

# The Irish Catholic

## FATIMA CENTENARY SPECIAL

# Fatima 1917-2017



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# Nun vows: 'They'll have to shoot us'

## Irish missionaries stand with people in war-torn South Sudan

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**Mags Gargan**

Irish missionaries working in war-torn South Sudan have vowed to stay with the people struggling with starvation and bloodshed, despite knowing they are in danger of being attacked at any moment.

South Sudan has become the world's fastest-growing humanitarian emergency with warnings that many people are dying from hunger and disease. More than 1.8 million people – including one million children – have fled violence after a fragile peace collapsed last year.

Limerick native Sr Margaret Sheehan FCJ told *The Irish Catholic* "we are in a terrible situation".

She said people live "with the possibility of an attack at any one time" but vowed that the missionaries will not leave the country "unless they shoot us out of the place".

### Bitter war

Speaking from her base in Yambio, in the southwest of the country close to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sr Margaret revealed that the

sisters' house had already been attacked by what she described as "a small group of rebels".

Up to 300,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the bitter war between rival politicians.

Sr Margaret warned that famine has now become the most urgent problem in the country with many shops unable to access food supplies "because of insecurity along the roads", inflation is rampant and many workers are not getting paid "as most of the funds go to buying arms".

Sr Margaret – a Faithful Companion of Jesus sister – works with the charity Solidarity with South Sudan, a consortium of 200 religious congregations.

Fr John Skinnader CSSp, a priest from Co. Monaghan working in two of the UN refugee camps in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, has said that many people have nowhere to turn but the Church.

"In this situation people tend to turn to their churches for help and protection, and as the Catholic Church continues to be one of the few

» **Continued on Page 7**

### 'Bring flowers of the rarest...bring blossoms the fairest'



Men from the Dominican Friary Youth Club carry a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in a procession in Dundalk, Co. Louth on Saturday, in advance of the opening Mass for the Fatima Novena at the friary.

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# A missionary nuncio coming to a missionary land

**A** Nigerian priest once told me that there were so many Irish priests in his homeland when he was growing up he just assumed that Jesus was Irish. For him – and most other Catholics in Nigeria – the spread of Catholicism was synonymous with Ireland and the Irish. It's not uncommon to get in to a taxi in Dublin driven by a Nigerian to hear fond memories of Irish missionaries. It's a reality attested to by the fact that the patron saint of Nigeria is our own St Patrick.

But, that great Irish missionary movement is at an end. The last few Irish missionaries are there serving alongside local people in parishes and communities. Many have returned home to an uncertain future, but content in the fact that they kept their word and went to bring the hope, healing and consolation of the Gospel to the ends of the world.

Today some 18 million Nigerians consider themselves to be Catholic. It will be with an immense sense of pride, therefore, that they will greet the news that Pope Francis has appointed a son of Nigeria – Archbishop Jude Okolo – to be his representative in Ireland as Papal Nuncio.

## Appointments

Archbishop Okolo has an impressive track record and has served the Pope and the Holy See in many difficult



## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

appointments. Like his predecessor the Irish-American Archbishop Charles Brown, Dr Okolo will undoubtedly carry an immense love in his heart for Ireland and all that Ireland has given to the world – above all through the work of countless missionaries.

Africa is coming of age within global Catholicism. As the Churches of many western countries seem jaded and tired, Africa – despite the many challenges – exudes an energy that is infectious.

**“People speak of a fresh and increasing enthusiasm for youth ministry”**

At various points in Church history, some countries are what we can call a 'source Church' – for a large part of the recent missionary history of Africa, Ireland was such a 'source Church'. That role is now being replaced, and priests and missionaries from countries like Nigeria are stepping up to the plate.

Just as the Church in Spain and

Italy was the source for the Counter-Reformation, and the Church of France and Germany the source for the Second Vatican Council, countries where the Faith is fresher are proving to be the vibrant source that the tired Church in the West needs today.

Archbishop Okolo comes to a Church and society in Ireland facing many challenges. Relations between Church and State here are now, thankfully, unrecognisable from when Archbishop Brown arrived in 2012. Within the Church, there is new energy. People speak of a fresh and increasing enthusiasm for youth ministry that has been lacking for decades.

But the challenges are immense. Not least the transformation from a society where belief in God was axiomatic, to one where it is just one choice amongst others.

A missionary nuncio from a missionary land will have much to teach us about re-embracing the joy of the Gospel. Tar anuas a Spioraid Naoimh.

## Primate welcomes new nuncio

Archbishop Eamon Martin has warmly welcomed the appointment by Pope Francis of Archbishop Jude Okolo as the new Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland.

“Archbishop Okolo's rich experience in the diplomatic service of the Holy See means that he brings many gifts to bear on his new mission in Ireland,”

Archbishop Eamon said.

The Vatican announced the appointment of Dr Okolo in a communique at the weekend. The 60-year old prelate is a native of Nigeria and has served in the Vatican's diplomatic service for more than 30 years.

He is expected to present his credentials to President

Michael D. Higgins next month at a ceremony in Dublin.

Archbishop Okolo speaks seven languages including English and his interests include sacred music, piano, reading and table tennis. Until now, he has served as the Pope's representative in the Dominican Republic.



Archbishop Jude Okolo.



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# Pope's commission sceptical about later Medjugorje visions

Mags Gargan

The commission investigating alleged visions of Our Lady at Medjugorje has reportedly recommended early apparitions be accepted as authentic, but casts doubt upon later claims of visions.

According to reports in the Italian media this week, the overwhelming majority of the 15-member body voted in favour of recognising the supernatural nature

of the first seven alleged visions. Just one member voted against, with another member deferring his vote. The commission is also said to recommend that a ban on official pilgrimages to the shrine be lifted.

The commission draws a distinction between the first seven alleged apparitions (between June 24 and July 3, 1981) and subsequent claims.

One of the issues of concern in relation to the second

phase of claimed visions is, according to the reports, the issue of the 'secrets' of the somewhat apocalyptic flavour that the seers claim to have been revealed from the apparitions.

## Authenticity

It comes after Pope Francis appeared to voice serious doubt about the authenticity of continuing apparitions in Medjugorje.

"These presumed apparitions don't have a lot of value. This I say as a personal opinion," he told reporters on his plane returning from Fatima.

Referring to the commission, the Pope said: "the report has its doubts, but personally, I am a little worse. I prefer Our Lady as mother, our mother, and not Our Lady as head of the post office who sends a message at a stated time."

Donal Lowry, acting chairperson of the Medjugorje Council of Ireland, told *The Irish Catholic* that "we as committed and faithful Catholics are prepared to accept the ultimate findings of the commission". He also said that while "the Holy Father did cast some doubts about it" he had pointed to "the spiritual and pastoral facts that cannot be denied about Medjugorje".

The Pope is expected to give his formal opinion on the Medjugorje phenomenon later this year.

Mark Patrick Hederman's latest book, in which he explores the search for a new ethics for Ireland, has entered the bestsellers list just weeks after publication.

*The Opal and the Pearl* examines sexuality in the lives and writings of James Joyce, Iris Murdoch and W.B. Yeats.

## Glenstal monk's book is best-seller

Published by Columba Press, the book by the former abbot of the Benedictine monastery in Co. Limerick takes up the call of President Michael D. Higgins to dialogue about the role of ethics in modern Ireland.

At the weekend, the book entered the prestigious top ten bestsellers list compiled by Irish bookshops.

Dom Hederman is the author of several books, including *The Haunted Inkwell*, *Walkabout* and *Underground Cathedrals*.



## Our Lady shines for Portugal's runaway Eurovision triumph

Staff Reporter

It may have been a coincidence or a moment of singular grace, but few could fail to remark on the significance that Portugal's win in the Eurovision Song Contest at the weekend – the first in that country's 49 attempts – came on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima.

As Salvador Sobral took to the stage in the final on May 13, Pope Francis was visiting the Marian shrine at Fatima to mark the centenary of when three shepherd children first reported sightings of the Mother of God.

And it wasn't just that the date was significant. Pope Francis was in Fatima to canonise two of the visionaries: sister and brother Jacinta and Francisco Marto – arguably the most famous siblings in Portugal.

Mr Sobral won the Eurovision performing a jazz-style ballad written by his sister Luisa before an expected global audience of over 200 million people.

While Mary has always had a special place in the lives of Portuguese Catholics, this culminated in 1646 when King John IV declared Our Lady to be the patron protectress of Portugal and laid the crown normally worn by the queen at the feet of a statue of the Virgin.

From that day, no queen of Portugal ever wore a crown out of deference to Our Lady, often referred to as the Heavenly Queen.

Salvador Sobral.

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# Teaching the teachers is 'Irish Church's top priority'

Greg Daly

Teachers and parents need support in helping prepare children for Christian lives, a leading theologian has said.

Speaking after an education conference in Limerick's Mary Immaculate College, which discussed whether sacramental preparation should be taken out of schools, Prof. Eamonn Conway said the conference affirmed the importance of very close working relationships between parents, parish, and Church schools.

"But that relationship needs to be reconfigured so that sacramental preparation is seen as a joint responsibility," he told *The Irish Catholic*, continuing: "In many instances this means that parishes need to take greater ownership of the parish and the home as places of evangelisation and not leave everything to the school."

The third edition of *Do This*

*in Memory*, the parish-based programme of preparation for First Holy Communion will emphasise the family even more than before, Maeve Mahon, the Primary RE Advisor for the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, said, adding that the intention is that the new edition should be released to coincide with the World Meeting of Families in August 2018.

Although stressing that many parishes already see significant levels of parish and parental involvement in sacramental preparation, she told *The Irish Catholic* that the ways in which parishes engage with parents need to be considered so parents can be given "an opportunity to re-engage and reconnect".

## Primary task

Arguing that parents and teachers urgently need help in forming young Catholics, Prof. Conway said: "I think the primary task facing the

Irish Church is to evangelise the evangelisers and in this instance that means teachers and parents. We need to invest heavily in the ongoing formation of teachers in Church schools to help them to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a confidence in speaking about Christ in the classroom, and similarly we need to support parents."

This should be a priority

even if parishes and dioceses are not in robust financial health, he urged, saying "we need to find the resources". Maintaining that "the continuing formation of teachers in the Catholic faith seriously both in terms of what we offer and what we require", he said: "There is no point in having a Catholic school in which Christian faith cannot be proposed at least as an invitation."

See Page 12.

## President Higgins to meet with Pope Francis in Rome

Mags Gargan

President Michael D. Higgins is expected to meet with Pope Francis during a visit to Rome next week.

The visit, which is set to take place in the Vatican's Papal Library, will be the first private meeting between the two heads of state. President Higgins previously met the Pontiff at the papal inauguration ceremony in 2013.

## Mission

The president, accompanied by his wife Sabina, addressed Pope Francis in both Spanish and Irish, wishing him every success in his mission for the Church.

"My wish for you on behalf of the people of Ireland is for the best of health in your mission on behalf of all of humanity," he said.

After being received by Pope Francis in an audience on Monday, President Higgins will meet with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State for the Vatican.

Meanwhile, President Higgins will receive His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, at Áras an Uachtaráin today (Thursday).

Pope Tawadros II will be accompanied by a number of archbishops and will have a private meeting with the President.

## Rita Ora reveals pride at singing for Pope



Pop superstar Rita Ora has revealed that one of her proudest moments was performing at the Vatican last year, at a ceremony to mark the canonisation of Mother Teresa, a fellow native of Kosovo. "Oh, it was beautiful," she said. "To hear my voice in that room – incredible reverberation by the way – was amazing. There was an opera singer, an orchestra and the Pope and a whole bunch of priests. I didn't know where to look, so I stared over their heads and hoped for the best."

## Abortion poll shows support limited

The Pro Life Campaign (PLC) has said it is confident that polls showing support for abortion would change rapidly in the event of any referendum "as people start to reflect on what the changes would mean in practice and how it would open the door to abortion on wide-ranging circumstances".

A survey by Behaviour & Attitudes for *The Sunday Times* found that 77% supported abortion "in cases where the mother's health could be damaged by pregnancy". There was strong opposition to more liberal grounds for termination with 58% opposing abortion for socio-economic reasons and 60% opposed unrestricted grounds for abortion.

"The clear lesson from the Citizens' Assembly is that once you start singling out certain unborn babies as unworthy of legal protection, then in effect you are saying that unborn human life in general has no intrinsic value," said PLC spokesperson Cora Sherlock.

"As a society, we either protect all human life or you end up protecting none," she said.

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# Ian Brady and the problem of evil

I'll never forget Michael Parkinson, the television host, telling me about his experiences as a young reporter in the north of England during 1966, when he was sent to cover the trial of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, the Moors murderers.

The press gallery, he said, was packed with experienced and even hard-bitten crime reporters who had seen every type of crime. But when the tapes recording the tormented screams of the murdered children were played in court, everyone was seen in tears. It was, recalled Mike, the most unbearable experience of his life.

There was widespread public regret that the death penalty had just been abolished, so Brady and Hindley were sentenced to life imprisonment for the five children they had murdered, several of whom had also been sexually assaulted.

**“Hindley expressed remorse, Brady did not”**

Later, in prison, Myra Hindley said that she felt she should have been hanged. Brady, who was judged to be the more culpable of the two, and who has just died of natural causes aged 79, requested assisted suicide since 1999 – refused on grounds of mental health.

Hindley, perhaps under the influence of Lord Longford, an indefatigable prison visitor, expressed remorse. Brady did not, and went to his death refusing to say where one of his little victims, was buried.

The Ian Brady case (Brady was the name of his Irish



Mary Kenny



Myra Hindley and Ian Brady.

stepfather – he was born Ian Stewart) has evinced much speculation on the nature of wickedness: and whether he was ‘bad or mad’. His lawyer Robin Makin has claimed that Brady suffered from a “mental illness”, but the popular press, and popular opinion too, simply regards him as evil.

If so, where does such evil come from? Was he born that way or did something in his disjointed childhood cause it?

To say that he suffered from a ‘mental illness’ is to suggest that people with a mental illness are inclined to be psychopathic killers. To say that it was caused by a dysfunctional childhood – he was born illegitimate – is to

diminish the many heroic people who have overcome hard childhoods. To say he was born evil is to say there is no redemption from a pre-destined fate.

## Gallows

Saved from the gallows by parliament, Brady lived 50 years behind bars and in solitary confinement (to protect him from attacks by other prisoners), and in all that time no answers really emerged as to why he carried out these terrible deeds, which haunted the victims’ family ever since.

His life is certainly an example of the moral, philosophical, but very real, problem of evil.

## Macron true to Jesuits

The French economist Alain Minc – one of President Macron’s mentors – has told the Irish journalist Melanie McDonagh that M. Macron is “a liberal Catholic”. Well, he is a Jesuit boy, and it would be surprising if a Jesuit education hadn’t left a formative mark. And he does seem to be less fanatically secularist than some elements in French republican tradition.

## McEwan’s novel approach is risky

The Scottish novelist Ian McEwan [pictured] has annoyed many older British people by suggesting that if a new Brexit vote were to be held in 2019, thankfully, many oldies will have died off. “2.5 million over 18-year-olds freshly enfranchised [in 2017]. 1.5 oldsters, mostly Brexiteers, freshly in their graves.”

Novelists, I’d suggest, seldom make astute political or social commentators.

They excel in writing fiction – that is to say, making things up. In the Irish context, I rarely find that Marian Keyes or Eimear McBride are towering intellects of political thought.

McEwan’s commentary on oldsters falls into the Stalin’s Error category. Stalin

famously said that religion would fade away in Russia because “only old people are seen in church”. He failed to consider that anyone who survives into old age – admittedly a challenge in Stalin’s Soviet Union – eventually becomes old. He also failed to understand that faith was deeply embedded in the Russian people, and it would spring forth once again in the exquisitely rebuilt onion domes visible today.

It’s possible that Brexit politics may have changed by 2019. It’s possible that the British people might vote differently. But anticipating the dying-off of a cohort of people doesn’t usually turn out just as predicted. ‘Be surprised by life’ is the wisest counsel!



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# Papal praise and Vatican improvements both welcome – Marie Collins

Greg Daly

Campaigner Marie Collins has welcomed praise for her from Pope Francis as support for her work and her reasons about stepping down from the Vatican child protection commission earlier this year.

"It was nice to hear the Pope's comments about myself, and it is I suppose a validation of the work I've done and the things I've said," she told *The Irish Catholic*, continuing, "He obviously, from what he said, doesn't see me as a negative critic, which is good."

Mrs Collins' resignation from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was announced in February, with her citing frustration with Vatican bureaucrats she believed were obstructing the commission's work.

## Comments

The Pontiff's comments came during a press conference on his flight back from Fatima last weekend, when he was asked who was responsible for failures to implement proposals he had backed, and what he was doing to ensure the commission's proposals were carried out.

In answering, Pope Francis described Mrs Collins as "a good woman" who "wants to work" and "continues to work on the formation of priests on this point", before saying that "she had some reasons" for her frustration.

Pointing to how the disciplinary section of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the

Faith (CDF) is struggling with a back-up of 2,000 cases, the Pope said that CDF head Cardinal Gerhard Müller had just days earlier taken on extra staff, and is seeking more.

He also praised Dubliner Msgr John Kennedy, the new head of the disciplinary sec-

tion, for having brought a new efficiency to the task.

"The director of the disciplinary office has changed, he was good, he was very good, but he was a bit tired: he returned to his homeland to do the same job with his bishop," he said, continu-

ing, "And the new one – is an Irishman, Msgr Kennedy – is very good, very efficient – a prompt person, and that helps a lot."

Welcoming the Pope's comments on how things have changed since Msgr Kennedy took over, Mrs Col-

lins said: "I think things have improved in the last few weeks and that things have speeded up, and that's an obvious sign that the change in leadership there with Msgr Kennedy coming in has made a difference."

## Knock's youngest witness honoured in New York



Members from the Ancient Order of Hibernians prepare to carry the coffin of John Curry, the youngest witness to the apparition at Knock, to be reinterred at the Basilica of St Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York at a Requiem Mass celebrated by Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Photo: Sinéad Mallee

## Ashers profits rise after 'gay cake' case

Staff reporter

The Northern bakery run by a Christian couple who last year lost a discrimination case over refusing to make a cake advocating same-sex marriage saw their profits rise in 2016.

Controversy around Daniel and Amy McArthur's Ashers Baking Company's 2014 refusal to make a cake bearing the slogan 'Support gay marriage' has not harmed the couple's business, which earned profits of £1.5 (€1.75) million for 2016, up from up from £1.3 (€1.52) million in 2015.

A refusal to fulfil one order

recently drew fresh attention to the seven-store baking chain, after London-based Grainne McCann revealed how Ashers had cancelled her order for an engagement cake bearing the words "Gay marriage rocks! Happy engagement, Andy and Joe! Lots of love xxx."

### Judgment

Ashers' terms and conditions say they will not make cakes bearing "threatening, defamatory, blasphemous or pornographic material".

The UK Supreme Court, meanwhile, has decided that it will this autumn consider last year's judgment, which

saw Ashers, after an estimated £200,000 (€233,000) in legal fees, being directed to pay £500 (€582) damages to gay rights activist Gareth Lee, who was backed by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### Defence

The North's attorney general, John Larkin, had spoken in defence of Ashers.

Mr McArthur has welcomed the decision, saying, "The fact that the Supreme Court is willing to hear arguments is very encouraging and reflects the importance of the issues and the high-profile nature of the case."

province is "in consultation with Dublin City Council about the new location of the statue" and they hope to have a decision soon.

## New 'St Francis' bridge to open in Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Council has voted to name the city's new CAS bridge, due to open next week, after St Francis. Fianna Fáil councillor Joe Malone told *The Irish Catholic* he has asked the Cathaoirleach to write to Pope Francis inviting him to visit the bridge during his expected trip to Ireland next year for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin.

## Social mix needed to avoid modular ghettos

Action should be taken to prevent homeless families being settled in modular housing 'ghettos', Focus Ireland has warned.

Responding to reports that Dublin City Council plans to offer permanent tenancies in high-quality modular houses for homeless families who have been living in hotels, Focus' Mike Allen said that while the houses are suitable for this but there would be a risk that surrounding communities could see clusters of such houses as "the 'homeless houses'".

## Development

To prevent "ghettoisation and stigmatisation", he said, community development support would be vital as would ensuring a social mix.

"One of the things we would suggest, say with 20 units, that some of them be used for families moving out of homelessness and others be used for families on the transfer list," he said, pointing out that this would not affect the overall amount of housing available.

"We need to think about them as communities," he said.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Bill would 'destroy' faith schools

Draft educational legislation would destroy faith-based schools, religious freedom think-tank The Iona Institute has warned. It was responding to the 'Equal Participation in Schools Bill' proposed by Ruth Coppinger TD.

