

The Irish Catholic

SUSTAINING THE PRO-LIFE MESSAGE

Mary Kenny
Page 5



IS THERE A CHRISTIAN WAY TO PROTEST?

Rónán Mullen
Page 8



EVERYBODY HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE CHURCH

Nuala O'Loan
Page 9



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Bishop outlines vision for youth so 'whole Church will flourish'

Renata Milán Morales

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross has said that the bishops are trying to create "a vision, and to work together so that the whole Church flourishes."

"The whole Irish Church needs to grow – not just young adults. We need a rigorous intellectual formation that challenges us and provides formation in Catholic tradition which is broad and deep, and not frozen in any one historical expression. If we are intentional about our growth, we will find that we build disciples for our time," he said. He was speaking at the *Into the deep* gathering which saw over 160 young adults gather in Co. Kildare on June 22 for the first 'Intentional Young Adult Ministry' gathering hosted by the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC).

The guest speaker, Fr Stephen Wang of the Archdiocese of Westminster said "There seems to be a great

» Continued on Page 2

A celebration of youth ministry in Clongowes



More than 160 young adults from across the island of Ireland gathered in Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare for the inaugural 'Intentional Young Adult Ministry' on Saturday, in an initiative by the bishops conference. Photo: John McElroy

CATHOLIC CHARITY SUPPORTS 138 COUNTRIES

Renata Steffens

PAGES 11



LIFE DESTROYED, LOVE DIMINISHED

Martina Purdy

PAGE 12



THE CATHOLIC VOTE IN BRITAIN'S ELECTION

David Quinn

PAGE 10



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The Irish Catholic

Bishop outlines vision for youth so 'whole Church will flourish'

» **Continued from Page 1**
deal of energy and enthusiasm in the *Irish Church* at the moment, and a desire to discover new ways of connecting with young people today. I pray that the meeting will be a catalyst for renewal in the Church, and will allow the Holy Spirit to speak to the hearts of all those who will be present."

Bishop Gavin highlighted the role of different youth groups in different local parishes and said there was strength in diversity and that

good news stories could be applied in other local situations. "We need young adults as protagonists who are formed for the very mission of animating our local parishes – bringing their commitment, talent, and love of Christ to the local community where they choose to settle down and build their careers and families." He added that if this vision of support and integration for young people is applied it will help all the other ministries in parishes.

Bishops express opposition to assisted suicide and euthanasia

Brandon Scott

The Irish bishops have issued a letter stating their opposition to legislation resulting in the introduction of assisted suicide or euthanasia.

In a pastoral letter, the Bishops' Conference said that such a move would see the State contribute to "undermining the confidence" of people who are terminally ill, who want to be cared for and want to live life as fully as possible until death naturally comes.

In March, an Oireachtas Committee which examined the introduction of assisted dying in Ireland recommended, in a final report, that both assisted dying and euthanasia be introduced here. The Bishops have rejected the committee's final report.

The bishops expressed "little confidence" that the pro-

posed restrictions would offer any real protection.

"Taking into account what has happened in many other jurisdictions, and indeed, what is already happening in Ireland with regard to the law on abortion, we believe that it would be only a matter of time before proposals would be on the table again to extend the availability of assisted suicide to those in our society who are most vulnerable, including people with intellectual disabilities," they said.

Explaining the position of the bishops, Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran, was interviewed on Monday's Claire Byrne show and lamented the modern approach to those who are dying, saying: "I think that if the best we can do for people who are dying is help put an end to their own lives, I think we've lost our way as a society".

New beds are a "game-changer" for struggling hospitals

Ava Westendorf

A recent allocation of new beds to Irish hospitals is being called "a game-changer for all hospitals" by Fr John Kelly, the Director of Pastoral Care at Tallaght University Hospital. He claimed that he was "surprised but delighted" by the recent allocation of 196 new beds in the next 24 to 30 months which Fr Kelly says is crucial due to Tallaght's growing population. He says that Tallaght is growing and aging so much so that "Tallaght is as big as Limerick" and "are still

challenged to keep service up to date that meets the needs of an aging community and a very diverse community with different health needs."

Due to many towns in Ireland's increase of population, this new allocation will provide much needed room that many hospitals do not currently have. This interview happened a few days after the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) that claimed that there were 599 patients across Ireland that were placed on trolleys because there was no room for them on the actual hos-

pital beds. The hospitals suffering the worst from this overcrowding have been University Hospital of Limerick with 118 people without a bed, Cork University Hospital with 50 people and University Hospital Galway with 49 people.

Another hospital struggling with lack of bed space is the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital which, on June 18, had 13 ambulances left stranded with their patients since they did not have open beds to put them in. Their wait ended up ranging between 2 to 4 hours as they prepared for

an open space in occupancy. This wait led to a shortage of ambulances across the north-east region of Ireland and no emergency vehicles were able to respond to calls during that time.

The Drogheda Labour TD Ged Nash addressed this issue by saying "Jobs have been offered to many of the nurses we need but the HSE has not been given the money and approval needed to hire them. The price is being paid by the sick and the old, and the worn-out nurses, doctors and health-care assistants."

Sr Rose blooms at 60



Sr Rose with Fr Joe Mullan, celebrant of the Jubilee Mass, at the Church of the Three Patrons in Rathgar celebrating Sr Rose being a part of the Sisters of St Paul for 60 years.

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Catholic values should be reflected in schools, report highlights

Brandon Scott

The Catholic Education Partnership, a group advocating for Catholic education at primary, post-primary, third level and adult levels in Ireland, published a report taken from its consultations with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Chief amongst the list

of recommendations was the affirmation that the values of Catholic school's curriculum be linked to the ethos of the school.

Speaking on behalf of the board of the Catholic Education Partnership, Chief Executive Alan Hynes said that he "welcomed the publication of the draft curriculum specifications and the consultation process which the NCCA is currently engaged" and out-

lined how "Catholics value education as a holistic endeavour, with the full totality of the person, physical, moral, intellectual, emotional and social, being brought to flourish".

In total, the Catholic Education Partnership submitted a list of 7 recommendations to address where they believe "improvements can be made" in Catholic schools and create a vision for how "education may

serve the common good, both local and global".

Particular recommendations called for a strengthening of the alignment between the curriculum's values and the inherent ethos of Catholic schools; the spiritual aspect of the education and development be given explicit recognition through the curriculum; that wellbeing be treated as an aspect of school

culture as opposed to an activity confined to a particular subject area and that religious wellbeing be recognised. Other recommendations focussed on the respectful promotion of Catholic education alongside prevailing trends and ongoing societal/cultural changes.

The full report can be accessed on the Catholic Education Partnership's website, www.catholiceducation.ie

Iconic Gaelic games commentator (93) and his Faith remembered

Staff reporter

Acclaimed Gaelic games commentator Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh, who amassed over 60 years of broadcasting before his retirement in 2010, died on Tuesday at the age of 93. Throughout his celebrated career, which was mostly associated with radio coverage of games, he made reference to his Faith and proudly spoke of how he had been a member of the Pioneer Association since his formative years in primary school.

Speaking a number of



Gaelic games commentator Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh celebrates in Croke Park. Photo: Irish Independent.

years ago about the presence of the Pioneers in his life, Ó Muircheartaigh said that he never felt in any way

disadvantaged in society by displaying his pin or by his membership of the Pioneers and in 2011 fervently criticised any potential closure of the Pioneer Association as being "a retrograde step".

One of his earliest and most abiding memories growing up on the Dingle coastline in Kerry was a prayer instilled by his grandmother, a prayer that resonated deeply with him towards the latter half of his life.

"I learned something at a very young age, and it came

from my grandmother at that time, and she said, a prayer taught to me in my youth, 'To wake every morning with enthusiasm for the day ahead', that was the end of the prayer," he said.

"To wake every morning with enthusiasm for the day ahead.' And I think it's a great motto. I always stuck to that. Be full of hope in the morning, be full of hope in the beginning of the year, and spread that, if you like, among people, in schools and wherever you got yourself in years to come."



Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh with Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan at an event where the retired commentator spoke about his Faith. Photo: Diocese of Killaloe.

Enabling Our Older Generation Stay in their Own Home with the Help of a Live-in Carer from ALHomecare



Tom Quinlan - ALHomecare

We all want our elderly relatives to get the best possible care, ideally in the comfort of their own home, but how do we go about organising this?

There are many private visiting care agencies which offer homecare, but this service can be very expensive, costing up to 30 euro per hour and 200 euro plus per night. This is a lot of money for any family to have to pay on an ongoing basis. With the visiting care option, you may not always have the same carer coming every time. This can cause confusion and anxiety for the elderly person.

If your relative wants to stay at home but if private visiting care is very expensive and not so consistent, is there any other option? The answer is Yes!

A company, founded by Tom Quinlan, a farmer's son in North County Cork, is called Affordable Live-in Homecare or ALHomecare for short and he has placed over 1,000 live-in carers in the past 10 years and has over 270 live-in carers currently working in the

country. During this time, Tom has placed many carers in countryside locations.

An idea was born from necessity:

Back in 2013, Tom was working as a primary school teacher and was trying to organise homecare for his mother, Ann. Ann had COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and her condition had progressed to a stage where she was admitted to intensive care.

She recovered enough to be discharged and the discharge coordinator gave Tom's family the choice between a nursing home and a visiting care service. Tom's parents had only recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary and he did not want to consider a nursing home. He contacted many visiting care services but the cost was way beyond what he could afford.

Subsequently, Tom contacted his friend in Poland and asked her if she could help him find a person who would come over to Ireland and live with Tom and his family and help with the care of his mother. A lovely lady called Lena came

over in October 2013 and took care of Ann until she passed away at home in April 2014.

During this time, Tom realised that there must be many other families out there in a similar situation who needed an affordable homecare solution for their elderly loved one. So, Tom made his idea a reality.

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Charities call for human trafficking reforms following critical report

Chai Brady

Charities who tackle human trafficking have decried Ireland's failure to adequately deal with human trafficking, following a report from the US Department of State.

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report has put Ireland on a Tier 2 status or lower since 2018, as it has been failing to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Speaking on Monday when the report was published, Brian Killoran the CEO of the Immigrant Council of Ireland, said: "It is unfortunate to note that though there were 53 investigations into trafficking taking place in the year,

only 2 prosecutions were initiated in 2023."

Mr Killoran added: "While the government have published a National Action Plan in 2023 which describes many of the advancements needed to secure recovery and integration for trafficked persons, little progress has been made in implementing these actions, as reflected by the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report.

"We must bear in mind that in all instances, the individual in question is a victim of crime and, all too frequently, has endured months or years of the most horrific exploitation. Their progress to regain the life they once had should be our primary concern and should imbue a critical sense of

urgency to all actions taken by the State and support organisations."

The report has noted that there was progress made in 2023 with the first specialised shelter for victims of trafficking being opened. The charity believes however that this is still not widespread enough and victims of trafficking are still being housed in Direct Provision Centres – which they say is an inappropriate setting for victims of human trafficking.

Ruhama, a charity that gives support to women impacted by prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation CEO Barbara Condon, stated that major gaps in Ireland's identification procedures and the protection of victims continued

in 2023 but welcomed the forthcoming reformed 'National Referral Mechanism' (NRM). She said: "The reforms are urgently required to extend the formal identification of trafficking victims to a competent authority or trusted partner and to remove the requirement for victims to cooperate with An Garda Síochána to access supports.

While An Garda Síochána opened 28 new investigations for sex trafficking in 2023, there were no new prosecutions.

"We are very concerned that the true number of trafficked victims is seriously under detected, which can prolong victims' pain and trauma and restrict their access to vital support services," said Ms Condon.

NEWS IN BRIEF

St Michael's Church restoration

An application was lodged on June 12 for the urgent roof repairs and floor strengthening for St Michael's Church in Gorey. The Church, listed as a Protected Structure under the County Wexford Development Plan and an important building under the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage needs a restructuring that would include the fixing of broken slates, lead and copper valleys and the repair of roof gutters and downpipes that have grown moss or other vegetation since the last roof repair in 2014.

These restorations need to be completed before winter as they cause a safety risk for people inside of the Church. A part of the application reads "the missing granite stone section below the capping to the corner pinnacle is a health and safety risk if it was dislodged. The original stone section when it became loose caused damage to the slate roof below which requires urgent attention".

26th International Columban Day held in Ireland

On June 23 Bishop Denis Nulty announced at the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta and Santa Giustina di Piacenza that he would be hosting the 26th International Columban Day in Carlow in 2025.

"It will be the first time that Columban's Day will be celebrated in the Republic of Ireland" and the bishop looks "forward to seeing you in Carlow, Ireland," where, "it is believed that this man of unwavering faith began, and where the Columban Way across Europe begins".

Bishop Nulty said that he is "delighted to welcome you all to Carlow Cathedral on Sunday 13 July 2025 to live an intense experience of grace and communion so that the shining witness of Saint Columbanus may be for all of us a special occasion to revive the hope that is within us, and which does not disappoint, because it is founded on the love of Christ".

Parishioners are being disturbed by sexual noises in Co. Waterford village

For the past few weeks, funerals and religious services have been interrupted by loud offensive noises near the Kilgobnet Church, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. The priest in charge, Fr William Ryan did not want to comment, while the Gardaí told *The Irish Catholic* that "Investigations are ongoing at this time."

The blasting sounds evolved from loud music to a loop of 'noises of a sexual nature.' However, it is unclear how the issue can be addressed, once the volume which the recordings are being played, even though loud enough to disturb the parishioners, is below the level considered noise pollution.

Dungarvan Sinn Féin's Councillor Conor McGuinness said: "It has become clear since that it is being done on purpose to be as disruptive and offensive and disrespectful as possible."

Bishops call for the end of the Israel Hamas War

Ava Westendorf

The Irish Bishops have asked for people to send their prayers for those affected by the Israel/Hamas war, for hostages to be released, for humanitarian workers and for first responders. The bishops restated Pope Francis's words by saying that this war is a "catastrophe for humanity" then followed with their own

reiterated words, "we renew our call for an immediate cessation to the Israel/Hamas war in Gaza. As well as the innocent population affected by this conflict, we are asking people of faith to pray for the safety of staff of humanitarian agencies who, in their life-saving work, must be allowed unhindered access to deliver vital aid into Gaza to prevent further deaths by starvation and malnutrition." After noting data given from Trócaire stating that 37,000 peo-

ple have been murdered, 15,000 of which are children, the bishops concluded by saying "this war is an attack on all of humanity. When people are deprived of basic human dignity and of necessary humanitarian aid, we are all made poorer...In the words of Pope Francis during his Angelus address on 2 June, 'it takes courage to make peace, far more courage than to wage war.' Let us pray that leaders will show courage now at this vital moment."

New book explores loss of God in science



The Papal Nuncio to Ireland Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor attended the launch of 'Theology and the University' (Routledge) in Trinity College Dublin on Friday evening. Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor is photographed with (from left) Dr Michael Kirwan SJ, Director of the Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin, Dr Fáinche Ryan, Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin Co-Editor of book: Prof Judith Wolfe (University of St Andrews) who gave the keynote at the launch, Dr Josef Quitterer (University of Innsbruck) Co-Editor of the book, Fr Tom Layden, SJ, chair of the trust of the Loyola Institute.

Ava Westendorf

On June 14, The Loyola Institute, Trinity College Dublin, was the home of an event created to celebrate the publication of the new book *Theology and the University* (Routledge, 2024). This book, edited by Fáinche Ryan, Josef Quitterer and Dirk Ansorge, examines how "intellectual virtues are cultivated, which enable students to live well".

This topic is one commended by Professor

Judith Wolf who believes that a university "requires something wider than the criticism and unmasking of power". Because of this, two goals, the discovery of the wonders of the science that creates our world and dwelling, particularly when considering the need for humanities such as theology and philosophy, were created.

The theology, as used within *Theology and the University*, is seen as "as a kind of 'tentacle' which reaches out to the other disciplines and enables necessary conversation." This novel is

filled with essays that are created by many European perspectives that explore the role of a contemporary university that contrasts that of which Professor Wolf explained.

The launch of this new book was then followed by a lecture given by Professor Wolf named 'Being Theologians in Secular Society'. In this lecture, she explained how when religion was withdrawn from nineteenth century science, humans "lost our sense of credibility when we lost our sense of God."

The pro-life movements should now pivot towards democracy

Momentum is building for the All Ireland Rally for Life which is taking place in Dublin on July 6. I'm sure it will be a very successful occasion, and a happy occasion too.

What's been remarkable about this annual event is the positive buzz around the gathering, the marches and speeches. It's obviously all about putting a pro-baby, pro-woman vibe out there while upholding the principle of respecting human life from conception.

The pro-life movements in Ireland, in Britain and in the United States have been brave, altruistic and even self-sacrificing over the past 50 years since this campaign began.

Circles

It's not a cause that makes you popular in progressive circles; pro-life activists have been called misogynists, bigots, even fascists, who want to tie women to the kitchen sink. But they have borne the heat and dust of the day, as St Paul says, and fought the good fight for a noble cause.

The pro-life campaigns will continue. But were I in a posi-



Mary Kenny



A speaker at the March for Life in May. Photo: Pro-Life Campaign.

tion to offer advice, I would say that it's now time to pivot more assertively towards a new aspect of this story: to focus information on the catastrophic fall in births that is now happening everywhere, save sub-Saharan Africa.

Economists – usually pro-choice – are increasingly worried about the fall in birth rates (the demographers call this “a decline in fertility”, but it's actually a fall in births). A demographic map published of Europe last week showed that not a single European country was having enough babies to replace the population.

Everyone knows that to

retain a stable population, there needs to be 2.01 births per woman, on average. But the roll-call of under-replacement was stark: Ireland 1.54; UK 1.49; Germany 1.46; France 1.79; Spain 1.16; Malta 1.08; Italy 1.24; Poland 1.29; Netherlands 1.46; Denmark 1.55. And so on – all these nations are at grave under-replacement level.

Impact

It's worrying economists because it will impact on pensions, employment, social care, and the costs of an ageing society. Immigrants can help fill the gap in the short term; but immigrants' coun-

Deep Freud Lewis

God versus Sigmund Freud – is the subject of a new movie, co-produced by Screen Ireland, with the support of the Irish Government (and partly filmed in Ireland), *Freud's Last Session*.

It is a supposed conversation between the Belfast-born Christian advocate C.S. Lewis, (Matthew Goode) and the father of psycho-analysis, in September 1939. Freud (Anthony Hopkins) and his family have fled from Vienna to London; and he is dying from cancer of the jaw, facing his final days.

It's a serious movie which

asks big questions, insightful about Sigmund Freud's disbelief in God, alongside his fascination with religion. His artistic Hampstead home is stuffed with statues of saints and divinities, and he has an especial interest in St Dymphna, the patron saint of mental illness (having once had a Catholic Irish nanny).

Anthony Hopkins, aged 86, gives an energetic performance as Freud, arguing with Lewis on matters of life, death, belief and transcendence. Matthew Goode is less persuasive as Lewis, portraying him as a sensitive, thoughtful Oxford don much

scarred by the First World War.

But Kingsley Amis, who described Lewis as “the best lecturer that I have ever heard”, called him “bluff” “breezy” and “loud-mouthed”, “an Ulsterman, an Orangeman”, and even an “intelligent version of Ian Paisley”.

There's also a back story about Freud's lesbian daughter, Anna, and her neurotic attachment to her father.

The movie is worth seeing for its content. But it also reminded me to return to C.S. Lewis's works, especially his brilliant “*Screwtape Letters*”.

Louisiana has passed a law ordering state schools to display a poster featuring the Ten Commandments, though I fancy that will attract much controversy before the year is out.

As the Decalogue is part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it could be argued that this is a history lesson.

There are also meaningful religious jokes around the Mosaic law. One Jewish joke

features Moses telling his people, after long negotiations: “The good news is – I got Him down to Ten. The bad news is – adultery is still in!”

The great Malcolm Muggeridge also raised gales of laughter when asked, on a BBC broadcast, his opinion of the Commandments. He replied that “I always think of them like questions on an exam paper – eight only to be attempted!”

tries also have falling birth rates.

There's a whole heap of reasons why this is happening, and access to abortion is obviously one of them. Yet studies show that many women in developed countries want to

have more children. Society just makes it really difficult. Motherhood often isn't valued or supported.

Emphatically

The pro-life movements should underline this

point emphatically: that to have the babies that every nation needs, create a more welcoming social attitude to raising the next generation. It's caring as a political point – and a winnable one, too.

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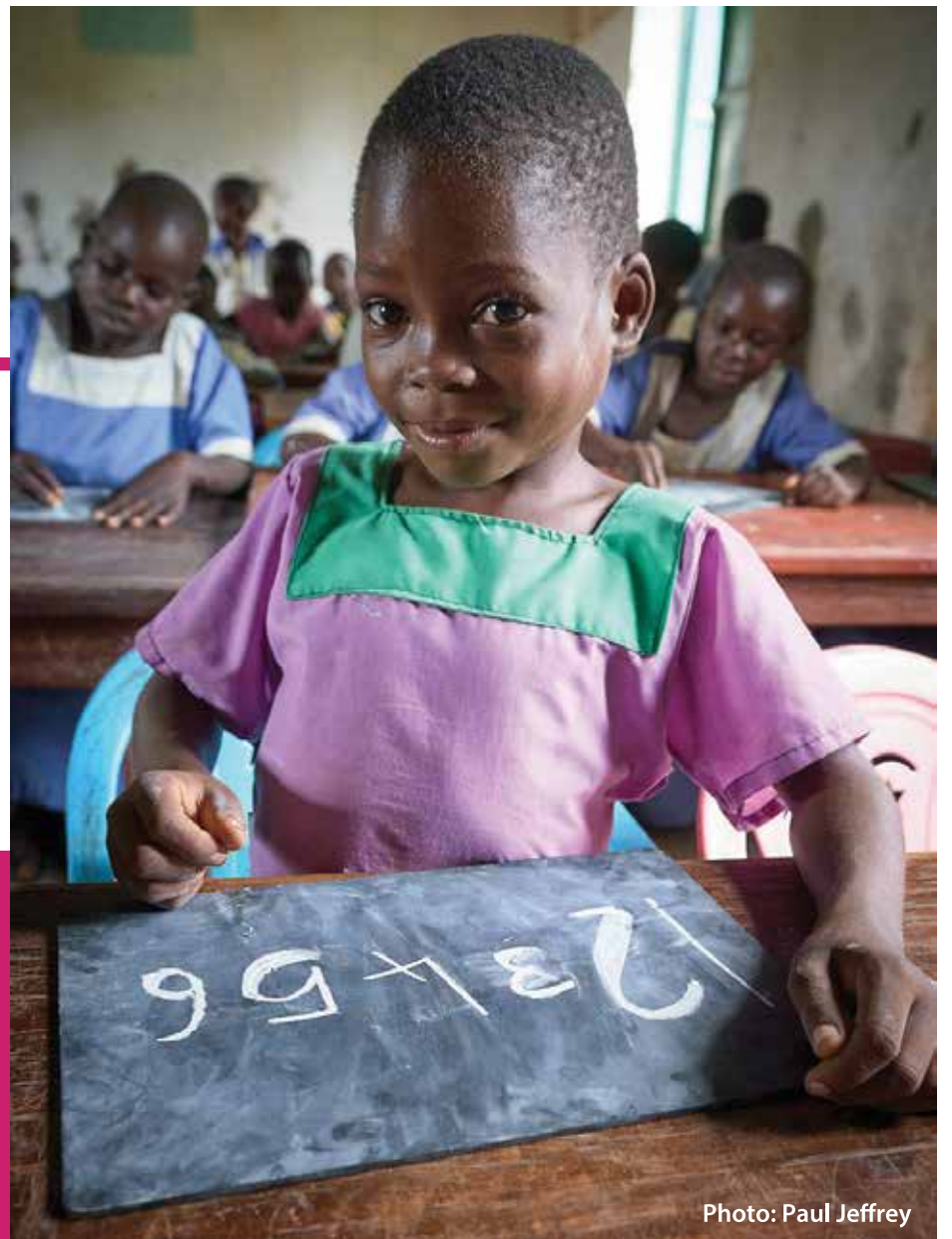


Photo: Paul Jeffrey

More dioceses to merge but slowly, said Apostolic Nuncio

Renata Steffens

The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor said changes to the structure of Irish dioceses will keep happening “little by little with consultation in the measure that is possible because it’s not a referendum.”

