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## Ireland joins in calls to make Newman 'Doctor of the Church'

Jason Osborne

The founder of University College Dublin could soon be one of only a select few figures to be declared a 'Doctor of the Church' with momentum growing to grant Cardinal John Henry Newman the rare ecclesiastical honour.

Cardinal Newman, who was made a saint by Pope Francis in 2019, has sometimes been referred to as the 'Father of Vatican II' because of the importance he placed on laypeople in the Church.

He founded UCD in 1854, and lived in Ireland for five years with his legacy continuing at the church he founded on Dublin's St Stephen's Green with the Notre Dame Newman Centre for Faith and Reason.

Last week, US bishops added their voice to a plea for the Vatican to declare the saintly cardinal a Doctor of the Church.

It is a move welcomed in Ireland, where hopes are high

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### Christmas starts early...



Children from the Ukrainian Catholic Community in Dublin prepare a Christmas tree, as part of a charitable initiative to gather gifts to send to Ukraine.

### Prayer was key for Ben Dunne

Chai Brady

Well-known businessman Ben Dunne, who died aged 74 on Sunday, had a prayer he said every day.

The controversial former chief executive of Dunnes Stores, who also built a chain of gyms, died during a trip to Dubai.

During an interview with RTÉ in 2021 regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic Mr Dunne said he "found it very hard to motivate myself, I lost my appetite, I found it hard to show much interest in anything".

Describing himself as a Christian, he said: "I had a little prayer that I'd say every day and that helped me, it motivated me just that little bit just to get me moving forward."

Mr Dunne then recited the prayer, saying: "So far all my nights have been followed by more days, but in this world of mine a night will come when there will be no more day for me, Lord look after me today."

In 1981 he was kidnapped by the IRA, and two years later took over the running of Dunnes Stores following the death of his father. The business grew significantly under his leadership. After his arrest in Florida on drug and solicitation charges, he was ousted from the retail giant.

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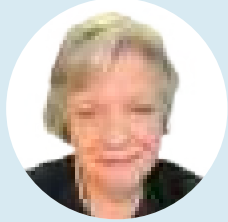
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# Ireland joins in calls to make Newman 'Doctor of the Church'

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it could refocus minds on Newman's teachings and ministry.

Fr Gary Chamberland CSC of the Newman Centre for Faith and Reason in Dublin city centre said that he hoped the Irish bishops would give adding their support to the calls "great consideration".

"I think Newman continues to play an important role in Ireland, in the way the Irish Church conceives of itself and its role in society," Fr Chamberland told *The Irish Catholic*, adding that

St Newman's "impact on the Irish Church, his impact on how we still process and think about things and regard the role of the Church in society," is worthy of the title of 'Doctor of the Church'.

The way we think about "so many ideas, especially around conscience and formation of conscience, religious freedom, and even the development of doctrine," points back to St Newman, Fr Chamberland said.

Currently, just 37 people have been declared as a 'Doctor of the Church'.

Popular internet per-

# Why are we so unwilling to face the unhappy truth?

**H**ave you ever had an experience of being gaslit? Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where a person (or institution) causes someone to question their sanity, memories, or perception of reality.

People who experience gaslighting may feel confused, anxious, or unable to trust themselves.

Over the past couple of years, I have become increasingly concerned that we're all being gaslit in Ireland. And I don't think I've become paranoid.

I was very struck late last week at the victim impact statement of Ryan Casey, the young Offaly man who was speaking at the trial of the murderer of his beautiful girlfriend Ashling Murphy.

One piece of his statement to the court particularly struck me: "I feel like this country is no longer the country Ashling and I grew up in and has officially lost its innocence.

"This country needs to wake up. This time things have got to change," he said.

Mr Casey is articulating what a lot of people in Ireland now think and feel. The following day, I was getting a coffee, and a middle-aged woman was telling me how unsafe she feels in Ireland now. "There is no respect for life," she said bluntly.

Quite remarkably, the only version of Mr Casey's victim impact statement that was not widely reported was the above portion and another section where he questioned how Ashling's murderer, a young man, could've lived on welfare for so long.

Mr Casey is right; all is not well in contemporary Ireland.

There has been a significant increase in violent crime, robbery and thefts, according to the latest CSO crime figures. The same figures show homicide offences, which include

sonality, Bishop Robert Barron was one of several US bishops who spoke out in support of a proposal to name St Newman a doctor of the Church.

Author of a book on St Newman, *A Perfect Peace - Newman - Saint for our time*, Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan said that he "eagerly" supports the US bishops' proposal and looks forward "to it happening in the very near future".

"I was half expecting that when he was canonised that

## “Suicide and self-harm are huge problems in Ireland, while eating disorders are rampant among younger people”

murder and manslaughter, increased by almost a third with 17 more people dying violently up to the first half of this year when compared to last year.

Anyone who works with young people will tell you that they're unhappier than they've ever been, even though they've never had so much.

Suicide and self-harm are huge problems in Ireland, while eating disorders are rampant among younger people – no longer just affecting girls, more and more boys are being treated for eating disorders.

There is a growing mental health crisis among the children and young people of Ireland, experts believe. Demand for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) increased by 33% between 2020 and 2021, while simultaneously seeing 21% more cases during the same period.

Irish people are now the fourth highest consumers of cocaine in the world. Almost every day brings fresh evidence of unhappiness in Ireland and charities warn of an epidemic of loneliness where many people leave work on a Friday afternoon and don't see or speak to another person until Monday morning.

Many people are living lives of quiet desperation. And yet, we are gaslit by politicians and commentators to believe

he might have been given that honour there and then, such is the profound influence his writings have had on Church thinking," Bishop Monahan told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper.

"Newman was regarded by many as the Father of the Second Vatican Council, his views being way ahead of his time. Certainly the Synodal Path way with the emphasis on the consultation of the laity was very much part of his way of thinking."

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## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



who tries to articulate a balanced approach to the past is demonised as either a 'fascist' or a 'misogynist' trying to bring us back to the dark ages.

It's a little bit like how we obsess about past failings where children were desperately let down by Church and State in the 1950s while ignoring the fact that children in HSE care today are allegedly being sexually exploited while the State is supposed to be looking after them. Such reports get a brief mention in the newspaper, then it's back to excavate the 1950s and continue the war with the past.

Modern Ireland, for all the opportunities and good things, is also a sad, frightened, angry and unhappy place. Naming this truth is the first step to healing it, don't let yourself be gaslit.

that contemporary Ireland is a very nice place and that the unhappiness clearly demonstrated is not real.

Ireland is a country at war with its past. The newspapers are full of articles about how terrible 'old' Ireland was. Films like *Angela's Ashes* and the *Magdalene Sisters* appear to be on a loop on Irish television channels, and the past is regularly brought up to contrast it with our bright, free and more compassionate present.

Of course, the past wasn't always glorious – but it wasn't all bad either. Despite this obvious fact, anyone

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# Tributes amass for bishop known for 'joyful faith' and soccer zeal

**Chai Brady**

Dedicated football fan Bishop Tony Farquhar will "long be remembered for his disarming presence, his affectionate smile and his pastoral charity", according to Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry diocese following his death last week.

The late Belfast-born Bishop Farquhar, one of the longest serving bishops in Ireland's history, famously set up the meeting between the Republic of Ireland football team and Pope John Paul II at the 1990 World Cup. Speaking on BBC Ulster's *Sunday Sequence*, Bishop McKeown said Bishop Farquhar's father brought him to football matches which led to his life-long enthusiasm for sport – particularly soccer.

Recalling Bishop Tony's story about the lead-up to the 1990 papal meeting, Bishop McKeown said:

"He was ordained in 1965, so 1990 was his silver jubilee and he rejoiced telling the story about going to the then Bishop Cahal Daly and saying he would like to go to Rome for a couple of weeks to celebrate his silver jubilee. Bishop Daly, entirely unaware as he was of football, said, 'A wonderful idea'.

"So Tony obviously knew the whole world of soccer but because he had been involved in university chaplaincy in Queens and then in Coleraine, he was very aware of players coming up through in the Collingwood Cup. So he actually knew a lot of the Irish players when they had been teenagers and playing for university teams so building on those relationships he decided to almost become chaplain to the Irish team and brought them to that famous papal audience," he said.

Bishop Tony Farquhar was

born in the Belfast parish of Holy Rosary in September 1940. He was ordained for the Diocese of Down and Connor in 1965. Ordained as an auxiliary bishop of the diocese in 1983, he did a huge amount of work towards furthering ecumenism.

He served as a member of the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARC-CUM), was the co-chairman of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), and chaired the Commission on Ecumenism of the Irish Episcopal Conference when he steered it to take up its associate membership of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).

In 2016, Bishop Farquhar received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) from Ulster University for his distinguished service to the university and to the community.

Bishop Donal McKeown, who was with Bishop Farquhar hours before he died, said he

first met the bishop in 1966 when he was doing his A-levels. Bishop McKeown described him as a "sincere, warm and engaging human being and a man of joyful faith who had a renowned and remarkable capacity to remember all those he had met and an infectious wit and sense of humour that endeared him to others".

Primate of All-Ireland,

Archbishop Eamon Martin remembered Bishop Farquhar's "friendliness, good humour and, of course, his prayerfulness and deep commitment to his vocation as priest and bishop". Speaking of the prelate's ecumenical endeavours, Archbishop Martin said: "Characteristically Bishop Tony himself emphasised the need to be joyful and faithful to one's own

religious tradition as critical to the work of building connections with those of another tradition. He proclaimed his Catholicism with conviction and encouraged those of other denominations to do the same in order to deepen mutual understanding and create the spaces and opportunities for dialogue".



The Republic of Ireland football team and manager Jack Charlton meet Pope John Paul II at the Vatican on June 8, 1990.

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# New SPHE curriculum 'ignores' spiritual wellbeing

Ruadhán Jones

Catholic schools' bodies have warned that a draft for a new SPHE curriculum for Senior Cycle "ignores" and "underplays" spiritual wellbeing.

