

# The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, June 20, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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## New Dublin bishop struck by generosity of priests

Matt Letourneau

The new auxiliary bishop of Dublin, Bishop Paul Dempsey has said that he is only a few weeks in Dublin but is already struck by the large size of the parishes and the generosity of the priests.

“One of the things that has struck me in Dublin and I’m only a couple of weeks here is the enormity of the parishes, they are absolutely huge parishes in Dublin and I’m conscious of the generosity of Dublin priests and I’m not just saying that, I’ve seen it myself, guys who are in big parishes who are maybe taking on the responsibility of another neighbouring parish and again the generosity of elderly priests. I’ve met men in their eighties who are still working in parishes that we wouldn’t expect others in society to do. So there’s a huge generosity in Dublin and across the country that I’ve encountered.”

However Bishop Dempsey, who was Bishop of Achonry before his Dublin appointment told *The Irish Catholic* podcast, *The Confession Box*, that painful questions need to be asked.

“We do have to ask the question how long that can continue, in fairness these men are growing older and the energy levels are not going to be the same. I don’t think we can expect priests to be able to give the same service as they are today in ten or fifteen year’s time. And this is not just a priest issue, this is an issue that is going to have to be faced by people and priests, now and into the future, because we can’t keep going they way we’re going. We need to reflect and dialogue and come up with imaginative ways of dealing with it. And it will be painful.”

### Finding St Anthony among the lilies



The congregation holding up their lilies to be blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio Luis Mariano Montemayor in the Church of the Immaculate Conception – Adam and Eve’s on the final evening of the annual St Anthony Novena. The lily is a symbol of St Anthony and a reminder of purity. Photos: John McElroy. See Page 14

### Recognition of Palestine by Ireland ‘well received’ says Gaza priest

**EXCLUSIVE**

Father Gabriel Romanelli, the only Catholic parish priest in the entire Gaza Strip has said that Ireland’s recognition of the state of Palestine was very well received by Christians in Gaza.

“People are very discouraged in general because there is a lot of news on the international scene that seems like promises but is often not kept” he said. “However, the recognition of Palestine by Ireland and others was very well received. Our faithful, then, remem-

ber well that the first state to have recognised Palestine was the Vatican State. Sometimes they feel the Christians of the world are distant from their cause but at the same time they experience the closeness of the universal Church.”

Father Gabriel Romanelli, an

Argentinean of Italian origin, belongs to the religious family of the Incarnate Word. He is the only Catholic parish priest in the entire Gaza Strip. His parish, dedicated to the Holy Family, is located in the al-Zaitoun quarter of Gaza city (north of the Strip)

**NO MORE CASH ON THE PLATE?**

Mary Kenny

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**NUNS, DONKEYS AND A GOAT**

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**PRIEST JUBILIARIANS CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARIES**

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# Sinn Féin ex-politician called traditional Catholics 'fascists' online

## Renata Steffens

Sinn Féin's Sarah Holland, a political activist tweeted twice in June using the word 'fascist' in relation to Christians. On June 6 the ex-politician posted a picture of candles on social media, saying that it was to "let the christo-fascists know that candles have been lit in Medjugorje for all those candidates who \*don't\* hate refugees, since Jesus was one."

A few days later, on

June 10, she reposted a *NewstalkFM* video depicting the *Irish Independent* political correspondent Gabija Gataveckaitė saying that Mary Lou McDonald's leadership of Sinn Féin "hasn't had one successful election".

Reposting the video Ms Holland said: "Trad-cath fascists rubbing their paws together with glee at the thought of Sinn Féin ousting our first female leader. Not going to happen boys, cry harder."

When a follower asked

"what is a tradcath," she replied "Traditional Catholic - they are religious extremists of the type who oppose rights for lgbtq, oppose womens rights etc. Here in Ireland, they have campaigned against marriage equality, divorce, availability of contraception, abortion rights, education reform etc."

On June 10, Ms Holland posted author Umberto Eco's list of '14 tenets of fascism,' with number one being 'the cult of tradition'. She said: "See all these ballbags who are anti-womens rights, extreme trad-catholics and rosary murmurers outside abortion clinics? That's them."

*The Irish Catholic* contacted Ms Holland for comment but she declined.

A spokesperson for the Iona Institute said: "Sweeping, extreme generalisations about Catholics are just as unacceptable as sweeping, extreme generalisations about any other religion."

"Associating saying the rosary outside facilities which carry out abortions with fascism is plainly ridiculous. The fact that she has received no real backlash about these tweets simply proves that you can say pretty much what you like about Catholics in this country, and get away with it."

## A third of homeless are children

### Renata Milán Morales

The lay organisation, 'Homeless run' told this paper that "in recent years, the number of homeless people has been increasing. There are now more than 10000 people, more than a third of them are children." This number is supported by 'The Dublin Region Homeless Executive's most recent report (April 2024), which states that "more than a third of all homeless people are children".

With their focus on each person's dignity, Homeless Run is launching their campaign 'A Roof, A Future'. "Every night, these individuals face the uncertainty and hardships of sleeping on the streets. Without a safe place to rest, rebuilding their lives becomes nearly impossible. This campaign's goal is raising funds to get

them off the streets and help them stay in shelters," said Maria Pineda, a member of the organisation.

Since January 2023, a group of young people decided to take a step forward and act by contributing our small part to building a better world. They gather every second Sunday from 12pm to 2pm at the heart of Dublin city.

The initiative's aim "is not merely to give material things. Our focus is to accompany them, get to know the life story of each one, make them realise they are loved and important, know their names, what they like and their hopes. Affection and kindness are the most important part of our goal, and we give something as a token of our affection and interest in them," said Maria Pineda.

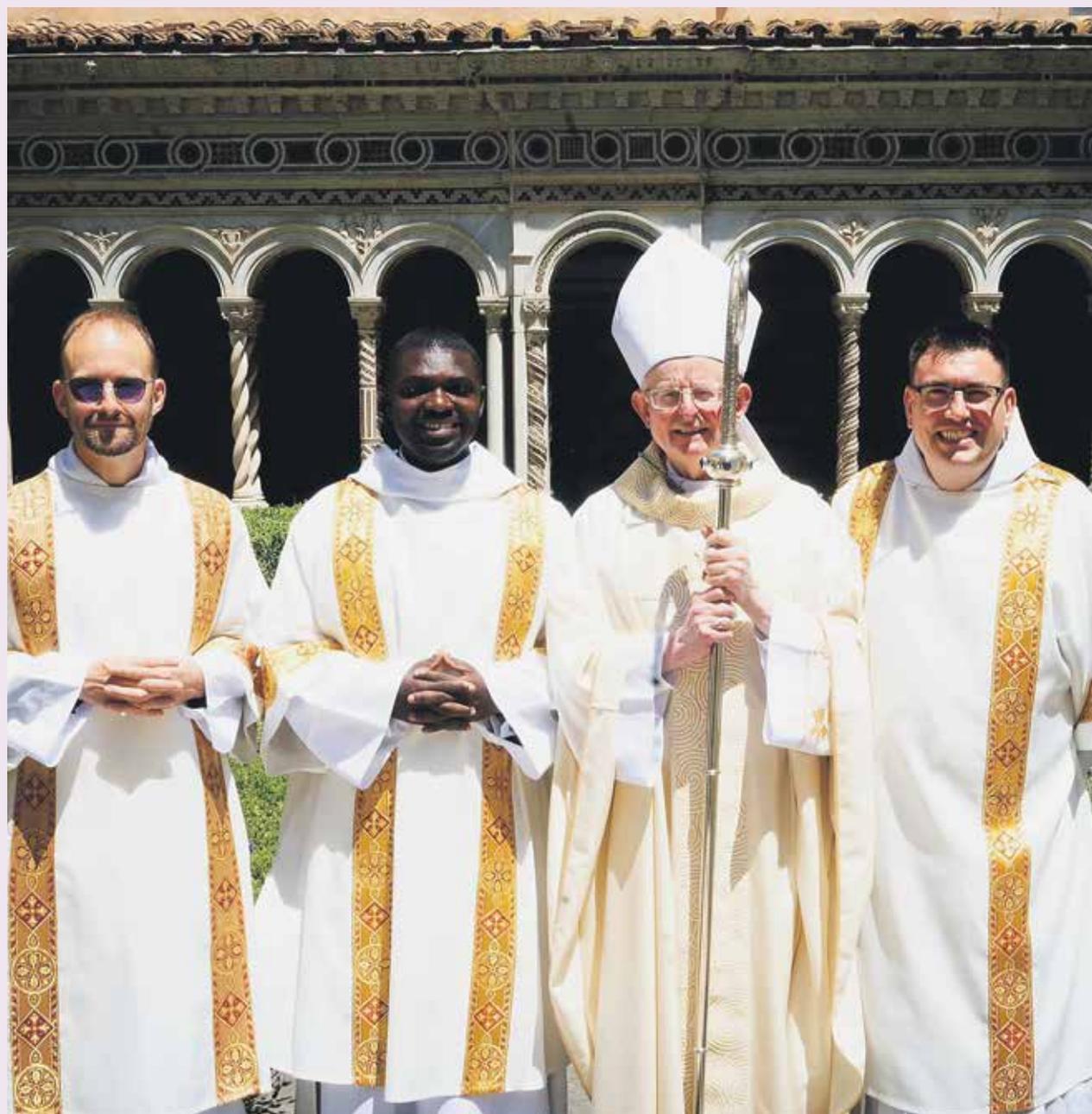
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## Formed Franciscan friar to be welcomed to Ennis



Franciscan friar, Bro. Philip McMahon OFM from Navan (right) was ordained a deacon in Rome along with Philip Thornley (Diocese of Leeds) and Louis Max-Romeo Osei Kwadwo OSB (Ghana) by Bishop Hugh Gilbert OSB of Aberdeen. Bro. Philip will minister in the friary and cathedral parish in Ennis this summer before returning to Rome to complete his theological studies in the Beda College.

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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105. ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandford, Dublin 18, D18 K277. Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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# Callan's comments on Vatican dubbed 'lazy'

Chai Brady

Politicians have criticised comments made by well-known RTÉ presenter and satirist Oliver Callan following his statement that the Vatican is "literally the largest homophobic organisation in the world".

During his 9am show on RTÉ Radio 1 on June 12, Mr Callan also said that the Pope is "living in an enclave of total corruption".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Laois-Offaly TD Carol Nolan responded saying "this kind of lazy, reductionist thinking... is what many Catholics expect from RTÉ whenever a topic touching our faith or the Pope is discussed. It is also boring and banal".

She added: "Oliver is of course perfectly entitled to hold whatever views he wishes, but is he entitled to do so on a salary ultimately paid for the taxpayer? I would have my doubts about that. Demanding a higher standard from RTÉ on these issues is like shouting into the abyss."

Michael Healy-Rae TD of Kerry said: "I wouldn't say it's fair. I couldn't agree with the statement. I believe in the good work that the Vatican does."

"I'm 100% sure that, going back over hundreds of years, that maybe horrible things came out of the Vatican or happened in the Vatican, but horrible things happened all over the world. But think of the saints... and so many people who devoted their lives to God, they left their homes and travelled across the world, became nuns and priests, and they were the nicest most genuine people. They sacrificed all of their life for what they believed in, and that is the spreading of the word of God," he added.

Mr Callan comments came as he was discussing the controversy that erupted following the Pope's widely reported use of a gay slur last month during a closed-door meeting

RTÉ was contacted for comment but failed to respond before this paper went to print.



# Keeping alive the missionary spirit in Ireland

Renata Milán Morales

This coming July 4, two Irish teachers, Orla Walshe and Anne Nagle, will be flying to Rwanda to facilitate two summer camps for disadvantaged children (one in the city and one in the countryside). They will be teaching English, arts and providing other assistance and support. The programmes also include computer literacy, sports, prayer, music, drama and dance. This initiative is

in partnership with two schools located in the areas of Kigali and Musanze.

"I think Ireland has a long history of kind of missionaries and people going abroad. What's happened in the last like few decades is just that Faith has weakened here. So maybe there is not as much. I just want to keep alive that missionary spirit of Ireland," said Anne Nagle, one of the teachers flying to Rwanda. Talking about her previous experience in Rwanda, Anna points out that "the children in Rwanda have a

lot of material poverty, but they have so much spiritual wealth. They're spiritually rich and they have the Faith. We have so much abundance here, yet we're so spiritually poor as well".

This will be Mrs Nagle's second time supporting the Rwanda community. Anne Nagle had also previously worked in Kenya and South Africa. "She has such a rewarding time that she invited some friends, and I took her up on her invitation," explained Orla Walshe, who is organising a

'Quiz Night' event happening on June 20 in Maynooth to fundraise money for the mission. Orla told *The Irish Catholic* that "Irish communities have been very supportive. Maybe a challenge has been that it's a small project and not tied to a big charity that people can identify with."

As they prepare to depart, Anne Nagle and Orla Walshe continue Ireland's legacy of Faith-driven service and support.

# A union begun by a single surname

Ava Westendorf

The Purcell Society Gathering or Reunion is said to inspire a "gathering of unity around a surname" says Fr William Purcell PP of Clara. On June 21 through 23, 215 people from around the world who have the Purcell name, most who have never met, will gather in areas of Kilkenny and Tipperary to learn about their ancestors' history and lineage.

As an admirer of his family name and history, Fr Purcell will be attending the Mass being held at Loughmore, Co. Tipperary on Sunday, June 23. He expressed his readiness for this event to *The Irish Catholic* by saying his "hope for it would be that it's an opportunity for one generation or two generations, three generations of families to come together."

Referencing the crest of his family, *aut vicnam aut periam*, meaning either conquer or destroy, Fr Purcell described how many people should be interested in attending this event, especially "young people that would research the name and maybe see the lineage where they've come from." These young people can do research on their family name but will learn more from firsthand experiences like this reunion than they will online.

With his eagerness for the event, Fr Purcell claims that this reunion is "a wonderful opportunity for the surname of a family to come together," and he hopes that other families will have a reunion with their surnames to create unity and a deeper connection, just as he hopes the Purcell reunion will do for him.

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# Child costs skyrocketing new SVP report has warned

**Renata Steffens**

Parents are facing huge costs due to soaring inflation which has seen products like nappies and baby formula increase by 84% and 37% respectively, a new report from Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) has warned.

The Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL), published on Tuesday and organised by Vincentian MESL Research Centre at SVP, seeks to lay out the basic needs of people to live with dignity.

The report found that costs for younger children are con-

siderably high, and it has the largest increase for all child age-groups. From 2020 to 2024, infant's needs increased significantly by 22.4%, with a 37% increase in baby formula and 84% in nappies.

Infant's food budget has increased by 27.3% in both urban and rural households from 2020 to 2024. Which is the highest raise from all MESL food budgets. The report explains that "this notable increase is caused by the food inflation experienced across all MESL food budgets over the past number of years".

The cost of a child remains higher for older children, aged

12 and over. This cost is at €149 per week, which is roughly 60% higher than the minimum needs of younger children.

The 2024 report shows certain stabilisation in costs, with an average decrease of 1.9% in the core MESL (excluding housing, childcare and the effects of secondary benefits) from March 2023 to March 2024. However, there has been a cumulative increase of 16.8% from 2020 to 2024.

The energy costs also remain higher than 2020 levels, with an increase of 62.7% for urban and 54.0% for rural households since that year. Compared to 2024 energy cost for urban and rural

households dropped 24.9% and 12.2% respectively.

In the last 12 months, the MESL food budget has increased by an average of 1.4% for urban households and 1.6% for rural ones. This is a small rise, compared to the increased in 2023, when the food budget represented the largest cost of a household.

The adequacy of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) remains a concern, as the income shortfall for urban single adults in full-time minimum wage employment has been lessened to €130 per week.

# Senator Mullen demands pause on Government's surrogacy legislation

**Renata Milán Morales**

The Government's Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Bill is on its Second Stage debate in the Seanad. The aim of this bill is to "regulate the provision of any treatment or procedure for the purposes of surrogacy ... for the purposes of establishing or preserving the possibility of establishing a pregnancy and to prohibit AHR treatment unless the person holds a licence... to provide certain rights for a

person born as a result of AHR treatment to access information concerning his or her origins; to provide for a comprehensive regulatory scheme", according to the May 31, 2024, document passed by Dáil Éireann.

Senator Rónán Mullen has condemned this Bill on June 13, calling "at a minimum" for a pause on the far-reaching provisions on surrogacy added to the Bill in recent months. "There has been very little public discussion of this Bill, it has passed the Dáil without, to my

knowledge, a single vote being called, and the national media have failed to shine a light on the controversial, and potentially bizarre, nature of some of its provisions," Senator Mullen says.

"This is the exploitation of the poor and the commodification, the buying and selling of children. Our responsibilities under the UN Rights of the Child are being ignored in deference to the rights of financially advantaged individuals or couples," said Mr Mullen,

who also points out that "of its nature, international surrogacy is commercial and conflicts with our duties under the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Slavery Convention of 1926". This bill raises significant ethical questions. Senator Mullen claims a necessity for public scrutiny and ensuring the protection of children's rights in line with international human rights standards.

# Christian churches unite to support Newry Cathedral

**Brandon Scott**

Newry's Catholic, Anglican and Methodist church leaders have joined together to defend the city's cathedral.

Newry Cathedral Parish Administrator Canon Francis Brown, Church of Ireland Rector Canon Scott McDonald and Rev Louise Donald of the Methodist Churches of Newry, Bessbrook and Warrenpoint are united in their concern over council plans to overshadow the Gothic granite grandeur of Newry Cathedral with a vast concrete office block known as the 'Civic and Regional Hub'.

More than 2,500 Catholic parishioners have signed letters of protest objecting to the council offices. Their complaints were presented recently to the planning department of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Canon Francis Brown feels the Council should listen to the community and put a halt to this "expensive, unpopular and unnecessary project" that parishioners feel will eclipse the Cathedral's bicentenary celebrations in 2029.

Canon Scott McDonald – who is Rector of St Patrick's and St Mary's Newry, an Anglican church, said "I fully support Canon Brown and his parishioners .... I would hope that their entirely legitimate concerns are not just noted – but also addressed respectfully and diligently".

Rev Louise Donald, a local Methodist minister said, "The congregations who form the Newry Circuit of the Methodist Church in Ireland would urge Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to give due deliberation to the concerns raised by parishioners of Newry Cathedral".

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Carlow priest honoured with Irish citizenship

Carlow priest Fr Yanbo Chen received Irish citizenship in a ceremony on June 11, in Killarney. The priest joined the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in China in 2010 and in 2014 he moved to Maynooth to study English and continue his theological studies.

The priest studied at the Divine Word School of English for a year to improve his language skills, before going back to theological studies at St Patrick's College.

During a Pilgrimage in Medjugorje, Bosnia, Fr Chen received a Carlow Jersey from Fr Tommy Dillon and some parishioners, as a symbolic gesture saying he is now an "honorary Carlow man."

### Leo Varadkar promotes countrywide unity

On June 15 former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar claimed at Ireland's Future gathering in Belfast that an apology toward non-Catholic communities for how they were treated by the State and IRA, would promote Irish unity. Varadkar said "it is really important that the belief in unification isn't seen to be the preserve of any one particular party or one or two parties, it needs to be all parties and no party" therefore we cannot create only one group with the Catholic community. However, before this community can evolve, an atonement must occur since "we have to acknowledge that for quite some time the Irish state gave the Catholic Church a special position and therefore treated minorities as if they were in a different position."

## The importance of the laity



Miriam McKane, Concilium secretary of the born-in-Ireland lay organisation, The Legion of Mary, meeting pope Francis at the Vatican after the international lay movements meeting on June 13. Photo: The Vatican's Dicastery for Communication

# No more cash on the plate?

**W**e have certainly seen, in recent years, the onward march of the cashless society. First, there were credit cards, which began to make their appearance in the latter half of the 20th century.

Subsequently, there were bank debit cards, which allowed us to pay for an item via 'chip and pin'. Then, in the 1990s, South Korea was the first country to introduce 'contactless' payment, and in the first decade of the 21st century, this electronic payment method started in Britain and Ireland.

## Cashless

For the past ten years, the cashless society – payments made by the touch of the debit card on the electronic machine – has spread ever more widely.

In recent times, I've noticed church offerings now include a "contactless"



Mary Kenny

option available the congregation. The church which I frequent in south Dublin has had a contactless card reader for some time; the church I attend in Kent, in England, has only recently installed the apparatus, and we are now reminded that it may be convenient to give via the contactless terminal.

**“It dispenses with the fiddlesome business of notes, coins and change. It is a peerless method of auditing”**

It's a natural development that churches, like

any other institution, would embrace a modern way of organising finances. The "cashless society" is considered an efficient advance in accounting.

In the ordinary process of commerce, it dispenses with the fiddlesome business of notes, coins and change. It is a peerless method of auditing. It is liked by governments because it reduces the opportunities for tax evasion. In businesses where dodgy practices may arise, it minimises the chances for dishonesty.

## Big Brother

But the cashless society means that 'Big Brother' can track all your expenditure and revenues – be that the banks, the



**“There is something meaningful about seeing a member of the congregation take the collections at Mass and passing the plate, or the collection bag, along the pew. There is an element of ritual which seems more communal than just touching the electronic gadget”**

## When courage is rewarded

**A** plaque has been erected in the town of Bétune in France – just over 40 kilometres from Calais – to the Irish Franciscan nun Sr Katharine McCarthy, a Cork-woman originally from Drimoleague. Sr Kate was a war heroine who helped more than 120 Allied soldiers escape the Nazis – while also caring for the wounded as a nurse in the local hospital. She was captured by the Gestapo and sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp where she suffered dreadfully but survived to be liberated in 1945.

The story of Sr Kate (in religious life Sr Marie-Laurence) is recounted in a commendable new book on "The Irish in the Resist-

ance", written by Clodagh Finn (and John Morgan), to be published by Gill in September. Irish nuns, as well as priests – and Irish governesses working in France – were involved with helping the Resistance, and it's the first time their life stories have been gathered together.

Clodagh Finn is an outstanding historian and archivist of women's lives. Among other disclosures, it emerges that Shane Ross's mother, Ruth Isabel Ross, was a code-breaker at Bletchley Park, the famously secret location where so many clever women worked breaking wartime codes.

I do hope to visit Bétune in the near future and see where Sr Kate McCarthy is honoured.



Sr Kate McCarthy. Photo: Southern Star.

used so ignorantly. Fascism is the political system of a militarised state, in which everything is controlled by the state and subject to the absolute leader. It's grotesque to compare this to the benign act of reciting the Rosary. Ms Holland might enlighten her-

self by reading David O'Donoghue's book *"The Devil's Deal: The IRA, Nazi Germany and the Double Life of Jim O'Donovan"* – being a meticulous chronicle of how one of Sarah Holland's political forerunners engaged with real fascists.

state or even global forces. Small organisations, like charities, which attract casual donations lose out. Poorer people, who have modest budgets, become disadvantaged.

So I find myself in two minds about the onward development of contactless payments in church. There is something physical and substantial about putting cash on a plate – a public act of commitment.

There is something meaningful about seeing a member of the congregation take the collections at Mass and passing the plate, or the collection

bag, along the pew. There is an element of ritual which seems more communal than just touching the electronic gadget.

**“Money may be ‘filthy lucre’ but it also represents something tangible and real: it's not just a touch linked to an electronic procedure, it's the widow's mite, the Samaritan's Dinari”**

It's a little like candles versus electric lights. There

is something about the act of lighting a candle which seems a more thoughtful measure than pressing an electric light.

