

## The future threat of climate change

Although the future looks brighter for Ahmed and his children, many families are still not safe from climate change. The World Bank predicts that the coming changes in weather patterns could force more than

## Leaving a legacy of hope for future generations

Siobhán O'Connor, from Concern, advises people who want to leave a gift in their Will to the charity. “The gifts that our generous supporters leave in their Wills have the power to change so much,” Siobhán told us. She continued, “the single act of kindness goes far beyond helping one family protect themselves from hunger – it lives on through the years from generation to generation helping the families and children of the future survive even the deadliest drought.”

### Life-saving innovation

For decades, Concern Worldwide has been bringing life-saving solutions to people facing the climate crisis. The miraculous results have been nothing short of life-changing for thousands of families.



#### CROP VARIETY & DIVERSIFICATION

Drought-resistant seeds increase the chance of a successful crop, even in dry conditions, to protect families from hunger.



#### IRRIGATION

When an area receives no rainfall, water pumping systems can bring vital, enriching moisture to barren soil.



#### POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT

When crops are harvested, more secure storage techniques can protect them from being spoiled by insects and fungi later.

**“I am proud to know that, even when I am gone, my support will continue to save lives.”**

Colm, who's leaving a gift in his Will to Concern Worldwide, Co. Galway

100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. And by 2050, it may internally displace 143 million people from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin America.

While the threat of mass starvation looms, Concern Worldwide is calling for more people to help them protect vulnerable families like Ahmed's from the hunger caused by drought and climate change. Climate change might be inevitable for future generations, but with your legacy, hunger doesn't have to be.

More and more compassionate people across Ireland are now moving to support Concern's vision to build a hunger-free world. Siobhán explains, “Our community is united by a simple belief that no one should ever have to suffer the pain of hunger. If you share in this belief, I would encourage you to consider joining us today. No gift is too small or big, even the smallest donation will help build a world free from hunger.”

## Find out how you can be part of a world without hunger

If you'd like to request your free brochure to find out more about leaving a gift in your Will to Concern, please contact Siobhán O'Connor at Concern Worldwide today.

**Phone:** 01 417 8020 **E-mail:** [siobhan.oconnor@concern.net](mailto:siobhan.oconnor@concern.net) **Visit:** [concern.net/legacy](http://concern.net/legacy)





## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# God will send priests despite modern world where life is no longer sacred

**I**t is very good to be part of a rejoicing Church. I have been privileged over the last two weekends to attend ordination ceremonies – one in Westminster diocese in England, and one in my home diocese of Down and Connor.

### Dedicated

At a time when there is so much talk of the problems and challenges facing the Church it is wonderful to witness the generosity of those who joyfully dedicate their lives to God in priesthood.

In Westminster Cathedral on June 24, five men were ordained to the priesthood in a glorious and profoundly moving celebration of this great Sacrament of ordination. The cathedral was packed with the gatherings of five families and friends of the ordinands and many others. In St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast on July 2 one man was ordained in an equally profound and moving ceremony in the presence of the many people who gathered to rejoice and to pray. Another deacon will be ordained for the diocese later in the year.

### Late call

In a sign of a changing Church, the two men whose ordinations I attended are both mature men who have had other successful careers, and who heard the call to vocation later in their lives. Men once entered seminaries at a young age, but that is changing. Fewer young men in Europe are hearing and responding to the call to priesthood, and so there is something very heartening in seeing that Christ is calling men at different stages of their lives, when they will bring so much lived experience to their ministry.

One of them, Fr Patrick van der Vorst, described the moment of his ordination thus:

"I stood there in Westminster cathedral in front of so many people with just two things: my heart and a little invisible box. This little box was filled with memories of the first 52 years of my life: the hurts,

frustrations, achievements, disappointments. That little box is all I had to offer to God. He took it, and gave me this magnificent, awesome, overwhelming gift in return: the gift of ordination to the sacred priesthood.

"It was a moment where God told me that he loves me, and that I told him that I love him too. Maybe my journey to priesthood is exactly that: my personal quest for love, my deep desire to be loved."

Patrick worked for many years in the auctioneers Sothebys, first in the impressionist and contemporary art departments, later as the director and head of continental furniture, specialising in 18th-Century French furniture. He is also a successful entrepreneur.

**“Please pray for vocations, and pray that your own families may be open to one!”**

He brought all those talents together in creating the website Christian Art: [www.christian.art](http://www.christian.art) that sends out to anyone who subscribes daily emails which contain the Gospel text for the day, a picture of a work of art, often but not always a painting and a reflection on the Gospel linking it to the work of art. It is very simple, very beautiful, often informative about the artwork he has chosen for the day and frequently gently challenging. If you do not know it, I commend it to you. It is a treasure made freely available to us all.

### West Belfast

The second ordination was that of Fr Robbie McMahon in St Peter's Cathedral Belfast. Robbie is a West Belfast man who taught in Christian Brother schools in Belfast and who was very active in the GAA over the years, both as an official and as coach to many young handball players. He has already made a very significant contribution over the decades to the communities in which he has lived and worked.



Those who journeyed with him in the past were there to celebrate with him as he embarked on his new and wonderful journey.

I met others who are on this journey to ordination too, one a man whose wife had died and who has four children and seven grandchildren and is now giving the rest of his life to priesthood. Another is a man who for decades worked in the fire service – among his many memories is the day he was one of those first responders to the Omagh bomb in August 1998 – a day of unthinkable and terrible horror. There are others too, men from all walks of life. Among those on the altar in St Peter's Cathedral were two young seminarians

from Maynooth. I had met them previously as they began their year of studies and it was good to see them looking well and happy.

### What message?

What does this tell us in this strange world in which the old certainties no longer prevail, in which even life itself is no longer held sacred, in which wars are waged, countries are destroyed, people live in terror, children are hungry, unborn babies are legally aborted, and the campaign to legalise assisted suicide and euthanasia is relentless? The solutions to the wars, poverty, loneliness, fear of being a burden, mental illness and other conditions which cause people to

want to die, or to feel they should die, often for the convenience of others, are available to us in the very simple and clear teaching of Christ – that we were loved by God before we were born, that Christ died for love of us and that we should love one another as he has loved us.

It tells us that, as he promised, God will send labourers into the harvest, that he is with his Church and that we are much blessed in those who give their lives to help us on our journey of life.

### Prayers

Patrick asked two things of us after his ordination, "Firstly, please pray for me, and for the four priests who were ordained with me, and

for my fellow seminarian brothers who will be ordained over the next few weeks. What we all share, is that we all want to be good priests. Not just 'being good at being a priest' – no, we want to be 'good priests'.

"We know how much God is a father to you, his people, how much he loves you and how much he cares for you all. Pray that we as priests may help you with your relationship with God, support you, love you and care for you too.

"Secondly, I would like to ask you to pray for vocations. It wasn't inevitable that I have now been ordained a priest. Priests and religious don't just pop up. Priests and religious don't grow on trees. They are real people who come from real families, who make real choices. So please pray for vocations, and pray that your own families may be open to one!"

We need priests to preach the Gospel, to celebrate the mysteries of Christ, for the glory of God and for our sanctification, as the Rite of Ordination says. May the good Lord send us many more good priests. May he bless Patrick and Robbie on their priestly journeys.

**“Priests and religious don't just pop up. Priests and religious don't grow on trees. They are real people who come from real families, who make real choices”**



# Thousands take to streets of Dublin for large pro-life rally

**Ruadhán Jones**

This year's Rally for Life saw thousands gather in Dublin to "hold the Government to account for the spiralling abortion rate", as the large crowd filled O'Connell Street on Saturday, July 1.

A Rally for Life spokesperson called for the three-day wait before abortion to be retained and criticised a Dáil bill seeking to legalise abortion up to six months gestation.

"We now know that the abortion numbers jumped 22% last year," Rally for Life spokesperson Megan Ní Scealláin said. The rise is "steep and deeply disturbing", she added.

The rally began from Parnell Square, marching down O'Connell Street and finishing with talks from doctors, nurses and politicians.

Consultant Obstetrician Dr Trevor Hayes, joined by mem-

bers of Doctors and Nurses For Life, told the rally that pro-life medical professionals would not be bullied into providing abortions.

"We are told that doctors and nurses should be informed at interview that contracts of employment will specify that it is mandatory to carry out abortions when requested – and that they would be fired if they refused," Dr Hayes said on Saturday, July 1.

"At a time when our maternal health care services are stretched to breaking point, does the Minister think a bullying tactic like this is going to work?"

He warned that it would drive "many excellent professionals away from the health service".

"We will not be forced into performing abortions and – this is a message to the Minister today – many of us would rather leave medicine than be

involved in abortion, a procedure that is never necessary, is never part of healthcare, and that helps neither mother nor child," said Dr Hayes.

Earlier, the chair of the Irish bishops' council for life Bishop Kevin Doran criticised the Government for having no interest "in what people thought about abortion", referring to the review of the new abortion laws.

Inconvenient truths about abortion are "ignored", including efficacy of the three-day waiting period, Bishop Doran said in a homily during Mass in St Saviour's Church, Dominic Street, before the rally.

He called for courage and respect in tackling pro-abortion laws, while offering "genuine human support in our response to the reality of human life in the womb and in our response to women for whom pregnancy is difficult and inconvenient".



Tom, his mother Áine and extended family enjoy the Rally for Life.



Thousands of people took part in the Rally for Life in Dublin, July 1.



People came from far and wide to promote the pro-life cause.



Pro-lifers showed great enthusiasm.



Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin joins pro-lifers from Derry at the rally.

## Mother Teresa

Author JIM TOWEY, trusted advisor and devoted friend of Mother Teresa, will share stories of her mission, life, and long connection with Ireland.

**Speaking Event**

Monday, July 17th 2023, 7:00 pm  
Franciscan Abbey, Galway City

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Wednesday, July 19th 2023, 7:00 pm  
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# Oireachtas committee shows us where permitting ‘assisted dying’ leads



The slippery slope is on full display in the ‘assisted dying’ public hearings, writes **David Quinn**

**A** special Oireachtas committee on ‘assisted dying’ has been holding public hearings for the last four weeks. The task before it is to consider whether or not Ireland should introduce assisted suicide for people who are terminally ill and nearing the end of their lives.

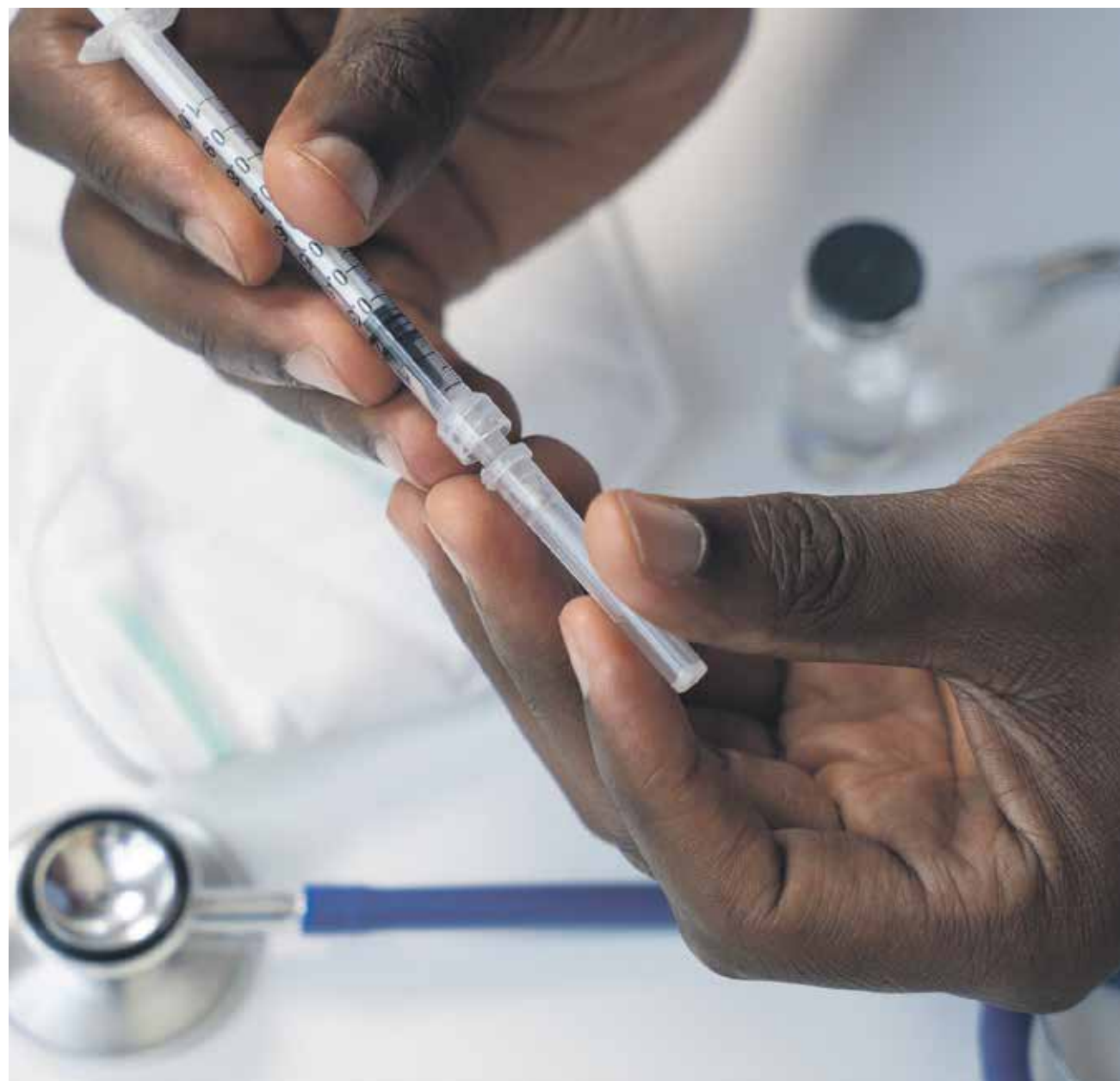
It is clear from listening to the members of the committee, that most are in favour of going down this road, and some would go even further than permitting it only for the dying.

**“At least we needed to hold a referendum to pave the way for abortion in Ireland”**

It is the same logic that operates in the abortion debate. Why limit abortion to the hard cases, like rape or a ‘fatal foetal abnormality’? If a woman feels she cannot continue with a pregnancy, then in a sense, every such case is a ‘hard case,’ subjectively speaking. Why permit a termination for one woman, and not another?

This is why we already have a very permissive abortion law, and now an even more radical one has the support of a majority of TDs.

At least we needed to hold a referendum to pave the way for abortion in Ireland. Oireachtas members generally believe we don’t need to have one to permit assisted suicide and that we can



instead do it directly through legislation.

But one of the expert witnesses who appeared before the assisted suicide committee does not agree, namely Dr Conor Casey, an Irish academic based at the University of Surrey law school. As this newspaper reported last week, he argued that the Constitution still protects the right to life, even if not unborn life.

He told the committee: “It is difficult if not impossible to frame legislation that provides a statutory right to intentional killing as a good faith attempt by the Oireachtas to either respect, defend, protect or vindicate by its laws the right to life of every citizen as far as practicable”.

In other words, it is constitutionally impossible for politicians to both protect the right to life and to permit “intentional killing”.

It is interesting to note, by the way, that Gino Kenny TD objected to Dr Casey using the word “killing”. He believes this is emotive language.

But it is hard to think of

a better or more objective word to use because killing is exactly what a lethal injection does.

The two other legal experts testifying on the same day as Dr Casey disagreed with his interpretation of Justice Denham’s words.

But he has raised an interesting point, and if politicians were to pass an assisted suicide law without a referendum, perhaps the way would be open for a constitutional challenge. The chances of success would be much greater if the ‘right’ to assisted suicide created by politicians was not extremely limited and surrounded by very stringent safeguards.

### Third day

The third day of public hearings heard some very interesting testimony from Dr Louise Campbell, who is herself in favour of assisted suicide in certain circumstances.

Her overall approach to these issues is very much pro-choice. As she put it: “At the heart of the liberal medical tradition is the idealised

concept of a rational, independent self that is capable of making its reasons and motivations known to itself.”

It is, of course, the “liberal medical legal tradition” that opens the way to killing patients (to use once again the word Gino Kenny dislikes), be it via abortion or assisted suicide/euthanasia.

**“But this still means abuses will occur, because as she said, nothing is ‘foolproof’”**

This is not medicine at all, strictly speaking. The true purpose of medicine is to try and heal a patient and never actively harm them, much less kill them.

Both Christianity and Hippocratic medicine – which predates Christianity – are at one about the proper purpose of medicine, and it has taken almost 2,000 years for a new

view of medicine, one that is willing to countenance killing, to supplant it.

In some ways, we are slipping back to the morality of Roman times, which had little or no moral issue with abortion, or even leaving newborn babies to die.

We are already aware from recent academic studies of cases in Irish hospitals where babies born alive after an abortion have been left to die afterwards.