However, they broadly welcomed the revision of the social, personal and health education (SPHE) curriculum, calling it "coherent and relevant" to the lives of modern teens.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) sought submissions on the revised SPHE curriculum, which is set to be introduced into schools from September 2024.

In response, the Association

of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) welcomed the revision, saying it "provides an opportunity for students to engage with significant questions about themselves".

However, they added it is "imperative" that schools can exercise their right to "approach the curriculum from the perspective of their own characteristic spirit".

APTCS warned that spiritual wellbeing is "ignored" in the health and wellbeing section, adding that "the absence of any reference to religion or faith beliefs is of concern".

"It is of great concern that religion, spirituality and values seem to be ignored when all of them play a very important role

in the development of young people," the body said in their submission.

"The word 'spiritual' is included in the rationale on page 6 of the draft specification, but later, when wellbeing factors are being listed (physical, emotional, social) 'spiritual' is not included."

The Catholic schools' body also pointed out that delays over the Junior Cycle revision led to "inappropriate textbooks" being published and called for sufficient time to implement the course.

Concerns regarding the absence of spirituality from the new course were also raised by the Joint Managerial Body/ Association of Management

of Catholic Secondary Schools (JMB/AMCSS).

"Education cannot be deemed to be holistic in any sense if it ignores either our actions or the spiritual or moral basis of the values that inform such actions," the body said in their submission.

They stressed the importance of proper engagement with parents when schools introduced the revised curriculum, to ensure a "trusting relationship" between schools and parents.

The JMB/AMCSS praised the NCCA's "extensive consultation" around changes to the curriculum, describing the revisions as "coherent and relevant".

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Minister for finance promises religious orders time to challenge land tax

In response to a question from Carol Nolan TD about whether he will address concerns that a new tax on land is being applied in punishing manner for religious orders, the Minister for Finance has said the tax is designed to prompt residential development by owners of land that is zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) purposes and that is serviced.

In his response, Minister McGrath promised all parties, "including religious orders", with a further opportunity to make submissions challenging whether their land meets the relevant criteria and to make rezoning requests.

### Just 6% see banning conversion therapy as a priority

A new study shows that just 6% of the Irish public think banning conversion therapy should be a Government priority.

Healthcare capacity (65%), social housing (60%), and energy security (30%) were the top three issues, a poll conducted by Whitestone Insight showed.

Welcoming the results of the poll, The Christian Institute's Deputy Director Ciarán Kelly said: "This poll makes it very clear that voters just don't buy into the idea that a new conversion therapy law should be a priority.

"Rightly, gay and trans people are already protected against verbal and physical abuse," he added.

However, he warned that "campaigners really want legislation restricting the ordinary work of churches: preaching, prayer, pastoral care – even calls to repent".

### St Pat's receives pastoral care bursary

In response to challenges in the provision of pastoral care, Bon Secours Health System has made a bursary available to develop the education of pastoral care workers in areas of work in diocese, parish, healthcare, education, prison and military.

Bon Secours Health System (BSHS) identified St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth (SPPU) as a partner in the provision of the professional development, especially for those in Catholic pastoral care roles and to assist with the continuous education and training of people working in Pastoral Care or Chaplaincy roles.

### Late canon remembered as 'defender of community'

The Bishop of Clogher has paid tribute to Canon Paddy Marron, retired PP of Fintona, Co. Tyrone, and formerly PP of Aghnamullen East, Co. Monaghan, who died aged 91.

Bishop Larry Duffy noted that Canon Marron's priestly ministry spanned a total of 66 years.

He said: "Wherever and in whatever role he was called to serve, Canon Marron threw himself into it with his unique style and determination. As an educator and as a pastor, he saw the potential for human flourish in all people. His love of the Irish language brought him into contact with many, especially through Cumann na Sagart and related initiatives.

"He took particular pride in being one of the first teachers appointed to the newly-founded St Michael's College, Enniskillen, in 1957," the bishop said, adding he was a "staunch defender of community needs in the face of bureaucracy".

# NI budget cutbacks have 'major' impact on faith-based schools

Staff reporter

Cuts to the education budget in the North will have a "major impact" on the "Catholic family of schools", according to submissions to a report released by the Executive.

Faith based schools hit back at claims that cuts will result in "minor negative impacts" on Catholic schools, according to the Department of Education's 'Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Final Report on

Resource Budget' allocations for the 2023-24 financial year.

In the report, the department claimed "it is difficult to determine the impact(s)" the cuts will have on religious belief, suggesting only "minor" negative impacts.

However, respondents including the Catholic Schools Trustee Service said reductions to the budget of the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools (CCMS) will "inevitably lead to reduced levels of service".

The respondents said it is "unacceptable"

to dismiss concerns of the effects likely to result from reductions to such programmes as the Free School meals.

"The ending or reduction of extended school and early years programmes will have a major impact on the Catholic family of schools. We would therefore disagree with the DE assessment that budget cuts in these areas would have 'minor negative impacts' in the Section 75 category of Religious Belief," one of the responses read.

# 36 men discern vocation to priesthood

Chai Brady

Thirty-six men from dioceses across Ireland enrolled in this year's weekend gathering from November 18-19, in the national seminary of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, to help discern a priestly vocation.

According to Fr Willie Pur-

cell, director of the National Vocations Office of the Irish Bishops' Conference: "The weekend offers those discerning a vocation to the diocesan priesthood an opportunity - not only to meet with the formation team and college community to experience life in the seminary - but also to meet with like-minded young men who are on

the path of discernment to the priesthood."

He said the national seminary provides a "safe and conducive environment for participants to ask questions of the formation team, while also enabling them to reflect on following the example of the life of Jesus".

Fr Purcell said that in the

contexts of the bishops' 'Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood', a man who is contemplating a vocation to the priesthood and wishes to further explore their calling, should make contact with the National Vocations Office on info@vocations.ie, where they can obtain resources and contact details for their local vocations director.

## A session for Confession...



Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell visits Brackenstown, Co. Dublin to launch a new booklet *A Thiarna déan trócaire*, a resource for teachers and parents of children in the Gaelscoileanna preparing for First Confession. He is pictured with Canon Paddy Boyle and the Ó Dughail family musicians Muireann, Róisín and Dónal. The booklet is available from Veritas and will be distributed to Gaelscoileanna throughout the country.

## Prayer was key for Ben Dunne

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Passionist priest, writer and broadcaster Fr Brian D'Arcy said that when he was based in Mount Argus in Dublin Mr Dunne "used to make sure that Dannes Stores in various places had a party for their customers and particularly the elderly" when he was still its chief executive.

"They would be brought in, given a meal and entertainment, a parcel of goodies to bring home and very often there was a draw for a prize which was a considerable sum of money at that time. He did that for many years. He remem-

bered particularly the old people and especially those who might be living alone.

"He was a very good man for advising you. When I was raising money for Mount Argus he was very helpful to me. He was very charitable and very

helpful in that way."

Fr D'Arcy added: "He made huge mistakes... but the way he handled it was in a way that others could have learned a great deal from. He didn't deny, he atoned, he apologised... and looked for forgiveness."



# Tubridy's story shows nobody is indispensable...

**R**yan Tubridy is a polished broadcaster, and I wish him success with his new London-based job with Virgin Media, where he will present a morning radio show from 10am until lunchtime, starting in January.

After leaving RTÉ, he has embraced his new role with the right attitude: pick yourself up, dust yourself down, and start all over again. He will earn nothing like a comparable salary at RTÉ – it's thought his earnings will be between £70,000 (€80,100) and £100,000 (€114,400) annually at the Rupert Murdoch broadcaster.

And he'll find that he'll have to build his brand again, little by little, in Britain. Irish voices are popular on the British airwaves, and I'm sure



**Mary Kenny**

he'll do well, though starting out again is always a gradual process.

The last time I encountered Ryan Tubridy happens to have been on the day that Queen Elizabeth died, in September 2022. We exchanged a few quick words coming and going from that fine bookshop in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Raven Books, which he frequented.

He seemed the blithe national treasure that viewers and listeners took him to be. Whether you liked Ryan's broadcasting style or not – I didn't always, although I recog-

nised his talent – he seemed to have a special connection with the nation at large. He seemed an almost irreplaceable part of RTÉ's family.

And then it all fell apart, in a saga of money mismanagements and financial misjudgements. Ryan wasn't perhaps monetarily greedy himself, but he failed to check the way the wind was blowing. And so he departed from Montrose and Erin's shores to launch his career across the water.

As I say, he's right to relish the chance to start again – 50 is no age these days. But Ryan's story has also illuminated a fact we know already – no one is really indispensable.

The morning radio show that Ryan previously hosted is attracting higher ratings with its various successors. The Late Late Show has found another host – and if this presenter doesn't exactly work out, someone else will.

In what we are, we are each unique. But in what we do, we are replaceable.

## Plans requiring penance



Pope Francis poses for a photo with French President Emmanuel Macron, his wife Brigitte Macron, and Benoît Payan, mayor of Marseille in Marseille, France, September 23. Photo: CNS

Madame Brigitte Macron has disclosed that her husband, Emmanuel, President of France, was just 15 years old when he first fell in love with her. She was his 40-year-old married schoolteacher and her daughter was in the same class as he was.

Some commentators have called this "creepy". I feel it's unworthy to judge individuals: and he wouldn't have been the first school pupil to develop a crush on a teacher (though it's rare enough for this to lead to marriage some years later).

But I most certainly do criticise President Macron for some of his appalling policies. He is currently seeking to insert a constitutional right to

abortion into the French constitution. The French bishops have denounced this move, but not strongly enough, in my view.

Apart from the contentious moral issue involved, France's abortion rate is already almost twice that of Germany's, although

France's population, at 67.75 million is well lower than Germany's 83.2 million.

And, as it happens, births are declining in both nations, causing a demographic winter. Macron's plan is deplorable.