The draft proposes to take away the right of denominational schools to have a religious ethos and would require religious education to take place outside schools hours.

Commenting on the Coppinger Bill, David Quinn of The Iona Institute said: "Taking all of the Bill's proposals together, the effect of them would be to effectively destroy denominational education in this country."

"They would extinguish the rights of the very many parents who still want to see their children taught in schools that reflect their religious beliefs," Mr Quinn said.

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# Church renewal in hands of next generation – archbishop

**Mags Gargan**

The Church in Ireland now looks to the next generation of priests for renewal, according to Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

Speaking at the priestly ordination of Edward Cosgrove SJ in the chapel of Milltown Park on Sunday, the Archbishop of Dublin told the Jesuit he had “become a priest at a new time in the history of the Irish Church”.

Archbishop Martin said it seemed like his own generation is handing “a weaker and more fragile Church” to the next generation – a Church that is now “fewer in numbers, weakened by scandal, less credible due to our life style”.

“We look to your genera-

tion now to call the Church to renewal”, he said, continuing that he prayed that the ministry of the next generation “will be marked by an ever closer configuration to Jesus Christ” and a style of life and spirituality appropriate to their calling.

## Authority

Archbishop Martin said that the priest “can never become obsessed with his own authority”.

He said those who exercise authority in the Church must act, not out of an arbitrary obedience to rules and regulations, but “from an obedience which through prayer seeks to enter into the mystery of the bond between Jesus and his Father”.

He noted that the two



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin celebrating the ordination of Eddie Cosgrove SJ, from Dromahair, Co. Leitrim, in the chapel of Milltown Park in Dublin on Sunday.

most fundamental dimensions of the priestly life of Blessed John Sullivan, who was beatified in Dublin on Saturday, were his practice of poverty and of obedience.

He said that the key to Fr Sullivan’s holiness lay in his

“continual conversion in his life of poverty and in a life of configuration to Christ through prayer”.

## Reform

“The Church,” he added, “is called to continual reform.

The Church is called continually to identify sinfulness in its ranks – each of us is called to identify sinfulness in our hearts – and to repent and to return in all humility and purification to our true calling.”

‘They’ll have to shoot us’

» Continued from Page 1

institutions still functioning quite well in the country, we have an important role to play in bringing hope and material help to the people,” the Spiritan missionary said.

## Ethnic cleansing

He also said that ‘ethnic cleansing’ is going on in many parts of the country. The conflict, Fr John told *The Irish Catholic*, has left people “with a devastated wasteland”. However, the missionary said they are “grimly determined to continue on with their lives as best they can”.

South Sudan became independent from Sudan in July 2011, after Africa’s longest-running civil war ended. However, violence erupted in 2013 when President Salva Kiir Mayardit sacked his vice-president Riek Machar, who has now become a rebel leader.

A peace deal in 2015 was violently shattered in July 2016, causing the current crisis.

See Page 8.

## Rugby player reveals strength of faith

**Staff Reporter**

A young rugby player has revealed the strength he receives from his faith, speaking at a Mass to celebrate sport in his parish in Co. Sligo.

Connacht prop and Irish under-20 squad member, Conan O’Donnell, told St Patrick’s in Strandhill that “God is important in my life”.

“My faith was nurtured by regular family prayer and attendance and participation in Sunday Mass regardless of whether the rugby game was home or away on any given Sunday,” he said.

The rising rugby star said each Sunday after Mass he always lights a candle and asks “for God’s protection during games and to keep me injury free”. However, his faith was tested when he fractured his ankle last October, which ended his involvement with the Irish U-20 six nations team.

## Low point

“This seriously tested my faith and left me with a feeling of abandonment by God,” he said. “Following my injury, I returned to Sunday Mass on my ‘scooter’ and repaired my relationship with God by simply talking to him and letting him know how I felt at this low point in my life.”

Now back at full training, the young player said it was important to remember that God loves us unconditionally “and that you never suffer alone”.



Conan O’Donnell. Photo: Sportsfile

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Mags Gargan

# Irish missionaries offer hope in 'wasteland' of South Sudan



Fr John Skinnader CSSp, a Spiritan priest from Co. Monaghan, pictured with local children among the devastation of war-torn South Sudan.

The picture opposite of children foraging for food among waste best sums up the situation in South Sudan, says Fr John Skinnader CSSp, a Spiritan priest from Co. Monaghan who has been based in the country since 2012.

"The three tall buildings, just visible at the back, are the only ones standing after the fighting and bombing of July 2016. People are left with a devastated wasteland but are grimly determined to continue on with their lives as best they can," he tells *The Irish Catholic*.

"From the highs of independence in 2011, the South Sudanese people have been left with a 'failed state' and the promise of more violence to come."

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011 as the result of a 2005 agreement that ended Africa's longest-running civil war. An overwhelming majority of the South Sudanese population

had voted to secede in a referendum earlier that year. The young state then plunged into crisis in December 2013 amid a power struggle between the president and his deputy, whom he had sacked. Presi-

dent Kiir signed a peace deal with rebel leader and former Vice President Riek Machar in 2015. However, violence broke out again between government forces and opposition factions in July 2016, and South Sudan has now become the world's fastest-growing refugee crisis, with more than 1.8 million refugees having sought safety in neighbouring countries.

Fr John is working in two of the UN camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, which hold more than 30,000 people who fled the ethnic killings when the conflict started in 2013.

"The main conflict is between the two largest ethnic groups: the Dinka and the Nuer. However, smaller ethnic groups are now being pulled into the conflict as they are defending themselves from the 'ethnic-cleansing' that is going on in many parts of the country," he says.

"In this situation people tend to turn to their churches for help and protection, and as the Catholic Church continues to be one of the few institutions still functioning quite well in the country, we have an important role to play in bringing hope and material help to the people."

Fr John says despite the many obstacles faced in getting church services organised, Masses were held throughout the camps on Easter Sunday and "people really appreciate the presence of the Church as a sign that the Risen Lord is with them".

## Consortium

Sr Margaret Sheehan, a member of the Society of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus from Co. Limerick, is working in Yambio with Solidarity with South Sudan, a consortium of more than 200 religious congregations train-

ing teachers, nurses and pastoral workers in South Sudan.

"We are in a terrible situation nationwide in South Sudan," Sr Margaret says. "Yambio is not suffering as much as other places because people somehow manage to plant but the people live with the possibility of an attack at any one time."

The house where Sr Margaret and her teaching colleagues are based was attacked in December 2015, but she says she will not leave the country "unless they shoot us out of the place".

"We were attacked by a small group of rebels where they took cars and phones and computers. Two of our members left after this experience so as well as what they took from us, we lost two very good teachers," she says.

Food has become an urgent issue in South Sudan as inflation rises at an incredible rate, making food too expensive for most people and creating famine conditions.

**“There is famine in many parts of the country but we continue to buy arms”**

"Many shops in Yambio town are closed as it is difficult to get food into our state because of insecurity along the roads," Sr Margaret says. "Also the dollar has soared, for example, when I came out to South Sudan in 2008 it was 3.2 South Sudanese Pounds to the dollar. Yesterday it was 145ssp to the dollar. Many workers are also not getting paid as most of the funds go to buying arms. There is famine in many parts of the country but we continue to buy arms."

"Hunger is a big issue

for the people as inflation is rampant," says Fr John, who is the co-ordinator of the Spiritan group in South Sudan. He says the Spiritans and a number of other religious congregations have feeding programmes in schools and parishes.

"We have two parishes in the Diocese of Rumbek: Wulu in the North run by a Kenyan and a Tanzanian Spiritan; and Tun Aduel which is run by another of our Kenyan priests," Fr John says.

"Thanks to the support of Misesan Cara and Love of Neighbour Worldwide/NLW, a German-registered missionary-supporting NGO, as well as family and friends, we have been able to help thousands of our parishioners to have at least one meal every other day.

"We also support those organisations that have permission to go to the famine areas which are controlled by the government."

## Difficulties

Sr Margaret says she and her colleagues continue to try and train primary school teachers in Yambio. One of the difficulties they face is that the students are trapped at the school 365 days of the year because it is not safe for them to travel home at the end of the school term.

"We cannot send them home at the end of the year as every student has to fly now because there is hardly any road transport, so we do not have funds for them to have any break," she explains.

"They come and stay here until they graduate. Having no time between one semester is hard on the body and the soul but we accept it because it is what we have to do. We continue every day to pray for peace," she says.

Fr John says, in a time of war and famine, missionaries "try to be a presence to the people".

"A sign that the outside world has not forgotten them and that God continues to look after them through the NGOs and Church personnel who bring food, water, medical care to them."

Sr Margaret Sheehan FCJ.



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# If Hell is a reality, priests should preach about it

It's wrong for clerics to use the excuse of a past overemphasis on fire and damnation to avoid talk of the reality of rejecting God, writes **David Quinn**

**P**ope Francis has something of a cuddly image with the general public and with many priests. The Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), for example, wants the incoming Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo of Nigeria, to seek out bishops in the mould of Francis. I'm all for that, so long as they are truly in Francis' mould because he is more realistic and tough-minded than we think.

It is true that Pope Francis strongly emphasises mercy in his preaching and wants the Church to do the same. But it is also true that Pope Francis, although he speaks about the issue of abortion less than his two immediate predecessors, still talks about it far more than the average priest or bishop.

He also draws attention to the 'global war' on the family far more than the average priest or bishop. He condemns 'gender ideology' far more than the average priest or bishop. (Did you know that under Irish law the sex you are has absolutely nothing to do with the sex of your body? Under Irish law you can choose your sex ('gender') irrespective of what your body says you are.)

## Little evidence

In addition, the Pope speaks about the devil and about Hell a lot more than your average priest or bishop. So, if bishops are to be truly like Pope Francis, then they must be willing to speak about these things as well. Is that what the ACP truly wants? I see little evidence of it in their utterings.

In any event, when Pope Francis was in Fatima



Charon and his boat of damned souls in Michelangelo's fresco of *The Last Judgement* in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel.

last weekend to canonise siblings Francisco and Jacinta Marto, the youngest of the three Fatima seers, he spoke directly about Hell, which features in the Fatima visions.

Pope Francis said: "Our Lady foretold, and warned us about, a way of life that is godless and indeed profanes God in his creatures. Such a life – frequently proposed and imposed – risks leading to Hell."

**“As Christians, we believe that we are free to accept God or reject him”**

He has spoken about Hell several times during his pontificate. For example, he also did so only last November speaking during his morning Mass at the Vatican.

Referring to his childhood, he said: "I remember when I was a boy, when I'd go to catechism they taught us four things: death, judgment, Hell or glory – that after judgment there's this possibility" of going to Heaven or to Hell.

The children didn't believe this, he remarked. They thought the priest was only trying to scare them.

Pope Francis continued: "No, it's true! Because if you do not take care of your heart so that the Lord is with you, and you always live far from the Lord, perhaps there is this danger, the danger of continuing to be distanced from the Lord for all of eternity."

It is apparent, therefore, that the 'Four Last Things' referred to by the Holy Father, are an integral part of

his teaching. To this extent, he is much more 'old-fashioned' and traditional than we've been led to believe.

In fact, to jettison belief in Hell would be to jettison something that is integral to Catholic teaching because it is hard to see how you can believe in God and in free will without also believing in Hell.

As Christians, we believe that we are free to accept God or reject him. This is what the Pope meant when he said in his Fatima homily that a life "that is godless and indeed profanes God in his creatures [that is, treats his creatures badly]" can lead to Hell, to separation from God.

## Service of others

Of course, the Pope has also said that an atheist might get to Heaven quicker than a Christian. What he meant by this is that some atheists lead better lives than some Christians and to this extent are (paradoxically) more Christian and more faithful than Christians can be at times.

But the atheist who leads a good life, that is to say, a life driven by the service of others, is not leading a truly 'godless' life. Some atheists don't believe in God for sincere reasons because, for example, they cannot see how a good God would allow such suffering as exists in the world. This is very different from a wilful rejection of God and all he represents.

If there is free will, then we must have the ability to accept God or to reject him. The person who says they believe in God but "profanes God in his creatures" does not really

believe in God. They only say they do and might have convinced themselves that they do when in fact the God they believe in is really an extension of themselves, and might even be used as an instrument to bully people,

which has often happened in the history of the Christian community (the Church).

If you reject God the logical consequence of this is separation from God after death. As C.S. Lewis once said, God does not condemn

you to Hell, you condemn yourself to Hell by your own actions or your own choices. You do this by making yourself God and by refusing to recognise that everyone around you is made in the image and likeness of God.

## Free will

There is almost no preaching about Hell these days. This is in reaction to an overemphasis on fire and damnation preaching in the past. But if Hell is a reality, that is, if rejecting God is a possibility, and it has to be given free will, then it is extremely remiss of clergy to so deemphasise it because of previously overemphasising it.

It should, therefore be re-included in the occasional homily and priests need only quote Pope Francis himself and take advantage of his popularity to preach an unpopular but true doctrine.

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## Pope Francis could use visit to right a wrong

The Jesuit Pope might visit the shrine of a colleague, but there's another nearby tomb he could consider as well, writes **Finola Kennedy**



When stepping down from the role of Taoiseach, both Charlie Haughey and Brian Cowen quoted household names: William Shakespeare and John F. Kennedy respectively. Not so Bertie Ahern who quoted the Jesuit priest Blessed John Sullivan: "This day now, at least let this be a good day. Be always beginning, let the past go. Now let me do whatever I have the power to do".

Two years ago a special Evensong was held in Christchurch Cathedral to commemorate Fr John Sullivan. The Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson presided. He captured in a phrase what many agree is the essence of John Sullivan when he said that he moved from 'sophistication to simplicity' in his way of life. At the service many Jesuit priests stood alongside their Church of Ireland counterparts.

A papal visit to Ireland from Pope Francis is expected next August. It may provide an opportunity to redress an omission during the last papal visit in 1979. For the community in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Sean McDermott Street, named after a 1916 leader, it was what Pope John Paul II did not do that mattered.

### Preparation

For weeks before the visit locals had cleaned the church and literally scrubbed the streets in preparation for the anticipated visit of the Pope to the Shrine of Matt Talbot, the Dublin labourer who struggled with alcohol. The Pope, who had greeted VIPs in the morning at the airport and would greet many of the same people again at a reception that evening, failed to stop at Sean McDermott Street.

Since then the Sean McDermott Street parish has changed in some unforeseen ways. Fr Richard Ebejer, until recently the administrator, is a Salesian priest from Malta. In a letter to this newspaper in 2015 in the context of a possible visit to Ireland by Pope Francis, Fr Ebejer described how John Paul II "was just driven past the church" in Sean McDermott Street.

### “The disappointment of the locals is still very palpable today, 36 years later”

He said: "The disappointment of the locals is still very palpable today, 36 years later."

A community at its best and most welcoming felt snubbed. Fr Ebejer claims that the Shrine of Matt Talbot was actually included in the Pope's itinerary but due to 'logistic reasons' the Pope did not stop. Fr Ebejer suggested that if Pope Francis came to visit the Shrine of Matt Talbot he would surely also visit the Shrine of the Jesuit John Sullivan around the corner in Gardiner Street. Now it may be the other way around.

**Finola Kennedy is an economist and writer.**

# Historic beatification



Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson speaking in front of a newly-unveiled portrait of Fr John Sullivan.



Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, greeting Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson and Catholic Archbishop Diarmuid Martin at the crypt of Fr Sullivan.

### Mags Gargan

The beatification of Dubliner Fr John Sullivan SJ, a convert from Anglicanism, has been hailed as a sign of reconciliation in Ireland.

The first ever beatification in Ireland was held in the Jesuit Church on Gardiner Street on Saturday with Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, as chief celebrant.

The ceremony, attended by almost 2,000 people in the church, garden marquee and at Belvedere College, consisted of a Mass during which a formal request for beatification was publicly made.

In an unprecedented ecumenical gesture, this request was made together by the two archbishops of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin and Dr Michael Jackson, reflecting the fact that Fr John was an Anglican for the first half of his life and Roman Catholic for the second.

Archbishop Jackson said Blessed John Sullivan "had a special place in the hearts of all of us who are members of the Church of Ireland".

"We mark with the Jesuit Order in Ireland and world-



Marquees were set up in the garden of the church to accommodate numbers.

wide, along with the Christian Church everywhere, the beatification in the Roman Catholic tradition of John Sullivan SJ. We do so mindful of the unending need for reconciliation in Ireland and expectant of the abundant

grace of God," he said.

Cardinal Amato said Fr Sullivan had been "exemplary" in his religious duties. "Those who knew him considered him a saint, and in my opinion he had reached a high degree of perfection.

"Even though he came from a rich family, once he became a religious he was oblivious to comforts and contented himself with that which was purely necessary. Faithful to the vow of poverty, he gave immediately to oth-



# is a sign of reconciliation



Cardinal Angelo Amato venerating two relics of Fr Sullivan during the beatification Mass on Saturday in Dublin. Photos: John McElroy



Some of the ecumenical congregation at the ceremony.



Cardinal Amato greeting some volunteers with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin at the conclusion of the Beatification Mass.

ers every gift he received," he said.

Other dignitaries in attendance included Archbishop Eamon Martin, Fr Toni Witwer SJ, General Postulator for Jesuit causes; Fr Leonard Moloney, Irish Jesuit Provin-

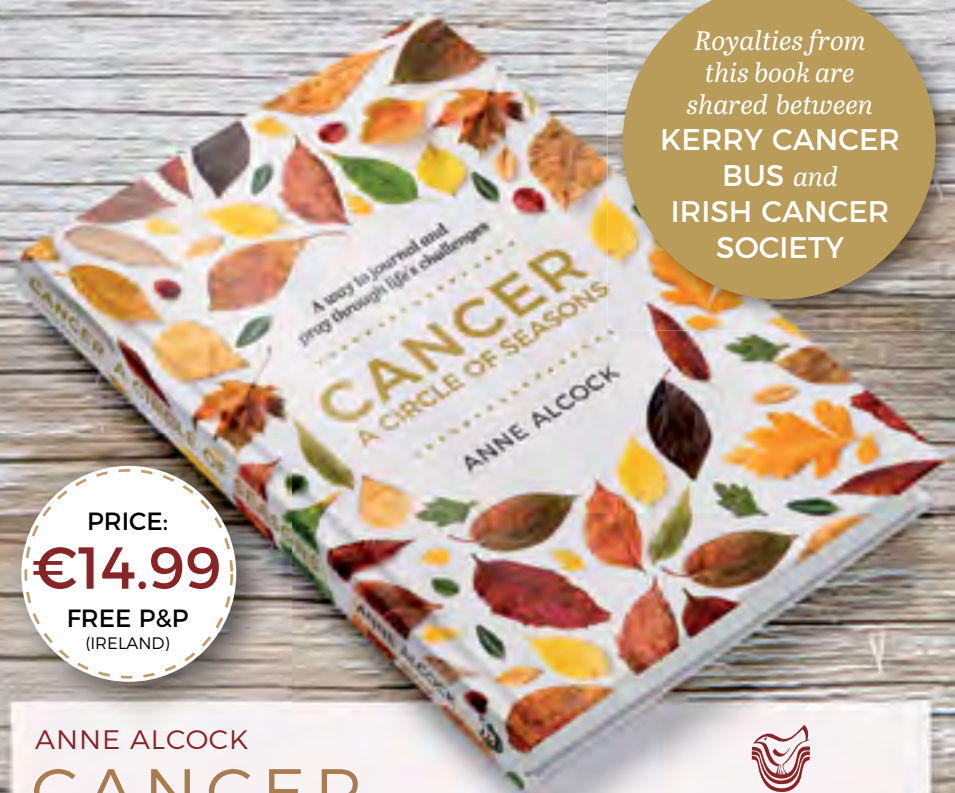
cial and Brendan Carr, Lord Mayor of Dublin.

Members of Fr John's family, Peter Lloyd and his wife Sarah and their two sons Hector and Joyelln, also attended. Representatives from Portora Royal School,

Enniskillen and Trinity College Dublin, which Fr John attended in the 1870s, were present and music was provided by students from Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare where Fr Sullivan was a teacher.

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# The sacramental triangle

Parish, families and schools all have key roles to play in sacramental preparation, Greg Daly hears

For at least one speaker at last weekend's McAuley Conference in Limerick's Mary Immaculate College, the question of whether sacramental preparation should be removed from schools is a simple one.

"Yes," said Stijn Van den Bossche, continuing, "this is not disrespectful to schools, but the sacraments belong in the parish."

It might seem ironic for a member of the Belgian Church to be so confident on this issue – as he himself admitted, figures for Catholic practice in Brussels especially could hardly be worse.