## Cash

Like most people, I use contactless payments in everyday life, but I try to keep cash going as well. Money may be "filthy lucre," but it also represents something tangible and real: it's not just a touch linked to an electronic procedure, it's the widow's mite, the Samaritan's Dinari, and the coins over which Our Lord pointed to the image of Caesar. It has history. I hope the contactless transaction won't entirely replace the offering on the plate.



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**S**inn Féin candidate and former councillor Sarah Holland has drawn some attention to herself by claiming that "traditional Catholics" and those who pray the Rosary in public are "fascists." It's irksome to witness this word

# Ireland not immune to human trafficking, bishops warn

**Renata Milán Morales**

“Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery and an assault on our human dignity. Ireland – north and south – is far from immune,” said the Irish Bishops

In their Summer 2024 General Meeting, the Irish bishops discussed the plight of victims of human traf-

ficking in Ireland, and the extent of this crime in society. During this conversation the bishops warned that “Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery and is an assault on our human dignity. Ireland – north and south – is far from immune. Women account for 67% of people trafficked into Ireland, and trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common form of this crime, accounting for 55% of victims, fol-

lowed by labour at 38% (IHREC Report, September 2023). We commend all those who raise awareness about this international form of human abuse and exploitation, and those who work to protect victims, including many Catholic-based groups, by continuing to highlight this challenge to humanity and our collective moral responsibility to help eliminate it,” said the Irish bishops.

A summit on collectively combatting human trafficking will take place for the first time in Ireland. The meeting will be held in University College Cork over June 26 and 27. Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ of Down & Connor, Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, who is President and chair of the Santa Marta Group

(an organisation that fights human trafficking since 2014 under the patronage of Pope Francis with the support of civil society groups and the Church) will attend.

Bishops encouraged the faithful to pray to Saint Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of human trafficking and slavery, to intercede for those who suffer, and to support those who combat this horrific crime.

## Day for Life is reminder that no life is useless

**Brandon Scott**

Last Sunday marked the Church’s annual Day for Life, celebrated in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, with this year’s event centering around the theme of ‘The Lord is my shepherd – compassion and hope at the end of life’.

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran commemorated the day by highlighting “the deep value and meaning of human life at every stage, and in every condition”.

Bishop Doran said “people who are coming towards the end of their lives are vulnerable, and recent research shows that many feel themselves a burden on their loved ones and wider society.

“Jesus shows us that life always has dignity and that there is no such a thing as a useless

life.

“We are called to defend this gift of life to its natural end and to protect vulnerable citizens from a culture that could pressure them into assisted suicide.”

Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty echoed Bishop Doran’s sentiments, affirming the belief that a “life always has dignity”.

“The ‘Day for Life’ message reminds us there is no such thing as a useless life, life always has dignity,” he said. “We support people with the companionship of a listening ear, appropriate treatment, and the best of care, so that their last days can be times of grace, intimacy and love.

“I attend many wakes, and often hear great praise of the hospice nurse, or maybe the carer, who held our loved one’s hand when it wasn’t possible for us to be there.”

## US friends of St Patrick grace Ireland

**Staff reporter**

The Saint Patrick Centre’s Young Ambassadors from the United States have concluded a whistlestop tour which included a visit with the First and Deputy First Ministers at Stormont.

Sixteen Young Ambassadors, who took part in the programme, also met the former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in Dublin as part of the annual programme this year.

The ambassadors came

from cities such as San Francisco California, Phoenix, Arizona, Charleston, North Carolina as well as regions in New York and Ohio and other midwestern states.

The programme, now in its 18th year, seeks to bring members of the international Saint Patrick Centre’s Friends organisation to Downpatrick.

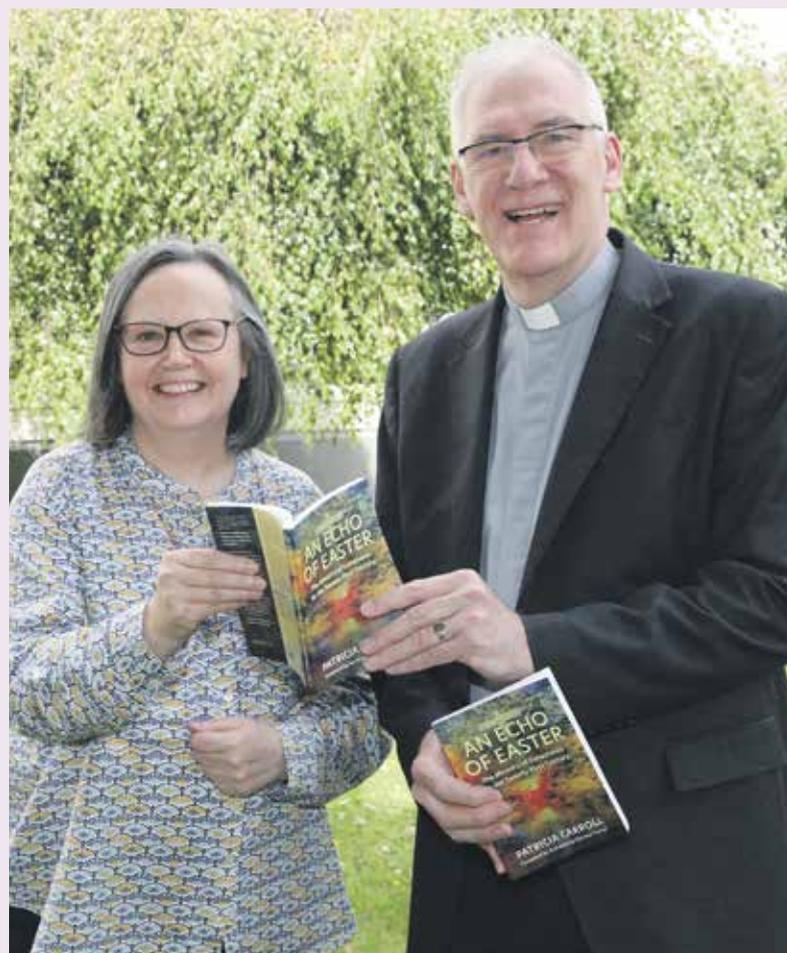
This year the Centre also worked with the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America to bring 11 young Hibernians as part of the experience.

“The AOH is the largest

Irish organisation outside of Ireland with 40,000 members, and this will be an ongoing commitment from the AOH,” said Dr Tim Campbell, Centre Director. “This was agreed at their national convention last November.”

All the Young Ambassadors stayed for two weeks in Newcastle, Co. Down, where they were able to learn about the county so they can go home and promote St Patrick and the place of outstanding natural beauty where he began his mission.

### An echo of Easter...



On Saturday in Dublin, Veritas Publications launched a new book by Patricia Carroll, *An Echo Of Easter: The ministry of catechesis for the 21st Century*. The book was launched by Fr Gareth Byrne VG, Moderator of the Dublin Diocesan Curia. Photos: John McElroy

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# 18th 'Fan the Flame' celebrated in Derry

## Staff reporter

**T**he 18th 'Fan the Flame' Mass for the children who received the sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Derry, happened on June 6 in the Celtic Park GAA Stadium. The annual Mass was celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry, and priests from across the diocese.

The event was attended by over 3000 young people from counties Derry, Donegal and Tyrone. In preparation for the Mass, the children completed a reflective journal and designed T-shirts and flags with theme 'Disciples of Jesus, Filled with Joy.'

During his homily, Bishop

McKeown said young people should be "courageous and with the 'love of God in their hearts' to answer the call of Jesus to 'come and follow me.'"

Assisting in the liturgy of the Word and the Offertory Procession were students from Saint Mary's NS, Castlefin, Saint Eithne's PS, Derry, Steelstown PS, Derry, Saint Patrick's PS, Castlederg, Saint Mary's PS, Gortnaghey, Sessiaghoneill NS, Killygordon, Crossroads PS, Kilrea and Saint Patrick's PS, Gortin.

Banners were brought by each school to be part of the entrance and procession. At the end of the Mass, students from the St John's PS, Derry led those gathered in the actions of 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands.'





# Live-in Care Works for My Family

**Joyce Hanna's beloved father John died last year. "He was 100 and a half," she says.**

A wonderful man with a terrific spirit, he had lived by himself for almost a decade, since the loss of his beloved wife Peggy in 2013. John, a doctor, was her mother's primary carer but as Peggy's health declined and she needed more care, they made the decision to move her into a nursing home, in 2009. She remembers that while he didn't need help at that stage, he was lonely. He often said that if he didn't have his dog, Soldier, he wouldn't hear his own voice at all.

Then she found ALHomecare, which stands for Affordable Live-in

Homecare, online. It seemed to offer the perfect solution, including a three-week trial to ensure John and his carer were compatible.

Joyce thought that the service, from beginning to end, was a win-win. It was affordable, it was reliable, and the beauty of it was that if her father had gone into a nursing home, he wouldn't have been able to bring his beloved dog Soldier. It was very important to keep them both together.

Through ALHomecare, Joyce found a carer in her 60's from Poland, Danuta. She said that as soon as her father met Danuta, he said, "She's the one". They hit it off instantly. They called her Angel Danuta, because she was like someone who had dropped from the sky for

them. Danuta looked after Joyce's father like Joyce would herself. Joyce said maybe even better! Having Danuta there also meant that for her own visits, Joyce could sit and talk with her father, as Danuta had everything else under control.

The year passed happily but unfortunately, her father caught pneumonia and Covid. By the time he had recovered in hospital well enough to come home, he had lost his mobility. Danuta organised all of the home comforts for John along with the family.

She felt that ALHomecare was transformational for them as a family. Her father was happy and secure. Danuta gave more than

100pc to her father and they very much appreciated her. Joyce said that her father had the perfect end, after the perfect final year, and she could never thank ALHomecare and Danuta enough.

To find out more about ALHomecare's affordable live-in home care service and avail of their three-week trial period, visit [www.alhomecare.ie](http://www.alhomecare.ie) or phone their inquiry lines: 087 991 6791 or 087 744 0729.





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# The concerning changes to the primary school curriculum



David Quinn

A major revision of the primary school curriculum is underway, one that will affect how the half a million children currently in our primary schools will be taught and all future children for years to come. It is a matter of great importance, but it has barely come to public or political attention at all.

The current primary school curriculum has been in operation since 1999.

It was signed off by Micheal Martin who was then Education Minister. Compared with that curriculum, the proposed new one makes some major changes that should concern many people.

## Changes

One big change is the demotion of the spiritual dimension of life compared with how this is handled in the present version. In addition, the class time spent on teaching Religious Education (RE) will be cut by 20pc, or 30 minutes per week.

A second big change is the promotion of political education. A third is the potential overcrowding of an already very crowded school day with the addition of new subjects.

A fourth, and very strange one, is the abandonment of the current aim of 'fostering a sense of Irish identity' in schoolchildren. More emphasis will be placed on making them 'global' citizens. Less attention will be given to our Europeanness.

The present curriculum has a section of its own about the spiritual aspect of life. This is now reduced to a single sentence in the 'Wellbeing' subject about "the spiritual dimension of living, which enables children to experience a sense of awe and wonder and to know that life has a meaning."

But as Dr Amalee Meehan, a professor of education from DCU, says in her submission on the curriculum revision: "It is important to note the strong research base identifying a direct correlation between participating in a religious tradition and wellbeing."

**“Religious belief allows people to cope better with adversity as it comes”**

In other words, people who practise a religion tend to have improved mental and physical health compared with those who don't practise any religion. Obviously, there are still plenty of religious people who suffer from all sorts of ailments, especially as they age, but the evidence suggests the prevalence and severity of such ailments tends to be somewhat less

among religious people.

In addition, religious belief allows people to cope better with adversity as it comes.

## Politics

A paper produced by Professor Patricia Casey some years back on behalf of the Iona Institute (which I head up) is called 'The Psycho-Social Benefits of Religious Practice.' The evidence she sets out has only mounted in the meantime.

So why withhold this information from children, especially in a course called 'Wellbeing'? Is it because we are now a more secular country? But facts are facts, and the facts are that there is a link between physical, mental and social wellbeing and religious practise.

On the other hand, more attention is to be paid to politics. Both the 'Wellbeing' course and another subject called 'Social and Environmental Education' aim to produce children who will become active in promoting "democracy, equity, equality, and social justice".

This might sound innocent enough, but while democracy itself is uncontroversial as a concept, the others are not. Take 'social justice', for example. What does this mean exactly? There are many definitions. Which one, or ones, will be offered? One person's version of social justice will include the right to life of the unborn, while another person's will not. Some people think a just society will offer people euthanasia, while others are horrified at the prospect of pressure being put on vulnerable patients to avail of it, as is happening in Canada.

Someone might respond that religion is also a contro-

versial topic, and that there are many different religions, but this doesn't prevent schools from presenting religion in a very denominational specific way. They might say that if religion can be taught in a non-neutral way in schools, then why not politics as well?

But there is a big difference, namely parents already know when a school is Catholic, or Protestant, or something else and society long ago agreed to the make-up of our schools. This is slowly changing, but the point is that parents know a given school is what it says on the tin.

On the other hand, if schools suddenly start teaching politics in a non-neutral way (and it is hard to do anything else), then parents ought to be fully informed beforehand and not have a particular view of politics foisted on their children without their say-so.

**“It is more essential than ever to try and create some kind of common identity”**

Overcrowding an already crowded school-day is more or less self-explanatory, so I want to look briefly at the fourth area of concern, namely the dropping of the current aim of "fostering a sense of Irish identity" in children.

Is this being ditched because Ireland is now a lot more multicultural than it was back in 1999? But given that fact that a lot more nationalities live here, surely it is more essential than ever to try and create

some kind of common identity like they do in America, where there are Irish-Americans and Italian-Americans and German-Americans and so on, but they are all Americans? This is the famous idea of the 'melting pot' in action. You don't have to lose your own cultural identity completely, but you must recognise that you are now part of a new country.

## Ethos

So, if the Irish education system has now dumped this as an aim, then that is a very serious matter. Having a 'sense of Irish identity' is no longer considered important, it seems. We are to be global citizens instead. But then what does Ireland become, simply a place on the map with no identity of its own and nothing to unite us?

How should the Catholic Church respond to the changes? Fortunately, patron bodies like the bishops will still be allowed to instil their own ethos in their schools, but they will need to produce their own materials for the likes of 'Wellbeing' and 'Social and Environmental Education' classes.

The spiritual dimension of 'Wellbeing' class can obviously be increased in Catholic schools, and concepts like 'social justice' can be taught from within the framework of Catholic social teaching with its emphasis on the common good.

Producing material that is compatible with the Catholic ethos of our schools will be essential, because if we don't do it, you can be sure someone else will, and that material might actively undermine Catholic school ethos, or at a minimum, not reinforce it.

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A student at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic School in Henderson, Kentucky. (OSV News photo/Tyler Orsburn, CNS)

# How do you solve a problem like Pride?



Martina Purdy

A man walked into a bank (a true story), and was met with a Pride flag at the teller's station. Before concluding his business, this man, a Catholic, unbit his lip. "I just want to say that if you want to have these flags, that's fine. But I want equal time at Easter. And I don't mean an Easter bunny. I want a crucifix to represent my Christian faith."

The woman teller replied: "You're not wrong sir", but head office makes us do this."

And, one might add, it's not just head office! What is more, there are signs some have had enough of "being made to do this."

Undoubtedly there are many sensitivities around Pride, but there is also a fair balance to be struck - and a right to hold a different opinion.

## Objecting

Christian Concern is pushing back on Pride by objecting to Westminster City Council's decision to display massive LGBTQ+ Pride Flags. Toronto Catholic school trustees just voted against the Pride flag flying on school property, St Andrew's Roman Catholic parish church, Westland Road, ended up in a media storm last week when it cancelled the Dublin Gay Men's Chorus event.

The Church had taken the booking in April, knowing it was from the Gay Men's Choir but cancelled when the event's title came to light: Pride in the Name of Love. The poster for the annual summer concert on June 23 featured the colours of the Pride rainbow with the subheading "Celebrating Love, Solidarity and Community."

The Catholic parish church sent an email to the choir's chairman, Patrick McNamara, saying the event was "not compatible with our mission". "The parish," it said, "is happy to welcome groups from all backgrounds to perform concerts, as you know from your concerts here as a musical director on many occasions.

"However, the parish is disappointed that the nature of

this event was not made clear at the time of booking." RTÉ online reported "massive upset" for choir members over the decision. And, RTÉ's Claire Byrne gave a fairly sympathetic hearing to Mr McNamara during which he admitted that the sexual inclination of the choir was not the issue: "It appears they are happy for us to perform once we don't align ourselves or be our real selves or show solidarity with our colleagues within the LGBT+ community".

The issue, he said, was the use of the term Pride, which he claimed was "purely a title" from the U2 Song. Ms Byrne eventually asked a very pointed question: "Can you blame them for thinking this is a Pride Festival event?"

McNamara reacted as if he had just come up the River Liffey in a bubble. He said there were "intelligent" people in the church who should have asked questions. Maybe they should have!

While he insisted it was not a Pride event, he showed no thought or regard for Catholic sensibilities. Irrespective, he said, of this being a Pride event or not, St Andrew's is either a concert venue or it is not.

**“Catholics have a right to our faith. We are not taught to define ourselves by our sexual appetites and we try to respect everyone”**

Actually it's a church whose primary purpose is to praise God, not man. And, frankly, anyone looking at the poster, Catholic or not, might reasonably conclude that it was a 'Pride' event under the 'if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck' logic.

Funnily enough, the LGBT+ newspaper *Pink News* described the concert as "Ireland's only all-male gay choir celebrating the tail end of Pride month". Perhaps it too got the wrong end of the stick?

In a subsequent statement, Mr McNamara highlighted the "increasing importance of Pride month" as 'the job' was not yet done". He also stated that 'pride' had become "a loaded word" for some.

Actually, 'pride' has always been a difficulty for Catholics as we believe it is the first deadly sin.

Catholics have a right to

our faith. We are not taught to define ourselves by our sexual appetites and we try to respect everyone. I have yet to see an organised Catholic anti-pride protest in Belfast or Dublin.

For Catholics, June is not about celebrating every kind of sexual expression in this new often hedonistic rainbow alphabet, which now includes transgender, pansexual, omni-sexual, queer, and a plus sign that as a group who might not be "understood". Hmmm. Would that in fact include those attracted to minors?

As Pride is about rights, what rights are still being sought specifically? Some in the LGB category (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual) have actually split from the alphabet. The US-based group, 'Gays Against Groomers', actively oppose transgender activists who push puberty blockers on vulnerable kids and promote drag shows for children.

As for the Pride emblem, this rainbow is often depicted with six colours, while the biblical rainbow has seven - God's perfect number. Note also that this annual festival also has a new flag and is no longer termed Gay Pride, just Pride.

## Cherish

Catholics are taught to love and cherish people, no matter what. Many Catholics are personally challenged by Church teaching on sexuality - and have family or friends whose sexual desires are at odds with Catholic teaching.

For Catholics, June is the month to honour the Sacred Heart of Jesus, from which flows all love. It is a self-sacrificing love because selfish love is an illusion. Unfortunately, our modern culture has only one word for love and it is too often linked to self-satisfaction. We use the same word for 'I love my coffee' and 'I love my husband'.

Christian love is humble, and tries to do God's will, even when it is contrary to our own desires. In humility, not pride, we seek forgiveness when we fail. Catholics are entitled to their own belief system without being emotionally blackmailed or pressured. Pride as an ideology is anathema to us.

How about Catholic disappointment at what happened, RTÉ?

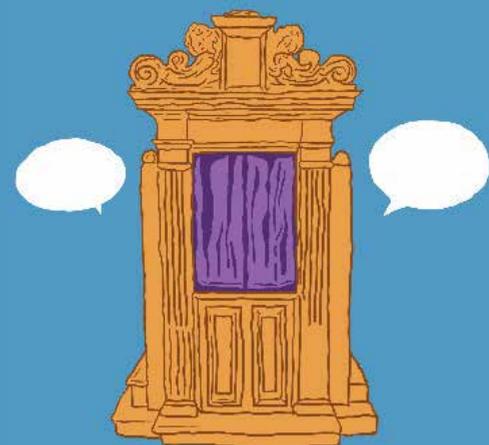
As the man said to the bank teller, let's get some balance.



An LGBTQ flag is seen in an illustration photo. Photo: OSV News Nadja Wohlleben, Reuters

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# Encouragement and memories at Maynooth reunion

Staff reporter

“The value of the gift of the priestly vocation was highlighted and acknowledged” during the annual Maynooth Union gathering that took place from June 10-11.

Among others, tribute was paid to Diamond, Golden and Silver Jubilarians – that is those ordained 60 (Class of 1964), 50 (Class of 1974) and 25 (Class of 1999) years ago.

In a post on St Patrick’s National Seminary Maynooth’s website, it was stated: “There was a convivial sense of colleagues and classmates gathering, remembering and of being encouraged. In the midst of engaging conversation about many things past, present and future, the value of the gift of the priestly vocation was highlighted and acknowledged.

“After a time of generous hospitality, good-natured reminiscing, sacred liturgy and hope-filled prayer, the gathering dispersed, feeling encouraged in the daily living out of fidelity to the priestly ministry. We are already looking forward to our next annual gathering from June 9-10, 2025,” it concluded.



# A promising election for pro-life



Eilís Mulroy

**W**ith the results of the European and Local elections now fully counted, there is encouraging news on the pro-life front in both sets of votes. The number of pro-life candidates elected to councils across the country has increased and now stands at over seventy.

Thirty of these have been elected in the more populous counties of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway, while a number of pro-life candidates narrowly missed out on election in tight races in their respective competitive local areas.

## Byrne

Aontú's Melissa Byrne in Newbridge was perhaps the tightest of all, with a total of four recounts taking place before she lost in the end by just two votes to decide the race in the final count.

Melissa's pro-life views were very much a part of her campaign, with her leaflets telling voters that she's the current Outreach Officer for Students for Life.

Her strong showing for

a first time candidate in a highly competitive large town can be taken as another sign of the openness of voters to the pro-life message and to candidates who are not ashamed to proclaim their beliefs on the issue.

**“A number of sitting Irish MEPs with explicitly pro-abortion views lost their seats”**

Councillors have a very different role from TDs when it comes to the pro-life issue, in that they do not vote on legislation in the Dáil. Nonetheless, they hold an important presence in the political system, with many significant powers, including having the ability to elect Senators. Being a Councillor is also a natural stepping stone to ultimately becoming a TD. It is therefore very encouraging to have over seventy people now in that position.

In the European Parliament Elections, a number of sitting Irish MEPs with explicitly pro-abortion views lost their seats, in some cases by a significant decrease in votes. In the South and Midlands North West constituencies, they were replaced by individuals who are more closely aligned to the pro-life position.

## Abortion

This is important in light of recent efforts in the European Parliament to recognise abortion as a fundamental right across the EU. This vote came in tandem with France enshrining the right to abortion into its constitution, which was seen as a shift in the tone around European debates on abortion.

Replacing just a few Irish MEPs who hold extreme pro-abortion views might not sound like a dramatic change, but the changes that occurred compose a good portion of Ireland's quota of 14.

Looking ahead, the gains made at local and European Parliament level are all the more significant with an impending general election.

After a decade where all the changes were firmly in the opposite direction, there is optimism that a new wave of pro-life politicians can achieve greater success at constituency level with the platform that has been given to them by winning council seats.