He said he personally goes to the dioceses that are most likely to be next and meets “some of the priests at least, some of the faithful that are engaged

in the pastoral work in order to listen to what they say and what they have to suggest.”

With the information given by the priests and laypeople, the nuncio gets together with bishops to consider the requests and suggestions. “We make a judgment, we send to Rome, Rome study and Rome decide. That is the process.”

The changes in the Irish Church will keep happening, he said adding, “Not immediately, it is step by step but it

will continue.”

The Nuncio was speaking on Monday after the unveiling of a plaque at the Ashtown Castle in Phoenix Park, where the first Holy See Embassy was located. Marking the site of the first Apostolic Nunciature is very important, “in order to recover the memory of this, this fact that this was the area of the ancient Nunciature,” the Nuncio told *The Irish Catholic*.

“The first Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Paschal Robinson, came to take

up residence here at the Nunciature in the Phoenix Park in January 1930. In five years’ time we will be celebrating the centenary of this highly eloquent diplomatic gesture,” the nuncio said.

“That was a kind of recognition of the government at that time,” he continued. “the first recognising the Irish Free State in 1929”. And added, “The Holy See established relations with Ireland, because Ireland has been always in the mind of Rome, was one of the pastoral worries of the Popes.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

St Mary’s turns multi-denominational

On June 11, St Mary’s Private School officially turned into Paradise Place Educate Together National School, making it the first Catholic Primary in Ireland to join the Educate Together Patronage. This switch is a part of the governments ongoing plan to switch Catholic schools to those of which are multi-denominational.

Although no longer a Catholic school anymore, Educate Together CEO Emer Nowlan said that she commends the past St Mary’s for their inclusive practices and ability to make a change. She welcomes the opportunity for more schools to convert to a multi-denominational school, saying “We will continue our inclusive, restorative and supportive practice as an Educate Together school and look forward to sharing and learning with and from other schools in the network”.

Ms Nowlan claims that this process is important because “Through the reconfiguration process, our school community recognised that equality-based patronage is the best fit for the diverse families we serve”.

The Church needs to guard against complacency

Renata Milán Morales

The Catholic Church in Ireland has introduced a new safeguarding policy ‘A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024’. The policy was released on June 11, 2024

Mr Aidan Gordon, who took over as CEO of the National Board for

Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in April 2024, pointed out the urgency of implementing these new guidelines. “My number one priority is to ensure that our new policy and procedural guidance is embedded in all Church bodies across Ireland,” Mr Gordon said to *The Irish Catholic*.

Mr Gordon also said that “We certainly need to guard against

complacency in the Church,” he said. “It is crucial that we ensure victims and survivors are heard in everything we do.”

The policy is deeply rooted in Gospel values, according to Mr Gordon, who told *The Irish Catholic* that “There is no conflict between Gospel values and safeguarding. It’s on all of us to minister to people with dignity.”

Since the policy’s release, 13 induction events have been held across the country, with over 500 attendees, including bishops, congregational leaders, clergy, laypeople, volunteers, and staff. These events aim to ensure understanding of the new standards.

The full interview with Mr Aidan Gordon will be available in next week’s issue.

Europe’s most extreme ‘hate speech’ bill

Renata Milán Morales

The Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 passed through the Dáil and is currently before Seanad Éireann, third stage, since June 21, 2024.

According to *The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe*, this bill could be Europe’s most extreme ‘hate speech’ bill. “In April 2023, the lower house of the Irish Parliament passed a ‘hate speech’ law that could be considered the most extreme ‘hate speech’ law in Europe,” claims this organisation’s 22/23 annual report.

On ‘Ireland Free Speech’ summit, on June 18, Andrew Doyle said, “I think Ireland bringing through this disastrous hate speech bill, with all major parties supporting it, is symptomatic of something broader”.

On a similar note, Senator Keoghan said “This law is going to have a chilling effect on the ordinary people... for those who may not be in favour of the government.”

See pages 20-21

Embracing the future



Bishop of Down and Connor Alan McGuckian is pictured on his first visit to the parish of St Joseph’s Church Kilough, Co. Down meeting parishioner Angela Digney and her daughter Olivia. Photo: Bill Smyth



Bishop Alan McGuckian stands with member of the Parish of Bright and Fr Peter O’Kane earlier this week during his pastoral visit to celebrate Mass at the parish in Co. Down. This is just one of the parishes he attended in the diocese to celebrate the sacrament of Communion.

Tackle child poverty, drugs and defend right to life urge NI bishops before elections



Chai Brady

The bishops of the North of Ireland have called on all voters to “maximise the good” by taking part in the July 4 Westminster elections and offered advice on what choices to make based on Catholic Social Teaching.

In their pastoral reflection ‘Give Reasons to Hope’ issued on Tuesday the bishops highlighted the fact decisions in the Westminster parliament impact the lives of every person in the North in a fundamental way and all people should exercise their “hard-won” right to vote.

The prelates continued, warning of a growing breakdown in social cohesion and hope, saying: “It is no coincidence that in this environment, our society is also reporting an unprecedented crisis in mental health, not least among younger people and children. Nor is it unrelated that in homes throughout Derry and Belfast, to the most rural areas of the north, the social ‘normalisation’ of illegal and legal mind-altering drugs is reaching epidemic levels.

“People also express concern to us about a growing culture of aggression and lack of civility in all aspects of life, fuelled in particular by the lack of regulation of social media,” they said.

The bishops encouraged voters to ask questions of politicians such as: What are you going to do to improve the quality and tone of public debate, and to improve social cohesion by modelling shared concern for the common good? What are you going to do to improve the quality of the lives of all, especially the most vulnerable, beyond your own personal or party interest?

“The well-being of society, especially of the young and most vulnerable, is the fundamental vocation of politics. Few citizens, we believe, would say that our society here is functioning well. We encourage our politicians, in their noble vocation, to strive for a vision of society that brings genuine hope and flourishing to the lives of all. In this election, give us reasons to hope!” the bishops urged.

Dignity

Focusing on the right to life, the bishops stated that through the Westminster parliament the respect for the fundamental right to life “has been subjected to a reductionist political culture, where people are valued more and more for their utility, or their positive cost to benefit analysis, rather than for their inherent dignity”.

They called on the Faithful to ask candidates: What will you do



Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh pictured in procession in St Mel's Cathedral.

to uphold the right to life of every person, from conception to natural death? What will you do to ensure the most vulnerable, at the beginning or end of their life, will not be at risk from pressure or harm from others to have their lives ended or to end it for themselves? What position will you take in forthcoming Westminster debates about introducing euthanasia and even more radical laws extending the limits on abortion, and discriminating against those in the womb with disabilities?

“Give them reasons to hope by providing adequate residential, expert multi-disciplinary support to set them free to live their lives again with confidence and purpose”

There is “near epidemic levels of substance abuse, and the violent criminal industry in legal and illegal drugs that sustains it” the bishops continued, highlighting another “rapidly growing threat to life and hope in our society”.

They said there is a need for the removal or reduction in criminal penalties for the possession and use of small quantities of drugs, in favour of treating such situations as a public health issue, and prioritising treatment, care, education pro-

grammes and longer-term personal development.

They stated: “Give them reasons to hope by providing adequate residential, expert multi-disciplinary support to set them free to live their lives again with confidence and purpose.”

The bishops added that North of Ireland does not have, but urgently needs expert, multi-disciplinary residential care for those who have become addicted to drugs specifically.

Child poverty

The prelates highlighted that many families are “suffering real financial hardships” and lack of access to health and social services, “which are at breaking point”.

Recent data shows that the equivalent of 26.3% of the population is on a hospital waiting list in the North, while across our schools, the spending per pupil on education is consistently lower than in England and adequate resources for Special Education Needs services continues to fall far short, despite rapid growth in the number of children requiring SEN assistance over the past ten years.

“The introduction by the outgoing Westminster government of a two-child cap on child benefit was, quite simply, socially and morally abhorrent. This tax on having children has compounded the levels of child poverty in the north, which continue to be among the highest on these islands, despite the promises of devolution. We continue our appeal to all politicians across these islands, to make the eradication of the totally unacceptable levels of child poverty here an urgent priority in public policy,” said the bishops,

adding: “This serious underfunding of Northern Ireland by the UK government undermines local democracy and further erodes confidence in politics. There is a strong case for a needs-based analysis to be undertaken in the application of funding to Northern Ireland due to the particular economic and social deficits here.”

Among other questions, they advised voters to ask candidates: What will you do to improve the dire levels of childhood poverty and levels of working poor in Northern Ireland? Will you work to remove to the socially and morally abhorrent two-child benefit cap, and work to urgently reduce child poverty in Northern Ireland?

“As Christians, it is our duty not only to welcome them as we would welcome any stranger, but also to enable these newcomers to belong in our communities, including in our parishes and congregations”

The bishops cited figures from the Department for Communities, which found the number of households considered to be ‘statutorily homeless’ is 10,349, with 45,105 applicants on the social housing

waiting list. Of these applicants, 32,633 are in ‘housing distress’. They called on people to challenge politicians on how they will address the housing crisis.

Focusing on migrants, they highlighted that many migrated to the North to work and play a “critical role in the delivery of our public services, particularly in healthcare”.

“Others have come here because of war, displacement, persecution, or economic oppression. As Christians, it is our duty not only to welcome them as we would welcome any stranger, but also to enable these newcomers to belong in our communities, including in our parishes and congregations. We call upon our successful election candidates to ensure proper planning, adequate funding and delivery of services for all of the community, including our newcomers,” they said.

Services

The bishops also raised the need to appreciate and adequately fund faith, community and voluntary sectors in the North which provide services across health, social services, family supports, the arts, social enterprise and local community services.

They warned that these services “are endangered through lack of funding and failure by politicians to fully appreciate their essential contribution. It is often only when the services have to be radically reduced or shut down completely, that people realise the invaluable contribution they make to areas such as disability awareness, marriage and relationships counselling, health and wellbeing services to the elderly, vulnerable children, the lonely, and to those disproportionately facing poverty and socio-economic disadvantage”.

“The UK’s exit from the European Social Fund has made this situation worse, coupled with the slowness in the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is resulting in lack of certainty in terms of community-based services from April of 2025. We need our elected politicians to appreciate and advocate for our community and voluntary sector and to work urgently to restore, if not improve their levels of funding for their vital work in building up social cohesion, well-being and hope.”

Looking at justice and reconciliation issues, they said: “A consistent ethic of life prizes justice as fundamental for peaceful coexistence in society. The passing of the recent NI Troubles (Legacy & Reconciliation) legislation at Westminster has added further pain to the already gaping wounds that many people across all our communities are being forced to carry. This legislation does nothing for the restoration of relationships and reconciliation. We urge those who will be elected in this election to continue to raise this question with the incoming government and to ensure that promises to repeal the legislation will be acted upon as soon as possible by any new government.”

Senator Rónán Mullen

A view from the Seanad



Is there a Christian way to protest?

Our President, Michael D. Higgins, let himself and the rest of us badly down with his recent comments about protests at public libraries. Sensible people are concerned about the highly inappropriate and sexualised, not to say obscene, material being pushed at children in the 12-17 year old children's sections these days.

Not the President, though. He referred to 'books being torn up' by 'vigilantes, attempting to impose a censorship based on ignorance and exclusion.' Backed up by Forasa trade union, he called for the protection of libraries and library staff from 'intimidation and protest.'

Since most of that sounds reasonable, why am I saying that this presidential pronouncement deserves, well, no respect? Could it be because of his failure to address the child protection question? I have seen some of these books, and their content is unquotable, though sadly not unprintable.

The shipping of this material into libraries is the State-sponsored corporatised grooming of children for sexual activity, under the guise of helping people in their personal development. In that light, the rudeness of some protestors and the performative tearing up of a book that someone had purchased for the purpose, is really beside the point.

It's also rather ironic that our President, who made a career out of noisy activism, should call for the protection of public institutions from 'protest.' What, not even outside?

So, is there a 'Christian' way to protest? Left-wing agitators don't always manage to separate the politics they disagree with from the person behind it. They resent you because they hate what you believe in.

'Woke' politics is all about that Marxist-inspired, aggressive, conflictual approach to difference of opinion. You take down, you cancel the person in order to squash their ideas and erase any influence they might have. There's no time, no room and no desire for dialogue.

Christianity posits a different approach. Behind the cause we disagree with are persons and groups we must care for. Violence is out. Destruction of other-people's property is out. Abusive language is out.

All that said, people have been too passive to date of the anti-culture that the Government and agencies of state are pushing at us. Perhaps, more than I used to, I welcome the raucous. But if we are to keep to Christian standards of respect for others, we need creativity.



A demonstrator holds a crucifix during a protest against Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's government in Managua May 15, 2018. (OSV News photo/Oswaldo Rivas, Reuters)

Is the Rule of Law breaking down in Mayo?

The sight of a County Coroner, a local solicitor of long-standing, pointing his finger in anger in a public place and accusing a young woman of being "the scum of the earth," is alarming. Some context here: the woman in question was one of the activist Burke family who, even when they are correct on some points, present themselves and their issues in ways that show very little respect for other people, get everyone's backs up and hurt the very causes they are trying to promote.

Ms Burke clearly annoyed the Coroner last week. He is seen 'losing it' on the street in Castlebar in the Burkes' own

recorded and edited video. The family claims that Ms Burke was arrested shortly afterwards, her phone taken away, brought to a closed sitting of the District Court in Swinford, convicted and fined.

So, did the wheels of justice roll into the ditch in Mayo or are the Burkes telling a selective story? The truth will come out, and I predict another court case. It may come down to a determination of what constitutes 'threatening, abusive or insulting' behaviour under the Public Order legislation. On the video, we hear Ms Burke advising the Coroner and a local Garda that they will "answer to God" for their actions. Could those be the offending words? Because that raises the question, 'Won't we all?'

Did we vote for this?

In case you thought the recent Referendum results had blunted the Government's enthusiasm for socially controversial legislation, or softened their cough around undermining motherhood, get this: in the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill going through the Seanad, there's a big green light for domestic and international surrogacy.

The Government proposes to permit any couple, same sex or heterosexual, or any single man over the age of 21, to commission the 'creation' of a child using a surrogate mother. The surrogate may not provide the egg containing the genetic material for the child, and the child brought into being must have at least one genetic parent (the single male contracting, or

one male or female member of the couple).

Most countries ban surrogacy because, every which way, it involves the exploitation of a woman for her child-carrying capacity, generally for money, with no thought of where it leaves her, or of the fact that the children involved are deprived of at least one of their genetic parents, of their natural mothers, of the possibility of breast-feeding and many other things. Forever.

The Government pretends that it's not 'commercial surrogacy,' since only 'reasonable expenses' are allowed. But these can run into tens of thousands of euros to judge by the international experience. Fact is, you never see rich women carrying babies for poorer women.

It's always the other way around. Surrogacy exploits poorer

women in poorer countries. The reason the Government is legislating for international surrogacy is that there are not enough financially disadvantaged women available in Ireland for exploitation in this way.

Could there be an 'even worse' bit? Thanks to the 2015 Gender Recognition Act, a male who registers his 'preferred gender' as female may use this new law to contract with a surrogate using his own sperm and a donated female egg. Once the surrogacy is recognised and a 'parental order' made, the commissioning male will be able to have himself registered as the parent, indeed the 'mother' of the child.

You remember voting for this, don't you? Don't you?

Everyone has a role to play



Nuala O'Loan

The first report of the Synod on Synodality was published last month and makes for very interesting reading. It was the first of two sessions.

Of the 364 voting delegates who attended, 50 were women and they, with the lay men and others who attended, were able to vote on this report and on the 2024 report. While 1 woman for every 7 men was a very distinct under-representation, it was a very significant improvement on previous practice and the need for greater female involvement is stressed: "It is urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry. The Holy Father has significantly increased the number of women in positions of responsibility in the Roman Curia. This should also happen at other levels of Church life, in consecrated life and in the dioceses. Provision needs to be made in Canon Law accordingly." Hopefully there will be more women as voting members in 2024.

It was a universal synod attended by, among others, 20 representatives of the Eastern Churches, including the Coptic Catholic Church, the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, the Maronite Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, and the Syro Malabar Church. Representative of each continent attended. Bishop Brendan Leahy and Bishop Alan McGuckian were there from Ireland with men deeply committed to the synodal process with all that it entails.

Divided

The 41-page report is divided into 3 major sections: The Face of the Synodal Church, All Disciples, All Missionaries, and Weaving Bonds, Building Communities. Within the three sections, a total of 20 areas of Church life are considered. The conclusions are reported under three headings: Convergences, Matters for Consideration and Proposals. It all makes for a very easily read document. It is all very focused and for the most part, very clear. It is work in progress.

The beginning the report says that "the Second Vatican Council was, in fact, like a seed sown in the field of the world and the Church. The soil in which it germinated and grew was the daily lives of believers, the experience of the Churches



Priests work in an English-language small group April 30, 2024, with facilitator Sister Maria Cimperman, a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as part of a meeting of parish priests from around the world gathered at Sacrofano, outside of Rome, to share their experiences and contribute to the ongoing synod on synodality. Photo: CNS/Courtesy of the Synod of Bishops

of every people and culture, the many testimonies of holiness, and the reflections of theologians. The Synod 2021-2024 continues to draw on the energy of that seed and to develop its potential." It tells us that "The synodal path is, in fact, implementing what the Council taught about the Church as Mystery and People of God, called to holiness. It values the contribution all the baptised make, according to their respective vocations, in helping us to understand better and practice the Gospel. In this sense, it constitutes a true act of further reception of the Council, prolonging its inspiration and reinvigorating its prophetic force for today's world."

“The focus, though, is on how we move forward on the journey, each of us seeking discernment on the journey through ‘authentic discipleship that develops the grace of Baptism’”

At the end, the report of the Assembly is described as a "small seed." It concludes with a very real aspiration: "We carry in our hearts the desire, sustained by hope, that the climate of mutual listening and sincere dialogue that we experienced during the days of common work in Rome will radiate in our communities and throughout the world, at the service of the growth of the good seed of the Kingdom of God."

It does not hesitate to name some of the major issues facing the Church in the world. The focus, though, is on how we move forward on the journey, each of us seeking discernment on the journey through "authentic discipleship that

excluded and says that this may require public denunciation of injustices, whether perpetrated by societal structures or by individuals, corporations or governments, something many in the Church are already doing.

“Even where further clarification is required, Jesus’ actions, assimilated in prayer and conversion of heart, show us the way forward”

It acknowledges that "matters of identity and sexuality, the end of life, complicated marital situations, and ethical issues related to artificial intelligence, are controversial not only in society, but also in the Church, because they raise new questions." It says that "Sometimes the anthropological categories we have developed are not able to grasp the complexity of the elements emerging from experience or knowledge in the sciences and require greater precision and further study. It is important to take the time required for this reflection and to invest our best energies in it, without giving in to simplistic judgements that hurt individuals and the Body of the Church... Even where further clarification is required, Jesus' actions, assimilated in prayer and conversion of heart, show us the way forward." That thoughtful, gentle analysis is reflective of the whole report.

Acknowledging that "Transparency and a culture of accountability are of crucial importance for us to move forward in building a synodal Church," it asks local churches to identify processes and struc-

tures that allow for a regular audit of how priests and deacons are carrying out roles of responsibility in the exercise of their ministry. It advocates structures and processes for regular review of the bishop's performance, with reference to the style of his authority, the economic administration of the diocese's assets and the functioning of participatory bodies, and safeguarding against all possible kinds of abuse. Such accountability of those in ministry will be welcome. It would enable the laity to understand just what is really involved in ministry and could lead to more focused, strategic development of the Church in a way which would enhance the mission.

Context

It states that "On a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with the context, the possibility should be considered of re-inserting priests who have left the ministry in pastoral services that recognise their formation and experience." It is not clear from the document what is proposed by these words. Many of those who

left the ministry are currently actively engaged in their local church communities. Could it mean more? Allowing such men who wish to return to ministry to do so?

It calls for the involvement of "men and women who have an apostolic disposition, distinguished not by their frequent presence in Church, but by a genuine evangelical witness in ordinary life in the various councils for the discernment and decision-making of a synodal missionary community.

What is clear is that everyone has a role to play. It says that we have a duty to participate in building up the common good and defending the dignity of life, drawing inspiration from the Church's social doctrine and working together in various ways, through engagement in civil society organisations, trade unions, popular movements, grassroots associations, in the field of politics, and so forth. This is all part of the Church's mission.

There is much in this report to give hope. It is but a step on the journey.

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develops the grace of Baptism."

The challenges are named: hearing and responding to those living in poverty of all kinds material and spiritual: "migrants and refugees; indigenous peoples, original and Afro-descendent peoples; those who suffer violence and abuse, in particular women; people struggling with addiction; minorities who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned elderly people; victims of racism, exploitation, and trafficking, especially minors; exploited workers; the economically excluded, and others living on the peripheries. The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, include the unborn and their mothers." The Assembly condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that cause such problems.

Actions

Speaking clearly, the report says that action needed to address these matters, includes protecting the rights of those who are



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The Catholic vote in the British General Election



David Quinn

The British General Election will take place on July 4. Labour is expected not only to win but may achieve the biggest majority ever seen in the House of Commons. The Conservatives, in power without interruption since 2011, are in for an almighty hammering. Since the last General Election in 2019, when the Tories won by a majority of 80 seats under Boris Johnson, Britain has seen little other than chaos.

Three months after winning the December 2019 election on a promise to 'Get Brexit Done', Britain, like the rest of us, was struck by the Covid-19 pandemic and hit Britain a lot harder than here. Some blamed that on Boris Johnson's chaotic style of government, although it also had a lot to do with Britain being an older, much more densely populated country than Ireland.