Just 5% of baptised Catholics attend Mass weekly in the Belgian capital, with a mere 0.75% of those aged between 18 and 35 doing so. These figures are minuscule despite between 50 and 60% of all children born in Belgium being baptised in the Church, he said, noting too that there are effectively no vocations being answered for the priesthood, that about 80% of parents presenting a child for baptism are not married in the Church, and that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is almost non-existent in the country.

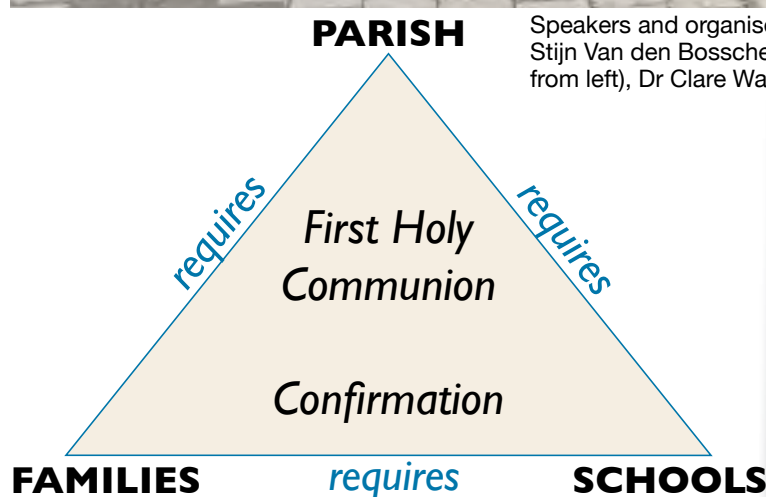
However, he pointed out, none of this is new: as early as the 1930s, these trends had been identified and there was a real concern about the future of the Church in Belgium, with real issues being clear by the 1950s. Part of the problem is that difficulties get embedded over time: people who don't really believe in the Faith to which they notionally subscribe cannot really transmit or share that Faith, such that the problem is worsened with each generation.

## Missionary approach

This needs to be faced, he said, saying the only answers lie in the Church taking a more missionary approach, accepting that our old Catholicism of convention is gone in a paradigm shift to a Catholicism of conviction.



Speakers and organisers at the 10th McAuley Conference, including Dr Stijn Van den Bossche (rear, third from right), Eugene Duffy (front, second from left), Dr Clare Watkins (front, centre) and Maeve Mahon (front right).



Parents who want their children to practice their Faith will need to be much more active, he said, recalling St Augustine's call for parents to be priests to their children, but the Church has a key role to play in supporting this.

**“There’s a conversation we need to have about what is the role of school in preparing children for sacraments”**

He suggested that parents seeking Baptism for their children should have to give three months' notice for this, and be offered a simple marriage ceremony along with other supports and Baptisms being clearly parish rather than private ceremonies.

Afterwards, he said, the challenge should be to invite families into the life of their parishes.

He also raised the question of whether the classic collective First Holy Communion ceremony should be done away with, in favour of children first receiving the sacrament when parents and priests jointly believe them ready, with this being followed, perhaps, by a larger parish feast for all children who had recently been initiated into the fullness of the Church as 'the body of Christ'.

While Maeve Mahon of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin clearly sympathised with aspects of this, she held that taking sacraments out of schools would be less a radical move than one that could uproot the Faith altogether.

"There's a conversation we need to have about what is the role of school in preparing children for sacraments," she told me, arguing that there can be too much emphasis on the idea of First Holy Communion as a 'big day' for which schoolchildren devote many hours of practice as though it's a show event.

Maintaining that "sacraments do belong in schools", she nonetheless said that the amount of time spent practicing for the ceremony had to go.

In focusing on what she reluctantly called a "performance-led celebration", and on children's various tasks on the day, the emphasis on what's really happening – the sacrament itself – can be lost, she said. "It is lovely," she said of how the children can seem on the day, "but it's not fair – it's not what it's about."

## Support

Calling for better support for parents so families are more thoroughly involved in sacramental preparation, she nonetheless reiterated later that the role of schools is vitally important.

"The school does this work of preparing the children in a formative way – they give them information and they give them formation in faith, and as I say about creating a Christian community within

the school context – so they learn what it is to belong to a Christian community as well, which is fundamental."

"All of that has to happen in school if for no other reason than that we don't have the structures to do that in our parishes," she pointed out.

For Eugene Duffy, organiser of the conference, there is a tendency to forget that Catholic primary schools are – according to *Share the Good News*, the Irish bishops' national directory for catechesis – "an outreach of the parish".

Indeed, he observed, sometimes it can seem that First Holy Communion and Confirmation are events for local schools, rather than for the parish as a whole.

Noting that initiation into the Church at large is through the local parish, he observed that while our parishes are faith communities, they are also shaped by many more factors than Faith and the Church.

Idealised descriptions of the parish from decades ago no longer apply, he said, "even if reading some of our Church documents you would think that it did", noting that for many people our homes, our places of work, our recreation spots and our churches are all quite separate and often some way apart, such that there is even a question now about how meaningfully we can speak of parish communities.

Often, he said, a parish can seem simply "a territorial or structured arrangement or service provider for rites of passage".

In line with other speakers, he expressed sympathy with the kinds of "deeply evangelical" approaches to Church life advocated by Pope Francis and said "we've been used to a much more passive or vicarious approach to evangelisation – we're happy that it's done by others", stressing that a major challenge now is to form parishes capable of forming individuals."

**“We’ve been used to a much more passive or vicarious approach to evangelisation”**

For Dr Clare Watkins, the conference's keynote speaker, the question of whether sacramental preparation should be taken out of schools may perhaps be based on unhelpful and outdated assumptions about the triangular relationship between schools, parishes, and families.

"It's only when we can reimagine the three elements theologically that we're going to understand the way in which all our faith formation and growth in Faith is going to increasingly be made up of events in Church that meet people where they are," she said.

Maintaining what while teachers and parents and schools must be able to "name our faith" and speak in the language of faith as well as the languages of youth and culture, she also added that more thought is needed about the family in this situation.

"I suspect – and I think this is what lies behind *Amores Laetitia* as well – that the renewal of the Church and the renewal of Faith and the renewal of parishes will only come through a renewal of the domestic church, the household, in all its messiness, in all its fragmentedness – that's the place where a lot of the answers to these questions will be held," she said.





# Fatima 1917-2017

## Follow Mary... be a sign of God's mercy



**M**ary is the "Mother of the Needy", Pope Francis declared in Fatima last weekend, cautioning pilgrims against thinking of her as "a plaster statue" of our own making from whom favours can be begged at little cost, and who "restrains the arm of a vengeful God".

Instead, the Pope said, Mary is the mother of the needy, to whom we cling like children, living in the hope that rests on Jesus, he said.

Our Lady did not come to Fatima simply so we could see her, he told a gathered crowd of 500,000 people at the canonisation Mass for Ss Jacinta and Francisco Marto, two of the three

children who saw Mary in Fatima 100 years ago.

Rather, he said, she came to remind us of the dangers of living a godless life that profanes God in his creatures, and to remind us of the hope that lies in Christ.

Urging those gathered to follow the example of the Church's newest saints,

he recall how from Mary's embrace comes the peace that all humanity requires – especially the sick and disabled, prisoners and unemployed, poor and abandoned.

He ended his visit by reminding the sick that they are of value, with gifts to offer the Church, and should never be ashamed of this.

# John Moriarty

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# Raising his servants from their lowliness



Pope Francis blesses the sick with the Eucharist at the conclusion of the canonisation Mass.



Pope Francis leads a vigil in the Chapel of Apparitions at the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima.



Blue skies overhead as Pope Francis celebrates the canonisation Mass of Ss Francisco and Jacinta Marto.

## Greg Daly describes Pope Francis' brief but moving pilgrimage to Fatima

If doubts remained in any hearts about how Pope Francis thinks over Our Lady, his words at a candlelit ceremony last weekend in Fatima's apparition chapel should have banished them.

"I feel that Jesus has entrusted you to me," he said, thanking the gathered crowds and continuing, "and I embrace all of you and commend you to Jesus, especially those most in need" – as Our Lady taught us to pray.

"May she, the loving and solicitous Mother of the needy," he continued, "obtain for them the Lord's blessing! On each of the destitute and outcast robbed of the present, on each of the excluded and abandoned denied a future, on each of the orphans and victims of injustice refused a past, may there descend the blessing of God, incarnate in Jesus Christ."

This, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin has observed, is the Mary we see in the Magnificat.

On arriving at the shrine on Saturday evening, the Holy Father headed for the small apparition chapel where he spent several minutes in prayerful silence before the statue of Mary that had been venerated by his predecessors Benedict XVI and Blessed Paul VI, as well as – most famously – St John Paul II, who had a bullet from the unsuccessful 1981 attempt on his life embedded in the statue's crown.

Before placing a silver vase containing golden roses at the statue's feet, the Pope recited an expanded version of the traditional *Salve Regina* ('Hail Holy Queen') in which he alternated verses with a choral refrain venerating the 'Queen of the Rosary of Fatima'.

### Intercession

As he prayed, he consecrated himself to Mary and entrusted to her intercession a suffering humanity where blood "is shed in the wars tearing our world apart", calling for believers to "tear down all walls and overcome all boundaries, going to all peripheries, there revealing God's justice and peace".

Returning to the chapel later that evening, he highlighted Mary's identity as the "mother of the needy", someone who had given a human face to the Son of God. Stressing how, as Blessed Paul VI said, "if we want to be Christian, we must be Marian; in a word, we have



Banners showing Ss Jacinta and Francisco Marto, two of the three Fatima seers, hang from the facade of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima.

to acknowledge the essential, vital and providential relationship uniting Our Lady to Jesus, a relationship that opens before us the way leading to him" he said that whenever the Rosary is recited the Gospel enters into our lives.

But, he cautioned, there are different ways to interpret Mary. Celebrating her as "a teacher of the spiritual life, the first to follow Jesus on the 'narrow way' of the cross by giving us an example" and a woman "blessed because she believed", he warned against treating her as a plaster statue from which favours could be begged at little cost, a "Mary of our own making" who "restrains the arm of a vengeful God".

### “Jesus knows the meaning of sorrow and pain”

Instead, he said, we should hold fast to how God's mercy forgives our sins, urging us to stand with Mary and become "a sign and sacrament of the mercy of God, who pardons always and pardons everything".

The following day, before a crowd Portuguese authorities have estimated as about 500,000 people, Pope Francis canonised St Jacinta and Francisco Marto, two of the three shepherd children who saw Our Lady at Fatima.

In his homily he reflected on the siblings' brief lives, commenting on how they tend to be remembered less for their sanctity than for the apparitions.

"The Virgin Mother did not come here so that we could see her – we will have all eternity for that, provided, of course, that we go to Heaven," the Pope said, pointing out that she came to share a message with us, a warning to all people about leading "a way of life

that is godless and indeed profanes God in his creatures".

"Such a life," which he described as frequently proposed and imposed, "risks leading to hell. Mary came to remind us that God's light dwells within us and protects us," the Pontiff said, adding that her hopeful message reassured us that we all have her as our mother.

"Clinging to her like children, we live in the hope that rests on Jesus," he said.

### Example

Calling on the crowd to follow the example of Ss Jacinta and Francisco, in whose lives, he said, God's presence became constant, as was shown by their insistent prayers for sinners and their desire to remain ever near "the hidden Jesus" in the tabernacle, he recalled how St Jacinta told her cousin Lucia that from Mary's embrace comes the hope and peace the whole human family require, "especially the sick and the disabled, prisoners and the unemployed, the poor and the abandoned".

As Mass ended, the Pope returned to this point when he addressed the sick, reminding them that having taken upon himself all our suffering, "Jesus knows the meaning of sorrow and pain", and called on those who were suffering to remember what they have to offer.

"Don't think of yourselves simply as the recipients of charitable solidarity, but feel that you share fully in the Church's life and mission," he said, describing their silent presence, their prayers, and their acceptance of their conditions and offering of their suffering as "a spiritual resource, an asset to every Christian community".

Reminding them that God never forgets them, he said: "Do not be ashamed of being a precious treasure of the Church."



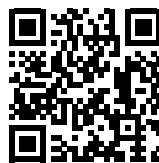


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# The sister and the saints: The seers of Fatima



## Greg Daly examines the lives of the Fatima visionaries

**R**emarkable though the Fatima apparitions were, last weekend's canonisations owed less to the visions witnessed by Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto than to how their lives were transformed by their encounter with Our Lady.

"The apparition of the Virgin Mary was an occasion, but it has nothing to do with or has not influenced the reason," Portuguese Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, former prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, has said of the reasons for the children being recognised as saints. "It was the children's heroism in their lives, their life of prayer, their turning to God that was truly holy."

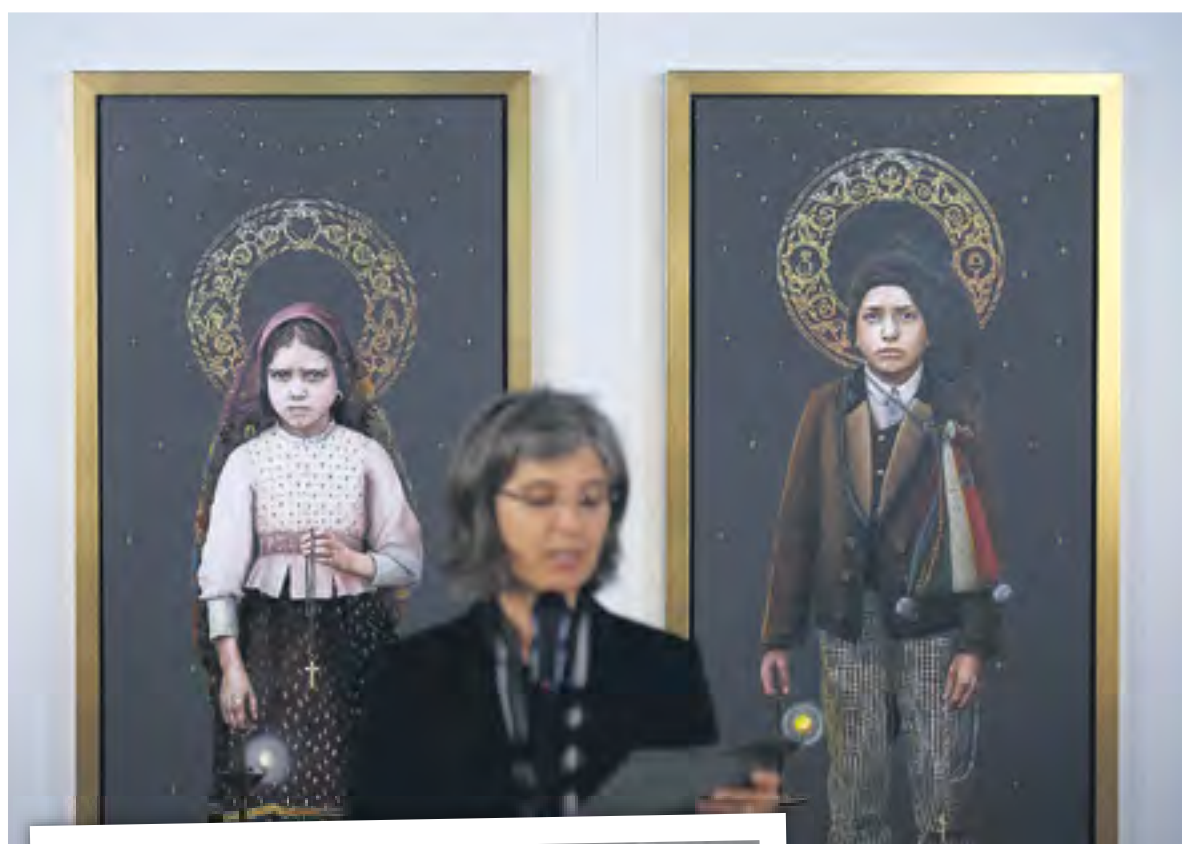
From their first encounter with Mary, the children, aged just nine and seven, turned dramatically to God after May 13, 1917, when Our Lady first appeared to them, asking the two children and their cousin Lucia to say the Rosary and make sacrifices, offering them for the conversion of sinners. The children responded by praying often, giving their lunch to beggars and going without food and sometimes even water, offering up their daily difficulties to Christ.

### “Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary”

In October 1918, just a year after the apparitions, however, Francisco and Jacinta became ill, victims of the 'Spanish flu' pandemic that ran from 1918 and 1920, and is thought to have killed over 50 million people worldwide.

Though ill, the children insisted over the following months on walking to church to make Eucharistic devotions and praying for hours, kneeling with their heads on the ground as they said they had been instructed to do.

The thoughtful and quiet Francisco, who preferred to pray alone, declined hospital



Two paintings of Blessed Jacinta Marto and Blessed Francisco Marto are presented in Fatima during a May 8 news conference ahead of their canonisation last weekend. Left, Sr Lucia, as photographed in 2000. Photos: CNS

said that the beatification process for the two young visionaries, which began in 1946, was stalled for decades because of a common view that children "do not have the capacity to practice Christian virtue in a heroic way".

Describing a declaration of heroic sanctity as "fundamental for beatification", he said he became convinced of the children's holiness by one particular event during the time of the apparitions when the children were kidnapped and threatened by the local mayor, Artur Santos.

### “Lucia 'became holy over the years, not because of the apparitions'”

Head of the local administration at a time when Portugal was under strongly anti-Catholic rule, he attempted to quash reports of the visions by having the children recant and deny the stories they had told. He separated Jacinta and Francisco from Lucia, telling the two children that Lucia had been boiled in hot oil and that they would share the same fate if they didn't say their claims were "all a fantasy", but the children replied: "You can do what you want but we

treatment and in April 1919, bedridden, he requested his first Holy Communion, and died the following day, aged just 10.

His younger sister Jacinta, notable for her affectionate nature and sweet singing voice, was moved from one hospital to another in what she said were futile attempts to save her life. She developed purulent pleurisy and under local anaesthetic only, endured an operation in which two of her ribs were removed, but she continued to deteriorate.

She died in February 1920, aged just nine, a night after she had the hospital chaplain who heard her Confession to bring her Holy Communion and administer Extreme Unction.

Shortly before her death,

Jacinta reportedly urged her cousin Lucia to speak about the Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. "When you are to say this, don't go and hide," she said, continuing, "tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask her for them; and that the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at his side. Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace, since God entrusted it to her."

### Prefect

Cardinal Saraiva Martins, who as then prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes oversaw the process that led to the beatification of Jacinta and Francisco in 2000,

cannot tell a lie. We have seen her."

The siblings were beatified in 2000, "because their heroic virtue was historically established", the cardinal said, observing, "for me, that fact of having preferred death instead of telling a lie, that is a heroic act".

In March this year, Pope Francis opened the way to the canonisation of the two siblings when, at a meeting with Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for Saints, he formally recognised the second miracle attributed to their intercession.

The saints' cousin Lucia, meanwhile, moved to Porto in 1921, and four years later entered the Institute of the Sisters of St Dorothy as a postulant, taking perpetual vows in 1934. While there, as Sr Maria of the Sorrows, she published four volumes of memoirs, these being published in English as *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*.

### Permission

In 1948, after receiving permission to be relieved of her vows, she entered the Carmelite convent of St Teresa in Coimbra, making profession the following year. While there she published two further volumes of memoirs, and a final book in 2001, and returned to Fatima for brief visits in 1967, 1982, 1991 and 2000.

She died in the convent in February 2005, aged 97.

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI waived the normal five-year waiting period before her sainthood cause could open. The diocesan phase of her cause, considering her life and holiness, was formally closed by Coimbra's Bishop Virgilio Antunes in February this year, forwarding his findings – including 50 volumes, totalling 15,000 pages, of evidence and witness testimonies – to the Vatican where her cause is now being investigated.

Fr Romano Gambalunga, postulator of Lucia's cause, said while the visionary is already regarded as a saint by many people, "the prudent path of the Church is that she is proposed to all, not just those who believe".

Lucia "became holy over the years, not because of the apparitions", the postulator said, with her having had a "spiritual experience" in the convent at Coimbra. Arguing that the Church shouldn't rush her cause, he said the evidence and testimonies the investigation had gathered would provide "a great occasion for spiritual and theological deepening", and would help "illuminate the history of the Church over the last 100 years".





Pope Francis embraces Lucas Batista, the Brazilian boy whose healing was recognised as the miracle necessary for the canonisation of Ss Jacinta and Francisco Marto, as offertory gifts are presented during the children's canonisation Mass on the 100th anniversary of the Fatima Marian apparitions. Photo: CNS

# A child saved by children's prayers

Those who had wondered what miracle prompted the canonisations last weekend of Ss Jacinta and Francisco had their questions answered ahead of Pope Francis' arrival in Fatima.