However, despite acceptance of abortion and infanticide by the ancient Romans, euthanasia does not appear to have been widespread, so in this respect, we are becoming even worse than them.

Dr Campbell was, at least, very honest about the pitfalls and the possibility of any law permitting assisted suicide/euthanasia being abused to coerce people into acquiescing to the procedure.

She told committee members that while, in an ideal world, people might make rational choices freely, in the real world, things “are not so neat, particularly where

chronic or terminal illness, loss of function, dependence on others or disability are at issue”.

She also admitted that there is no “foolproof solution” to the problem of a person coming under pressure to avail of assisted suicide, although she claimed that “training and experience over time will allow health-care professionals to spot and identify undue influence where it is detectable”.

**“Dr Campbell herself struggled to see a definitive reason to refuse assisted suicide to those suffering from severe mental illness”**

But this still means abuses will occur, because as she said, nothing is “foolproof”.

Dr Campbell was also honest enough to admit that in the Netherlands, which introduced assisted suicide/euthanasia in 2002, there has been a change in culture. Assisted suicide is no longer seen as something that should be open only to the terminally ill. Instead, it should be available to everyone “as part of their entitlement as an autonomous person capable of determining the timing and manner of their own death”.

Dr Campbell herself struggled to see a definitive reason to refuse assisted suicide to those suffering from severe mental illness.

Her precise words were: “I do not see that entirely prohibiting assistance in dying when mental illness is involved is entirely ethical either.”

The committee hearings have actually been useful from a pro-life point of view in that they are revealing how hard it is to limit a ‘right’ to assisted suicide once it is permitted. Instead, as with abortion, it takes on a momentum of its own, and in due course we go from assisted suicide in very limited circumstances, to the procedure being allowed in wide-ranging circumstances as has happened in the Netherlands, Canada and elsewhere.

We should not fool ourselves into thinking anything would be different here.



# 'Trust in God is key' says 100-year-old nun



**Sr Mary Tighe puts her longevity down to faith and positivity, writes Sofia Zate**

**O**n June 30, Sr Mary Tighe celebrated her oak jubilee, ringing in 80 years in the Congregation of the Sisters of St John of God. She also celebrated her 100th birthday on the 14th of the same month.

When I spoke to Sr Mary, she sounded grateful as she recalled her, not one but two, birthday celebrations. One she celebrated with the community in St John of God Convent and the other with her extended family.

When I asked Sr Mary how she was feeling, she simply replied: "I've had a lovely time". It was that positive attitude that kept reappearing in our interview.

## Grateful

Sr Mary has never stopped being grateful, never stopped being optimistic. Even when she recalled being in London in 1944, living in a home damaged by bombs, she reminisced about the sense of community that the war created, and how it brought people together. "We all walked together with great generosity among each other," Sr Mary remembered.

The Irish nun was born in Kylemelawn, Erril, Co. Laois on June 14, 1923, one of 10 siblings from a large and devoted Catholic family. Sr Mary remembers her childhood fondly.

The local parish was the centre of life in Kylemelawn but it was the nuns who taught her who inspired young Mary to pursue a vocation to religious life. She joined the Sisters of St John of God on June 30, 1943, with four other women who soon became her close friends.

At the tender age of 21,

Sr Mary moved to war-torn London, then still reeling from the blitz only three years before, to work on mission there. Life was hard in London at the time and supplies were scarce.

Sr Mary remembers being afraid when she first arrived but "after a while we got used to it". She added that her faith played a large role in her optimism even in the face of war. "Our faith helped us all. We always prayed together," Sr Mary said.

In addition to being a member of the Sisters of St John of God, the Irish nun taught in cities around England including Bristol, Trowbridge, and London for 31 years.

She "loved every minute of it" and praised the wonderful children and parents she interacted with. Sr Mary also witnessed first-hand the benefits of Catholic education and the sense of community that it created. The retired teacher is remembered by pupils and colleagues alike (many of whom she keeps in touch with) as a dedicated and respected educator and then principal.

I asked Sr Mary, on the eve of her Oak Jubilee, if she would offer herself from 80 years ago any advice but her answer surprised me. She told me she wouldn't give herself any advice. Instead, Sr Mary told me she always wanted to be a nun and she had accomplished that goal.

**"I trust in God and he never lets me down"**

She reiterated her positive attitude, saying: "I was one of those people who was able to accept most things good and bad." In light of this answer and Sr Mary's lack of regrets, I asked her if she was the kind of person that liked to look back or if she always looked to the future. "I live in the present, very much in the present," she replied.

Sr Mary's tone throughout the interview was calm and focused. She sounded sharp and gave the impression of being endlessly devoted to her faith.

When asked if she thought her faith played a role in her longevity. "I definitely think so and I think the goodness of God being there all the time and trusting" him she said, elaborating: "And my family always prayed for me.



Sr Mary Tighe celebrates her 100th birthday

"And the support of them and the support of the parents helped me along. And I thank God that I had very good health and didn't worry about things."

Sr Mary is also optimistic about the future of the Church saying "I trust in God and he never lets me down". The 100-year-old nun also puts her trust and faith in the Pope when it comes to big decisions regarding the structure and future of the Church, such as allowing women or married men into the priesthood. She feels strongly that whatever is meant to be will be.

## Devotion

In addition, Sr Mary praised the devotion and enthusiasm of the younger members of her family whom she is confident will carry the Church into the next decade.

Sr Mary chose a reading from the Prophet Isaiah for her celebratory Mass: "Fear not", the text says, "I have called you by name... you are mine". This passage seems entirely fitting for Sr Mary's life and her unwavering faith and dedication to God and the Church. Sr Mary is only the second nun from St John of God to celebrate her 100th birthday and one of the first in Ireland to celebrate her oak jubilee, a momentous achievement.

## A summer of serenity



In today's chaotic world, finding moments to reflect are becoming few and far between.

Sr Stan's books on mindfulness provide much-needed relief, guiding readers in their search of peace and fulfilment.

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# Cormac McCarthy's Catholic imagination

Cormac McCarthy at La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, in 2023. Photo: Kate Joyce



The renowned American author leaves us some of the most interesting examinations of religious themes in fiction, writes Jason Osborne

Author of the acclaimed novels, *The Road*, *No Country for Old Men*, *Blood Meridian* and more, Cormac McCarthy died on June 13, aged 89. Up to that point, he had been considered by many the greatest living American author, and so he must surely now be considered a part of that country's rich literary heritage.

Many publications marked his death with articles pronouncing him something along the lines of,

'novelist of a darker America,' or novelist of the 'stark and dark,' as *NPR* put it. While there is certainly a lot in his work to back up those claims, I've always glimpsed a faint – divine, even – light at the end of the harrowing tunnels he's depicted in his various stories.

## Burnt-out

Harrowing they are. To take a couple of examples I've already mentioned, *The Road* follows a nameless father and son as they make their way through burnt-out, post-apocalyptic America, a land portrayed as being as barren of meaning as it is of life. They're making their way south, in the hope of finding something worth living for there. *No Country for Old Men* (the book upon which the Oscar winning movie is based) follows a man who chances upon a wealth of drug money in the deserts of the American south before being pursued by a psychopathic hitman eager to put a stop to his flight. *Blood Meridian*, finally, paints a fictionalised picture of the infamous, scalp-hunting Glanton Gang that (truly) operated on the Texas-Mexico border during the mid-19th Century. The gang is demonic, its spiritual leader a man known simply as 'Judge Holden' who revels in chaos and evil without remorse.

These are but a few of the grim tales Cormac McCarthy is famous for telling, but despite their often bloody and merciless landscapes, hope and a way out of the cycle of

violence frequently appear when it seems there couldn't possibly be any.

Some context before delving into this more deeply: McCarthy himself appeared to be a "lapsed" Catholic, and through his novels and the few interviews he designed to give throughout his life, agnosticism seems to have been where he felt most comfortable, if you could say such a thing. Despite this, McCarthy's work is saturated in Catholicism – in the sacramental, the eucharistic, the liturgical. He perhaps revealed more than many realised when the protagonist of his fourth novel, *Suttree*, said after being called upon to say a few words after a friend's death: "The only words I know are the Catholic ones".

**“Their conversation is sparse as they travel, reflective of the fact that just as everything has died off, so too have things to be talked about”**

The key to the interpretation of Cormac McCarthy is that his novels portray a deeply sacramental world – that is, they portray a world that physically manifests the divine. The catch is that his portrayals also bring the problems of evil, suffering and apparent senselessness to the

fore, forcing the characters, and the readers, to trudge through them for a glimpse at possible redemption.

The clearest example of this is to be found in his Pulitzer prize-winning 2006 novel, *The Road*. The anonymity of the father and son is no coincidence – it allows each of us to put ourselves in their shoes (when they have them) as they undergo their brutal trek through a colourless, ashen America.

## Reflective

Their conversation is sparse as they travel, reflective of the fact that just as everything has died off, so too have things to be talked about. Despite this, we encounter them *in media res*, and so they've formed certain patterns of speech and conversation that we're privy to. Most notable is the boy's twofold insistence that they're the "good guys" and that they're "carrying the flame". Despite living lives of constant fear, hunger, cold and suspicion, the boy never ceases to make sure they're not becoming like the animalistic cannibals and warlike tribes they so carefully avoid, and he becomes deeply upset whenever his father strays into that territory in his efforts to keep them alive in a hostile and unforgiving world.

Keen not to spoil anything for those who haven't yet read the book – it would be a crime to do so – the father and son's "flame" is carried right to where it cannot possibly continue to flicker, and yet it does.

In another of his books, *Child of God*, McCarthy introduces us to a character, Lester Ballard, who by both circumstance and choice, by the end of the novel, has had the image of God within him twisted to the point of total distortion. And yet, a chance encounter with a moment of grace – invisible to all but Lester, who recognises in a dim way what he sees and needs – potentially sets him down the path he needs to be on. It doesn't promise a happy life, but it does promise, tentatively, redemption.

**“Cormac McCarthy didn't seem to be sure about whether or not God existed, and if he does, whether or not he's good”**

Most of McCarthy's stories don't have happy endings, but the sacramental world is always present for those with eyes to see. That "and yet" is always waiting at the end of the road for the characters willing to look in the right direction, few as they may be.

Cormac McCarthy didn't seem to be sure about whether or not God existed, and if he does, whether or not he's good. That didn't stop him searching for God, though, and the search itself reveals an often sorry world in which divine light is always just around the corner.



# Golden jubilee celebrations for committed priest



Audrey Bryce

When Fr Pat Neeson joined the priesthood, he had his heart set from the very start on ending up somewhere like Malawi, Africa, to begin his ministry. Fr Neeson was passionate about his calling, saying, "All through my training I wanted to go there. I thought I would go to Africa, and I got my wish". You could say it was destined.

## Celebrates

Now, 50 years later as he celebrates his golden jubilee, Fr Neeson conveys his profound gratitude for the communities he had the opportunity to serve and the blessed people he met in Africa that have since been an inspiration for him to steadfastly carry out his vocation for the many years that would follow.

Christians in the south-eastern African country endured tremendous poverty that Fr Neeson witnessed first-hand throughout those five years that he served there. "They had nothing; they were poor—

but they were joyful," said Fr Neeson, who described being impacted by "how joyous they were as a people and a nation".

Asked about the lessons he learned throughout his five years spent in Malawi, Fr Neeson said he witnessed Christians struggle daily in poverty, often unable to find access to clean water. "For them, water is always a problem", he said. "We waste our water by letting the tap run."

Fr Neeson said his time in Malawi has instilled in him a profound appreciation for the things in his life that are too often taken for granted.

"They have nothing, and look what we have", he remarked. "And still, we complain." Despite their destitute conditions, these Christians demonstrated unwavering Faith and happiness in the eyes of Fr Neeson who was inspired by them. Their joy was "first-class".

Fr Neeson detailed the layout of the churches in Malawi, particularly how they were scattered over many miles. Every Sunday, Fr Neeson travelled to different churches to see parishioners and to celebrate Mass. The people of Malawi were delighted to have him for Mass, christenings, confessions and marriages, which were extraordinary blessings for them to have.

The people, in fact, are still what keep him going. After spending five years in Malawi, Fr Neeson returned to the Diocese

of Down and Connor where he served in the towns of Coleraine, Portaferry, Lisburn, Glenariffe, Kircubbiin and Ballygalget.

## Love

Currently serving as pastor emeritus, Fr Neeson told *The Irish Catholic* about the people he serves, saying: "They love their Eucharist; they love their Mass; they love seeing their priest every morning. That's what keeps me going."

Parishioners of Portaferry and Ballygalget were able to celebrate Fr Neeson's Golden Jubilee at Mass on both Saturday, June 10 and Sunday, June 11 in Portaferry with refreshments that followed at the adjoining St Mary's Primary School.

Fr Neeson routinely celebrates Mass every day for the members of his current parishes and finds a tremendous reward in still being able to do so after so many years – and he does not anticipate stopping soon, as his daily celebration of Mass and commitment to his people remain his driving motivation each and every day.

After celebrating 50 years of faithful service, Fr Neeson looks forward to celebrating his 80th birthday this October although he jokingly predicted it will be "much quieter of a celebration" than his golden jubilee. Fr Neeson remains one of the oldest serving priests in the diocese.



Lily Trainor, Fr Neeson, Feidhlim Trainor and Fr McGrady.

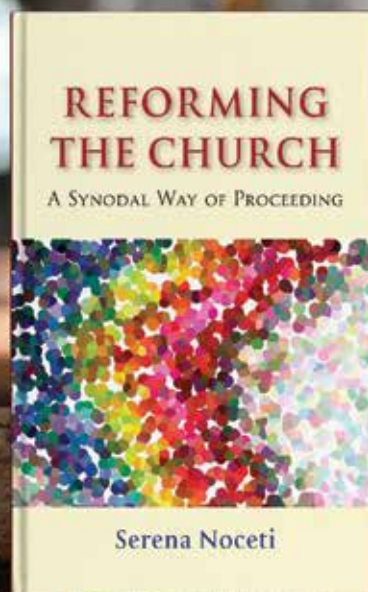


Gregory, Henrietta and Donal Mason enjoy Fr Neeson's celebrations.



Pauline McCarthy congratulates Fr Neeson on his golden jubilee.

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# Reducing the harm of illegal drugs



Is the bishops' stance on the decriminalisation of illegal drugs the best course of action, Chai Brady asks

**I**t is no secret that Ireland is facing a major drug epidemic. This was once again highlighted by a UN report in March of this year which found the country is the joint fourth highest consumer of cocaine globally – taking into account population size.

The Global Report on Cocaine 2023 from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found 2.4% of Irish people reported using cocaine in 2019. Only three other countries reported higher levels of cocaine use: Australia, the Netherlands and Spain.

Soon after this revelation the planned Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use had its inaugural meeting in mid-April. It was established by the Government to consider the legislative, policy and operational changes Ireland could make to significantly reduce the harmful impacts of illicit

drugs on individuals, families, communities and wider Irish society.

Among the discussions was the idea of decriminalisation of those who were discovered to have illegal drugs on their person for personal use. The Irish bishops advocated for this change in law in a joint submission to the assembly.

## Support

The Irish Bishop's Drugs Initiative (IBDI), along with the Family Addiction Support Network (FASN), outlined that the current criminalisation approach to drug policy has been ineffective in addressing drug use and its associated harms. It stated that drug use should be addressed as a social and health issue rather than a justice issue and that research shows that decriminalisation does not increase drug use and other crime. This position has faced criticism but patron of FASN and Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh, Michael Router, defended decriminalisation telling *The Irish Catholic* it is a very different stance from pushing for the legalisation of illegal drugs.

"One of the things that developed over time is the whole stigma that's attached to drug usage – no one should be using drugs – but unfortunately the type of person who gets into trouble very often comes from a very socially deprived background and once they're found in possession of drugs they are criminalised. If it goes through the legal system their chances of ever improving their lot after that is very, very difficult," Bishop Router said.

"When we're talking about decriminalisation, we're talking about it for personal use, so if somebody is found in possession of drugs

just for their own use that should be a health issue, they should be directed towards treatment, or for their education around the effect of drugs or whatever it may be, rather than starting a criminal process, a legal process that's probably going to blight their lives effectively, and gives them very little chance of improving – of getting over the issue – and finding a good job or travelling abroad or whatever it may be.

**“Speaking of the work of FASN, the submission stated the charity has gained considerable support for its ‘Stop the Stigma’ campaign which aims to decriminalise personal drug use”**

"I think there's too much of our resources wasted on that element. There's a big difference between decriminalisation and legalisation, we are totally against the legalisation of drugs," he said.

Bishop Router insisted that while there are people advocating for the legalisation of drugs such as cannabis, the bishops would "be totally against that, because we see the physical and psychological effects that it has around the country at the moment and around the world: it's not a harmless drug".

He added: "If alcohol was only appearing on the scene now we'd think twice knowing what we know about legalising it. So knowing what we know about cannabis and the

effects it has on people, why would we ever dream of legalising it?"