**“Whether you liked Ryan's broadcasting style or not – I didn't always, although I recognised his talent – he seemed to have a special connection with the nation at large”**

## Self-help with Arnie

**A**s I'm a fan of self-help books – perhaps a late outcome of the 'spiritual reading' encouraged in my schooldays – I was among those readers who purchased Arnold Schwarzenegger's new bestseller, *Be Useful*.

I'm not quite sure what I expected to learn from the Austrian-born Mr Universe and sometime Governor of California, but his book is in the tradition of self-improvement that is so very American.

And Arnie has absorbed

much of the American dream. Have a vision. Work hard – earn your rewards. Do good. Think big. Pain can be constructive and build character. Learn from your mistakes. Be curious. "Shut your mouth and open your mind."

And – whenever you're bothered about anything, go for a walk. Walking is therapy. Go for the greatest walk of all, urges Arnie: the Camino del Santiago.

Now that is a genuine case of being useful!

• Yet another study has found that people who go to church are 'happier' and generally have better mental and psychological health than those who do not.

Numerous American-based studies, notably by Pew research, have established that churchgoers enjoy better wellbeing and live longer. But now a British study of 2,000 people, from the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL) have come up with the same findings.

Some 70% of those surveyed across the UK reported "good psychological wellbeing" as part of their faith experience.

There is huge emphasis on mental health and wellbeing among modern educationalists – no bad thing to teach awareness of mental health conditions.

So here's the question: will the positive impact of church-going also be part of the curriculum on wellness and psychological health?

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# 'Concerned' Faithful rally around parish after Antrim arson attack

**Chai Brady**

A parish priest who snuffed out a fire set deliberately at the door of his church in Ballymoney welcomed messages of support from parishioners and the community.

The arsonist targeted the side door of the Church of Our Lady and St Patrick at approximately 9.45pm on Sunday.

Fr Damian McCaughan PP said he heard the fire alarm and investigated. "At that stage it was

burning but not out of control, so I extinguished it myself," he told *The Irish Catholic*. He said it was "very fortunate" the fire was discovered "before it took hold". A log had been placed beside the door and was set alight, he was able to kick it away and extinguish the flames with water.

Fr McCaughan said that "nothing like this has happened in the time I have been here, it's a quiet area and during the day it's quite a public area. We would have people visiting the church, vis-

iting the cemetery, the nearby schools, passersby who would use our grounds to cut through to the town centre so it's normally very quiet and we've never had any anti-social problems or certainly not anything more sinister than that, so it's come as a big surprise".

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) put out a statement appealing for witnesses and that they are investigating what happened "as a deliberate arson attack".

Sergeant Moody of the PSNI said: "Our enquiries are ongoing and I would appeal to anyone who may be able to assist with our investigation to contact us on 101, quoting reference 1540 19/11/23.

"We are especially keen to hear from anyone who was in the Castle Street area of the town and near the church on Sunday evening between 9.30pm and 9.45pm, and noticed anything suspicious, to get in touch."

Fr McCaughan said since he put a picture of the damaged door on

social media the parish has been contacted by parishioners "both concerned and upset that it happened but very keen to support the parish".

He added: "We've had a lot of messages from other churches in the town and from other people in the community, so people have been very kind and have been very supportive of us. Everybody has been very good, we appreciate all the good wishes and prayers we've received."

## Catholic app defends using Liam Neeson for prayer voiceovers

**Ruadhán Jones**

A popular Catholic app has defended employing Irish actor Liam Neeson for prayer voiceovers, as it faced backlash due Mr Neeson's pro-choice positions.

In a statement, Hallow, a prayer app with millions of users, said Mr Neeson and his fellow actors have done "an incredible job" recording scripts for the Advent season.

Mr Neeson joined Jonathan Roumie, who stars as

Jesus in *The Chosen*, and Sr Miriam Heidland to "bring to life" the writings of CS Lewis for the app's 'Advent Challenge'.

The Irish actor was chosen "primarily because of his powerful portrayal of Aslan" in a series of films,

a spokesperson from Hallow said.

However, the choice sparked backlash due to Mr Neeson's advocacy for the legalisation of abortion in Ireland during the 2018 referendum.

Mr Neeson claimed that

Ireland's Eight Amendment "stripped women of their human rights" and called for the repeal of the pro-life amendment.

Acknowledging this, Hallow said "we do not stand behind or claim to endorse any of the personal views

or political opinions of the actors on the app.

"Liam, Jonathan, and the many dozens of other actors on the app are actors, not theologians, and Hallow is partnering with them because of their talent as voice actors."

## Plastic hurleys and barmbrack as Mexico school celebrates Irish week



Fr Colm O'Mahony OSA is pictured with students of the Mendel Institute in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico, during their Irish culture week.

**Staff reporter**

A Mexico school run by the Augustinian order threw themselves into Irish food and culture, making hurleys out of bits of plastic and sampling a full Irish breakfast, all witnessed by Irish friar Fr Colm O'Mahony OSA.

Fr O'Mahony was invited to the Men-

del Institute in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico, to join them in celebrating Irish culture.

"It was fantastic, the kids wore green from head to toe," he said.

They tried Irish dancing and ate Irish food, Fr O'Mahony said, including an Irish breakfast with a "Mexican twist".

"It had soda bread, barmbrack, coddle and cakes," he explained.

The highlight of the trip was a 20-minute hurling match organised by one of the physical education teachers.

"They had never seen hurling, and knew nothing about it. They had to make their own hurls out of plastic bottles, containers, and use a softer ball than sliotar," said Fr O'Mahony, who is based with the Augustinians in Drogheda.

## SVP expects record calls for help this Christmas

**Staff reporter**

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) has estimated it will receive more than quarter of a million requests for help this year, as Christmas approaches.

With calls for help already at almost 200,000 to date, the society expects calls at the end of this year to well exceed last year's record of 230,000 calls.

The figures were announced by National President Rose McGowan at the launch of the SVP annual appeal this week.


This year the appeal is focused on providing help to struggling parents trying to provide a happy Christmas for their families.

Ms McGowan said: "In 2021 we had a record breaking 191,000 requests. Last year the figure jumped by 20% to just over

230,000 and this year we on track to exceed that number again.

"According to the latest CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions there are over 670,000 people at risk of poverty in Ireland, almost 875,000 people were experiencing enforced deprivation and going without essentials and over 265,000 live in consistent poverty."

She said that despite the additional cost-of-living support payments made by the Government "there are many people who continue to struggle to meet basic family expenses. This struggle becomes even more difficult on special occasions such as Christmas".



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## Nuala O'Loan

### The View



# Synod calls for accountability and all to participate in Church's mission

**T**he first report of the Synod on Synodality makes for very interesting reading. The second session of the synod will be in 2024.

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

### Synod

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

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

At the beginning the report says that "the Second Vatican Council was, in fact, like a seed sown in the field of the world and the Church. The

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

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

**“The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, include the unborn and their mothers”**

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

The challenges are named: hearing and responding to those living in poverty of all kinds, material and spiritual; "migrants and refugees; indigenous peoples, original and Afro-descendent peoples; those who suffer violence and abuse, in particular

Pope Francis prays while holding a crozier during Mass in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, October 29, marking the conclusion of the first session of the Synod of Bishops on synodality. Photo CNS



women; people struggling with addiction; minorities who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned elderly people; victims of racism, exploitation, and trafficking, especially minors; exploited workers; the economically excluded, and others living on the peripheries. The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, include the unborn and their mothers." The assembly condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that cause such problems.

### Address

Speaking clearly, the report says that action needed to address these matters includes protecting the rights of those who are excluded, and says that this may require public denunciation of injustices, whether perpetrated by societal structures or by individuals, corporations or governments, something many in the Church are already doing.

It acknowledges that "matters of identity and sexuality, the end of life, complicated marital situations, and ethical issues related to artificial intelligence, are controversial not only in society, but also in

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

**“Many of those who left the ministry are currently actively engaged in their local church communities”**

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

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

### Ministry

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

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

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

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

As Advent approaches, each of us could try and work out what more we can do for this Church which we love!



# Irish Catholics should be 'concerned' over Finland Bible trial

**Ruadhán Jones**

After a Finnish MP was acquitted of hate speech charges levelled against her for expressing Christian beliefs about marriage, an Irish lawyer said her case showed the "chilling effect" such laws can have on Christians.

As the Irish Government considers introducing its own hate speech laws, Mr Lorcan Price warned Catholics in Ireland that authorities could pursue similarly "ideological campaigns" here.

Former MP Päivi Räsänen was cleared on November

14 by the Helsinki Court of Appeals of hate speech charges she faced for expressing the Christian view that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

It was a nearly five-year "ordeal" for her, said Mr Price, who works for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a charity who gave Ms Räsänen legal aid.

"She faced over four days in court hearings, police interrogation, tens of thousands in legal costs and years of her life having to deal with this in the background," Mr Price told *The Irish Catholic*.

However, he added that the prosecutors are looking to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court, so Ms Räsänen's ordeal "may not be over yet".

The case is about "more than one individual, this was about sending a message" by targeting prominent Christians, said Mr Price.

As Ireland considers introducing hate speech laws, the Irish lawyer warned that these laws "are so easily weaponised" against Christians for "mainstream" beliefs.

"This the problem with these laws... you can use state

resources to pursue ideological cases," Mr Price stated.

"Can we be sure that the Irish authorities won't pursue the same ideological campaigns? I don't think we can.

"If you give the state this power, this is where we will end up," he added, saying Irish Christians should be looking at the case with "concern".

"There's a chilling effect. It's designed to make you think twice – particularly for Christians – before you state your views in public for fear that someone will make a criminal complaint."

## Irish priest in Holy Land welcomes 240 displaced Israelis to Galilee

**Jason Osborne**

An Irish priest based in Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee has said that "providence" organised their presence there so that they could receive around 240 Israelis displaced from the north due to ongoing fighting with militant group Hezbollah.