Speaking at a press conference at the shrine, the Brazilian parents João Batista and his wife Lucila Yurie described the miraculous healing of their son after a terrible accident.

"On March 3, 2013, before 8pm, our son Lucas, who was playing with his little sister Eduarda, fell out of a window from a height of 20 feet (6.1 metres). He was five years old," João said, continuing, "his head hit the ground and he sustained a very serious injury, which caused a loss of brain tissue."

## Medical care

He related how Lucas was given medical care in the family's own city, Juranda, before being transferred to the hospital in Campo Mourao, Parana, because his injuries were so severe. "When we got there, Lucas was in a deep coma," he said. "His heart stopped twice, and they performed an emergency operation."

It was then, the couple said, that they "began to pray to Jesus and Our Lady of Fatima, to whom we have a great devotion", he said, explaining that the following day they called the Carmelite convent of Campo Mourao to ask the sisters to pray for Lucas, but said the sisters did not receive the message as they were observing a period of silence.

With Lucas' condition worsening, the doctors told them that his chances of survival were low, and that any recovery he might make would be very slow, and would probably leave him with "severe cognitive disabilities or even in a vegetative state".

## “Two days later, on March 9, Lucas woke up and began to speak”

Lucas' parents called the convent again on March 7, with the sisters this time receiving the request. "One of them ran to the relics of Blessed Francisco and Jacinta, which were next to the tabernacle, and felt the impulse to pray the following prayer: 'Shepherds, save this child, who is a child like you,'" Joao said, explaining that she also

persuaded the other sisters to pray for the intercession of the "little shepherds".

"In the same way," João continued, "all of us, the family, began to pray to the little shepherds, and two days later, on March 9, Lucas woke up and began to speak, even asking for his little sister."

Lucas was discharged from the hospital a few days later, and has been completely well ever since, without any symptoms or after-effects.

"The doctors, some of them non-believers, said that his recovery had no explanation," said João, thanking the doctors for their care, and also Sr Angela Coelho, the postulator of the children's canonisation cause, but above all thanking God.

"We thank God for the cure of Lucas and we know with all the faith we have in our hearts, that this miracle was obtained through the intercession of the little shepherds Francisco and Jacinta," he said, "we feel a great joy because this is the miracle that leads to their canonisation, but especially we feel the blessing of the friendship of these two children who helped our child and who now help our family."

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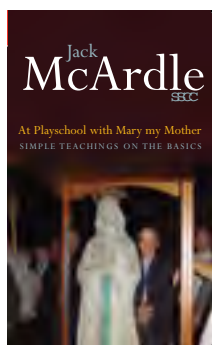
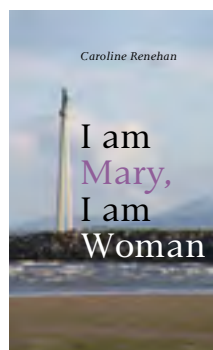


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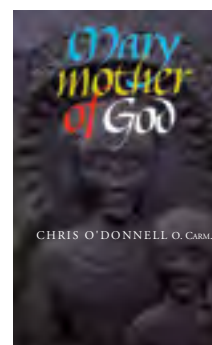
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# Strange occurrences Portuguese village



**Stephen Bullivant** considers how the Fatima visions sought to speak to the modern world

**S**unday, May 13 1917 would prove an auspicious day, both for the Catholic Church, and for the whole tumultuous course of the 20th Century. In the Sistine Chapel, Pope Benedict XV consecrated Eugenio Pacelli as archbishop, prior to sending him off to be nuncio to Bavaria. Thus one Pope, an indefatigable voice for peace throughout a War then engulfing the world, sent off another on his path – as the future Pope Pius XII – to play a pivotal role in the next.

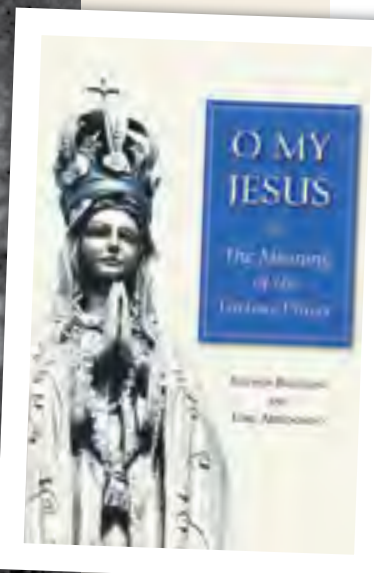
As unlikely as it sounds, 1,100 miles away on a dusty Portuguese hillside, something of perhaps greater import was taking place.

Three primary-school age children – siblings Francisco (9) and Jacinta (7), and their cousin Lucia (10) – were tending their families' sheep. Startled by a sudden burst of light, they looked up expecting to see a thunder storm coming. Instead, before them, as Lucia would later recount in her memoirs, was "a lady, clothed in white, brighter than the sun".

## Apparitions

So began a remarkable series of apparitions at Fatima, an out-of-the-way village 80 or so miles north of Lisbon. Or rather, so they continued: this Lady in White was not the first visitor "from Heaven" (as she told them) to have appeared "while shepherds watched". The year before, for example, a figure calling himself "the Angel of Peace" had spoken to the children several times.

This new visitation, however, marked a new and significant phase. As the Lady informed them, "I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13th day, at this same hour. Later on,



Jacinta, Lucia and Francisco, the children of Fatima and, above, the cover of Stephen Bullivant's book, *O My Jesus – The Meaning of the Fátima Prayer*.

I will tell you who I am and what I want."

A great deal happened in those six months, very little of which may be recounted here.

Each 13th day, however, the Lady returned as promised. Alongside her repeated appeals for penance, prayer and fasting, she entrusted the children with three revelations. Together, these made up the so-called Secret of Fatima.

It is here where traditional Catholic piety and the 'private revelations' of mystics enter the global stage of geopolitics.

On July 13, 'Our Lady of the Rosary' (as she identified herself) entrusted the children with the first two parts of the Secret.

The First, and most important, we will deal with later. In the Second, however, she warned them that unless the world repented, and sharpish, then not only would the current war continue, but it would soon be followed by a second and much worse one. This would

be heralded by a "Great Sign" in the sky (in retrospect, often identified as the great *Aurora Borealis* of January 1938).

To prevent this, Our Lady asked that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart, and the First Saturdays devotion be begun in reparation.

**“Our Lady’s requests were not notably heeded, and Russia did indeed spread its influence throughout the world”**

Significantly, she promised (or threatened): "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have

much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

For those who take their Marian apparitions seriously, this is a clear-cut case of a prophecy come true.

For Our Lady's requests were not notably heeded, and Russia did indeed spread its influence throughout the world, causing wars, persecutions and martyrdoms on a vast scale, and the annihilation of nations.

And the Holy Father – or rather Holy Fathers, since it happened several times, just to be sure – consecrated Russia to her Immaculate Heart (albeit, prudently mindful of political and ecumenical sensitivities, somewhat subtly; Lucia herself confirmed that the deed had indeed been done).

Furthermore, a post-communist Russian religious

revival – if not one unalloyed by other factors – has indeed taken place. And, fragile though it now seems, one can indeed speak in general terms of a period of (relative) peace.

The third and most famous part of the Secret was given on October 13, the last of the six monthly appearances. This was, of course, the occasion on which the sun was said – and by many thousands of people, a good number of whom had come to mock and 'wag their heads' – to dance in the sky.

Unlike the others, the Third Part was delivered not in words but visually: the Holy Father moving prayerfully through a corpse-strewn, ruined city; set upon by assassins, he is martyred, along with clergy, religious, and lay faithful.

## Literal sense

This metaphor-laden 'dream sequence' ought not, as the then Cardinal Ratzinger explained upon the Third Part's publication in 2000,

be taken in a too-literal sense. Rather, like similar apocalyptic visions in scripture, it is primarily symbolic: "The history of an entire century can be seen represented in this image." Furthermore, he adds, "the image which the children saw is in no way a film preview of a future in which nothing can be changed... Rather, the vision speaks of dangers and how we might be saved from them."

**“That vision only lasted for a moment... Without that, I think that we would have died of terror and fear”**

As is well known, St John Paul II saw in all this a shadowy foretelling of the attempt on his life in St Peter's Square on (note the date) May 13, 1981. That he was not in fact killed, he ascribed to the tender mercies of Our Lady of

**“She warned them that unless the world repented, then not only would the current war continue, but it would soon be followed by a second and much worse one”**



# in a small



Pope Benedict XV consecrates Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, as bishop on May 13, 1917.



Pope John Paul II visiting the man who tried to kill him, Mehmet Ali Agca, in prison.

unsurprising that the First has been comparatively overlooked. But to my mind, it is by far the most important.

On July 13, 1917, Our Lady revealed to the little shepherds a vision of hell. I will spare you the details here (they can be easily looked-up online), but as Lucia would later remember: "That vision only lasted for a moment... Without that, I think that we would have died of terror and fear."

**“Thus when Our Lady of Fatima speaks of “the fires of hell”, she is simply repeating an image used often by her son”**

Hell is not much spoken of these days, especially not in the graphic ways that Lucia recounts in her memoirs. The very idea, I recently read in a theology book, is one “in the last analysis, unworthy of Jesus”.

The trouble is, Jesus himself disagrees. His own descriptions, moreover, are graphically to-the-point. Thus when Our Lady of Fatima speaks of “the fires of hell”, she is simply repeating an image used often by her son (Mark 9:43; Matthew 13:42, 50; 25:41).

In the Gospels, Jesus rebukes those requesting “a sign from Heaven” (Mark 8:11) with the observation that “only an evil and adulterous generation” (Matthew 12:39) would require such.

As we celebrate the Fatima centenary, then, we might reflect – somewhat uncomfortably – on the question: What does it say about the modern world that his mother felt we might benefit from, not just one such sign, but several? And what might we do, for ourselves and others, to turn things around?

## Connections

Given the explosive nature of the Second and Third Parts, their connections to major world events, and the temptations they afforded to ‘Fatima Truthers’ to imagine conspiracies prior to (and long after!) their being publicly revealed, it is

**📌** *Stephen Bullivant is Professor of Theology and the Sociology of Religion at St Mary’s University, Twickenham. His latest book, co-authored with Luke Arredondo, is out now: O My Jesus: The Meaning of the Fátima Prayer (Paulist Press, 2017).*



## First footsteps in Fatima: a continued Camino

**Stephen Buttivant**

My first visit to Fatima was on a whim. In September 2005, my dad and I had walked 200 miles across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela. With a few days to kill before our flight from Madrid, a quick coach trip down to Lisbon sounded like fun. And seeing as how we’d be passing by anyway, I suggested, why not call in at Fatima – just an hour and a half’s drive north of the Portuguese capital – for the night?

Truth be told, I didn’t know much about Fatima. But having just finished up a theology degree, and about to start a master’s on Vatican II, now seemed like a good time to find out.

I was, at this point, still some sort of atheist. I say ‘some sor’ because – as attentive readers may already have spotted – in hindsight I suppose some warnings signs were already there.

Fatima, away from the Basilica and its surrounding shops, is a much smaller and sleepier place than – as I would later find out – Lourdes. One really needs to go with serious devotional intent; there is not much touristy there to do.

## Basics

Still, I at least learned the basics of the Fatima story: three little shepherds, visits from Our Lady, miracle of the Sun, ominous prophecies. Moreover, even as an outsider, I found something moving about the place: my first real taste of Catholic piety – candle-lighting, processions, penitents walking around on their knees – on a grand and baroque scale.

I cannot say that it was Fatima, directly, that

transformed this atheist into a Catholic. (I wish I could: it would help sell books, for one thing.) But I dare say it contributed in some way, along with a great deal else, accumulating gradually over a long time. In any case, less than three years later, I was baptised in Rome.

On returning to Britain as a Catholic, I was given a how-to pray-the-rosary pamphlet by a friend. Naturally, the existence of something called “the Fatima prayer” caught my interest. So too did its brevity, at just 29 words: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those with most need of thy mercy. Amen.”

I am not, I’m afraid to say, a great memoriser of prayers. Perhaps if I was a greater pray-er of them, I would find it easier. Here, though, was one I thought that even I could manage.

**“Pleading for those “with most need of thy mercy” felt like a concretely practical bit of self-care”**

I’m glad I did. For while concise, it is remarkably profound. It addresses, head on, the great themes of Christianity: sin, hell, Heaven, mercy. It is a prayer for both others and oneself. It even has, for those that like that sort of thing, the frisson of theological daring: the plain and natural reading of “lead all souls to Heaven” is that it evinces, at the very least, a hope that all may be saved. And all disarmingly prefaced by so simple and direct an address as a child (or three) might use: “O my

Jesus”.

According to the second-century theologian Tertullian, the Lord’s Prayer presents us with “a whole summary of the Gospel”.

Now, I am not quite enough of a ‘Fatimaniac’ to go that far in this case. But I will say this. Even if believers and unbelievers alike hadn’t seen the Sun dance in the sky in 1917, this theological marvel-in-miniature would be plenty sufficient to be sure something supernatural was afoot at Fatima.

## Devotees

For most devotees, the prayer is typically used after each decade of the rosary as, indeed, Our Lady requested it be. But the saintly siblings Francisco and Jacinta – the younger two of the three children to whom Mary appeared; they both died soon after in the Spanish Flu pandemic – would often use it as a standalone prayer too.

For what it’s worth (after all, my own prayer life isn’t exactly one to aspire to) that’s also how I most often use it. While solemnly processing up for Communion, for example, I find it a good way to focus on both the gravity and privilege of what I’m about to do. During a recent bout of depression, it was sometimes the only prayer I could summon the energy or conviction to utter. In the midst of a couple of scarily dark episodes, pleading for those “with most need of thy mercy” felt like a concretely practical bit of self-care.

Twelve years on from my first visit, then, perhaps it’s high time I returned to Fatima. This time, the lack of touristic diversions mightn’t bother me so much. I’ll find plenty there to fill my time – and my heart.



# Saved

## by a mother's hand

Fatima was central to the spirituality of St John Paul II, writes **Greg Daly**

**I**n the designs of Providence there are no mere coincidences," declared St John Paul II in Fatima on May 12, 1982, a day short of the first anniversary of Mehmet Ali Agca's attempt on the then Pope's life in St Peter's Square.

Although two bullets, fired at close range, pierced the Pontiff's abdomen, no major organs were struck, with one bullet having missed his heart and aorta by a few inches.

The saint attributed his survival that day to the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima and on his first visit to Fatima he visited the chapel of the apparitions which housed the statue of Our Lady, carrying one of the bullets that had wounded him. He slowly approached the statue, placing the bullet in her crown, murmuring, according to the Portuguese Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins: "You saved me, you saved me."

For St John Paul II, Cardinal Saraiva Martins said, the three pilgrimages he would make to Fatima were those of a grateful son to the mother who saved his life.

### Bullet's path

The Pope believed "It was a mother's hand that guided the bullet's path". He based this view, it would seem, not merely on the fact that the assassination attempt had taken place on the anniversary of the first appearance of Our Lady to Lucia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta, but on the fact that the so-called 'Third Secret of Fatima', which he would make public in 2000, involved the gunning down beneath a hail of bullets of "a bishop clothed in white".

Nothing is an accident, the Pontiff believed, convinced that the

assassination attempt and its date, as well as his survival and the continuation of his papacy, were all manifestations of God's greater design.

Not that he believed he had been uniquely singled out by God in this way. To his mind, everyone in the whole world has a part to play in the salvation drama that is history as written and seen by God. He believed this had been a core message of the Second Vatican Council, coming as it had done in the aftermath of the Second World War and at the height of the Cold War with nuclear armageddon far from being a distant prospect.

**“St John Paul thanked Our Lady for “having guided with maternal tenderness peoples to freedom””**

Life is not without purpose, he felt, and what we do here matters, with the Church being called to tell the world the story of its redemption as worked out through billions of lives. To do this, the Polish Pope believed, the Church needed to be allowed to speak, needed to be able to contest the limits of the state and proclaim the



St John Paul II with Carmelite Sr Lucia dos Santos in 1991, more than 70 years after the young Lucia had encountered Our Lady of Fatima.

value of the human person, and to do so publicly.

The Church had not always behaved this way, St John Paul II realised, but he believed this was what the Second Vatican Council had envisaged it as being called to do.

Nine years later, on May 12, 1991, he revisited Fatima, meeting with the then 84-year-old Sr Lucia dos Santos, before returning to Rome on the 10th anniversary of the assassination attempt to give thanks to Mary for his survival and much more.

Calling Fatima a constant reference point for living the Gospel, and highlighting Mary's "palpable, penetrating call" for us to mould ourselves to God's ways, St John Paul thanked Our Lady for "having guided with maternal tenderness peoples to freedom", a clear reference to the liberation of eastern Europe from communism.

He was aware, of course, of how Our Lady had called in 1917 for the consecration of Russia, and had lived through decades of communist oppression under a Poland that was under the thumb of the Russia-led Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

In the years since his first visit to Fatima, however, reform movements in the USSR had come to dominate, with the Soviet Premier Mikael Gorbachev reversing the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' that the Soviet Union would intervene if socialism were threatened in any of the Warsaw Pact states. 1989 saw reforms in Hungary,

Czechoslovakia and Poland, with the latter country's Solidarity movement being allowed to stand in elections – winning almost every seat in the country's parliament – and Germany's Berlin Wall, the great symbol of Cold War division, being torn down.



The Browning HP 9mm handgun used by Mehmet Ali Agca in the 1981 assassination attempt is displayed near a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in an exhibit at the national museum dedicated to St John Paul II in his hometown of Wadowice, Poland. Photos: CNS

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formally dissolved just a few months after the saint's second pilgrimage to Fatima. The story of his role in the Cold War's end, of his relationship with US President Ronald Reagan, who shared the Pope's view that communism was a moral evil, and of the inspiration he gave the Polish people in the Solidarity movement and their struggle with Soviet overlords, has been told at length elsewhere.

### Third Secret

In 2000, St John Paul II beatified Francisco and Jacinta, the two child visionaries who would go on to be canonised last weekend, and made public the 'Third Secret of Fatima', not least to dampen apocalyptic speculations that for some were almost feverish in the millennium year.

June of that same year also saw the pardoning by the Italian state of Mehmet Ali Agca, who had been sentenced to life

imprisonment after the assassination attempt. The then Pope had long forgiven the Turk, of course: in 1981 he asked people to "pray for my brother (Agca), whom I have sincerely forgiven", and in 1983 the Pope and the unsuccessful assassin met and spoke privately in Agca's Rebibbia prison, with the Pontiff meeting Agca's mother and brother on other occasions.

**“The Pontiff reminded him that Mary is venerated by Muslims”**

When the Pope and his would-be killer had met in Rebibbia prison, Agca had told him of how he feared the vengeance of Our Lady of Fatima. He was convinced that the assassination and his own escape were so well-planned that they could not have failed without supernatural intervention. On having learned that the assassination attempt had been on the anniversary of the first apparition of Our

Lady in Fatima, he became convinced that the same "goddess of Fatima" who had saved John Paul's life would punish him.

The Pontiff reminded him that Mary is venerated by Muslims, and said that Agca should not fear the Mother of God who loves all people. It's a lesson to be remembered by us all, especially in light of how, at his final visit to Fatima in 2000, St John Paul II had focused on the absolute nature of the Fatima seers' response to Mary.

"Ask your parents and teachers to enrol you in the 'school' of Our Lady, so that she can teach you to be like the little shepherds, who tried to do whatever she asked them," he urged the Portuguese children before him, quoting St Louis de Montfort's dictum that one makes more progress in short periods of dependence on Mary than during whole years of self-reliant personal initiatives.

"This was how the little shepherds became saints so quickly," he said.



# The depths of devotion

Greg Daly

While St John Paul II's devotion to Fatima may be proverbial, and while Pope Francis' visit to the shrine may be filling the headlines, it is always worth remembering that their devotion to Fatima is one shared by countless Catholics – and even, as described below, Muslims!

Some four million people visit the Portuguese shrine each year, with many thousands coming from Ireland alone, and the World Apostolate of Fatima is thought to have over 20 million members in over 100 countries around the world.

The apostolate was the brainchild of the American Fr Harold Colgan, who founded it in 1947 as a deliberate 'Blue Army' intended to counter the Soviet Union's 'Red Army', given the threat of atheistic communism at the time and how at Fatima Mary had called for the conversion of sinners, devotion to herself under the title of her Immaculate Heart, and for people of Russia to be consecrated to her care.

Other groups devoted to Fatima include the

Alliance of the Holy Family International and the Alliance of the Two Hearts, which together earlier this year brought to Ireland one of six statues of Our Lady of Fatima that Pope Francis had blessed.