The submission of the bishops and FASN also calls for the provision of peer-led family support groups, the inclusion of families in the development of all services and policies, and for substantial investment in drug projects and family supports to help protect future generations from the negative and harmful effects of drug use.

## Stigma

Speaking of the work of FASN, the submission stated the charity has gained considerable support for its 'Stop the Stigma' campaign which aims to decriminalise personal drug use.

FASN and the bishops said that the person in addiction should be provided with immediate and quality health care to tackle the issue and should be offered a specific information course to educate them about the dangers of the substances they are using.

"FASN considers that the most important and effective way to reduce drugs related harm in society is to include the families of people with addiction in all services and policies, to value them as experts through their lived experience of being affected by substance misuse. FASN and the Irish Bishop's Drugs Initiative (IBDI), which provides education on the dangers of drug use to primary and second level students and to community groups throughout Ireland, believes that through empowering individuals, families and communities with skills, knowledge and support, and through promoting a restorative practice of healing broken relation-

ships, the cycle of addiction and criminality within families will be broken," the submission stated.

However, Damian Richardson who is a former drug addict now working as an addiction counsellor believes the move is sending the wrong message.

**“The Central Statistics Office revealed that in 2022 there were 12,136 recorded offences for possession of drugs for personal use in Ireland, which represents 70% of all drugs offences last year”**

Working out of Cuan Mhuire's addiction centre in Athy, Co. Kildare, Mr Richardson – who spoke of his experiences of addiction before the Pope and tens of thousands of pilgrims at the World Meeting of Families in Croke Park in 2018 – warned against decriminalisation.

He told this paper that it is "opening the gateway to mind altering substances, no matter how much they have, whether it's pills, cannabis, cocaine, it's a mind-altering substance and it's changing the individual's character. There's a carnage that comes with that, the carnage that comes with someone not being in a state of normality, of lucidity – it's minimising it again".

"I know where they're [the bishops and FASN] coming from, obviously from a view of the heroin



addict on the boardwalk in Dublin, that's his fix for the day, but should we not be emphasising why people need to take drugs? This emptiness; why is it that we're not happy so we need to take this substance?" he asked.

**“The Citizens’ Assembly on Drugs Use heard last week that the Health Research Board (HRB) reported there were 400 drugs related deaths in Ireland in 2020”**

“Everyone has different views on it, and my view after 15 years of drug abuse, would be to educate people that this is not the way to go forward. I can see where they’re coming from, that it’s compassionate, that this individual is sick – a heroin addict for example, why should they be getting arrested? But, we’re minimising drug addiction, we’re giving a green light. The guy or girl on the back lane of Moore Street taking drugs, are we saying it’s OK to do that? We’re giving a green light to it when we should be saying: ‘Why do you want to get out of your head? Why do you want to take a substance? Why do you need to block the world out?’ Those are the questions you need to be asking.”

Mr Richardson also warned that the money used to buy drugs can be the proceeds of crime, saying “we’re

fuelling this big machine again, it’s saying it’s OK to buy drugs, it’s OK to have drugs – and I know they’re not saying that – but there’s an epidemic out there, we need to find out why the young people of Ireland need to take drugs to block the world out, to take mind and mood altering substances, we should be putting all our resources into finding out why”.

The Central Statistics Office revealed that in 2022 there were 12,136 recorded offences for possession of drugs for personal use in Ireland, which represents 70% of all drugs offences last year.

**Criminalisation**

Asked whether decriminalisation would take away the legal disincentive regarding a person having drugs on their possession, Bishop Router said that while criminalisation is one way of tackling the issue, it is doing so in the wrong way.

The result of the current model is “you spend most of your time dealing with people who are victims of the drug industry rather than people who are resourcing drugs in the country, who are importing them and dealing them – they are the people we should be focusing our efforts on”, the bishop said.

“But unfortunately because of social deprivation or whatever, a lot of people get involved in drugs before they even know anything about that or before they fully realise the dangers and they become addicted and once they become addicted they can be used to deal for someone higher up the food chain or



they can be intimidated to do various different things, to steal – they run up big debts and then have to pay those back and their families and themselves are intimidated as a result of that.

“I think we started in the wrong place by criminalising people who have enough in their possession just for personal use, naturally enough if someone has more than that then they would be subject to criminalisation as a result, but there was 12,000 people last year who were put through the legal process for possession of drugs for personal use and it doesn’t seem to be having an effect. Where is the positive effect of

that in society? I think we see that it just isn’t working so there has to be a different way of doing things.”

The bishops and FASN believe a health-led approach which will lead to a greater chance of positive outcomes for those suffering from addiction, advocating for a model similar to Portugal which adopted this strategy in 2001 – treating the person as a patient rather than a criminal.

The Citizens’ Assembly on Drugs Use heard last week that the Health Research Board (HRB) reported there were 400 drugs related deaths in Ireland in 2020. The chair of the assembly, Paul Reid, described it as “grim”.

He said: “The HRB statistics show that it is not only heroin that is a key factor in these deaths but also methadone, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, benzodiazepines and other prescription drugs. Poly-drug use is clearly a huge part of the problem, and dual diagnosis seems to feature in half of the deaths.

**“Finding the answers to those questions will be central to our work from now and will be the key part of our recommendations in the assembly’s final report”**

“This is all grim news. When the problem is shifting rapidly we need equivalent change in our approach to national policy and delivery of necessary services. For that reason, this weekend the assembly is focusing on potential solutions. We’re also hearing case studies of good practice from Ireland and abroad. But we need to remain focused on the key questions: what is working, what is not working, and what could work to make a significant difference.

He added: “Finding the answers to those questions will be central to our work from now and will be the key part of our recommendations in the assembly’s final report.”

The assembly is expected to finish its work by the end of the year.

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# Out&About

## Dawn Mass for Duhallow



**KERRY:** Intrepid Duhallow parishioners are pictured after dawn Mass was celebrated on Sliabh Luachra on June 21.



**DONEGAL:** Kinnegad Parish celebrates Corpus Christi on Saturday June 11.



**KERRY:** Corca Dhuibhne parishioners gather for dawn on June 21.

### IN SHORT

#### Farm deaths leave 'cavern of darkness'

Farm deaths and accidents leave a "cavern of darkness" for those they affect, Bishop Denis Nulty said during an ecumenical prayer gathering on June 25.

Accidents cause "devastation to families and farms", the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin said at the 10th ecumenical remembrance service in Abbeyleix.

"The more advanced we have become in our farming methods the more risks there are for slippage, for mistakes, for shortcuts," he said.

For 10 years "we have been joining in prayer coming from Abbeyleix", Bishop Nulty continued.

"For 10 years we have been reading names and revisiting that cavern of darkness in the hope of offering some word of comfort and consolation."

He urged all those who mourn or who have been affected to "never give up on hope".

To prepare for the ceremony, 18 widows gathered the previous weekend to arrange flowers and art work.

#### Cork church celebrates 200th anniversary

Parishioners gathered to celebrate the bicentenary of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Ballheada, with Bishop Fintan Gavin in attendance.

This was the final of three consecutive bicentenaries in Ballinhassig parish, with Goggin's Hill and Ballygarvan churches having celebrated similar milestones in 2021 and 2022.

People came together to clean and paint the exteriors and interiors of all three churches and helped to put up bunting, erect banners and memorial plaques, while the church bell systems have now been restored in both Ballygarvan and Ballyheada churches.

Bishop Gavin was principal celebrant at the bicentenary Mass, assisted by Fr Danny Pyburn Co-PP and Deacon John Guirey.

A talk on the history of the church was given at the end of the Mass by local historian John O'Sullivan. After Mass, the bishop unveiled a commemorative plaque and

blesed a restored 'Mass Path' cross.

#### Book used to convert Charles II goes on show

A rare book believed to have been used to convert an English king to Catholicism has gone on public display.

The copy of the *Missale Romanum*, or the Roman Missal, was owned by Fr John Huddleston, who helped save the life of King Charles II and had the book with him when the monarch converted to the Catholic Faith on his deathbed.

The book, published in 1623, was purchased by the National Trust at auction and will be put on display at Moseley Old Hall, near Wolverhampton, 363 years after it was first there.





**CAVAN:** Aonghus Byrne, principal of Muff School, Kingscourt is pictured with Ciara Walsh, Chairperson of the board of Management.



**CAVAN:** Aonghus Byrne, principal of Muff School, Kingscourt is pictured with his pupils at a presentation before taking up a new Principal appointment at Yellow Furze school in Navan.



**KILDARE:** Fr Ruairi O'Domhnaill receives a gift from Newbridge parish's Polish community as he marks his silver jubilee at St Conleth's Church, Newbridge on June 26.



**KILDARE:** Fr O'Domhnaill is pictured with Bishop Denis Nulty on the occasion of his silver jubilee.



**CORK:** Fr Des O'Driscoll celebrates the annual Mass in Sherkin Abbey on June 25 as part of the O'Driscoll Clan gathering in Baltimore.



**LIMERICK:** Sixth class pupils at Doon CBS are pictured before they graduate after their years in primary school. Back Row: Joanne O'Connell, (school principal), Eoin Murphy, Nathan O'Connor, Tony Arthurs, Junior Owolabi, Thomas O'Dwyer, and Elizabeth Doherty, (deputy principal). Front Row: Ronan Hanrahan, Colm Quinlan, Cian Murphy, Aaron Morris and Michael Dillon.





**JUBLIN:** North Wall parish gathers to celebrate 'Mass on the grass' in Irvine Terrace on Saturday June 24.



**BELFAST:** Fr Martin Magill and the community of St John's Parish Falls Road acknowledged the service of Jessica, Madisen and Adam to the parish on June 24 as they leave primary school.



**LIMERICK:** Bro. James Dormer, Board of Management, Doon CBS PS makes a presentation to sixth class school pupil, Eoin Murphy, to mark his excellent attendance, with no absences for even one day during his time as a student at Doon CBS. Also present are members of his family; Caoimhe, Marion, Tom and Cormac.



**DOWN:** Candidates for the permanent diaconate in the dioceses of Armagh, Clogher, Down and Connor and Dromore are pictured with Bishop Michael Router. The candidates were instituted into the ministry of reader at Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre, Crossgar on Sunday, June 25.



**CLARE:** The Killaloe diocese committee of Apostolic Work are pictured at the annual display on Saturday, June 24, in Ennis.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LOUTH:** Fr Seán Dooley celebrates at Mellifont Parish cemetery Sunday Mass, in Tullyallen.



**DONEGAL:** Bishop Donal McKeown (far left) is pictured with pilgrims from Derry diocese at Lough Derg, where they made a weekend retreat.



**DONEGAL:** Paul Gallagher (left) and his brother Patrick (right) who were confirmed in Raphoe/Drumkeen/Convoy Parish May 14, 1973, are pictured after receiving their golden Pioneer pins from Fr Eamonn Kelly PP Raphoe.



**CLARE:** Fr Harry Bohan, pictured on the right of Bishop Fintan Monahan, celebrates his diamond jubilee of ordination to the priesthood in Sixmilebridge.



**LOURDES:** Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O'Reilly leads the Eucharistic procession in Lourdes with the pilgrims of Cashel and Emly diocese on June 20.



**LIMERICK:** Ms Elizabeth Doherty, Deputy Principal Doon CBS PS, makes a presentation to school pupil Cormac Murphy for having a perfect attendance of school days during the past school year, 2022-2023.

**ANTRIM**

An evening of adoration, worship, Confession, prayer ministry, testimony and benediction takes place 6-8pm on the third Sunday of every month in St Joseph's Church.

**ARMAGH**

A Holy Hour will take place in St Malachy's Church on the evening of Friday July 7, the first Friday of the month, from 8-9pm.

A guided tour of Newry Cathedral is available on Wednesday, July 19, 7pm, lasting approximately 90 minutes. Meet at the main door of the cathedral.

**CARLOW**

Cemetery Mass for Graigueculen and Killeshin parish takes place in Sleaty at St Mary's on Monday July 10 at 7pm.

**CAVAN**

'Mother Teresa: Her Love of Ireland and Lessons on Aging Well' event takes place on Wednesday, July 19, 7-8.30pm at Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre.

**CORK**

A 'Finding new life in the Holy Spirit' gathering takes place Thursdays in the Holy Family Centre, Glenville at 8pm.

Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions take place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in 'Carraig an Airfeann' Mass rock, Glenville.

**DONEGAL**

Weekly rosary for priests takes place every Thursday evening at the Grotto beside the Pius X Adoration Chapel, Letterkenny, at 7.40pm.

**DOWN**

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in Newry Cathedral every Thursday from 5-9pm, on Saturday after 10.30am Mass until 5.30pm and Sunday from after the 12 noon Mass until 5.30pm.

**DUBLIN**

Rathmines parish young adult ice cream and prayer hike to Bray head takes place Saturday, July 22. For more information contact eoin@rathminesprish.com.

**FERMANAGH**

A Divine Mercy Holy Hour takes place every Thursday in Newtownbutler adoration room from 8-9pm.

ration room from 8-9pm.

**GALWAY**

Eucharistic Adoration takes place on Saturday evenings from 7-8pm and on Monday evenings from 6-9pm.

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for young adults (18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8.15pm.

**KERRY**

Pioneers celebrating 25, 50 and 60 years of membership will be presented with pins and certificates at the 6.10pm Mass in St John's Church, Tralee, on Saturday, July 8.

**KILDARE**

Annual cemetery Mass in Two Mile House takes place Sunday July 9 at 11am, replacing the 11am Mass in St Peter's Church, Naas parish.

**KILKENNY**

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

**LAOIS**

The Divine Mercy chaplet is prayed at 3pm every Sunday in Portlaoise parish church.

**LEITRIM**

Daily Rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

**LIMERICK**

Eucharistic adoration takes place on Friday from 4.30-5.30pm in St John's Cathedral.

**LOUTH**

A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

**MAYO**

Achony diocese's 'reek challenge', a hike up Croagh Patrick for young adults (aged 18-35), takes place Sunday, July 9, at 3pm. For more information, contact achonyreekchallenge@gmail.com.

Reek Sunday, the national pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick, takes place July 30, with Masses every hour from 8am-2pm and Confessions from 7.30am-2pm.

The Grandparents Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine takes place on Sunday, July 23 from 2-3pm.

**MEATH**

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

**MONAGHAN**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Tuesday from 2-4pm in Muckno parish, St Mary's Church.

**ROSCOMMON**

Pro-Life Mass organised by Roscommon for Life takes place in the Apparition Chapel Knock Shrine on Saturday July 8 at 12.30pm. Celebrant is Fr Vincent Twomey SVD and the Mass intention is the renewal of the Gospel of Life.

**SLIGO**

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place each day 9am-5pm in St Bernadette's Chapel, Sligo Cathedral.

**TIPPERARY**

Relics of Padre Pio coming to St Mary's Church, Cahir on Saturday, July 29 at 6pm. Healing Mass followed by blessing with St Padre Pio's relics.

**TYRONE**

Strabane parish contemplative prayer group meets on Mondays at 8pm in the prayer room of the Parochial House.

Lectio Divina takes place Monday nights at 8pm in the Convent of Mercy, Dungannon led by Fr Eamonn McCamley and Deacon Tony Hughes.

**WATERFORD**

The annual Mass at St Declan's Holy Well, Toor, Aglish, takes place on Thursday July 27 at 12 noon. Confessions will be held before Mass.

Join Fr Kilian Byrne and the Foyer of Charity at Dunmore East, x91 FC65 as they journey into the 'Secret of Mary' by St Louis de Montfort. Takes place Saturday July 22 and 29 from 11am-12.30pm.

**WEXFORD**

Men's prayer group takes place in the adoration chapel, Bride St Church, Wexford town, every Wednesday evening at 8pm. It includes Rosary, Lectio Divina and benediction.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### US Franciscan friar sent to prison for abortion protest

● Catholic priest and pro-life activist Fr Fidelis Moscinski, CFR, has been sentenced to six months in federal prison for blocking access to a Planned Parenthood abortion facility by placing locks and chains on the gated entrance.

Judge Steven Tiscione laid down the six-month sentence, which is the maximum available for the specific crime. Fr Moscinski was found guilty of violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, which imposes harsh penalties for obstructing access to an abortion facility or a pregnancy centre.

"My actions ... were done because Planned Parenthood as an organisation is in the business of killing," Fr Moscinski told the judge while asking for a lenient sentence, according to his remarks provided by the pro-life organisation Red Rose Rescue.

### Former cardinal McCarrick deemed unfit to stand trial

● Former cardinal Theodore McCarrick is not competent to stand trial on criminal sexual abuse charges in Massachusetts, a mental health expert hired by the state said after examining the disgraced ex-prelate.

The update in the case could lead to the dismissal of the first criminal charges against McCarrick, 92, following several accusations of sexual abuse of minors and seminarians, which led to his removal from the clerical state in 2019. Criminal sexual

assault charges filed against McCarrick in Wisconsin in April are still pending, as are a number of civil lawsuits.