After the referendum in 2018, it was clear that the traditional parties no longer expected their candidates to vote with what would be considered a pro-life position, but with new parties like Aontú, Independent Ireland and other smaller parties coming on the scene since then, voters are being offered more options in terms of candidates who are sympathetic to the

pro-life cause.

That 2018 referendum, it must be remembered, was not an overnight event. It was the result of three and a half decades of campaigning. The pro-life movement can therefore take heart in knowing that it has started to gather some momentum already.

**“With the increased pro-life representation in elected office across the country, the prospect of positive pro-life change increases exponentially”**

The gains in the recent elections are noteworthy and will make a difference, but we need every pro-life supporter playing their part when election time comes rolling around to bring about the kind of change that will truly turn the tide in a pro-life direction.

With the increased pro-life representation in elected office across the country, the prospect of positive pro-life

change increases exponentially. Reducing the number of abortions taking place has to be the number one priority and it's welcome that a significant number of now-elected Councillors were willing to sign the Pro Life Campaign's pre-election pledge that they would work to support measures to help reduce Ireland's rapidly increasing abortion rate.

The recent elections showed that voters respect candidates who fearlessly speak their minds and are not cowed or frightened to express their belief in the right to life of unborn children.

## Transfers

One of the key discussion points in recent weeks has been the importance of transfers in getting elected. With several candidates losing out by just a handful of votes, the importance of voting all the way down the ballot paper becomes evident.

The General Election is very likely to happen before years end. Transfers will be every bit as important in that election in deciding who does and doesn't succeed.

The Pro Life Campaign's

'Voter Guide' was viewed over 60,000 times in the runup to the recent elections, with voters looking for information on pro-life candidates to vote for. If this pragmatic approach to voting is carried through in the next election, pro-life candidates will reap the benefit when it comes down to the small margins that determine seats.

**“It will make an incredible difference and ensure the election of even more pro-life public representatives”**

A lot of pro-life volunteers played a part in turning out the pro-life vote in the recent elections. Too many volunteers however sat this one out and didn't get involved. With the General Election most likely just months away, there is time for everyone to commit to helping out next time round. If they do, it will make an incredible difference and ensure the election of even more pro-life public representatives.



Aontú's Melissa Byrne looks on anxiously as a second recount continues in Kildare with just one vote between her and Sinn Fein candidate James Stokes. Photo: Irish Independent.

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# Merchant's Quay hosts big novena celebration in honour of St Anthony

Staff reporter

Last week the annual Novena to St Anthony concluded in the Church of the Immaculate Conception – Adam and Eve's in Dublin. The Novena ran from June 4-13 and drew many from around Dublin and beyond.

The Novena was given by Fr John Walsh OP and the final evening concluded with Mass celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor and music was provided by the Garda band.



Vincent, Marie-Anne, Jovanita and Hansram outside the church.



Noel and Anushka Fernandes.



Ging Ging Demecillo and Aileen Moynihan outside the Church of the Immaculate Conception – Adam and Eve's on the final evening of the annual St Anthony Novena.



Andrea Humphreys selling some lilies to Marian Kane outside the Church of the Immaculate Conception – Adam and Eve's on the final evening of the annual St Anthony Novena.



Tess Connaughton, Noel Owens and Anne O' Neill.



The congregation holding up their lilies to be blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio Luis Mariano Montemayor



Members of the Garda band playing in the church on the final evening of the annual St Anthony Novena.



Lucasia S. Fernandes holding some lilies outside the church.

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- Plaza of three cultures in Tlatelolco to see the Church of St James where St. Juan Diego presented the 'tilma' of Our Lady to the Bishop as proof of her apparitions.
- Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe built in response to Our Lady's request to the visionary, St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin.
- At Tepeyac Hill, kneel before the miraculous image of Our Lady.
- Explore Mexico City.
- Ruins of the Aztec city.
- Palacio National
- Paseo de la Reforma. Teotihuacan
- a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the pyramid of the Sun and the Moon.
- Church of the Holy Family, where the remains of the martyred Miguel Pro are venerated.
- Floating Gardens of Mexico, Xochimilco.
- City of Angels.
- Old City of Puebla.
- Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro.
- See the image of Our Lady of Ocotlan burnt into a tree trunk after she appeared to Diego Bernardino in 1531.

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- Tour of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Entrance fees to Teotihuacan (pre-Aztec Pyramids).
- Gondola boat trip of Xochimilco.
- Entrance to Anthropology Museum.
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# When you love people who don't love God

## Interview with June Chapman



Renata Milán Morales

June Chapman, a business professional in the greater Washington, D.C., area, has recently published her first book, *Peace in the Waiting: When You Love People Who Don't Love God*. In it, Ms Chapman recognises the heartache believers feel over friends and family who don't share their faith. In a conversation with *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Ms Chapman discussed the reason behind her work, emphasising the profound pain believers endure when those they love don't accept God. "I felt that this book topic was important since I know how painful it can be when believers love people who don't love the Lord. We live with this painful uncertainty of where they might be spending eternity. It's so wonderful to know that there are people who prioritise this concern," June Chapman explained.

### Reach

Ms Chapman points out that believers often overestimate the power of their words to convert others and underestimate the power of prayer. She believes that the true transformation of hearts is beyond human control and lies only with God: "We might want to be the instrument that He uses to reach them, but He could be using a million different circumstances that we can't see and can't understand. And we might not even know how to reach that person's heart. He might not need us

**“I know how painful it can be when believers love people who don't love the Lord. We live with this painful uncertainty of where they might be spending eternity”**

to strive and manipulate circumstances or situations to reach these people. He loves our service, but He wants our hearts more. We can become so focused on salvation that we make salvation an idol in our lives, or even start worshipping salvation more than we're worshipping the salvation giver.”

**“God works in mysterious and miraculous ways, and so we get to rest and trust in His timing and His plan, knowing that He won't be a moment too late”**

Ms Chapman underscores that God's desire is for believers to walk in freedom and not be burdened by responsibilities they were never meant to carry: "Salvation belongs to the Lord, and it is a gift from God, not a result of human effort, as we see in the scriptures." The author said, "God wants to set us free from all the brokenness that comes with our walk in this sinful world. He desires that we would walk in freedom and not be burdened by these yokes of our own brokenness or our own slavery because He doesn't want us to bear the burden of responsibilities that we were never meant to carry. It's so important to remember that we don't save anybody. Only the Lord can save someone. Our actions will never be able to save someone or change someone's mind unless the Lord has willed that they are



ready.”

In her book, Ms Chapman encourages believers to embrace the freedom God offers, which can liberate them from fears, worries, and anxieties that might otherwise lead them to be self-focused: "Love without freedom isn't love at all. It's just control. Our Father doesn't intend to control or manipulate us. He desires the closeness of a relationship governed by genuine interest, love, and free will." This freedom, the author told this paper "allows them to serve others more authentically, creating deeper relationships without imposing unrealistic expectations."

For Ms Chapman, the ultimate responsibility of believers is to be obedient to God's word and to glorify Him above all else, trusting that He knows the hearts of their loved ones better than they do. June Chapman said: "We don't want to hinder God's work more than we help it. A hard truth to sometimes accept is that He knows them so much better than we know them. He knows what they need, and He formed them in their mother's womb, created in His image. We are all God's image bearers. And so, He can powerfully pursue them in ways that we can't plan or expect or understand. God works in mysterious and miraculous ways, and so we get to rest and trust in His timing and His plan, knowing that He won't be a moment too late.”



### Freedom

During the conversation with the paper, the author draw on the example of Jesus, who experienced human suffering and sorrow, to illustrate that He understands the pain believers feel: "Jesus, on Earth, as man, He suffered and felt sorrow, and He even had to get down on His knees and grieve and pray and cry out to the Lord. He knows what we're going through, and He understands sorrow and He understands grief and He understands love. When we care so deeply about someone or about someone's soul,

it's easy to focus on our own pain and get distracted by our own efforts rather than trusting and waiting for God. In my book, I try to examine all the barriers that we run up against, all the questions and all the thoughts we examine and tie it back to how we reframe our mindset around God's mercies. I

think focusing on His mercies in our lives is so important. We tend to think so much about ourselves and about our friends. And those are good motivations. It's good to be concerned about the souls of the people we love. This is so important because it's exactly what we want for our loved ones.”

**“Only the Lord can save someone. Our actions will never be able to save someone or change someone's mind unless the Lord has willed that they are ready”**

## “When we can walk into this freedom that Christ has already offered us, we can be freed from our fears, our worries, our personal orchestration, and even our anxieties”

Ms Chapman invites readers to embrace the freedom that comes from leaving their concerns in God's hands and allowing Him to guide their actions and words: “When we can walk into this freedom that Christ has already offered us, we can be freed from our fears, our worries, our personal orchestration and even our anxieties. Instead of being servant hearts, we want to love our friends and our family well. We want to do it in a way that just focuses on our depth of relationship with them and our service toward them, rather than what we need from them.” June Chapman considers that freedom and trust are two sides of the same coin: “We become truly free when we live in God's hands and when we choose that He is going to be the one behind our actions and our words. God has absolutely commanded us to go and make disciples, and He's told us that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. We know how important that is in salvation, and we know that He's commanded us to share the truth with other people. But we can pray, and we can pray for guidance for when sharing is fruitful, we can pray that the Spirit would lead us to share when He wills us to, we can pray for opportunities to share, and we can engage in conversations about our faith all the time.”

## “If we don't know the truth, then we can't make thoughts obedient to it. And the truth is found in the word”

Ms Chapman explains that wisdom comes from the Lord and that believers must immerse themselves in His word to take their anxious thoughts captive and replace them with truth: “Wisdom comes from the Lord, and the Lord has left His word. It reminds me of 2 Corinthians 10:5. That verse says we demolish argu-

ments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. If we don't know the truth, then we can't make thoughts obedient to it. And the truth is found in the word. So one of the ways that we replace those anxieties that we have over our loved ones with peace is that we take those thoughts captive and we replace them with truth.”

### Prayer

Also, in her book, Ms Chapman repeatedly emphasises the importance of intercessory prayer. While human efforts may fall short, prayers brought before God hold immense power because of His ability to act upon them: “One of the best things that we can do for our lost friends and family is pray because prayer, in addition to bringing the names of these friends and family to God, inclines our will to God. We can pray, and we can open our hands and release control and submit these names and hearts back to God and know that our prayer before Him is so much more important than anything we would ever be able to do or to effectually change. We can find a lot of peace, also, in God's creativity. No one that we know is outside the reach of a holy righteous God. He is unlim-

ited in His power, in His merciful, loving kindness, and in His ability to save. And then leave the rest to Him to His creativity,” June Chapman continued, “Our prayers themselves won't change things just like our efforts to convince our friends to convert won't change their hearts, but when we take our prayers to God, our words hold weight because of who we're bringing them to and not because of our own power but because of God's power to carry out our prayers.”

## “Prayer is the most powerful act of service believers can offer their non-Christian loved ones, as it aligns their will with God's”

Prayers, like I have mentioned, also incline our hearts to God. This privilege of prayer is a grand merciful gift. Rather than expecting a clear-cut yes or no from God as an answer, through our prayers, God is inviting us to be involved in His pursuit of our lost friends and family. We get this divine privilege of knowing that God hears our prayers and that He is working in His mighty and mysterious ways. We have this opportunity to submit our will to God. God is inviting us into this communion with Him, into this relationship with Him, in our waiting and our prayers give us

this opportunity to not only present our requests to Him, but to submit our will to His. They give us this absolute grand merciful privilege to wait for the salvation of our loved ones alongside God.”

Ms Chapman concludes that prayer is the most powerful act of service believers can offer their non-Christian loved ones, as it aligns their will with God's and places trust in His boundless power: “Our prayers are perhaps the single greatest way that we can serve our lost friends and family. Pray without ceasing, and we get to lean into the fact that our observations and our power are so small and so finite.”

### Reassurance

In *Peace in the Waiting*, Ms Chapman offers a message of hope and encouragement for believers grappling with the spiritual state of their loved ones. She assures them that they are not alone in their waiting and that God loves their hearts

and their concern for their friends and family: “God loves you, and He wants to meet you where you are. He doesn't need you to be in a place of perfect trust before you approach Him for His mercy, and He doesn't need you to be in a perfect place of surrender”.

## “By taking refuge in God and dwelling in His goodness, believers can find peace amidst the uncertainty surrounding their loved ones' salvation”

Ultimately, Ms Chapman's message is one of hope and trust. She urges believers to expect and look for God's goodness, even when circumstances seem difficult. “God's timing and methods may not align with human preferences, but His plans

are always perfect. By taking refuge in God and dwelling in His goodness, believers can find peace amidst the uncertainty surrounding their loved ones' salvation.”

Ms Chapman's *Peace in the Waiting* is a call to trust in God's sovereignty and goodness while actively engaging in prayer and maintaining a servant-hearted approach to relationships. Her book offers a compassionate perspective that seeks to comfort and guide believers through the often-painful experience of loving those who do not share their faith. The author's message provides a path to peace through trust, prayer and a focus on God's merciful and mysterious ways. Her insights offer encouragement to believers, reminding them that they are not alone in their journey and that God is always at work, even when it is not immediately apparent.

## “Her book offers a compassionate perspective that seeks to comfort and guide believers through the often-painful experience of loving those who do not share their faith”

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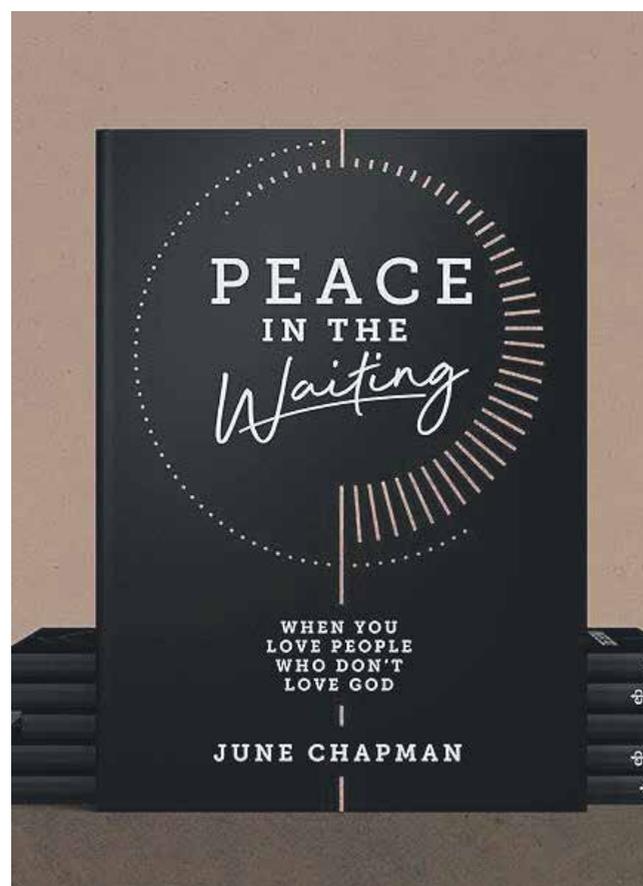
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# Faith among others responsible for mother's fortitude



Gareth Foynes

**T**ragedy is inevitable in life but how one responds is up to each individual. The response of Geraldine Mullan in Moville, Co. Donegal has inspired many across her parish but also the country. During the summer of 2020, Geraldine's life took a turn for the worst when she and the car she was travelling home in with her family had left the road and entered Lough Foyle just when they were coming into the village of Quigley's Point. Twenty minutes down the road would have seen Geraldine home with her loving husband John and two children, Tomás and Amelia. She was the only survivor.

**“I wanted to give it back to the community. I want it to be a hub of positive energy”**

Geraldine is known in her local parish for turning this tragic event and experience into a positive by setting up the Mullan Hope Centre. Her husband John was a talented gardener and was known in the area for running the Moville Garden Centre. Despite being a respected oncologist nurse, Geraldine insists that John would have possessed a lot of patience when it came to her gardening skills. Between these two things, Geraldine took some initiative: “I wanted to give it back to the community. I want it to be a hub of positive energy.” The Hope Centre hosts a number of activities and initiatives: “We have craft evenings every month, and we also have a farmer's market.

**“It's about community, they're always so welcoming. It's a good supportive environment and they've been supporting me. They will help on the tough days whether it's going for coffee or lunch or even just a little nod”**

There are many people that use the space. John would love all the stuff. We have many youth groups up like the Donegal Youth Service. We would have a mixture of everything going into the Autumn,” she said.

Geraldine finds faith to be something that gives her hope, saying: “Everybody's got their own faith and we all believe in something. For me, my faith is important. The Hope Centre is something that has brought people together and we have different cultures and different faiths. It's also a place where people can have a coffee and listen to music. Many people will say that they bought this or that for John”.

## Faith

Geraldine also possesses an immense amount of faith in her day-to-day life: “Every day is a new one. I've had to learn coping mechanisms. I will look to John, Amelia and Tomás for help, on birthdays and on anniversary days, I'll take it a little easier. If you can be kind to yourself, you can be kind to others.” A shrine remains where the crash happened for her family. “It means there's something there to mark it. Amelia loved rainbows, there's a stained glass of rainbows there with all the colours of the rainbow. We put flowers there for the anniversary. I do have to pass it on my way to work every day. It's a funny thing fear but I do have to go to work and pay the bills,” Geraldine said.

Geraldine specialises in cancer treatment when it comes to her nursing career and has for 29 years while being in nursing for 21 years. She said: “I got an interest in cancer care and did my post grad. I probably get more from the patients than they get from me. Without John's support, I couldn't have done it.” In terms of John's passing, she finds great support at Letterkenny Hospital from her fellow nurses. “Since the accident, they've been so good to me at work. It's about community, they're always so welcoming. It's



Geraldine Mullan, who lost her husband, John, son Tomás (14), and six-year-old daughter Amelia in a drowning tragedy in Lough Foyle in August 2020.

a good supportive environment, and they've been supporting me. They will help on the tough days whether it's going for coffee or lunch or even just a little nod,” Geraldine said.

She also attributes her courage to practicing her Catholic faith: “I love the rosary. I'll be at Mass here in Moville on a Sunday. I would have also done prayers with the kids. Tomas would have been an alter server. In Galway [where Geraldine originates from] we would have went to Mass in town. It was part of who we were. I always go when I'm home.” Geraldine still says the rosary after all these years.

**“I used to have a fear of the water. I wouldn't have been confident but it's a reminder of the good times... me and John's first date would have been at Stroove beach”**

Geraldine stresses how much the community has meant to her and the Moville GAA club: “I actually



Geraldine Mullan at the Hope Centre.

played camogie in the Caribbean when I was a nurse out there. I played Gaelic football as well.” Naturally, Geraldine got involved in the GAA club where she now considers home, saying “Amelia would have been playing for Moville. She actually had a match ten days before the crash. I've kept up the membership, they have the Amelia Christmas cup now in her honour. I usually help out at that.”

## Swimming

Geraldine has just returned from Dubai where she spent the week with some of John's family, a week where Tomas would have been doing his

leaving cert. Now home, Geraldine will keep up one of her favourite pastimes despite swimming in 40 degrees heat in Dubai last week – sea swimming in Donegal. Geraldine said: “I used to have a fear of the water. I wouldn't have been confident but it's a reminder of the good times... me and John's first date would have been at Stroove beach” in Greencastle, Donegal. Geraldine also sees the social benefits of sea swimming. “There's a group of women that go down.. all different ages, shapes and sizes... we have a group chat as well named The Mighty Mermaids, we meet up every week, every Saturday morn-

ing – I'd never go by myself though. I'll meet up with a few of the lads too and go for a swim as well,” she said.

## Resilient

In keeping with her reputation as a particularly resilient woman, Geraldine will be climbing Mount Kilimanjaro on Tomás' birthday and in aid of Children in Crossfire. For her training, she will be using the Inishowen head, an 8km loop on the Inishowen peninsula on the northern tip of Donegal. For now, it's back to work next week before she gets the shopping in this evening as well as taking in her two dogs – “I must keep going, I must keep pushing.”

# Out&About

## Mini-camino cheer among Rathmines youth



**DUBLIN:** Rathmines Young Adult Ministry climbed Bray Head on a mini-Camino from Rathmines this month. The group took the time to pray the rosary by the cross at the top giving powerful witness to their faith.



**ROME:** Meeting of the Venerable English College Rome and Saint Mary's College Oscott in Rome where Irish men studying for Irish and British Dioceses met for a photography together. The men are studying for East Anglia, Shrewsbury, Nottingham, Down and Connor and Waterford and Lismore.



**ARMAGH:** First Communion celebrated by Fr Barry Matthews with assistance from Deacon Eunan McCreech. The Mass was held on the feast of St Colmcille, at St Colmcille's in Knockaconny, in the parish of St Patrick's Cathedral.

### INSHORT

#### Co. Cavan sister honoured with top award in Zambia

Irish Sister who for many years worked in Zambia, was honoured with an award for all her hard missionary work. Sr Mary Courtney, was born in Co. Cavan and started her work at the Lavey parish, New Inn, Ballyjamesduff.

Sr Courtney is part of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa (FMSA). FMSA are a member organisation of Misesan Cara, which provides funding and practical support to Irish missionary groups overseas.

The sister received the President's Insignia for Meritorious Achievement by President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia on

behalf of the FMSA, acknowledging the hard work of her staff and volunteers. The event was presented on May 24 at the annual Investiture Ceremony at the State House in Lusaka.

Known for her pioneering efforts, Sr Courtney worked to improve health outcomes for marginalised people in Livingstone, by establishing health centres, counselling services, palliative and home-based care, and behaviour change programs in response to HIV and AIDS.

#### Dioceses announce new appointments taking effect in June/July

The dioceses of Meath, Ferns and Killaloe have announced clerical appointments. In the Dioceses of Meath they will take effect on Friday, June 28, in Ferns on the weekend of July 13-14, and in Killaloe on Friday, July 26.

Fr Janusz Lugowski CC, Moynalvey has left the Diocese of Meath to return to Poland.

Msgr Joe McGrath has retired as Vicar General of the Diocese of Ferns and will continue his ministry as Co-PP in his Pastoral area. Bishop Ger Nash has announced Fr Brian Broaders as the new Vicar General of the Diocese of Ferns.

Bishop Nash also appointed new priests as Co-PP to some pastoral areas and extra pastoral duties to Fr Odhran Furlong besides

his duties as a Chaplain at the Wexford General Hospital. Extra duties were also assigned to Fr David Murphy in addition to being a Chaplain to the Defence Forces.

Msgr Seamus Horgan, native from Ennis and priest of Killaloe Diocese was appointed by Pope Francis to be Papal Nuncio. The priest will be ordained Archbishop on Saturday July 27 in the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul.

Bishop Fintan Monahan announced some retirements, Co-PP and VF appointments. Two students, John Lupton from Roscrea and Brian Tuohy from Tulla, who completed their pre-seminary studies in Valladolid, will commence formation in the seminary.

A list of all appointments can be found on the respective diocese websites.

# Nursing home does not kid about ‘healing power of animals’

Ava Westendorf and  
Matt Letourneau

Living right outside of Phoenix Park, Mount Sackville Nursing Home is a peaceful, animal-loving, growing community that recently, through the Congregation of Cluny's donation, built a €1.3 million euro expansion to build a new wing. When I first walked in to Mount Sackville on the morning of June 14, I was welcomed by kind staff who offered me coffee or tea before I sat down to interview Sr Maeve Guinan in a bright, cosy room designated as a meeting place for residents, most of who are retired sisters, to sit down with their families. After this interview, I was given the chance to tour the facility and their many benefits.