Boris himself was extremely chaotic and ill-disciplined. There were multiple breaches of the Covid rules inside 10 Downing Street itself. Then there was the chaos of Brexit. After Brexit, immigration into the UK was supposed to slow down. That was half the reason many people voted for Brexit: to take back control of not only Britain's laws, but its borders as well.

Obviously, immigration plunged during Covid-19 but after that it reached record levels, meaning Brexit voters felt betrayed.

After the fall of Boris, Liz Truss became Prime Minister and she lasted only weeks. Her first and only budget caused economic chaos and she had to resign.

Sunak

Then along came the current Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, but he has never connected with voters despite bringing a measure of much-needed stability to Government. People are just sick of the Tories and Labour under Keir Starmer doesn't even have to do much to win election. It is all a foregone conclusion.

This means that no one thing is going to make a difference to the outcome. In



Leader of the Labour Party Keir Starmer.

other, tighter elections, court- ing the votes of one portion of the electorate, for example, young people, or pensioners, or environmentalists, or even church-goers can make a difference, although the ability of church-goers to make a difference in a very secular society like Britain, seems minimal.

“Muslims have traditionally voted for the Labour party, although some might be tempted this time to cast their votes for more radical candidates”

In fact, in Britain, it might be Muslim voters that make more of a difference in some constituencies.

In the UK there are about four million Muslims making up around 6% of the population. But they are concentrated in certain areas, and they often vote the way Catholics used to; as a bloc. This is often what communities do when they are still relatively new to a country. Muslims have traditionally voted for the Labour party, although some might be tempted this time to cast their votes

for more radical candidates because Keir Starmer is trying to steer a middle-of-the-road course on the war in Gaza.

In any case, the Catholic bishops of England and Wales, and the Catholic bishops of Scotland, have each issued statements on the election as a guide to Catholic voters. It is important that they do this because the Church has a rich tradition of social teachings to draw on and Catholics ought to be more informed about them than they are.

Society

If Catholics were more inclined to vote as Catholics, then Catholic social teaching would have more of an influence on society. Unfortunately, a lot of Catholics seem to have been taken in by the line that religion and politics have no business mixing, but this is only true if by that you mean that the Church should not dictate to the State or vice versa. It cannot mean that Christians are not entitled to a view, as Christians, of what a just society ought to look like, and not look for guidance on that to the teachings of Christ. Christianity is not a wholly private religion by any means, nor ought it to be. It has social and political implications. For this reason, the Church was very supportive

of Christian Democratic parties after World War II and that still exist in some countries, such as Germany.

The electoral guidance from the bishops of England and Wales looks at the issues of criminal justice, domestic poverty, family life and taxation, education, the environment, international relations, human rights and peacebuilding, life issues, and migration.

“It is an opportunity to proclaim the dignity and value of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God, and promote the common good”

The Scottish bishops comment on the right to life, marriage and the family, poverty and immigration, the environment, war and nuclear weapons, and freedom of religion and conscience, in that order.

The preamble to the statement from the Catholic bishops of Scotland describes the election as “an opportunity to connect our voting to our Catholic faith and elect an individual representative who reflects as closely as possible

our values and beliefs”. This is spot-on.

It adds: “It is an opportunity to proclaim the dignity and value of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God, and promote the common good.”

The statement from the English and Wales bishops begins: “Gospel values inform how we look at the world as Christians. These values can also offer a different way of looking at politics, a way that puts the common good before self-interest.”

Priorities

It's interesting that the statement from the two hierarchies have different priorities. The bishops of England and Wales put the right to life near the bottom, while the Scottish bishops have it at the top, with marriage and the family second.

The statement from the England and Welsh bishops doesn't mention marriage at all, which seems like a very strange oversight. Instead, it talks about creating favourable economic conditions for family life.

The Scottish bishops, on the other hand, say: “Society relies on the building block of the family to exist.

“The love of man and woman in marriage and their

openness to new life is the basic, fundamental cell upon which society is built.”

“Bishops should not shy away from promoting the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman as a foundation stone of society”

“The wellbeing of society depends on the flourishing and health of family life and MPs should respond to this with policies that create economic and fiscal support for married couples and families with children.”

This has it exactly right, in my view. Bishops should not shy away from promoting the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman as a foundation stone of society.

Ireland will have its own General Election in due course, at the latest by next spring, but possibly this coming autumn.

Our bishops ought to consider what they might have to say in that election. The statement from the Scottish bishops in particular provides a good guide. They cannot say nothing.

Christians in 138 countries were supported by Catholic charity last year



Renata Steffens

In recently released statement, the international charity Aid for the Church in Need (ACN) shows the agency spent €144.5 million over 5,000 projects in 138 countries in 2023. "Once again, this year, these numbers reflect a true miracle", said the head of the organisation, Irishwoman Regina Lynch.

The international charity counts on "the generosity of some 360,000 benefactors in 23 countries, including Ireland," the organisation said in the statement. ACN helps Christians suffering around the world, including the war-torn Gaza Strip and Ukraine.

The headquarters of the organisation is in Königstein, Germany, and provides aid to Catholic communities in some 140 countries around the world. The roots of ACN go back to the years after WWII, "emphasising the urgent work of reconciliation and reconstruction in Europe."

Ms Lynch explained that in 2024 the charity's "focus is tending to shift towards the need of pastoral accompaniment and support for people in war zones or facing persecution, who have suffered deep trauma as a result. This is an area where we hope to further intensify our help."

Goal

She also said their goal for this year is to "step up our help in the Sahel region, where jihadist terrorism is spreading and where Christians are facing increasing suffering from the violence."

The organisation has national offices in 23 countries worldwide and the support of donors in those countries allows ACN to function without any financial support from governments or ecclesial bodies.

"The country that received the most aid from ACN in 2023 was Ukraine, for the second year in a



A church destroyed by a Russian attack on the village of Bohorodychne in Ukraine's Donetsk region is pictured Feb. 13, 2024. Photo: OSV/Vladyslav Musiienko, Reuters

row, with €7.5 million, at a time when the Catholic Church in Ukraine remains committed to healing the spiritual wounds of those traumatised by the war and continues, in this difficult situation, to accompany those who are suffering due to the ongoing conflict," the organisation declared.

“81.3% of the funds spent ‘went directly to mission-related expenses. Within this amount, 85.9% went to aid projects in 138 countries’”

The second country to receive the most aid in 2023 was Syria, "with €7.4 million, followed by Lebanon, with €6.9 million. In both these countries the Christian population is still dealing with the effects of a crippling economic crisis and, in the case of Syria, a long-lasting civil war and the terrible earthquake of 2023."

81.3% of the funds spent "went directly to mission-related expenses. Within this amount, 85.9% went to aid projects in 138 countries, allowing the foundation to approve 5,573 projects for the world's neediest com-

munities."

The remaining €16.6 million (14.1% of the total) was destined to "activities related to information work, proclaiming the faith and the defence of persecuted Christians, including the publishing of religious literature," the announcement said, and added that funds were also directed to "prayer campaigns and advocacy for the rights and interests of persecuted and suffering Christians."

Africa

The most support on a regional level was given to Africa. The continent received roughly a third of the resources (31.4%), while "the main beneficiary countries in this region are the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Nigeria and Burkina Faso."

Ms Lynch commented on those projects: "Africa is home to approximately one in every five Catholics, one in every eight priests, one in every seven female religious, and almost a third of seminarians in the world."

"Besides that, the spread of terrorism and Islamic extremism in some countries, especially in the Sahel region, are a cause of great suffering and pain for Christians in this continent."

Being the region with the second highest amount of support, the Middle

East received 19.1% of aid. In Syria, 61% of all funds received went to "emergency aid, including food and housing, medical assistance and microcredit support for businesses."

The charity also declared that "In Lebanon, emergency aid accounted for 47% of total aid to the country. It was mainly used to maintain the operation of Christian schools, but a considerable amount was also allocated to food, housing and medical care."

“One in every ten seminarians in the world received support in their formation in 2023, which accounts a total of about 11,000 seminarians in total”

India is the country "where the foundation provides the largest number of scholarships to priests and religious," with 17.3% of funds destined to the Asia-Oceania region. "Europe and Latin America received 15.4% and 15.3% of the total aid each. The remaining 1.5% went to other regions."

40,767 priests received Mass stipends in 2023. The charity destined a total of almost 1.75 million to that cause. "Statistically, this means that one in every ten priests in the world received support from ACN and that every 18 seconds a Mass was celebrated somewhere around



Regina Lynch: Photo, ACN

the world for the intentions of ACN benefactors."

One in every ten seminarians in the world received support in their formation in 2023, which accounts a total of about 11,000 seminarians in total. Of these, 5,793 were in Africa, "which is now home to highest number of priestly vocations in the world."

Vocations

The region with the second largest number of religious vocations is Latin America, with 2,103 seminarians helped by ACN, followed by "Asia with 1,996, and Europe with 1,099, of which 600 are in Ukraine."

"Support for the formation of priests, religious and laypeople represented 26.7% of all the support, whereas Mass stipends and subsistence aid for women religious amounted to 21.6%."

Just over a quarter of the aid provided in 2023 (26.8%) was destined to construction projects, which put these projects at the top of the list. Almost a thousand construction projects were executed in 2023, of which one third involved churches and chapels.

"The remaining amount went to the renovations of convents, seminaries, parish houses and pastoral centres." The region with the most construction projects was Africa, where

36.2% of all funds received went to that purpose.

“Emergency aid accounted for around 11% of expenses, which in 2023, went to more countries than before, including to the Holy Land”

The organisation also directed aid to transportation. 10.4% of funds went to that purpose, "providing 1,041 vehicles to help pastoral agents carry out their missions", over 10% of the 515 automobiles went to Ukraine. The charity also provided "340 motorcycles, 175 bicycles, six buses and five boats, as well as 21 projects for maintenance and repair" worldwide.

"Emergency aid accounted for around 11% of expenses, which in 2023, went to more countries than before, including to the Holy Land, where the recent conflict has had such a serious adverse effect on the Christian population."

Each year, ACN funds over 5,000 projects helping to support the Church in its mission. "From building churches to providing catechetical books to emergency aid."

“One in every ten priests in the world received support from ACN and that every 18 seconds a Mass was celebrated somewhere around the world for the intentions of ACN benefactors”

The destruction of life and the diminishing of love



Martina Purdy

A baby was screaming rather loudly at Mass the other day – so loudly from the church porch that the priest's final blessing was being drowned out. So, he paused, smiled widely, and declared: "When I hear a child crying in church, I know the Church has a future. And it always does."

But sadly, the 'crying child' is all too rare in church these days, and not just in church.

Births are falling and abortions are rising.

In fact, babies, it seems, are becoming an endangered species, the invisible casualties in the culture wars.

Levels

New figures reveal abortion figures in England and Wales have just hit record levels: 251,377 pre-born boys and girls were aborted in 2022. The upward trend in Ireland continues amid great indifference – another reason to join the March for Life on July 6 in Dublin.

“Many are easily seduced by the notion that an abortion pill is an easy solution to an unwanted pregnancy. But it's a lie. The abortion pill doesn't solve a problem”



Other than debating what the falling birthrate might mean for the rest of us, the media generally seems to have little or no interest in defending the rights of pre-born babies. I am stunned at times to hear even baptised Catholics, including those who attend Mass, insist on a "woman's right to choose".

“As Catholics we cannot simultaneously embrace Christ's words, 'This is my body' and the pro-choice abortion chant: 'This is my body'”

We have a "This is my body" generation whose views have been formed, not by God's living word, but by the likes of *The Irish Times* and *The Guardian*. The media and the abortion industry have sold us a very false notion of compassion. Abortion is a corrupt practice which kills children and traumatises women as well as men.

As Catholics we cannot simultaneously embrace Christ's words, "This is my body" and the pro-choice abortion chant: "This is my

body".

But how much thought do we give to the words 'This is my body' in either context?

I have asked Catholics who claim to be "pro-choice" what the choice is and they invariably give me a puzzled look. The choice is death, right? Dismembering or poisoning a child? After that question, they seem less certain.

Our choices become barbaric when separated from self-sacrificing love.

"This is my body" – when spoken at Mass – must also be considered with greater care and contemplation.

In the United States, a few years ago, a straw poll of Catholics in the pews found 70% did not believe in the invisible and real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Would the numbers be any different in Ireland today?

Contemplation

Deep contemplation seems almost impossible in a world where the pace of life is so fast; there is often little time to consider anything more profound than the fast food menu as we speed into the drive-through.

How wonderful that right now, in the United States, many Catholics are engaged in a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, a slow procession with the Blessed Sacrament, journeying from four directions to Indianapolis, for the 10th Eucharistic Congress, on July 17-21.

Jesus has crossed the Mississippi River on this pilgrimage which has just passed the half-way point.

In the culture wars, this

is the great march of life and love.

The other day, a Carmelite priest, Fr Stephen Quinn, OCD, from Derry's Termonbacca Community, took some time out to celebrate a 'teaching Mass' at St Patrick's Church, Downpatrick.

“I would argue, we are ill-prepared to tackle the abortion crisis in our world”

Fr Quinn challenged everyone to really think about the words of Christ "This is my body" at the consecration.

"This is an act of love. If we were plugged into that," said Fr Quinn, "we wouldn't have a crisis in our Church."

We are supposed, he said, to draw life from Mass.

Yet, we Catholics are ill-prepared to truly understand what we are being offered: a miraculous trans-

formation through Jesus Christ, "the living bread come down from Heaven".

And so in turn, I would argue, we are ill-prepared to tackle the abortion crisis in our world.

Persecution

Fr Quinn recalled the Great Persecution in 303 when Mass was banned – and a group of Christians were caught outside Carthage in the act of Sunday worship. "The court records what happened," said Fr Quinn. "The Governor of the area asked, 'Why are you disobeying the order of the Emperor?' And, they replied, 'We can't live without Sunday'."

Abortion is the number one cause of death on this planet.

Is this surprising when even doctors deny the truth – the humanity of the child in the womb?

Many are easily seduced by the notion that an abortion pill is an easy solution to an

unwanted pregnancy. But it's a lie. The abortion pill doesn't solve a problem. It creates a problem because it destroys life and diminishes love.

“We cannot live without Sunday because life and love are inextricably linked”

Perhaps it is easier to believe this lie than the truth, that the Eucharist, the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ – is the real medicine, the antidote to our only real problems in life: sin and death.

We cannot live without Sunday because life and love are inextricably linked.

There's a wonderful scene in the film *How the West Was Won* when a railwayman turns to the cowboy and remarks on a crying child.

"That's not a crying child," said the cowboy. "That's new life."

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Youth breaking for the right in Europe

Dean Keating

These recent elections were not the parting of the fog that many had hoped for or the endorsement of Government that the Taoiseach has claimed. At best, we can see a stagnation for all three major parties and a diversification of the Irish political spectrum, caused by a rejection of the Government's more radical policies in relation to climate and migration. A trend that has stark parallels in the broader European context. The rising support for Independents in Ireland, the growing generational divide in Europe and rise in support for the European right has set the stage for an uncertain future. Similar to the recent local election, the 2019 election saw Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael gain seats with their political rivals losing seats. Sinn Féin alone saw a loss of 78 seats. However, this success completely failed to translate into the general election, where both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael saw a decline in seats, with Sinn Féin making significant gains. Local elections are distinct from national elections because of the dominance of the two major parties at a local level.

Underpin

This might underpin the Taoiseach's hesitancy to call a snap election despite calls from within his own party to capitalise on the success of the recent result. Particularly because the two major parties performed poorly in comparison to their 2019 results, losing a joint 41 seats. In the Taoiseach's own constituency, Fine Gael did not fare well in the local elections, seeing just short of a 5% drop in first preference votes. The party also failed to gain any more seats since the 2019 election, despite Harris recently becoming Taoiseach. There has been no 'Harris bounce'.

Independents also fared well in the local elections, collectively occupying the third highest number of seats in the country, but many were already sitting councillors. While the issue of immigration polled

high in the months leading up to the local election in terms of issues of importance to the electorate, this failed to translate into any major gains for Ireland's anti-immigration parties. As Sean Murray and Martin Mongan noted in the *Irish Examiner*, more people with ethnic backgrounds were elected than those on an anti-immigrant ticket. Which would seem to undermine the commentary that suggested an emerging anti-migration vote in Ireland. However, as has been noted by Dr Matt Tracey of *Gript*, when considering the votes that went to parties and independents that took a right leaning stance towards migration, this would place emerging trends in Ireland at a comparable level to our European counterparts.

“The right in Europe was able to capitalise on the decline of the relevancy of class-based left wing politics, and the resulting rise in salience of other collective identities – such as national identity”

The European elections in Ireland saw all the major European groupings decline in support, bar Renew Europe following a strong performance from Fianna Fáil. While the right broadly performed well at a European level, in Ireland, massive vote-splitting meant that they were unable to make any major gains. This was not reflected across Europe, where the right achieved historic success. Right-wing parties took the highest number of seats in every major country across Europe, including Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Poland.

The right in Europe was able to capitalise on the decline of the relevancy of class-based left wing politics, and the resulting rise

in salience of other collective identities – such as national identity. Commentators have also noted the importance of growing economic problems on the continent as well as dissatisfaction with the EU as contributing factors to the recent surge for the Right. The united front as well as the professionalisation of the right on the continent in recent decades are also factors that arguably distinguish the success of the European right when compared to recent results of the Irish Right.

The European elections also demonstrated a growing generational divide, where the European youth is rapidly aligning with the radical right on the continent, in comparison to older generations who have remained voting for more moderate parties. Across the continent this has caused a major fall out at a national level, triggering a national election in France and the resignation of the Belgian Prime Minister. Current domestic polling in France suggests that this could result in Marine Le Penn's Rassemblement National winning its first Prime Ministership.

Unique

Europe appears to be unique in terms of the youth breaking for the right. Commentators have noted that there is a more prominent right wing bent in cultural attitudes among Europeans in comparison to their western anglophone counterparts. This in conjunction with a delayed backlash against the 2015 migrant crisis and a sense that the 'system' is failing young people, might give an appeal to the anti-establishment parties of the right.

As the Vice-Chair of Renew Europe claimed: “The fight for the future and identity of Europe has already started.”

The recent elections only add to the uncertainty of the future of politics in Ireland and in Europe.

i Dean Keating is an M.Sc candidate in International Politics at Trinity College Dublin and a Student Director for Free Speech Ireland.



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A promising future for youth ministry in Ireland



Renata Milán Morales

The success of the first 'Intentional Young Adult Ministry' gathering, that took place on June 22 in Co. Kildare, shows a promising future for youth ministry in Ireland, as young adults continue to inspire and support one another in their faith journeys. This initiative, hosted by the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC), reflects a hopeful and inclusive vision for the Church, where young people play a key role in shaping its future.

Over 160 young adults from across Ireland gathered to represent the different movements and initiatives happening in the Irish Church. The day began with an inspiring opening address by Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross, setting a hopeful tone for the event. Following Bishop Gavin's address, attendants heard testimonies from youth leaders representing various groups, including Focus Missionaries, Sycamore, and Alpha.

Insights

Fr Stephen Wang shared his ideas and insights during a Question-and-Answer session, where he talked about the importance of genuine interactions. "Enjoy. Love them and enjoy your conversation," Fr Wang said. "It's about you as a friend and as a brother and sister listening and talking to someone. If they're a bit fragile, be very sympathetic. Having a real relationship allows them to be themselves. If they get angry or cynical, love them like any friend."

Fr Wang also mentioned the value of diversity within the Church. "We should really love and respect the differences and the charisms," he said. "It's great that the Church has lots of different groups doing lots of different things, many of them almost independently. We believe in subsidiarity, which is the importance of the local and the fact that the local can respond to differences. We must not become mono-

chrome. We're here to learn from each other, but not to do the same."

Sarah T, a youth leader representative from the Cork and Ross diocese, in conversation with *The Irish Catholic* said that "There was a beautiful start with the praise and worship music. It really set the tone and kind of inspired the Holy Spirit and reminded us that we're here because of Him, not because of ourselves. It was brilliant to hear of the different initiatives. Each with their own unique approach and it just shows, as Fr Stephen was mentioning, how we use our own charisms and see what you can bring to the table."

“When we work together intentionally, respectfully, and listen to one another, we can really build something great for our future”

The day was filled with discussions and sharing of personal experiences, highlighting the diverse ways young people can engage with and spread their faith. A key theme was the importance of authenticity and joy in evangelisation. Sarah P. shared her realisation that the most sustainable way to evangelise is by sharing one's joy. "You don't necessarily have to tell people they have to believe," she said. "You just let them see the joy your faith gives you and be an example for others."

Bishop Gavin emphasised the idea of collaboration and mutual respect. "We aren't selling one particular movement over another but showing what's possible and encouraging. When we work together intentionally, respectfully, and listen to one another, we can really build something great for our future," he said.

The gathering concluded with a renewed sense of mission among the participants, united by their common goal of evangelising. The event highlighted the importance of embracing diverse approaches and the power of authentic, joyful witness in evangelisation.



Keynote speaker Fr Stephen Wang. Photos: John McElroy



Some of the young people at the event.



From left to right: Gerard Hanley, Bishop Fintan Gavin, Miriam Goulding and Fr Stephen Wang



Praise and worship led by Youth 2000 music ministry



Sarah Ryan Purcell, youth leader from Cork and Ross diocese



Large attendance at the event

‘Pope calls us every evening’ says Gaza parish priest



Luca Attanasio

Father Gabriel Romanelli, an Argentinean of Italian origin, belongs to the religious family of the Incarnate Word (Ive). 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) and, before the war, had about 150 faithful. From the beginning of October 2023 until last May, Father Gabriel Romanelli lived far from his parish. His return from Jerusalem was scheduled for October 7 but was postponed by one day. The Hamas attacks and the immediate outbreak of war led to the decision by the Israeli authorities to block all return permits and Father Gabriel, who was due to get back on October 8, remained far away from his parishioners. After seven very long months, taking advantage of the visit to Gaza of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, from May 16 to 19, the priest was able to re-embrace his deputy, Fr Youssef Asaad, the faithful and the refugees housed in the parish compound (about 500 Christians, including Catholics and Orthodox from the nearby Greek Orthodox parish of St Porphyrios, ed.)

Over the past few months, he has received daily phone calls from the Holy Father, who is constantly informing himself of the situation and receiving updates on the faithful and citizens under siege in Gaza. After much difficulty getting in touch with Fr Romanelli largely due to poor connection, *The Irish Catholic* was able to reach him by phone.

“There were 37 deaths among the faithful, 20 of them from bombings, in particular the one that devastated the Greek Orthodox church. An IDF sniper killed two Catholic women right here in the compound of my parish. Then there were many wounded”



A woman and child walk among debris in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, June 9, aftermath of Israeli strikes at the area, where Israeli hostages were rescued, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict. Photo: OSV/Abed Khaled, Reuters

Fr Gabriel, what did it mean to return after such a long time and what community did you find on your return?