McCarrick is charged in state court with three counts of indecent assault and battery on a person over the age of 14 relating to allegations that he sexually abused the teenager who was a family friend at a wedding ceremony in the 1970s at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

### Mexican bishops demand respect for religious freedom

● Given the possibility that the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN) may prohibit Nativity scenes on public property, the Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM) issued a statement calling for the free exercise of religious liberty whether individually or collectively.

In 2020, the Yucatán civil association Kanan Human Rights sought to prohibit the placement of Nativity scenes in public squares in the municipalities of Mérida, Chocholá, and Mocochoá in Yucatán state, alleging that this "violates the secular state". The organisation filed constitutional protection lawsuits that have made their way to the SCJN.

"Religious freedom is not limited to worship but rather goes far beyond it, embracing freedom of thought, conscience, expression; taking shape in artistic and educational expressions, [and] in popular traditions, among others. The above has been recognised in our political constitution and international treaties," the bishops wrote.

### Nicaraguan dictatorship places Sandinista flags in front of cathedral

● The dictatorship of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, in Nicaragua has set up the red and black flags of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the regime's political party, in front of the cathedral in Matagalpa.

The bishop of Matagalpa, Rolando Álvarez, was sentenced February 10 to 26 years and four months prison, charged with treason to the homeland.

Ortega has been in power since 2007. The Sandinistas are a socialist political party.

In a statement to *EWTN News*, Martha Patricia Molina, a researcher and the author of the report *Nicaragua: A Persecuted Church?*, charged that "obviously this is one more provocation from the Sandinista dictatorship against the Nicaraguan Catholic Church".

## US Supreme Court sides with web designer opposed to same-sex marriage

The US Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment's free speech clause protects a Colorado web designer who feared she would be prosecuted under state anti-discrimination law for her faith-based objections to designing websites that promote same-sex marriage or same-sex weddings.

Lorie Smith, owner of the graphic and web design studio 303 Creative LLC, filed the legal challenge. It was not a response to government action; rather, it was a pre-enforcement challenge intended to prevent the use of the law against her.

Colorado's Anti-Discrimination Act includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes. The question before the court was whether compelling an artist to speak or stay silent violates the First Amendment's free speech clause. It did not take up the question of whether it is a religious freedom violation.

"In this case, Colorado seeks to force an individual to speak in ways that align with its views but defy her conscience about a matter of major significance," Justice Neil Gorsuch said in the 6-3 decision. "But, as this court has long held, the opportunity to think for ourselves and to express those thoughts freely is among our most cherished liberties and part of what keeps our republic strong."

"Of course, abiding by the Constitution's commitment to



Web designer Lorie Smith in her office in Littleton, Colorado. On June 30, 2023, the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of her right to refuse to create websites for same-sex couples because of her Christian beliefs about traditional marriage. Photo: OSV News/Kevin Mohatt, Reuters

the freedom of speech means all of us will encounter ideas we consider 'unattractive,' 'misguided,' or even 'hurtful,' but tolerance, not coercion, is our nation's answer. The First Amendment envisions the United States as a rich and complex place where all persons are free to think and speak as they wish, not as the government demands."

Ms Smith was represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) legal group, and her attorneys argued that state law affects creative professionals who have religious or moral concerns about creating content that violates their beliefs. ADF characterised the decision as

a "landmark" victory.

"More than just a win for Lorie Smith, this is a sweeping free speech victory for every American," the group said on Twitter on Friday.

Justice Gorsuch's decision in the case known as 303 Creative v. Elenis invoked several Supreme Court precedents. Students are protected from being compelled to salute the American flag and say the Pledge of Allegiance; a St Patrick's Day parade in Boston could not be forced to include a gay, lesbian, and bisexual group; and the Boy Scouts could not be forced to include a gay man as a scout leader.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor authored a dissenting opin-

ion, joined by Justices Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

"Today, the court, for the first time in its history, grants a business open to the public a constitutional right to refuse to serve members of a protected class," she objected. "The law in question targets conduct, not speech, for regulation, and the act of discrimination has never constituted protected expression under the First Amendment."

Justice Sotomayor said the decision had consequences beyond questions of sexual orientation and gender identity and would allow the exclusion of other groups from many services.

## Violence among top concerns of Congolese bishops

Persistent violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the emergence of new groups of militia are key concerns of the Catholic bishops in the Central African nation.

In a statement issued at the end of their June 19-22 plenary assembly, members of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) stated: "We are witnessing the persistence and worsening of insecurity, especially in the eastern part of our country."

Security challenges, alongside "the proliferation of armed groups, are of the utmost concern to us," CENCO members said in their June 22 statement.

They also decried the revival of the March 23 Movement (M23) in the country, saying: "With the resurgence of the M23, supported by Rwanda, part of the national territory has been beyond the control of our armed forces for over a year."

"In the same vein," the Church leaders said, "we are witnessing the emergence and expansion of the Mobondo militia in the western part of our country, which is spreading terror right up to the gates of the capital, Kinshasa".

Between May 11 and May 13, members of the Mobondo militia reportedly attacked villages in Kiwango province,

approximately 75 kilometres (about 47 miles) from Kinshasa, killing at least 11 people.

The bishops also expressed concern about the Special Brigade of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), a wing of the ruling party, "which sometimes collaborates with the police to hunt down political opponents and other peaceful citizens with a critical view of the country's current governance".

The bishops said it is unfortunate that their recommendations on security and national cohesion are not adhered to.

## Church in Germany loses members in record numbers

The Catholic Church in Germany, shaken by the abuse scandal, is continuing to shrink, with more than half a million people officially quitting the Church in 2022.

Most of the resignations occurred in the Archdiocese of Cologne. The wave of res-

ignations from the Church in Germany has reached a record high, according to figures published by the German bishops' conference in Bonn June 28.

Membership in the Church now stands at 20.9 million in Germany, less than a quarter

of the population. This has reinforced the trend of more than half of the German population no longer belonging to a Church.

The 522,652 official departures, along with 240,133 deaths, stand in contrast to about 155,000 Catholic bap-

tisms performed last year.

In addition, a total of 1,445 people joined the Church and 3,749 were readmitted to it.

The Protestant Church in Germany also is shrinking. According to data published in March, the number of members fell to 19.15 million.





Edited by Jason Osborne  
jason@irishcatholic.ie

## Celebrating our first pope



A statue of St Peter decoratively dressed in vestments and wearing a papal tiara, as is customary on the saint's feast day, is seen during a Mass for the feast of Ss Peter and Paul celebrated by Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 29, 2023. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

# German cardinal plans to file legal complaint after June 27 raid

Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki plans to take legal action after investigators searched his residence and other buildings of the Archdiocese of Cologne June 27, the KNA news agency reported.

"What bothers us is not the raid, but that the information and the date appear to have been leaked to the media," Cardinal Woelki's lawyer, Bjoern Gercke, told the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. In response, he planned to file a criminal complaint against unknown persons for a breach of confidentiality.

Some 30 police officers and four state prosecutors conducted the searches.

Mr Gercke criticised the

behaviour of some media, saying journalists had already been waiting at the archbishop's door a half-hour before the investigators arrived. "We would have voluntarily provided everything the prosecution needed," the lawyer said.

Police and prosecutors in the German city of Cologne searched various premises of the Archdiocese of Cologne early June 27 as part of an investigation into Cardinal Woelki. The cardinal of Cologne is suspected of giving false testimony under oath in court, KNA reported.

The prosecutor's office said properties in six locations were searched starting at 8 am local time, four of them in

Cologne and one each in Kassel and Lohfelden. The premises searched were the offices of the vicar general, the diocesan tribunal, the archbishop's house, as well as the offices of the archdiocese's IT email service provider.

"The measures are directed toward the investigation into a merely initial suspicion and in this respect toward the establishment of both incriminating and exonerating circumstances," the state prosecutor's office said. To avoid misinterpretation, the office clarified, "it is also explicitly pointed out that the accused is in no way charged with actively or even passively covering up or even

participating in acts of abuse," KNA reported.

Cardinal Woelki personally opened the gate to his residence to let the investigators in. Numerous journalists and photographers who had lined up near the entrance before the search broadcasted the scene in the media.

"By viewing business documents and emails of the archdiocese, it is to be determined whether the accusation made against Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of having committed a testimony-related offense can be proved or, on the contrary, disproved," the Archdiocese of Cologne said in a June 27 statement.

## Sexual morality views halt appointment of dean at Italian seminary

The Vatican vetoed the appointment of a new dean at a seminary in Northern Italy, citing concerns over the appointee's views on sexual morality diverging from the Church's teachings.

On June 26, the Philosophical-Theological College in Bressanone (PTH Brixen), announced that Fr Martin Lintner, OSM, had been chosen to serve as dean for the term from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2025.

Fr Lintner is professor of moral theology and spiritual theology at the

seminary. According to *CNA Deutsch*, the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education, the department responsible for such appointments, communicated to Bishop Ivo Muser of Bolzano/Bozen that it will not be granting its approval for the appointment.

The PTH Brixen, located in the Northern Italian region of South Tyrol (Alto Adige), is a significant institution in the traditionally German-speaking region, offering courses in philosophy and theology. It serves as a hub for religious and

philosophical discourse and is the academic training centre of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone for priests and deacons, pastoral assistants, teachers of religion, and other pastoral vocations.

The decision to veto the appointment is rooted in Fr Lintner's published works on Catholic sexual morality, which have stirred controversy within Church circles. Fr Lintner's writings include discussions on the spirituality of marriage, sexual ethics, and the ethics of relationships.

# Vatican roundup

## Papal peace envoy journeys to Moscow

● Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi met with a Kremlin foreign policy adviser during the peace mission he is making to Moscow on Pope Francis's behalf.

Archbishop Giovanni d'Aniello, the apostolic nuncio to Russia, told reporters June 29 that the mission Pope Francis entrusted to Cardinal Zuppi "is to identify and encourage humanitarian initiatives that will make it possible to begin a journey that, we hope, will lead to the much-desired peace".

Such humanitarian initiatives, he said, were the topic of the cardinal's meeting June 28 with Yuri Ushakov, a foreign policy adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin and former Russian ambassador to the United States.

Humanitarian issues, the archbishop said, also would be the subject of a meeting June 29 with Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights, who has been accused by the International Criminal Court of aiding the abduction and deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.

Archbishop d'Aniello said Cardinal Zuppi would meet Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in the afternoon June 29 and then would preside at Mass in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and meet with the local Catholic community.

He was scheduled to return to Italy June 30, the nuncio said.

## Vatican urges cooperation in supporting Catholic schools

● As Catholic schools worldwide face several challenges – including declining enrolments, funding or maintaining a distinctive religious character – the Vatican has urged religious orders, dioceses and laypeople to come together to "take risks" and be creative in finding solutions.

"It is urgent for the various institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life to sing together as a choir, and for bishops, parish priests and diocesan pastoral offices to sing in tune with the rich educational charisms present in schools run by institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life," a joint document said.

"It is essential that clergy,

religious men and women, and lay people all sing as one choir, and that lay people be given the chance to echo the educating voice of a diocese and even the unique timbre of a religious charism," said the letter from the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Published June 28 and addressed to "all involved in the mission of education in Catholic schools," the letter explained a few outcomes from a meeting the dicasteries held May 22 with "a number of leading figures in the worldwide network of Catholic schools, in order to discuss in person the prospects and difficulties involved in the mission of education in our time".

## Pope looks to reform of diocesan chanceries

● With the help of an expert canon lawyer, Pope Francis and members of his international Council of Cardinals discussed ways that the principles behind his reform of the Roman Curia also can be reflected in the structuring and functioning of diocesan chanceries.

At the end of the council's meeting June 26-27, the Vatican press office said one of the items on the agenda had been the beginning of a "reflection on how to implement the spirit, principles and criteria of the apostolic constitution *'Praedicate Evangelium'* ("Preach the Gospel") in the diocesan curias".

The apostolic constitution, published in 2022, called for the "missionary conversion" of the Church and of its structures to better serve the Church's mission of preaching the Gospel. An important part of that effort, it said, was strengthening the Church's "synodal" nature so that all the baptised listen to one another and share responsibility for the Church's mission.



# Letter from Rome

## On communications, have popes become too much Paul and not enough Peter?



John L. Allen Jr

As I write, it's the great Roman feast of Ss Peter and Paul, the patron saints of the Eternal City. The double feast is of ancient origin, but the link between the two saints has taken on even greater significance with the modern papacy.

It was the late Pope John Paul II who once said that he considered himself not only the successor of Peter but, to some extent, of Paul too — meaning as the great communicator of the Church as well as a tireless missionary.

Modern popes have become, in effect, the Evangelist-in-Chief of the Catholic Church, using the media of their day, just as Paul did in his, to spread their message.

Like John Paul II before him, Pope Francis too has engaged the media with gusto. For one thing, he's given more interviews to journalists than anyone can count, so much so that whole sections of libraries probably could be filled with the transcripts.

And, yet.

Yet the towering irony is that while John Paul II and Francis both became media sensations, demonstrating an instinctive genius for gestures and soundbites, that success hasn't always been translated into the effectiveness of the Vatican's own institutional communications.

Indeed, in a recent interview with the Ukrainian news outlet *Glavcom*, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv, leader of the Greek Catholic Church, said something out loud that many observers have long mumbled sotto voce — to wit, the Vatican's communication system is bad and getting worse, not better.

### Reform

Referring to Pope Francis's efforts to reform the Vatican, Archbishop Shevchuk said "we're in a moment of transition in which the institution is undergoing changes, which, however, aren't improving its efficiency".

The Greek Catholic prelate pointed to communications in particular as a problem area. Here's what he said:

"The biggest problem I see today in the machinery of the Vatican is communications, communication with the world, especially through the media. In reality, today the Pope doesn't have a spokesperson who can act as constant communicator with journalists when we



St John Paul II greets the World Youth Day crowd in Czestochowa, Poland, in 1992. Photo: CNS file photo

**“The biggest problem I see today in the machinery of the Vatican is communications, communication with the world, especially through the media”**

don't understand the Pope or his statements aren't entirely clear.

**“John Paul and Navarro often obscured the fact that the Vatican's communications system, as opposed to the personalities at the top of the pyramid, remained seriously dysfunctional”**

"Naturally, everyone wants to understand exactly what the Pope said and what he meant by it. If it's not understood, who can you go to for clarifications? It used to be the Vatican spokesperson who took care of it, but not today. I don't know why, and I can't understand it by myself. [It seems] the Pope wants to be his own

spokesperson."

Therein lies the heart of the problem: Francis may be a great communicator himself, but he has not, in the eyes of most observers, created a great communications system.

As Archbishop Shevchuk indicated, during the John Paul II years there was at least a powerful spokesman in Spanish layman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, who was a genuine insider with unrestricted access to the pope, and who therefore could issue clarifications, based on his own access and standing, which people took seriously.

(Navarro-Vall's memoirs, by the way, *My Years with John Paul II*, recently appeared in Spanish and Italian.)

### Sweetness

It's not that all was sweetness and light in the Navarro years — it was often hard to know, for instance,

where John Paul's thinking ended and Navarro's spin began. Moreover, the dynamic duo of John Paul and Navarro often obscured the fact that the Vatican's communications system, as opposed to the personalities at the top of the pyramid, remained seriously dysfunctional.

Since Navarro stepped down in 2006, no spokesman has enjoyed anything like his direct personal relationship with the boss. As a result, directors of the Vatican Press Office have become more akin to employees of the Secretariat of State, and are able to release only the information provided to them by the powers that be.

Indeed, as Archbishop Shevchuk suggested, the problem actually has been compounded under Francis's reform with the creation of the Dicastery for Communications, which has, in effect, created another layer of bureaucracy through which a spokesperson is compelled to wade before he or she can say anything useful.

In part, this is a question of personal style. Francis is legendarily allergic to being 'handled,' and thus resistant to creating the impression that anyone else is truly able to speak definitively in his name.

Whatever the explanation, the plain fact is that there's a clear imbalance between the personal and the structural when it comes to communications by, and about, popes.

Somewhat cheekily, we might say that today's feast is therefore a reminder that when it comes to communications, modern popes have got the Paul part down.

### Success

They've embraced the tools the media offer to spread their message, often to astonishing personal success — Pope Francis, for example, was the third most followed world leader on Twitter in 2022, behind only US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

What's missing to some extent is the Peter element, meaning the governance challenge of not merely being a great communicator, but of building a great communications system.

Perhaps that's a challenge for a different day ... but if one were inclined to offer up a pious wish in prayer, it's hard to imagine a better occasion than today.

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



# Reporter poses as priest to highlight anti-Christian sentiment in Holy Land



Judith Sudilovsky

A local Israeli reporter went undercover as a priest and was spat at several times while walking the streets of Jerusalem, *Haaretz*, the Israeli daily, reported.

*Haaretz* underlined that at a time when attacks on Christians in Jerusalem are rapidly increasing, police are reluctant to track down the perpetrators.