The new, modern, bright wing in the nursing home, costing the Congregation of Cluny €1.3 million was built for “the safety of the residents.” Equipped with their own individual bathrooms as well as a spacious room fitted with a desk, sitting chair and bed, this new wing was built due to the growing strictness of fire regulations. Sr Maeve said that “now fire regulations are much more stringent, so we would have to retrofit the school and assembly hall and classrooms. Couldn't do that. We didn't want to close down the nursing home because we think we have something quite valuable here, so we built a new wing.”

## Animals

The next reason that Sr Maeve mentioned for building this new addition was so that the rooms had “a new access to the gardens and grounds.” The grounds not only let the residents wander around the property to get exercise but also to obtain a form of therapy through an unexpected source: animals.

Mount Sackville Nursing Home is the residence of two donkeys (Howard and Cyril), a pygmy goat (Stella) who just gave birth to two kids, a sheep (Freckles) and a service dog (Bailey). These animals have become “a fix-

“With so many nursing homes in the area closing recently due to a lack of profit given to them from the city, a sense of community seems to have become much more important”

ture” in the nursing home and are used to help many residents with their health, providing them with happiness within their new home. I was able to get a tour through the farm. While engaging in the tour, I was given the opportunity to see how connected these animals are with the sisters living on and working at Mount Sackville.

With all the help that the animals provide for the residents, the nursing home also helped them gain a happy life. Most of the animals living at Mount Sackville, besides Stella the goat, were adopted by the home or dropped off at their door. Sr Maeve was saying that they brought their last dog in because they were “tied to a tree somewhere in the city.” These efforts to save these animals and give them a better life are appreciated by the animals and shown in the way that they act around the sisters.

“These residents also feel a sense of safety through the community that has grown within this home”

When going out to the paddocks with Sr Bridget, it was amusing to see her walking to the middle of the yard, yelling the animal's names. They then came running up to her, anticipating being pet or given treats. It was obvious through their actions how happy and safe they feel at the nursing home, which shows how willing they are to spread this feeling of safety to the residents of Mount Sack-

ville.

These residents also feel a sense of safety through the community that has grown within this home. With so many nursing homes in the area closing recently due to a lack of profit given to them from the city, a sense of community seems to have become much more important. Sr Maeve helps grow a family between the sisters because they “do everything together.” With daily Mass and stimulating activities, the residents of Mount Sackville are together constantly.

## Community

I noticed this sense of community when walking down the halls of this nursing home. It was rare to see one of the residents navigating the halls without a friend beside them, whether this is one of the caretakers, all of which know every resident by name and vice versa, or if they are moving with another resident. It was a special sight to see because you could tell that everyone felt as though they were a part of a family.

This family now can grow due to the nursing home's, who put together the Congregation of Cluny, own money that they used to build their new addition. Many other nursing homes around the area are not so lucky. When speaking to Sr Maeve, I asked why she thought these nursing homes were closing at such a rapid rate. She responded that “it's financially, really very hard actually, for small nursing homes to keep going and keep up the standards,” like they were able to do because of the luck of having enough money to make their own improvements. With these nursing homes closing and causing many of the residents to find new places of living, Sr Maeve says that she hopes “that they get a nursing home as good as where they were.” A nursing home such as Mount Sackville that has dedicated its time and money to create a peaceful, happy community for its residents and workers.



Sr Maeve Guinan during her interview in a meeting room with *The Irish Catholic*



Resident Rita Frawley cuddling with her dog Bonnie



From left to right: Sr Maeve Guinan standing with two workers who have been building the new wing, Mark Pemberton (Contractor PBS) and Terry Lee (Project Manager)

“It's financially, really very hard actually for small nursing homes to keep going and keep up the standards”



Mount Sackville's in-house chapel



New mother Stella alongside her two new kids born on Monday June 10



Sr Bridget speaking to two of Mount Sackville's resident donkeys Howard (in the front) and Cyril (in the back)



Sr Bridget holds one of the new baby goats



Sr Bridget rewarding Stella with her favorite snack in the paddock, a Weetabix Biscuit



New baby goat being curious about *The Irish Catholic's* camera



Sr Bridget showing *The Irish Catholic* the paddock of their sheep Freckles

Edited by Renata Steffens  
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Events deadline is a week in  
advance of publication



**KERRY:** Corpus Christi processions in Tralee. Many young parishioners and families attended this year's procession. Photo: John Cleary.



**KERRY:** Corpus Christi processions in Tralee. This year's procession was hosted by the residents of Hawthorn Drive. Photo: John Cleary.



**ZAMBIA:** Sr Mary Courtney, FMSA (centre) with President of Zambia, Hakainde Hichilema, and other award recipients at the annual investiture ceremony at the State House in Lusaka on May 24.



**DUBLIN:** Graduates of the course Pathways: Exploring Faith and Ministry, run by the Archdiocese of Dublin in DCU Mater Dei Centre of Catholic Education. The graduation ceremony happened in DCU St Patrick's Campus and certificates were presented by Archbishop Dermot Farrell.



**ZAMBIA:** Sr Mary Courtney, FMSA with President of Zambia, Hakainde Hichilema, at a ceremony on May 24 in Lusaka, to receive the President's Insignia for Meritorious Achievement.



**LIMERICK:** Canon Des McAuliffe (centre) celebrated his Golden Jubilee of his ordination in the Parish Priest Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Ennis Road. Pictured are, Fr. Tom Ryan, A.P., Audrey Hanrahan, (sister), Canon Des, P.P., Joseph Hanrahan, (nephew), and Margaret Clifford, church sacristan after a celebration Mass in the Parish Church.

## ANTRIM

Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey invite men between the ages of 20 and 50 for a 'monastic come and see day' on June 23 starting at 10am. The event happening in the Cistercian monastery of Our Lady of Bethlehem, in Portglenone aims to answer questions and assist those who feel a calling or vocation to start a religious life.

## ARMAGH

Missionaries of Charity organising One hour of prayer, scripture and song before the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday from 7-8pm in the Missionary of Charity House, Cathedral Rd.

## DOWN

Eucharistic adoration happens every day at Newry Cathedral. Monday to Friday 9am-10.15am, on Thursdays 5pm-9pm, on Saturdays after 10.30am Mass-5pm and on Sundays after 12pm Mass-5pm.

## DUBLIN

Legion of Mary is organising a lunchtime discussion on talks given by Frank Duff at 12.15pm to 1.30pm, on June 22 with theme 'The Legionaries Promise' and June 29 about 'The Individual and Praesidium.' All welcome at De Montfort House, Morning Star Avenue, D07 VA03.

Music Celebration International present 'Dublin Choral Festival' on June 22 at 8pm at St Patrick's Cathedral. The event is free and count with artistic direction of Jake Runestad.

## FERMANAGH

The Golden Age Club meets every Sunday at St Michael's Parish for music, games and conversation, from 3pm to 5pm. Anybody interested, contact Fr Joe at the parish office for more information.

## KERRY

New members welcome to participate on the Legion of Mary weekly meetings happening in St John's Parish Centre, Tralee, every Friday, from 5pm to 6pm.

## KILDARE

The Irish Church Music Association's 54th Annual Summer School 'Water of Life', is taking place in Maynooth from July 2-4, at St Pat-

rick's College Maynooth. For more information check [www.icmamusic.ie](http://www.icmamusic.ie).

## LAOIS

Rosary prayed in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish, daily at 2pm and at 3pm on Sundays.

## MAYO

National Grandparents Pilgrimage 2024 will happen on July 28 in Knock Shrine. Celebrating the world day for grandparents and the elderly, it will have as leader of the celebration Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Papal Nuncio of Ireland, and the event will start at 2.30pm in the Basilica. Transport needs to be organised with your local parish.

## MEATH

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

Bingo in aid of Athboy Parish funds will happen on Sunday, June 23 at 3pm.

## SLIGO

The 'Annual Maria Goretti Novena' takes place in Collooney Church, Co. Sligo from June 28 to July 6. Mass each evening at 8pm. Confessions and Rosary from 7.30pm. Further details of speakers on [www.kilvarnetparish.com/novena](http://www.kilvarnetparish.com/novena)

## TIPPERARY

The Thomistic Institute are hosting their second annual intellectual retreat this July 3-5 in Glencomeragh house. This retreat is open to all students in Ireland and it is free for all to attend, with bus transport to be arranged. There will be mass, prayer, socials, and lectures on the topic 'How to Live A Happy Life'. Interested need to apply to participate on Thomistic Institute website.

## WATERFORD

Healing service and Benediction will take place in the Holy Family Church, Luke Wadding Street, on Saturday June 29, at 11am and the last Saturday of each month. All are invited to the Anointing of Healing.

# In reimagining the papacy, don't underestimate its star power



John L. Allen Jr

Friday was among the most remarkable single days in the entire Pope Francis era, and given the way this papacy has generated non-stop thrills, chills and spills for more than 11 years now, that's truly saying something.

It was a long day's journey into night, beginning at 8:30am with a still-unexplained, but nonetheless deeply amusing, encounter with more than 100 comedians from around the world - virtually every one of whom, for the record, told reporters they had no idea what they were doing in the Vatican - and ended fourteen hours later when Francis's helicopter landed back in Rome, after the Pontiff spent several hours at a G7 summit in the southern Italian region of Puglia.

Any day that begins with the likes of Whoopi Goldberg, Jimmy Fallon and Conan O'Brien, and then ends in the company of Joe Biden, Giorgia Meloni and Emanuel Macron, has to go down as memorable. (I leave it to the reader to mull which cast of characters, in the end, is the more laughable.)

In addition to cajoling the G7 on the ethical dimension of artificial intelligence while in Puglia, Pope Francis also conducted bilateral meetings with nine heads of state, including not only Biden but President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, as well as the Director General of the International Monetary Fund.

Let's be clear that we're talking about an 87-year-old man who's been in and out of the hospital in recent months, who has chronic difficulty breathing and who can't really move very far under his own power, yet who somehow found the stamina to pull off a day that would put most people half his age into the ground.

## Blockbuster

What's the main take-away from this blockbuster of a day? In a word, it confirmed the Pope's star power - and not just Francis, but any pope. As a thought exer-

Pope Francis waves to visitors gathered to pray the Angelus in St Peter's Square June 16, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media)



cise, ponder the question of what other institution could have convened Goldberg, Fallon, O'Brien, Chris Rock, Stephen Colbert, Julia Louise Dreyfus and Jim Gaffigan, all of whom showed up under their own power, none of whom appeared to understand clearly what the point was, but all of whom were on their best behaviour? (We got through the morning, for instance, without anybody being slapped.)

**“Aside from the fact that it just seemed like a hoot - the comedians' summit triumphantly confirmed the papacy's unique power to convene”**

Sure, you could probably get the same roster for the Oscars, but that's just America's cavalcade of stars. On Friday, you had the equivalents of that celebrity wattage from all over the world. Could the Secretary General of the UN pull something like this off? Maybe, but

it's a short list, and there's almost certainly no one else in the world of religion who could do it.

Perhaps the Dalai Lama could have managed it before his recent scandals, or Bishop Desmond Tutu in his day, but that was about personal charisma rather than the power of the office. Whatever the logic for the event may have been - and, frankly, no one offered a particularly cogent explanation, aside from the fact that it just seemed like a hoot - the comedians' summit triumphantly confirmed the papacy's unique power to convene.

## Advantage

The Vatican simply is the greatest home court advantage in the world, and almost no one says no to an invite from the Pope. In terms of the G7, it marked the first time a pontiff had attended the gathering of the major Western powers, and ironically it came at a moment when Francis is steadily reorienting the Vatican away from its historical pact with the West towards a more globally non-aligned stance.

Even so, the star power

of the papacy was impossible to miss. An Associated Press report noted that Meloni had touted the Pope's appearance in a special video message in the run-up to the summit in Puglia, emphasising how it lent enormous prestige to the event, and that when Francis entered the room on Friday, the normally cacophonous space fell silent, and even the heads of state seemed slightly awed.

**“When Francis delivered his address on the moral challenges posed by AI technology, the titans of the earth paid attention”**

As John Kirton, a political scientist at the University of Toronto who runs a G7 think tank, put it, “The Pope is, well, a special kind of celebrity.” All that meant that when Francis delivered his address on the moral challenges posed by AI technology, the titans of the Earth paid attention. It's not that they necessarily will follow

through on all the Pope's talking points, but they were at least compelled to sit up and listen.

All this is worth underscoring, especially in light of a new document released this week by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity titled “The Bishop of Rome: Primacy and Synodality in the Ecumenical Dialogues and in the Responses to the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*.”

## Reflection

In effect, it's a reflection on thirty years of experience since the late St John Paul II invited other Christians to join Catholics in rethinking the exercise of the papacy to make it a source of unity rather than division among Christians - as John Paul put it, a “service of love recognised by all concerned.”

For the most part, it's been taken for granted ever since that rejiggering the papacy to make it acceptable to other Christian denominations means cutting it down to size, limiting its powers, especially as delineated by the First Vatican Council's declarations on infallibility and supremacy. No doubt, there are ways of reframing the role of the Pope

to allow legitimate diversity in the Christian universe to flourish.

**“If we didn't have a papacy, in other words, we'd have to invent it - and that's a point worth bearing in mind, especially as the project of reimagining the office unfolds”**

Friday, however, was also a triumphant reminder that the papacy occupies an absolutely unique niche on the cultural landscape, and represents arguably the single most precious resource that Christianity has at its disposal to engage the wider world. If we didn't have a papacy, in other words, we'd have to invent it - and that's a point worth bearing in mind, especially as the project of reimagining the office unfolds.

**John L. Allen Jr.** is the editor of *Crux*, specialising in coverage of the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Priest and martyr of communism Fr Michał Rapacz beatified in Krakow

● A 20th-century Polish Catholic priest killed by communist authorities was beatified on Saturday, June 15 at the Divine Mercy Shrine in Krakow-Łagiewniki, Poland.

Pope Francis recognised the martyrdom of Fr Michał Rapacz in January. The 41-year-old priest was shot twice by communist authorities on the night of May 10-11, 1946, after being taken from his village parish in the south of Poland to a nearby woods.

"From the celebration of the Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, [Fr Rapacz] drew inner strength and energy, capable of transforming life and the world, everyday life and history," Cardinal Marcello Semeraro said in his homily at the beatification Mass on June 15.

### German Catholics write letter to Rome over Synodal Way, warn of 'serious scandal'

● Days before a crucial meeting of the German Synodal Way, a Catholic initiative announced it has turned to the Vatican in an attempt to avoid what it sees as the risk of 'serious scandal' over the push for a permanent Synodal Council to oversee the Church in Germany.

The committee charged with turning the Synodal Way into a permanent council met last Friday and Saturday. Last week, the group *Neuer Anfang* ('New Beginning') said it had

written a letter to Rome, dated June 11, to determine whether the constitution of such a committee "complies with or violates the Church's legal order."

The group's statement also warned that if bishops' actions were found to be breaches of duty and the Church failed to disapprove or impose consequences, this could encourage believers to ignore Church norms. *Neuer Anfang* described this as the risk of a "serious scandal" that could permanently damage the faith of believers.

### Argentine priest leads congregation in political chant used against President Milei

● A Catholic priest in Buenos Aires, Argentina, incorporated into the celebration of the Mass a political chorus used in protests against the government of President Javier Milei.

The irregular act took place at the Argentine capital city's Holy Cross Parish on June 9, when the parish's pastor, Fr Carlos Saracini, led the congregation in repeatedly singing "The homeland is not for sale" ("La patria no se vende"), a chant routinely used in political protests against the administration of the country's president, Javier Milei.

Fr Saracini intoned the chant during the presentation of the offerings portion of the Mass, when the priest presents to God the gifts of bread and wine that, later, in the consecration, will become the body and blood of Christ. The moment was captured on social media networks.

### Two priests attacked in parish robbery in Odisha, India

● A group of 15 attacked a Catholic parish in Odisha, India, on June 15, injuring two priests. The incident happened at Jhorabahal parish in the city of Rourkela. The men injured Fr Nerial Bilung and Fr Alois Xalxo – the pastor and assistant pastor – and stole all the parishes money.

The attack happened early in the morning and the Diocese of Rourkela said in a statement the priests did not get any chance to escape or to inform anyone when the other men entered the parish. The statement said the invaders severely started attacking the priests brutally beating with iron rods, crow bars, and hockey sticks, "and other lethal weapons." The priests were then handcuffed and had their mouths taped shut.

"They threatened them not to make any noise or shout or they would be killed," the statement said. "They ransacked the house nearly for an hour and threw away all the belongings all of the place. Fr Nerial Bilung fell unconscious severely bleeding," it continued.

## Pope faces investigation for 'illegally wiretapping phones'

The Pope faces being investigated after allegedly authorised the unlawful wiretaps of phones in the sale of a London property.

The alleged authorisation is said to have taken place during a Vatican investigation into the "corrupt" sale of a €300 million property in London. It comes after the legal team for British financier Raffaele Mincione filed a complaint to the UN. The complaint included details about alleged abuses that were carried out during the trial by Pope Francis.

Rodney Dixon KC, a human rights barrister, has claimed that the Pope approved for Mr Mincione's phone to be wiretapped during the investigation into the alleged wrongdoing at the Vatican. The trial heard that the spiritual leader allowed investigators to tap phones, intercept emails and arrest anyone without approval from a judge. He made the decision based on ancient laws that the Pope had powers over these authorisations.

In the complaint, Mr Dixon labelled the Pope as a "perpetrator" of human rights abuses. He said: "This unreasoned authori-

zation to prosecutors by an absolute monarch greenlit the undertaking of surveillance without the articulation of definite reasons, ongoing judicial or other independent and impartial supervision, or a mechanism by which to challenge the implementation of the surveillance before an independent and impartial tribunal".

Mr Mincione was earlier charged with offences such as fraud, embezzlement, and abuse of office. It comes after claims that the price of the property was inappropriately valued as the Vatican alleged that the financier inflated the price.

However, Mr Mincione has disputed the allegations and said the property was correctly valued by independent experts. According to claims, Mr Mincione defrauded the property by inflating the price when it invested £124 million in an old Harrods warehouse in Chelsea through a fund ran by Mr Mincione.

He told *The Daily Telegraph*: "My basic rights have been trampled on and been ignored. How can it be correct that I have been handed criminal penalties for breaches of spiritual



Pope Francis holds on to his zucchetto as the wind blows during his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican June 12, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

law which only applies to members of the Church, which don't seem to apply to anyone else that handles the Vatican's investments, and which I didn't know anything about?"

"This has been a devastating experience for me and my family and I truly hope

that the United Nations will pursue justice in this matter." A spokesperson for the Vatican said: "The legitimacy of the investigations and the correspondence of the Vatican judiciary system to the principles of fair trial has been recognised by various foreign courts."

## Former punk band guitarist and policeman ordained to priesthood

The Cathedral of Prato, Italy, was the setting last Saturday for the ordination of a former punk band guitarist and policeman.

Fr Giulio Vanucci, who has long hair and a beard and who earlier in life was part of the group i Quanti, a local punk band, was ordained along with Fr Michele Di Stefano, a former police officer, by the bishop of Prato, Giovanni Nerbini.

"The Lord has not chosen administrators or supermen but simple and always generous people," Bishop Nerbini said in

his homily at the ordination Mass.

Fr Vanucci, 38, was born in the town of Pistoia. Of his punk band past, he told the Italian newspaper *Avvenire* it was "a period in which I had a lot of fun and that I do not regret".

During the past eight years, Fr Vanucci has worked as a bricklayer in a Catholic housing apostolate. "For me, being a priest means putting oneself even more at service, it means taking care of everything and everyone," Fr Vanucci said.

The other priest, Fr Michele Di Ste-

fano, 39, is a former police officer in the town of Bardonecchia. He completed his priestly formation in Florence.

"Today is not a goal achieved but rather the beginning of a new path, even an exhausting one," Fr Di Stefano said. "But I am sure that I am not alone and that I have God's help. My intention is to be close to people who suffer, who feel alone," said Fr Di Stefano, who was accompanied by several policemen who were former colleagues of his.

## Diocese of San Diego to file for bankruptcy for the second time

With the Diocese of San Diego facing about 450 lawsuits over alleged sexual abuse of minors by priests, religious, and laity, Cardinal Robert McElroy has informed the clergy and faithful that today the diocese will file for bankruptcy for the second time.

The announcement comes about 16 months after Cardinal McElroy said the diocese was considering the move.

"For the past year, the Diocese has held substantive and helpful negotiations with attorneys representing the victims

of abuse, and I, in collaboration with the leadership of the Diocese, have come to the conclusion that this is the moment to enter formally into bankruptcy and continue negotiations as part of the bankruptcy process," Cardinal McElroy said in a June 13 letter.

Cardinal McElroy explained that bankruptcy offers the best pathway for the diocese to both justly compensate victims of sexual abuse, and to "continue the Church's mission of education, pastoral service and outreach to the poor and the marginalised."



Edited by Brandon Scott  
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## Blessings have no boundaries



Fr Michael Thiel, diocesan chaplain for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, is joined by perpetual pilgrims on a pontoon boat on Shawano Lake near Cecil, Wisconsin during a one-hour Eucharistic boat procession June 12, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Sam Lucero

## Syro-Malabar Catholic priests in India threatened with excommunication

Syro-Malabar Church leaders in India are threatening to excommunicate priests who do not comply with facing the altar during Mass by July. The Syro-Malabar Church, with an estimated following of 4.25 million worldwide, is the second largest of the eastern Churches in communion with Rome. Ever since its synod decided in 2021 to adopt a new, unified mode of celebrating the Mass, the Church has been gripped by controversy, above all in its largest jurisdiction of Ernakulam-Algamany.

The synod required that Mass be celebrated facing the people during the Liturgy of the Word, and facing the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

That decree, however, was resisted by a swath of clergy and laity in Ernakulam-Angamaly, on the grounds that Mass facing the people throughout the celebration represented their local tradition and is also more in keeping with the liturgical teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The dispute occasionally has turned nasty, with angry public protests and the burning of decrees in public.

St Mary's Cathedral in the archdiocese has been closed for the last two Christmas seasons amid the controversy. Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil and Bishop Bosco Puthur set a deadline for the Ernakulam-Angamaly clergy to comply with Eastern

Rite's Mass structure in a joint pastoral letter issued on June 9. The letter is also supposed to be read in all parishes on June 16.

The circular said Catholics that participating in a Syro-Malabar Mass not following the synod-approved structure after July 3 would not be fulfilling their Sunday obligation. "Those who fail to submit the undertaking within the stipulated time will be barred from engaging in priestly duties," said the circular.

"Priests who do not obey our decision from July 3 will be treated as those who have left the Catholic Church fraternity. Such priests will be barred from offering Holy Mass in the Catholic Church

from July 3," the statement says.

In a meeting held after the decree was announced, around 300 priests said that they will continue to offer Mass facing the people even after July 3. Fr Kuriakose Mundadan told Crux the Major Archbishop had called an online synod on June 14 to discuss about the liturgical impasse in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

"And some of the synod members few influential bishops had already expressed their disagreement on this point of those not celebrating the unified Mass by July 3rd would be excommunicated," the priest said.

## Priest says schismatic Spanish nuns are in state of 'paranoia'

Fr Jesús Silva of the Archdiocese of Madrid explained in a video posted on his YouTube channel the reason why the schismatic Poor Clares of the Belorado Monastery are experiencing "paranoia" according to their own thesis by which the religious vows they took would not even be valid.