“After very long months, it was a real grace for me to be able to return, I found a very lively community, despite everything, although not as lively as it was before. On the one hand because so many had left, then because there were 37 deaths among the faithful, 20 of them from bombings, in particular the one that devastated the Greek Orthodox church. An IDF [Israel Defence Forces] sniper killed two Catholic women right here in the compound of my parish. Then there were many wounded. The Christians here who had double passports were able to

emigrate. If there is one thing that struck me on my return, however, it is to have found a sense of resilience that is always very strong, unfortunately we are used to so many wars and so many difficulties here.

“One of the biggest difficulties we encountered in saying Mass was the lack of wine, which usually comes from outside Gaza”

I believe that Pizzaballa’s visit that coincided with my return comforted many. In

addition, an Argentinean nun and two Chilean nuns joined us, while we are also fortunate to have with us the Provincial of the Ive, Fr Carlos Ferrero, who will stay for a while to help us.”

How is faith lived in such a dramatic context, do people still attend the parish?

“The community is very devout, before the war, we were 135 Catholics [the total number of Christians living in Gaza is 1017]. Our parish has always also been very well attended by Greek Orthodox faithful, many of them participate in parish activities and groups of all ages. During the war we continued to celebrate two Masses thanks to the presence of my deputy Youssef Asaad who has always remained here. One of the biggest difficulties we encountered in saying Mass was the lack of wine, which usually comes from outside Gaza. That is why after a while the daily Masses were reduced to just one and one adoration and recitation of the rosary. There is, however, great awareness that Jesus is here, right in our midst, in the Eucharist. Here it is a bit like

an oasis, people come in, talk and pray with Jesus and Our Lady.”

Do you manage to run any activities?

“It is obvious that activities are very difficult because of the continuous bombing, which continues even now, as I speak. People can’t go out, our neighbourhood al-Zaitoun is quite quiet but the bombs fall a hundred metres away from us and even if they don’t cause casualties, they constantly terrorise the population.

“There has been practically no electricity for eight months, the solar panels are almost all destroyed and diesel is very expensive. And consider that we are not even the worst situation”

We have long since reactivated the oratory and we are trying to organise activities for the children as best we can,

we hold meetings in the afternoons according to age and, as far as possible, we play: I know it sounds strange, but we do everything to ensure physical and mental health. We can also count on Caritas to offer psycho-social help and on our volunteers who have resumed giving lessons to the children since the schools are closed. They give lessons in Arabic, English, maths and science and create, in the midst of this madness, some stability. It is clear that by now the year is lost for all the students, but at least we try not to make them lose the habit of studying. The Palestinian people are very cultured and educated, they love education both here in Gaza and in the West Bank, the level is very high but everything here is complicated – a glass of water, where do you get it, how do you purify it? There has been practically no electricity for eight months, the solar panels are almost all destroyed and diesel is very expensive. And consider that we are not even the worst situation, there are people who are much worse off than us, without food, water or medicine.”

“People can’t go out, our neighbourhood al-Zaitoun is quite quiet but the bombs fall a hundred metres away from us and even if they don’t cause casualties, they constantly terrorise the population”

Is it true that the Pope calls you every day? What do you talk about?

“Yes absolutely true, even when I was in Jerusalem. The Holy Father at 8pm calls me and Fr Youssef, and asks how we are and how the people are. He thanks us for what we are doing, for the testimony we offer, and asks us to take special care of the children.

“Our faithful, then, remember well that the first state to have recognised Palestine was the Vatican State”

He rejoices at the smallest things that we tell him. By now it is a tradition and the faithful wait for the phone call, come here, bring the children, make

their voices heard or ask for prayers from the Pope. It is a short phone call but very important, an enormous grace.”

Recently Ireland, along with other European states, recognised Palestine, how was the news received?

“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. However, the recognition of Palestine by Ireland and others was very well received. Our faithful, then, remember 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, of the Pope who, as I told you, phones us every evening.”



Palestinians search for food among burned debris, May 27, in the aftermath of an Israeli airstrike on an area designated for displaced people in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. Photo: OSV/Mohammed Salem, Reuters

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Out&About

A whole world inside the Church



ARMAGH: Armagh Cathedral Parish international Mass on June 16 hosted the East Timorese choir and parishioners from Ukraine, India, USA, Poland, Syria, Nigeria and Kenya, and others. Irish dancers and members of the travelling community were also present.



DUBLIN: Rathmines Young Adult Ministry enjoying ice cream on the day they prayed at Bray Head on a min-camino from Rathmines.



ARMAGH: Children symbolically posing with 'a globe' in the International Mass at Armagh Cathedral on June 16.

INSHORT

Ex-footballer Niall Quinn attends Mass for Loyalist Killings victims

On June 18, Niall Quinn, retired Republic of Ireland footballer, attended a Church service honouring the 6 victims of the loyalist killings 30 years ago. Niall Quinn claimed that this was a "powerful" night that was filled with "a community coming together, still feeling pain and helping each other, and I suppose putting their trust in God."

This service was organised to honour the victims that were murdered when the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) killers raided a bar in the middle of the World Cup match on June

18, 1994. This night was described by Niall Quinn to be a "horror and terror," and he was "delighted" to have been invited to this event 30 years later and was also shocked by the "expression of love between everyone," including the victim's family members as well as surviving members of the attack.

Galway church celebrated 60 years of service and faith

Bishop Michael Duignan celebrated a Mass to mark the 60th anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kilconieron, Co. Galway.

Bishop Duignan remembered "the Parish Priest at the time, Fr Willie Cummins and to the people who started the project, settled on the designs, donated the land, found the money to pay for the building and brought it to completion."

The Bishop invited people present to think about their history with the church. "How many of you here today or your fore fathers and fore mothers were baptised here? How many of you made your First Holy Communion here? How many of you were Confirmed and married here? Over the years, how many relatives and friends have been brought here in death?"

New deacon ordained in Cavan Cathedral

On Sunday June 23, Rev. Jordan Mac Gabhan was ordained to the Diocese of Kilmore at the Cathedral of St Patrick and St Felim, Cavan at 3pm. His first Mass in his new position was celebrated on June 24 at St Mary's Church, Staghall at 7pm.

This ordination marks the second to occur in the Diocese of Kilmore since 2020. A native of the diocese, Rev. Jordan Mac Gabhan expressed his gratitude for his ordination by saying, "I am very proud and honoured to be ordained as deacon for my native Kilmore diocese where I received the faith I now hold dear.

"My family, local community and the priests who served in the parishes where I lived all passed on faith to me. Into the future, I hope to make my own contribution to the life of faith of the people of the Kilmore Diocese."

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



WEXFORD: Bishop Ger Nash pictured with this year's Jubilarians in The Diocese of Ferns. Fr Jim Curtis (Diamond), Frs Michael Byrne, Joe Kavanagh, Martin Casey, Thady Doyle & Bernard Cushen (Golden), Fr Brian Broaders and Fr Don Kenny (Ruby) and Fr Robert McGuire (Silver). Special mention to Fr Willie Howell (Golden) and Fr Dick Hayes (Diamond) who are missing from the photo.



DUBLIN: Bill Keimig, Franciscan University Steubenville, giving a talk to over 70 attendees on Catechesis in St Saviours Priory.



ARMAGH: Participants at the Armagh Cathedral Parish international Mass on June 16.



WESTMEATH: Mullingar Pioneers were presented with various cutting and articles about the Pioneers down the years, from family of the late Mary O Donovan. The presentation took place at Mullingar Pioneers Annual Mass in the Cathedral of Christ the king, the celebrant was Bishop Thoman Deenihan.



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



ROME: Franciscan friar, Bro. Philip McMahon OFM (Navan) 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.

ARMAGH

Missionaries of Charity is 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.

DERRY

4 day outdoor summer fun soccer academy' takes place at Templemore Sports Complex from July 1 to 4. Boys and girls aged 5 to 18 are welcome. Times: 10am to 3pm. For details contact Sean Davis on 028 71263044.

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

All aged between 16 and 35 are welcome to Pro-life Youth Evening happening on July 5, from 6.30pm to 9.30pm. The event will count with guest speaker Kaya Jones, Grammy winner and former singer from Pussycat Dolls, who will talk about the dark side of music industry and abortion regret. To register for free text 087 167 4656.

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 Patrick's College Maynooth. For more information check 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.

ROSCOMMON

Roscommon men's group get together every Friday morning in The Cube, Lanesborough Road, F42 DX61 from 11am to 1pm. Everyone welcome for good conversation, outings, talks and friendship. For more information call 087 7516308.

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.kilvarnet-parish.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.

All welcome to 40 hours adoration for renewal of faith in the Foyer of Charity, Leperstown Cross, Dunmore East, X91 FC65. From June 29 at 6am to June 30 at 10am. Mass Saturday 6am and Sunday 10am. More information contact Helen on 086 167 8027 or hellywilliams@gmail.com.

Free speech and how Christianity in Ireland will be persecuted



Theo McDonald

Ireland's hate speech bill has garnered international attention from critics who argue it will impede on free expression and debate.

Home to a multitude of big tech headquarters such as Meta and Twitter or X, Irish domestic legislation will have major international repercussions for public participation on the internet and for society as a whole.

The bill has passed the Dáil and is currently stalled in the Irish Seanad, following opposition from various members of the upper house.

Critics have pointed out the lack of a definition for what constitutes hate. The bill could see a subjectivity applied in determining prosecutions as well as other worrying elements, such as members of An Garda Síochána being given the power to raid the home of a person suspected of being in possession of so-called hateful material.

Gathering

It's within this context that the Christian legal advocacy group, the Alliance for Defending Freedom (ADF), alongside the Irish grassroots organisation Free Speech Ireland (FSI) held a Free Speech Summit in Trinity College Dublin last week to "gather Irish politicians and high-profile free speech advocates from across the West to raise awareness about the importance of free speech and threats to this fundamental right".

The event saw over 200 people gather in Trinity's Thomas Davis theatre to listen to an array of international and domestic speakers.

“Elites, not the general public, drive the desire for censorship while also mentioning the increasing power of tech companies and governments to control information and monitor citizens' activities”



UCD Prof. Emeritus Gerard Casey speaks from the podium

Guest speakers included the high-profile American journalist Andy Ngo and the author Michael Schellenberger as well as the co-creator of 90s Irish sitcom Father Ted and outspoken trans-critic Graham Linehan.

“He had been sarcastically asking people around Dublin if they are experiencing a ‘hate crisis’”

Other guests included the Catholic Herald's Laura Perrins and former GB News host and priest Calvin Rob-

inson.

Schellenberger has long been interested in Ireland's hate speech bill.

As one of the authors of the 'Twitter files,' which revealed a left-wing bias within the company prior to Elon Musk's takeover, he has long been an advocate for free expression and against attempts by governments and social media conglomerates to silence critics.

He kicked off a series of speeches by arguing that elites, not the general public, drive the desire for censorship while also mentioning the increasing power of tech companies and governments to control information and monitor citizens' activities.

He mentioned that he had been sarcastically asking people around Dublin if they are experiencing a "hate crisis."

"There's less hate of racial and sexual minorities than we've ever had in Ireland," he was told.

He noted that while "violence has declined precipitously over the years" in Ireland "somebody wants the power to censor speech they don't like... and wants to control what you're

allowed to say... maybe picking a small country where all these high-tech companies are as a way to create a backdoor into censorship."

Schellenberger seems to think the Irish won't take such draconian legislation lying down: the Irish have a "rebellious spirit... you do not want to be slaves".

Repercussions

Andy Ngo, another US-based writer who has written for the New York Post among others, has similarly plunged himself into Ireland's free speech culture war.

As someone who has highlighted egregious attempts to silence free expression in the name of 'Anti Fascism,' or Antifa for short, Mr Ngo has a warning for Ireland that if such a conference were to take place in America, "It would be stopped by radical extremists who wear masks, who will come in with bats and smash up the building, and/or threaten the establishment or set it on fire the night before."

Mr Ngo said that people who get assaulted rarely receive justice, as the assail-

“Ireland's existing incitement to hatred act which dates from 1989 has only seen 44 convictions from 2000-2020 when, according to Price, 'Ireland went through an extraordinary demographic and social change'”

ants are covered head to toe: "Rinse and repeat that over and over and you'll have a population who eventually stop speaking out."

On a happier note he mentioned that, "This is the first time I've actually been able to speak in person, live at a university."

“Instead of being used against those motivated by racial animus such legislation may target those of a religious disposition”

Legal Counsel for ADF Barrister Lorcan Price provided a lucid analysis into the legal intricacies surrounding the proposed legislation.

Over the years, Lorcan has had firsthand experience of litigating freedom of speech cases in Strasbourg. But despite the freedom of expression protections afforded to Irish people under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) Ireland is not immune to "creeping censorship."

Ireland's existing incitement to hatred act which dates from 1989 has only seen 44 convictions from 2000-2020 when, according to Price, "Ireland went through an extraordinary demographic and social change."

Instead of being used against those motivated by racial animus, such legislation may target those of a religious disposition.

Price highlighted the case of Päive Räsänen who was prosecuted for posting a Bible verse on X in 2019.

Räsänen, a Finnish politician, posted the verse after tweeting about why the Finnish Lutheran Church should not endorse the Helsinki pride parade.

Ironically, she was charged with legislation that she had voted for in the Finnish parliament.

"And it wasn't just the tweet, they then went back and found a pamphlet she had written 20 years ago on the Christian conception of marriage and they added that to the chart as well."

"Räsänen," Price said, "faces a conviction and a hefty fine for a tweet and something she had written 20 years ago."

According to ADF's website: "If this type of prosecution took place in Ireland, she could be prosecuted for simply possessing the pamphlet she wrote for her church congregation on the biblical definition of marriage, even if it was never published online."

Price highlighted the cross-border censoriousness of such legislation which has seen a priest in Spain prosecuted for expressing similar views about pride month.

Another speaker worried about the implications for religious liberty is Fr Calvin Robinson.

Cancelled

As a priest in the Nordic Catholic Church and previously a deacon in the Free Church of England, an Anglican denomination, Calvinson knows better than anyone the perils of cancel culture.

Having been cancelled by *GB News* and the Church of England, Robinson has bounced back.

He touched on the broader "woke" environment that dictates such a piece of legislation as "not a perversion of Christianity" but "an inversion of Christianity."

According to Robinson, "If you strip Christ out, that will leave a vacuum and nature abhors a vacuum so that void will be filled with something else... and 'woke' has filled that void."

“If you strip Christ out that will leave a vacuum and nature abhors a vacuum so that void will be filled with something else... and ‘woke’ has filled that void”

“The West is intolerant of Christianity and their intolerance is becoming persecution and bill’s like this [The hate speech bill] will see Christians persecuted”

GB News host Andrew Doyle, who gained international acclaim for his pseudonymous Twitter handle Titania McGrath which mocked social justice advocates, described woke as an "enduring appeal to authoritarianism."

Robinson also touched on other worrying developments, such as the criminalising of "silent prayer" outside abortion clinics in the UK which involves, "People being arrested and persecuted for being Christians in a Christian country."

“Legislation to criminalise prayer outside abortion clinics, so-called Safe Access Zones, passed all stages of the Dáil”

"We now have instances of four people being arrested for being in an area, not outside the abortion centre but in a general area of it, standing there, doing nothing, saying nothing, just standing there, not protesting, not harassing, but just praying to their creator."

Similar legislation to criminalise prayer outside abortion clinics, so-called Safe Access Zones, passed all stages of the Dáil late last year and is currently awaiting a sign-off from President Michael D. Higgins.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after the event, Robinson said: "The West is intolerant of Christianity and their intolerance is becoming persecution and bill's like this [The hate speech bill] will see Christians persecuted."

Laura Perrins of the *Cath-*

olic Herald echoed these sentiments by noting the flipping of Christian social teaching surrounding compassion which is now used to promote hate speech legislation.

Targets

"What they are doing is targeting the weak; those who may be confused about their gender... unborn children in the womb, babies in nurseries... because people have a natural instinct because of the Christian foundation to protect the weak so they have manipulated that quite effectively."

She also compared the legislation with the blasphemy statutes of the past.

Two Irish representatives in the room included Senators Rónán Mullen and Sharon Keoghan who are very outspoken on the legislation within the upper house.

Senator Mullen highlighted that while he is not concerned about prosecution under the legislation, "the process itself is the punishment."

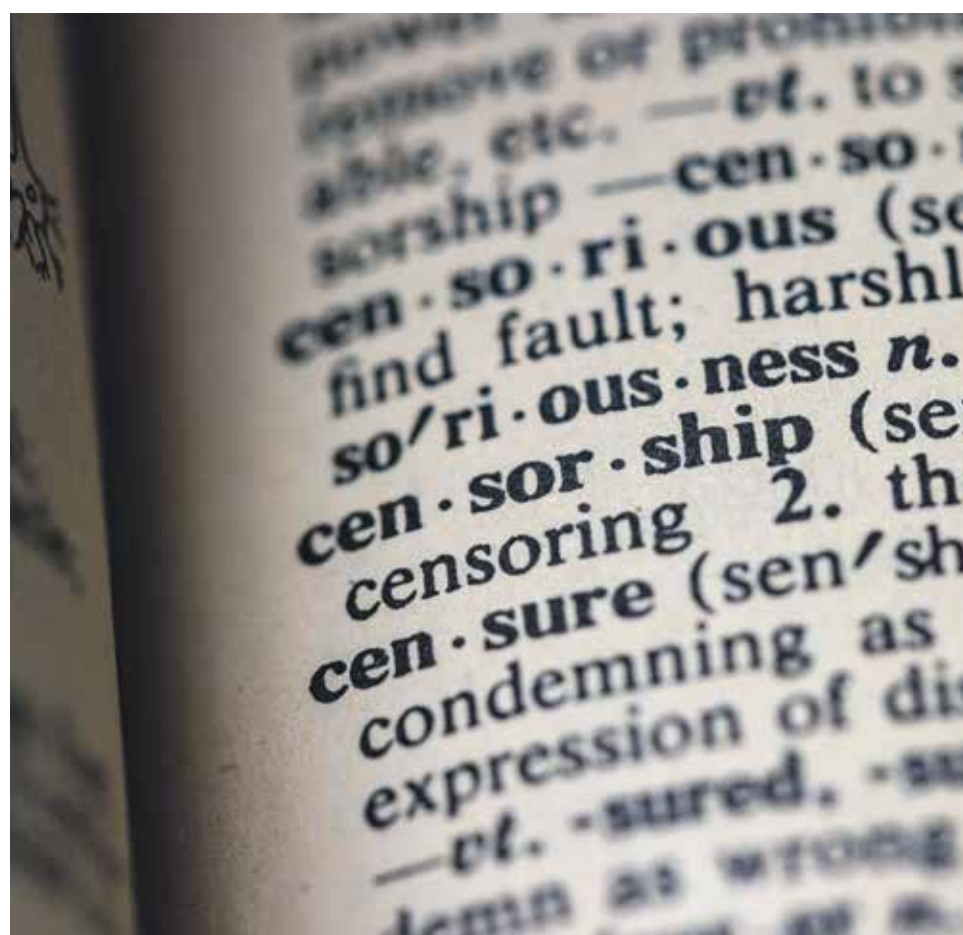
He said that it's not politicians who will be targeted but rather "people who haven't been trained up in the art of advocacy to any extent who may be a bit clumsy in the way they want to express their disquiet or concern."

Senator Keoghan echoed this by saying: "This law is going to have a chilling effect on the ordinary man and woman here in Ireland for those who may not have the same ideas or those who may not be in favor of the government of the day."

She exclaimed how she is "proud to be a mother... and I don't see why I should not be able to say those things."



Senator Ronan Mullen at the summit



Is Rishi Sunak's assisted suicide support the Tory death-knell?



Dualta Roughneen

What is Rishi Sunak thinking? With the Conservative Party well and truly tanking in the polls, hanging on to only its most loyal voting base and an election a mere fortnight away, he chooses to announce that he is not opposed to assisted suicide.

The Conservative Party, after 14 years in power, overseeing and implementing a legislative regime, almost totally at odds with what it purports to stand for, has seen the Labour Party reclaim the support it lost five years ago and then some more. The Labour Party has re-taken the vote on the left, left of centre and probably a significant portion to the right of centre as well.

Nigel Farage's re-entry into politics has started to rapidly erode the Tory supporter base on the right, with some polls placing the Reform Party ahead of the Conservatives in advance of the July 4 election.

The polls continue to spell doom for the Tories – with a poll in the *Sunday Times* suggesting the Tories will be reduced to 72 MPs and Starmer will cruise to power with a 262-seat majority. The same poll found that support for Nigel Farage's party has increased by two points to 19%, with the Tories one point behind on 18%.

Why, in all good sense, would Rishi Sunak announce his support for a policy that is already supported by Labour and most likely opposed by the remaining steadfast Tory voters? If ever there were suspicions that Sunak is unfit to lead the Conservatives, this additional misstep is guaranteed to push another portion of the dissatisfied voting base into the arms of Farage's Reform Party.

Regain

If Sunak is hoping to regain some votes from the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, by attempting to burnish his socially liberal credentials, even the least informed of political followers would understand that no such approach is going to tempt those who have been thoroughly disappointed with Tory misrule over the past five, if not 14, years of governing.

Earlier in the campaign,



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Photo: OSV Annegret Hilse, Reuters

Sunak had clearly targeted the core Conservative voting base – the only social strata that were (barely) majority Tory voters – the 'grey vote', by promising to cut tax for pensioners. Billed as the 'Triple Lock Plus' both the state pension and the tax-free allowance would rise in line with the highest of earnings, wages or 2.5%, protecting pensions from the impact of inflation and economic growth.

“The family is the primary building block of society. They are the ‘somewheres’, rooted in family, community, neighbourhood and locality”

During the G7 summit, Sunak said he is not opposed to assisted suicide as long as there are safeguards to protect the vulnerable and ensure no one is pressurised into killing themselves. Does the Prime Minister believe that this will appeal to the grey vote? Or to his remaining conservative base?

Conservative voters are, to

generalise, people who see the 'little platoons' as fundamental to society. They see personal responsibility to those nearest and dearest as necessary for democracy. They look to civil society as an interlocutor between the State and the individual. The family is the primary building block of society. They are the 'somewheres', rooted in family, community, neighbourhood and locality. Increasingly, these are elderly or of 'middle England'.

Adherents

Labour voters, progressives if you want, are adherents to individualism and the expectation of the State to maximise liberty and choice. They are the 'anywheres', uprooted from community whose primary relationships are those who share the same values and social class, rather than those they share physical spaces with.

Does Sunak believe that a commitment to assisted suicide will appeal to the 'somewheres' and to the elderly? Will turkeys vote for Christmas? Of course not. Assisted dying is mainly supported by those who have eschewed personal commitment and see the State as the primary provider of care services.

Reported in the *Telegraph*, Dr Gordon Macdonald, chief executive of Care Not Killing, argued that the Prime Minister's comments do not mean his position on assisted suicide has changed. "These new comments do not reflect a change in his stance. What they do show is he recognises the difficulty in drafting robust legislation on this issue, because of what we see in the handful of jurisdictions that have introduced state-assisted killing."