Channel 13's Yossi Eli was first spat at just five minutes after setting out in the company of a Franciscan clergyman, who is identified by the paper as Fr Alberto. Spitting incidents included one by a child and a soldier, as the reporter spent a day dressed as a priest in Jerusalem to investigate growing hate crimes against Christians in the city. *Haaretz* also reported that a man mocked them in Hebrew, saying, "Forgive me, father, for I have sinned".

On June 15, a stained-glass window of the Cenacle, the traditional location of the Last Supper, was shattered by a rock thrown by unknown vandals.

## Frequency

It is one of many incidents of violence on Christian holy sites in Jerusalem that have increased in frequency and have practically become a daily occurrence, said the organiser of a June 16 conference, aimed at investigating these attacks from a religious, historical, legal and current events perspective.

Spitting on Christian clergy has become a common issue in the Holy Land and inspired the title of the conference, "Why Do (Some) Jews Spit on Gentiles," which sparked controversy among Jews.

"According to statistics we have received since the Religious Freedom Data Centre hotline was established a month ago, we can say there is a spitting attack every day," said Yisca Harani, an independent researcher, lecturer and interfaith activist who initiated the conference.

Held at the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem's Old City, the conference was sponsored by The Open University of Israel and its Centre for the Study of Relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Since last November, surveillance cameras have filmed 19 attacks, including spitting, swearing, physical violence against clergy, and vandalism perpetrated by ultra-nationalist and ultra-orthodox Jews. Other incidents of harassment include vandalism, arson and acoustic disturbance of processions or religious ceremonies, said Ms Harani.

These more extreme cases get attention, and sometimes suspects are apprehended, such as in the recent incidents of spitting on the Armenian bishop during a religious procession in November 2022, the vandalism of a statue of Jesus at the Church of Flagellation in February 2023, an attack on Greek Orthodox priests at the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in March 2023 and the vandalism of graves at the Anglican cemetery in January 2023.

**“On May 28, ultra-orthodox and ultra-nationalists, led by Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King, attacked evangelical pilgrims holding an outdoor prayer service in the Old City”**

But the majority of incidents of harassment go unreported because it is impossible to know who the perpetrators are, she said, and many international Christians fear losing their visas if they report an incident.

An online form in several languages is available on the Data Centre website where Christians can report any incidents of religious harassment. Another group, Window to Mount Zion, consists of Israeli volunteers who accompany the Armenians during their religious procession, documenting and photographing any kind of incident of harassment, so the information can be passed on to the police, she said.

"There is a lack of confidence in the police," Ms Harani said. "Every month, we pass on the reports we have received to the police."

Jerusalem's Chief Sephardi Rabbi Shlomo Amar has condemned the attacks on Christians, writing in a rare English-language letter May 16, saying that they are "strictly forbidden. We are not permitted to disparage any man who was created in the image of God".

However, as the conference began to create controversy – largely based on its title – he



An ultra-orthodox Jewish man walks past the entrance to the Armenian St James Cathedral in the Old City of Jerusalem June 18. Photo: OSV News/Debbie Hill

later also condemned the conference. Invited members of Israel's Foreign Ministry, which is charged with the responsibility of dealing with the external and internal relations with Christians, also decided to boycott the conference.

## Brunt

Armenian clergy and the Armenian Cathedral of St James have seen the brunt of the spitting attacks because of the location of the cathedral and the Armenian seminary on the route Orthodox Jews take through the Armenian Quarter to the Western Wall, a Jewish holy site, Ms Harani noted, but attacks also occur on the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross), and elsewhere.

On May 28, ultra-orthodox and ultra-nationalists, led by Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King, attacked evangelical pilgrims holding an outdoor prayer service in the Old City, traditionally staunch supporters of Israel.

Christian leaders, including Archbishop Pierbatista Pizzaballa, the Latin

patriarch of Jerusalem, and Franciscan Fr Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land, have spoken out about the increasing incidents and lack of response from the current government. Elected last November, it is Israel's most extreme right-wing and religious government in history.

"This is not a new phenomenon. It has been going on for many years – 30 years," Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein, director of the Elijah Interfaith Institute, told *OSV News*. "The political climate is giving a greater sense of freedom to unleash these behaviours ... with a government which has no brakes."

Though the custom of spitting at symbols of Christianity is rooted in a European history of violent attacks, torture and attempts of forcible conversion of Jews by Christians, there is no law in Judaism that calls for such actions or defends it, noted Yair Furstenberg, professor of the Department of Talmud and Halacha (Jewish religious law) of The Hebrew University.

"The gap between this behaviour and Jewish law is unbelievable. Jewish literature completely rejects this kind of behaviour. ... The principle is a way of peace including approaching (non-Jews) in greeting for the purpose of peace," he said.

Indeed, noted Iris Shagrir, professor of the department of history, philosophy and Judaic studies of The Open University, in the Middle Ages, including during the Crusades, this act of spitting was often the last act of Jews who were tortured in attempts to forcibly convert them.

## Defiance

"Spitting (at symbols of Christianity) was the last act of defiance before they were killed," she said. The problem arises when such a bold act borne from violent traumas that several centuries ago were imposed by Christians onto the weak Jewish minority is used in modern-day Israel where "it is done in a position of power against innocent

Christians," she noted.

Representing the Latin Patriarchate, Msgr William Shomali told the gathering that proper education and an end to incitement and hate speech is the only way to put an end to anti-Christian harassment and racism in general.

"We need to go to the source," he said.

At the conclusion of the conference, as participants made their way out of the patriarchate, Msgr Shomali crossed the narrow street to greet a Latin Patriarchate priest sitting in the small courtyard at the entrance of St James Cathedral. Just as the two men shook hands, an ultra-orthodox boy, not older than 12, walked past them and spat on the ground behind them seemingly as a reflex, and continued to walk toward the Jewish Quarter, lugging a rolling suitcase which bounced behind him on the cobblestones.

*Judith Sudilovsky writes for OSV News from Jerusalem.*



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Prevalence of 'doublespeak' in euthanasia debate

**Dear Editor,** I am writing to offer congratulations for your recent article [*The Irish Catholic* - June 29] on euthanasia. Your insightful and thought-provoking piece delved into the use of language and its impact on the discussion surrounding this deeply complex and sensitive topic.

Your reference to George Orwell's *1984* sheds light on the manipulative power of language, particularly in the context of the Oireachtas committee hearings on euthanasia. By highlighting the use of euphemistic terms such as 'assisted-dying', you bring attention to the deliberate distortion and obfuscation of reality employed by proponents of this procedure.

Dr Conor Casey's expert testimony, in which he used the word "killing" to describe the act of assisting someone to

take their own life, was met with criticism and pushback from certain quarters. It is indeed disconcerting that such a neutral and accurate term is met with resistance, as it merely acknowledges the undeniable consequence of administering life-ending medications.

Your emphasis on the importance of confronting the reality of euthanasia and not shying away from the implications of ending another person's life is commendable. The refusal or inability of some individuals to acknowledge this fundamental truth raises concerns about their understanding of the gravity of the matter at hand.

By drawing parallels with the abortion debate, you aptly highlighted the prevalence of doublespeak and the distortion of

language in sensitive ethical discussions. It is essential for politicians and organisations to be forthright and honest when addressing the public, ensuring that the true nature of the proposals and their potential consequences are clearly understood.

Your article encapsulated the need for open and honest dialogue surrounding euthanasia, without succumbing to euphemisms that obscure the reality of the act.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to upholding the values and principles of the Catholic Faith in the realm of journalism.

*Yours etc.,  
Jenny Brady  
Mallow, Co. Cork*

## The President's support of artists

**Dear Editor,** Our President's rebel credentials - Niamh Uí Bhriain: 'Michael D. Higgins is strangely muted on some subjects' - [*The Irish Catholic* - June 22, 2023] owe a good deal to the support he gave to artists. In there somewhere is the vogue for South American revolution. I mean, who can forget all those artist studios and rented flats with the picture of Che Guevara hanging on the wall?

Of course, artists, or some of them, entered the elite and from that point the revolution was to be kept 'over there': don't bring it here, except the anti-Catholic part; bring that alright.

I have a clear memory of Mr Higgins at the Clarinbridge Oyster Festival maybe 20 years ago - he and other celebrities inside the paywall, we outside. It was all there.

*Yours etc.,  
Gerald O'Carroll  
Ballylongford, Co. Kerry*



## Populist Catholicism doesn't help attain eternal salvation

**Dear Editor,** I'm sorry but I found myself in total disagreement with Grace Fayne's letter [*The Irish Catholic* - June 22, 2023] in praise of a First Communion Mass she attended.

First point: The priest said, "that God loves each and every person present unconditionally and with

a deep love that is beyond our understanding". No arguments with that as such but God similarly loves all the 'bad guys' in the world: dictators, murderers, paedophiles, drug barons, etc. To be saved however requires that we respond to God's love, that we "repent and believe in

the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Second point: The priest said, "that everyone was welcome to receive Holy Communion". It is a solemn 2,000-year-old Catholic teaching that to receive Communion worthily we must be in communion with Jesus and the Church - otherwise we do serious

harm to our souls.

Populist Catholicism is little help towards attaining eternal salvation. On the other hand teaching authentic discipleship with pastoral charity and honesty is.

*Yours etc.,  
Philip Lucey  
Kenmare, Co Kerry*

## Freezing eggs and reluctant men

**Dear Editor,** Columnist Mary Kenny hits the nail on the head in her recent article [*The Irish Catholic* - June 29, 2023] on the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown and its connection to the rise in the number of single women freezing their eggs and seeking assisted conception through IVF and donor insemination.

Mrs Kenny's observation of the significant increase in egg-freezing cycles linked to the pandemic, as reported by the British Human Fertility and Embryology Authority, is indeed a cause for reflection. The

pandemic has heightened awareness among women of the challenges they may face in finding a suitable partner to start a family, leading them to explore alternative options for preserving their fertility.

Behind the statistics lies the poignant reality of women yearning to become mothers or hoping for a future opportunity to have children. Their decision to freeze their eggs is often driven by a desire to maintain a sense of agency and the possibility of fertilisation later on. However, it is important to recognise that the success rates

decrease with age, emphasising the limitations and challenges associated with delaying motherhood.

Baroness Ruth Deech's assertion that men's reluctance to commit to marriage and parenthood during a woman's fertile years contributes to these challenges resonates with the Irish bishops' arguments from the 1950s. It is striking how similar reasoning persists despite the different societal contexts.

*Yours etc.,  
Jane Murphy  
Marino, Dublin 3*

## Normalising gender dysphoria is an attack on genders

**Dear Editor,** There are those who genuinely suffer from gender dysphoria and those people must be helped through compassion and understanding; others just have emotional or psychological problems for which medical intervention is necessary, but in most cases is not available, however that is no reason to create alternative biology encouraging people to make up gender identities.

Normalising gender dysphoria by telling children they can be any gender they want to be and even make up their own if they want, will ultimately destroy the lives of those children who do not suffer from gender dysphoria resulting in them suffering from serious medical conditions later in life, which is evident from the evidence put forth by adults who transitioned as children but later in life wanted to transition back but found they could not.

This is an attack on morality, it is an open assault on the male and female genders and the truths surrounding them in an attempt to eradicate all teachings surrounding the male and female by creating as many gender ideologies as is possible to the extent that to speak of male and female alone will be considered to be hate speech: which is ultimately an attack on religious beliefs and an attempt to silence people who do not agree with them and to eradicate freedom of thought, conscience and open discussion, and to attempt to help anyone suffering from gender identity by discussing their beliefs with the goal of understanding and helping them to appreciate themselves for who they actually are rather than who or what they perceive themselves to be, could result in a therapist being struck off and cancelled or even arrested on the false allegations of conversion therapy.

*Yours etc.,  
Chris Carr  
Midleton, Co. Cork*

## An elephant in the ecclesiastical 'room'

**Dear Editor,** Your recent editorial [*The Irish Catholic* - June 22, 2023] alludes to a fundamental dilemma about the synod and possibly an elephant in the ecclesiastical 'room': is the synodal process "akin to a parliament or an assembly where key issues will be decided and the majority will win the day" or is it not?

Pope Benedict XVI is possibly the greatest theologian who has ever sat on the chair of St Peter. In his essay '*Demokratie in der Kirche*' (Democracy in the Church) he writes that the idea of the mixed (lay and episcopal) synod as a permanent supreme governing body of the national Churches is a chimerical (illusory) idea in terms of the tradition of the Church as well as its sacramental structure and

its specific goal. Such a synod would lack any legitimacy and therefore obedience to it has to be decisively and unequivocally denied. (Page 31)

In the same essay he points to the deep divisions that such a synodal system has generated in the worldwide Anglican Church.

As you point out "the mission of the Church [is] to bring people into relationship with Christ". I believe this mission requires fidelity to the traditional foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church; one such belief is that Jesus delegated his authority to the 12 apostles and their successors.

*Yours etc.,  
A.P. Breen  
Bronx, New York, USA*

## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, July 6, 2023

**Questions  
of Faith**  
Is God a narcissist?  
Page 32



## Why the rosary, why now?

It's easy for Catholics to take the rosary for granted. We tend to purchase them as souvenirs, or carry them around with us, or even wear them – but we forget the immense power that they have when we actually pray them. And that's really too bad, because a devotion to the rosary can be the answer to so many struggles in our 21st Century world.

### Secularism

Our society today faces growing secularism and the disappearance of faith from the public square. We find ourselves confronting a world awash in the spread of evil and terrorism, war and violence. We are plagued by broken families, abounding distractions and a general lack of

drive for holiness.

But the rosary can help. And we know this because Mary herself told us this 100 years ago in Fátima, Portugal, when she appeared six times to three shepherd children from May to October 1917. She told them repeatedly: "Recite the rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war." Sr Lucia dos Santos, the eldest Fatima seer whom the

**The rosary is a prayer we take for granted, but it's a deep well of spirituality to be tapped into, writes Gretchen Crowe**

Church just declared "venerable," emphasised the message of Mary, who introduced herself to the children as "Our Lady of the Rosary," throughout her long life.

We also know the great value of the rosary because it has manifested its power time and time again in the lives of men and women of faith throughout history. This, of course, isn't because the rosary is magical; it's because it brings us to Jesus. As

the late Cardinal Francis George, archbishop of Chicago, said at the conclusion of the Year of the Rosary in 2003: The rosary "brings us to the heart of the Gospel".

### Lifestyle

In today's typical lifestyle, it is easy to become distracted and overwhelmed by all of the "noise". Technology is constantly demanding our attention. We

sit in front of screens and, at the same time, look at smaller screens. We are drawn in by the lure of social media alerts and use texting as a primary form of communication. We have developed an "always on" or "always available" mentality, and noise no longer knows any boundaries. A recent Nielson report issued said that Americans, on average, spend 11 hours a day looking at some type of screen. It's easy for us to tell ourselves we're being productive and that this abundance of "screen time" is necessary, but the reality is that all that noise is damaging to our relationship with God.

This is not just a 21st Century problem, although it has become more pronounced in recent decades. In 1973, Cardinal







Albino Luciani – then-archbishop of Venice who would go on to become Pope John Paul I – gave a homily that identified a “crisis of prayer” in the world – adding that part of the reason was due to the fact that “noise has invaded our existence”.

If he thought that life was noisy in 1973, what would Papa Luciani think of it today?

**“The more we honour and pray to Mary, especially in her signature prayer of the rosary, the more our love for and devotion to the Church will increase”**

We also face an abundance of internal noise. We are distracted by interior barriers to prayer that often manifest themselves in the form of pride and self-centeredness. In all of these moments of difficulty, we can turn to the rosary. The meditative quality of the devotion can help focus us and break through the external noise. At the same time, by praying this simple prayer frequently, faithfully and with humility, we can break down our internal barriers.

One of the intellectual, spiritual and even media giants of the 20th

Century was Archbishop Fulton Sheen. Archbishop Sheen also had a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother, and he dedicated a book to her called *The World's First Love, Mary, Mother of God*.

He also spoke much about her in public. In a talk titled “The Woman I Love,” Archbishop Sheen indicated how Mary and the Church were intertwined because “as we discontinue our devotion to the Blessed Mother, there is always a decline in the love of the Church”. Fascinating, isn't it? The less we pray to and venerate Mary, the less we are connected to the Church. It would follow, then, that the opposite also is true. The more we honour and pray to Mary, especially in her signature prayer of the rosary, the more our love for and devotion to the Church will increase.