The Spanish nuns announced May 13 that their community "is leaving the

conciliar Church to which it belonged to become part of the Catholic Church". They complained that in recent years "contradictions, double and confusing language, ambiguity, and loopholes in clear doctrine have been coming from the chair of Peter". These Poor Clares also claimed that "HH Pius XII was the last valid supreme pontiff", thus leaving the papal office vacant since then.

According to an analysis Fr Silva made of the Catholic Manifesto the nuns made public a month ago, the sisters, who risk looming excommunication for schism, are in a situation that, according to their own reasoning, "everything they themselves have done is invalid, because since they have been nuns under Vatican II, they are not real nuns".

## Vatican publishes papal primacy document aimed at 'a reunited Church'

● The Vatican published a 130-page study on papal primacy on Thursday containing suggestions from Orthodox and Protestant Christian communities for how the role of the Bishop of Rome might look in a future "reunited Church". The study document, titled 'The Bishop of Rome: Primacy and Synodality in Ecumenical Dialogue and Responses to the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*', is the first Vatican text since the Second Vatican Council to outline the entire ecumenical debate on papal primacy.

In addition to identifying the theological questions surrounding papal primacy in ecumenical dialogue, the document goes a step further to provide suggestions 'for a ministry of unity in a reunited Church', including "a differentiated exercise of the primacy of the bishop of Rome".

The end of the text published on June 13 includes a section of proposals from the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity on "the exercise of primacy in the 21st century", including recommendations for "a synodal exercise" of papal primacy.

## Pope Francis gets laughs at meeting with big-name comedians

● Pope Francis got a chuckle from an audience of comedians last week after he suggested throwing away his prepared remarks for simply making people laugh with a silly gesture.

Following the advice of St Thomas Aquinas, who said, "Those who lack playfulness are sinful", the Pope joked that instead of reading his prepared speech, "I'll do this, and we will all laugh", as he held

his thumb to his head and wiggled his fingers.

Pope Francis took the stage in front of over 100 comics, stand-up comedians, and humourists, including Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Fallon, and Conan O'Brien, on June 14 in the largest — and possibly only — gathering of comics in the Vatican since Pope Pius V eliminated the role of the papal jester in the 1500s.

## Theologians conclude evaluation of synod reports after Rome meeting

● A group of 20 theologians concluded an evaluation of 107 synod reports from national bishops' conferences and Eastern Catholic Churches following nearly two weeks of meetings in Rome, according to a news release from the general secretariat of the synod.

The theologians, who met from June 4 through June 14, were asked to provide an analysis of the reports, which will help synod officials draft the Synod on Synodality's 'Instrumentum Laboris 2' - the document that will guide the work of the second session of the synod in October. The analysis from the theologians has not been made public.

According to the news release, the themes most frequently mentioned are the formation of synodality, the functioning of participatory bodies, the role of women, outreach to young people, attention to the poor, inculturation, transparency, and a culture of accountability.

## Joe Biden meets with Pope Francis at G7 Summit to discuss foreign policy, climate change

● US President Joe Biden privately met with Pope Francis last week in Apulia, Italy, at the Group of Seven (G7) Summit to discuss foreign policy and climate change.

Francis is the first Pope to address the G7 summit, which is an annual meeting of government leaders from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy. The European Union also participates but is not an official member.

In a statement following the meeting, the White House said both leaders "emphasised the urgent need for an immediate cease-fire and a hostage deal" in Gaza and the need to "address the critical humanitarian crisis".

# Letter from Paris

## Church and state arguing over Paris' Notre Dame



Renata Steffens

Victor Hugo wrote his *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, "The greatest products of architecture are less the work of individuals than of society." Looking through the bus window on the way from the airport to Paris, I was speechless with the number of imposing, impressive buildings.

It was windy when I got off the bus, not what I expected for a June evening in Paris. I guess the city was trying to make me feel welcome and gave me a weather similar to our well known Irish breeze.

It was my first day in Paris, something I dreamed about for a long time. I arrived to my B&B and got ready to enjoy my first evening in the French capital. I had dinner by the Canal de l'Ourcq, with a beautiful view of the Église Saint-Jacques-Saint-Christophe de la Villette.

This church was built in the 19th Century in a neoclassical style with Italian inspiration and was a fantastic background for my first few hours in the city. I felt like the area was not the most touristic, so I was able to interact with a few locals and understand a little more about French culture.

Like every tourist ever, I could not go to bed on my first night before seeing the Eiffel Tower, so I got into a metro in direction to the Alma-Marceau station.

### Experiences

Visiting another country is always an experience, but I caught myself comparing Dublin and Paris a few times during my trip. We complain about not having a metro in the Irish capital nearly every day, possibly just for fun, but the Parisian metro was scary. I could not stop myself from comparing it with the Irish public transportation.

I know what you are thinking. "It was in the evening, of



Notre Dame Cathedral. Photo, Renata Steffens

course weird people would be out and about." Well, no. Throughout my trip I encountered so many people staring at me, many times around noon. I don't know if they were all French, as I was trying to avoid the looks and pretend I did not notice it, but it was uncomfortable.

**“Notre Dame was saved by the famous writer Victor Hugo. The cathedral was in ruins in the 19th century”**

After seeing the Eiffel Tower and taking some pictures, I was happily waiting for the sparkles but, instead, the tower's lights went off at midnight. The solution I found to enjoy a bit more of the warm night was to rent a bike and cycle home, which gave me the opportunity to know the city and take in its

beautiful sceneries.

On my first full day in the city, I did the usual tour of going to the Louvre, Arc de Triomphe and one I was the most looking forward to seeing: The Notre Dame Cathedral.

I can still remember the sadness I felt when watching the cathedral burning in the news on April 15, 2019. It has been over five years since! The first plan announced by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, was to reopen the cathedral on the fire's anniversary, but the renovations were not done in time.

During a boat tour, the guide told us how Notre Dame was saved by the famous writer Victor Hugo. The cathedral was in ruins in the 19th century, as the building was neglected for several years after the French Revolution.

Our guide explained how the author decided to write a novel in an attempt to save the building, which worked and today Notre Dame Cathedral is one of the most important

Catholic buildings worldwide.

### Conflict

The church's reconstruction is expected to be finished by the end of the year, and the reopening ceremony is scheduled for December 7. The reopening ceremony planning, however, is growing tension between the president and the Archbishop Laurent Ulrich.

The president wants to hand the building keys to the clergy, while the Archbishop believes there is no need to do that, as he already has those keys.

Another reason for conflict I read about while scrolling news about the cathedral sitting on a bench in front of the barrier fences, said that Mr Macron wants to give a

**“She believes the ‘disagreement between President Macron and the Archbishop shows how challenging it is to balance the interests of the state and the Church’”**

had no opinion on the case, yet a Brazilian tourist shared they “suppose for the people who believe, it would be a bit invasive if there was an opening event inside the church.”

Another tourist said that Notre Dame is “a main symbol of the Catholic religion, any political speech given by the president at its reopening ceremony should be given outside.”

After some failed attempts of getting people to talk to me, I met Laly Attal, a French student who moved to Paris a few months ago. She believes the “disagreement between President Macron and the Archbishop shows how challenging it is to balance the interests of the state and the Church.”

She explained to me how important the separation of Church and State is for the French. “I'm not sure if the speech should be inside or outside the Church. Inside, it could show respect for the sacred nature of the cathedral, but outside might better align with the idea of separation between the Church and the state,” she said.

The French State has owned the cathedral since 1905, and French newspaper *La Dépêche* wrote president Macron has not had many emblematic monuments credited to his presidency, and he is turning the cathedral reconstruction into a mark of his government.

### Fascination

I left the church still fascinated by how political French people are and how serious they take state related matters. Cycling back to the Louvre, I could hear shouts and siren noises and decided to follow my journalistic curiosity and investigate.

A pro-Palestine march was filling the streets, while completely unbothered tourist ate sandwiches under the archway that lead to the Louvre's gardens, and the police blocked the street on the other side.

It was a fascinating trip, full of beautiful buildings and landscapes, but with surprising amount of politics. It was interesting, and I might search about current affairs for any country I visit from now on.

speech inside the church, whilst Archbishop Ulrich wants him to speak at the forecourt.

**“Notre Dame is ‘a main symbol of the catholic religion, any political speech given by the president at its reopening ceremony should be given outside’”**

Later, walking around in front of the church, enjoying some macarons and avoiding being hit by running children, I asked the opinions of a few tourists. Most of them had no idea about French politics and

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### People of solid faith would not divest any school...

**Dear Editor,** The divesting of schools from Catholic management to other secular kinds of management is becoming a trend, so much so that I am wondering if we will have any schools under Catholic management in ten years' time. I see this as making a joke of Daniel O'Connell's great effort to win Catholic emancipation so that we could have our own Catholic schools. I also see it as one other symptom of the sell-out which I hold to be

the principal hallmark of the Church in Ireland over the last four decades. People of solid faith would not divest any school as long as there is even one Catholic pupil of faith still attending that school or even one non-Catholic who might be searching for the faith. These are being betrayed.

Pope John Paul gave clear guidance on this in *Catechesi Tradendae*. He said that Catholic truth should not be imposed on anyone by any kind of com-

pulsion but should be proposed in its entirety to all who will listen, not diluted from fear of "offending" anyone (which seems to be the number one crime today). If there are some parents who do not want their children to learn about the faith it is up to them and not the school authorities to make alternative arrangements. They are free to ask the Government for entirely secular schools if they so wish.

The root problem here is

not so much the migrants but parents, teachers and school authorities who are lukewarm or cold in the faith, despite all their bragging about the Catholic ethos of our schools, that they still cannot see that the true faith is central to a rounded education for the simple reason that our pupils' ultimate destiny is union with God.

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Richard O'Connor  
Angelicum University,  
Rome*

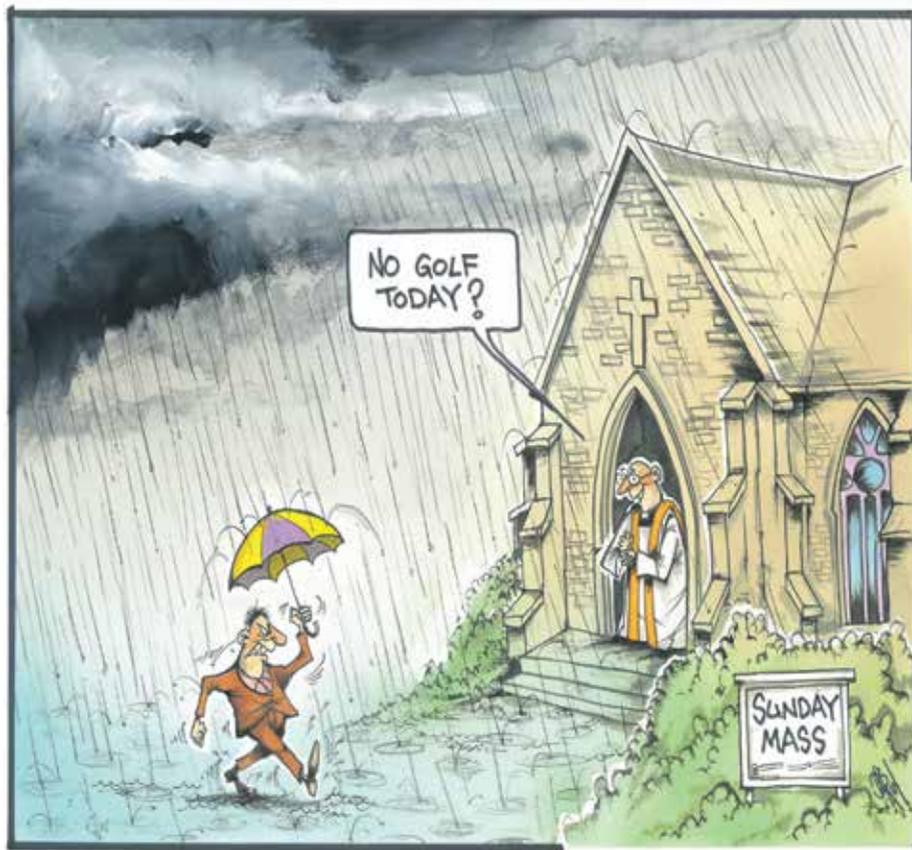
## Zionism and 'the promised land'

**Dear Editor,** David Quinn in his article, 'Does anti-Semitism exist in Ireland?' [*The Irish Catholic* - May 30, 2024] makes many interesting points, including the fact that Zionism is synonymous with Jewish nationalism; however, Zionism is not synonymous with nationalism in the broader sense for the following reasons.

Firstly, Zionism is predicated upon the whole notion of "the promised land", this term having religious/Biblical origins, nationalism on the contrary makes no such claims.

Secondly, nationalism aspires to accommodate people of all faiths and none, while Zionism is on the contrary monolithic and the antithesis of any movement towards a pluralistic society.

*Yours etc.,  
Stephen Garland  
Terenure, Dublin 6*



## A U.S. view on Irish Confirmation

**Dear Editor,** I commend Fr Bernard Cotter for his honesty in addressing the charade that present-day Confirmation has become (as well as First Communion and Baptism). His article [*The Irish Catholic* - June 6, 2024] speaks of a parish where none of 100 Confirmation candidates were present at Mass the following Sunday.

The article moves from the lesser issues of cate-

chetical instruction and not appreciating the value of the sacraments to the primary issue: "In truth, the issue is something deeper - the dying of the faith."

It is wishful thinking to hold that Confirmation without the requisite Christian belief is valid in the first place. The sacraments are the ways we commit ourselves to Jesus in the New Covenant; at the same time we receive the grace to

fulfil these commitments. Taking the sacrament of matrimony as an example: if a given marriage is later found to lack adequate commitment / maturity when it was celebrated, a decree of sacramental nullity is issued (the marriage never actually happened in God's eyes). Why should Confirmation be any different?

Here in the US there is more integrity in celebrating the sacrament of Confir-

mation. The candidates are at least 2 years older than in Ireland, the instruction is parish-based and taught by believing catechists and there is a greater expectation that the candidates and their families are committed.

But all that requires more work than the slapdash Irish approach...

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

## Proud of our new Irish who bring life

**T**he symbiosis between Catholicism and nationalism in Nineteenth Century Ireland was vital in shaping the movement towards self-determination. It was a hugely unifying factor in the founding of the new Free State and overcoming the trauma of the Civil War - whatever our difference on the national question, we worshipped at the same altar every Sunday morning.

The 1932 Eucharistic Congress was surely the culmination in that hand-in-glove relationship between Church and State, and generated a level of enthusiasm among Irish people that has few real parallels. The sheer scale of the event bore striking testimony to the pride in identity, both national and religious, which patently guided the hundreds of thousands of people who participated.

Yet our history probably blinded many to the fact that Catholicism and nationalism have always been - and should be - very uneasy bedfellows. After all, universalism is at the very heart of the Gospel which naturally relativises national identity.

We would do well to keep this in mind as a new form of ethnonationalism emerges that seeks to associate Irishness with Catholicism. The irony, of course, is that many of the self-described patriots who are standing up for Ireland's identity as a 'Catholic country' are not exactly to the fore in the reform and renewal of their local parishes.

If they were present in their local parishes, they would see that the ancient Faith in the 'land of saints and scholars' is being renewed by a commitment and fervour that puts many of us to shame.

The so-called 'new Irish' are bringing life and vibrancy to many of our tired parish structures. Priests will often tell of how inspired and renewed they are in their own vocations by new Catholic communities from places as diverse as Timor-Leste, India, Nigeria, The Philippines, Brazil, Chile, Croatia and Poland.

In our capital city, Mass is now celebrated in almost two dozen languages as our newcomers show a hunger and thirst for the Gospel that many native Irish people evidently no longer experience.

In the latest episode of *The Confession Box* podcast, Bishop Paul Dempsey speaks of his pride at the vibrancy newcomers are bringing to our parishes (see news pages).

The recent all-Ireland national rosary rally at Knock Shrine was notable for the fact that many of the participants were not from traditional Irish backgrounds. As coaches arrived at the national Eucharistic and Marian shrine earlier this month, it was a real and telling example of a Biblical vision of the Church as coming "from every nation, tribe, people and language".

Pope Francis often talks of his vision of a humble Church which can receive as well as to give. This is the model of the Church that we need in Ireland as we approach the 1,600th anniversary of when that great foreigner-turned-Irishman Patrick brought to the Faith in 432. That anniversary will be marked in 2032, just five years after the bicentenary of Catholic Emancipation.

There is much to reflect upon in these important anniversaries, not least the deep roots of the Faith on this island sealed in the blood of the martyrs. But, like the Israelites in the Hebrew Scriptures, we would do well to remember that the Promised Land is always in the future - our greatest days were not in the past, despite the splendour and wonder of events like the 1932 Eucharistic Congress.

In Church history, there are always what one could describe as 'source Churches'. Ireland was such a Church in the aftermath of the Dark Ages, this was true also of the Nineteenth Century as the great powers scrambled for Africa, saintly Irishmen and women left these shores to bring the light of the Gospel.

We are no longer a source Church - and we must have the humility to see that God constantly renews his Church in ways that once seemed unimaginable to us.

A narrow nationalism that would seek to exclude people from our parishes based on where they were born or the colour of their skin will only see parishes wither further. But even more, such views are sinful and profoundly unchristian. Such thoughts have no place among the followers of Jesus.

## Letters to the Editor

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

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication

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



# Letter from Portugal

## Polarisation, liberalism and the future US president



Michael Sanfey

Readers familiar with the Irish actor and comedian Jimmy O'Dea might recall his monologue: "Thank heavens, we are living in Rathgar." When I was a diplomat in Portugal some years ago, I used to say to myself, "Thank heavens that I live in Estoril". It's a very beautiful place about 25km from Lisbon. Driving home from the embassy along the marginal, the car radio might sometimes play the recently released Bryan Adams song '18 'til I die', and so attractive is the landscape that one could easily believe in such age-defying bravado.

### Estoril Political Forum

I was back recently for the three-day Estoril Political Forum (EPF) at the Hotel Palácio. Organised by the Institute of Political Studies of Universidade Católica Portuguesa, the purpose of the event was to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and to look to the future of democracy's third wave. The latter is a reference to a seminal work by Samuel P. Huntington *The Third Wave – Democratization In The Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Huntington wrote that "The third wave of democratisation in the modern world began, implausibly and unwittingly, at twenty-five minutes after midnight, Thursday, April 25, 1974, in Lisbon Portugal when a radio station played the song 'Grandola Vila Morena'. Thus *Wall Street Journal* columnist and EPF panelist William A. Galston was justified when in a recent column he described Portugal as "a small country with an outside influence on modern politics".

The EPF brought together academics and think tankers from both sides of the Atlan-



Former US President Donald Trump leaves the courthouse after a jury found him guilty of all 34 felony counts in his criminal trial at New York State Supreme Court in New York City, May 30, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Justin Lane, pool via Reuters

tic and Macao, as well as students from UCP and other European universities. The opening session featured presentations by former Portuguese Prime Minister and European Commission President Jose Durao Barroso, and leading democracy theorist Larry Diamond of Stanford University. The latter declared that the day Donald Trump was elected in 2016 had been the worst day of his life. Larry, you're a terrific political scientist and I really liked your book *Ill Winds*, but *donnez-moi un break!*

### China and the Vatican

Day two of the forum led off with a fascinating session on the role of Catholic universities in academic diplomacy and democratic engagement. The highlight was the contribution by Rev Stephen Morgan, Rector of the University of St Joseph (USJ), Macao, and Vice President of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. During the Q&A he was asked whether the 2018 agreement between the Vatican and China had affected his work, and what he thought of the agreement generally. He had just come

to Macao when it was signed, and outlined his views as follows.

**“Geopolitically the Chinese believe that the rules of the international order were agreed before they were at the table, so they think the rules are rigged”**

Initially he was enthusiastic about the prospect of more open engagement, but now thinks he had been naively optimistic. The agreement was a fantastic political card played by the Chinese government to control the underground church, adding that it would be possible to comment better on the agreement if we knew what was in it – its contents have not been revealed. It appears to play little or no direct part in the work of his university, although it was conceivable that there were things going on in the background of which he was unaware. Geopolitically the Chinese believe that the rules of the international order were agreed before they were

at the table, so they think the rules are rigged. The sinicisation of religion is behind that, and we – i.e., the West – don't make a good case for ourselves, here mentioning the upcoming US elections as an example. We should manifest why democracy might be a good idea, rather than taking it as self-evident.

### Sharp power

There followed a session on 'sharp power' in which Prof Dóra Györfy of Corvinus University, Budapest expressed concern that important trade-offs in a climate change/relations with China context were not being recognised by the EU. She said that Hungary is playing a very important role in China's EV export strategy, with huge factories being built in this central European country, meaning that Chinese surveillance is coming to Hungary as well. She is worried about the dangers of privileging technologies dominated by China and sees the Hungarian case as a warning to the whole EU. In the meantime the FT has reported that the European Commission announced it would provisionally apply additional duties on imported Chinese EVs from July.

### US elections

Given that we are in a US Presidential election year, it was timely that the final session was devoted to looking ahead to that. University of Virginia Professor John Owen focused on the high level of polarisation in the United States, which has in effect become an almost evenly divided 50:50 country. He sees a lot of the problem as having to do with the way liberalism has evolved. He divided this into three stages: classical, welfare, and open. The main culprit, if you like, is open liberalism in the way it has joined together economic 'neoliberalism' from the right and cultural and social liberalism from the left. Millions of Americans have become alienated by de-industrialisation mixed with elimination of traditional norms, leading to a "cocktail of maladies" and a "destructive dialectic".

William A Galston (WSJ, Brookings Institution) opened with an assertion: everything which had been discussed that afternoon – the future of Ukraine as well as of the Transatlantic Alliance/NATO – depended on the outcome of the November election. As to the issues, he sees inflation as

top of the list, and mentioning in addition: fundamental cultural divisions; immigration; abortion; climate change; threats to democracy; and the age/character of the respective candidates. Biden is a trans-Atlanticist in his bones, who has pushed for a massive programme of aid to Ukraine at considerable political cost. Trump, on the other hand, has no admiration for Ukraine, seeing it as the source of many of his problems. As to Trump having said that he'd end that war in 24 hours, Galston suggested that the terms for that would be, in one word: "Munich."

**“Trump has a wide variety of choices for his running mate – will he have the self-discipline to choose the right one?”**

Galston also pointed to a big difference between the two candidates in regard to US relations with Europe. The Democrats had made their peace with Europe, Trump not. Trump sees the EU as a protectionist conspiracy, so if he wins in November we can expect things to be rocky, transatlantic-wise. If the election were to be held next week, Trump would win, but as to November, Galston said he didn't know. The right question to ask is what could happen over the next five months to change the trajectory of voters' intentions? The recent guilty verdict against Trump might have an effect, even if wasn't doing so yet. At the very early debate scheduled for June 27, Biden has a lot to win or lose. Depicted as a doddering senile old fool, Biden could well do better than that, and might seem viable after all. The two political party conventions (Republicans in Milwaukee, July; Democrats in Chicago, August) could have an impact on public opinion. Trump has a wide variety of choices for his running mate – will he have the self-discipline to choose the right one? If inflation's downward trajectory allowed for interest rate cuts that could make a big difference.

# The priest who ‘heard’ the Big Bang



US Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno, director of the Vatican Observatory is pictured at the observatory in Rome in 2007. Photo: CNS/Annette Schreyer

## Staff reporter

**C**opernicus and the “Galileo case” are still taught in schools today. They drove a wedge of mistrust between the Church and science. But it was also a Catholic priest who first heard the bang.