Fr Eamon Kelly LC told *The Irish Catholic* that after the flow of pilgrims to their archaeological site and guesthouse dried up as a result of the conflict, they had the space to welcome the men, women and children from northern communities.

"They're living right on the border, they can even see people across [in Lebanon] and wave to them and in healthy times, people wave back," Fr Kelly said.

"But now obviously, with the happenings of October 7 then they were immediately evacuated, should any replication of such atrocities be attempted."

The "cordial and mutually-helpful" atmosphere at Magdala between the staff and their new guests "sets a tremendous contrast to the noise of war that is being delivered all around the world from here," Fr Kelly said.

"One candle in the dark – one act of kindness in the midst of destruction – is a very bright light."

The hundreds now staying at Magdala lived at a *Kibutz* that "extended right to the border," Fr Kelly said, which was made unsafe by ongoing clashes between the Israeli Defence Forces and Hezbollah.

"The kids [among the group] can live here now without realising there's a problem. They'll have plenty of time later in life to hear the history of this and process this. They don't need to be traumatised by what's going on."

## Irish Vatican librarian celebrated in Rome by Dominican brothers

**Staff reporter**

A "world famous and world renowned" scholar and librarian, Donegal-born Fr Leonard Boyle OP, was recently remembered and celebrated in Rome by his Irish Dominican brothers on the centenary of his birth in 1923.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Provincial for the Dominican Order in Ireland, Fr John Harris OP, said that "the most important librarian on the face of the Earth" during his time as Vatican librarian "was fully acknowledged" in Rome.

"He was a world famous and world renowned expert on palaeography, wrote the basic textbooks recognised all over the world. In 1984, he became the librarian for the Vatican – he basically brought the library into the modern world," Fr Harris told this paper.

"He brought in technology, he made it more open to laypeople, to women. He made the library more user friendly. That became very obvious to me during the colloquium we had. The modernisation of the library and its accessibility to scholars from all over the world."

"I do think Leonard's contribution to scholarship, to the Vatican library was fully acknowledged," Fr Harris said.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Misean Cara announce Climate Action award winners

Misean Cara have announced the three winners of its 'Climate Action Award' for projects embedding climate-smart practices for resilience and sustainable futures in communities on the frontlines of climate change.

First place went to the Sharing Education and Learning for Life Foundation (SELL) programme in Bauchi, Nigeria, run by the St Patrick's Missionary Society.

In second place was Cultivating Hope: Empowering Brickfield Communities through Organic Sack Farming, a project by the Loreto Sisters in Kolkata, India.

Third place was claimed by the Climate Smart Agriculture in the Western Cluster of Zambia, run by Edmund Rice Development in Zambia.

The Misean Cara Climate Action Awards were launched in 2020 to celebrate these projects and inspire others like them.

### Missionary nun named Cork person of the month

Presentation Sister Sr Josephine McCarthy has been named Cork 'Person of the Month' for November in honour of her work in community development.

Known as Sr Jo, the West Cork woman was inspired by Nano Nagle's legacy to pursue a life of service with the Presentation order.

She served on missions in South America, Africa and Asia, from Peru to Pakistan, before returning to Ireland to establish the Cork Migrant Centre.

"We did serve in some very dangerous places whilst doing our missionary work. When in Ecuador we lived in an area which was completely lawless and every dispute was settled with an axe," Sr Jo told *CorkBeo*.

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## One big, holy family...



Holy Family Mission in Glencomeragh, Co. Tipperary, welcome the 13 newly commissioned members of the community, who are pictured with the head of HFM, Fr Patrick Cahill.



# Today, I was a tourist attraction



Attending Mass in an Italian church shows how European Christianity has collapsed, writes **Dualta Roughneen**

**I** have travelled a lot over the last 20 years. My work has taken me to many different and varied countries, for weeks, months and years at a time. The work travel has allowed me to add holidays on top of those in even more places.

As a visitor, or a tourist, coming from a wealthy, 'northern' country, there is always an interest in seeing how other people live. Sometimes opportunity allows for genuine interaction and sharing of certain aspects of their lives.

Other times, it can be a little voyeuristic, being fortunate, or privileged sometimes to take part in or observe the different cultural, traditional or religious rituals that make up their lives. There is an element of curiosity. Not in a bad way, most of the time.

## Impose

But there can be a tendency to assume a right to impose oneself in a space, or a place, that it may not be appropriate to do so. It isn't always unwelcome. But there is, especially with an affluence asymmetry, an imbalance. Coming from the wealthy west, the still dominant culture, with digital camera or smartphone in hand, to treat people and their lives as tourist attractions.

Today, I was a tourist attraction.

Milan Cathedral, *Duomo Milan*, or Metropolitan Cathedral-Basilica of the Nativity of Saint Mary, is the third largest Catholic church in the world, after St Peter's Basilica and Seville Cathedral. Its construction has associations with many famous names in Italian history.

Leonardo da Vinci



In Milan Cathedral, Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan celebrates the funeral Mass of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini on September 3, 2012. Photo: CNS/Paolo Bona, Reuters

submitted an entry in the competition to design its cupola. The Sforzas are intimately associated with its early days. As Archbishop, Charles Borromeo removed many lay monuments within the Church. Napoleon was crowned King of Italy at the Duomo.

**“The cathedral took nearly six centuries to complete: construction began in 1386, and the final details were completed in 1965”**

The American writer Mark Twain visited Milan in the summer of 1867. He dedicated chapter 18 of *Innocents Abroad* to Milan Cathedral, exclaiming “What a wonder it is! So grand, so solemn, so vast! And yet so delicate, so airy, so graceful! A very world of solid weight, and yet it seems... a delusion of frostwork that might vanish with a breath! ... They say that the Cathedral of Milan is second only to St Peter's at Rome. I cannot understand how it can be second to anything made by human hands.”

Oscar Wilde was, however, less flattering, describing it in a letter to

his mother: “The Cathedral is an awful failure. Outside the design is monstrous and inartistic. The over-elaborated details stuck high up where no one can see them; everything is vile in it; it is, however, imposing and gigantic as a failure, through its great size and elaborate execution.”

The cathedral took nearly six centuries to complete: construction began in 1386, and the final details were completed in 1965. It is intricately designed throughout with the main feature being the Madonnina's spire, erected in 1762 at the dizzying height of 108.5m.

I arrived in Milan on a Saturday evening and sought Mass on Sunday in the Cathedral. I arrived to find queues of people waiting to get in. Not to go to Mass but explore the cathedral as tourists. The lines waiting to ascend to the rooftop walk looped around numerous times.

## Liturgical

There were no such waiting times to go to Mass. Entrance by a small door allowed those joining the liturgical celebrations to quietly enter the church at the north and walk to the centre of the church to take a seat for the Mass – but not before walking passed many tourists outside the

barriers observing the cultural spectacle of Mass taking place.

There were many more outside the barriers than within. The hundred-plus faithful were vastly outnumbered by their viewers, taking photos of the building and the natives going about their cultic practices. While some stopped to observe in the Christian sense from outside the barriers, carefully making the Sign of the Cross and acknowledging the Tabernacle and the sacrifice of the Mass taking place, the majority were simply passing by and through.

**“It becomes clear in such times that Christianity and Catholicism are now minority faiths across Europe, even in Italy, a country steeped in the Church's heritage”**

How strange it felt to be photographed or videoed on the way to receive the Eucharist, to be perceived as part of the tourist experience. Do they look at me as part of the experience, seeking to share, without commitment or reciprocity, in the 'culture' now considered to be part of the

life of the 'other' instead of central to their European identity?

It becomes clear in such times that Christianity and Catholicism are now minority faiths across Europe, even in Italy, a country steeped in the Church's heritage. The dominant faith, of liberal secularism visits the monuments of Christianity to observe the artworks, the beautiful construction, the intricate designs and to absorb the historical inspiration, the heritage of Europe that is often denied.

## History

Little consideration is given to the inspiration and the commitment of Christians throughout history that gave life to the impressive *Duomo* they are now 'experiencing' as nothing more than something to be 'done' in the same way *La Scala* theatre is 'done', the *Castello* is 'done', *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* is 'done' and even the *San Siro* is done.

They also observe the locals going about their rituals, somewhat disinterested, if not uninterested, in the reality of what is taking place, so much greater than the artworks and artefacts that they are looking at.

The day's Gospel asks if it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Almost everyone is familiar with Jesus' answer: “Render

therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's.”

**“The Mass is the common sacrifice of the Church, in which the Lord prays with us and for us and communicates himself to us”**

Some queued for hours to enjoy the rooftop experience, to walk among the flying buttresses and look across the majestic city of Milan, yet they could have skipped the queue and walked straight into the Cathedral to experience something far more profound, valuable, lasting. The majority were somehow rendering tribute to Caesar while oblivious to the greater tribute owed.

As Pope Benedict XVI put it: “The Mass is not only a meal among friends who have come together to remember the Lord's Last Supper through the common breaking of bread. The Mass is the common sacrifice of the Church, in which the Lord prays with us and for us and communicates himself to us.”

“It is the sacramental renewal of Christ's sacrifice: consequently, its redeeming power extends to all men, those present and those far away, the living and the dead.”



# Hate speech laws have ‘chilling effect’ on Christians



A Finnish case shows the dangers hate speech laws pose for Irish Christians, Ruadhán Jones hears

As Ireland considers introducing controversial hate speech laws, a Finnish case against a prominent Christian politician shows the “chilling effect” these laws could have here.

While former MP Päivi Räsänen was cleared on November 14 by the Helsinki Court of Appeals on charges of “hate speech” levelled against her, her case shows how these laws can be “weaponised” against Christians.

For expressing fundamental Christian beliefs about marriage, the former Finnish MP and public personality has faced a trial “entirely motivated by ideology”, says Irish lawyer Lorcan Price.

“All it takes is for an ideologically motivated prosecutor or prosecution service to push ahead with charges and four or five years of your life are gone,” Mr Price tells *The Irish Catholic*.