“The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Suicide heard extensively that attempted safeguards have proven to be ineffective”

This may be wishful thinking. He may be correct that Sunak is trying to walk both sides of the road on this – seeking to burnish his liberal credentials while falling back on the unworkability of 'safe' assisted suicide.

As an electoral strategy,

this makes no sense. As the saying goes: 'when you are explaining, you are losing', and Sunak's statements will require some explanation in order to satisfy his voting base.

More likely, Sunak genuinely believes in assisted suicide as a societal good. And like the majority of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying, he believes not in the reality of all the regimes where assisted suicide has failed to protect the vulnerable through adequate safeguards but in the perfectibility of his own legislative system and of human nature.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Suicide heard extensively that attempted safeguards have proven to be ineffective and that every jurisdiction that introduced assisted suicide has seen its boundaries extended rapidly.

Impossible

Immediately, it becomes clear that it is impossible to draw a clear line between what is permitted and what is not, irrespective of how the law is defined. Why is assisted suicide allowed for

one borderline case and not for another? The slippery slope is real in every jurisdiction and only the gullible or the devious choose to suggest otherwise.

And then there is the imperfectability of human nature. Even if families and loved ones could be convinced to never, ever put even the slightest unintentional emotional pressure on their elderly, infirm dependents, is it possible to protect the elderly from themselves, from feeling that they are a burden and for wishing to unburden their children, who they have loved and raised, from the time, energy and cost of looking after them into their extended dotage?

If the upcoming election was already a lost cause for the Tories, Rishi Sunak may have put the final nail in the coffin of the party, driving a further portion of its voting base into the welcome arms of the Reform Party, relegating the Tories to the previously unimaginable position of a minority opposition party. Nigel Farage's aim is to destroy and replace the Conservative Party in the UK. He may just have been gifted his wish.

Church leaders welcome assisted suicide ruling but concerns linger



Jonathan Luxmoore

Catholic Church representatives have welcomed a ruling by Europe's top human rights court that countries have no obligation to allow physician-assisted suicide.

However, they also voiced concern at suggestions that it could be recognised as a human right in the future.

"This judgment largely concerns procedural questions - but it's a very good result," said Fr Marco Ganci, the Holy See's permanent representative to the Council of Europe. "It was suggested refusal to permit assisted suicide violated the right to private family life set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. This has now been rejected."

The Italian priest was reacting to the June 13 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, that Hungary had not violated human rights by refusing to allow a terminally ill patient to be helped to die.

In an OSV News interview, Fr Ganci said, "the Holy See, although represented at two dozen Europe-based international organisations, was not part of the European court system and would not speculate on details of this latest court judgment."

Europe

Meanwhile, a Catholic bishop from Great Britain, where new legislation to allow "assisted dying" is under consideration, also praised the latest ruling but cautioned about its long-term implications.

"I welcome the judgment that there's no right to physician-assisted death - as well as the Court's recommendation that high-quality palliative care, involving access to effective pain management, is essential to ensuring a dignified end to life," said Auxiliary Bishop John Sherrington of Westminster, lead for life issues at the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

"However, the view that the European Convention has to be interpreted and applied in light of the present day, with appropriate legal measures kept under review, is disturbing," he said in a written



Bishop Emeritus William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, is pictured in a file photo blessing a patient at Good Shepherd Hospice Inpatient Center in Port Jefferson, New York (OSV News photo/CNS file, Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic)

statement sent to OSV News June 17.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled on a case brought by Daniel Karsai, a lawyer who suffers from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a neurodegenerative disease usually fatal within three to five years.

The 47-year-old argued that criminalisation of physician-assisted suicide in his native Hungary violated privacy and family life clauses in the 1950 European Convention.

“This subject continues to raise ‘extremely sensitive moral and ethical questions, and one on which opinions in democratic countries often profoundly differ’”

In the 6-1 ruling, the European court's judges, said Mr Karsai, had been entitled to bring the case, fearing his future existence would "consist almost exclusively of pain

and suffering".

However, they ruled that Hungary's ban on assisted suicide had helped secure the lives of "vulnerable individuals", while also "maintaining the medical profession's ethical integrity and protecting the morals of society".

This subject continues to raise "extremely sensitive moral and ethical questions, and one on which opinions in democratic countries often profoundly differ", the judgment continued.

The choice of "means that are appropriate in order to protect the right to life ... will need to be made in full appreciation of the local conditions and institutions in a given society", the judgment said.

Humanity

The court said relevant international documents did not "advise, let alone require", the Council of Europe's 46 member-countries to "provide access to PAD (physician-assisted death)".

In a June 15 statement, the European Centre for Law and Justice, or ECLJ, which lobbies on moral issues, said the ruling would disappoint those hoping for a Europe-wide right to assisted suicide.

However, it added that the

court's decision to keep the issue under review as public attitudes evolved also risked compromising "intangible principles" underlying human rights since World War II.

“The Court suggests assisted suicide is a human right according to the number of countries that have legalised it, which is philosophically absurd”

"It is dangerous for human rights to have their content and protection dependent on changes in mentality and legislation," a rule that "makes them variable and relative", said the ECLJ, which holds special consultative status at the United Nations.

"The evolutionary approach embraced by the Court suggests assisted suicide is a human right according to the number of countries that have legalised it, which is philosophically absurd."

Meanwhile, the president of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in

Europe, Vincenzo Bassi said the ruling from the human rights court was a victory for the "European founding principle of subsidiarity" - that European institutions "must not over-reach beyond the national competencies of member-states".

Contradictions

However, he warned there also were "ominous signs" that a public "impression of consensus" was forming around new human rights.

"When assisted suicide is proposed as a right, we reiterate that this would be incompatible with human dignity," Mr Bassi said.

"The answer is to make it easier not to die, but to choose life - and this is done by providing care, intergenerational solidarity and protagonising family networks," he said, "This way, we'll have a chance to combat the pandemic of loneliness gripping our societies."

Several European countries - such as Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain - allow assisted suicide despite a 2012 Council of Europe resolution condemning it.

Paragraph 2325 of the

1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church says suicide is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment and "seriously contrary to justice, hope and charity", while paragraph 2324 brands euthanasia as murder "whatever its forms or motives".

However, legislation to allow "aid in dying" is currently being debated in traditionally Catholic France and is under consideration in Britain, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

In his OSV News interview, Fr Ganci, the Holy See representative, said the European Court was right to state that palliative care was always "the better alternative", adding that he was studying its motivation in suggesting the right to assisted suicide "remained open".

“While we understand the desperation and pain, we nevertheless maintain that life is a gift and must not be subjected to any kind of disposal”

Meanwhile, Bishop Sherrington said "compassion and hope at the end of life" had been the theme of Britain's June 16 Catholic Day for Life, which is devoted annually to "raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life in every stage and condition".

"I thank all those health care professionals and family members who support those dying with dedication and provide the best possible care," the English bishop said. "The Catholic Church teaches that the moral prohibition against assisting suicide is based on revelation and natural law and cannot be changed. It calls for high-quality palliative care and a legal framework which protects the weakest and most vulnerable."

Meanwhile, Mr Bassi said his Catholic family federation would continue stressing there was "no consensus" on assisted suicide, which should "remain within the competence of member-states".

"While we understand the desperation and pain, we nevertheless maintain that life is a gift and must not be subjected to any kind of disposal," the federation president said.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Euthanasia expanded in Spain

● The culture of life suffered two setbacks as the culture of death advanced again in Spain. The government is proposing to extend euthanasia to people with mental illness, while the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of abortion for minors 16 and over without parental knowledge.

According to the *Diario Médico* journal, the Spanish government's Ministry of Health is going to modify the "Manual of Good Practices for Euthanasia" to include mental illnesses.

The draft of the planned change states that the Organic Law for the Regulation of Euthanasia "does not exclude mental illness, allowing people with an unbearable suffering due to the presence of a mental illness to request PAM [aid in dying] on equal terms with those whose suffering comes from a bodily illness."

Consequently, the government would apparently allow euthanasia for people with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia or those who are bipolar.

Brazilian Supreme Court justice accuses bishops of 'disinformation' on marijuana debate

● As the Supreme Court of Brazil prepared to examine the decriminalisation of marijuana possession, Justice Luis Roberto Barroso said the head of the Bishops' Conference called him earlier to express his concerns over "the legalisation of drugs," adding it was a sign that he had been exposed to "disinformation." Barroso claimed Archbishop Jaime Spengler of Porto Alegre had been misguided by "fake news," since the

court is not willing to allow the consumption of illicit drugs in Brazil.

"The Supreme Court considers, as does the current legislation, that the consumption and possession of drugs, even for personal use, is an illicit act," the justice explained, adding that they're discussing whether carrying marijuana "should be treated as an illegal act of criminal nature or an illegal act of administrative nature."

Church in Haiti overwhelmed by spike in gang violence

● Gang violence has led 580,000 Haitians to leave their homes and move elsewhere, according to a new UN report released earlier this week, with the Catholic Church also reeling from the chaos and rapid deterioration. Many of the displaced people left the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince and went to other provinces in order to escape the violence of the capital city, where 80 percent of the territory is under control of gangs.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration stressed that regions receiving the displaced don't have the necessary infrastructure or social assistance to welcome them, something that can lead to tensions. The Haitian Church has not been able to do much in that context, since it's equally suffering with the social turmoil in the Caribbean nation.

In March, the number of displaced people corresponded to 362,000, according to the previous IOM report. The fast deterioration of the situation in Haiti has led to the surprising growth in the internal refugee crisis.

Papal charity flags Islamic extremism in Africa's Sahel as major threat

● A Catholic charity that supports persecuted Christians around the world has identified the spread of terrorism and Islamic extremism in the African region of the Sahel as a cause of "great suffering and pain" for Christians on the continent. In a report published June 20, detailing how money raised in 2023 was spent, Aid to the Church in Need said it wants to step up assistance to the Sahel region "where jihadist terrorism is spreading and where Christians are facing increasing suffering from the violence."

"According to my information, no organised initiative has been taken at the congregational level. Those in the affected areas are not safe either. And they don't have the means to help, just with occasional responses," Fr Firtó Régis, who works at a school in Carrefour, a city near Port-au-Prince, told *Crux*.

Fr Régis said most displaced are living with their families. The only Catholic institutions that have been able to help them are the schools, which in some locations are giving shelter to students who had to leave their homes.

Camino Nuns get marching orders



A picture of the recently excommunicated nuns. Photograph: Instagram.

Spain's Catholic Church has excommunicated a group of 10 nuns after they refused to renounce their allegiance to a rebel former priest.

The sisters, who live in a 15th-century convent in Belorado on the St James Way pilgrimage route near Burgos, said last month they no longer recognised rule by the Vatican and claimed they were being "persecuted" over a real estate deal.

The cloistered nuns, who belong to the Poor Clares order and were famed for the sweets they made, including a mojito-flavoured confection, aligned themselves with a renegade priest, considered a heretic by Church authorities.

The nuns, led by their mother superior, Sister Isabel de la Trinidad, said they no longer recognised the authority of Pope Francis or the Spanish Church hierarchy and swore allegiance to Pablo de Rojas Sánchez-Franco.

Mr Sánchez-Franco is a controversial figure, himself excommunicated due to his support for sedevacantism, a movement that considers the papal chair is in fact vacant, as all popes since Pius XII, who died in 1958, are heretics.

"It is very painful to hear the mother superior say that the Pope is a usurper," said the archbishop of Burgos, Mario Içeta, who on Saturday took the

decision to excommunicate 10 of the 16 sisters from Belorado. Six nuns were spared as they were considered too vulnerable to be banished from the support of the Church.

Archbishop Içeta excommunicated Mr Sánchez-Franco in 2019. He has since formed the Devout Union of the Apostle Saint Paul, which he calls "the true church of Christ."

Mr Sánchez-Franco is a follower of the ultra-conservative Opus Dei Catholic organisation. He has described Spanish dictator Francisco Franco as "our undefeated leader."

The rebel nuns had been called to an ecclesiastical court accused of schism, but the

deadline for their appearance expired on Friday. In a fax sent to the archbishop's office, the nuns reaffirmed their "unanimous and irrevocable decision" to leave the official Church, and said any penalty imposed on them had no legitimacy.

Sr Isabel de la Trinidad informed the Church that the sisters had agreed to pay 1.2 million euros to buy and renovate a property for their future use. To raise funds, they wished to sell into private hands an abandoned Poor Clares' convent, but the Church blocked the move, saying the property was legally bound for religious use.

Iraq: 10 years after ISIS invasion, Christians still need help

Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that about 9,000 Christian families have returned to their homes on the Nineveh Plains after fleeing a decade ago, when ISIS took the region.

In June of 2014, the Islamist extremist group captured Mosul and the villages to the north and east of the city, prompting a mass exodus of Christians and Yazidis, among others. The occupation of Mosul left other Christians on the Nineveh

Plains vulnerable, and indeed, on August 6, 2014, prompted by further ISIS aggression, the entire Christian population fled to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Archbishop Warda told ACN that 13,200 Christian families had fled to his archdiocese in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. He said he was grateful to the international community – including ACN – for providing emergency aid and helping to rebuild the destroyed villages, making it possible for thousands

of Christian families to return to their native land, with "everyone working towards one goal."

He added that "all those sad and terrifying memories are still there, but at least [the Christian families] can start building and see that the future is in [their] hands." The archbishop underlined that the "churches are filled again," and "there are so many children" receiving catechesis and preparing for their First Holy Communion.

The Catholic Church in France will have 105 new priests in 2024

The French Bishops' Conference (CEF) reported that, in 2024, 105 new priests will be ordained, 17 more priests than in 2023, when 88 new priests were ordained in the European country.

An article published on the CEF website said the vast majority of priestly

ordinations are celebrated during the month of June, particularly on the Sunday before the solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, which the Catholic Church celebrates every year on June 29.

Of the 105 new priests, 73 are diocesan, 16 belong to religious orders, 10 are

members of communities, two belong to societies of apostolic life, while the remaining four "were ordained in the institutes under the former Ecclesia Dei commission, celebrating according to the Roman Missal of 1962 [before the reform of Vatican II]".



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Blessed are the children



Pope Francis poses for a photo with his guests during a meeting in the Vatican audience hall on World Day of the People. (Photo CNS/Vatican Media)

Growing case of kidnappings of Christians in Nigeria

A surge in kidnappings has hit Nigeria's Catholic clergy, with two more priests abducted within the past two weeks. Fr Christian Ike – the parish priest of St Matthew's Church in Ajalli, Anambra State, was taken on June 16 alongside Fr Ogbonna Aneke after a church service.

The kidnapping was confirmed by the Chancellor of Ekwulobia Diocese, Fr Lawrence Nwankwo. "When they arrived at the junction of Amagu, their vehicle was stopped by armed men who came in three vehicles. While two people managed to escape, the attackers took the priest and another person and also stole some personal belongings of the vehicle's occupants," Fr Nwankwo said in a June 16 statement.

The recent kidnapping marks a disturbing trend of violence against reli-

gious figures in Africa's most populous nation. Fr Gabriel Ukeh was kidnapped June 9 from the rectory of St Thomas Parish in Zaman Dabo in Kaduna State.

He was freed 24 hours later. "Fr Uke once spent a month in my parish while on holiday. I had the privilege of listening to stories of the daily risk he and his parishioners face as a result of unrelenting attacks by these terrorists," said Fr Moses Lorapu, the Director of Communication at the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi in Benue State, Nigeria.

"His kidnapping was, therefore, no news to me," he told *Crux*. Fr Oliver Buba of Yola Diocese regained his freedom on May 30 after spending nine days in captivity. Earlier, on May 15, the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha announced the abduction of Fr Basil Gbuzuo, who was

also later set free. Other Christians are also facing kidnappings.

On February 28, seventeen Christians were dragged from their homes in Gonin Gora, near Kaduna City, and marched into the dense forest in northeastern Niger State. These people are still being held, and the kidnappers are demanding a €27 million ransom, according to Rev. David Ayuba Azzaman, pastor of the Kings Worship Centre Kaduna who spoke to the terrorists by phone.

The persistent kidnappings, and the government's apparent inaction, have sparked outrage among Christian leaders, leading to accusations of a "conspiracy of silence" among Nigeria's elected officials.

Vatican comms chief defends use of accused sexual abuser's artwork

The head of the Vatican's communications department is defending his office's use of an accused sexual abuser's art on its website. The Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication of the Holy See, Italian layman Paolo Ruffini, offered his defence last Friday, in response to questions

from journalists attending his keynote address at the annual Catholic Media Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

"We did not put any new photos," Mr Ruffini said, "we just left what [images] there were." "I think this is the reason," Mr Ruffini said. "We didn't decide what -

what wasn't in our charge to decide."

The artist in question is ex-Jesuit Fr Marko Rupnik, who has been accused of abusing scores of victims - most of them women religious - over several decades, much of which he spent in Rome at the Centro Aletti art institute

he founded in the early 1990s.

"We're not talking about abuse of minors," Mr Ruffini told a room of roughly 150 journalists and other media professionals. "We are talking [about] a story that we don't know," Mr Ruffini said. "Who am I to judge the Rupnik stories?"

Pope Francis fields questions from students about gender identity and LGBTQ

● Pope Francis participated in a live Q-&A video call with university students last week in which a bisexual student from the Philippines asked the Pope to stop using "offensive language" and an Australian student expressed concern that teachers in Catholic schools are espousing gender theory.

In the one-hour conversation on June 20 organised by Loyola University's Building Bridges Initiative, Pope Francis spoke directly to students from across the Asia-Pacific region. Jack Lorenz Acebedo Rivera, a psychology student from a Catholic university in Manila told the Pope about how he feels stigmatised.

"I myself am outcasted and bullied due to my bisexuality, my gayness, my identity, and being the son of a single parent," Mr Acebedo said.

Elizabeth Fernandez, a law and business student from Sydney, expressed how many Catholic university students today feel "bombarded by secular ideologies, mocked for our faith, and outnumbered in our mission to be beacons of hope".

Vatican doubles down on courtship of China

● Last week the Vatican appeared to be re-upping its efforts to secure further goodwill with Chinese authorities, as two top officials spoke at a presentation on a key figure in the development of the Church in China. On Thursday, June 20, Vatican Secretary of State Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin presented the book, 'Cardinal Celso Costantini and China – A Builder of a Bridge between East and West', by Monsignor Bruno Fabio Pighin, a

historian in the postulation of Cardinal Costantini's cause of beatification and canonisation.

The presentation comes a month after high-profile conference in Rome organised by the Pontifical Urban University for the centenary of the Council of Shanghai, which was attended by several members of the state-backed Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA).

Diocese of Rome closes first step toward sainthood for young wife and mother

● The Diocese of Rome last week officially closed the diocesan phase of the investigation into the life and virtues of Chiara Corbella Petrillo, a joyful 28-year-old wife and mother who died from cancer in 2012 in Rome.

"We strongly trust that the Church, after a careful and accurate discernment of her life and virtues, will want to soon celebrate also on Earth this daughter of our Church of Rome and propose her as an example of Christian life to contemporary Christian generations," Bishop Baldassare Reina said at the closing ceremony June 21.

Bishop Reina, vice regent of the Diocese of Rome, presided over the session in the Archbasilica of St John Lateran, where the inquiry was opened nearly six years ago on September 21, 2018.

Vatican's secretary of state rues Russia's absence at Ukraine peace conference

● Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin recently appealed for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine amid their ongoing war while noting the absence of Russia at the Swiss conference on peace in Ukraine.

"Peace is always made together," he said June 19 as reported by Vatican News. Cardinal Parolin led an observer delegation from the Vatican to the Conference for Peace in Ukraine, held in Switzerland June 15–16. About 100 delegations, mostly from Western countries, attended the conference, AP News reported. Russia was not invited.

Cardinal Parolin in a statement following the conference reaffirmed the Holy See's commitment to maintain "regular communication with the Ukrainian and Russian authorities" and assist in potential mediation initiatives, Vatican News said.

Letter from Rome

In Italy, prominent conservatives back Vatican move against Viganò



John L. Allen

A recent Vatican move to lodge schism charges against Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, a notorious papal critic who's accused Pope Francis both of covering up sexual abuse and also various doctrinal errors, has drawn potentially surprising support from a couple of high-profile conservative commentators.

Luigi Bisignani, an influential lobbyist and power-broker who has strong ties with former conservative Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, published a June 21 essay calling the decision to act against Archbishop Viganò long overdue, saying it came after Pope Francis had tolerated "every possible injury and manoeuvre" from the former papal envoy to the United States.

Meanwhile, the conservative Italian newspaper *Il Foglio*, founded by another figure with close ties to Berlusconi and his political heirs, carried an unsigned editorial on June 21 titled 'Well Done, Holy Father'. "Mercy and human patience are all well and good, but in the end there's a limit," the editorial said. "The Church is too serious a thing to allow the diffusion, almost the metastasis, of trash inside herself."

Expressions

The twin expressions of backing for the Vatican's June 11 action against Archbishop Viganò may indicate a desire among mainstream Catholic conservatives to disassociate themselves from a figure whose positions are seen as having become progressively more extreme after he initially broke with Pope Francis in August 2018 over the case of Theodore McCarrick in the US.

Since that time, Archbishop Viganò has gone on to become a champion of far-right and traditionalist Catholic causes, including scepticism about the coronavirus and rejection of much

of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Reports suggest that Archbishop Viganò has been reconsecrated as a bishop by a prelate linked to the break-away traditionalist Society of St Pius X, founded by the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in the wake of Vatican II, and in social media posts regarding the Vatican decree, Archbishop Viganò identified himself with Archbishop Lefebvre.