The statues were taken around the world as focuses for prayers and reparations for peace and the sanctity of family life. Archbishop Eamon Martin welcomed the statue to Ireland, crowning it in St Malachy's Church in Armagh, after which it was brought to a succession of dioceses around Ireland, with pilgrims praying before the statue and bringing roses and white handkerchiefs for blessing.

Unsurprisingly, then, last weekend saw Fatima processions around such Irish towns as Navan, Kilkenny, and Dundalk, as devotion to Our Lady was unabashedly taken to the streets.

## Devotion

Such devotion is, of course, often much more low-key, sometimes to a point where Catholics don't realise they are following the instructions of Our Lady of Fatima. Younger Catholics in particular often don't realise that when saying the Rosary,

they often do so in a variant requested during one of the Fatima apparitions.

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy," we so often pray after praying the 'Glory Be' following each decade of the Rosary, often oblivious to how Our Lady requested of Lucia and Ss Jacinta and Francisco that they should do this.

**“There were, after all, four other prayers taught to the children by Our Lady in 1917”**

The prayer struck some as controversial from the start – how could all souls be saved? – and as early as 1946 Sr Lucia felt a need to correct versions of the prayer that watered it down by changing it to call for “mercy on the souls in purgatory”.

Famously, however, the theologian Fr Hans Urs Von Balthasar, a great influence on Pope Benedict XVI, argued in *Dare We Hope* that 'All Men Be Saved'? that hope and prayers for the salvation of all is permitted.

Scripture, he maintained, displayed a tension on the subject, and it would be for God, and God alone, to resolve this tension.

## Prayer

As Sr Lucia explained to the then Archbishop Bertone, faith, hope and charity are at the very heart of Fatima, and in considering this prayer we should keep in mind how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses how “God ‘desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’; that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth”.

In calling this one prayer ‘the Fatima prayer’, though, we perhaps run a risk of impoverishing our understanding of Fatima.

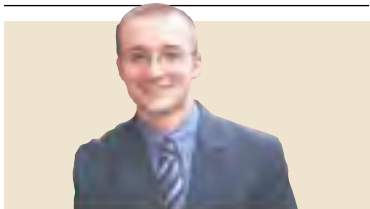
There were, after all, four other prayers taught to the children by Our Lady in 1917, with Sr Lucia saying that years later she was taught two further prayers.

In combination with the call for First Saturdays devotions to be dedicated as acts of reparation to the Immaculate Heart and the general promotion of the Rosary, it is clear that the devotional riches of Fatima are remarkably deep.



Parishioners of St Malachy's Church, Armagh touch a statue of Our Lady which had been blessed by Pope Francis.

## The surprising connection between Our Lady of Fatima and Islam



Philip Kosloski

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, one aspect that could easily go unnoticed is the subtle connection with Islam. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to the three shepherd children near the village of Fatima, Portugal, a place named after both a Muslim princess and the daughter of Mohammed.

During the 12th Century, Christian armies sought to recapture cities in Spain and Portugal that were being occupied by Muslim forces. In this time period, a knight named Gonçalo Hermigues and his companions captured a Muslim princess named Fatima.

Some stories say that after her capture, Fatima fell in love with Gonçalo and the two were soon after betrothed. Before their marriage Fatima was baptised into the Catholic faith and took the name Oureana.

The Portuguese towns of Fatima and Ourém are said to be named



A Lebanese Muslim pilgrim approaches the Marian shrine of Fatima on his knees. Photo: CNS

after this Muslim princess.

What's interesting is that the Muslim princess was named after one of the daughters of Mohammed, Fatimah bint Muhammad, a woman highly revered in Islam.

## Title

She was given the title, al-Zahra, 'shining one', and Mohammed once said about her, "Thou shalt be the most blessed of all the women in Paradise, after Mary." (While Muslims do not hold the same

beliefs about the Virgin Mary as Catholics, they still hold her with highest regard.)

According to Fr Miguel Angel Ayuso, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, this connection can be a doorway to dialogue. He noted in a joint prayer meeting in 2014 how, "the Catholic Church recognises that Muslims honour the Virgin mother of Jesus, Mary, and invoke her with piety... Mary is mentioned various times in the Koran. Respect for her is so evident that when she

is mentioned in Islam, it is usual to add 'Alayha l-salam' ('Peace be upon her')... Mary, a model for Muslims and Christians, is also a model of dialogue."

Venerable Fulton Sheen draws an interesting connection between Muslims' reverence for Mary and the daughter of Mohammed and the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima:

"This brings us to our second point, namely, why the Blessed Mother, in this 20th Century, should have revealed herself in the

insignificant little village of Fatima, so that to all future generations she would be known as 'Our Lady of Fatima'.

"Since nothing ever happens out of Heaven except with a finesse of all details, I believe that the Blessed Virgin chose to be known as "Our Lady of Fatima" as a pledge and a sign of hope to the Muslim people, and as an assurance that they, who show her so much respect, will one day accept her Divine Son, too."

## Pilgrims

Surprisingly, besides attracting Christian pilgrims, the shrine at Fatima, Portugal, has also attracted Muslims in great numbers. They go to see the place where the Virgin Mary appeared in a place named after one of their most highly revered women.

In the end, the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima called Christians to pray for peace in the world. In an age when violence is so often committed in the name of Islam, how much more should we have recourse to Our Lady of Fatima! Let us continue to work for peace in the world and look to Our Lady to be a bridge between Muslims and Christians, begging her to end the hatred that has caused so much violence around the world.

Courtesy of aleteia.org



# Authenticating true Marian apparitions



**Junno Arocho Esteves**

When it comes to Marian apparitions, the Catholic Church takes a prudent approach that focuses more on the message than the miracle.

Supernatural phenomena, like the alleged miracle of the Sun in Fatima, Portugal, nearly 100 years ago, are not the primary factors in determining an apparition is worthy of belief.

In that particular case, the Bishop of Leiria – where Fatima is located – deemed the apparitions, but not the miracle of the Sun, were worthy of belief.

His ruling came in 1930, more than a dozen years after Mary's final apparition to Lucia dos

Santos and her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto.

More than 1,500 visions of Mary have been reported around the world, but in the past century, fewer than 20 cases have received Church approval as worthy of belief.

The Vatican's 'Norms regarding the manner of proceedings in the discernment of presumed apparitions or revelations' were approved by Pope Paul VI in 1978. An official English translation was released in 2011.

Like with Fatima, responsibility for determining an apparition's veracity lies with the local bishop, according to the norms established by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The process is never brief, with some cases taking hundreds of years. Visionaries and witnesses must be questioned and the fruits of the apparitions, such as conversions, miracles and healings, must

be examined.

According to the norms, the local bishop should set up a commission of experts, including theologians, canonists, psychologists and doctors to help him determine the facts, the mental, moral and spiritual wholesomeness and seriousness of the visionary, and whether the messages and testimony are free from theological and doctrinal error.

**“The Catholic Church does not require the faithful to believe in apparitions, even those recognised by the Church”**

A bishop can come to one of three conclusions: He can determine the apparition to be true and worthy of belief; he can say it is not true, which leaves open the possibility for an appeal; or he can say that at the

moment, he doesn't know and needs more help.

In the last scenario, the investigation is brought to the country's bishops' conference.

If that body cannot come to a conclusion, the matter is turned over to the Pope, who delegates the doctrinal congregation to step in and give advice or appoint others to investigate.

Still, the Catholic Church does not require the faithful to believe in apparitions, even those recognised by the Church.

Church recognition of a private revelation, in essence, is just the Church's way of saying the message is not contrary to the Faith or morality, it is licit to make the message public “and the faithful are authorised to give to it their prudent adherence”, the then Pope Benedict XVI said in his 2010 apostolic exhortation, *Verbum Domini* ('The Word of the Lord').



Pope Francis is seen through a window venerating the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Photos: CNS

## Church-approved Marian sites

In recent years apparitions at Kibeho in Rwanda and Champion, in the US state of Wisconsin, have been approved by their diocesan bishops, the former having taken place in 1981-1982, the latter in 1859. Despite devotion on a vast scale, alleged apparitions at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been rejected by local bishops.

Major Marian sites that have received Church approval include:

### Guadalupe

In 1531, little more than a dozen years after Martin Luther set in motion events that split the Catholic Church, Mary appeared four times to Juan Diego at Tepeyac hill near Mexico City, proclaiming herself the spiritual mother of all mankind and leaving her miraculous image on Juan Diego's outer garment, his tilma.

The apparitions were formally approved by the second Archbishop of Mexico in 1555.

### Paris

In 1830, the year of the 'July Revolution', which saw the last of France's Bourbon monarchs overthrown, Mary appeared three times to Catherine Labouré in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, at Rue du Bac. She showed her the design of the 'miraculous



Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay, Wisconsin unveiling the new logo for the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion in August 2016. Dr Ricken had approved of the authenticity of the 1859 apparition in 2010.

medal' of the Immaculate Conception which helped to renew devotion to Our Lady in France and eventually worldwide. In 1836, the Archbishop of Paris began a canonical investigation which ruled that medal was of supernatural origin and the miracles linked with it were genuine.

### La Salette

Mary appealed for penance and an end to Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy when in 1846 she appeared to two children, Maximin Giraud (11) and Mélanie Calvat (14) while they were looking after herds high in the

mountains by La Salette-Fallavaux one afternoon. Five years later the Bishop of Grenoble said he believed the apparition, which is credited with reviving Catholicism in the area, was genuine, with Pope Pius IX formally approving the devotion that year.

### Lourdes

In 1858, Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous (14), 18 times at Lourdes in southern France, describing herself as the "Immaculate Conception", and asking for penance and prayer for the conversion of sinners.

In 1862 the Bishop of Tarbes declared, "what Soubirous saw

was the Most Blessed Virgin", continuing, "our convictions are based on the testimony of Soubirous, but above all on the things that have happened, things which can be nothing other than divine intervention."

### Pontmain

The last of the approved 19th-Century French apparitions occurred at the height of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, when a group of young children in the small town of Pontmain in northwestern France saw Mary appear in the sky for about three hours, with her message – encouraging prayer while emphasising Jesus' love and concern – appeared on a banner under her feet.

The nearby Prussian forces ceased their advance towards Pontmain and the nearby town of Laval. The Bishop of Laval gave formal recognition of the vision the following year.

### Knock

Mary appeared at Knock, Co. Mayo, in 1879 when on an August evening a group of villagers saw a silent apparition, lasting for about three hours, by the gable end of the local church, with Mary, accompanied by St Joseph and St John the Evangelist, gazing upon a lamb that was standing upon on

an altar, surrounded by angels. A Church commission summoned in 1879 found that the witness statements were trustworthy and that no natural explanation for what happened could be offered. A hundred years after the apparition, St John Paul II celebrated Mass in Knock and knelt in prayer at the apparition wall.

### Beauraing

During the winter of 1932-33 Mary appeared 33 times to a group of children in a convent garden in the small town of Beauraing in Belgium. Describing herself as "the Immaculate Virgin" and "Mother of God, Queen of Heaven", she called for prayer for the conversion of sinners. In 1943, the Bishop of Namur authorised public devotions to Our Lady of Beauraing.

### Banneux

In early 1933, Mary appeared eight times to Mariette Beco (11) outside Mariette's family home at the small Belgian village of Banneux. Describing herself as the "Virgin of the Poor", she promised to intercede for the poor, the sick and the suffering. Following consultations with the Holy See, in 1942 the Bishop of Liege approved the veneration of Our Lady of the Poor.





## Rational explanations for Fatima admit the supernatural, argues Fr Dwight Longenecker

**A**theists love to mock miracles, and the miracle of the Sun at Fatima is one of their favourite objects of derision. The high priest of the atheists, Richard Dawkins dismisses the miracle of the Sun as a mass hallucination.

He writes in *The God Delusion*: “On the face of it, mass visions, such as the report that 70,000 pilgrims at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 saw the Sun ‘tear itself from the heavens and come crashing down upon the multitude,’ are harder to write off... It is not easy to explain how 70,000 people could share the same hallucination. But it is even harder to accept that it really happened without the rest of the world, outside Fatima, seeing it too - and not just seeing it, but feeling it as the catastrophic destruction of the solar system, including acceleration forces sufficient to hurl everybody into space. Obviously the Sun did not dance and plunge to the Earth. We know the Sun is billions of times bigger than the Earth. If the Sun plunged to the Earth there would be no Earth. Clearly there was no miracle of the Sun at Fatima...”

Dawkins is relying on the Scottish philosopher David Hume’s pithy test for a miracle. Hume wrote: “No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish.”

Hume’s test applied to Fatima would be to observe that it is very improbable that 70,000 people could simultaneously be deluded, or simultaneously collude in a mass lie. It is also very improbable that 70,000 people experienced the same hallucination.

### Alternative

However, all of those improbabilities are far more probable than the alternative: that the Sun was suddenly yanked sideways in its orbit, spun around and crashed to the Earth destroying the balance of the whole solar system with nobody outside Fatima noticing.

This is typical of the dull literalistic ‘reasoning’ of the atheists. We who believe in the miracle of the Sun have also taken



Portuguese peasants in Fatima gazing at the sky during the ‘Miracle of the Sun’ on October 13, 1917.

# Facing facts about Fatima

science classes. We do understand that the Sun is much bigger than the Earth.

We also know that if the Sun were really spinning that everyone on Earth should be able to see it. We also know that if the Sun plunged to Earth we would all be toast.

Yet we believe in the miracle of the Sun.

Scientists are supposed to objectively and rationally examine the evidence. At Fatima we have documentary, eyewitness and photographic evidence that 70,000 people ‘saw’ the Sun spin, felt it was yanked from the sky and that it plunged to Earth.

**“Obviously the Sun didn’t literally fall to the Earth. But 70,000 people saw it fall to the Earth”**

Everyone said they saw the same thing. Everyone was so frightened they screamed and ran for their lives. Clearly something happened, what was it?

Obviously the Sun didn’t literally fall to the Earth. But 70,000 people saw it fall to the Earth. The miracle therefore occurred somewhere within the process of perception.

We see with our eyes, but what do we see? Whatever we see is transferred to the brain and the brain interprets what we see. It is well known that if we do not have the mental capacity to ‘see’ certain things they are invisible to us. Likewise we may ‘see’ certain

things, and without the capacity or mental vocabulary to process what we have seen they will remain a mystery to us, for we all process what we see in terms of what we know.

Therefore do we conclude that the miracle of the Sun at Fatima was a miracle that occurred within the minds of 70,000 witnesses?

Does this mean ‘It was only in their mind?’ Or that ‘They had merely imagined it?’ How did they all imagine the same thing? Was that the miracle? Did the event manipulate their minds and powers of perception in some way? Was it therefore a very unusual kind of mass hallucination?

No. They really did see the Sun spinning, being yanked from the sky and plunging to Earth, but the way they ‘saw’ it was with some other capability than the usual kind of ‘seeing’. They ‘saw’ something in the same way that the visionaries ‘see’ the Blessed Virgin who is not there in a normally physical way. Yet, the visionaries report that the characters they ‘see’ seem to be physical and solid.

### Reality

The seeming reality of what they see means this was not an ordinary hallucination. Furthermore, the miracle could not only have taken place within the perception of the witnesses because the phenomena was witnessed elsewhere.

Marian researcher Donal Foley records that the poet Alfonso Lopes Vieira who lived almost 50km away from Fatima witnessed the phenomenon. He wrote: “On that

day, October 13, 1917 without remembering the predictions of the children, I was enchanted by a remarkable spectacle in the sky of a kind I had never seen before.”

Foley tells the story of a young boy, Inacio Lourenco, who was a schoolchild of nine when he saw the miracle at a village about 19km from Fatima. He described how the children and their teachers were attracted outside by a commotion in front of the school to see the miracle of the Sun. He tells of how he could look at the Sun, which looked like “a ball of snow revolving on itself”, before it suddenly came down in a zigzag toward the Earth.

**“There was an explosion of joy and everyone joined in thanksgiving and praise of our Lady”**

As he says: “During those long moments of the solar prodigy objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow. We saw ourselves blue, yellow, red, etc. All these strange phenomena increased the fear of the people. After about 10 minutes the Sun, now dull and pallid, returned to its place. When the people realised that the danger was now over there was an explosion of joy and everyone joined in thanksgiving and praise of our Lady.”

The miracle was also seen by sailors on a British ship off the coast of Portugal. Foley recounts an

experience in England. He gave a presentation on Fatima at a college in England and was told by one of the teachers that her grandfather saw the miracle from his ship and wrote about it to his wife – “without obviously understanding what it meant or its significance”.

And finally, what most convincingly shows that the miracle was not only in the minds and perception of the witnesses is the fact that the crowd at Fatima felt the heat of the Sun as it approached them, and their clothes and the ground – which had been soaked by torrential rain – were dry at the end of the miracle.

Believers and atheists agree that the Sun did not literally and physically crash to Earth. Some atheists will continue to propose a mass hallucination. Others are honest enough to be mystified by the events at Fatima, and admit that it was some sort of psychic phenomena for which we do not yet have an explanation.

Believers will ask: “Why not accept the most obvious explanation: A power greater than nature interrupted the natural order. The term for a power greater than nature is God, and the term for such an interruption is ‘miracle.’”

**1** Fr Dwight Longenecker is parish priest at Our Lady of the Rosary parish in Greenville, South Carolina, and is a contributor to Cruxnow.com



# The 'third secret' – the mystery of Fatima

**Greg Daly** explores one of the Portuguese apparitions' most intriguing aspects



In the decades following the apparitions, Fatima was mainly known, like Lourdes and other Marian sites, as a place of healing. However, in her 1941 memoirs, Sr Lucia wrote about how during Our Lady's third apparition, she gave the children a message in three parts, which has become known as the 'Great Secret of Fatima'.

As Sr Lucia described the message, it began with a vision of hell, about which Our Lady said, "You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace."

She continued by saying, "The war is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the Pontificate of Pius XI."

It might seem natural to point out that the Second World War began in September 1939, by which time Pius XII had succeeded Pius XI, but it is worth remembering how in 1935, Italy had invaded Abyssinia, with the Spanish Civil War – in which Germany and the Soviet Union took opposite sides – starting in 1936, and Japan invading Manchuria in 1937: the three Axis powers were already at war during Pius XI's reign, as – crucially – was Soviet Russia.

## Visible

Also within Pius XI's papacy, January 1938 would see a remarkable Aurora Borealis visible across Europe, even as far south as Gibraltar, and it is often thought that this too featured in the second part of the secret.

"When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father," Sr Lucia recorded Our Lady as

having said, before calling for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays.

In the aftermath following the Second World War, the publication of these first parts of the secret offered many a spiritual framework in which to understand the 20th Century, with its world wars, the rise of communism, and the Cold War, so Fatima acquired a unique place among the holy places of Christendom, a key piece in the Church's response to the threat of communism.

**“The prospect that the world might be reduced to ashes by a sea of fire no longer seems pure fantasy”**

The third part of the secret, rather than being published, was written down in 1944 on the instructions of "the Bishop of Leiria and the Most Holy Mother", and was sealed and sent to the Vatican, with instructions that it remained sealed until at least 1960. Although St John XXIII and Blessed Paul VI read the text, they declined to publish it, as, for most of his papacy, did St John Paul II, although having read it in 1981 he prayed for the consecration of the whole world to Mary's Immaculate Heart, repeating this in Fatima the following year and again in Rome in 1984. Sr Lucia subsequently wrote to him, confirming that he had done as Our Lady had wished.

In 2000, however, he arranged for its publication, with extensive notations from the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and an introduction from the then Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone.

The future Secretary of State to Pope Benedict XVI related how Sr Lucia herself believed the third part of the secret to be a "symbolic



A mural of the apparitions at Fatima with an inset about the "Secrets" of Fatima in St Joseph's Co-Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York. Photo: CNS

revelation", relating to Our Lady's warning about how if her words were not heeded, Russia would "spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church" such that "the good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated".

As Sr Lucia saw it, Russia had indeed invaded the world with her errors, and its repercussions were ongoing. And yet, she said, it was important to understand that this was not a divine punishment, but simply the working out of human sinfulness.

"And let us not say that it

is God who is punishing us in this way; on the contrary it is people themselves who are preparing their own punishment. In his kindness God warns us and calls us to the right path, while respecting the freedom he has given us; hence people are responsible," she said.

The secret, as the future Pope Benedict XVI described it, showed "the Church of the martyrs of the century which has just passed represented in a language which is symbolic and not easy to decipher".

After careful explanations of the nature and value of private revelations, the future Pope noted how, for instance, an image of an

angel with a flaming sword recalled biblical images representing the threat of judgment on the world, and observed: "Today the prospect that the world might be reduced to ashes by a sea of fire no longer seems pure fantasy: man himself, with his inventions, has forged the flaming sword."