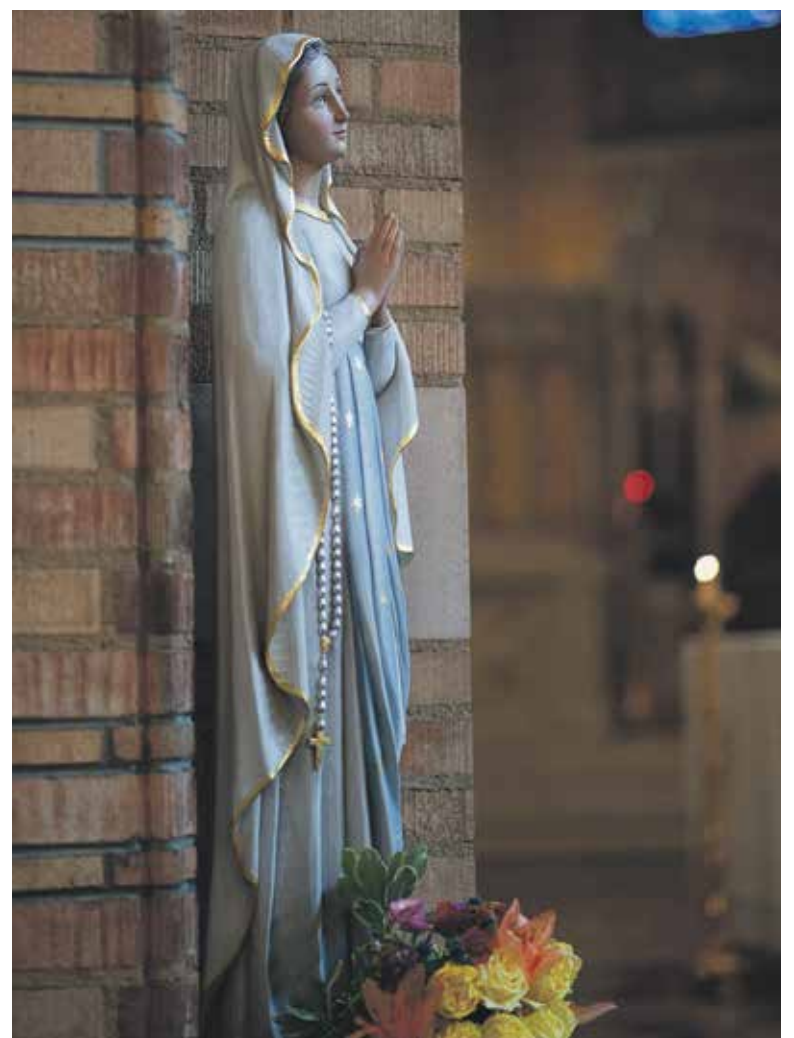
#### Devotion

And this is a devotion that we desperately need today. Catholics in the 21st Century are experiencing a massive decline of love of the Church. We're experiencing a rise in the religiously unaffiliated, or “nones”. We're also facing a large – and growing – gap between the moral teachings of the Church and the evolution of our secular society. Recent years have seen an increase in cultural mores and public policies at odds with Church teaching, which means that Church teaching

is increasingly at odds with the laws of the land. Part of the problem is widespread lack of faith formation, particularly for many adult cradle Catholics.

**“For many of them the rosary ... was the privileged instrument for their daily discourse with the Lord”**

The universal call to holiness is expressed in the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) – which reminds us that we are called to “be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect”. When wanting to achieve holiness, where else is it better to look than to those men and women who have already done so – that is, the saints themselves. “The saints and blessed of paradise remind us, as pilgrims on Earth, that prayer, above all, is our sustenance for each day so that we never lose sight of our eternal destiny,” St John Paul said. “For many of them the rosary ... was the privileged instrument for their daily discourse with the Lord. The rosary led them to an ever more profound intimacy with Christ and with the Blessed Virgin.”





# Materialism undone in a confusing spiritual classic

## Faith in film



### Ruadhán Jones

It is a remarkable thing that arguably the most overtly spiritual director of the 1970s and '80s was a product of the decidedly atheist USSR. Andrei Tarkovsky imbued each film with a yearning for spiritual truths, even while cultural authorities policed films for such 'subversive themes'.

Two of Tarkovsky's films make the Vatican's 1995 list of important films, both under the 'religion' section. His eponymous biopic of Russian iconographer Andrei Rublev was an obvious choice; *The Sacrifice* (1986), his last film, is much harder to pin down.

### Unifying

Materialistic men and women confronted with the unknown is arguably the unifying theme of Tarkovsky's works. In *Stalker*, a strange, magical 'zone' has supernatural powers, confounding a scientist and writer; in *Solaris*, whole teams of scientists are bamboozled by a planet that appears to be conscious.

In *The Sacrifice*, the unknown is more prosaic, the great unknown that faces us all: death. Tarkovsky knew he was dying going into production and the film draws from this knowledge. It confronts a materialistic art critic (Alexander) with the spectre of his own death when an obliquely rendered nuclear apocalypse occurs.

What is life worth, Alexander ponders, along with his wife, daughter and son, as well as his



*The Sacrifice*

friend Dr Viktor and a mysterious postman. They have little to offer in the face of such a terrifying prospect. All the doctor can offer is a sedative, while the more sensitive types lose their composure entirely.

**“His style is deliberately meditative and allusive, while the almost gnostic mix of Christian and pagan sensibilities makes for a confusing, if often beautiful film”**

But what about the artist, symbolised in Alexander; what can he offer? The answer seems to be, a prayer or something like it, pointing towards a reality beyond our often violent and confusing material world, a reality that makes

sense of it.

This is the interpretation, I think, the film hints at. In an early scene, Alexander looks through a book of icons and comments on their beauty, saying at one point, “They are like a prayer”. And so too is Tarkovsky's film.

*The Sacrifice* centres on an actual prayer, delivered in a monologue from Alexander to God. It takes place about halfway through, after the apocalypse has occurred, when a prostrate Alexander pleads with God to save his family and friends. He offers his whole life as a sacrifice, if only God will spare them.

### Crux

This is the crux of the film and the question becomes; will Alexander fulfil his mission? He knows now that if his life is to mean anything, he must go beyond the empty words that

make up most lives. He will have to do something truly meaningful. This knowledge inspires Alexander to give up his life for his friends, or at least to try.

The materialistic man, faced with the unknown, is brought to the edge of the immaterial. This is a direct restatement of Tarkovsky's favourite theme, although 'direct' is perhaps a misleading term. His style is deliberately meditative and allusive, while the almost gnostic mix of Christian and pagan sensibilities makes for a confusing, if often beautiful film.

Catholic critic Steven Greydanus has summarised the complexity well: “The film's theme is complicated by the joining of two originally separate story ideas, one involving a holocaust offered in satisfaction of a vow to God, the other borrowed from a pagan fertility-cult ritual... there is a dialectic of Christian and pagan

ideas.”

It is a complication that, in my view, Tarkovsky cannot overcome. It is beyond even his poetic talents to splice incompatible storylines. That was also the view of the audience I watched it with who were confused, disappointed and, as they frankly said, quite bored.

Their mood was not helped by the style in which the story is captured, one typical of Tarkovsky's symbolic mindset. He layers his films with images and sounds that build up a ritual significance, like the repetition of prayers in an Orthodox service.

The film is made up of long, languorous takes composed in the flat Swedish landscapes, or else strikingly rendered (and equally long) close ups of faces lit by the flickering light of a television set. This style is alienating.

### Patience

But it is very deliberate and, handled with patience, does open up some possible interest. For instance, the staging is very deliberate, with interior shots composed so that it looks like the characters are acting on a stage. We aren't seeing anything true, just their performances. They are pretending to be men and women.

It takes the shock of the apocalypse to drive them out of their complacency and back into the natural world. It should be no surprise, in this light, that the key act of the film involves the destruction of the home – their stage – leaving them homeless, but in a strange way free.

It is a film full of possible interest. But there's no denying that the style is alienating and the message confusing. If you want a better insight into the poet-on-celuloid Andrei Tarkovsky, I recommend beginning with *Andrei Rublev* (which is free and legally available on YouTube). To invert the common phrase, if you don't like that, you certainly won't like *The Sacrifice*.

## Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Paul at work in the home of Priscilla and Aquila

## Sts Aquila and Priscilla: The Church's earliest missionary marriage

The myth that only religious can be saints is one that's well and truly on its way to being busted, with the Church making a renewed effort to highlight the many, many people who've walked the path of holiness in many different forms of life. July 8, a missionary, married couple from the early Church remind us of the sanctity of a good marriage and how God can and will use this Sacrament to his ends.

Saints Aquila and Priscilla are best known for their deep friendship with that most famous of apostles, Paul. Appearing in both the Acts of the Apostles and in some of Paul's letters, they were clearly an important influence in the life of the early Church.

Aquila was a Jewish Christian, believed to be from Pontus (a region in modern day Turkey) who moved to Rome, where he met his wife, Priscilla. When we first encounter Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18, we hear that they'd fled not just Rome, but Italy altogether, on foot of the Emperor Claudius' order that Jews had to leave.

“After this he [Paul] left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a

native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers.” (Acts 18:1-3)

Clearly, Aquila and Priscilla settled in Corinth after their flight from Rome, where they encountered St Paul. As Scripture says, tentmakers by trade, they lived and worked together for a time towards the founding and upbuilding of the Church in Corinth.

After some time, when Paul upped and left Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him as far as Ephesus. There the couple stayed, and as Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) tells us, there they established a church in their own home: “Aquila and Priscilla, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.”

An image very reminiscent of the family as “domestic Church” that we've rightly heard so much about lately, it's worth meditating on the friendship between Paul and the couple. Far from it simply being the case that they benefitted from

Paul's great holiness (although they surely did), I imagine Paul was refreshed and restored by the love, warmth and support of this married couple. Living a hard life on the road for the sake of Christ and his Church, the home of Aquila and Priscilla must have been a beacon in an often dark and weary world for Paul.

We know Aquila and Priscilla drew deeply from the sources of life God gave them – the scriptures, for example. During their time in Ephesus, an eloquent preacher, Apollos, “well versed in the scriptures” came and taught people there. He spoke well of Christ, and fortunately the holy couple were there to enhance his capabilities in Christ.

“He [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.” (Acts 18:26)

Priscilla and Aquila offer us a perfect example of the holy potential of marriage, that God desires us to tap into. A well-spring of love and faith for all who encountered them to benefit from. Their hospitality and steadfastness remain a lesson to us all.



# Embracing the ‘other’



**Susan  
Hines-Brigger**

**T**en years ago, I travelled to Assisi, Italy, on pilgrimage, to follow in the footsteps of St Francis.

For days, we immersed ourselves in the words and actions of St Francis throughout his life.

Of all the moments that resonated with me, though, there was one story that seemed especially challenging – both for him and me. That was the story of St Francis embracing the leper.

In Assisi during Francis’ time, those suffering from leprosy were relegated to the plains below the city, far from the everyday view of the town’s residents. Francis himself admitted that he was repulsed by the sight of the lepers.

## Profound

Therefore, it was quite a profound conversion for Francis when he encountered a leper on the road one day and, instead of turning away, reached out and embraced him. In the leper, he suddenly saw Christ.

When I listened to the story, I remember immediately wondering how I would have reacted had I been in Francis’ place? Would I have been loving enough to look beyond the illness and see the person?

In the years since, I have often replayed that same question in

my mind when I have encountered people that society tends to deem as “the other”. Those people, though not marked by physical illness as the lepers were, can be marked by things such as poverty, illness, addiction, sexuality, race or many other things that can force people to the margins of society.

Sometimes, I think we might marginalise these people out of fear. Or maybe we do it simply out of a lack of investment – if it doesn’t affect my life, why should I bother?

**“We made eye contact and he gave me a nod and a soft smile, almost as if to absolve me from my judgment of him. The light changed and I went along my way”**

But much like with many things in our lives, we only confront the divisions that have crept into our lives when we come face to face with the reality of those situations and it closely touches our lives.

Only then are we called – much like St Francis – to make the decision to either embrace the other or turn our backs. I am sorry to say that there have been times when I’ve done both. We probably all have.

In fact, I can still recall one rainy day when I was driving with a friend and we came to a stoplight. Standing on the sidewalk directly next to us was a weathered and dirty man sitting atop a bucket, holding a tattered cardboard sign asking for food or

money. The rain had soaked his clothes and he hung his head to deflect the water from falling on his face.

Immediately, my friend told me not to look over toward him. If I did, she said, he’d probably come over to the car. Anyway, he probably only wanted money for drugs, she added. I’m embarrassed to say that the same thought briefly crossed my mind.

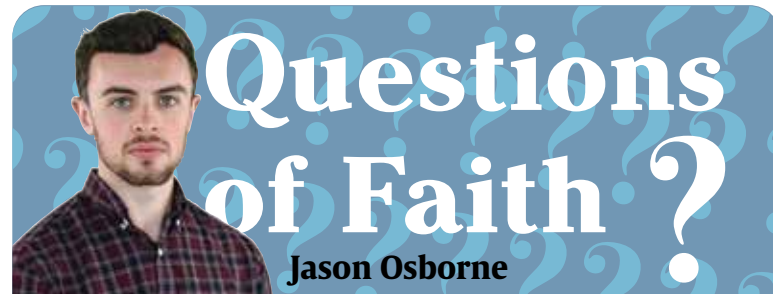
As I sat there, waiting for the light to turn, I glanced over at the man. We made eye contact and he gave me a nod and a soft smile, almost as if to absolve me from my judgment of him. The light changed and I went along my way.

## St Francis

After I drove away, I remember wondering if that was my “St Francis embracing the leper” moment and I had carelessly driven away from it. After dropping off my friend, I retraced my route to once again find the man and bring him the umbrella I had in my car, as well as a warm meal and a blanket. But he was gone. I had missed my opportunity.

The remembrance of that day, along with the memory of St Francis and his own encounter of the other, continues to challenge me today. For in the other, I can see Christ, if I only take the time to look.

**i** Susan Hines-Brigger is a mother of four, ranging in age from 23 to 11. She is also an executive editor of St Anthony Messenger magazine.



## Is God a narcissist?

**A** common line of thought these days among critics of religion, and Christianity in particular, is that God must be a major narcissist, creating a world full of people, animals and more, to sing his praises from now through to eternity. Commandments from throughout the Bible to love and worship God, a ‘jealous’ God, have been taken to mean that God is personally slighted if we set our sights on something – or someone – other than him.

### Condemns

The claim that God is a narcissist is often backed up by the idea that he condemns those who refuse to worship him to hell. Is his desire then, his demand, for our worship the sign of a narcissist?

The first point to make is to clarify that God doesn’t need our worship, he wants our worship. That’s important to emphasise, as it makes all the difference. God exists in a manner very difficult for us to grasp – impossible for us to grasp, in some sense – being not only the perfect being, but being itself. Without getting too wrapped up in theology, it’s enough to say that God doesn’t need things in the same way we finite humans do. In fact, creation itself is the result of his superabundance. The Trinity of persons that God is so full of love that it ‘boiled over’ into creation, that that love and joy might be multiplied.

As such, God doesn’t need anything from us – everything we have was given to us by him in the first place. He does, however, want our love, our worship and not because he gets a kick out of it in the same way we do when we receive praise and acclaim on social media for a photo or a post. He wants our worship because he wants us to share in the kind of joy that he himself enjoys, and we can only

do that by entering into the relationship of love and service that he himself is.

How do we do that? By worshipping him. As mentioned, everything we have was given to us by God in the first place, so that the only thing of value we have to give him is our hearts – we can direct our free will towards him. As God is objectively the greater being, the greatest being in fact, the only appropriate stance for us to take towards him is one of adoration and worship.

Does God condemn us to hell if we refuse to do this? No, we condemn ourselves. A useful analogy I heard in relation to this topic before is that of a party. If the most joyous party in the universe were taking place and you refused to join it for some reason or other, despite having a full invitation, you would in that case be ‘condemning’ yourself to a more miserable time. In our case, the communion of love that God invites us to enter into with himself and others is the party, and those of us who refuse to open up to him and to others – through selfishness, pride, bitterness or any other reason – are relegating ourselves to a hell of our own making.

### Experiences

It may be the case that we’ve had experiences or struggled in the past to enter into a relationship with God, and that’s OK. The Church teaches though (on the very first page of the Catechism) that “at every time and in every place, God draws close to man”. His invitation is never rescinded, and he does not suffer a personal slight which he holds against us if we reject it. As it says in the same paragraph of the Catechism, he continuously calls us to “share in his own blessed life” by worshipping him and serving both him and others.





# Scripture says we have no lasting city...



Scripture tells us that in this life we have no lasting city. True enough. But, it seems, we also don't have a lasting house, school, neighbourhood, town, zip code address or most anything else. Eventually nothing lasts.

Perhaps my case isn't typical, but a lot of things in my life haven't lasted. My grandparents were immigrants, Russian-Germans, moving to the Canadian prairies and being among the first farmers to break the soil there at the beginning of the 1900s. They were young, so too was life then on the prairies, and their generation planted new farms, schools, towns, and cities across the great plains of Canada and the USA. I was born into the second generation of all that – but just as urbanisation and other changes were already beginning to cause the disappearance of a lot of what they had built.

## No lasting school

So, here's my story of having no lasting city: The elementary school I went to closed after I'd finished the sixth grade. We were bused to a bigger centralised school and our old school building was carted away. Nothing remains today to indicate there once was a school there. The new school I attended closed several years after I'd graduated. The building itself was razed and today the entire former campus is part of a farmer's field with only a small plaque to indicate there once was vibrant life there, with hundreds of young voices filling the air with energy. That school was a couple of miles out of a small town and that



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

town itself has now completely disappeared, without a single building left.