## Concern

Irish Christians should be looking at the case with “concern”, says the lawyer, who works for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), an NGO who is offering legal support to the Finnish MP.

Whether in Finland or in Ireland, “these laws can be used to target legitimate expression of Christian belief in public and used to intimidate the rest of the population to say, well if we can after a former minister and media personality, we can go after you,” says Mr Price.

Ms Räsänen, a member of the evangelical Lutheran Church – until recently the official state Church – stood accused of hate speech after criticising the church in a post on X/Twitter for sponsoring a pride parade.

Additionally, she was accused of encouraging hate

against same-sex couples for espousing the Christian understanding of marriage in a 2004 pamphlet and a 2019 TV interview.

Ms Räsänen was not alone in the stand, as a Lutheran bishop was accused of hate speech for the same 2004 pamphlet, *Man and Woman He Created Them*.

Ms Räsänen is a respected public figure in Finland, commenting on current affairs from a Christian, conservative perspective, explains Mr Price. Her views are “totally mainstream, orthodox Christian beliefs”, he stresses.

**“Finland has a major problem with hate speech and she saw it as her function as prosecutor general to crack down on that”**

And yet, when she posted a Tweet questioning the Finnish Lutheran Church’s support of the Helsinki Pride parade, posting a quote from St Paul regarding the Bible’s teachings on sexual morality, she found herself accused of inciting hatred against people with same-sex attractions.

In addition, her 2004 pamphlet on how Christians should respond to demands for gay marriage, was dug out of the archives and a criminal complaint made.

Finally, following comments questioning whether it is right to act on homosexual tendencies just because one is born with them on a radio show, she was charged for a third time.

The Finnish politician was initially cleared of all charges relating to the Tweet by the police and then acquitted by a local court, but still the state prosecutor is pushing her case.

The prosecutor is, or rather was, Riva Torvyanen. Ms Torvyanen has made her views on Christianity very clear, comparing the Bible to *Mein Kampf* and claiming that even if it is not illegal to believe what the Bible says, “it can be illegal to express those in a way that constitutes hatred against minority groups”.

According to Mr Price, the Finnish prosecutor said “Finland has a major problem with hate speech and she saw it as her function as prosecutor

general to crack down on that. It became a prosecutorial and policing priority for her”.

After the police concluded their investigation, Ms Torvyanen made a “direct intervention” in the case to bring charges against Ms Räsänen.

Mr Price welcomed her acquittal, saying it was clearly not her intention to advocate for hatred.

“Her intention was never to undermine, impugn or attack the dignity of any human being. If you read the pamphlet and listen to the Reuben Stiller TV show, again and again she underlines the dignity of every human being created in the image of God, and the importance of treating everybody with respect. And at the same time being able to disagree with certain activities that people do.”

Despite this, the case shows how hate speech laws can be used against Christians to “narrow the space in which you’re able to engage with these issues”, says Mr Price.

## Chilling

“There’s a chilling effect. It’s designed to make you think twice – particularly for Christians – before you state your views in public for fear that someone will make a criminal complaint.”

Even though Ms Räsänen was cleared unanimously of all charges, Mr Price says the case demonstrates the way the “process itself is a punishment”.

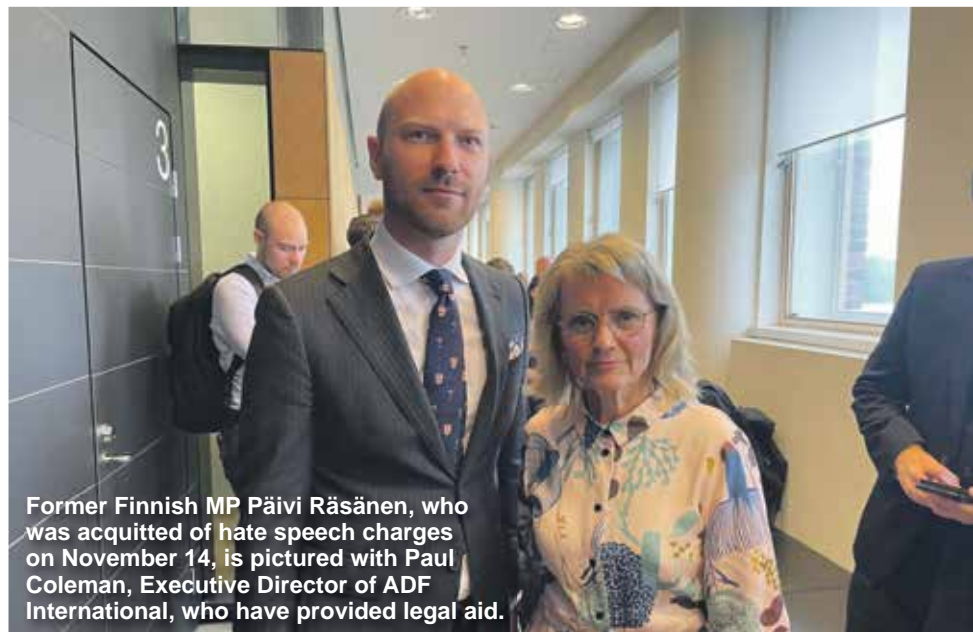
“They can throw resources at you because they are tax-payer resources. They can drag you through the courts, drag you through police interrogations,” he says.

“Päivi sat through 10 hours of police interrogation on this issue, four and a half days of court examinations, tens of thousands in legal fees which we have been able to help with.

“For most people, even if you are acquitted in the end, it is enough to put people off their totally legitimate and protected views in public.”

Although on hold temporarily, the Irish Government still has plans to push through hate speech legislation. A bill, which has been debated in the Dáil and the Seanad, is tabled for further consideration this autumn.

Mr Price highlighted Ms Räsänen’s case at a gathering in the Oireachtas, saying it is a perfect example of how “these



Former Finnish MP Päivi Räsänen, who was acquitted of hate speech charges on November 14, is pictured with Paul Coleman, Executive Director of ADF International, who have provided legal aid.

laws can be used to target legitimate expression of Christian belief in public”.

“For Irish Christians, we should be very concerned about any of these kinds of laws being introduced. Our own Government tabled a bill

that was outrageous in how wide it was, the lack of robust defences contained within, even absurd, poorly defined, possibly limitless categories of gender identity,” Mr Price continues.

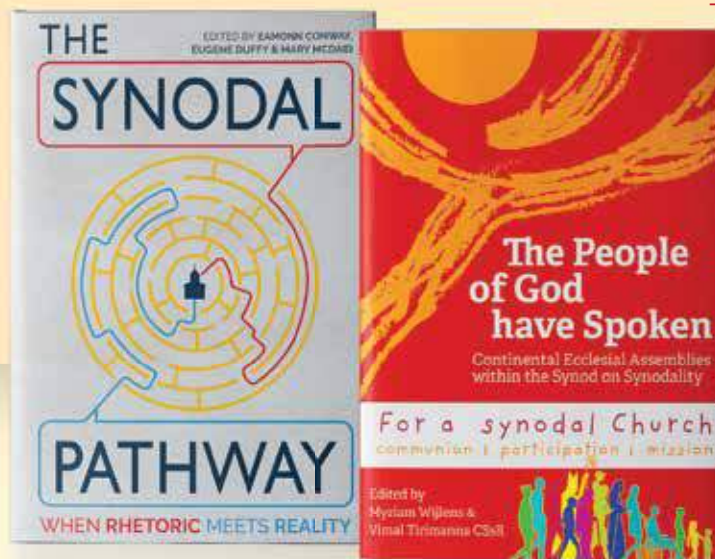
“For Christians, and that

includes bishops, priests, lay people, public figures – everybody – the way in which Päivi was treated is a cautionary tale for all of us in expressing our deeply held and biblically inspired views on homosexuality.”

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# Clogher youth receive JP II awards

Ruadhán Jones

**Y**oung people who took part in Clogher diocese's Pope John Paul II awards programme were honoured at a celebration in Enniskillen on Friday, November 10.

The awards night was held for the first time since 2019 due to Covid-19, with some of those who achieved the award from 2020 to 2022 attending the ceremony in St Michael's Church.

Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy handed out the awards and was joined by Clogher's head of youth ministry Fr Leo Creelman, youth minister James McGlaughlin and the Supreme Knight of the Knights of St Columbanus John Murphy.



Young people from Clogher diocese who received their JP II awards are pictured with Supreme Knight John Murphy, Fr Leo Creelman, Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy and James McGlaughlin, at the celebrations in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen.









# Why the ‘safe access zone’ bill could be challenged in court



Most countries deem such restrictions to be disproportionate and not to hold rights in balance, writes **David Quinn**

**T**here is every chance you didn't notice it because it was barely reported, but last week the Dáil voted by an overwhelming majority of 117 to 10 in favour of the so-called 'Safe Access Zones' Bill that will potentially ban all pro-life activities within 100 metres of any facility that provides abortion, or might do so.

This means all maternity hospitals, all GP clinics, all family planning centres, and so on. Imagine the hundreds of such facilities that exist up and down the country and then draw a 100m (328ft) wide circle around them all and you have a very large area of land in which pro-life activities cannot take place.

You have to assume that the pro-life marches could still take place through Dublin city centre, even though they would come within 100m of plenty of facilities that offer abortion, but many other pro-life activities could easily fall foul of this law when it passes, which will be soon.

## Obstacles

It only has to be voted on by the Seanad and assuming it runs into no obstacles there (it won't), President Michael D. Higgins only has to sign the bill to make it law.

What does the bill prohibit? Well, to take one example, it prohibits anyone from engaging in activity "that is likely to obstruct or impede another person [who is seeking an abortion] from accessing a relevant healthcare premises".

But this would constitute harassment or intimidation and is already banned.



Pro-life activities could easily fall foul of this law when it passes.