Against this, he says, the splendour of the Mother of God stands as a summons to penance and a sign of human freedom, showing how the future is not "unchangeably set", so we can turn to the God's light.

Subsequent images of "a bishop dressed in white", who the children believed to be the Pope, along with

other bishops, priests, and men and women religious climbing a steep mountain and passing through a ruined city to a large cross, where the white-clad bishop and the others were shot down by a group of soldiers, pointed, Cardinal Ratzinger said, to the 20th Century as "a century of martyrs, a century of suffering and persecution for the Church, a century of World Wars and the many local wars which filled the last 50 years and have inflicted unprecedented forms of cruelty".

**“Some devotees refuse to believe the entire secret has been released”**

The bishop in white, he said, was a convergence of different Popes, while the final image, in which two angels gathered the blood of the martyrs and sprinkled the souls on their way to God, was, he said, "a consoling vision, which seeks to open a history of blood and tears to the healing power of God".

Perhaps predictably, some devotees refuse to believe the entire secret has been released, partly because in 1960 the Vatican issued a press release stating that it was "most probable the secret would remain, forever, under absolute seal".

Indeed, one German professor claimed last year the then Cardinal Ratzinger had told him that part of the secret – supposedly about "a bad council and a bad Mass" – remained unpublished, but this misrepresentation prompted the Pope Emeritus to use the Vatican Press Office to make a rare public statement:

"In this regard, Pope emeritus Benedict XVI declares 'never to have spoken with Prof. Dollinger about Fatima,'" the statement said, continuing, "clearly affirming that the remarks attributed to Prof. Dollinger on the matter 'are pure inventions, absolutely untrue', and he confirms decisively that 'the publication of the Third Secret of Fatima is complete'."

There the matter should surely rest.



# World Report



Edited by Greg Daly  
greg@irishcatholic.ie

## End 'absurd' conflicts through prayer – Pope

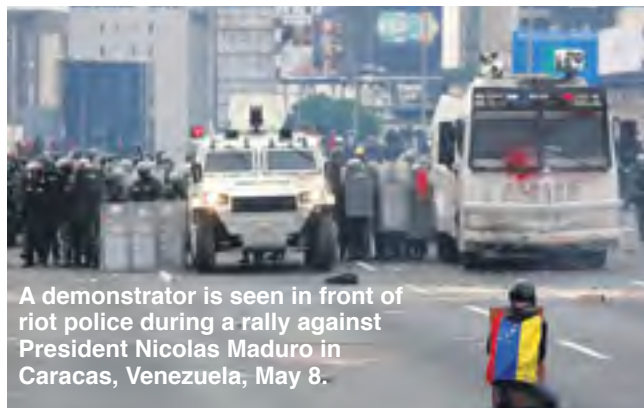
There is a great need for "prayer and penance" to plead for the end of the many wars spreading all over the world and the many "absurd conflicts" that "disfigure the face of humanity", Pope Francis has said.

Referring to the canonisation of Ss Francisco Marto and Jacinta Marto in Fatima, he said that the two shepherd children offered penance and sacrifices for the end of war and for souls in need of divine mercy.

"Today, too, there is a great need of prayer and penance to plead for the grace of conversion, to plead for the end of so many wars that are all over the world and that are increasingly spreading, as well as the end of absurd conflicts - big and small, that disfigure the face of humanity," he said.

### Tested

After reciting the *Regina Coeli* prayer on Sunday with an estimated 25,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square,



A demonstrator is seen in front of riot police during a rally against President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, Venezuela, May 8.

Pope Francis entrusted "to Mary, the Queen of Peace, the destiny of the peoples

afflicted by wars and conflicts, particularly in the Middle East".

"Many innocent people are sorely tested, be they Christians, Muslims or minorities like the Yazidi, who are facing tragic violence and discrimination," the Pontiff said.

The Holy Father assured them of his solidarity and prayer, and at the same time thanked all those committed to assisting them in their need.

Pope Francis encouraged all the different communities to continue along the "path of dialogue and reconciliation in order to build a future of respect, security and peace, far from any kind of war".

## Panama's World Youth Day logo revealed

Ambar Calvo, a 20-year-old student of architecture at the University of Panama, was the winner of the competition among 103 entries for the next World Youth Day logo, to be held in Panama from January 22-27, 2019.

Msgr José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, Archbishop of Panama, said the design managed to capture the message the country wants to send to young people all over the world, "the smallness of our country, but the



greatness of our heart, open to all, without excluding anyone, from the hand of the Virgin Mary, model of a young brave, committed and generous woman, who said yes to God's call".

The logo includes the Panama Canal, which symbolises the pilgrim's journey; the Pilgrim's Cross; the profile of the Virgin in her 'Fiat'; the small white spots as a sign of Mary's crown, and of the pilgrims from all continents.

## Bishop pleads for international help to tackle Somalia's drought

Bishop Giorgio Bertin of Djibouti has urged the international community to focus on alleviating the drought in Somalia, as six million people experience severe food shortages and contend with the al-Shabab extremist group.

Bishop Bertin expressed fear that the country may slip into a famine if action was delayed. "The Somali government, international community and Somali diaspora should map out the most affected areas and find the best way to respond to the immediate needs of local population," he said.

Nearly half of Somalia's population

need humanitarian assistance and an estimated 275,000 malnourished children are at risk of starvation, according to aid and development agencies.

Bishop Bertin said Caritas Somalia was responding alongside other agencies. "We are distributing emergency food in six villages in Somaliland. We are also working on a project to take water to a rehabilitation center for handicapped children in a very poor settlement near the city of Hargeisa," he said.

While stressing the role of the Somali diaspora in rebuilding their

country, Bishop Bertin urged the lifting of restrictions on "hawala", traditional money transfer agencies, to allow the Somalis worldwide to contribute to the aid effort.

"The international community should be able to distinguish between terrorists and good people, good organisations which need to transfer money," Bishop Bertin said. "They should not have just a same parameter: Somalia all is bad. With the modern technology and communications, the international community should be able to distinguish which hawala to lift (from) the ban."

## Drugs no excuse for death penalty – Indonesian Church leaders



President Joko Widodo.

Church leaders in Indonesia have criticised the government for using the country's drugs problem as an excuse for rejecting the UN recommendation to abolish the death penalty.

The recommendation, put forward at the 27th session of the UN Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, which reviewed Indonesia's human rights situation, was rejected by Law and

Human Rights Minister Yasonna Laoly, who led the her country's delegation in Geneva, Switzerland.

She said the death penalty was an integral part of President Joko Widodo's fight against narcotics, which she claimed was one of the top-three causes of death among Indonesian youths.

However, Fr Paulus Siswantoko of the

Indonesian bishops' Commission for Justice, Peace and Pastoral for Migrant People said the death penalty is not a deterrent, and the government's insistence on keeping it exposes its failure to handle the drugs problem.

"Drug-related crimes and serious violence continue to occur unabated," he said.

### IN BRIEF

#### Bolivian president turns to Pope

● Bolivian President Evo Morales has asked Pope Francis to send a papal envoy to mediate in the case of nine Bolivians imprisoned in neighbouring Chile. "I beg you to intervene in the best possible way to quickly resolve this case," President Morales said in letter to Pope Francis. "Justice must conclude with the liberation of nine Bolivian functionaries." He said the prisoners were being "deprived of their human rights."

The nine Bolivians, including seven customs workers and two soldiers, were detained on March 19 in a border area and accused of robbery, carrying weapons and importing contraband.

#### 'Get messy' Pope tells Canadian bishops

Catholics need to go out and share the Gospel, Pope Francis has told the bishops of Quebec at their second meeting during a two-week *ad limina* visit. Pope Francis said: "You've got to go, and it's going to be messy," according to Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher of Gatineau, former president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Evangelisation and the

need for full involvement by lay Catholics in the Church's mission were the key concerns of the Pope during the meetings. Archbishop Durocher said the Pontiff had urged the bishops to start immediately and be creative.

Pope Francis' responses to the bishops' questions and his comments on what they shared emphasised the need to step out and listen to people.

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# Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,  
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,  
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

## Letter of the week

### Sacraments of Initiation should be 'parish-owned'

**Dear Editor,** Fr Eugene Duffy and the staff of Mary Immaculate College are to be congratulated on organising a seminar entitled 'Reimagining Sacramental Preparation'. Up to the present, our evangelising was based on a very simple strategy. The parents had the Faith and practiced it as a family and as part of the parish community. They gave religious instruction to their children at home, but relied mostly on the Sunday sermon and the R.E. class in school.

The Sunday Eucharist and the R.E. class obviously helped the children's faith to grow, but their faith journey itself started and developed in the home. In other words, the

evangelisation of the young is not really about what takes place during the school's religious programme, but in the 'Stages of Faith' (cf. J.W. Fowler, *HarperOne*, 1995) that the young person, and all of us have to go through.

The title of the seminar relates to the involvement of the school in two of the Sacraments of Initiation – First Holy Communion and Confirmation. The school's R.E. class is hardly the issue for parents or clergy. The real challenge for the local Christian Church lies in the fact that the Sacraments of Initiation are the rituals whereby the young people

are integrated into their religious community. This initiation process and its celebration should obviously be parish-owned. The present situation of course suits most of the clergy and the parents. Imagine all the work involved if the parish had to organise the big day! Imagine what would happen if each parish had to put into practice a simplified version of the RCIA. Imagine the P.P. during the scrutiny, asking a young person due to be confirmed, why he hadn't seen him/her at Mass since Christmas Eve!

*Yours etc.,  
Pat Seaver,  
Limerick City.*

### Catholics must challenge bias

**Dear Editor,** Baroness Nuala O'Loan calls for "more accuracy and balance from the media" (IC 04/05/2017) and in the same edition the Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin made the same point too. I believe it is never too late for all informed practicing Catholics to take action in challenging bias from what appears to me to be a small number of vociferous personalities. Many have influence and have focused on specific failings of Catholic organisations to whip up an almost witch hunt against any openly Catholic person contributing to public debate. In the words of Martin Niemöller the German Lutheran pastor: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out."

*Yours etc.,  
Frank Browne,  
Templeogue, Dublin 16.*



### Referendum will put decision into our hands

**Dear Editor,** Will we really decide to repeal or retain the Eight Amendment or will we as a nation acquiesce to the demands that the philosophy of modernity places upon us? Either way we will have to accept, some day at least, responsibility for the ramifications of the outcome, which one can now only dread.

Let us leave aside individual religious arguments on this most important of issues and look at the two basic options open to a secular state and the premise of such options. On the one hand is the belief that the foetus, as well as being part of the woman's body, is in itself a separate and distinctive life. On the other hand is the belief that the foetus

is part of the woman's body and does not have its own separate life, or, if it is accepted that it does, it is on the premise that this life is an inferior life and a life without rights.

If one believes the latter, and if the state concurs, then abortion becomes a civic right. Euthanasia becomes likewise, and one would expect capital punishment to return to the statute books, as the state would have assumed, for itself, jurisdiction over life and the taking of it, for whatever reason it, the state, may decide.

However, if one believes that the foetus is a separate, definitive and equal life, and if the state concurs, then the

state must protect that life, irrespective of the circumstances.

Each of us must make up our own minds as to which premise we align ourselves to and take responsibility for our decision in that regard, as our collective decision dictates how the 'state' concurs.

We all must realise the significance of what we may do in the forthcoming referendum and accept responsibility for the ramifications of that action. We cannot blame 'modernity', as modernity has no vote, unless of course we disempower ourselves to allow that to be so.

*Yours etc.,  
John J. Lupton,  
Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.*

### Sisters cannot go against their ethos

**Dear Editor,** It is my belief that if the Sisters of Charity sell or give land for a new maternity hospital, knowing that abortions, IVF and sterilisations will be performed therein, it will be an example of close, formal co-operation in what is sinful. These practices are all contrary to the natural law. If they go

ahead the result will be, first, obviously, that innocent lives will be taken, then also that scandal will be given and finally that the credibility of the Sisters of Charity will be greatly undermined.

Those promoting this new, totally secularist hospital for the benefit of the 'taxpayers' should remember that

in Ireland 78% of taxpayers are still Catholic and that in any case, whatever the religions of the patients or medics, all are bound by the natural law.

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Richard O'Connor,  
Rome, Italy.*

### Citizens' Assembly a Pontius Pilate ploy

**Dear Editor,** It seems the Government is going to take the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly as a blueprint for the referendum on the removal of the Eighth Amendment. The format of this assembly suggests that a small group of people (under 100) gathering in a Dublin hotel room being 'informed' by a panel of 'experts' is the ultimate democratic process. To call it a democratic process is ludicrous! I would venture to say that it is more of an exercise in indoctrination than a presentation of unbiased information, as when it comes to views on abortion everyone is biased.

But is this not a clever Pontius Pilate ploy by the Government to absolve itself of any calamitous consequences if the repeal of the Eighth Amendment is passed or not passed in a referendum? It is cynical to use public monies bordering on being unconstitutional given the McKenna judgement. It is symptomatic of the spineless Irish Governments we have had of late. Ironically the Eighth Amendment was put in place by an agreement of the main political parties, FG, FF and Labour with few dissenters from all parties in 1983 and passed by 66.9% in the referendum. If the Government and opposition need a sample of public opinion it is time they went out and knocked on the doors of their constituents.

*Yours etc.,  
Nuala Nolan,  
Galway City.*

### Sisters, you should stand your ground on deal

**Dear Editor,** The Sisters of Charity who own the St Vincent's Healthcare Trust, must not compromise on their Catholic ethos in the proposed new building of the national maternity hospital on their land.

Some journalists and medics have suggested that the sisters sell or lease out the land, or worse still that a compulsory possession order be made to solve the dilemma.

Now if the sisters sell/lease the land they would be compromising on their Catholic ethos, i.e. knowing that some medical procedures which are contrary to their ethos would be taking place on their former land.

Some years ago I left midwifery in Britain as procedures were taking place on the maternity unit contrary to Catholic doctrine.

Despite the past failings of some sisters, they are still the best custodians of their land for the common good, even when taxpayer funding is needed.

How many state-funded organisations are squeaky clean? Those who are now bashing the sisters may not be in powerful positions today only for the education and healthcare provided by the sisters in the past.

Well done, to Bishop Doran again for defending the Catholic ethos – we need to hear from his brother bishops and priests.

*Yours etc.,  
Ann Campbell,  
Scotstown,  
Co. Monaghan.*

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# 📷 Around the world



▲ **MEXICO:** A candle burns next to an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe near debris after fireworks stored in a house exploded in Chilchotla, killing at least 12 people and injuring 30 more. Photos: CNS

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis poses with a group of Chinese priests after a general audience in St Peter's Square.



**IRAQ:** Displaced Iraqis rest amid rubble after fleeing fighting between Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service forces and Islamic State militants on May 15 in Mosul.



**VENEZUELA:** A protester faces the National Guard during clashes in Caracas. The motto on his back reads: "Mum, today I went out to defend Venezuela. If I do not come back, I went with her."



**CANADA:** A man tries to start his generator to pump water out of his flooded home in Deux-Montagnes, Quebec. A mix of heavy rains and melting snow caused the situation.



**HOLY LAND:** Palestinian protesters run for cover from tear gas fired by Israeli troops in clashes in May 15 during a protest in the West Bank town of Bethlehem marking the 69th anniversary of their uprooting.



## Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



### A decoration perfect for any summer party

**I** scream for ice cream! During our recent sunny weather you've no doubt been treated to one or two giant waffle cones filled with a few scoops of your favourite ice cream. We can't rely on getting long spells of hot weather in Ireland, even in the summer, so slurping on ice cream in the sun is a real luxury.

But you can have as much ice cream as you want with these DIY ice cream cones. So whether the sun is still shining, and you have eaten your fill of ice cream, or if the sun has gone away and you miss the days of ice cream, move onto making these felt cones.

They make great decorations for a summer birthday party and you can make as many of the ice creams as you like without the brain freeze. Double them up and stuff them with kapok to hang them from the ceiling, or keep them flat and turn them into bunting for an ice cream party. Decorate them the same way you would decorate real ice cream: with sugar strands or hundreds and thousands, flakes, cherries, or chocolate sauce.



Begin by making your templates on the back of some card. Start with the cones; make triangle shaped cones or flat-bottomed cones like the ones that stand up straight on a surface.

Next make the templates for the scoops of ice cream. Cut out all of your templates and leave to one side. Pin the cone template to the beige felt, and ice cream template to the pale green felt.

#### “ Sew a waffle stitch pattern onto the cone if you like”

Cut around the templates and then remove the pins. Repeat so you have two sides for each shape.

Next take some brown embroidery thread and sew little chocolate sprinkles all over the green pieces of felt. If you're using white felt for vanilla ice cream, use embroidery thread in different colours for the hundreds and thousands.

Sew a waffle stitch pattern onto the cone if you like. Next attach the cone to the ice cream. Place the cone underneath the ice cream scoop shape and glue in place with some fabric glue.

Repeat with the other pieces and place them back to back. Sew everything up or glue it together, and then make as many ice creams as you like. Add extra scoops to each cone if that's how you have your real ice



# Student innovators making a difference



## Mags Gargan meets young activists working to solve problems they see in their communities

**F**arm safety, human trafficking, sexual consent, mental health, animal cruelty, eating disorders and climate change were among some of the issues being tackled by teenagers competing for the Young Social Innovators of the Year 2017 title.

About 800 young people from schools across the country attended the national awards in the Convention Centre in Dublin last week. Previous years saw about 4,500 youths attend the awards to showcase their projects in a day-long festival atmosphere that included workshops and games. This year financial restraints saw only the finalists attend a more scaled-down ceremony, however this did not dampen the excitement or enthusiasm of the contestants.

Young Social Innovators (YSI) is a non-profit youth organisation co-founded in 2001 by Sr Stan Kennedy and Rachel Collier to encourage young people to bring about change in their communities and wider society.

### Change

“Young people bring passion, energy and ideas to the forefront that have the ability to change our nation. They are one of our greatest resources and it is vital that they are listened to,” Sr Stan said. “Social innovation gives young people a chance to realise their potential and develop entrepreneurial skills to create a more equal and fair society. The YSI Awards showcase the very best that our young people have to offer.”

The programme is open to

secondary school students and aims to empower young people and give them the skills to come up with solutions to social problems that will benefit their communities. Since 2006 the YSI has been holding Speak Out Fora which gives young people a platform to present their projects on their chosen social issue. The presentations can involve music, singing, theatre and artistic displays, and the award finalists are chosen from the Speak Outs.

Following a 2,000 mile Speak Out tour where 7,000 young social innovators and 456 teams were invited to present their projects at 16 events in March, just 11 teams were selected to compete for the 2017 title of Young Social Innovators of the year.

### “ We handed out candles in glass jars to every family in our community and we had a ‘light up’ ceremony at night...”

Students from Largy College, Clones, Co. Monaghan took the top prize with their project titled Mend a Mind – It's a Disorder Not a Decision, which aims to raise awareness about mental health in their school and community and to educate people about the mental health issues that are most pertinent to young people.

“It's so prominent and the statistics are heartbreaking,” says Caoimhe O’Gorman. “Like every year 77 people in secondary schools commit



suicide, 66 boys and 11 girls. It's hard-hitting stuff to think that it is people your own age. We want to promote positive mental health and eliminate the stigma around it.”

The students held numerous events throughout the year to try and improve the mental health of their school and town community, including meditation for Leaving Cert students and healthy smoothies for primary school students.

“We handed out candles in glass jars to every family in our community and we had a ‘light up’ ceremony at night,” says Maeve Monahan. “We sang songs and read poems. It was so touching and some people cried.”

“We did a flash mob on Grafton Street,” says Caoimhe. “We had a digital detox and spent 24 hours at an adventure

centre and bonded as a group without our phones. We had to talk to each other and learned the importance of communication.”

“We also had a free family fun day at a sports centre,” says Maeve. “It was all sponsored and we had a bouncy castle, cookery demonstrations, tea and coffee, a relaxation room and a lady gave massages. Some of the local county footballers came and gave demonstrations.”

### Feedback

The girls say the feedback from the community has been great and they really enjoyed their project and look forward to taking it further after their win.

The silver award went to St Joseph's College Lucan, Co. Dublin for their project ‘No Limits’ on social inclusion and Tullamore College, Co. Offaly





The winning team from Largy College, Clones, Co. Monaghan and, below, Minister Simon Coveney and Sr Stan Kennedy with students from Newtown, Co. Waterford. Photos: Jason Clarke.

was awarded bronze for 'Think Safety, Farm Safely' on staying safe on the farm.

An additional six teams were awarded in a variety of other categories, and this year following the introduction of the programme to Junior Cycle students, the first Junior Award was presented to St Farnan's Post-Primary School in Co. Kildare for their project #DogDefenders.