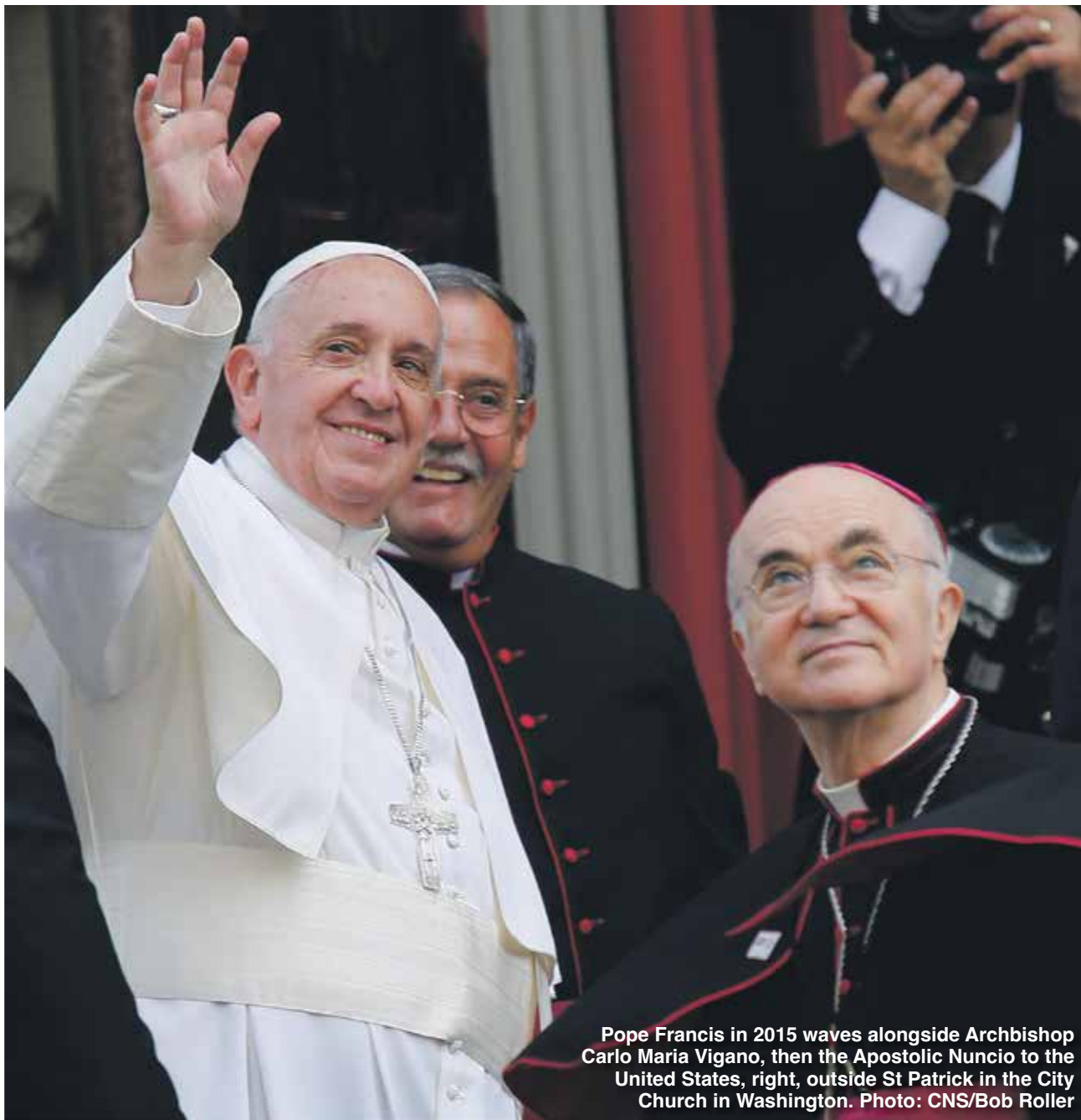
“Monsignor Viganò has gone down in the news as a ferocious family bureaucrat, first in Rome and then in Washington”

"His defence is mine; his words are mine; and his arguments are mine," Archbishop Viganò wrote. It's a comparison that Mr Bisignani vigorously challenged in his June 21 essay. "The small difference is that Marcel Lefebvre, before rejecting the documents of the Second Vatican Council (which he had voted for) had been the greatest missionary of the 20th century of the Catholic Church in Africa," Mr Bisignani wrote.

"Meanwhile, Monsignor Viganò has gone down in the news as a ferocious family bureaucrat, first in Rome and then in Washington, where for a long time he colluded with McCarrick before cutting him loose and dumping all the blame on him, after he was unable to defend himself due to senile dementia," Mr Bisignani said.

In the end, Bisignani argued, Archbishop Viganò has brought the schism charge on himself. Moreover, he said, it was necessary for the Vatican to act now in light of rumours that someone linked to Archbishop Viganò may have been planning an unspecified "theatrical gesture" during a consistory for the canonisation of saints Pope Francis has convoked in Rome on July 1.

The *Il Foglio* editorial suggested that Archbishop Viganò's reputation has been in steady decline since his original 2018 accusa-



Pope Francis in 2015 waves alongside Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, then the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, right, outside St Patrick's Church in Washington. Photo: CNS/Bob Roller

tions. "The archbishop went into eclipse," it said. "He appeared only in videos with increasingly apocalyptic messages, and with homilies spread by sites and blogs with a similar vision of the world and of the Church."

Champion

"He became a champion of the large 'No Vax' and 'No Pass' crowd, and he took up the defence of Putin saying that 'George Soros and the globalist cabal wanted this war'", the editorial said. Both Mr Bisignani's piece and the *Foglio* editorial sug-

gested Pope Francis showed remarkable restraint in not acting against Archbishop Viganò earlier. "For once, Bergoglio wasn't impulsive," Mr Bisignani wrote. "If anything, he procrastinated."

A June 11 decree summoned Archbishop Viganò to face the charges, or to designate an attorney acting on his behalf to do so, on June 20. He didn't show up, and has just a few more days to respond before he's found guilty and sentenced to some form of ecclesiastical sanction.

For his part, Archbishop

Viganò called the charge an "honour" and showed absolutely no sign of remorse. One interesting footnote came in the reaction to all this of Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State and among Pope Francis's closest allies.

Faithful

"I always appreciated him as a great worker very faithful to the Holy See, in a certain sense also an example," Cardinal Parolin said of Archbishop Viganò, referring to a period earlier in his career before he began

attacking the Pope. "When he was Apostolic Nuncio, he worked extremely well. I don't know what happened."

Cardinal Parolin, however, has offered a reminder that perceptions of Archbishop Viganò in 2018 were different than today. Back then, most US bishops simply recalled him as a former Vatican official and a reasonably effective ambassador to the States.

They had no way of knowing what he would later become, nor were many of them eager in the immediate wake of the McCarrick revelations to be seen as dismissing any accusation, no matter whom it involved.

“When he was apostolic nuncio he worked extremely well, I don't know what happened”

Letters

Letter of the week

Women could be named Ministers

Dear Editor, Dr Cerrato tells us women may not be ordained deacon for “fundamentally theological” reasons [*The Irish Catholic* – June 6, 2024]. Also, while there were “Deaconesses” in the past, he points out they were not “equivalent” to male deacons. He may well be right, but that need not be the end of the story.

Outside the core ministries of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, the Church can and does create titles and functions at will – Cardinal, Monsignor, Archdeacon, Canon, Chancellor, Papal Nuncio, Master of Ceremonies, Head of Various Vatican Congregations and so on. Many of these titles could be given to women without impinging on the theology of priestly ordina-

tion.

At Mass, the male deacon conducts the Penitential Rite, proclaims the Gospel, preaches, reads the prayers of the faithful, receives the gifts, prepares the altar, assists with incensing, distributes Holy Communion and dismisses the congregation. Outside of Mass, the male deacon administers Baptism, brings Viaticum to the dying and officiates at prayer services, funerals and weddings.

It is clear that many – perhaps all – of these duties could be performed by female ministers, without theological issues arising. In fact, most of these duties currently are performed by women.

Surely, we can create a role and

add one more title to the long list of Church titles which would give a meaningful role to the women of our time while respecting theological truths which remain true for all time.

If we were to create such a meaningful role – right up to the theological limit but not overstepping it – I am sure that only a theologian would spot the difference between a male deacon and the resulting female minister – who could be called for example an Archdeacon to signal the highest ministry open to women in the Church.

*Yours etc.,
John Redmond
Mount Merrion, Co Dublin*

Phones in the confession box

Dear Editor, One can understand the need to find the most apt ways to communicate with people these days especially the young, who are largely absent from church most Sundays.

However, it is irritating not to be able to get any information re church services etc. except through Facebook ... The mantra for every church seems to be “Find us on Facebook!”

Whereas that may suit a business, it excludes those who, for privacy reasons, do not want to be on social media.

Perhaps those parishes which use Facebook might consider giving basic contact details and other important information in plain English on an easily accessible website also.

And what of those who for reasons of disability may be unable to type or even to see the contents of the website? One cannot beat old fashioned telephones with humans at the other end, especially if one needs to call a priest in an emergency.

Lastly, can I appeal to priests to please leave their mobile phones outside the confessional or room in which they are engaged in confidential discussions.

These instruments are well known to be listening devices which, though switched off, can turn on



automatically without one being aware until after the event...

A mobile phone switched on during confession leaves open the possibility of breaking the seal of the confessional (as does hearing confessions in the middle of the church within hearing distance of others and of those who insist on walking around near the priest/penitent!). That has put me off completely and may well be one reason why few people avail of the sacrament.

*Yours etc.,
Loretto Browne
Ashbourne. Co Meath*

Priest lacking personal freedom

Dear Editor, I found Mark Tighe’s report (Sunday Independent, 16 June) on Fr Fergal Cummins’s posts on his personal Facebook page highly amusing. Are priests not allowed any personal freedom these days?

I wonder, would People before Profit TD Paul Murphy have taken umbrage if Fr Cummins had posted far-left views on Facebook, instead of “posts that advocated for right-wing parties.” I did not know that expressing a right-wing opinion was a sin in our

democratic society.

I am also amazed at the irony of the far-left TD, demanding that the Bishop of Meath use his mitre to put a gagging order on one of his priests. How ultra-liberal of him!

Irony of ironies, Fr Cummins has chosen a vocation which by definition has always put “people before profit.” Let Fr Cummins be.

*Yours etc.,
PJ Mathews,
Diocese of Meath,
Drogheda*

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.

Inspiration from a persecuted Church

It is of the essence of the Catholic Church to be Catholic. At first glance, this statement seems rather peculiar or even so self-explanatory to be tautologous. What else would the Catholic Church be except Catholic?

The community formed by the followers of Jesus was first called Catholic in 110AD by St Ignatius of Antioch. The Church Father used the term to describe the ecclesial community, meaning that it was universal rather than made up of sects, coming from the Greek *katholikos*.

So, when we speak of the Church being Catholic – under the authority of the Successor of St Peter – it is at the same time Catholic, meaning it is all-embracing.

This is at the heart of our self-understanding of the Church as a community that is always in mission. The Church exists to be missionary, that is to evangelise. This is a mandate from Christ Himself who instructed his followers to “go forth and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have ever commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of times” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Church in Ireland has always had an acute awareness of that missionary mandate going back to the first followers of St Patrick, the Irish monks who rebuilt European civilisation after the Dark Ages and the great missionary movement of the 19th and early 20th Century that continues to our own day.

The global Pontifical Foundation Aid to the Church in Need has just released its annual activity report for 2023 (see page 11). The report reveals what ACN President Irishwoman Regina Lynch describes as a ‘true miracle’ with over 5,000 projects supported to the tune of €144.5 million.

The figures are all the more remarkable when one considers that the charity does not receive (nor does it seek) funding from government or other ecclesial sources.

In that sense, Aid to the Church in Need is the fruit of a grassroots movement of ordinary Catholics in the 23 countries where the foundation has a national office – including Ireland – supporting the missionary activity of the Church in 138 of the world’s poorest countries.

ACN is perhaps unique as a charity in that at the core of the mission is a dual focus on both the material well-being of people, and their spiritual wellbeing.

A brief look at the report shows urgent humanitarian support for war-torn communities in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine and Syria. As crises deepen in Lebanon, Armenia, Myanmar, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Mozambique ACN is supporting vital aid.

Alongside that humanitarian aid, ACN is providing vital pastoral support. Whether is it supporting the formation of future priests, one of ten of whom globally is now funded by ACN – or buying a motorbike for a missionary in Uganda or a canoe for a catechist in an isolated part of the Amazon, a little really does go a long way.

Catholics are always called to think universally. It can be tempting to think solely of local circumstances, and sometimes in that context reasons to be hopeful might be in short supply.

When one has a universal vision – a truly Catholic approach – one can see the bigger picture and rejoice in the growth of the Church. The divine paradox, of course, is that the Church always grows in what can seem the most difficult of circumstances.

Keeping the universal picture before our eyes also helps us remain what Pope Francis calls a Church that goes out, rather than one that is self-referencing. It’s easy for Catholics in Ireland to grumble at cheap shots against our Faith on the radio; many of our sisters and brothers in troubled parts of the world risk their lives for the Faith – we should take inspiration from their struggles.

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



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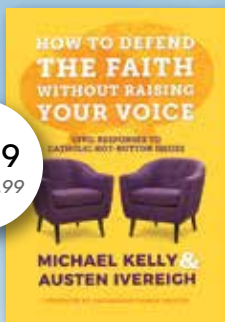


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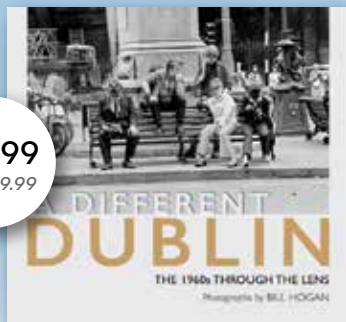
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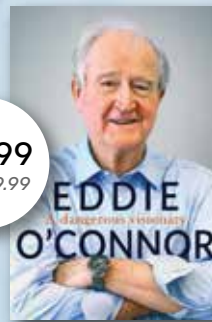
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Liam Swords

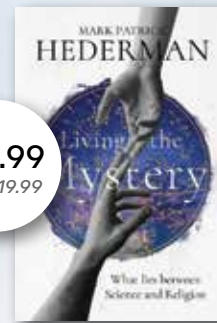
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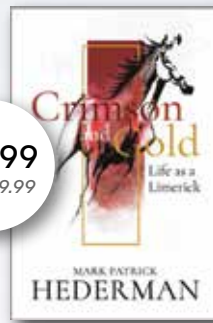
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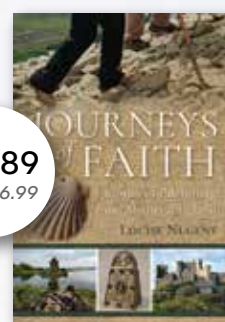
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Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, June 27, 2024

Why does the Catholic Church oppose contraception?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 32



How to celebrate Sunday as a Catholic



Lorene Hanley Duquin

Do you feel like you're on a treadmill that never stops? Do you need some quiet time? Some family time? Some time when you can renew your mind, your body and your spirit?

Then maybe it's time to reclaim Sunday as a day of rest!

There was a time when Sunday was a special day. People went to church on Sunday morning. The afternoon was a great time for a good book, a visit to friends and neighbours, or a little nap. Families gathered for Sunday dinner. Children played with their cousins. Stores, banks, businesses, schools, and libraries were closed. It was unthinkable to do laundry or housecleaning. Sunday was the Lord's Day. It was a special day, a day of celebration, a day of rest.

Times have changed.

Nowadays, Sunday seems like just another day. Parking lots at supermarkets and shopping malls are packed with cars. Many of us work on Sunday. Too few families have time for family dinners or playing with cousins. It seems like fewer Catholics than ever see Sunday as a reason for celebration or for rest.

Economy

We live in a world economy that operates 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Parents juggle work demands in addition to the busy schedules of children involved in school, sports, scouts, music and other activities. Sunday has become another day for catching up on errands, chores and social media feeds.

But we must ask ourselves if this is a good thing. What implications does our round-the-clock world have on our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being?



Experts agree that it is important to balance activity with rest. Physical, mental and emotional strain depletes your energy and produces feelings of tension and fatigue. Rest gives your body a chance to replenish itself.

But there's a spiritual component involved, too. Pope Benedict XVI warned: "The men and women in our technical age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart."

“Sunday offers us the opportunity to reflect on the spiritual side of our existence, to appreciate our blessings, and to draw closer to God”

Consider the old story about African tribesmen who had to carry goods from one village to another village. On the first day, they travelled faster and farther than expected. The next morning, they refused to move. They insisted that they had gone too quickly the first day, and they had to wait for their souls to catch up with them.

When we observe Sunday as a day

of rest, it offers us physical renewal, but it also gives our souls a chance to catch up with our busy lives. Sunday offers us the opportunity to reflect on the spiritual side of our existence, to appreciate our blessings, and to draw closer to God.

When we set aside time for God, we begin to see everything from a different perspective. Our lives no longer spin out of control, because we know in the depths of our being that God is in charge. We can let go of our own agendas. We can look forward to Sunday as a holy day because we begin to see that, ultimately, everything rests with God.

Reclaim

If you are going to reclaim the Lord's Day, you have to make it a priority. Imagine what your Sunday would be like if you and your family decided to 'keep Sunday holy'.

What kinds of things would you do? What kinds of things would you refrain from doing? Would you start new traditions? Would you resurrect old family traditions?

The best advice for modern-day Catholics who want to reclaim Sunday as a day of rest is to start slowly. Remember, there are no mechanisms in today's society to

support your decision to make Sunday a holy day.

“Make the commitment to attend Mass every week to hear God's words in the Scripture and be nourished by the Eucharist”

Think of one thing that you will stop doing on Sunday and replace that one thing with something spiritual or restful that puts God into your Sunday in a special way. Once this becomes a normal part of your Sunday, drop something else and replace it with another new activity that will help you to make Sunday holy.

If you haven't been going to Mass every Sunday, this is the best place to start. Make the commitment to attend Mass every week to hear God's words in the Scripture and be nourished by the Eucharist. When you plan how you will spend your time, you prioritise by putting the most important items first and building around them.

Another possibility is to make a conscious effort to try to take care of

shopping or household needs during the week or on Saturday. That doesn't mean you can't run to the store on Sunday if you're out of milk or need a prescription refill. It means that you're making an effort to restrict your activities on Sundays.

How you find rest and holiness on Sunday will depend on what you do during the week. If you are sedentary most of the week, an outdoor adventure on Sunday will give you a chance to appreciate God's creation. If you are engaged in physical labour during the week, Sunday can be a quiet day to restore yourself. If you're with people all week, you might build some solitude into your Sunday. If you don't get a chance to see family members as often as you'd like during your workweek, Sunday could become your family day.

If your job requires that you work on Sunday, you don't have to quit. Instead, try to incorporate the holiness of the day into whatever you do. Try to set aside some time during the day to reflect on God.

Creation

In the story of creation, God rested on the seventh day - not because he was tired, but because he wanted to give us an example of how to live. He gave us dominion over everything he created, and then showed us that work is not an end in itself. He created a day of rest. When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, he reminded us "to keep holy the Sabbath day."

Jesus observed the Sabbath, but after his death, the early Christians moved their observance from Saturday to Sunday for two reasons: Sunday was the day Jesus rose from the dead, and it was also the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles gathered in the upper room.

Keeping Sundays holy does not mean that you become a watchdog over yourself or other people. It means making room for rest and gratitude. Jesus reminded us that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27).

i Lorene Hanley Duquin is a Catholic author and lecturer who has worked in parishes and on a diocesan level.

The little way to pray all day, even if you have no time to spare!



A young woman prays during Mass at the Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco May 19, 2024. The Mass was celebrated for the western route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, during which pilgrims from across the United States will travel with the Eucharist for the next eight weeks on their way to the National Eucharistic Congress, scheduled for July 17-21, 2024, in Indianapolis. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)



Elizabeth Scalia

There is a saying, dubiously attributed to St Francis de Sales but it sounds more like Venerable Fulton Sheen to me: "Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer every day, except when we are busy - then we need an hour."

It's a clever phrase - and true, too. When parenthood and career kept me at my busiest, I was somehow managing to spend more time in prayer at my little oratory than ever before or since. I cannot explain how - perhaps there is some strange metaphysical phenomenon of time touching timelessness and becoming more flexible, shrinking or expanding as needed, as we commingle our hearts, minds and spirits with the

Triune reality that is eternal.

All I know is that at a point when life seemed to leave me without a spare minute, prayer was happening and nothing was left undone.

Necessities

For many, the idea of 'finding time for real prayer' seems daunting as they imagine adding an hour to their already crammed schedules and then begin to consider all the things they will 'need' to really get going: a prayer corner, with icons and statues and Bibles and breviaries. They close their eyes and imagine such a space, with candles lit and rosary at the ready. Then a kid screams, a phone rings or the dog starts trying to eat the Amazon delivery guy through the door, and the image shatters and

fades away - another good intention deemed unworkable.

"I take it as a prompt to give thanks for little things"

Nice as an oratory is to have, it's not necessary. All we need is a mind and spirit willing to be opened to the slightest prompting to prayer (which is an invitation from heaven) and a heart ready to give itself over to the moment. Those little God-ward nudges go on all day long, and if we are attentive to them - responding with prayer as soon as they are perceived - we very soon find ourselves praying quite a lot as we fashion ourselves into channels

through which God's purposes may travel.

When I see my clock flashing repeated numbers, I stop what I am doing and make prayers of thanksgiving, until the time changes.

So, if the clock reads 10:10 or 11:11 (you get the idea), I take it as a prompt to give thanks for little things: At 12:12, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, thank you for my life; thank you that we are healthy; thank you that we are employed." At 1:11, "St. Michael, thank you that the house did not flood last night." And 3:33, of course, has me offering thanks to the Holy Trinity for being such an instructive mystery in my life.

Hey, don't knock it till you've tried it. It's all prayer and little prayers of thanksgiving have a way of making you grateful. And gratitude, after all, is the seed of joy.

Prayer

Prayer need not be lengthy to be efficacious; it needs only to be worked - the lines left open, so to speak, so the Holy Spirit can move. The first prayer of the day can be a simple line or two: "I

"In this Year of Prayer, it is good to discover all the ways God invites us to work with him as we go about our day"

thank you, Lord, for by your cross and resurrection, you have set me free. Through you may I be a blessing to others this day!"

"Prayer comes and goes, flowing through the conduits we become once we have learned to recognise"

My favourite prayer on rising comes from the opening to St Patrick's Breastplate: "I arise today through a mighty strength: an invocation of the Trinity, through a belief in the Threeness, a confession of the Oneness of the Creator of Creation." Lately, I find myself repeating those words at odd or anxious

moments, and they are powerfully grounding.

Throughout the day, prayer comes and goes, flowing through the conduits we become once we have learned to recognise when we are being nudged into prayer and respond.

Almost anything can be a prompting to prayer: A siren in the distance can invite a sign of the cross and a quick, "Lord, the ones you love need your help!" The pinch of a new shoe can bring a prayer for those who cannot walk. A windchime can draw us into the Angelus.

In this Year of Prayer, it is good to discover all the ways God invites us to work with him as we go about our day, "continuing instant in prayer" (Rom 12:12).

Elizabeth Scalia is editor-at-large for OSV. Follow her on X (formerly known as Twitter) @the anchoress.

Peter, Paul and the messiness of Christian discipleship



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

We all like things neat, uncomplicated and in good order. But as we step over the threshold into the virtual world created by artificial intelligence, it seems to me that inclination may be more problematic than ever.

Over the past few weeks, I've seen a number of images circulating on social media. A baby dolphin, a 1901 photograph of a family with 18 children, two little boys of different races enjoying friendship: nothing controversial. The response to these images is almost universally positive. That's because the images are created to be universally appealing.

The problem is that these images aren't real. They are created by AI. What's the big deal? More and more people are becoming unable to tell the difference between what is real and what isn't. Even worse, we seem to be developing a preference for flawless and beautiful images over messy and imperfect reality. I'm grateful that God does not.

Flawed

At the end of June, the Church commemorates her two most influential (and flawed) leaders: Sts Peter and Paul. The irony of a shared feast day shouldn't be lost on us. Despite the similarity of how their lives ended, both Peter and Paul had their issues.