“In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. But the earth was desolate and empty (...), and God’s Spirit hovered over the waters.” This is how the beginning of the world is described in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The fact that this account of creation is not a scientific treatise, but rather a testimony of faith that is more than 2,500 years old, has got around outside the creationist doctrine. To this day, the Church is accused of being hostile to science. But it was a Catholic priest, of all people, who developed the counter-theory of the “Big Bang”: the Belgian Georges Lemaitre (1894-1966). His legacy is the focus of an international conference taking place from Sunday to Friday (16 to 21 June) at the Vatican Observatory in Castel Gandolfo.

The most important insight of this astrophysicist and theologian is as simple as it is obvious: the universe has its origin in time. If galaxies are constantly drifting apart, then they must have been closer together in the past. And this suggests that much earlier, the entire

universe must have been concentrated in a single point: the “primordial atom”, which “exploded at the moment the universe was created”. Lemaitre assumed that the recently discovered red shift of stellar nebulae was not the result of the movement of galaxies in space, but rather the expansion of the universe itself.

The young professor published his ideas in 1927 in a little-known Belgian scientific journal - two years earlier than the US researcher Edwin Hubble (1889-1953), who is now generally credited with discovering the expansion of the universe. Lemaitre did not translate his essay into English until 1931.

### ‘Hubble-Lemaitre law’

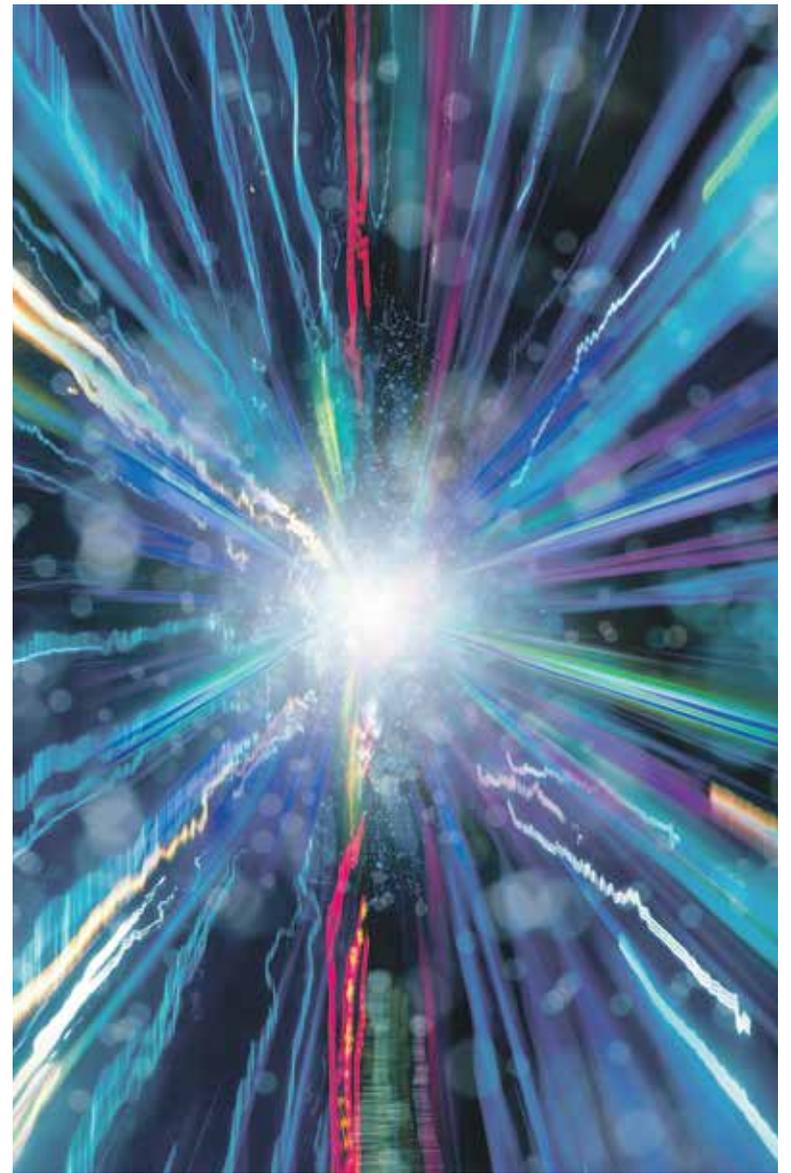
However, he omitted the actually decisive passages on the expansion of the universe because, in his opinion, Hubble had already explained these ideas more precisely in 1929 - which later became

**“Lemaitre assumed that the recently discovered red shift of stellar nebulae was not the result of the movement of galaxies in space, but rather the expansion of the universe itself”**

famous as the “Hubble constant”. The priest-physicist never claimed his own copyright. Nevertheless, in 2018 the International Astronomical Union decided to rename the “Hubble Law” the “Hubble-Lemaitre Law”.

**“Lemaitre’s answer to the question of who might have triggered this primal impulse was that of the theologian”**

Born in Charleroi, Wallonia, the Jesuit student Lemaitre wanted to become both a priest and a researcher from an early age. However, his ambitions were initially interrupted by his deployment on the front in the First World War.



**“Today, an asteroid in the “main belt” between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter is named after him, as are a lunar crater and a transport vehicle to supply the International Space Station (ISS). He probably deserved more”**

In addition to theology at the Mechelen seminary, he then studied maths and physics in Leuven and obtained his doctorate in 1920.

His many talents led to the next steps in rapid succession: ordination to the priesthood in 1923; further studies in stellar astronomy at Cambridge in 1924; professorship in Leuven in 1925; further doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology in 1927. Pius XII (1939-1958) admitted Lemaitre to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the end of 1940.

His faith in God was not shaken by his findings. And so Lemaitre’s answer to the question of who might have triggered this primal impulse was that of the theologian. This also appealed to and made sense to the Pontifical Academy, which recognised his theory in 1951. Pius XII explained that the beginning of the world, which can be dated to the “Big Bang” - around 13.8 billion years ago according to current knowledge - originated from an act of creation by God.

### Divine creation?

However, it was precisely this

interpretation that made the “Big Bang” theory so difficult to digest for Lemaitre’s critics: it was far too close to the biblical idea of the divine creation of the world, and also had the inexplicable uniqueness (“singularity”) of a “primordial atom”. It is said that the Belgian only managed to convince Albert Einstein (1879-1955) years later during a trip to California.

It was only after Lemaitre’s retirement in Leuven in 1964 that the final proof of the accuracy of the Big Bang theory was provided. The two young astrophysicists Arnold Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered the incidence of constant weak radio waves on the earth in Holmdelb/New Jersey in 1965. Cosmic background radiation; a noise, an echo of the once derided “Big Bang”.

Lemaitre died in Louvain in June 1966 at the age of 71. Today, an asteroid in the “main belt” between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter is named after him, as are a lunar crater and a transport vehicle to supply the International Space Station (ISS). He probably deserved more.

# Your Faith

Is my friend  
'dead' in  
Christ due to  
her irregular  
marriage status?

Jenna Marie Cooper

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The Irish Catholic, June 20, 2024



## What to do when we encounter difficulties in prayer



Celia Wolf-Devine

Regular prayer has always been regarded as an essential part of Christian life. In capitalistic Psalms, the believer is compared to a tree planted by a stream that still bears fruit, even in times of drought, remaining full of sap and green, even in old age.

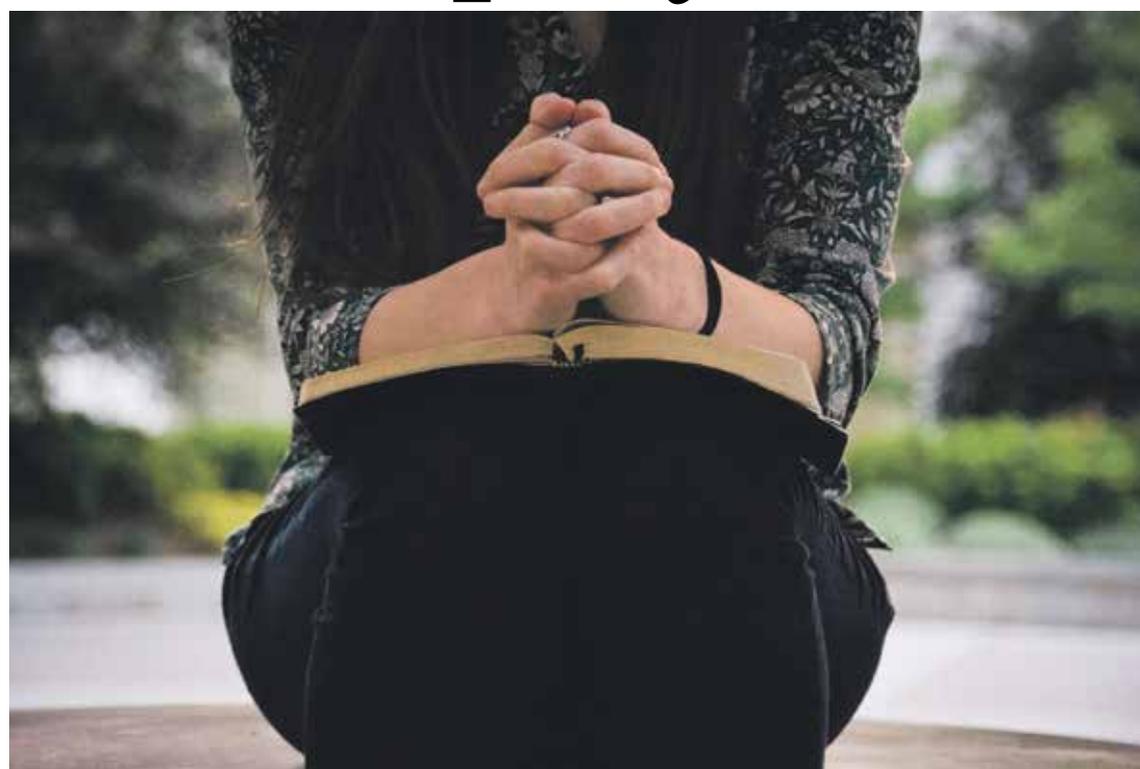
Jesus is the one who can give us living water, as he tells the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:10), and prayer is an important way in which we can open ourselves to receive this so that we, too, can remain full of sap and green amid the trials of life. "O God, you are my God / it is you I seek / For you my body yearns; / for you my soul thirsts, / In a land parched, lifeless, / and without water" (Ps 63:2).

### Desire

Our desire for God indicates that God is already at work in us, calling us to him. Realising this puts prayer in a new light. It is not just something we do; it also involves inviting God to work in us - to transform us and conform us more to Christ. God is, in fact, present when we pray. As the 17th-century Carmelite Brother Lawrence put it: "You need not cry very loud; he is nearer to us than we are aware of." Whether we are speaking words or singing or simply being silent, this sense of our longing for God and the reality of his presence should be a kind of constant background to our prayer.

If you know you need to pray more but keep finding yourself getting to the end of the day and finding you have not prayed, you should think about what is holding you back.

"I'm too busy." Don't think of prayer as another thing you have to do, but as an opportunity to disengage yourself from the rush of practical activities and experience some of the leisureliness and eternity of



God. Even a short period of this sort of prayer is like finding an oasis in the desert.

**“We also fear that God will take us over or ask us to give up things to which we are attached. God always leaves us free”**

We also feel embarrassment. We may be afraid to invite God in because we want everything to be clean and orderly, but we know that much is chaotic, conflicted, misshapen, even ugly. The answer is twofold. First, just as you would visit someone out of friendship regardless of her messy house, so Jesus wants to visit us. Second, if we wait until everything is orderly and beautiful, we will wait forever because it is only the action of the Holy Spirit that can purify our hearts.

Our sinfulness in general can overwhelm us sometimes, as when St Peter cries, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Lk 5:8). But Jesus came to call sinners and shared meals with tax collectors and prostitutes.

We also fear that God will take

us over or ask us to give up things to which we are attached. God always leaves us free. He may, in fact, ask us to give up something we are attached to, but if so, he will gradually lead us to see it differently and be less attracted to it. If, like most of us, you have already tried to do everything your own way and made a mess of things, the idea that God really does know what is good for us better than we do begins to look pretty plausible.

### Presence

We all want to experience God's presence and not just believe that He is present. But don't assume you are not experiencing it because you are not having experiences like Saul on the Damascus Road or Teresa of Ávila. Dramatic experiences can and do happen. But more ordinarily, the sense of God's presence is subtle and intermittent: a feeling that you are not alone, a moment of heightened life and peace, a sense of being held and stilled or comforted in times of sorrow or anguish, or perhaps a sudden clarity that reveals something deep about yourself and your situation.

The background image we have of God is very important for prayer. If you envision him as a harsh judge, this will

get in the way of openness and trust. You might experiment with some images that are common in mystical literature. Imagine yourself as clay in the hands of the potter or as a house you invite him to come dwell in, or perhaps as the bridegroom of your soul.

**“We are dry, bramble-infested ground which God weeds and waters and softens so we can bring forth fruit”**

Mystics have employed maternal imagery as well - for example, nursing at the breast of God; God as a powerful deliverer, coming to drive out all darkness and evil, is an image that may feel appropriate sometimes. I sometimes think of myself being a flower that turns toward the light and opens its petals, or following his lead as I would follow the lead of a dancing partner.

A good analogy in Scripture is the garden. We are dry, bramble-infested ground which God weeds and waters and softens so we can bring forth fruit. We want to be like the good soil in the parable of the sower (Lk 8:15) - like

those who "hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Lock prayer into your daily routine. A short period of prayer first thing in the morning before you turn on your computer, phone or TV is an especially valuable practice. We need to bring Christ to the world, so spend some time with him first before you get entangled in your daily activities. Pray before you make your list and let God give you his perspective on what is important. It is OK to sip your morning tea or coffee as you start. One way to structure it is the following:

-Read a little Scripture and see what stands out for you. The daily Mass readings are a good choice.

-Bring to God whatever is on your mind: things left over from yesterday, your emotions, your worries and fears and try to let go of them. Offer him thanks for bringing you to the start of another day.

-Say or sing some sort of Holy Spirit invocation.

-Ask God to help you surrender to him, to let him dwell in you more deeply and live in him and for him more today than yesterday. Be sure to leave some quiet time.

-Do some sort of invocation of the Sacred Heart. I use the Litany of the Sacred Heart.

-Say a prayer of thanksgiving and ask for his guidance and protection throughout the day.

### Distractions

If you are bothered by distractions, just return gently to the prayers and don't get upset at yourself for your poor concentration. Turn your worries into prayers for that situation. Keep a writing pad next to you for insights or things you need to do. Don't pick at yourself or worry about whether you are doing it right. And don't get discouraged if you don't see quick results - either in the feelings you experience or in overcoming your faults.

God can work in us at all sorts of levels that we are not aware of. Just be faithful to prayer, ask him to transform your heart, putting your desires in the right order so the compass needle of your soul points to him, the true north, and trust he will complete the good work he has begun in you.

**i** Celia Wolf-Devine writes from Rhode Island.

# A two-fold approach to listening to survivors

Sr Carino Hodder OP

**W**hat does it mean to listen to survivors of abuse? It's something that the Church repeatedly and emphatically calls us to do. But the call to listen is in danger of becoming an empty slogan if we do not take the time to stop and think about what, exactly, this listening involves. To help us, we can look to two places: the science of trauma and Pope Francis' spirituality of accompaniment. Together, science and spirituality can deepen and inform our ministry of listening to survivors.

I first began thinking about this topic when I stopped to reflect on my experience of talking about past trauma, and how it fit - or did not fit - with my understanding of the call to listen to survivors.

When I heard the words 'listen to survivors of abuse,' I tended to imagine a formal, structured process: somebody working through a neat, clean-cut narrative from beginning to end, and somebody else simply receiving it. But then it occurred to me that I had never done such a thing myself, and for many years would have been incapable of doing so.

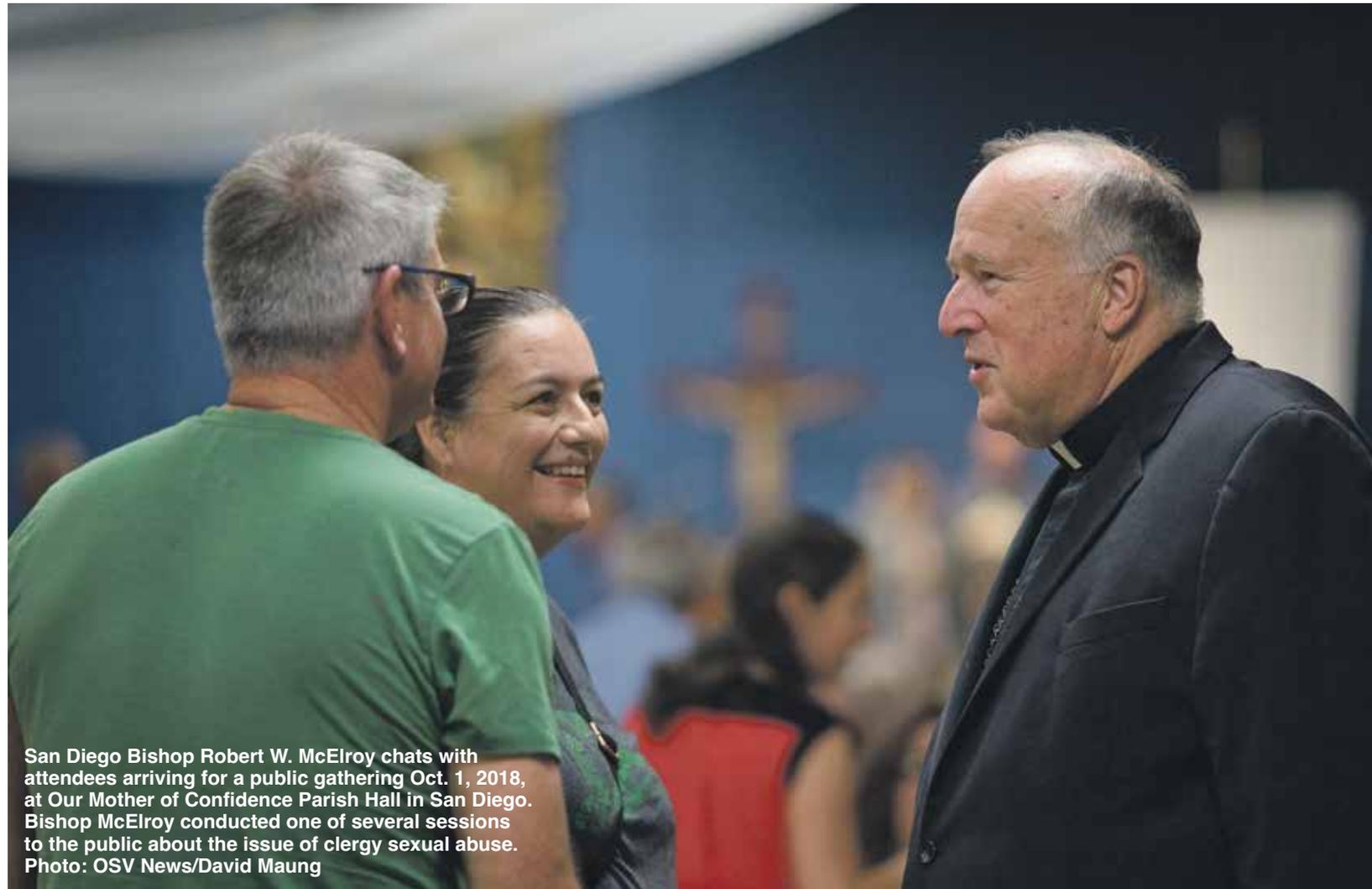
This is not to say such conversations never happen; far from it. But I knew that it was possible to struggle for many years to talk about trauma directly, and then only find direct words for it with the help of others. I know very many good, trustworthy, loving listeners, but their role in my life has not been just to listen to the words I had to say. Instead, they have had to help me discover those words in the first place.

## Trauma

Am I abnormal? Neuroscience suggests that - in this area, at least - I am not. Traumatic memories differ from non-traumatic memories because of how they are formed within the brain, in ways that have repercussions for how they can be retrieved and spoken about.

Memory-making is a team effort: one part of the brain, the amygdala, processes the emotional effect of the event and its perceived threat level without reference to time or situational context; another, the hippocampus, regulates this work by introducing meaning, context and a sense of time and place to the emotional imprints.

But trauma - the experience of having our psychological



San Diego Bishop Robert W. McElroy chats with attendees arriving for a public gathering Oct. 1, 2018, at Our Mother of Confidence Parish Hall in San Diego. Bishop McElroy conducted one of several sessions to the public about the issue of clergy sexual abuse. Photo: OSV News/David Maung

and physical coping mechanisms stretched beyond their capacity - disrupts this normal memory-making process. As a result, memories of trauma are often fragmented, disjointed and composed primarily of physical and emotional sensations that are difficult to contextualise or understand.

**“It will be work that, in the vast majority of cases, will only happen in the context of a relationship characterised by love, patient understanding and trust”**

Integrating these memories into the story of ourselves is a gradual, often arduous process. It usually takes place in the context of a relationship with a medical or counselling professional, spiritual director or spouse. The process will not necessarily begin by confronting the past directly; instead, it might begin by talking about the emotional difficulties and

physical triggers experienced in the present, and gradually building the courage and confidence to go backward from there.

In short, most survivors will have a lot of work to do before they are at the stage where they can speak out loud what has happened to them - and it will be work that, in the vast majority of cases, will only happen in the context of a relationship characterised by love, patient understanding and trust.

## Holiness

What does this mean for us as Catholics, called not only to psychological healing but to the heights of holiness? We can 'baptise' these lessons of neuroscience and put them at the service of Christian discipleship with the help of Pope Francis and his spirituality of accompaniment.

From the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has emphasised the importance of walking alongside others, in all the mess and confusion of human experience, in order to guide them slowly and gently toward Christ. In his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaud-*

ium, the Holy Father described this as the "art of accompaniment" - an art which calls for "prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit," and which goes hand-in-hand with "the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing."

**“The accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive discovery of the mystery of God”**

Then, in a general audience last year, the pope reminded us that "one does not go to the Lord by oneself," which is why it is "essential to be part of a journeying community" of companions.

In between these times,

the 2020 Directory for Catechesis introduced the pope's spirituality of accompaniment into its description of evangelisation and catechesis. It reminded catechists, and all who work in parish ministry, that "the accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive discovery of the mystery of God." To that, we can add the discovery of the mystery of the human person made in God's image.

In his spirituality of accompaniment, Pope Francis emphasises the importance of long-term personal relationships in which our interactions are not merely functional and didactic but marked by patient loving-kindness. For me, this perfectly describes the kind of relationships in which trauma can be processed and - eventually - spoken of.

Nowadays, when I think of 'listening to survivors,' I imagine a slow, gradual and, above all, mutual process, uncovering a story of suf-

fering that was once wholly beyond words. It is a process that I, and others I know, have experienced personally, and which our modern scientific understanding of trauma tells us is the normal way by which stories of abuse are brought to light. It is the art of accompaniment, which the Holy Father has called us to make an essential part of our Christian discipleship.

## Answer

We can answer the Church's call to listen to survivors by learning this art of accompaniment, informed by the science of trauma. That way, we will understand that the first stage of listening will probably involve no words at all, but instead simply the building of a relationship for its own sake. And we will remember the reason why we listen: not to prove a point, inform a policy or tick a box, but to lead others into deeper communion with Christ.