Elsewhere, the bill says that "A person shall not, in a safe access zone...engage in conduct that is likely to threaten or intimidate a person who is accessing or attempting to access a relevant healthcare premises."

Again, this is already banned by law.

The bill also states that no attempt can be made to influence someone not to have an abortion. It refers to "conduct directed at the public or a section of the public in a manner that is likely to influence the decision of a person in relation to availing of, or providing, termination of pregnancy services..."

What does this mean? Presumably it will stop anyone handing out pro-life leaflets anywhere near an abortion facility.

**“Is this really what our law-makers intend, all 117 TDs who voted in favour of this legislation?”**

But it would also seem to include someone within 100m of such a facility (a maternity hospital, say) standing somewhere quietly ready to hand out pro-life literature to anyone who asks. This is where the bill becomes

very excessive.

Or what if they are praying nearby? Sometimes I pass the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin city centre and occasionally come across two or three pro-life people standing at the railings of Merrion Square Park more or less opposite the big front façade of the hospital. (The actual entrance is down Holes Street).

They tend to be praying the rosary and on the railing behind them is sometimes fastened a small, pro-life poster. As you pass by, you could easily miss them, and certainly anyone going in or out of the hospital would be extremely unlikely to notice them.

## Influence

But clearly they are hoping that through their prayers and very quiet witness they somehow influence events in a more pro-life direction.

It is very likely that these people will be breaking the new law when it passes. Is this really what our law-makers intend, all 117 TDs who voted in favour of this legislation? It is hard to know, because often TDs simply do what their party bosses tell them and don't really engage with the implications of what they are voting for, but presumably a lot of them do know what they backed.

In any case, we face the prospect of pro-life people praying quietly nearby the

National Maternity Hospital being arrested and taken away. Is this truly what we have come to as a free and democratic society?

Almost no other country has a nationwide law that goes this far. Councils in parts of Britain and elsewhere do have similar prohibitions. In Britain we have seen pro-life activists like Isabel Vaughan-Spruce being arrested for praying silently, without any pro-life material on display, near an abortion clinic.

Is this the sort of thing we want to see here?

**“That could well mean a pro-life activist praying nearby an abortion facility and being arrested for doing so”**

I suspect if you asked the average member of the public if they support this law, you would find in most cases they have barely thought about it, if even that. But they might well think its purpose is to stop intimidation and harassment of women seeking abortion and would therefore back it.

But would their support hold up if they were told that such behaviour is already against the law, and that the bill goes much further than

this? It's hard to know, but hopefully some would pull back from it.

However, that hardly matters now, because the bill is not far from becoming law, and as usual when it comes to matters like this, without any proper debate either in Leinster House or among the public at large.

So, what should happen next? The Pro-Life Campaign predicts that the law will be legally challenged. Presumably this means a challenge under the Constitution. It is probably too much to hope that President Higgins would refer it to the Supreme Court before signing it. Therefore, someone directly affected by the law will have to do so instead. That could well mean a pro-life activist praying nearby an abortion facility and being arrested for doing so.

## Constitution

That person, or persons, would then claim that their rights under the Constitution have been violated.

For example, "subject to public order and morality", the Constitution protects "the right of the citizens to express freely their convictions and opinions", as well as the right to "assemble peacefully".

The law can "prevent or control meetings which are determined...to be calculated to cause a breach of the peace or to be a danger

or nuisance to the general public."

This is why laws preventing intimidation or harassment are compatible with the Constitution, but can it truly be said that praying quietly opposite a maternity hospital is a "breach of the peace"?

The Constitution holds rights in balance. One reason most countries so far do not have laws like the 'Safe Access Zone' one about to be passed here is because they are deemed to be disproportionate and not to hold rights in proper balance.

What would the Supreme Court ultimately decide if a case were brought before it by a person arrested for praying, or standing quietly with a pro-life banner within 100m of an abortion facility? Who can say for sure? But if the judges ruled that they could indeed be arrested that would seem like a very disproportionate limitation of the right to free assembly and expression.

On the other hand, if the judges struck down certain aspects of the law for going too far, that would be an acute embarrassment for the Government and the 117 TDs who supported it because the question would then arise, why didn't they anticipate this? Why did they support something ultimately deemed to be unconstitutional?



# Out&About

## A joyful jubilee



**KERRY:** Children and parents from Fenit enjoy a fun day after the parish celebrated their Golden Jubilee celebration of St Joseph's Church. Fr Francis Nolan celebrated Mass at Fenit Church, which was followed by games, music, a quiz and art display as well as a Jubilee birthday cake with drinks for the event. Photo: John Cleary.



**CAVAN:** The Ériu group perform in concert on Saturday, November 10, in St Mary's Church in Staghall, Belturbet, raising funds for Cuan Cancer Support.



**DUBLIN:** Author Shelley Corcoran reads her children's book, *The Most Irish Person* (Currach Books), which celebrates multicultural Ireland today, to first class students from St Monica's GNS D5, as part of Dublin Book Festival, in Raheny Library on Thursday, November 9.

### INSHORT

#### Kildare and Leighlin receives lay funding boost

Proceeds from the writings of a deceased Laois parish priest will go towards training lay people for ministry in counties Laois, Kildare, Offaly and Carlow.

After he was presented with a cheque for €7,000 by members of the Cummins family, from Newbridge, Co. Kildare, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty announced his intention to spend the money on training lay ministers.

The money is the proceeds from the first book of sermons by their late brother, Fr John Cummins (52) PP Abbeyleix, who died in a tragic car accident in 2019.

The first volume *My Life in Your Hands* was published in 2022 after the family discovered his sermons on their late brother's computer.

Following the success of that first book, a second volume, by the same title, has recently been issued and is now on sale in parish centres and bookshops in Kildare and Leighlin.

Bishop Nulty said by putting the €7,000 towards the training of lay people it would sit well with the renewal programme in his diocese 'Launch out into the Deep'.

In this programme, lay people will be trained to prepare and lead liturgies. They would stand in on a priest's day off or on weekdays during a priest's holidays.

#### Date for MSC's 'Light Up a Memory' Mass announced

The annual 'Light Up a Memory' Mass, celebrated by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Cork, will take place on Saturday, November 25.

The candlelight memorial Mass will begin at 6.30pm at the Sacred Heart Church on the Western Road, Cork, and will be streamed live on the MSC website [www.mscomissions.ie](http://www.mscomissions.ie) for those who cannot attend in person.

"Bereavement and grief touch us all, and the month of the Holy Souls is a special time to honour fond memories and to pray for friends and family who have gone to their

eternal rest in the Lord's love," the order said in a statement.

"This November, we come together once again to remember specially those who are no longer with us, and to light a candle in tribute to those whose memory we hold dear."

#### Drumlane parish hosts charity concert

The parish of Drumlane in Belturbet, Co. Cavan, hosted a charity concert in aid of Cuan Cancer Support on Saturday, November 11.

The parish's pastoral council said the event was a "resounding success" with a full house in attendance for the performance by Ériu in St Mary's Church, Belturbet.





**TYRONE:** Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin is pictured with members of the Timor Leste community in the archdiocese, as they gathered at Dungannon Parish to welcome the first Cardinal of Timor Leste, Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo da Silva on November 13.



**BELFAST:** Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, is pictured with Irish folk singer Malachi Cush, who performed at the SVP's charity 'An Evening of Seasonal Songs' at Clonard Monastery on 19 November, and compere for the evening broadcaster Claire McCollum.



**CORK:** Fr Michael O'Leary SMA of Wilton Parish presents a cheque to Sr Ursula Sharpe MMM for €3,000. The donation is to purchase an incubator for a new maternity centre recently built by the sisters in Malawi. Also pictured is Chris Sheehan, who spearheaded the appeal in the parish.



**DUBLIN:** On Saturday, November 11, Hope Ireland held a conference on the need for a stronger focus on quality palliative care at end-of-life and opposed to the introduction of euthanasia/assisted suicide. Pictured talking during a break are speakers, Prof. Des O'Neill, professor in medical gerontology at TCD; Dr Miriam Colleran, Consultant in palliative care at Naas General Hospital and in St Brigid's Hospice; Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director of Canada's Euthanasia Prevention Coalition; and Dr Gordon McDonald CEO of Care Not Killing. Photo: John McElroy.



**DUBLIN:** Dr Miriam Colleran addresses the Hope Ireland conference. Photo: John McElroy.



**DUBLIN:** Sr Angela (centre) who celebrated her Solemn Profession as a Redemptoristine Nun on Saturday, November 11, is pictured with prioress Sr Gabrielle and Sr Lucy.



**DUBLIN:** Pro Life Campaign volunteers are pictured outside the Dáil at the launch of the PLC's 'Vote Pro-Life' initiative on November 13.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones  
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**ROSCOMMON:** Fr Michael Daubanes, Rector of the Shrine of Lourdes is pictured following a conference for the Irish Association of Lourdes Hospitalités, which he attended as a special guest. Pictured are Fr Tony O'Connor, Ossory Diocese and Secretary of the Irish Lourdes pilgrimage Directors; Fr Daubanes; Helena Foy, Cloyne Diocese and Vice-President of Hospitalité Notre Dame de Lourdes; François Labadie, co-Director Reception and Accommodation Department, Sanctuaries of Lourdes; and Mathias Terrier, Director Reception and Accommodation Department, Sanctuaries of Lourdes.



**MEATH:** On Saturday, November 11, in the Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan presented awards to second level students who took part in the Pope John Paul II awards within the diocese. The award was facilitated by Sean Wright. Students who received awards represented schools and parishes from Mullingar, Kells and Trim. Also pictured is Bro. PJ Finn, Deputy Supreme of the Knights of St Columbanus, who supports the awards in the Diocese.



**CARLOW:** Cummins family members and the editorial team of *My Life in Your Hands* are pictured presenting Bishop Denis Nulty with a cheque for €7,000, proceeds from the sale of the Year A edition of the book honouring Fr John Cummins on November 10. The money will go towards the training of lay people for ministry across the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. Pictured are Joe O'Brien, Margaret Farrell, Gary Cummins, Bishop Nulty, Julie Kavanagh, Maria Cummins, Paddy Pender and Con Cummins.