The Step Up Challenge was won by Portmarnock Community School in Co. Dublin for an incredible project that saw the students meet not only three government ministers from Lesotho, but also the King and Queen.

"For the past three years we have been using open street map," explains Sam Barlow. "It's a tool that allows us to draw on satellite images and create digital maps for developing countries. It's all open source so all you need to access it is an email address and mapping is a free skill anyone can learn."

"We have been focussing on a country landlocked by South Africa called Lesotho. They called for help three years ago so we started with them. We met the ministers from Lesotho back in February and we saw the positive impact that we have had. Last year Lesotho had their most accurate census to date using the maps we created and they are now using it for planning purposes. We've also partnered with a Swedish company that turns our 2D maps into 3D maps for free. Now we're moving from Lesotho to all the developing countries in the world."

'Deal with the Wheels' was the project by St Mary's Secondary School Ballina in Co. Mayo which examined the issue of wheelchair accessibility.



**“It's all open source so all you need to access it is an email address and mapping is a free skill anyone can learn”**

"We're raising awareness of the difficulties wheelchair users face and we're trying to create a more friendly atmosphere for wheelchair users," says Grainne Moyles.

"If I walk past a car in a disabled spot now I check to see if they have a disabled badge. I am tuned into now and I think all the girls are too. We are more compassionate since speaking to wheelchair users and seeing what they go through."

Hugh Dooley from St Vincent's High School says during their project 'All About Maria' he learned a lot about "the negative effects of drugs and what to do if you find someone who has taken an overdose". "People might think some drugs are safe but different people can react in different ways to different drugs," he says.

Our Lady's College Greenhills in Co. Louth did their project on human trafficking and Eleanor McHugh says she has learned a lot from the research. "We found it was a very prominent issue not just in other countries but also in Ireland. A lot of people don't think of it as a problem here. The sale of sex has gone up

70% since 2014, so we decided to introduce more awareness in Irish schools."

**“People might think some drugs are safe but different people can react in different ways to different drugs”**

The school has raised money for Ruhama, a charity that supports women vulnerable to trafficking, and hopes to become a sister school to the Girls' Sunshine Home in Vietnam "which takes vulnerable girls off the streets".

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Simon Coveney said the young people "bring new insight, passion and innovative actions to many of the difficult challenges we face today".

"We need to enable and empower each and every citizen, through programmes such as Young Social Innovators, to actively engage and build not only a strong economy, but a fair society," he said.

# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



**W**e are on the cusp of summer. Tender leaves are unfurling on the trees, joyfully compelled by the spring sunshine. I let the children scamper happily ahead on the way to school. We prefer to take the long way, which is a path by the brook, filled with bluebells and birdsong. It is for this that we forsook the big city. We wanted the children's childhood to be simple, peaceful and filled with nature.

Our village school is magical. Indeed, it was the school that first drew us to this part of the Isle of Wight. When we went to view the school, there was nobody there – because the entire school was having lessons on the beach. That sold it straight away!

Another thing that sold it on a subsequent visit was seeing how kind the older children were to the smaller kids. There was a strong feeling that this was a kind, secure place, where great value was placed on looking after one another.

**“A school is like a third parent to your child. It will have a profound influence on who they become”**

You take schools for granted until you become a parent. Then, with your first child, you see how sensitive they are to environments like childcare or crèches, and you realise that the much more challenging environment of school is coming soon. A school is like a third parent to your child. It will have a profound influence on who they become. Children will spend perhaps as much of their waking lives in school as with their parents – more in some cases.

Some parents become neurotic about academic rigour, stressing children out with too much pressure and extra-curricular activities. Academics are important, but the ethos of a school, and the values it inculcates, are even more so. Fret about academics in secondary, as the Leaving Cert or A-Levels

loom. At primary level, forming their characters, their emotional intelligence and their idea of what is good, that is the vital task. For many parents, including ourselves, a school with a Christian ethos is a vital aspect of that journey.

I can only look in amazement at the media-led campaign underway in Ireland



to obliterate Christian ethos in primary schools.

Here in England, which is far more secular country, with a much smaller percentage of practicing Christians, of whatever stripe, a Christian ethos is appreciated and respected, even by parents of no faith.

The *quid pro quo* is that even faith schools have a very inclusive ethos, which respects those of all faiths and none. Yet that is also true of Irish Catholic schools, which are so routinely maligned.

In England, there is even a statutory obligation for all state schools – including non-denominational schools – to have daily act of collective worship – yet this is not complained of.

## Flames

Those stoking the flames of anti-Catholicism in Ireland imagine themselves liberal, tolerant, multiculturalists. Yet they seek to impose uniformity. They seek to deprive people different to them of the right to send their children to schools that reflect their beliefs.

They would also imagine themselves as the protectors of refugees, yet in creating a climate of hostility to a particular faith, they have more in common with the persecutors than the persecuted.

Will we move back to Ireland some day? In deciding, one question must now be: do we want our children to grow up in a culture where their faith is subjected to ridicule and hatred?

Perhaps Ireland's illiberal 'liberals' are already creating refugees.



# Coming full circle from story books to spirituality



## Fr Rolheiser

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

**M**y first love was literature, novels and poetry. As a child, I loved story books, mysteries and adventures. In grade school, I was made to memorise poetry and loved the exercise. High school introduced me to more serious literature, Shakespeare, Kipling, Keats, Wordsworth, Browning. On the side, I still read story books, cowboy tales from the old West, taken from my dad's bookshelf.

During my undergraduate university years, literature was a major part of the curriculum and I learned then that literature wasn't just about stories, but also about social and religious commentary; as well as about form and beauty as ends in themselves.

In classes then we read classic novels: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *East of Eden*. The curriculum at that time in Canada heavily favoured British writers. Only later, on my own, would I discover the richness in Canadian, US, African, Indian, Russian and Swedish writers.

### Catechised

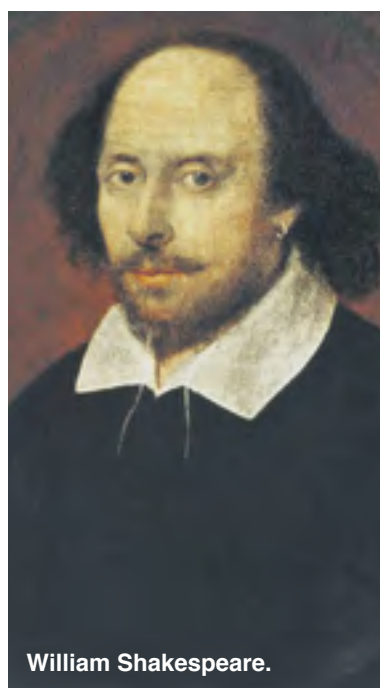
I had been solidly catechised in my youth and, while the Catechism held my faith, literature held my theology.

But after literature came philosophy. As part of preparation for ordination we were required to do a degree in

philosophy. I was blessed with some fine teachers and fell into first fervour in terms of my love of philosophy. The courses then heavily favoured Scholasticism (Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Aquinas) but we were also given a sound history of philosophy and a basic grounding in Existentialism and some of the contemporary philosophical movements. I was smitten, and philosophy became my theology.

But after philosophy came theology. After our philosophical studies, we were required to take a four-year degree in theology prior to ordination. Again, I was blessed with good teachers and blessed to be studying theology just as Vatican II and a rich new theological scholarship were beginning to penetrate theological schools and seminaries.

There was theological excitement aplenty, and I shared in it. In Roman Catholic circles, we were reading Congar, Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Schnackenburg and Raymond Brown. Protestant circles were giving us Barth, Tillich, Niebuhr and a bevy of wonderful scripture scholars. The faith of my youth was finally finding the intellectual grounding it had forever longed for. Theology became my new passion.



William Shakespeare.

But after theology came spirituality. After ordination, I was given the opportunity to do a further graduate degree in theology. That degree deepened immeasurably my love for and commitment to theology. It also landed me a teaching job and for the next six years I taught theology at a graduate level. These were wonderful years; I was where I most wanted to be, in a theology

classroom. However, during those six years, I began to explore the writings of the mystics and tentatively launch some courses in spirituality, beginning with a course on the great Spanish mystic, John of the Cross.

My doctoral studies followed those years and while I focused on systematic theology, writing my thesis in the area of natural theology, something had begun to shift in me.

I found myself more and more, both in teaching and writing, shifting more into the area of spirituality, so much so that after a few years I could no longer justify calling some of my former courses in Systematic theology by their old catalogue titles. Honesty compelled me now to name them courses in spirituality.

**“Without spirituality, theology too easily becomes only an intellectual aesthetics, however beautiful”**

And what is spirituality? How is it different from theology? At one level, there's no difference. Spirituality is, in effect, applied theology. They are of one and the same piece, either ends of the same sock. But here's a difference: Theology defines the playing field, defines the doctrines, distinguishes truth from falsehood, and seeks to enflame the intellectual imagination. It is what it classically

claims itself to be: Faith seeking understanding.

But, rich and important as that is, it's not the game. Theology makes up the rules for the game, but it doesn't do the playing nor decide the outcome. That's the role of spirituality, even as it needs to be obedient to theology. Without sound theology, spirituality always falls into unbridled piety, unhealthy individualism and self-serving fundamentalism. Only good, rigorous, academic theology saves us from these.

But without spirituality, theology too easily becomes only an intellectual aesthetics, however beautiful. It's one thing to have coherent truth and sound doctrine; it's another thing to give that actual human flesh, on the streets, in our homes, and inside our own restless questioning and doubt. Theology needs to give us truth; spirituality needs to break open that truth.

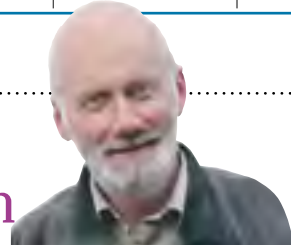
### Full circle

And so I've come full circle: from the story books of my childhood, through the Shakespeare of my high school, through the novelists and poets of my undergraduate years, through the philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, through the theology of Rahner and Tillich, through the scripture scholarship of Raymond Brown and Ernst Kasemann, through the hermeneutics of the Post-Modernists of my post-graduate years, through 40 years of teaching theology, I've landed where I started – still searching for good stories that feed the soul.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Insight needed on unfair stereotyping of priests

A short but worthy season of **The Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio 1), came to a low key end last Friday night.

This last episode included an interesting item on the Jehovah's Witnesses. David Dunlea of the Jehovah Witnesses in Ireland and presenter Michael Comyn discussed the oppression of the Witnesses in Russia where it seems they've now been classed as extremists and have had their property seized, apparently with the collusion of the Orthodox Church but with the disapproval of the Catholics.

As Dunlea pointed out, the Witnesses he knows are far from extremist or any threat to the state.

I'd like to have heard more about the beliefs of the Witnesses and in what way they differed from mainstream Christians. Comyn did ask how they interpreted Scripture and avoided out-of-context misinterpretations if they hadn't any central guidance. Dunlea said that they let Scripture interpret Scripture, which certainly needed more elaboration.

### Isolation

In a second item, about the wellbeing of priests, Fr Roy Donovan spokesperson for the Association of Catholic Priests and Fergal Rooney, Principal Psychologist at St John of God's discussed how isolation and loneliness were



Jesse Wallace and Shane Richie in new *Eastenders* spin off, *Redwater*.

big problems, and while celibacy was raised it was broader than that – there were times when curates in parishes lived with other curates and a housekeeper and this informal support structure was less common nowadays.

They also referenced the demoralising effects of the child abuse scandals and the fears priests had of being wrongly accused. Something more on the unfair stereotyping of priests in the media and the effect of that would have been in order as well.

While *Leap of Faith* was on the way out for now, RTÉ launched a new TV drama series, **Redwater**, last Sunday night. It was a bit of a hybrid – an RTÉ/BBC co-production that featured characters (Kat and Alfie) from BBC soap *Eastenders*.

For the most part I liked it – the acting was mostly confident and relaxed, the script was witty and the profanities relatively infrequent. The Waterford seaside setting was used to good effect and some of the cinematography was

downright poetic. The plot – and especially the relationships – were hard to follow at times and I had to pause the credits to get a handle on how the main characters were connected.

### Tasteless

Oisín Stack was interesting and as local priest Fr Dermot, sympathetically portrayed, at least until the rather melodramatic ending, which included a rather tasteless scene involving the Eucharist.

Stack was interviewed on the *Ryan Tubridy Show* (RTÉ Radio 1) last Monday morning, when he said they researched the look of modern young priests to guide them for his portrayal.

US disease drama **Containment** (RTÉ 2 Saturday nights) has a religion problem as well.

The virus that has a chunk of Atlanta under quarantine may be highly contagious but I doubt if enthusiasm for the

show will catch so quickly. As is often the case, the initial premise had the makings of tense drama, but too much of it has sagged under the weight of soapy plot developments and clichéd platitudes. In last Saturday's episode some characters went to what seemed a Protestant Evangelical church complete with healing preacher.

One described the place as creepy and blamed the nuns (!) for being 'sadistic', sending them there for Bible study when they were young. Looks like they've also got the prejudice infection.

Not unconnected, the peculiar blasphemy controversy rumbled on for another week. One of the best discussions was on last Saturday morning's **Talking Point** (Newstalk) – a more reflective treatment of the issue than some of the knee-jerk stuff from earlier in the week.

Church of Ireland Canon Rev. Ginnie Kennerly disapproved of gratuitous offence but thought a blasphemy law was "problematic in a pluralist society". Lawyer Eoin O'Dell of Trinity College said he was in favour of free speech with no legal limits, no 'buts', but I'd like to have heard him challenged more on that – would he not favour laws on libel for example?

If not, surely justice would be ill-served, if so then I'd suggest he would be assenting to some pretty large 'buts'. Joe Humphries of *The Irish*

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**BROKEN**  
BBC 1, Tuesday, May 23, 9pm

New drama series – Catholic priest Fr Michael Kerrigan questions how much of an impact he can really have on the ever-evolving spiritual landscape of modern-day Britain.

**EWTN THEOLOGY ROUNDTABLE**  
EWTN, Wednesday, May 24, 11am

Discussing the continuing importance of the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima a century ago.

**TUAM BABIES**  
TG4, Wednesday, May 24, 8.30pm

The BBC Alba current affairs series 'Eorpa' tells the human story born in Tuam's Mother and Baby Home.

*Times* noted that the bishops didn't have anything to say and presenter Sarah Carey suggested they'd be afraid of having their heads taken off. They mustn't have noticed Bishop Kevin Doran's contribution from the front page of last week's *The Irish Catholic*.

[boregan@hotmail.com](mailto:boregan@hotmail.com)



Michael Comyn.



Aubrey Malone

# Film

## Cockney revamp of Arthurian legend is anachronistic

### King Arthur: Revenge of the Sword (12A)

That Arfur bloke wasn't a bad old geezer, wuz he? No, mate. Okay, so it done his head in trying to get the hang of – whaddya call it, Excalleybur? – but the job was Oxo in the end, innit?

There's a joke told about John Wayne when he played the soldier at the foot of the cross in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. After Christ died he had the line: "Truly this man was the son of God." The director wasn't happy with the way he said it so he told him to put some 'awe' into it.

Wayne then cleared his throat and went: "Aw, truly this man was the son of God."

The (probably apocryphal) anecdote sprang to mind as I watched this umpteenth re-working of the Thomas Malory tale from Guy Ritchie. Ritchie is a man who directs films for people who move their lips as they read. It was always going to be dodgy letting him loose on a quasi-historical epic.

### Yobboes

The script is riddled with words like 'celebrity' and 'pro-active', sentences like "It's not gonna happen, boss." You keep wondering if Vinnie Jones is going to turn up with a gang of yobboes from the



Jude Law in *King Arthur: Revenge of the Sword*.

Fair  
★★

East End going, "okay, guv? Got cash and carried to that Lady Guinevere bird yet?" It's Lock, Stock and Two Smokin' Chainmails.

The cast is problematic too. We all know what happened when they kitted Brad Pitt

(Troy) and Colin Farrell (Alexander) out in togas, don't we? That's right. Career suicide. Bottom line? You don't put prettyboys in frocks or they'll come across as effeminate.

Something similar applies to Jude Law here. He's

Vortigern, the bad egg of the piece. He kills Arthur's parents and usurps his throne. But he's too bland-looking. Ditto for Aidan Gillen and Eric Bana (two goodies) and Charlie Hunnam (Arthur). None of them have 'period' faces. We don't feel they've come from savage battlefields in 'Londonium', as Ritchie calls it. They look more like people who've been negotiating the quarter-finals of the Wimbledon tennis championships.

### Energy

Notwithstanding such blips, the film hums. It has a hydraulic energy that carries it along.

When it's not being an unintentional hoot it's full of Stygian excess, penumbral

shadows, psychedelic special effects, strange witchy creatures, Harry Potter-ish spells from Guinevere. (Here's a lady who's almost as odd as her name – Astrid-Berges Frisbey. Is she a person or a game?)

Law needed to be more insane. That way we might have accepted him knifing the women in his life every time he has a bad hair day. The supporting members of the cast sound like they just got off the tube at Hyde Park Corner – except for Gillen. He's more like a Dart fugitive from Glenageary.

If this is the London – sorry, Londonium – of five centuries ago I'm a Dutchman. It sounds more like the London of five minutes ago.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Recent books in brief

### Selected Prayers by Pope Francis (Veritas, €4.99)

Prayer, according to Pope Francis, helps a person to keep their faith in God, and to entrust themselves to him even when they do not understand his will. "Prayer brings you to hope," the Pope adds. "And when things become dark, with more prayer there will be more hope" – very much a thought for today.

Since he became Pope his allocutions and papal documents have contained many examples of his own prayers. In three sections this little book provides a selection of them. Many, of course, were intended for particular occasions but this does not affect their appeal to others, for by focusing prayers fully on events and places which have affected many, the individual is enabled to both share the general insights the Pope has, and apply them to their own personal situations.

Readers should not overlook the last section of prayers beloved by the Pope. The first is St Thomas More's "Prayer for Good Humour" – the relevance of which will appeal to countless people who have discovered (as Pope Francis did long ago) that a little humour eases every situation. Another is the "Five Finger Payer", which has been mentioned in these pages before.

But the most unusual, and one of very special importance to the Pope, is a "Prayer to Our Lady, Untier of Knots". This was inspired by a baroque painting by Johann Schmidtner which depicted Our Lady suspended between Heaven and Earth serenely untying a knotted white ribbon. From this Pope Francis derived a special devotion to "Our Lady Untier of Knots" as a resolver of problems that he shared with his compatriots.

The prayer is now used to introduce a novena to this devotion. This idea has an immediate appeal both for its special quality and its truthfulness to human nature. For this one prayer alone the booklet is worth buying.

### Challenges in Later Life

Mary Threadgold RSC  
(Messenger Publications,  
€3.95 / £3.50)

We live today it seems to many in an era of unrelenting change. This can be especially difficult for older people who only wish to live quite and undisturbed lives, but also to continue to get as much out of life as they can.

Today this group amounts to over nearly 12% of the population, by 2041 this figure will have risen to 22%. So in Irish society this is not just a problem area for individuals and their relations and friends, it is a national issue, and one which must be faced realistically.

This little pamphlet by Sr Threadgold deals with some of the issues that can arise in the areas of physical ability, social interaction, intellectual needs and challenges, but especially in the area of emotions and spirituality. She hopes to enable both those of advancing years and their families to deal with situations.

The book provides not just comfort and advice, but also important information on where to go and who to contact for advice and help.

For many people then this little book may prove to be invaluable.



# Fatima: Tradition

Peter Costello

In the century since the events on the plateau near the village of Fatima a multitude of books have been published dealing with the apparitions, and the coming century will undoubtedly bring many more.

But many of these books merely provide summaries and comments, rather than new information. Many of the commentaries are couched in terms of today's anxieties, especially those of North Americans.

To understand about Fatima, the inquirer has to go back to the earlier testimonies and the earliest publications. But among these, it is interesting to note, Irish published books play a leading role.

But first of all to recall what is said to have taken place in May 1917, and the following months.

It was in May 1917 that Pope Benedict XV added the title "Queen of Peace" of the Litany of Loreto. Eight days later three small children were out on the plateau of Cova de Irina, herding the family's flock of sheep, when they had the first of a series of visions. They told their families that a lady had appeared to them; in a later apparition they said the lady had told them she was "the Queen of the Rosary".

As is nearly always the case, the vision was seen only by the voyants.

### Sceptical

Their families at first were sceptical, as parents often are with the strange claims of small children, especially those of a pious nature. However, the visions went on week by week, culminating in an event witnessed by an estimated crowd of 60,000 (some say 70,000) from all over Portugal, when allegedly "the Sun danced".