**†** Sister Carino Hodder is a Dominican Sister of St Joseph based in the Portsmouth Diocese, UK.

# The enduring gift of 'True Devotion to Mary'



Laretta Brown

**W**hen an individual or secularised culture has largely abandoned Faith, the Virgin Mary often lingers in grace-filled whispers. Take the 'Hail Mary' pass in football, or the lovely musical renditions of the 'Ave Maria', both of which remain popular in secular society today. As the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris burned in 2019, strains of the hauntingly beautiful Hail Mary in French were sung by bystanders as firefighters battled the flames.

Like the frightened young communist soldier whose repetition of party rhetoric shifts to a 'Hail Mary' when faced with death in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, we are called back by our Heavenly Mother amid our troubles in this valley of tears even when we think we have cast off Faith.

Coming with the recommendations of eight popes, *True Devotion to Mary* by St Louis-Marie de Montfort was an obvious choice to explore the devotion to Our Lady of whom, de Montfort notes, "there is scarcely a sinner, who even in his obduracy, has not some spark of confidence in her."

## Popularity

Originally written in the beginning of the 18th century, de Montfort's work gained enormous popularity after it was rediscovered and published in 1843. The treatise and its companion consecration prayers outline how devotion to Mary is a sure path to her son.

"God the Father has not given his Only-Begotten to the world except by Mary," de Montfort wrote. "How highly we glorify God, when, to please Him, we submit ourselves to Mary, after

the example of Jesus Christ, our Sole Exemplar!"

He wrote that while Mary is "infinitely below her Son, who is God, and therefore she does not command Him as a mother here below would command her child, who is below her," nevertheless, God "never resists the prayer of His dear Mother, because she is always humble and conformed to His Will."

Her humility and conformity to the will of God, evident in her 'yes' to His plan of salvation, provide a great model for us in surrendering ourselves to the will of God.

De Montfort saw devotion to Mary as a necessary part of Christian life and wrote that while Mary is "necessary to God by a necessity which we call hypothetical, in consequence of His Will, she is far more necessary to men, in order for them to arrive at their Last End."

He grounded much of his writing on Mary in the teachings of the Church fathers and cited St John Damascene's writing that "to be devout to you, O holy Virgin, is an arm of salvation which God gives to those whom He wishes to save."

He also referenced St Bonaventure's writing that "the way to come to Christ is to approach her: he who shall fly her shall not find the way of Peace."

**“The strongest inclination of Mary is to unite us to Jesus Christ her Son; and the strongest inclination of the Son is that we should come to Him by His holy Mother”**

To those who might fear to draw near to Mary lest it detract from her son, de Montfort offered reassurance.

"Our Blessed Lady is the means Our Lord made use of to come to us. She is also the means which we must make use of to go to Him," he wrote. "For she is not like all the rest of creatures, who

if we should attach ourselves to them, might rather draw us away from God than draw us near Him. The strongest inclination of Mary is to unite us to Jesus Christ her Son; and the strongest inclination of the Son is that we should come to Him by His holy Mother."

De Montfort called Mary "the mediatrix of intercession" to Jesus who is our Mediator before God. Citing St Bernard of Clairvaux who called her the "mediator of salvation," he wrote that "we have need of a mediator with the Mediator Himself," and Mary is uniquely suited for such a role.

## Nature

"In seeing her, we see our pure nature," he explained, "she is not the sun, who, by the vivacity of his rays, blinds us because of our weakness; but she is fair and gentle as the moon, which receives the light of the sun, and tempers it to render it more suitable to our capacity."

He also reflected on how God "did not will to come into the world at the age of a perfect man, independent of others, but like a poor and little babe, dependent on the cares and nourishment of this holy Mother" and how the Lord remained under her care for 30 years.

"Are we so senseless as to imagine that we can find a more perfect or a shorter means of glorifying God than that of submitting ourselves to Mary after the example of her Son," he asked.

For those devoted to Mary, de Montfort wrote that she will instil in them a portion of her great Faith in God and she will "take away from your heart all scruple and all disorder of servile fear" and "introduce into it pure love, of which she has the treasure; so that you shall no longer be guided by fear."

St John Paul II took his papal motto "Totus tuus" or "all yours" from de Montfort's words, "I am all yours, and all that I have is yours, O most loving Jesus, through Mary, your most holy Mother."

In a 2004 letter to the Montfort religious family, John Paul II emphasised the great influence de Montfort's work had on his own Marian spirituality and reflected on Christ's words on the cross to the beloved apostle John, "Behold your Mother."

"Throughout its history, the People of God has experienced this gift of the crucified Jesus: the gift of his Mother," he wrote. "Mary Most Holy is truly our Mother who accompanies us on our pilgrimage of faith, hope and charity towards an ever more intense union with Christ, the one Saviour and Mediator of salvation."



Jenna Marie Cooper

## Is my friend 'dead' in Christ due to her irregular marriage status?

**Q: John 6:54 states the following: "Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.'" I just met a sister in Christ who has a problem. She has a common law spouse and children, but only she has come to the Faith. The others (especially her husband) are atheist. There is no holy matrimony in sight. She attends Mass but does not receive the holy Eucharist. She loves the Church and is devoted. But she feels ashamed and claims that in the eyes of the Church she is dead, based on the above Scripture. Could a priest or bishop allow a dispensation where somebody like my friend could receive the holy Eucharist? If not, is she 'dead'? I've just met her and am trying to help her out of the "I'm dead" realm.**

**A:** Practically speaking, the best advice you can give your friend is to encourage her to find a local parish priest with whom she feels comfortable sharing her situation.

Scenarios like your friend's will not seem surprising or scandalous to a parish priest, or to the many non-priests who serve in other forms of pastoral ministry. While your friend might feel a little nervous about approaching a priest, you can remind her that there really is no reason for her to feel 'ashamed'. The Church is always happy when someone seeks a closer relationship with Christ in the sacraments, no matter what roadblocks might need to be resolved.

There are ways to work out complicated irregular marriages so that a person can regain a full sacramental life in the Church, but every situation is unique and comes with its own set of concerns and nuances.

For example, was your friend baptised Catholic as infant, but is just now returning to a more fervent practice of the Faith? Or is she a non-Catholic who wishes to become Catholic?

If your friend is not techni-

cally Catholic, and if her 'common law marriage' is one that has secular civil effects, then it is possible that her marriage might already be considered a valid one in the eyes of the Church (though in that case she would still need to complete a process of Catholic initiation before receiving the Eucharist).

If your friend is Catholic but her common law husband is not, there could be other ways to regularise her marriage. For instance, perhaps your friend's legal husband might be willing to exchange matrimonial consent in a very quiet, simple Catholic ceremony. Or if there was already some sort of deliberate legal exchange of consent or marriage vows in their 'common law' union, it may be possible to request something called a 'radical sanation' from the local bishop, which is somewhat like retroactively declaring the marriage vows valid in the eyes of the Church.

But again, it is not possible to give your friend concrete advice without being there in person to get the whole story and clarify all the details - your friend would need to work all this out with someone who is familiar with the Church's marriage law and able to apply it to the specifics of her own situation.

Regarding the concerns about being 'dead', the Church and sacred Scripture often speak in terms of life and death when describing the sacraments and the spiritual life. E.g., in baptism we die with Christ so as to share in his Resurrection; and serious sins are called 'mortal' because they cut us off from God, the source of all life. But this sort of language does not mean to imply that the spiritually 'dead' are dead in the sense of being beyond the Church's love and concern. Even if your friend does not yet enjoy the fullness of life found in the Eucharist, she is still precious and valuable in God's sight.

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

# Giving one's death away



St John of the Cross

According to the renowned mystic, John of the Cross, we have three essential struggles in life: to get our lives together, to give our lives away, and to give our deaths away. What is asked of us in the first two struggles is more obvious. But what does it mean to give our deaths away?

In essence, it means this: How we die leaves behind a legacy, a particular spirit, which either nurtures or haunts those left behind. If we die in bitterness and anger, not at peace with our loved ones, ourselves, and our God, we will leave behind a spirit which is more toxic than nurturing. Conversely, if we die reconciled and at peace with our loved ones, the world, and with God, then like Jesus, we will leave behind a spirit which nourishes, warms, consoles, and gives our loved ones sacred permission to be at peace. How we die colours our legacy, and that legacy is either a gift or a burden to those we leave behind.

## Loving

On November 23, 2023, Richard (Rick) Gaillardetz, a renowned theologian, died of pancreatic cancer while still in the prime of his life. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, gifted lecturer, friend and mentor to many, a sports enthusiast, with a robust sense of humor. He also had a solid Christian faith that would be put to the test during the months of his terminal illness.

When he was diagnosed with



## Fr Rolheiser

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

cancer more than a year before he died, his doctors told him it was terminal, there was to be no cure; he needed to face the brutal fact he was going to die within the next two years. He did face that. Moreover, in doing so, he tried (not without some agonising struggles) to make his death a conscious gift to his family and to the world. During the months leading up to his death, he kept a blog which shared what it is like to know you are dying and to accept that in love and faith, even within the agony of having to let go of life and wrestle with the powerful instinctual resistances within us.

Those blogs have been brought together in a book, *While I Breathe I*

**“What I hold most firmly in my heart through all this is the conviction that God has so profoundly encompassed me in love over these past several months since my diagnosis that, surely, God will not abandon me in those final days and hours”**

*Hope – A Mystagogy of Dying*, edited by Grace Agolia.

**“One of the demons I confront daily is an overweening ego that endlessly clamors for attention like a whining toddler, drowning out the needs and concerns of others”**

Here are some of Rick's feelings and thoughts:

- Unlike many saints in our tradition, I did not choose this diminishment; it has been thrust, unbidden and unwanted upon me. But I do see

in it an invitation to a graced vulnerability, a call to abandon a misplaced confidence in my own vigour and bodily autonomy.

- I am praying for both the grace for diminishment and the grace of diminishment.

- One of the demons I confront daily is an overweening ego that endlessly clamors for attention like a whining toddler, drowning out the needs and concerns of others. One of the unexpected graces of diminishment appears as I am drawn kicking and screaming out of my natural egotism to discover within a much-neglected reservoir of compassion for the suffering of others.

- I must confess to an occasional preoccupation with the final dying process. What will it be like? How will I handle it when my bodily organs begin to break down and the real dying begins? Will the peace I now feel sustain me through that quite 'different' time? ... What I hold most firmly in my heart through all this is the conviction that God has so profoundly encompassed me in love over these past several months since my diagnosis that, surely, God will not abandon me in those final days and hours.

- I now belong to the ragged band of the elderly and infirm. These are now my people, my last tribe.

- Giving my death away is not just a matter of accepting my inevitable physical demise; giving my death away bids me to embrace experiences of passive waiting, diminishment, and marginality as a liberation from the slavery of personal achievement and

self-importance. If I give these experiences due space, they beckon me beyond my egoistical self and enlarge my soul. They draw me to a greater compassion for the pain and suffering of others and encourage me to pray for others in the midst of their own suffering and impending death. Herein lies the gentle pedagogy of dying and rising.

- “My final task is to return to God the life graciously given to me”.

**“If we die at peace with God, others, and ourselves, then like Jesus, our loved ones, while grieving our loss, will in the deeper part of themselves, feel nourished”**

In his farewell speech to his disciples, Jesus promised that after he had been taken from us, he would leave behind his spirit, the spirit of peace. When we go away we all leave behind us an unspoken spirit which affects those we have left behind. If we die at peace with God, others, and ourselves, then like Jesus, our loved ones, while grieving our loss, will in the deeper part of themselves, feel nourished, warmed, and consoled by their every memory of us.

Rick Gaillardetz RIP, you have left us (family, friends, the world) the gift of peace.

# Just have Faith

Jb 38:1, 8-11  
Ps 107:23-24, 25-26,  
28-29, 30-31  
2 Cor 5:14-17  
Mk 4:35-41

## The Sunday Gospel

Author



**R**embrandt got it. Centuries ago, the artist captured the scene in this Sunday's Gospel - a scene full of raging waves and gathering clouds and sheer, unabashed terror. The apostles are screaming in fear. One of them is leaning over the side of the boat, throwing up. And in the back, there is Jesus, blissfully asleep, seemingly unaware of any of the turmoil around him.

How often do we feel like that? How often do we feel overwhelmed by the storms of life, and think that God isn't paying attention?

But Rembrandt adds this detail: he positions Jesus near the back of the boat, where someone steering the vessel would sit. He's there when the apostles awaken him. With just a word, he calms the storm and then spends the calm after the storm rebuking them.

"Why are you terrified?" he asks. "Do you not yet have faith?"

We could ask ourselves the same question today, when we face the squalls in our own lives.

I once read about a preacher who offered this timeless wisdom: "God is always present," he told his listeners, "Even though he may not always be evident."

### Message

Here is a message we can't hear often enough: we need to trust and believe that God is steering the ship. Even if we think he's asleep at the rudder.

In the early days of the Church, when Mark was writing his Gospel, that was an urgent and timely lesson. Christians were being rounded up, imprisoned, executed. The Barque of Peter - their little boat - was constantly in danger of going under. Jesus' words in the midst of the storm most assuredly gave persecuted Christian's reason to hold on for dear life and have some sense

of hope. God was with them.

We all need to keep asking ourselves in moments of worry, helplessness or doubt: "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"

Encountering storms, as all of us do, we need to remember Christ's challenging, humbling words.

When the check bounces, or the surgery doesn't work, or a job falls through, or we find ourselves awake at two in the morning, staring at the ceiling, wondering how we will make it from one side of the sea to the other, we need to rediscover faith. Hold fast to it. When the waves are overwhelming, we need to remember who is steering our boat.

**“Whether we realise it or not, God is close. In fact, he is as much a part of the storm as the wind and the waves”**

In every season, in every kind of weather.

When the water is surging, when the wind is howling, when it seems we are about to be thrown into the water... Remember what happened on the Sea of Galilee.

God won't let us go overboard.

We will not be abandoned when our lives seem lost, when friendship is scarce, when we feel unloved or unlovable. When it seems we will sink and that the storm has become too much to bear.

Have faith.

Whether we realise it or not, God is close. In fact, he is as much a part of the storm as the wind and the waves.

In the first reading, God addresses Job "out of the storm" - not from out of the



Rembrandt's *Christ in the Storm on the Lake of Galilee*

sky, or some place apart, but from "out of the storm." He is in it. And he reassures Job that He, God, is in control. "Here shall your proud waves be stilled."

And then, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus goes ahead and stills "the proud waves" by being right in

the middle of them.

### Embolden

This should give us consolation and hope - and, really, embolden our faith. God is beside us, behind us, among us - his hand on the rudder, his eye on the clouds

(and, we're reminded elsewhere, even on the sparrow).

Remember what he has done. Remember what he can do.

This Gospel story conveys one simple but profound lesson: just have faith.

Ultimately, we are all in the same boat.

And, it turns out, God is there with us.

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

## TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



# A matter of words

I have felt for a long time that the Church needs to get its act together on same-sex attraction. There have been too many own goals, too many myths, too many misunderstandings. I'd suggest what is needed is clear, orthodox and challenging teaching expressed and effected in the most modern, empathic, compassionate and pastoral way consistent with that teaching.

On **Oliver Callan** (RTÉ Radio 1, Wednesday) the host indulged in another cheap swipe at the Catholic Church - in my opinion abusing his privileged position in publicly funded media. He declared ('without evidence' of course) that the Catholic Church is "the largest homophobic organisation in the world", and that the Pope lives in "an enclave of total corruption". I found his tone demeaning towards Pope Francis personally, speaking of his ill health and him being 'propped up' to receive a gathering of comedians at the Vatican last Friday. Mr Callan was not among the guests. He's really something of a loose cannon, or loose Callan. I'm all for engaging with the culture and judging by the coverage I saw from RTÉ News and Colm Flynn's reports for EWTN, it went



Oliver Callan

well - striking to see Ardal O'Hanlon (of *Father Ted* fame) getting Pope Francis to bless rosary beads!

On **Today with Claire** (RTÉ Radio 1, Thursday) we learned of another own goal on the Church's part (covered in last week's *The Irish Catholic* issue) - the Dublin Gay Men's Chorus being refused permission to have their annual concert in St Andrew's Church in Westland Row after initially being able to book the venue. Patrick McNamara from that choir

was 'massively disappointed', but we got only one side of the story apart from the official statement from the church in question. This said the true nature of the event was not made clear to the church, Mr McNamara claims otherwise. It was a phone booking, which I thought was unusual, so it's hard to know what exactly went on. Even when there's good will on both sides there can be different versions of events in people's heads. I thought Claire Byrne was sympathetic to the choir

and not challenging enough, but she did put it to him that 'there might be people' thinking the booking was made to provoke a response from the church. It would have been better if she had asked that question more directly. There was confusion over the nature and purpose of the event. The church felt that being in June and being called 'Pride in the Name of Love' it was linked to the Pride Festival, and given Church teaching they couldn't support that. Mr McNamara said it wasn't linked, which I thought was disingenuous, as did a texter to the show. It felt like another 'gay cake' controversy to me.

The controversy shows how delicate it is for churches to host concerts - those in charge of booking would need to thoroughly examine any proposed event, but this works best if the promoter is upfront about all aspects - not saying they weren't in this case. I was reminded of the case last year at the Edinburgh Festival when a gay-friendly venue cancelled a show that they felt wouldn't align with their values.

Away from such controversies we learned of the courage of Church people in **Heart and Soul** (BBC World Service, Thursday). This episode told the moving story of Christians

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### STORYVILLE

**BBC Four Tuesday June 25, 10pm**

A Storyville documentary that tells the enthralling, edge-of-your-seat story of a defiant journalist's battle for freedom of the press and against state-censored media.

#### DOUGLAS IS CANCELLED

**ITV Thursday June 27, 9pm**

A four-part comedy drama about cancel culture, set in the world of television news, starring Hugh Bonneville.

#### FILM: A HIDDEN LIFE

**RTE 2 Friday June 21, 9:55pm**

Based on real events, the story of an unsung hero, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, who refused to fight for the Nazis in World War II.

currently suffering in Gaza. George Antone, sheltering in the compound of Holy Family Church, the only Catholic church in Gaza, has been staying in touch with BBC reporter Catherine Murray and indeed Pope Francis keeps in touch with them daily. They are an understandably dwindling community, and it was good to see their plight getting some coverage. They were determined to stay on as they feared if they left there would be nothing left of that Christian community in Gaza.

Mr Antone spoke of the terror of the nights when the area was bombarded by the Israeli Defence Forces. We

learned of the two women, a mother and daughter, that had been shot by snipers as they crossed the compound, and of Fr Gabriel Romanelli, an Argentinian priest attached to the church who was away when the war started and was unable to return for months.

It was clear that the Eucharist was of huge importance to these beleaguered Catholics - they devised a way of making their own Communion hosts when the regular supply ran out. Inspiring!



Pat O'Kelly

## Music

# Sunlit harmonies

June brings with it a number of special musical events not least the 'Pipewrks International Organ and Choral Festival' and the 'Dun Laoghaire summer Sunday evening organ recitals' in St Michael's Church.

The former opened its doors on June 19 afternoon with a master class in Milltown's St Philip's Church directed by Geoffrey Webber, a renowned expert on Buxtehude and the North German style.

The festival's first evening programme took place on June 19 in Adam and Eve's Church on Dublin's Merchant's Quay, where eminent Manchester-born organist Daniel Moulton joined the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and Pipe-

works Festival Chorus, under artistic director David Leigh.

This commemorated the centenary of the death of Dubliner Charles Villiers Stanford with his *Stabat Mater* and brought the Irish première of Percy Whitlock's Symphony for organ and orchestra. Following his death from TB in 1946 Whitlock's music has been, more or less, neglected.

Studying under Stanford at London's Royal College of Music, his Organ Symphony dates from 1936/37. While his output rests mainly in the realm of light music, Whitlock also left a considerable repository of organ and choral works among them a concert overture - *The Feast of St*

*Benedict* - from 1934 and the spectacular *Carillon* for organ and orchestra of 1932.

David Moulton has master classes this June 20 afternoon at St Philip's Milltown while this evening 'Four in a Bar' - a male voice close harmony quartet from Christ Church's own choir - offer a diverse and varied programme in the cathedral that includes a commissioned piece from Rhona Clarke that focuses on Stanford's legacy in a thought-provoking way.

The cathedral is also the venue for a later event tonight devoted principally to Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* with John Finucane, violin, Martin Johnston,

cello and Fergal Caulfield, piano. The Quartet is one of Messiaen's most hauntingly beautiful and otherworldly works written when he was a prisoner of war in Silesia in 1941. His organ *Diptyque*, the second section of which prefigures music of the Quartet, begins the programme.

Geoffrey Webber will give a short lunchtime recital in Sandford on June 21 including further snippets of Stanford and Whitlock. On the same day we find David Moulton in the Carmelite Church Whitefriars' Street playing a substantial programme of Bach, Mozart, Schumann and Liszt and finding room for another little helping of Stanford



'Four in a Bar', Irish male voice close-harmony quartet

through his *Intermezzo on the Londonderry Air*.

English organist, scholar and director, Edward Higginbottom, features in a number of musical guises in TCD's Exam Hall on Saturday, June 22. He will have a discussion with the festival's Andrew Johnstone at 2pm; give a master class there at 3pm and present an early evening recital of French Baroque music, for which he has a par-

ticular penchant, at 6pm.

Pipewrks Festival ends on Sunday June 23, evening in St Michael's in Dun Laoghaire when Moscow-born Mona Hartmann plays music by Buxtehude, Bach and Mendelssohn on the church's fine Rieger instrument.