### ARMAGH

The Legion of Mary at Armagh Cathedral will pray a rosary for Holy Souls in Armagh Cathedral cemetery at 3.30pm each Sunday in November.

### CAVAN

Lectio Divina takes place every Tuesday for 30 minutes in the Conference Room (Ss Patrick and Felim Cathedral) behind the altar after 10am Mass.

### CORK

'Light Up a Memory' Mass to take place for the holy souls in Sacred Heart Church, Western Road, at 6.30pm. The memorial Mass will also be streamed live on www.mscmissions.ie

First Friday devotions take place in St Patrick's Church, Whitechurch, with adoration from 6-8pm, beginning with two hearts devotion from 6-7pm followed by a holy hour of reparation until Benediction. First Saturday Fatima devotions take place during Adoration 11am-12pm midday, with Confessions 11-11.45am. Benediction takes place at 12pm, with Mass 12.10pm.

### DERRY

Dana Rosemary Scallon will speak on 'Light the Fire' of Vocations on November 26, and sing her new song at Long Tower Church, as part of the parish's novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for parents, grandparents and tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10am Mass. It runs from 10.30am-12pm.

### DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10.30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11.15am.

### DUBLIN

A Blessed Carlo Acutis mini-pilgrimage takes place in Aughrim Street Church on November 26, beginning with Mass in Italian at 4pm and Mass in English at 6pm.

Part three of a Theology of the Body series for all Christians takes place Friday, December 1, at 7pm on 'The marriage of the lamb' in 23 Merrion Sq North, D02 XE02.

### FERMANAGH

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

### GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer group takes place in Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore, on first Fridays at 8.15pm.

### KILDARE

A memorial service for babies who died through miscarriage, still birth and neonatal deaths takes place in Caragh parish on Friday, November 24, at 7.30pm.

Youth 2000's Christmas retreat takes place in Newbridge College, December 8-10 for ages 16-35. Free booking online at www.youth2000.ie.

### KILKENNY

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

### LEITRIM

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

### LIMERICK

'Freedom from Slavery', a discussion with Fr Luke Demasi SHM and Fr Brendan Kilcoyne takes place in St Staviour's Church, Limerick on November 30 at 7.15pm, presented by the Legion of Mary.

### MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock on Sunday, December 10 at 6pm.

Cenacolo Comunita in Our Lady of Knock House, F12 2K74, to host a family day on Saturday, December 6, beginning with Mass at 12, testimonies at 3pm and a live, outdoor Nativity play at

5pm. Text 085 252 6864 if attending.

### MEATH

Fr John Byrne to continue his introduction to the Bible on Mondays at 12 noon via the Kells webcam, accessible on www.kellsparish.ie. This year he will introduce the St John's Gospel and each session will last 25 minutes. For queries, you may contact Fr John on email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com

### OFFALY

Tullamore parish to host an eight week Bible study course in January and February 2024, beginning on Monday, January 8, at 7.30pm in Tullamore parish centre with tea after.

### ROSCOMMON

Bishop Barron's *Catholicism* series will be presented in St Patrick's Castlereagh Parish Office (attached to the Parochial House, F45D284) on Mondays at 8-9.30pm.

### SLIGO

St Patrick's Church, Stranhill, to host 'The Way of Gentleness', an advent journey on Mondays at 9pm on December 4, 11 and 18, in person and online at churchservices.tv

### TYRONE

The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher every Monday after 10am Mass, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8pm.

### WATERFORD

Primary school children are invited to get ready for Christmas through story, art and crafts, fun and faith beginning Friday, November 30, in Aglish Community Hall from 5-6pm. To book contact 087 630 8900.

Charismatic Renewal to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King on Sunday, November 26 from 2-5.30pm in Tower Hotel. For further information contact Síle on 086 8590 394.

Celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, Sunday November 26 at the Tower Hotel from 2pm to 5.30pm. Prayer, music, Scripture, sharing, prayer for healing. Contact Síle 086 8590394



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Pope welcomes migrant he's been praying for since July

● When Mbengue Nyimbilo Crepin told Pope Francis of his harrowing journey to Italy and about the deaths of his wife and six-year-old daughter in the desert along the border between Libya and Tunisia, the Pope told him he had been praying for them since July.

Nyimbilo, known as "Pato," sobbed November 17 as he shared the story of his family being forced to leave Tunisia, crossing the desert to Libya on foot.

He collapsed but urged his wife and daughter to continue. He eventually made it to Libya, but then he saw photos on social media of his wife and child dead in the desert, according to a report in July by *Associated Press*. Libyan border guards said they found a dozen migrants dead in the desert after Tunisia expelled them.

### Altar vandalised and vessels stolen from French basilica

● During the night of November 14–15, unidentified persons destroyed the altar and stole sacred vessels from the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in the Archdiocese of Rouen, France.

According to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, the prosecutor's office confirmed that the

Sacré-Coeur basilica was vandalised and that the unidentified persons also smashed a statue, although the Blessed Sacrament was not stolen.

The authorities have not yet identified the vandals, but local police have already launched an investigation to find them.

### Archbishop defends LGBT flags on coffins in Mexican cathedral

● The vice president of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Gustavo Rodríguez Vega, justified the draping of LGBT flags on the coffins of a gay activist and his partner during their funeral held in the Aguascalientes cathedral, despite the scandal that this has caused among the Faithful.

The caskets were covered with the flags during the funeral Mass of the "nonbinary" judge and activist Ociel Baena and his romantic partner, which was held on the morning of November 14.

Both bodies were found with indications of violence inside Baena's house on November 13. The attorney general's office of Aguascalientes state reported in a statement posted on Facebook that day that "everything indicates that it could be a personal matter" since "a sharp instrument" was found in the hands of one of the deceased.

Several comments on the post questioned the quick conclusions of the investigators and claimed it was a hate crime, alluding to Ulises Nava, a gay rights activist who was gunned down in July as he was leaving an event organised by Baena.

### US bishops approve designating abortion 'preeminent priority'

● The US bishops will continue to highlight the threat of abortion as a "preeminent priority" in the introduction to a guide they'll disseminate to Catholic voters ahead of the 2024 election.

That designation, the source of debate among some bishops in recent years, was retained when the bishops voted overwhelmingly (225-11, with seven abstentions) to approve a revised introduction to the guide, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, at their annual autumn assembly in Baltimore.

The bishops also voted to approve several brief excerpts from the guide to be inserted in parish bulletins during the upcoming election cycle.

"The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless brothers and sisters and destroys more than a million lives per year in our country alone," the new introduction to the guide says.

## Watchdog: 'Anti-Christian hate crimes' in Europe up 44% in past year

Europe has witnessed a 44% jump in anti-Christian hate crimes across more than two dozen European countries over the past year, according to a group that monitors discrimination against Christians.

The Vienna-based Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (OIDAC Europe) November 16 released its annual report detailing the spike in anti-Christian incidents, which it said is "connected to a rise in extremist motivation and a higher acceptance of the targeting of churches".

OIDAC Europe says on its website that it researches, analyses, documents, and reports "cases of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe".

The group's surveys of "intolerance and discrimination" against Christians reported "physical attacks and threats against individual Christians or Christian communities, desecration and vandalism of Christian sites" and "violations of freedom of religion, expression, association, and conscience," among other incidents.

In its release, OIDAC Europe said "arson attacks on churches" increased by 75% between 2021 and 2022. The report also revealed "legal discrimination against Christians who expressed traditional Christian worldviews".

The top five countries for anti-Christian hate crimes, the report said, were Germany, Italy, France, Spain, and Poland. The United Kingdom and Aus-



Worshippers pray inside St Michael Church in Chamonix, France. The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe in Vienna has warned of growing anti-Christian hostility in Europe. Photo: CNS/Denis Balibouse, Reuters

tria were also near the top of the list.

Overall, "in 2022, OIDAC Europe documented 748 anti-Christian hate crimes in 30 different countries, which ranged from arson attacks, graffiti, desecrations, and thefts to physical attacks, insults, and threats," the release said.

The group noted that those numbers align closely with those reported by the inter-governmental Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The OSCE "found 792 anti-Christian hate crimes in 34 European countries," the group said, "making

Christians the most targeted religious group after Jewish believers".

The report also examines instances of Christians who reportedly "lost their jobs, faced suspension, or criminal court cases for expressing nonviolent religious views in public" as well as "violations of parental rights to educate children in accordance with one's religious convictions".

Notably, the release said that more hate crimes last year "were perpetrated by radicalised members of ideological, political, or religious groups that follow an anti-

Christian narrative".

Regina Polak, a professor and the head of the Department for Practical Theology at the Catholic-Theological Faculty at the University of Vienna who also works with OSCE, said in the press release that the "increasing number of anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe" detailed by the report is "deeply worrying".

"It is highly necessary to raise both governmental and societal awareness for this problem," Prof. Polak said in the release, "and undertake political measures to tackle and combat it decidedly".

## Costa Rica: Catholics oppose bill forcing priests to break confessional seal

A group of Catholic leaders from Costa Rica — including Daniel Blanco, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of San José — recently participated in a webinar titled "Sacramental Secret: A canonical, legal, and preventive approach" in order to lay out the position of the Church regarding a bill that seeks to eliminate the seal of Confession.

On September 11, lawmaker Antonio Ortega of the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) political party, supported by legislators from several parties, introduced a bill that by amending a series of articles

of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Civil Code would allow lifting the seal of Confession when sexual crimes against minors are involved.

In response, the Costa Rican Bishops' Conference expressed its opposition to the bill, pointing out that according to canon 983 of the Code of Canon Law, the sacramental seal "is inviolable," which prevents the confessor from revealing the penitent's Confession.