Simon walked on water, but then sank. He proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, then cautioned him

against going to Jerusalem. Swearing he would remain loyal even if no one else did, within hours, Peter denied Jesus not once, but three times. He was anything but the 'rock' Jesus had called him to be - not exactly a firm foundation on which to build the Church.

“These two men could not have been more different from each other. Simon was not well educated, and Saul was a scholar”

In his zeal for Jewish law, Saul orchestrated the stoning of Stephen. He was ambitious and intent on rooting out members of this dangerous new Messianic cult. He was a man with a mission, en route to Damascus to arrest wayward Jews and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. That was interrupted when Jesus appeared to him. Poor Ananias must have been terrified when God sent him to minister to Saul. It's no wonder Paul was not readily trusted by those who were following the way.

These two men could not have been more different from each other. Simon was not well educated, and Saul was a scholar who had studied under one of the most esteemed rabbis in Jerusalem. Simon was brash and impetuous, often jumping into things mouth first. Saul was calculating and deliberative, carefully planning his next move. Simon lived in Galilee, a crossroad of cultural and religious diversity. Saul grew up in Tarsus, exposed to the full force of Greek learning and achievement and

its effect on Jewish thought.

Simon and Saul also came to faith in Christ in entirely different ways. Simon's discipleship grew organically and over time. He became 'Peter' slowly. In contrast, Saul was struck blind by an unexpected mystical encounter. When he regained his sight, he was 'Paul', suddenly part of a community he had considered heretical.

Redemption

But Peter and Paul were not homogenised by Christ. Their profound differences remained even after their entire lives were personally redirected by Jesus of Nazareth. We see this in the Acts of the Apostles. While Luke acknowledges each man's total commitment to the Gospel, he does not gloss over the tension between them or ignore the difficulty they both experienced during a significant dispute. Yet, in Christ Jesus, these two unlikely companions were brought together. So much so that iconographic tradition often depicts them embracing.

Perhaps this kind of unity was possible because below the surface, these giants of the early Church shared something else in common. Both were very broken men. Both had, what we call, a checkered past.

As Catholics, it's important for us to remember that God sees our sin and brokenness. He knows our failures and fears. And he chooses the real us - not an idealised image of us - nonetheless. God risks everything on each one of us because there is nothing Jesus Christ can't redeem. No one is beyond the power of God's transforming grace. Simons and Sauls can become Peters and Pauls not just in appearance, but in truth.

i Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, petaholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.



Sts Peter and Paul

Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Why does the Catholic Church oppose contraception?

Q: A Catholic doctor who has to prescribe birth control pills as part of his job does not agree with the Church's teaching on contraception. He says the Bible does not talk about contraception. If contraception is stopped completely, abortions will go through the roof. Doesn't it make sense for Third World countries to use contraceptives rather than deal with numerous single moms who cannot afford to raise children?

A: It looks like we could break your question down into three distinct but interrelated ones.

First, although birth control is not explicitly forbidden in the Bible, there are a few passages in Scripture which strongly suggest the sinfulness of contraception. For example, Gn 38:8-10 gives an account of how Onan was punished by God for engaging in non-fruitful intercourse. And in St Paul's letter to the Galatians, he condemns "pharmakeia." (see Gal 5:20). 'Pharmakeia' is Greek work often translated as 'sorcery', but it is also the root of our English word 'pharmacy' and in a literal sense can refer to the administration of drugs. So there is some thought that St Paul might have intended to condemn the use of whatever drugs, herbs, or chemicals the ancient world would have used for contraceptive purposes.

We as Catholics look not only to Scripture for moral guidance, but also to the authoritative teaching of the Church's magisterium, i.e. the teaching authority of the pope together with the bishops throughout the world, in harmony with the Church's sacred traditions.

We need to keep in mind that most of today's usual contraceptive methods are a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. Therefore, logically we would need to turn to more recent Church documents to address those birth control methods which have come about as a result of the modern technology of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One excellent place to start is Pope Paul VI's 1968 Encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* ('Of Human Life').

In addition to restating the Church's traditional teaching on contraception, Paul VI also reflects on some of the societal consequences of widespread artificial contracep-

tive use, noting that among other things: "A man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection" (*Humanae Vitae* 17).

Reflecting on your second question, it does not automatically follow that less or no artificial contraception usage will cause a great increase in abortions. The core of the Church's teaching on contraception is, essentially, respect for not only the sacredness of the marital act but also for women and their capacity to conceive and bear new life. Contraception promotes a less reverential attitude toward sexuality which leads to casual sexual encounters; and it is the increase in casual sex which actually fosters the conditions for unexpected pregnancies at risk for abortion.

To your third point, we need to respect the dignity of those in developing nations and to be careful about inappropriately judging their needs according to our own cultural lens. Adults in developing nations are just as capable of chastity and self-control as those of us in the first world. There is no reason to assume that a cultural love of large families is a problem, let alone a 'problem' that could or should be 'fixed' by ready access to artificial contraception.

Finally, it's always good to keep in mind that in Catholic moral teaching, we do not believe that the 'end justifies the means'. The Church teaches that deliberately and purposefully seeking to separate the procreative and unitive aspects of the marital act is intrinsically wrong. Even if artificial contraception was a real solution to the practical issues you mention, this would not be an argument in favour of its morality.

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

What has been given you to carry?



What has been given you to carry? Where do the needs and pains of others conscript your freedom? When is freedom mitigated by circumstance? What are the situations that you are born into or meet in life to which you must respond, perhaps even at the cost of your life? What may you not walk away from?

These are important questions, not easy to answer. But they are key questions vis-a-vis discerning one's vocation: what is that special task to which each of us is asked to give over our lives?

Vocation

Each of us comes into this world with a God-given vocation. In essence, that's easy enough to pinpoint. Simply put, we are all asked to love God and love each other. That's the same for everyone. However, beyond that bald essence, it's no longer the same for everyone because we are all born into and meet different circumstances in life. We are born into different families, different countries, different times in history, different cultures, different situations of poverty or affluence, different faiths, different kinds of intelligence, different natural aptitudes, and different physical bodies that vary greatly in terms of health, strength, and physical attractiveness. Philosophers call this your 'existential' situation. In that particularity, like snowflakes, no two people are ever the same. And that uniqueness will colour and perhaps fundamentally define your vocation and help dictate what will



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

be given you to carry.

Here's what's at stake. We are all born free, yes, but many things both conscript and constrict our freedom.

“Everything in them hungered for more freedom and choice; but, given their circumstances, this was what they were given to carry”

Let me illustrate with a personal example. I was born the twelfth child in a large family. My parents, first-generation immigrant farmers who during many years of marriage and child-rearing, were unable to fully support our family from the farm alone. We needed

“If you are on the fragile and wounded side of the equation, your seeming human shortcomings can give you special powers to be a healer for others. Being wounded, you have special powers to become a wounded healer”

some added income. As well, our outback rural community had only an elementary school and any education beyond the eighth grade required leaving home to attend a boarding school, something my parents could not afford.

Because of that, five of my older siblings had to end their education after elementary school, not because they wanted to or because they lacked the desire or intelligence for higher education, but rather because our financial need and the absence of a local high school necessitated that they leave school and take jobs to help support the family. For all of them, particularly for a couple of them, this was a hard sacrifice. Everything in them hungered for more freedom and choice; but, given their circumstances, this was what they were given to carry. And

that sacrifice, that giving over of themselves for something beyond themselves, very much defined their vocation and their very persons. A large part of their vocation was to sacrifice many of their own dreams and ambitions for the sake of the family. Among other factors, my own opportunity for an education was largely predicated on their sacrifice.

Sacrifice

However, in this, they are not exceptional. Their sacrifice is mirrored in the lives of millions of men and women all over the world: immigrants who need to sacrifice their own ambitions in order to work in the fields or take menial jobs to support their families; young women and men from developing countries who have to leave their families and go abroad to earn money to send back to their families; millions of young people who cannot attend university because of cost; countless women and men who need to sacrifice whole seasons of their lives to take care of an ill or aging parent; and billions of women who have to sacrifice career to raise children. This is what has been given them to carry – and their sacrifice helps constitute the heart of their vocation.

Beyond these things which can conscript our freedom and radically dictate our vocation, there are still other things which either constrict or open our freedom and so help dictate our vocation: having robust physical and mental

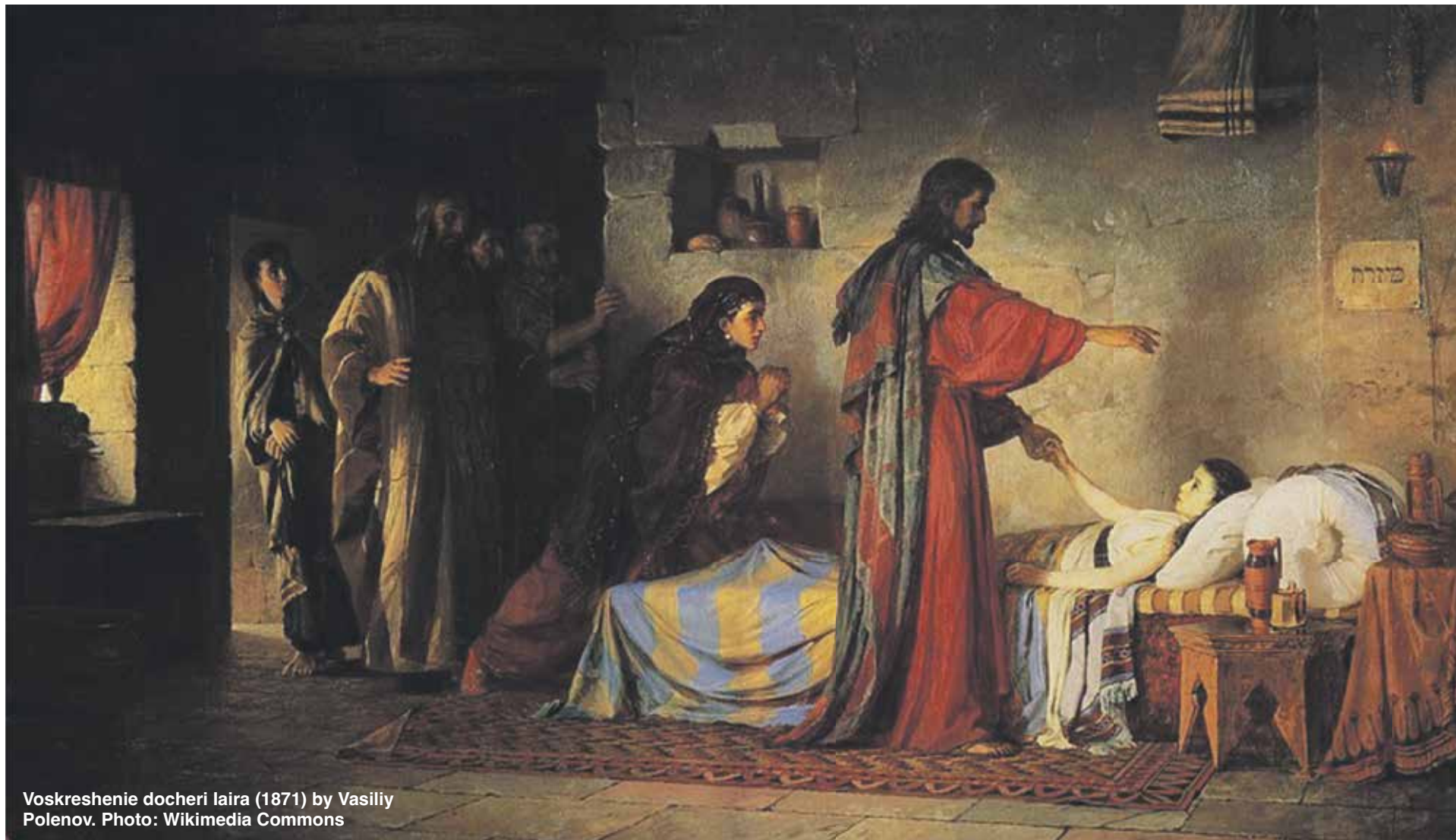
health as opposed to being physically or mentally fragile; having an athlete's body as opposed to having a physical disability; being an alpha male or a homecoming queen as opposed to being the one who is bullied and shunned; being temperamentally aggressive as opposed to being temperamentally gentle and accommodating; or being the one who comes from privilege as opposed to being the one who comes from a background without privilege.

“If you are on the privileged side of the equation, that privilege also dictates your vocation and your special gift”

Each of these not only helps dictate your vocation, but each also helps to specially equip you for your vocation. If you are on the fragile and wounded side of the equation, your seeming human shortcomings can give you special powers to be a healer for others. Being wounded, you have special powers to become a wounded healer. Conversely, if you are on the privileged side of the equation, that privilege also dictates your vocation and your special gift, namely, you are now the one to whom much is given and consequently from whom much is expected.

What has been given you to carry?

Christ's healing power



Voskreshenie docheri laira (1871) by Vasily Polenov. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Wis 1:13-15; 2:23-24
Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13
2 Cor 8:7, 9, 13-15
Mk 5:21-43 or 5:21-24,
35b-43

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



Deep below the outskirts of Rome is a vast network of underground tunnels and chambers, known as the Roman catacombs. There, the early Christians made burial spaces outside the city walls where they could pray for their loved ones and celebrate the Eucharist. On the catacomb walls they expressed their Faith in vivid paintings of scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

Healing

Among the biblical scenes painted on the walls of the ancient Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter is the healing story recounted

in today's Gospel. Such images tell us that Jesus' healings had a profound impact on the first Christian community, born at Pentecost.

Throughout his earthly life, Jesus showed a 'preferential love for the sick', as he encountered people with various illnesses who sought healing from God. As the Catechism notes, "moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (CCC, No. 1505).

Two healing miracles are recounted in today's Gospel as one story unfolds

within another. Mark tells us that a large crowd followed Jesus seeking his wisdom and healing power. Then a synagogue official, named Jairus, pleaded with Jesus to lay his hands on his daughter who was dying from illness.

“ Daughter, your Faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction”

As Jesus accompanied Jairus to his home another healing unfolded on the way. A woman, suffering for many years from haemorrhages, heard about Jesus and approached him in the crowd to touch his cloak. To suffer from haemorrhages meant that the woman was ritually unclean and therefore isolated and ostracised from her community. Her physical suffering resulted in spiritual suffering from social and emotional alienation.

At the touch of Jesus' cloak, the woman is healed. And we might wonder why

“ Throughout his earthly life, Jesus showed a 'preferential love for the sick', as he encountered people with various illnesses who sought healing from God”

Jesus asks, "who touched my clothes," in the midst of a pressing crowd. Jesus' healing is not a manifestation of raw spiritual power but an expression of divine love and friendship. Jesus desires that the woman recognise the gift of Faith that she received along with the gift of physical healing. One without the other leads to superstition and irrational beliefs. Jesus' personal encounter with the woman ensures that her experience of his healing touch is rooted in a freely chosen act of Faith. So, Jesus says to her, "Daughter, your Faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

Faith

Jesus continued on to Jairus' house only to learn that his daughter had died. Once again we see

that Jesus desires that this moment of crisis become a moment of deep Faith. So, Jesus encourages the distraught father with these comforting words, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." When he arrived at the house, he took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum," which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise!'

“ They were confident that Jesus' presence and words could heal and restore in a way that only God can”

Mark tells us only that the family and crowds were astounded as the 12-year-

old girl arose immediately and walked around.

Both the synagogue official and the woman with haemorrhages had deep Faith. They were confident that Jesus' presence and words could heal and restore in a way that only God can. For only God can raise the dead to life and restore and heal physical and spiritual wounds. May we deepen our faith in Jesus' desire to heal as we pray, "speak to me, Lord."

Question: How have you encountered Jesus' healing love in the sacraments of the Church?

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

“ Her physical suffering resulted in spiritual suffering from social and emotional alienation”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Searching for a deeper understanding

We don't like to talk too much about death. It's the ultimate elephant in the room – inevitable and ignored for as long as possible, while we use euphemism to whistle past the graveyard.

On **The Moral Maze** (BBC Radio 4, Wednesday), many of the issues surrounding death were literally interrogated as the panel quizzed 'witnesses,' guests that had interesting things to say on the matter. I learned a new concept – 'grief tech' where artificial intelligence (AI) can create the illusion that you are still conversing with the deceased. Much was said about the body and what happens to it after death and why or whether we should respect it. Of course, for Christians, the body is not just a disposable "husk," as one contributor put it, but inherently wedded to the person. In that respect I'd like to have heard more about the resurrection of the body and all it implies. I was glad to hear the presenter William Crawley referencing the Communion of Saints. Some thought you could do no more for loved ones when they were gone, and I thought the Christians present could have made more of what we can do for our deceased loved ones through prayer. The issue of what happens to relationships after death was



Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin

of particular interest.

The use of rituals surrounding death was thoroughly discussed. Even journalist Ella Whelan, brought up Catholic in Ireland but no longer a person with faith, favoured the old traditions. Another contributor thought that the old traditions and rituals around death were of value because they were tried and tested. The overall question posed by the programme was 'Do we need a final farewell?' and there was a related ques-

tion – 'are funerals for the living or the dead?'

Faith

After that topic, some good news is needed. On **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One), Charlotte Littlewood of the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life outlined the surprising findings of new research into the religious views of young people. It seems in particular 'Gen-Z' is the most religious of all generations. For example, when asked if faith had a sig-

nificant impact on their lives, the figure for 18-24 year olds was 69% compared to 65% for over 65s; for those searching for a deeper understanding of God, it was 38% for 18-24 year olds, 18% for 45-64 year olds and 20% for the over 65s; for those who find faith helps them find purpose in life, it was 72% for the 18-24 group, but only 47% for the over 65s. Three articulate young adults, a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim gave a sense of the importance of faith to their lives. Green shoots then! The young Christian, Samuel, spoke of how his phone was an important factor in his journey to faith – finding people, new ideas, new connections online.

Podcast

Related to this is the growth of religious podcasting (radio by any other name!). The most recent edition of **The Confession Box** (Spotify etc) featured Garry O'Sullivan of this parish in conversation with Bishop Paul Dempsey, recently appointed Auxiliary for Dublin Diocese. The title and design are inspired, and the approx. half-hour length is ideal, a chance to tease out a topic at leisure with one guest. Bishop Dempsey was aware of the challenges facing the Church, has really enjoyed his parish work in Kildare and Leighlin and was now facing 'enormous

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC ONE Sunday June 30, 1.15 pm

Katherine Jenkins is at RHS Chelsea Flower Show to explore a garden exhibited by St James's Piccadilly, the first church to contribute a garden to this prestigious event.

FAITH AND LIFE

EWTN Monday July 1, 8 pm

Fr Joseph Mary of the Franciscan Friars talks about his previous work in a housing estate run by Irish gangs. Lessons he learned from his own teenage years helped him evangelise and improve the lives of others.

EUGENICS: SCIENCE'S GREATEST SCANDAL

BBC FOUR Tuesday July 2, 11.15 pm

Science journalist, Angela Saini, and disability rights activist, Adam Pearson, investigate how the legacy of eugenics continues to the present day.

change' in his new role. He was conscious of the 'huge generosity' of older priests and was particularly welcoming of the 'new Irish' and their contribution to parish life. He was upset at the negativity evident on the migration issue, while also accepting that welcoming communities needed appropriate facilities.

Legislation

Another Bishop who impressed this week was Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin who, on last Monday's **Today with Claire Byrne** (RTE Radio 1), ably proposed and defended the Church's position on assisted suicide legislation. He did well under

courteous but robust questioning. Claire Byrne put the choice and autonomy argument, but Bishop Doran proposed that autonomy wasn't absolute and that there had to be concern for the impact of legislation on the common good. The experience of other countries suggested that what was introduced on narrow grounds eventually became broader even to the point of obligation. "People make choices," he said, "but the proposed legislation involved 'the active participation of health care professionals in taking the lives of the sick.'"

The straight talking was welcome.



Aubrey Malone

Film

Catholic media conference launches three seminal movies

The Catholic Media Conference in Atlanta has just released details of three films which may be of interest to readers. The first, **Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist**, embarks, as the CMC puts it, "on a global journey to rediscover and revive the transformative power of the Eucharist."

Produced by Jim Wahlberg and directed and written by Tim Moriarty, it's set against the backdrop of a 2019 Pew Research study which revealed that only one-third of practising Catholics in the US believed in the 'Real Presence' of Christ in the Eucharist.

The second film, **Teilhard: Visionary Scientist**, is a two-hour biography of the

renowned French theologian-cum-palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin SJ by Frank and Mary Frost. I watched it on my computer by clicking into an American channel called Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). It's a no-profit making channel, so it won't cost you anything.

Fr Chardin endured stern opposition from the Church, as he espoused what were then seen as radical concepts about evolution and the duality of mind and body.

Declaring that spirit and matter were comprised of "one and the same cosmic stuff" and making statements like "God does not make the world; He makes the world make itself," he found himself tilting at windmills often during his controversial life.



Fighting Spirit: A Combat Chaplain's Journey.

Muzzled by the authorities, he sought ways to express himself that wouldn't alienate his superiors, but many of his books and papers were sup-

pressed. At one stage it was suggested he leave the Jesuits and become a diocesan priest. This he was unwilling to do.

He continued to try and

bridge the schism between science and theology. Eventually a kind of compromise was reached. He agreed to be obedient to his Order without this implying intellectual assent to its zeitgeist.

He was before his time in his ideas. This fascinating biopic pays homage to this, pointing out that Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* owes much to his prophetic views.

The third film being launched by the CMC is called **Fighting Spirit: A Combat Chaplain's Journey**. A co-production from the U.S. Army Corps, it's the directorial debut of Rich Hull.

It begins with army chaplain, Justin Roberts, attending the funeral of a priest called Emil Kapaun. Fr Kapaun died as a prisoner of war in North

Korea in 1953. In 1993 Pope John Paul II declared him to be a Servant of God, the first step towards canonisation.

The film studies the important work army chaplains have done over the decades in treating the mental health of soldiers as they prepare for battles and try to recover from them. This is a hugely important function. A recent report listed suicide as one of the main causes of death among US military personnel.

Army chaplains are non-combatative but still wear uniforms. "You have to be fearless to do that," one speaker in the film asserts. Another describes them as "the unsung heroes who've shaped history by touching lives and comforting souls."

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Where to find spiritual strength in troubled days

Fully alive: Tending to the Soul in Turbulent Times, by Elizabeth Oldfield (London: Hodder & Stoughton, £18.99 / €26.99)

Frank Litton

Elizabeth Oldfield directed the London based 'think-tank', Theos from 2011 to 2022. Established in 2006 with the support of Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, the then Archbishop of Westminster and the then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Theos researches issues of public concern within a Christian perspective, giving voice to the Christian tradition in the public square.

We can distinguish between contestation and conversation. To contest is to enter into a argument to correct error and clarify truth, to converse is

not recall when I last heard a sermon on sin. I suspect I am one of the last generation who could even make a stab of listing them: wrath, avarice, *acedia*, envy, gluttony, lust and pride.