A multiple prize-winning concert organist, Mona Hartmann is recognised as exceptional among the leading players of her generation.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Kevin O'Higgins: 'a soul incapable of remorse'

**Walled in by Hate: Kevin O'Higgins, His Friends and Enemies,** Arthur Mathews (Merrion Press, €19.99).

Felix M. Larkin

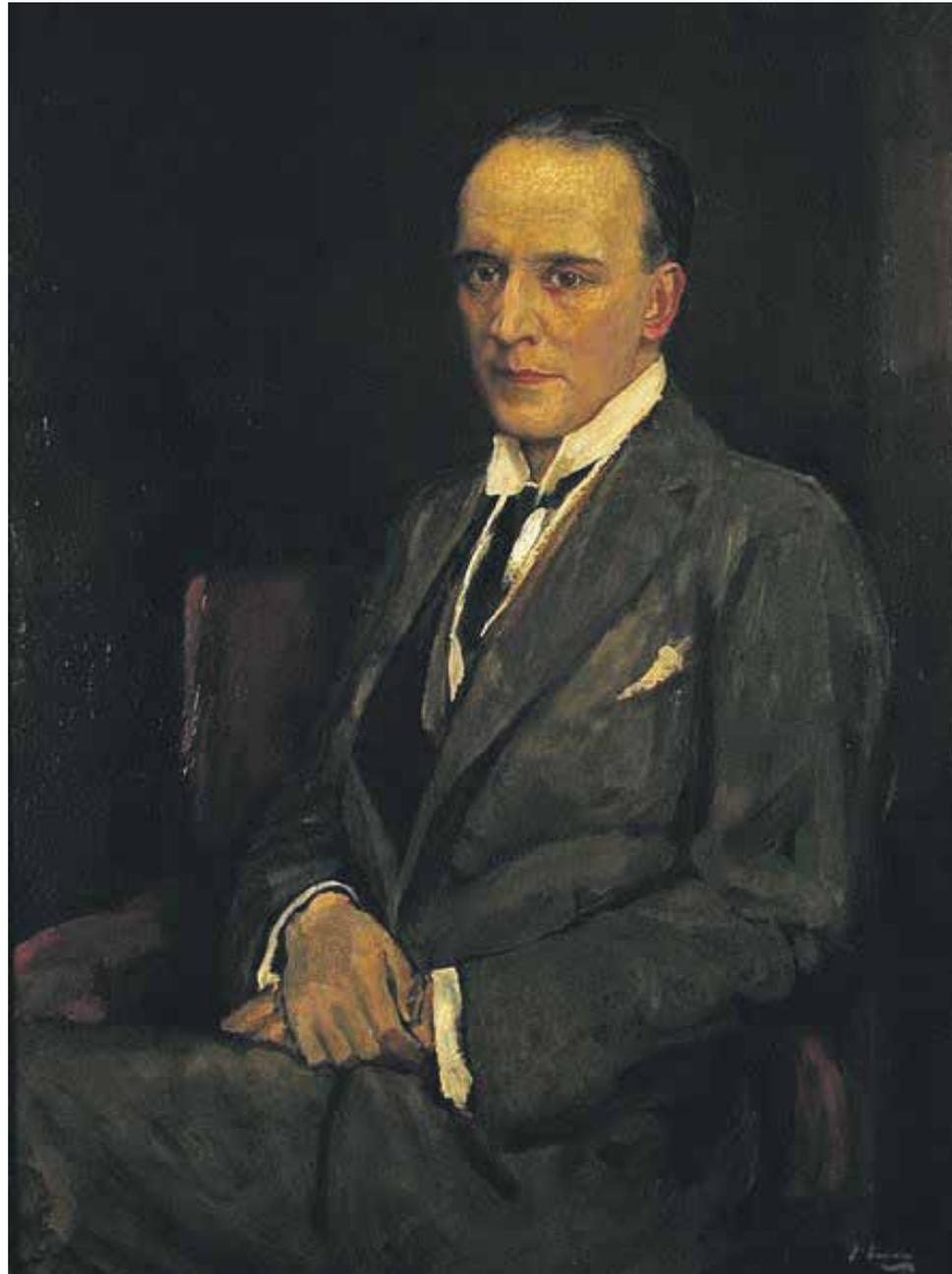
The tragedy of the Irish Civil War and its legacy of hatred loom large in this new biography of Kevin O'Higgins by Arthur Mathews.

Data on the Civil War fatalities recently published by a team of researchers in UCC highlights the extent of the tragedy. Between June 1922 (the bombardment of the Four Courts) and May 1923 (when the order to dump arms was issued by the IRA leadership), there were 1,426 fatalities directly attributable to the conflict. Of these, 648 were pro-Treaty, 438 were anti-Treaty, 336 were civilians and four were Crown Forces. The anti-Treaty number includes 81 men executed by the State – not 77, which is usually given as the number of the executions.

**“As Mathews points out, historians and others who have written about the period have displayed a ‘notable bias in favour of the republicans’”**

These figures do not include revenge killings after the end of the Civil War, the most notable of which were the brutal murder of Noel Lemass in November 1923 and the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins on 10 July 1927.

The fact that fatalities on the pro-Treaty side were significantly greater than those on the anti-



Kevin O'Higgins, painted by Sir John Lavery, the portrait Yeats refers to in his poem about his past friends

Treaty side will come as a surprise to many. Much of the discourse on the Civil War has tended to focus on the Government's draconian measures – especially the reprisal executions of O'Connor, Mellows, Barrett and McKelvey in December 1922 – to the exclusion of the actions of anti-Treaty

ites. As Mathews points out, historians and others who have written about the period have displayed a “notable bias in favour of the republicans”. But there were atrocities aplenty on both sides, and the reprisal executions were in response to the shooting by the IRA of two pro-Treaty

TDs, one fatally. The IRA had threatened to kill pro-Treaty TDs and Senators on sight, and they burned the houses of a number of these TDs and Senators – including the home of W.T. Cosgrave, president of the Executive Council of the Free State.

### Opprobrium

O'Higgins attracted much of the opprobrium for the Government's policies – partly because he was more vigorous in defending them in the Dáil and elsewhere than were his colleagues – and his image as

the ruthless prosecutor of the campaign against the IRA was copper-fastened by his (albeit reluctant) assent to the execution of Rory O'Connor who had been best man at his wedding about a year earlier. His defence – and it was a valid one – was that the armed opposition of anti-Treatyites to the democratically elected government represented an existential threat to the new State and had to be defeated. If, as Yeats wrote of him, he was “incapable of remorse” that was because he believed in the necessity of the actions that were taken. Few of the major players on either side in the Civil War ever showed much remorse for their actions.

**“Mathews is clearly of the view that O'Higgins and his colleagues probably struck the right balance in defending the State. Their strategy was, in any event, successful”**

The conundrum which O'Higgins and his colleagues faced in 1922-3 is one which many liberal democratic societies still face today – namely, to what extent and in what circumstances a democratic society which broadly espouses liberal values may be justified in adopting extreme measures, often illiberal in character, in order to protect itself and its values. Mathews is clearly of the view that O'Higgins and his colleagues probably struck the right balance in defending the State. Their strategy was, in any event, successful – and the democratic institutions of the State were finally consolidated by legislation introduced immediately after O'Higgins' assassination

that forced Fianna Fáil, the new anti-Treaty political party formed by Éamon de Valera in 1926, to abandon their abstentionist policy and enter Dáil Éireann.

O'Higgins was born in 1892 in Stradbally, Co. Laois. His father, who was himself killed by the IRA during the Civil War, was a medical doctor. His mother was the daughter of T.D. Sullivan, editor of *The Nation* newspaper and author of numerous ballads of a romantic nationalist character. He studied for the priesthood at Maynooth and later in the Carlow diocesan college but was expelled from both for smoking. He was elected Sinn Féin MP for Queen's Co. in the 1918 General Election and soon emerged as a leading figure in the First and Second Dáils, holding junior ministerial office in the Department of Local Government. He became Minister for Home Affairs following the death of Michael Collins in August 1922 and was also vice-president of the Executive Council of the Free State from December 1922 until his death. His ministerial post was re-styled Minister for Justice in 1924. In 1927, he held the additional portfolio of Minister for External Affairs.

### Comprehensive

Mathews' book is based on a comprehensive trawl through the existing literature on the period of the Civil War and afterwards, and is a compelling and sympathetic account of O'Higgins' life. It explores his personal, as well as his public, life – emphasising his strong Catholic values and his devotion to his wife and young family. Nevertheless, as is now well known, O'Higgins was infatuated in his last years with the alluring Hazel Lavery – who had also, allegedly, charmed Micheal Collins. Mathews' verdict on their affair is that it was “the oddest chapter” in O'Higgins' life, hard to reconcile with “the image of the public man – stern, disciplined, aloof, puritanical.”

**“Mathews' book is based on a comprehensive trawl through the existing literature on the period of the Civil War and afterwards, and it is a compelling and sympathetic account of O'Higgins' life”**

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.

## In a splendid scene of God's creation, a place with a bad name for mans' dark doings



The "Hell Fire Club" on a summer evening

### The Hell Fire Club, Dublin's Dance with the Devil,

by Maurice Curtis (The Old Dublin Press, €20.00 hb)  
**Sléithe Séadchomarta Bhaile Átha Cliath,** Sharon Greene & Noel Jackman, designed by Sara Nyland, An Siopa Leabah, 6 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, D02 VH98; free of charge (but packing and postage extra)

#### Peter Costello

When I was a child the area around the so-called "Hell Fire Club" and the Massy Estate was the destination for outings on many long summer evenings, such as we have been having of late.

Equipped with a large thermos flask of tea and frying pan we would drive up into the

hills, and light a little fire to cook sausages, eat home buttered slices of bread and drink tea as an alfresco supper while enjoying the scenery.

(We took care, of course, to rub out the fire before leaving. Nowadays with our much drier climate lighting fires in wild places might better be avoided.)

#### Accounts

Like all Dubliners I heard accounts about the 'bad things' supposedly done there, but they were never really clear in my mind. Later I spent too much time with the sort of experts who always refer to that grey grim ruin as "Speaker Connolly's Lodge" and never by its folklore nickname to really believe the legends.

In this pleasantly amusing new book from local Dublin historian Maurice Curtis, that rim grey ruin, despite

the title, plays only a small part to play, for the theme of the book is basically the low haunts of the city itself and the grandees of politics and literature who resorted to them.

For some perverse reason Dubliners delight in aspects of their city's squalid history. There is little here of the quiet and respectable lives of ordinary people (the sort of people celebrated in the late Tony Farmer's classic book *Ordinary Lives*) They have always been there and are the real story of Dublin.

Yet readers, it seems, prefer to read of disorderly lives, though in reality such things have always played only a small part in the making of society. But Maurice Curtis's book is still, in its colourful way, very entertaining.

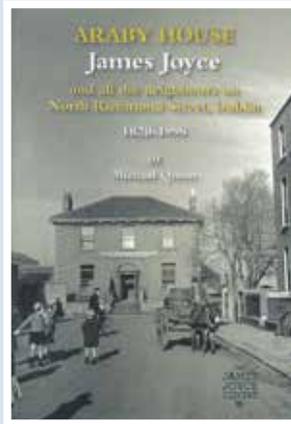
\*

Turning to the second title, after so much about the sordid side of city life, proves to be quite a breath of fresh mountain air.

This small book was supported by South Dublin County Council, DLR council, Dublin Mountain Partnership and others, such as Abarta Heritage, and despite its original cost, it is now being given away free (yes, free) by the Irish language book shop in Harcourt Street.

One of the first images in it is a view from one of the window openings of the Hell Fire Club, overlooking the city below, its concrete spread coming ever close to the mountains like a dreadful lava flow since the lodge was built.

## The various Joyces of North Richmond Street



**Araby House: James Joyce and all the neighbours on North Richmond Street, Dublin 1820-1998,** by Michael Quinn (The James Joyce Centre, 35 North Great George's Street, Dublin, €15.00)

#### Peter Costello

The month of June has in recent decades become dedicated to Mr James Joyce. But there are odd overlooked aspects of Joycean Dublin.

Many Joycean writers are anxious to get their hero out of darkest Ireland and into European civilization. Now when interpretation and textual exploration of all kinds are in vogue, mere biographical and social history of Dublin may seem unimportant, which is not the case. There is more to be known.

#### Sparked

My own interest in Joyce was sparked both my Jesuit education, not at either Clongowes or Belvedere though, and a personal knowledge of some of the places so casually mentioned by Joyce in his essays, stories and books.

This interest has never left me. And preferring to see what can still be explored of Joycean Ireland, I was greatly attracted to this little pamphlet on Joyce and North Richmond Street.

Alas, I find that though the pages are filled with fascinating information about the people who have been involved in the street since it came into existence, Michael Quinn has added nothing to the core mystery, about which indeed he seems a little unfocused.

The problem is simple: when did James Joyce's family live on the street. He uses it in his story "Araby", about the bazaar held in the RDS on May 14-19, 1894. Yet other evidence suggests that James and his family lived there on the street in 1895, and that the residence of John Stanslaus Joyce there, perhaps at number 13, was only a matter of months.

Here let me quote myself from my book *James Joyce The Years of Growth*: (1992). "By an odd coincidence there was another John Joyce living at 17 Richmond Street: he died in 1898, leaving over £20,000 to his widow. His long residence on the street has deceived Joyce's earlier biographers into thinking that the writer's family lived on North Richmond Street for several years, but this is not the case: in fact their stay was so brief that it left no record in the usual records. « (James Joyce *The Years of Growth*, p.134)

By that I meant *Thom's Directory*. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce suggests the number of their home was in number 12, but that house was occupied from 1870s to 1898 by a doctor's widow, the Hon. Juliana Michell, a sister of the 3rd Lord Mountmorris, murdered at Clonbur in the Joyce Country during the Land War. She died in 1898 and her son George and his wife moved to Mountjoy Square.

Number 13, however, had been left vacant after the death of Fr. Edward Quaid, whose

name is recalled in *A Portrait*. A brief tenancy between say December of one year and September of the next would pass without note in the directory, as Thom's lists those who lived in houses when the database closed in November. So the volume dated say 1896, would be of the people there in November 1895, not actually in say May 1896. This simple fact often leaves researchers quite confused.

So we simply do not know exactly what number J. S. Joyce and his brood lived at, or when. But though he casts no light on the Joyce mystery, Michael Quinn has scored a rich haul of facts on the other people who lived on the street and who are entangled as models in the characters in Joyce's fiction.

#### Fascinating

For all those who are even slightly interested in Dublin history, this is a fascinating glimpse of life in inner city Dublin. Even those interested only in Dublin will enjoy and benefit from it.

Rarely, if ever, has such a history of the people on one street through a long period of time ever been attempted in Dublin. For this reason alone, leaving the enigmas of the nomadic Joyces out of the matter, it is well worth buying and reading.

But next time Mr Quinn will have to apply himself with a little more diligence. He relies on the decennial census returns, but much more to be learned, say from birth and death records, not to speak of wills and probates. I, at least, sought out the details of the probate of the «Other Mr Joyce», and even troubled myself to visit his grave in Glasnevin, while in search other final resting places there, including indeed that of «The Real Mr Joyce.»



St Michael's Cross, a relic of medieval faith

and medieval invaders, and so to modern times, and the first efforts at industrialisation.

This is some ten thousand years in all: the olden days indeed. I was very taken by an image of the cross at Rath Michael, dating from the 12th century, mounted on a boulder, around the base of which are grouped small stones left as tokens by those in the recent past who visited it and prayed there. You can almost feel on the page the living past, for though the industries have died, the faith that erected this monolith still lingers on.

The relics of the past include prehistoric monuments up to recent times, all

supported by some very fine photographs, maps and charts. I have some regrets, as every ecologist, has about the baleful armies of pine trees that the state forestry body always thinks of planting - they grow fast, bringing a quick return on the invested tax payers' money. But they are unpleasant places in reality, nothing like a genuine forest, and not as good for wildlife as many people suppose.

But this book is the sort of thing that every family driver should have to help them plan expeditions on foot, bike, or if need be, by car, to add a sense of wonder to those family summer evening drives.



# Leisure time




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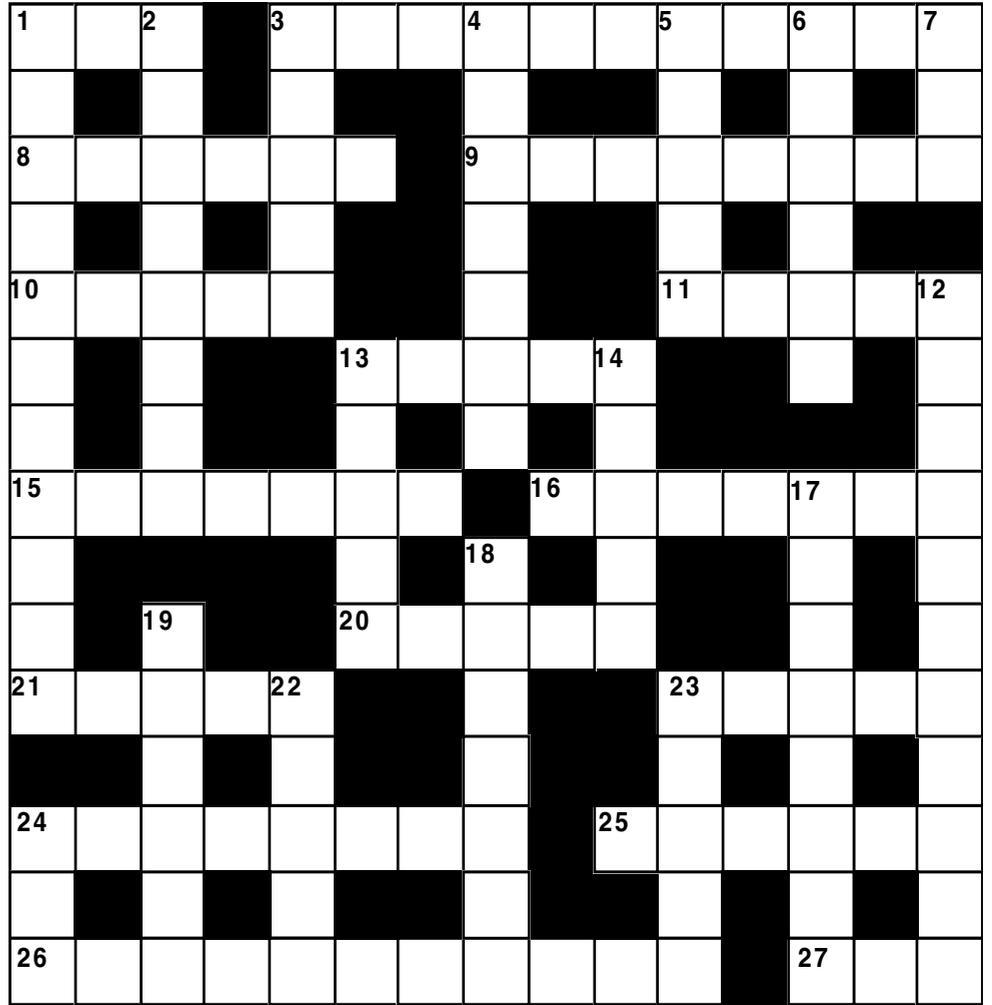
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## Crossword

Gordius 668

- Across**
- Dairy animal (3)
  - Caribbean performer (5-6)
  - One who engages in gratuitous destruction (6)
  - Salad dish made with white cabbage (8)
  - Franz, "Hungarian Rhapsodies" composer (5)
  - Ancient Celtic priest (5)
  - Harvest what other harvesters have left behind (5)
  - The first book of the Old Testament (7)
  - Spire (7)
  - Discovered (5)
  - Quantity, of wheat for example (5)
  - Gallery in Madrid (5)
  - Ransacked (8)
  - Film on copper or bronze caused by oxidation (6)
  - What you should proverbially do after initial failure (3,3,5)
  - Organ of sight (3)



- Down**
- One's basic entitlements in society (5,6)
  - One measurement of a bird (8)
  - Jumped (5)
  - Crumpled (7)
  - Out in front (5)
  - Hue (6)
  - Tier (3)
  - Get progressively worse (11)
  - Great sadness (5)
  - Observed (5)
  - Heaven (8)
  - Canine breed (7)
  - Actually, genuinely (6)
  - Panache (5)
  - Area of level ground (5)
  - Domesticated animal (3)

- 3 Jumped (5) worse (11) (6)  
 4 Crumpled (7) 13 Great sadness (5) 22 Panache (5)  
 5 Out in front (5) 14 Observed (5) 23 Area of level ground (5)  
 6 Hue (6) 17 Heaven (8) 24 Domesticated animal (3)  
 7 Tier (3) 18 Canine breed (7)  
 12 Get progressively worse (11) 19 Actually, genuinely (6)

**SOLUTIONS, JUNE 13**

**GORDIUS No. 667**

**Across**

1 Traffic jam 6 Trio 10 Chant 11 Clamoured 12 Galahad 15 Pylon 17 Ogre 18 Bath 19 Toast 21 Fanfare 23 Verge 24 Ambo 25 Tips 26 Basil 28 Hostess 33 Artichoke 34. Onion 35 Dodo 36 Transgress

**Down**

1 Tack 2 Alabaster 3 Fatwa 4 Cocoa 5 Ajax 7 Rural 8 Ordination 9 Compete 13 Haka 14 Dogfish 16 Above board 20 Armistice 21 Fetlock 22 Ribs 27 Sated 29 Ocean 30 Thong 31 Poor 32 Ends

## Sudoku Corner 538

**Easy**

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

**Hard**

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

**Last week's Easy 537**

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

**Last week's Hard 537**

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



# Walking into something sacred and precious

**As I write these few lines,** I am preparing to go to Ballaghaderreen for the wedding rehearsal of my nephew, Aaron and, his bride-to-be, Emma. It is something of a coincidence, since this same evening 37 years ago, I was at another rehearsal for an upcoming liturgical celebration. I was in Gurteen Church with some of my family, local priests, classmates and friends from Maynooth, and we were getting ready for my ordination the next day, June 14, 1987.



**Funny**

Aaron can be quite funny. I celebrated a wedding Mass a few months ago for a classmate and friend from his St Nathy's days. He told me afterwards that comedians and entertainers put on a show and tour the country with it. Appearing in different venues, they follow the script and playlist of the show. "That's fine Vinnie" he said "but our wedding needs to be the first night of your new show!" I feel a bit of pressure then to rise to the moment and not repeat myself. Hopefully I will and will not, if you follow me!

What I want for Aaron and Emma is what I want for all couples getting married. What I want is, I think it fair to say, what all priests or deacons celebrating the marriages of parishion-

ers, family members or friends want and that is that the couple will be blessed and happy. The hope is that as they walk down the aisle, they are walking into something sacred, precious and a total gift. The fear can be that they are literally walking away from the Church, many only to return for baptisms, First Holy Communion or Confirmation days. This is not what is intended in the celebration of marriage in church. There is, at the heart of the celebration, an invitation to let the Lord in so that he can shape,

lead, encourage and strengthen the sacred connection that is marriage. The sacrament of marriage brings its own layer of meaning, that invites those called to marriage, to be true, intentional and committed witnesses to faith and the ongoing relationship between God and his people, mirrored in the love that is married life. Walking down the aisle then, cannot be a one-way journey. Its success is rooted in the many happy returns to Church and in continuing to seek God's blessing and guidance.

**Encouraging**

I often say at Mass in my own parish that there is nothing as encouraging as seeing young couples and families in the congregation. It is more than numbers, it is life – faith life – lived. There is something so wonderful in this and it is a witnessing that cannot take place and will not take place if people walk away from the altar on

their wedding day to the clicking of cameras, the smiles of friends and the applause of guests. In fairness to Aaron and Emma, I am happy to say they are regulars at Mass in my parish, and I am always happy to see them there. I don't expect this to change. Aaron has a way of keeping me grounded that is as challenging as it is refreshing! Though he doesn't tell me, there is part of me that hopes I am doing the same for him.

**“The ‘I do’s’ remain in the now of every day and are the echo of all that is honest, decent and life-giving”**

So, if you are on the road to marriage or one of your family is, maybe have a chat around the deeper meaning of the day. We all know that there

**“I often say at Mass in my own parish that there is nothing as encouraging as seeing young couples and families in the congregation. It is more than numbers, it is life – faith life – lived”**

are so many add-ons now; from doves to ice cream, from quartets to barbecues, but at the heart of it, there is an invitation to be Sacrament, to believe, to deepen Faith and to return often to the altar that the “I do’s” remain in the now of every day and are the echo of all that is honest, decent and life-giving.

I'll work on the new show, but there is truly only one show in town and one stage we are all performing on. God bless you all in your relationships and on your journeys in life.

Rehearsal time...

**Contradictions...**

Spotted this recently: Husband: In the twenty-eight years we have been married, you have contradicted everything I ever said. Wife: Twenty-nine years!!!



## Franciscan Sisters urgently appeal to The Little Way for funds for food and water for more than 1,000 people suffering from a terrible heatwave in India

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- provide oral rehydration packets for 500 families,
- give small air coolers to 70 of the most needy families
- pay for food for 400 families.

The target area is 10 villages in the Jaipur District. Dear Irish Catholic readers, please send a donation today, no matter how small, and help relieve the suffering of the people.

*The Little Way Association makes no deduction from donations sent for the Missions, so every euro is utilized fully for the purpose for which it is sent.*



*“My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on this earth I only have today.” – St Therese*

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