These events were reported in the Portuguese papers – especially the last which was front page news in the major Lisbon newspaper *O Século*, a paper not over friendly to clerical interests. Photographs of the day appeared in Portuguese illustrated news magazines.

Yet oddly enough this news made little impact around the world, passing almost unreported, even in Catholic papers. A generation

ORIGINAL PHOTO OF THE "MIRACLE OF THE SUN" IN FATIMA  
13 OCT 1917 - PUBLISHED BY L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, 1951



Fatima Sun on October 13, 1917; left the children at the centre of the apparition.

1932) by Senator Helena Concannon, the well-known religious writer.

However, the most important of these publications was by Monsignor Finbar Ryan, the titular archbishop of Gabala. *Our Lady of Fatima* was a substantial volume published in Ireland in October 1939, and in Australia, by the long established firm of Brown and Nolan. It was issued by Herder in the USA.

Bishop Ryan had been lecturing on Fatima for many years, and his book was one of the most influential ever published on the shrine.

The book passed through many editions, with even a Gaelic translation appearing from the Irish Government Stationary Office in 1948. Thus Ireland played a significant role in the spreading the devotion to a now much visited shrine.

Irish books on Fatima reached a peak in 1950, but then faded away to almost nothing, the last being published by its author himself in 2000.

This trend was an indication of the changing nature of religion in modern Ireland, even then beginning to decline.

But by middle of the last century a wave of publications, largely from the USA, was sweeping the world.

One of these, still highly regarded by many and as influential as Bishop Ryan's

later people would speak of a conspiracy by the news agencies; but this was not the case. The local clergy and the local bishop were sceptical about the events; indeed the bishop forbade the clergy from playing any part in organising pilgrimages, aside from providing mass for the visitors.

To theological prudence was added a certain amount of caution about aggravating the Republican government's attitude to these events, which they tried to discourage.

But local people continued to visit the site, where a small chapel was erected. In 1922 after the publication of the first book by a local canon, Dr Manuel Formigao (*Os Episodios Maravilhosos de Fatima*, never translated into English), and a second book by another author in 1923 (also untranslated), a canonical commission was appointed, which reported back in 1928 to the Bishop of Leiria, who in 1930 declared Our Lady of Fatima worthy of devotion.

By 1930 a proper church had been built at Cova de Irina, paid for out of contributions, rather than parish funds. It was only after this that Fatima slowly became a place of international pilgrimage. In 1930 one procession was estimated at nearly half a million.

“Irish books on Fatima reached a peak in 1950, but then faded away to almost nothing”

Yet abroad even Catholic papers continued to refer to Fatima as the "Lourdes of Portugal" – an indication of its status at the time. Portugal was for the other Europeans a far away country of which they knew little, to adapt a famous expression of the day.

By now accounts of the events, albeit at second hand, had begun to appear in English. The first publication in Ireland was a small pamphlet *Our Lady of Fatima* (Irish Messenger Office,



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.

# and legacy in books

1940s and early 1950s was the personal interest of Pope Pius XII, through what might be called his direct patronage of the shrine. He was influenced by a visionary experience of his own in the gardens of the Vatican. He experienced for himself a vision of the sun "dancing" akin to that seen at Fatima he thought; an event which was later confirmed by his spokesman.

**“The whole matter of the three secrets of Fatima is bound up with Sr Lucia’s later testimony”**

The first extended theological treatment of Fatima was the work of an eminent scholar, the Belgian Jesuit theologian, Fr Dhanis, who had a distinguished career, as professor of theologies at Louvain (1933 to 1949), later at the Gregorian University in Rome (1949 to 1971), of which he was rector (1963 to 1966). He died in 1978. He was, from the Vatican point of view, a “safe pair of hands”: in *The Message of Fatima* (2000) by Cardinal Ratzinger, Fr Dhanis is the single theological authority quoted.

Dhanis discerned stages in the development of what we know about Fatima. Stage I derived from the original testimonies gathered for the diocesan commission, on which the recognition of the devotion was based.

### Documents

Stage II derived from the memoirs of Sr Lucia, written in stages many years later. These documents have been examined for the process of her canonisation.

But the separation of her canonisation from that of her cousins derives from the doubts in the minds of some theologians (perhaps even Benedict XVI) about the trustworthiness as historical evidence of testimonies recorded so late, and seemingly not presented before the original commission.

The whole matter of the three secrets of Fatima, about which theories of conspiracy have abounded to the embarrassment of the Vatican, is bound up with Sr Lucia’s later testimony.

On these matters we can see controversy continuing.

One most significant book on Fatima has never been translated from the Portuguese. This is *Fatima: Segredos, Graças, Mistérios* by Antero de Figueiredo (Paulus Editora, €12.90), a recognised figure of some standing in 20th-Century Portuguese literature. Published in 1936, this is one of several spiritual books the author wrote.

A book distinguished for its literary merit, which reminds one of an author such as Huysmans in *La Cathédrale*. Theirs are books



of great significance, which are, however, far removed

from the pious publication which so many prefer to read.

But the lack of a translation of Antero de Figueiredo’s book shows that there are still things to be discovered and read and appreciated, even after a century of discussion on the meaning of the event at Fatima.

If we are to try and fix the meaning of Fatima that comes from even a brief survey of the literature since 1917 it would be essentially a message of peace, peace between cultures, peace between nations, peace between individuals symbolised for Christians by the maternal anxiety of the mother of Jesus for the all the children of humanity



was *Our Lady of Fatima* (1947) – which is still in print (Image, \$15.00). This was by Professor William Thomas Walsh, a writer very much of his period, whose other books have, however, been criticised for their anti-Semitism.

This raises a point regarding the care readers need to take reading older books on Fatima.

Many books from the past were issued with an *imprimeur*, but this merely indicated that a local ecclesiastical censor found them free of doctrinal error; it does not mean that the Church approved of their social, political, or philosophical outlook. Nor is such a declaration a protection from condemnation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Since 1950, Marian theology has developed, deepening an awareness of the role of the Blessed Virgin in the life of the Church, in a wider context of ever increasing insight. This often gives it a different aspect to older views.

But what really sets Fatima apart and began the great wave of devotion in the late



Canon Manuel Formigao.

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## The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus,  
In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your

Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

L.C.

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PLEASE REMEMBER BÓTHAR IN YOUR WILL. €1,800 will allow us to give an Irish, in-calf, dairy heifer to a struggling family in Rwanda, completely transforming their lives. Your gift will live on for generations. Phone the office on 061 414142 or [info@bothar.ie](mailto:info@bothar.ie)

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Please print your advertisement in the coupon, placing ONE word in each space. Below, please print your name and address. Do you require a Box Number? YES  NO  (Please tick ✓) Box Number €6 extra.

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The Irish Catholic, 23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2.

STATE UNDER WHICH HEADING YOUR AD IS TO APPEAR:

Minimum charge of €24.60 (inc. VAT) for 5 lines (25 words). Extra lines €4.92 each.

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Miracle Prayer €40

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# Leisure time



**Imagine just for today you are homeless. Hungry. You have no money and no phone.**

Join us for Tea and a private Tour of our homeless centre. See confidentially how Merchants Quay Ireland uses donations and legacies to bring relief and hope. All welcome.

to find out more visit [www.mqi.ie](http://www.mqi.ie)

**Ring Emma Murphy at 01-5240965 to be included on the guest list for the June 8th tour.**



**Giving Family & Life a gift in your Will is a hugely inspirational, lasting, and dignified way to leave a loving mark on countless lives.**

A gift in your Will ensures that the most effective pro-life / pro-family organisations will continue working for the kind of society we all desire.

**Remember, everything we do to save babies and strengthen the family relies on you and our other generous friends.**

For further advice or to avail of our Solicitor's free Will-service, please contact us today on

**01-8552790**

**Family & Life**

26 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1  
Ph: 01 8552790 | email: [tandl@fol.ie](mailto:tandl@fol.ie)  
[www.familyandlife.org](http://www.familyandlife.org)

## Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart work in poor parishes in Africa, Russia and Venezuela

**Please remember them in your Will**

Contact:  
Mission Support Centre, Western Road, Cork.  
Tel: 021 - 4543988  
[www.msquireland.com](http://www.msquireland.com)

**Trocaire is working for a just world and an end to poverty.**

**Please remember this work when making your will**

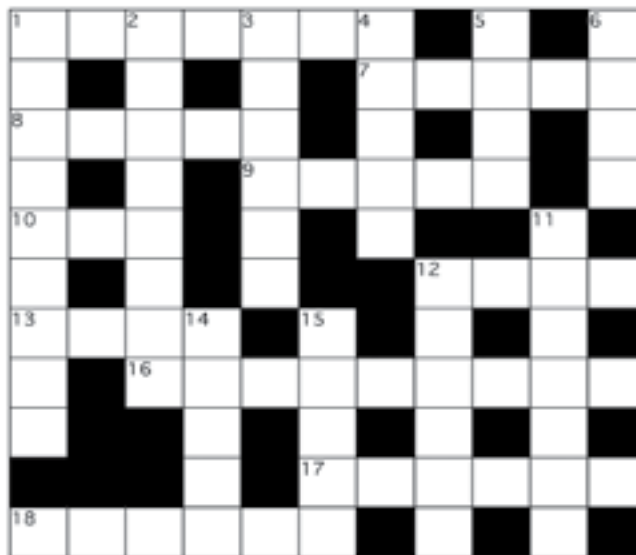
If you would like further information please contact Trocaire, Maynooth, Co. Kildare



01-629 3333  
[info@trocaire.ie](mailto:info@trocaire.ie)  
[www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)

## Crossword Junior

Gordius 182



### ACROSS

- 1 Sore skin you might get if you try to get a tan (7)
- 7 Adam and Eve ate this fruit (5)
- 8 Glue (5)
- 9 Made a choice in an election (5)
- 10 You listen with this (3)
- 12 Tablet (4)
- 13 You hit it in tennis (4)
- 16 Win this, and you're into the last match to try to win the cup (4-5)
- 17 Its official name is Association Football (6)
- 18 Make it different (6)

### DOWN

- 1 The ninth month of the year (9)
- 2 There are two of these in your nose (8)
- 3 Odd, like the numbers 1, 3, 5 and so on (6)
- 4 Definitely not nice (5)
- 5 Nickname for a potato (4)
- 6 Breakfast or dinner, for example (4)
- 11 Less dirty (7)
- 12 The son of a king and queen (6)
- 14 Yellow fruit (5)
- 15 Wash out with water alone (5)

## LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.298

**Across** – 1 Bid 3 Pollen count 8 Import 9 Bookworm  
10 Decay 11 Spick and span 13 Peels 16 Bring up  
20 Thump 21 Tiara 23 Basic 24 May altar 26 North sea oil 27 Yak

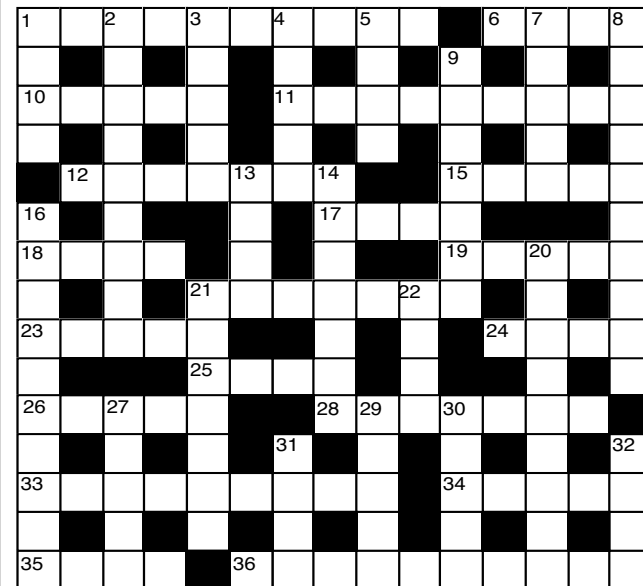
**Down** – 1 Blind as a bat 2 Depicted 3 Party 4 Lobster  
5 Cakes and ale 6 Utopia 7 Tom Sawyer 12 Keep in check 13 Plait 14 Strip 17 Glossary 18 Austria 22 Allah 23 Banal 24 Men

CHILDREN'S No.181

**Across** – 1 Triplets 5 Sty 6 Mechanic 8 Owed 9 Useful  
10 Rod 11 Last 14 Wade 17 Chin 18 Visit 19 Taxi 20 Dove  
**Down** – 1 Tomorrow 2 Included 3 Leaves 4 Athens  
7 Collected 12 Tangle 13 Music 15 Adam 16 Evil

## Crossword

Gordius 299



### ACROSS

- 1 Member of a Protestant sect who can make Pat abstain (10)
- 6 Skilful practitioner in the kitchen (4)
- 10 Supplementary clause found on horseback (5)
- 11 Bring in something, or make someone acquainted (9)
- 12 Flourish, thrive (7)
- 15 Located, as a building project is (5)
- 17 Find a robe in disarray in a Spanish river (4)
- 18 Curved lines (4)
- 19 Boulders (5)
- 21 See 33 across
- 23 A character avails of public transport vehicles (5)
- 24 This solution should not be written! (4)
- 25 The taste of gnat turnover (4)
- 26 Wanderer apt to return to the bar in Coronation Street (5)
- 28 Relent (4,3)
- 33 & 21 A desperate try to jettison a piece of cobblers' equipment (4-5,7)
- 34 Female relative (5)
- 35 Gather a harvest (4)
- 36 Thinking of a golf

tournament, one is ready to be persuaded (4-6)

### DOWN

- 1 & 2 Put-on mannerisms, to appear more upper-class, involve a crass gardenia arrangement (4,3,6)
- 3 Tapestry depicting some spectacular raspberries (5)
- 4 Clan (5)
- 5 Divisions of a tennis match (4)
- 7 Is it not what the ghost of your huncle might do? (5)
- 8 Confuse the shy infidel in a devilish way (10)
- 9 Is the royal spouse the trickster-type? (7)
- 13 Agreement, truce (4)
- 14 Retribution (7)
- 16 One who breaks in just to steal moggies? (3,7)
- 20 Colin and Fred are involved in naming this part of the farm (9)
- 21 Straddling, athwart (7)
- 22 Contents of a pod (4)
- 27 Panorama, view (5)
- 29 Extremely pale (5)
- 30 French boredom caused by some alien nuisance (5)
- 31 Pace (4)
- 32 Provide sustenance for (4)

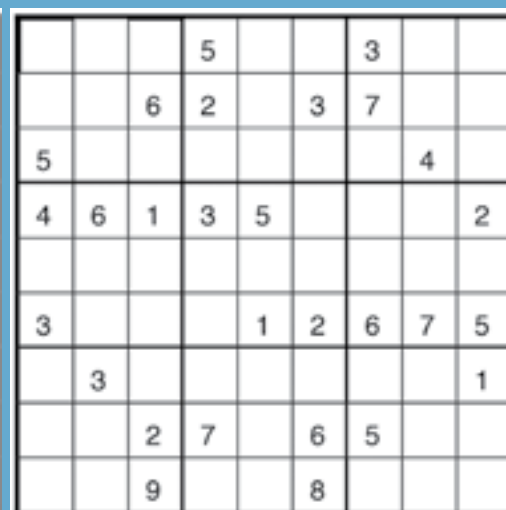
## Sudoku Corner

182

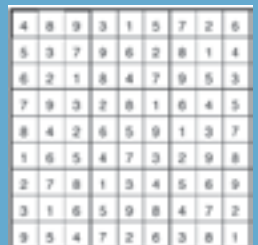
Easy



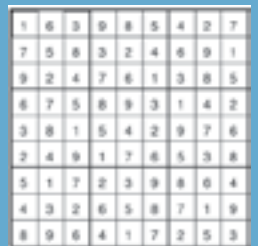
Hard



Last week's Easy 181



Last week's Hard 181







Fr Martin Delaney

Notebook

# The power of the Sacred Heart to lead us home

**RECENTLY MY BROTHER** and his wife renovated our family home where we all grew up. I was very happy that along with the many wonderful changes they have made they retained the Sacred Heart lamp and picture which had been there since my late father and mother moved in almost 60 years ago.

The practice of placing a picture of the Sacred Heart in a prominent place in the home with a little red lamp burning in front is a uniquely Irish tradition. It dates from 1873 when the Irish bishops consecrated the country to the Sacred Heart. Irish households were encouraged to consecrate their families to the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart speaks to all people who are hurting and there was a real sense that homes and families were 'protected' by Jesus particularly in times of sorrow and trouble.

**Experience**

A few weeks ago I came across a very moving and very powerful experience of how the Sacred Heart can protect a family and also bring healing. I was asked by a friend of mine to come and pray with him and his siblings as they



buried the ashes of their brother Joe in the family grave. Joe was the eldest boy of a large family and like many young Irish men he ended up going to live in England, not necessarily by choice.

He had a very poor relationship with many of his family and over the years he lost contact with all

of them. A man with a brilliant brain who achieved great success in his chosen career but sadly because of an addiction to alcohol his life became very troubled and very lonely. He ended up living in a dreary flat in the London area completely invisible to most of those who lived around him.

**Impression**

In 2016 Joe was diagnosed with cancer and for the last few months of the year he was a patient at a hospice. The staff in the hospice were extremely kind to Joe but they were under the impression that he was all alone in the world. As Joe was coming closer to death he did reveal something of his story to the hospice chaplain and among other things told him that he had a family in Ireland.

He mentioned the names of two of his siblings and the staff at the hospice decided they would try

to make contact with Joe's family. They got access to Joe's flat and tried to find some contact details but were not successful.

Then one of them noticed the rather faded Sacred Heart picture on the wall.

At the bottom of the picture were written the names of Joe's parents, their address in Ireland and the names of his siblings. After a few unsuccessful attempts they managed to contact Joe's brother, my friend, and told him that Joe was close to death.

His brother got a flight that day and arrived at Joe's bedside just hours before he died. Some other siblings based in England were also there. Joe knew they were with him as he passed from this world.

The Sacred Heart whose picture was the only thing Joe had taken from the family home in Ireland many years earlier was there with him to the end and allowed his estranged family to be there too. They brought his ashes back home to be buried with their parents and for Joe and for them, there was healing, there was closure, there was mercy. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant eternal rest to Joe and comfort and peace to his family.

**The Prayer to the Sacred Heart**

Oh Lord Jesus Christ, to Your most Sacred Heart I confide this intention {name petition}. Only look upon me, then do what Your love inspires. Let Your Sacred Heart decide. I count on You. I trust in You. I throw myself on Your mercy. Lord Jesus, You will not fail me. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in You. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Your love for me. Sacred Heart of Jesus, Your kingdom come. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have asked You for many favours, but I earnestly implore this one. Take it, place it in Your open Heart. When the Eternal Father looks upon it, He will see it covered with Your Precious Blood. It will be no longer my prayer, but Yours, Jesus. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You. Let me not be disappointed. Amen.

**EPITAPH ON A TOMBSTONE**

Pause as you pass by,  
As you are now, so once was I  
As I am now so shall you be.  
So prepare yourself to follow me.  
A local wag added in chalk:  
To follow you I'm quite content  
...but how do I know which way YOU went!



## YOUR GIFT CAN RELIEVE FAMINE IN AFRICA

Famine is afflicting the people of Africa, and the Little Way Association needs to send urgent relief to priests and religious who are helping the poor and destitute. Fr Peter Ndegwa CSSp of Garissa Diocese, Kenya, writes: "There are tales of households suffering, desperation, hopelessness and imminent loss of life here. We are in a state of hunger leading to famine and a looming disaster of untold magnitude. The residents are boiling leaves of trees to use as vegetables. Livestock have died in big numbers." Kenya is just one of several countries affected. The United Nations speaks in terms of millions at risk of starvation. The disasters are partly man-made, partly natural. The Catholic bishops of South Sudan warn that the church is being targeted for attacks. There are problems also in Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.



**LITTLE WAY HOUSE IN FATIMA AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS**

Would you like to take a group to Fatima for the Centenary celebrations? Casa Little Way is available for parish or group bookings. The house is about 20 minutes' walk from the Shrine and can accommodate up to 22 pilgrims in shared rooms. You would need to book your own flights but transport can be arranged between Lisbon airport and Fatima for groups.

Ph: 00 44 207 622 0466

**The church is uniquely positioned to deliver help.**

Your donations to The Little Way Association are **sent intact** to clergy and sisters in Africa, so they can feed the starving people.

**Please be generous.**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **AFRICAN FAMINE**

€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€..... **HOLY MASSES** (Please state number .....)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

**Name** (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

**Address**

To donate online go to [tinyurl.com/lwadonations](http://tinyurl.com/lwadonations)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

IC/05/18