I learned in primary school that sin is what offends God, merits punishment and will be forgiven. This is not a good starting point for developing an adult understanding.

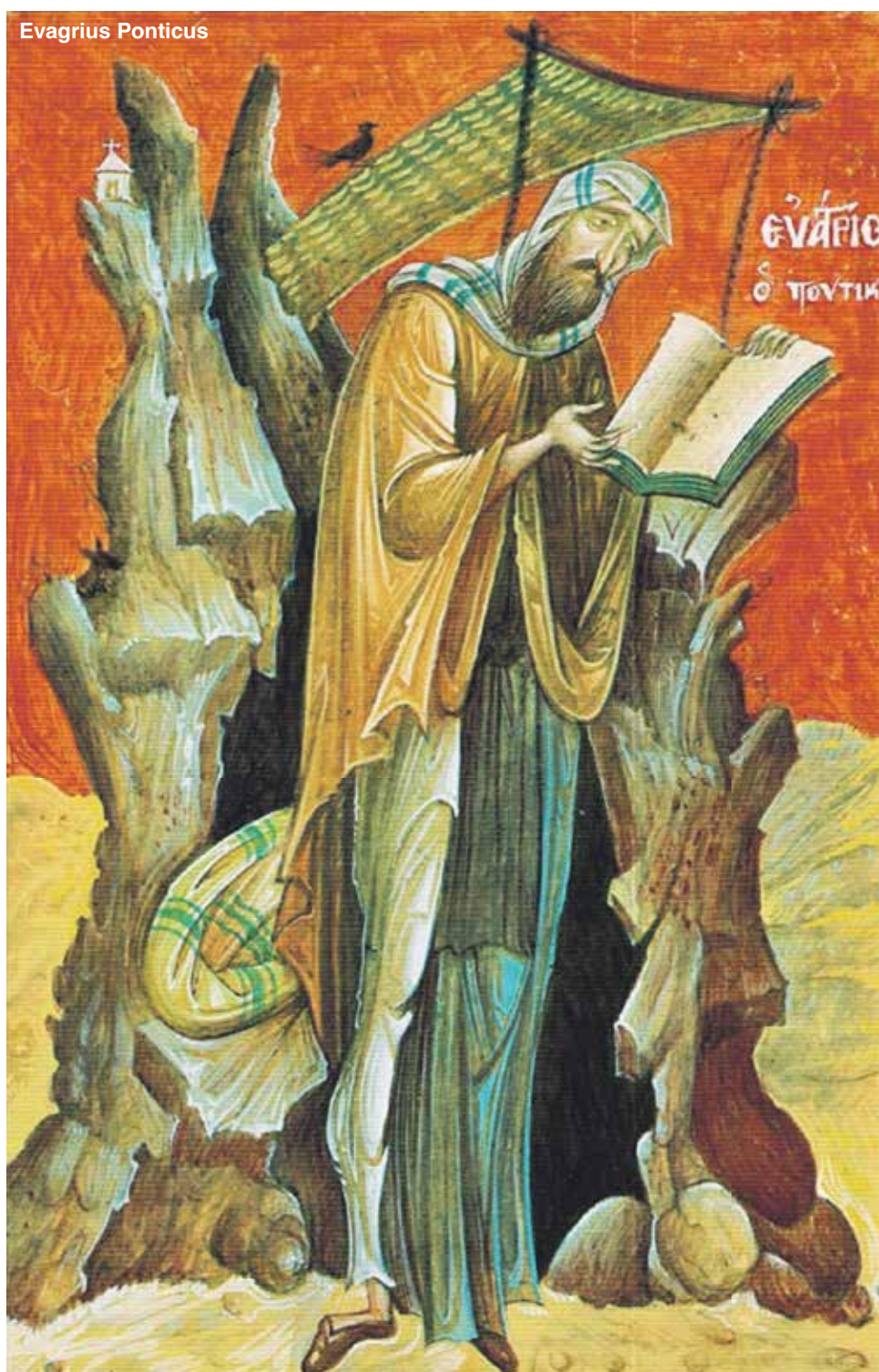
Oldfield anchors her account in her own experience and the ways in which we mess things up, frustrating our desires and damaging our relationships. She weaves, with considerable intelligence, psychological insight, sociological sense and the wisdom of the

tradition together to bring the reader into the world where the particular damage each sin does to our flourishing is clearly visible, our weaknesses are laid before us, our culpability for the way things can go wrong for us, exposed.

“We make a “hell” for ourselves by the ways in which we distort our relationships with others and the world about us”

Sartre's assertion that “hell is other people” is an extreme example of the common fear that our relationships threaten our autonomy, restrain our freedom and expose us to the danger of exploitation.

While Sartre and our culture put the individual first, Oldfield puts relationships first. She supposes, correctly, that individuals emerge from relationships in which our capacities



sort of super-hero, the biggest most powerful object in the universe. The creator is not a creature. I doubt, however, if any unbeliever has been brought to believe by these arguments.

“If the deadly sins describe the hell we can make for ourselves, they also indicate the happiness we can find in human flourishing”

So, Oldfield wisely leaves such considerations out of her conversation. She wants to show what “believe in God” means by recounting what it has meant for her. It is a relationship founded on the experience of profound love and it transforms what could have been a despairing picture of the misery of the human condition.

To recognise the damage a sin does is at the same time to recognise a good it frustrates. If the deadly sins describe the hell we can make for ourselves, they also indicate the happiness we can find in human flourishing.

The story Oldfield tells of faith lost and found, of the rewards and difficulties of family, work, living in community, is also a story of how God's love transforms. Responding to that love in striving to love our neighbour, the good that our nature can attain comes into view and we move closer to its realisation.

The non-believing reader seeking ‘spiritual core strength’ is led to the thought that we need saving and salvation is at hand. The believer will find their understanding of redemption renewed and deepened while being encouraged to renew their efforts.

Oldfield's chatty, relaxed style which makes for an easy read is rooted in a deep theological understanding and a firm philosophical grasp.

for autonomous action are formed. We make a “hell” for ourselves by the ways in which we distort our relationships with others and the world about us. And the deadly sins describe these.

Value

I am sure that she succeeds in convincing the non-believer that there is much of value in the Christian account of sin. Believers too, will learn much from this

persuasive telling of part of their tradition that is confined to the shadows. But a question remains.

The notorious atheist Richard Dawkins has recently declared himself a “cultural Christian”. Although he continues to believe that talk of God and revelation is nonsense, he finds norms promoted by, and insights found in, Christianity worth preserving. Has Oldfield done more than contribute

to “cultural Christianity”?

Where is God in her account? Proving the existence of God is high on the agenda of those who contest the atheistic, scientific foundations of our secular culture.

Endeavour

Believers benefit from this endeavour. It strengthens their faith and protects them from the temptation of supposing God is some



Elizabeth Oldfield

Principles

The book, she tells us, is ‘designed for those in search of spiritual core strength who are curious about what the practices, postures, and principles of Christianity might teach them’. She does this in an examination of the deadly sins listed by Evagrius Ponticus (345-399AD). An eccentric choice, one might think when sin hardly figures, if at all, in secular discourse where concern with “self-esteem” rules out attention to our “grievous faults”.

While Catholics continue to recite the *confiteor*, I can-

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.

Never give way to despair - even in Ulster

Keeping the Faith,
by Alf McCreary
(Messenger Publications,
€14.95 / £12.95)

Peter Costello

This is a sombre and sobering book, one dealing with the Northern situation that could have driven a saint to despair, but it is also a book that carries a final message to never despair, however appalling and inhuman the situation.

Alf McCreary tells the story of his life as a journalist and a communications person in the context of a changing Northern Ireland. The first third of the book is devoted to an account of his Protestant background and early years, down to leaving Queen's in 1964 and becoming a journalist on the *Belfast Telegraph*.

These pages provide a narrative of hope, that the university educated generations (the production of the Butler's Education Act of the mid 1940s - a gift of British colonialism that goes on giving - that began the social change that was to lead both to social warfare and to the emergence of a that new Ulster.

Justice

McCreary picks out two figures in the time to whom he thinks full justice has never been done. The first is Terence O'Neill, a man too often seen by Catholic nationalists as an old landed non-entity and not a modern figure at all. He sees him in quite a different and more admiring light, as a man who tried to do his best for his country but was defeated by the granite-like nature of the Unionist tradition.

The other important figure in his view of things was his editor at the provinces leading paper, John E. Sayers, of whom he gives a most penetrating and absorbing account, again of a good man trying his best to shape the opinions of a



Alf McCreary,
hopeful survivor

stolid society that saw no need for change, at a time when the demands of that younger generation to which McCreary belongs was becoming more insistent.

The middle of the book, however I found the hardest to read, for it is devoted to what happened when those "dogs of war" were released, and havoc followed.

A pivotal point is his account of the Kingsmill massacre (January 5 1976) was when a van with twelve workers from a Glenanne factory was stopped by gunmen. They lined the men up along the side of the road, released one because he was "a Catholic" and mowed down the others.

“He gives over the chapters a chilling account of Rev. Ian Paisley and his activities in setting the conflict going and encouraging it”

Alf was sent to the scene by his editor because it was "his own place" near Bessbrook. What has to be asked in this context is what do the terms Protestant and Catholic mean?

He rightly doubts that the designation were rooted in any way in true religion, but were, as in the massacres by Hutu militias of the Tutsi in 1994, were tribal distinctions.

This event and its consequences opens up the theme that is present all through the book, but which dominates the last half: what is the role of "faith" in Ulster?

He gives over the chapters a chilling account of Rev. Ian Paisley and his activities in setting the conflict going and encouraging it.

Virtues

Some see him as a man with some virtues: he was kind to Catholic constituents. But these pages deal in a different man entirely, an embattled crusader against Romanism. But this is places in a context of the growing efforts in making and sustaining peace and healing, despite such setbacks as the Enniskillen bombings. Some readers may feel he does not "balance the account" with similar atrocities committed on Catholics, but this is not so: he is quite clear about the horrors of the Divis Flats in Derry for instance.

The last five chapters are powerfully revealing, especially two dealing with St Patrick as the bringer of this

The Yeats Sisters



A Cuala print, Connemara, by Beatrice Elvery, 1920

The Yeats Sisters and Irish Design: Making, Identities & Legacies

An exhibition in the Long Room of the Old Library, Trinity College, Dublin

Peter Costello

Currently mounted in the Long Room of the Library at Trinity College is an exhibition on the life and work of the Yeats Sisters, which draws on the immense collection of Yeats material preserved in the library, which is little seen.

W.B. Yeats the poet and his brother Jack Yeats the painter are well known, indeed internationally famous personalities. Less known, indeed overshadowed by the men in the family, were Elizabeth and Susan (Lily) Yeats. They were the creators of the Dun Emer Industries (1902-1908) and then the Cuala Industries which lasted till 1940.

There was a time when the images produced under their auspices were to be found in middle class home, certainly down to the 1950s. In my bedroom when I was small child hung one such print, "The Post Car" by Jack Yeats, showing a mail carrier driving his cart up a western street pulled by a powerful horse. Both man and beast were filled with the pride of accomplishment and an energy I loved.

conflicted faith to Ireland, which explores just how deeply rooted conflict may be.

Eventually the significantly called Good Friday Agreement comes, and peace rather than murder begins to dominate Ulster discourse.

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried”

The last chapter is entitled "Keeping the Faith" and is perhaps the most significant, for having spilt all that blood an over religious society in the island of Ireland is faced with a flight from religion in the younger generations. But

is it any wonder, he asks, if that has happened faced by the murder and mayhem in the north and the gross revelations about clerical abuse in the South.

Reconciliation

But that faith, Alf McCreary seems to suggest is still vitally important, because it is perhaps only in the deeper resources of Christianity that reconciliation might yet be truly found.

Towards the end he quotes a remark by G. K. Chesterton, who was longer a Christian before he ever became a Catholic, about the reality of Christianity. Chesterton wrote that "the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried. He who begins

In other houses you would see landscapes, framed prayers and holy pictures. This was only right for what the Yeats sisters produced was intended to be hung in Irish homes and was not intended for art galleries. It was arts and crafts for the people rather than intellectuals.

It is only now that the full richness of what they achieved is coming to be seen in a wider aspect. This informative exhibition has been curated by Dr Angela Griffith and Dr Angela Byrne.

The items on display are fascinating, but the essential aim of the sisters was to train and provide work for young Irish women in the tradition of the arts and crafts movements elsewhere, in Scotland and Scandinavia. Women craft workers of today, of which there are now thankfully so many, owe a great deal to the two indomitable Yeats sisters.

(The exhibition in the Long Room runs until 6 September. It can be seen as part of The Books Kells Experience, but intending visitors must be careful about what level of visit they choose, as a family ticket for the longest option lasting up to 90 minutes runs to €65.00. The details of this and other options can be found on the TCD visitor site. Pre-booking online is essential.)

by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all."

What is needed is a return to the essential message of Jesus in the gospel that we must love God and love our neighbour as oneself (Mark 12: 31-31). There lies the answer to all sorts of division: a deep regard for the lives and feelings of others.

This is a book I found almost unbearable to read, given the terrible events the author witnessed and lived through. But essentially this is a book with a message of hope for all. McCreary's has been a life well and truly lived, and it is a life worth reading about, and above all, learning from.



Dr Ian Paisley

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Little Nellie of Holy God

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- Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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J.M.

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Crossword

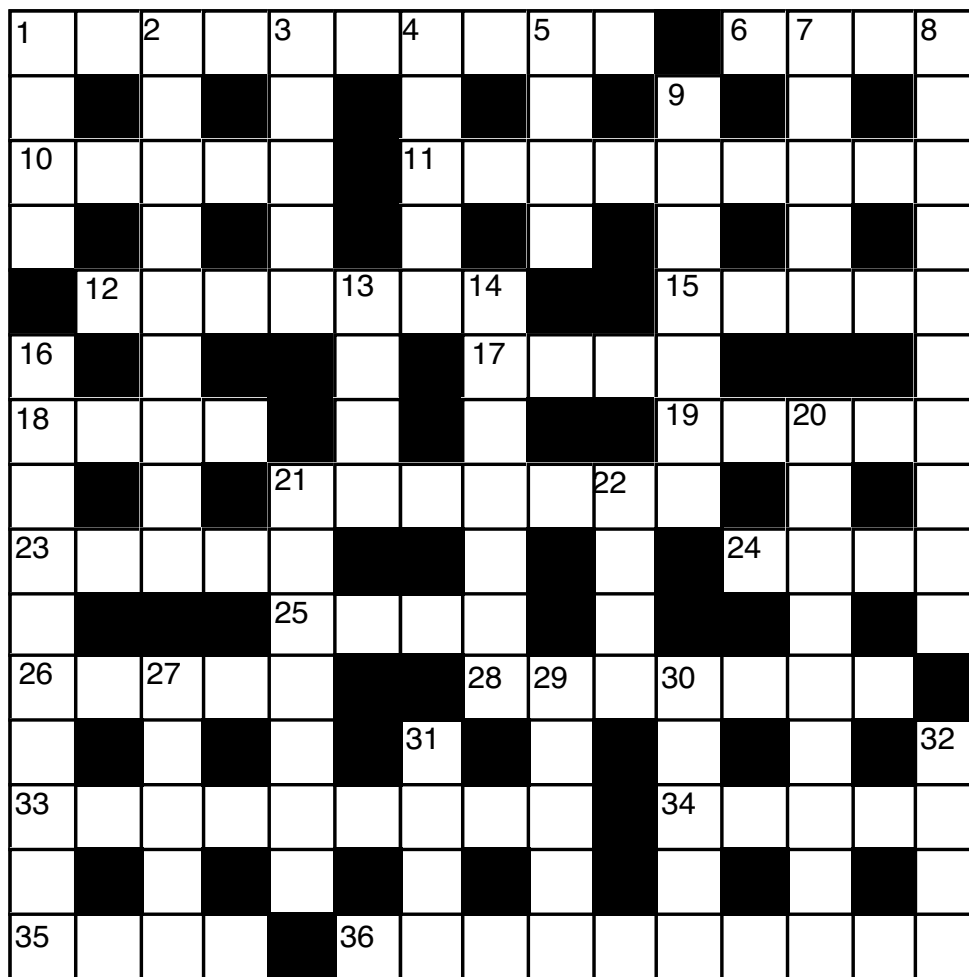
Gordius 669

Across

- 1 Medal (10)
- 6 Aching (4)
- 10 The Ship of the Desert (5)
- 11 A fall of snow and rocks (9)
- 12 Seedless raisin (7)
- 15 Nice surprise (5)
- 17 Member of Hitler's party (4)
- 18 Extremely keen (4)
- 19 Grinding tooth (5)
- 21 Violent spiral wind (7)
- 23 This hole is half way round a golf course (5)
- 24 Small, biting insect (4)
- 25 Finished or above (4)
- 26 Sub-aqua enthusiast (5)
- 28 A style of cutting remark (7)
- 33 Distress signal (4,5)
- 34 Make use of (5)
- 35 Spoon's eloping partner (4)
- 36 Weight-training activity (5,5)

Down

- 1 A mallard or teal, perhaps (4)
- 2 The taking of the Eucharist (10)
- 3 Ignited once more (5)
- 4 Locomotive (5)
- 5 Egg-shaped (4)
- 7 With perfect timing



- (2,3)
- Wales (5,5)
- the roof (5)
- 8 The voting population (10)
- 20 Painting of a rural setting (9)
- 30 It is used to immobilise the car of an illegal parker (5)
- 9 Hobby (7)
- 21 Musical piece (7)
- 31 Leer (4)
- 13 Body of soldiers (4)
- 22 Close by (4)
- 32 European mountain range (4)
- 14 Horns on a stag (7)
- 27 Unhealthy bug (5)
- 29 Room or space near
- 16 The patron saint of

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 13

GORDIUS No. 668

Across

- 1 Cow 3 Limbo dancer 8 Vandal 9 Coleslaw 10 Liszt 11 Druid 13 Glean 15 Genesis 16 Steeple 20 Found 21 Sheaf 23 Prado 24 Pillaged 25 Patina 26 Try, try again 27 Eye

Down

- 1 Civil rights 2 Wingspan 3 Leapt 4 Buckled 5 Ahead 6 Colour 7 Row 12 Deteriorate 13 Grief 14 Noted 17 Paradise 18 Bulldog 19 Really 22 Flair 23 Plain 24 Pet

Sudoku Corner 539

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 538

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

Last week's Hard 538

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

Notebook

Fr John Harris OP



The difference a pair of shoes makes...

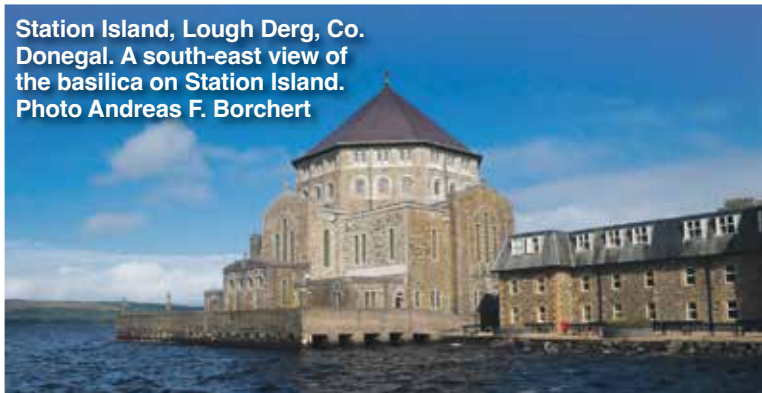
When planning how to mark the 800th anniversary of the arrival of the Dominicans in Ireland it seemed right and fitting that the pilgrimage to Lough Derg be included. It is a unique place of pilgrimage in the entire Church worldwide and it is Irish.

Last weekend, 10 of us Dominicans, together with some people who worship at St Saviour's in Dublin went to Lough Derg on pilgrimage. With another 60 or so pilgrims we arrived on the island on Friday morning to begin our prayers and penances until Sunday. In our group were three young people from Latin America and among our Dominicans were brethren from Poland, Columbia, Hong Kong and Trinidad.

Opportunity

Of course when one thinks of Lough Derg one thinks of the bare feet, the cold, the rain, the midges, the black tea but it is so much more. It affords the pilgrim a distinctive opportunity for space and time to focus on God, his reality and majesty. Without the basic comforts of food and sleep one is left standing before the mystery of the divine. Stripped of all distractions one faces the reality of one's aloneness with God. The homilies

Station Island, Lough Derg, Co. Donegal. A south-east view of the basilica on Station Island. Photo Andreas F. Borchert



and talks we heard helped us to think deeply on God and his role in our lives. The wonderful celebration of confession was truly a moment of accepting the personal love of God when we were invited to open our souls to God in confidence and trust.

As a pilgrim to Lough Derg one always meets wonderful people. Sharing in the common experience of prayer and penance brings people together. One realises the depth of faith that remains in so many Irish people. On the island one so easily shares one's faith. It is a safe place of encounter with God and with others. One has a real experience of the Church as a community of believers, who share so much at a deep and

personal level. On the island one can be oneself and not part of a bigger game of make believe. People of faith without shoes in the middle of the night help you to see that faith allows you a freedom to be a believer. On the holy island one meets real people and real faith.

Encouragement

I want to thank the prior of the island, Fr Laurence Flynn and his staff for their kindly welcome and encouragement. It is a hidden jewel of the Irish Church and a rare opportunity to get away from the mobile phones, the preoccupation with status and comfort in order to be given the space to go deeper in being with

God.

All that being said, it is wonderful to put one's shoes back on and to get on the boat home. A few days without shoes, sleep and food does make one more grateful for the ordinary delights of life like, shoes, milk in your tea, butter on your toast, but it also leaves you with a renewed awareness of how blessed we are to be believers, to have faith, to experience the awesome love of God and the real community of fellow worshippers. You realise you are not alone on the journey of faith and that we live our faith in the midst of many good and holy people.

My sister is a mother...

A conversation from the 1960s between two priests:

"My sister has become a mother."
 "Congratulations, I didn't know you had a married sister."
 "I don't."
 "Oh?"
 "She's a nun and she has been appointed the local mother superior!"

The Norwegian connection

Recently I was visiting the Dominican family in Oslo. The sisters told me of an amazing Irish sister who had died earlier this year. Her name was Sr Mary Doyle. Her own name was Olive and she was born in Mount Temple in Co. Westmeath in 1937. She joined the only Nordic native congregation in 1958. She became a nurse in Norway and spent her whole life ministering to the sick and poor in the small towns in Norway. When she died she was the last member of her congregation. How many young girls left Ireland and joined foreign congregations and served the Church whose memories are known only to the one who matters, the Lord himself.



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

Forty districts in the western Indian state of Rajasthan are experiencing a severe drinking water crisis. Extreme temperatures have already killed many people and the current level of heat is due to last for at least another month.

The Franciscan Sisters of St Joseph are working to reduce the impact of the heatwave and sandstorms. They have sent us an urgent appeal for funds to do the following:

- pay for a water tanker to supply water to 300 families for each of 60 days,
- 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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