## Novitiate house

I went from high school to an Oblate novitiate house situated in the heart of the Qu'Appelle valley, a beautiful stately building on a lake.

**“Each of these is a mini death, leaving a part of my soul rootless”**

Several years after I'd graduated from there, the building was sold and soon afterwards was destroyed in a fire. Only an empty stretch of prairie sits there now. From there, I

moved to another seminary, a magnificent old building (formerly the government house for the Northwest Territories) and spent six wonderful years there. Again, several years after I'd graduated, the building was abandoned, and it too was eventually destroyed by a fire.

## Theological college

From there I moved to Newman Theological College in Edmonton where I spent the next 15 years. Newman College had a beautiful campus on the outskirts of the city, but several years after I'd left, the campus was expropriated by the city to build a ring road and all its buildings were razed. From there, I moved to a wonderfully homey building, the Oblate Provincial residence in Saskatoon.

Several years later, after I'd moved out, that building too was razed and nothing remains where it once stood. And, while all this was happening, the little town to which our family was connected (for mail, for groceries, for services, for identity) became a ghost town with no inhabitants, all its buildings shuttered.

## Texas

Eventually, I moved to Oblate School of Theology in Texas to live in a welcoming little house designated for the president of the school. However, after a few years, the land it was on was needed for a new seminary and that house too was razed. Finally, most painful of all, two years ago, our family house, our home for more than 70 years, was sold and the new owners (sensitive enough to ask our family's permission to do so) burned the old house to the ground.

That's a lot of roots disappearing: my elementary school, my high school, the town our family was connected to, both seminaries from which I graduated, the college

where I first taught, both Oblate houses I'd spent wonderful years within, and the family house – all gone, razed to the ground, nothing left to go back to.

## Nostalgia

What does that do to you? Well, there's nostalgia, yes. How I would again love to walk into any of those buildings, feel what they once meant to me, and bask in memories. None of that can happen. Each of these is a mini death, leaving a part of my soul rootless. On the other hand, more positively, all that unwanted letting go is helping prepare me for an ultimate letting go, when I will be facing my own death, and not just some haunting nostalgia.

As well, this has taught me something else of substance. Buildings and houses may disappear, but home is not contingent on them. Rene Fumoleau, a poet among the Dene tribes, shares how he once visited a family the day after their house had been destroyed by fire and had this conversation with a young girl:

“The next day I visited the burned out family.

What could I say after such a tragedy?

I tried with the ten-year old daughter:

‘Joan, you must feel terrible without home.’

The young girl knew better:

‘Oh, we still have our home,

But we have no house to put on it.” (*Home – Here I Sit*)

Yes, we can still have a home even without our former house on it.

**“All that unwanted letting go is helping prepare me for an ultimate letting go, when I will be facing my own death, and not just some haunting nostalgia”**



# Christian love is the way of service



14th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Zec 9:9-10  
Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14  
Rom 8:9, 11-13  
Mt 11:25-30

**J**esus makes us an invitation that is irresistible: “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Who would not want that? The devout Jews of his day were used to difficult



## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon  
Greg  
Kandra

yokes and heavy burdens – restrictions, rules, rubrics. But here, he was telling them: my way is different. It isn't a way to make your shoulders ache and your knees sore. No. It's a way of mercy. Of renewal. Of compassion. Of love.

### Humble

Significantly, he tells his listeners, learn from his example, “for I am meek and humble of heart”. As much as Jesus teaches that his yoke is “easy,” it does come with a catch: humility.

Most of us know that's

not how the world works. All you need to do is scan the headlines on any given morning, and you'll see that power accrues to the ruthless, the brutish, the arrogant, the proud. The most influential people in the world are rarely the humblest.

**“To love another person and to be loved in return is an act of humility”**

But as he did so often, Jesus turned the world's expectations upside down. What he is saying here is altogether new and, really, radical. He taught those who would become the first Christians that what they would eventually call

‘The Way’ was a way of the small and the meek; he would remind them on the night before he died that the truest model of Christian love wasn't something noble, grandiose or intimidating. It was, in fact, the image of a humble man with a basin and a towel, who got down on his knees to wash dirt from the feet of his friends.

It was about service. And it still is.

### Extraordinary

In these summer days of Ordinary Time, we are reminded just how extraordinary the call to living as a Christian really is. We're reminded, too, of Zechariah's prophetic words: “Your king shall come to you; a just saviour is he, meek, and riding on an ass.”

This really goes to the heart of what the Christian life entails. My friend Deacon William Ditewig recently published a book, *Courageous Humility*, that outlines this particular vision for the Church as a

place of meekness and, yes, humility.

“To love another person and to be loved in return is an act of humility,” he writes, noting that “the bottom line is that the Church is humble because our God is humble”. He quotes theologian Richard Gaillardetz, who observed, “Once you've begun to imagine a Church that makes mistakes, you have the beginning of a humble Church”.

In a world consumed by politicians who thump their chests and point their fingers, and civic leaders who rarely admit to mistakes (and some Church leaders who aren't very good at doing that, either), the readings this week are a bracing splash of cold water.

Do we understand what it means to be “meek and humble of heart”? Do we realise that to live in the imitation of Christ means exactly that? Are we willing to do that?

It's not that hard, Jesus

says – but, let's face it: that doesn't mean it is easy.

### Strength

What Jesus is asking doesn't require superhuman strength. It requires, instead, qualities that could challenge any hard soul – things like meekness and humility, self-denial and sacrifice.

Looked at that way, maybe the defining question is: Are we big enough to become smaller? That is the way to true Christian discipleship.

Jesus, showing us another way of living, shows us also ‘The Way’ to perfect love. A way to grace. A way to draw ever-closer to the merciful and humble heart of God.

To a weary world, it's an invitation we've been waiting for.

How can we possibly refuse?

**i** Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, *The Deacon's Bench*. He serves in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

**“Once you've begun to imagine a Church that makes mistakes, you have the beginning of a humble Church”**



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## An uplifting portrait of the work of religious

I know media outlets have to report the bad news, but sometimes I question the priorities and the prominence. So, it's welcome to hear a good news story, with people at their inspiring best.

The story of Sr Helen Culhane on **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio One, Wednesday) fit the bill. A Sister of Mercy in every sense, she had pioneered a new children's grief centre in Limerick – to support children who were suffering loss, whether through death, divorce or separation. It was a welcoming, child-friendly place, and free to users. We heard touching testimonies from some very articulate young people that had benefitted from the service. John Cooke's report and presenter Sarah McInerney's comments were very positive.

The biggest media story of the week continued to be the fallout from the hidden payments to Ryan Tubridy in RTÉ. Whether it should have been so dominant is questionable, when you consider all the other really important stuff going on the world. Those we normally see reporting the news increasingly became participants in the story. It was topsy turvy time. If Ryan Tubridy was removed from his radio show, for "editorial reasons" (so said interim director general Alan Lynch) because the presenter couldn't be at the centre of the story, how about the positions of those other reporters? What about the gold standard of media



Sr Helen Culhane RSM

neutrality? The pinnacle of media oddness for me was **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ Radio One, Friday) when education correspondent Emma O'Kelly, wearing her NUJ hat, was interviewed by Áine Lawlor. She hit hard – saying RTÉ had "lost sight entirely of its public service remit". In my view RTÉ news and current affairs has fallen down regularly in the past on this front, with its biased panels, activist stances and self-congratulation. The controversy continues.

Last week a different controversy featured on **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Tuesday), in relation to proposed legislation on 'safe access zones' around places

providing 'termination services'. If only maternity hospitals and clinics could be safe zones for both mothers and their unborn babies! Stand-in presenter Anton Savage did ask Health Minister Stephen Donnelly some searching and intelligent questions to clarify the extent of the proposals and did raise issues around rights to free speech and protest. The minister, as always, sounded all reasonable and plausible when describing the most gruesome of activities...grateful I'm sure for the power of euphemism. We learned that church grounds were explicitly exempted, even if they were within the 100-metre buffer zone.

On the same show, we got yet another supporter of the buffer zones: Karen Sugrue of the group Together for Safety in Limerick (more wielding of euphemism). She said people would still have a right to protest but would have to move "just a little" away from the premises. Has she tried walking 100 metres? The presenter put it to her that the protestors could see their action as the last chance to save a life. Ms Sugrue didn't disagree and saw the protestors as "people of good heart".

Maybe to redress this imbalance, Niamh Uí Bhriain of the Rally for Life appeared on **The Anton Savage Show** (Newstalk, Saturday). She got

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### THE ANGELUS

RTÉ One nightly, 6pm

This week: young adults with Down Syndrome, a painter at Ballindoon Abbey, a stonemason in Bolinree, a textile artist in Listowel, an horologist in Carrick-on-Shannon, a pilgrimage in Galway and a reflection from the Limerick School Of Art and Design.

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday July 9, 11.30am

Katherine Jenkins joins celebrations at the Catholic cathedral in Arundel, West Sussex, marking the Feast of Corpus Christi.

#### MOTHER CABRINI

EWTN Sunday July 9, 9pm

An EWTN original movie on the life of St Frances Xavier Cabrini, who founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and established missions around the world.

more of a grilling than Mr Donnelly or Ms Sugrue got back on the Tuesday. When Ms Uí Bhriain said that around 31,000 babies had died by abortion since it was legalised, Mr Savage said "that's a very emotive way to phrase it", a phrase I've never heard used to a pro-choice activist. He said these were pregnancies ended rather than babies! Ms Uí Bhriain said the baby was fully formed at 10 or 12 weeks, but Mr Savage became didactic – "that's simply not the case" and shifted off to a point about viability. Then he further moved the goalposts to talk about the first few days after conception, and referenced a "small collections of cells", a bit ironic

coming from a large collection of cells!

Ms Uí Bhriain plugged that day's Rally for Life. In that Saturday evening's headlines (5pm) on Newstalk the rally was described as attracting "hundreds" of attendees, while the **Six One News** (RTÉ One) referred to "around 3,000" and had it at the tail end of the news items. Those Newstalk headlines said it started with Mass but in fact it was optional and before the rally (possibly shorthand for 'just a Catholic thing – ignore!'). RTÉ's brief video coverage (no interviews) also included a religious image. Stereotyping?

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## India's Howard Beale in firing line

*While We Watched* (15A) is an engrossing documentary from director Vinay Shukla (*An Insignificant Man*) that shines a laser beam into a dark porthole of India. It follows veteran TV reporter Ravish Kumar into dangerous territory as he struggles with Hindu nationalists and other forces seeking to silence him.

Kumar has won many prizes for his uncompromising reports into issues like unemployment, the abuse of civil rights and governmental abuses. He's been unfairly described as a communist in some quarters. He's also routinely heckled. There have even been threats on his life. This has led to him employing

a bodyguard for some of his assignments.

NDTV, the station for which he works as executive editor, has also had its signal blocked on occasion. It struggles to stay afloat in a world of rising costs. It's had to shred its staff in recent years in a bid to keep these down.

The 'farewell cake' has become a near ubiquitous phenomenon in the newsroom as yet another worker bites the dust. The refusal of bank loans, raids from the tax authorities and withdrawal of government advertising have also contributed to the financial problems of NDTV.

Notwithstanding such difficulties, Kumar and his col-



Ravish Kumar, a TV journalist based in India

leagues have continued to look for "the story behind the story". This is in marked contrast to sycophantic 'yes-men' from most of the other Indian stations who tend to sing from the prevailing government's hymn sheet, delivering propa-

gandist broadcasts that are in line with their agendas.

Kumar has put his neck on the line in his quest for accuracy. He's avoided the misinformation and disinformation that's often laid at his door – and the "fake news", to use

Donald Trump's phrase, that so often doubles for truth on Twitter feeds. Unreliable social media platforms all too often serve as mouthpieces for prejudicial trolls of a tabloid media culture rather than the carefully researched work upon which he prides himself.

*While We Watched* was shot between 2018 and 2020. It's taken this long to get to the screen due to Shukla's rigorous editing. It's a pity that this has led to the elimination of the lighter aspects of Kumar's personality. Shukla felt these got in the way of the film's central message about the necessity of integrity in reporting at a time when such a quality was so often absent.

"I've stopped watching the news," he said after he delivered the final cut, "to protect my mental health".

At a screening of the film in Dublin some time ago, cinematographer Amaan Shaikh made the eerie prediction that journalists who swam against the tide in India were an "endangered species".

In such a scenario, Kumar is something of an anachronism. But he's still out there doing what he has to do. It's to his credit that despite all the slings and arrows that have been cast in his path, he resolutely keeps searching for what should always be the fourth estate's main priority: the truth.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## An Irish gentleman in the wilds of the Ottoman Holy Land

'Irish Explorers of the Jordan Rift Valley and the Euphrates Valley in the 1830s: Scientific Adventure and Imperialism', in *George Moore: Dublin, Paris, Hollywood*, by Haim Goren, edited by Conor Montague and Adrian Frazier (Irish Academic Press, €26.99 pb/ €44.99 hb)

Peter Costello

I was recently given this book as a present from someone who knew of my great interest in George Moore. The connection is a strange one, in that a governess of the Moore boys at Moore Hall later went on to the children of an ancestor of another family connection. The belief in the family was that this governess with her strict Jansenist views was responsible for Master George's views in later life.

I would not expect all readers of this paper to share this interest. But one article in this splendid collection caught my attention at once, as having an element that would indeed interest readers.

It deals with the role of George Henry Moore, the owner of Moore Hall, in the days of the Land War, and the father of George and Col. Maurice Moore, as a pioneering explorer of the Holy Land.

At this time of year many people are setting off on pilgrimages to the Holy Land (a place now more dangerous than it was in the days of the Ottoman Empire).

They take with them guides of all kinds, the best of which might be noted here. The work of Fr Jerome Murphy-O'Connor for the historically minded, and of course our own Michael Kelly, for a well informed pocket-book to carry with you.

### Connection

For an overview of our own nation's connection with the Holy Land over the centuries there is Con Costello's *Ireland and the Holy Land* (1974), a former army officer's tribute to the region where he served in a vital role with the United Nations.

The knowledge we find in these excellent guidebooks of today is ultimately reared



The salt encrusted shores of the Dead Sea.

on the work and exploits of those who began in the 19th Century to survey the Holy Land and map it, recording as they did so the all-important place names.

The aim of modern scholarship to see Jesus in his own place and time is important to the deepest understanding of the New Testament. The time and the place are important. So explorers have a role just as important as textual scholars.

**“The idea of an Irish man in 1837, not merely visiting, but consciously exploring the Jordan Valley is indeed an exciting one”**

The pioneering work of the survey of Palestine was done on the ground by such men as George Henry Moore. The author of this paper, alas, is unclear in his mind about the importance of the Moore family in Irish life, of their connection with the Rebellion of 1798, of GH Moore as a leader of the Irish Independent Parliamentary Party that preceded Parnell's party, of Col. Maurice and George as Irish patriots in their very different ways and

indeed of George Moore in his novel *The Brook Kerith* (1916) as a very different kind of explorer of the Holy Land.

So I thought the notion of an Irish landlord as an explorer in the path of the patriarchs, of the Apostles and of Jesus was not to be neglected. But the idea of an Irish man in 1837, not merely visiting, but consciously exploring the Jordan Valley is indeed an exciting one. Though his later efforts were frustrated and met with disappointment, it in no way detracts from the extraordinary nature of what he discovered.

By scientific tests on site, so to speak, he found that the Dead Sea, which had attracted the attention of travellers for centuries, lay more than 1,292 feet (394 metres) below the level of the Mediterranean; and more than that, the actual bed of the Dead Sea itself lies 2,570 feet (783 metres) below sea level.

These figures are from a German-American scientist; Haim Goren, though hail-

ing the importance of the discovery, fails to bring out the underlying significance for today of what Moore and his colleague, WG Beke had found.

This discovery of how great a slash nature had made through the rocks in this

northern extension of Africa's Rift valley was recorded and applauded in the professional geographical journals, but seems to have attracted little attention at home as Moore was described in the by scientists across Europe as an 'Englishman'.

There were quite a number of other Irish men involved in later forays into the Holy Land in quest of scientific knowledge, and some are mentioned here – indeed enough to compile into a book. But Moore's discovery, though among the earliest, remains the most significant.

The author of the article does not allude to this aspect of the matter – he has other modern anti-Imperialist considerations on his mind.

I allude to it here as I think it is very important. In about 1925 a French engineer Pierre Gandrillon proposed that the differential fall between the sea and the lake could be utilised in a grand scheme for power generation.

This involved pumping sea water from near Haifa through a canal down through what was then the British Mandate territory and the Kingdom of Jordan to fall into the Dead Sea after passing through two power plants.

### Troubled

The troubled state of the British Mandate meant that politics and religion as well as cost precluded the scheme. But in 1934 an American expert, Dr Walter Lowdermilk, proposed a variant of the plan with the canal running through Mandate Territory only.

The political situation which prevented these engineers' dreams from going ahead has only grown more extreme.

Yet they are quite practical and do not interfere with the flow of the Jordan such as it is. We always tend to think of the Jordan from our childhood as a great broad pleasantly streaming river. It is no such thing. It is a very unattractive water course that ancient Hebrew writers thought little enough of, and

that even the Bible has little praise for.

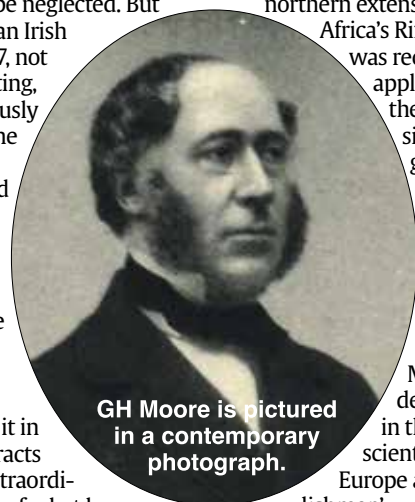
**“The discovery of that Irish gentleman George Henry Moore will receive its right and proper praise”**

Still it is now lodged in the imaginations of Jews, Christians and Muslims alike that it must be left untouched.

But it is to be hoped that a time will come that the various entities with an interest in the Jordan and the Dead Sea will come together and achieve a combined reconciliation of the engineering problems and begin to produce the energy so badly needed sans oil.

When that time comes the discovery of that Irish gentleman George Henry Moore will receive its right and proper praise. History exists to remind us not only of lost greatness, but also of future possibilities.

But what has this to do with religion? I have been asked. Anything that helps our understanding of the time and the place of Jesus is surely important. As I say, an understanding of the Truth can only be built on a solid foundation of truth.



GH Moore is pictured in a contemporary photograph.



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.

# Seeking out the truth in life

**A Quest for Meaning: A Journey Through Philosophy, Science and Spirituality,** by Gearóid Ó Donnchadha (Orpen Press, €14.99/£12.99)

**J. Anthony Gaughan**

**T**his is a stimulating book by an author who in his lifetime as a teacher invited and delighted in argument and debate.

Gearóid Ó Donnchadha was a very committed priest and a very committed academic. Born on March 24, 1933, he grew up in Killarney, Co. Kerry, and was educated at the Presentation Monastery school, St Brendan's College, Killarney, and St Patrick's College Maynooth, where he was ordained in 1957.

## Ministered

He ministered in the early years of his priesthood in his home diocese of Kerry. Thereafter, he studied and lectured in a number of colleges and universities in the US. Retiring to his diocese in 1980, thence to the end of his active ministry, he lectured on sociology in the Tralee Regional Technical College which has now become a constituent of the Munster Technological University. The book is a collection of musings and reflections from his various postings.

At the outset Gearóid sets out his intention. He regards

it as a mission to place before an increasingly educated public the facts of an area about which there is a great lack of understanding; the area of the spiritual, of God, of theology, of morality, of philosophy and of the history of religion.

He also has an ancillary aim, namely to promote empathy. This he describes as a human being's capacity to perceive and understand another human being's emotions, feelings and thoughts. This, he claims is a crucial factor for a successful teacher – student relationship.

Gearóid highlights the awesome advances in the physical and social sciences during the last half-century. He is particularly interested in psychology and psychiatry and especially the Viennese School of Alfred Adler (1870-1937), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Viktor Frankl (1905-1997).

He dismisses Adler's attempt to explain human conduct in materialist terms and the will to dominate others. And he rejects Freud's claim that all human conduct is prompted by the sexual instinct. He finds Frankl's explanation of human behaviour more amenable. Curiously, for one who spent time in a Concentration Camp, Frankl stressed the power of love and the need to respect the rights of others and promoted both of these in his School of Psychotherapy.

Gearóid provides a 'warts and all' account of the 2,000-



The boy Jesus disputing with the Doctors in the Temple – a paradigm of how to debate.

year history of the Church. Underlying his narrative is an ever-recurring theme.

## Oversight

He notes that, of those charged with its development and oversight, some adopted a legalistic approach, while others were more focused on the crucial importance of love and mercy.

This dualism he traces back to the Council in Jerusalem, where Peter and Paul differed on the need for Gentile converts to submit to Jewish religious regulations. In this regard he is severely critical of a number of self-aggrandising popes who he regards to be responsible for an over-legalistic approach in the Church down through the centuries.

In his reflections Gearóid does not omit referring to what have become known as 'hot-button issues' in the Church today: married priests, women priests, re-assessment of the moral teaching on homosexuality, marriage after divorce, democratisation of the Church at all levels. On these and other topics, he has vigorous and radical comments to make. However, he is not afraid to challenge the prevailing culture. For instance, he is adamant in stressing the intrinsic evil of abortion.

One thing is certain about this book. It will make you think, and that of course was Gearóid's main aim in writing it.

## Hopkins Summer School goes from strength to strength

### Books Editor

**T**his year's Gerard Manley Hopkins International Festival will take place in Newbridge College, Co. Kildare from July 21 to 27 inclusive. It should not be missed.

The festival has been held every last week in July since 1987, an unmatched record in Ireland.

It celebrates, of course, one of the greatest of Victorian poets, a Jesuit priest whose last years were spent teaching classics in University College Dublin to reluctant students.

Described as "the best literary festival in Ireland", it incorporates a highly regarded literary conference, a youth programme, creative writing workshop for emerging writers, a music workshop, a translation workshop, as well as an art exhibition, international poetry readings, and a nightly festival club.

No wonder it has also been called "A bright gem in the literary world".

The organisers have announced that "the Festival 2023, our 35th event,



Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins as a young man.

will be graciously opened by HE Claire Cronin, American Ambassador to Ireland, at 7.30 pm on July 21, in Newbridge College Theatre".

The opening event, art exhibition and festival club each evening is free to members of the public. Tickets for any or all other events including the annual classical concert can be booked on their website [www.gerardmanleyhopkins.org](http://www.gerardmanleyhopkins.org), where you can also view

the full festival programme. Kildare itself is now such a lively county that those who live in or near Newbridge should make every effort to support poet Des Egan and his associates in the remarkable work they do.

Its importance is that it is the only Irish summer school at which music, art, philosophy, spirituality and just plain religion all play important parts.



Author Gearóid Ó Donnchadha navigating the shoals of his life.







# Leisure time

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

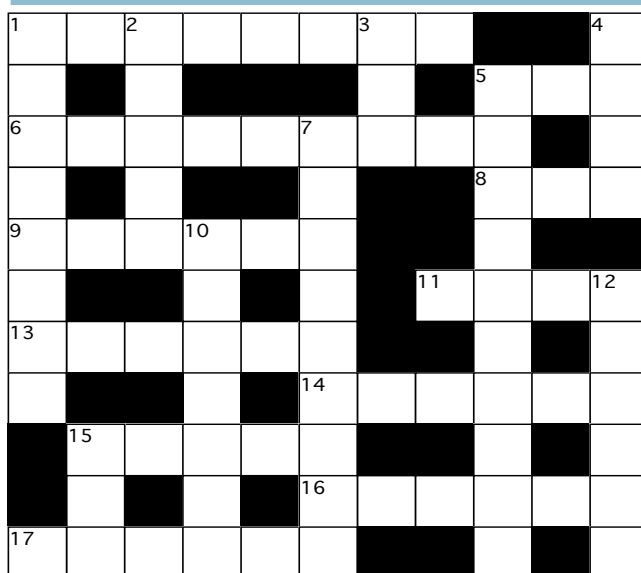
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One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

### Crossword Junior

Gordius 490



#### Across

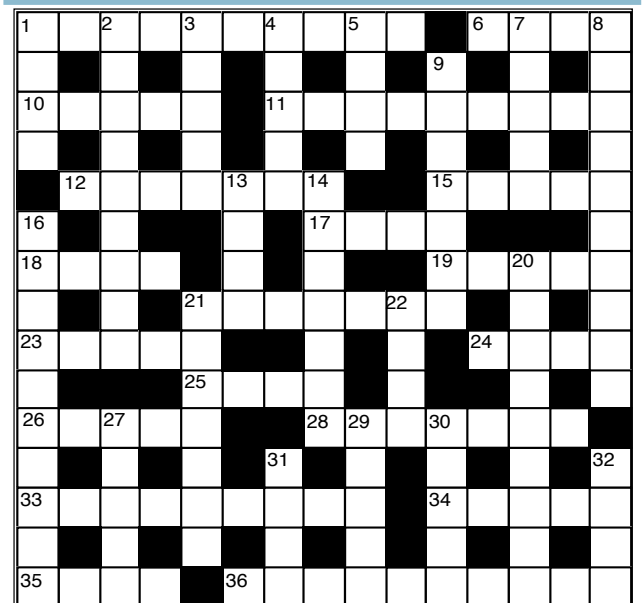
- 1 Animated films (8)
- 5 Insect which lives in a colony (3)
- 6 This reptile looks a bit like a crocodile (9)
- 8 Plant that grows up walls and trees (3)
- 9 Elves (6)
- 11 Male deer (4)
- 13 Huge seas (6)
- 14 You might sip a hot drink from this (6)
- 15 Beijing and Shanghai are in this Asian country (5)
- 16 This plant might sting you (6)
- 17 What a police officer may do to a criminal (6)

#### Down

- 1 The winner of the whole tournament (8)
- 2 Take it easy (5)
- 3 An almond, perhaps (3)
- 4 Don't go (4)
- 5 Disney cartoon about a group of kittens (10)
- 7 Helper (9)
- 10 Dream up (7)
- 12 Burrowing creature such as the ground squirrel and prairie dog (6)
- 15 Automobile (3)

### Crossword

Gordius 618



#### Across

- 1 High-ranking clergyman (10)
- 6 Virtuous (4)
- 10 & 15a The tolling of a bell to mark someone's demise (5,5)
- 11 South American country, capital Caracas (9)
- 12 Long narrow flag (7)
- 15 See 10 across
- 17 Sparkling Italian wine (4)
- 18 Usually, they're the best cards (4)
- 19 Works for a wage (5)
- 21 Crossbreed, cur (7)
- 23 Latin American dance (5)
- 24 PR version of certain news (4)
- 25 Pleasant (4)
- 26 Intended (5)
- 28 & 3d A brother of playwright Brendan, he wrote the song "The Patriot Game" (7,5)
- 33 It's important how some mount has moved! (9)
- 34 Nimble (5)
- 35 Badger's home (4)
- 36 One who takes on the champion, or the name of an ill-fated space shuttle (10)

#### Down

- 1 Finds the total (4)
- 2 Reptile with extraordinary

#### camouflage (9)

- 3 See 28 across
- 4 & 8d Pride and Wrath are two of these (5,6,4)
- 5 Has possession of scattered snow (4)
- 7 Variety of daisy named after part of an animal (5)
- 8 See 4 down
- 9 Old Testament prophet whose name means 'God Strengthens' (7)
- 13 The highest male voice (4)
- 14 Fouled, enmeshed (7)
- 16 Theatrical shows traditionally staged around Christmas time (10)
- 20 Mending (9)
- 21 The fourth largest state in the USA, capital Helena (7)
- 22 Test (4)
- 27 Let in or own up (5)
- 29 Songbird - a type of thrush (5)
- 30 Mindless, silly (5)
- 31 Scottish lake (4)
- 32 Dread (4)

### SOLUTIONS, JUNE 29TH

GORDIUS NO. 617

**Across** - 1 Clean slate 6 Anna 10 Among 11 Candlemas 12 Currant 13 Nadir 17 Raki 18 Toil 19 Cecil 21 Carpark 23 Panda 24 Inca 25 Poke 26 Eyots 28 Damsons 33 Swallowed 34 Horse 35 Nook 36 Smart bombs

**Down** - 1 Cran 2 Evolution 3 Niger 4 Lucan 5 Tank 7 Nomad 8 Australian 9 Old Nick 13 Abba 14 Trapped 16 Stephenson 20 Conundrum 21 Capsule 22 Room 27 Otago 29 Alder 30 Sahib 31 Swam 32 Lens

CHILDREN'S No. 489

**Across** - 1 Candlestick 7 Lorries 9 Pal 10 Date 12 Feet 14 Tea 15 Errand 17 Return 18 Witch 19 Invite 21 Glad 22 Antlers

**Down** - 1 California 2 Nurse 3 Laid 4 Sister 5 Imp 6 Killed 8 Eaten 11 Earrings 13 Tourist 16 Nectar 20 Eve

### Sudoku Corner

490

Easy

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

Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 489

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

### Last week's Hard 489

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



Notebook

Fr John Harris OP



# The end of a religious era in Ireland?

**A number of years ago** I was giving a retreat to priests in the USA. Most of them had been born in Ireland and had spent all of their priesthood in various dioceses. They are what used to be known in the Church in America as FBIs (foreign born Irish), to distinguish them from those of the American born clergy of Irish descent who filled the ranks of the various diocese around America. In many ways while the great European nations were building empires for themselves in the 19th Century the Irish were building a different empire, which has lasted longer than the other empires. The Irish were building up the Church in America, Australasia, Africa and Asia.



**Ordination**

I remember one man in particular who was celebrating his golden jubilee of ordination. He had left Co. Clare and was serving in the southern states of America. He used to laugh and say the first big city he saw after Limerick was New York.

I asked him what he considered the biggest change in the Church in the 50 years since he was ordained in 1955. His answer knocked me for six. He said the absence of nuns. He said that when he was growing

up in Ireland or serving as a young priest, he could never have envisaged a Church without the sisters in the schools, the hospitals and particularly in the USA in the parishes. He said the sisters were the power house of prayer and evangelisation.

As I travel around Ireland and drive through the many small towns, I see so many of the convents either derelict or being used as apartments or hotels. I think back to what that priest said to me. I find myself reflecting on the amazing women who build up our educational and health systems. The women of vision

who had the courage to being our social services.

**Centenary**

Over the last few years, we have been 'celebrating' the centenary of the establishment of the Irish State. What is the greatest difference in 100 years from the Ireland of 1922 and the Ireland of 2023? We have a highly educated, positive-thinking and self-assured population. How much of this is true because of the work of countless sisters in these now abandoned convents? The Irish State and nation are suffering from an institutional and cultural

amnesia. Empty convents all over the country are the only acknowledgement of the immense role these women have played in the Church and in Irish society. Yes, there is a shadow side to the story but there is also a great story of incredible women breaking through countless glass ceilings for their pupils and local communities. We have become accustomed to focusing only on the shadow and not on the bigger picture.

As I drive around and I look at the empty convents I wonder how soon before there will be empty churches and like the nuns we priests too will be a forgotten part of Irish history. Like the religious sisters we priests don't do it for

our own glory but in service of our Lord. Will anyone moan our passing or will the empty churches like today's empty convents be our only monuments?

**Lough Derg**

I was on Lough Derg recently with four of our students for the priesthood. Like everywhere else the numbers have not returned to the pre-pandemic times. I am told that generally church attendances are down about 30% on pre-Covid times. If you are reading this and you haven't been back since before Covid or you have never been on the three-day pilgrimage, I would encourage you to head to the holy island. Lough Derg is a true treasure and a source of renewal for the Church here in Ireland.

**Renewal begins with prayer**

An archbishop in one of the great archdioceses of the Church was once asked on the radio how did he think his diocese could be renewed. His answer was as quick as it was simple: if everyone in my diocese prayed the Morning Offering each morning and went to Mass each Sunday, in a year my diocese would be a new place.



## A poor rural community in Ethiopia need our help to build a solid chapel in place of a grass-roofed one



Fr Amanuel Mulatu CM, a Vincentian missionary in Ethiopia has written to ask for our help in enabling a solid and strong chapel building to be built to replace the grass-roofed one which was put up over a decade ago. The local bishop, Markos Gebremedhin, fully endorses this appeal and says that a modest but a permanent chapel will support evangelization and encourage the spiritual growth of the parish. It will be a worthy place for celebrating the Divine Liturgy and for Eucharistic Adoration.

The faithful people are very poor, depending on rainfall for the growth of maize, beans, coffee and root crops, which in good times they can sell and use themselves. The Manja ethnic minority earn a living partly from the sale of charcoal, firewood and honey. Fr Amanuel has many outstations to take care of and is asking The Little Way for the sum of €9,200 for the new chapel building.

**Can you spare a small gift to build this chapel?**

Your gift will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to Fr Amanuel for the chapel building. You may be sure of the prayers of Father and the people who will pray and worship in their new chapel. (If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).



*"My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is a but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on earth I only have today." - St Therese*

**MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS**

Missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

**We like to send a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass.**

**CAN YOU HELP PROVIDE A WELL?**

The Little Way is constantly receiving requests for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs in mission lands. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk approximately three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

**Every euro you send will be sent direct.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

- I enclose €..... to be allocated to:
- €..... **MISSION CHAPEL IN ETHIOPIA**
- €..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**
- €..... **WELLS AND WATER**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state no. )  
(We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass)
- €..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to [www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address