In the webinar organised by the Catholic University of Costa Rica on October 31, Bishop Blanco, a specialist in canon

law, referred to a document published by the apostolic penitentiary in 2019 on the importance of the inviolability of the sacramental seal.

The text points out that "reconciliation itself is a benefit that the wisdom of the Church has always safeguarded with all her moral and legal might, with the sacramental seal. Although it is not always understood by the modern mentality, it is indispensable for the sanctity of the Sacrament and for the freedom of the conscience of the penitent".

## Scottish bishops criticise gov't's new guidance on sex ed

The Catholic Church in Scotland has criticised the Scottish government's new guidance on sex education, arguing that the latest proposals threaten the right of Catholic schools to protect their religious ethos.

Following the release of a draft government document called 'Guidance on

Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood (RSHP) Education', Scotland's bishops issued a forthright statement on November 8 in response, highlighting that previous religious protections had been scrubbed out.

"The Bishops' Conference of Scotland is both disappointed

and confused at the decision by the Scottish government to delete all reference to Catholic schools in its 'Guidance on the Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood (RSHP) Education in Scottish Schools' document," the bishops said.

"We strongly request the

reinsertion of the paragraphs relating to denominational education from the previous iteration of the guidance, which would reflect both the legal protection for schools with a religious character and the previously supportive position of the Scottish government for Catholic schools."





Edited by Jason Osborne  
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## Evangelising from on high



Sagrada Família in Barcelona, Spain, lights the four towers of the Evangelists for the first time, November 14. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, papal nuncio to Spain, blessed the towers of the famous basilica on November 12. Photo: OSV News/Pep Daude, Sagrada Família, Handout via Reuters

## US bishops express support to name St John Henry Newman doctor of the Church

Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, was one of several US bishops who spoke passionately in support this week of a proposal to name the 19th Century English cardinal St John Henry Newman a “doctor of the Church”.

The US bishops’ Committee on Doctrine asked the country’s body of bishops November 15, during their annual fall meeting in Baltimore, if they support a petition brought by the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales asking the Vatican to name Newman a doctor of the Church.

The US bishops voted overwhelmingly — with just two bishops voting no — to send a letter to Pope Francis expressing their support for the UK bishops’ proposal. Newman, born in 1801, was famously

a convert to the Catholic Faith from Anglicanism and faced backlash and prejudice from his community and his family.

“If that happens, that Newman is named a doctor, we should really take advantage of that, study his writings deeply. I think it might help to heal some of the divisions in our Church,” Bishop Barron said, speaking to his brother bishops ahead of the vote.

Other bishops including Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia and Cardinal Seán O’Malley of Boston also rose to express their support.

Prior to his conversion, Newman made a name for himself as a well-known and widely respected Oxford academic, preacher, and public intellectual. His 1845 conversion to

the Catholic Faith resulted in the loss of many friends — including his own sister, who never spoke to him again.

He became a priest in 1847 and founded the Oratory of St Philip Neri in England. He was particularly dedicated to education, founding two schools for boys and the Catholic University of Ireland. Newman’s Idea of a University became a foundational text on Catholic higher education. A prolific author and letter writer, he died in Birmingham in 1890 at age 89.

Newman would join the ranks of just over three dozen saints — including Anthony of Padua, Jerome, and Thérèse of Lisieux — if he is ultimately named a doctor of the Church. Pope Francis canonised him in 2019.

## Sagrada Família basilica inaugurates the towers of the Evangelists

It seemed like one of Antonio Gaudí’s dreams come true. On November 12, the Pope’s nuncio to Spain, Archbishop Bernardito Auza, blessed the towers of the Evangelists of the famous Sagrada Família basilica in Barcelona.

Gaudí, a legendary Catalan architect, started working on the now-iconic basilica 140 years ago. The rector, Msgr Josep María Turull, told the Spanish Catholic weekly *Alfa y Omega* that, if Gaudí were alive, he would be “very

happy,” without caring about the extra century of work, because, as he used to say, the “master is in no hurry”.

The architect’s work, he added, “is not the result of a dream on a summer night, but of a lot of time of meditation, work and prayer”.

Archbishop Auza said during his homily November 12 that each of the towers “push us to be witnesses of the Lord in the middle of the world,” like the Evangelists, “that in unison evoke

the presence of Christ. (They) move us all to look where Gaudí truly looked, to the incarnate word of God in Mary”.

Concelebrating with the nuncio November 12 were Cardinal Juan José Omella of Barcelona, Cardinal Lluís Martínez Sistach, retired archbishop of Barcelona, Auxiliary Bishop David Abadías of Barcelona.

Regional politicians were present among the 2,000 people gathered for the event.

## Vatican roundup

### Vatican aims to have a net-zero-emissions vehicle fleet by 2030

● As part of a plan to reduce its CO2 footprint, Vatican City State has launched a program to replace its existing vehicle fleet with electric vehicles. The city state’s ‘Ecological Conversion 2030’ programme includes making all its vehicles CO2-neutral by 2030, according to a press release from the Vatican City State governor’s office November 15.

“Vatican City State has been dedicated for many years to promoting sustainable development through environmental policies that safeguard the environment and provide strategies for saving energy,” it said.

In an effort to have a net-zero-emissions fleet of vehicles by 2030, the Vatican has signed an agreement with Volkswagen to supply “just under 40 fully electric models” starting at the beginning of 2024, Volkswagen said in a press release November 15.

“At later stages, further zero-emission vehicles also from the Volkswagen Group brands will be progressively handed over until the entire fleet has been completely replaced by 2030,” the car company said.

### Vatican doctrine office reaffirms that Catholics cannot be Freemasons

● The Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) released a document reaffirming that Catholics are forbidden from becoming Freemasons.

The new document signed by Pope Francis and DDF Prefect Cardinal Victor Fernández was written in response to a bishop from the Philippines who had expressed concern at the growing number of Catholics in his diocese who are taking part in Freemasonry and asked for suggestions for how to respond pastorally.

The dicastery’s response, dated November 13, calls for “a coordinated strategy” involving all of the bishops in the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines to promote catechesis “in all parishes regarding the reasons for the irreconcilability between the Catholic Faith and Freemasonry”.

The Freemasons are the

largest worldwide oath-bound secret society. Freemasonry promotes ideas and rituals incompatible with the Catholic faith, including indifferentism, or the position that a person can be equally pleasing to God while remaining in any religion, and a deistic concept of a “Great Architect of the Universe”.

The Vatican document reaffirms that “those who are formally and knowingly enrolled in Masonic Lodges and have embraced Masonic principles” fall under the provisions of the Catholic Church’s 1983 Declaration on Masonic Associations.

The 1983 declaration, signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger when he was prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declares that Catholics who enrol in Masonic associations “are in a state of grave sin and may not receive holy Communion”.

### Buddhist-Christian dialogue calls for shared action to spread hope

● A group of Christians and Buddhists engaged in dialogue urged members of their religions to work together to bring hope and compassion to a troubled world.

“In these troubled times, we refuse to give in to despair, for we strongly believe that in the midst of dark clouds, those who are deeply rooted in their respective religious traditions and willing to work together with everyone can bring a ray of hope to a desperate humanity,” the representatives said in a final declaration released November 16.

“We believe that now more than ever, we need to work together and with a great sense of responsibility,” it said, listing seven points of “shared action” to implement in their respective regions.

The final statement came at the end of the seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium held in Bangkok, Thailand, November 13-16. The main organiser of the colloquium was the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.



# Letter from Rome

## How the Vatican's 'no' to Freemasonry is also about the enemy within



Chris Altieri

There was a curious news item carried by *Vatican News* recently, one which, among other things, reminds us that the Catholic Church has both real enemies and a long memory. It may also, however, serve to illustrate that often enough, the Church's worst enemy is within – and the enemy isn't who or what you think.

A piece titled *Vatican confirms Catholics still forbidden to join Masonic lodges* published to the official *Vatican News* website on November 15 2023, explaining that “active membership in Freemasonry by a member of the Faithful is prohibited, because of the irreconcilability between Catholic doctrine and Freemasonry”.

Now, Freemasons and Freemasonry both figure prominently in a plethora of conspiracy theories, some of which are far-fetched even by tinfoil hat standards, but Freemasonry is a thing and some of its tenets – officially ‘secret’ but not very well kept as such – are directly at odds with core Catholic teaching about God, the sacraments, life, the universe, and pretty much everything.

### Reunification

In Italy, Freemasons and Freemasonry played something of a role in the reunification of the country under the royal house of Savoy in the mid-19th Century. Italian unity came at the expense of papal political power in central Italy, and not only marked the end of the so-called Papal States but also fostered and fomented a virulent anticlericalism that persists in Italian culture. So, the culturally Italian curia is arguably even more wary of Freemasons and Freemasonry than of other secret societies.

The cultural wariness of the Church's central governing apparatus is rooted deep in history, but as recently as the early 1980s,

**“Italian authorities determined that a Masonic outfit called Propaganda Due (P2 for short) had been involved in criminal activities including the Banco Ambrosiano scandal that left the Holy See with a serious hit both to its reputation and on its balance sheet”**

Italian authorities determined that a Masonic outfit called Propaganda Due (P2 for short) had been involved in criminal activities including the Banco Ambrosiano scandal that left the Holy See with a serious hit both to its reputation and on its balance sheet. So, there's ample reason for vigilance well within living memory.

The really interesting thing about the Vatican's reiteration of the long-standing ban, however, is less in how it came to be, as in the fact it came at all.

**“Transparency in governance has been a major problem not only for the Vatican but for the Church's leadership culture just about everywhere”**

The Vatican's renewed no to Freemasonry came in a response to a *dubium* from a bishop in the Philippines. *Dubia* are a form of official query about doctrine or policy that usually go to curial officials, though occasionally – as was the case in a recent high-profile contretemps over Pope Francis's 2016 apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* – they go directly to the pope. This one was fielded by the new prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Víctor Fernández, and was published with Francis's permission and approval.

*Dubia* don't always receive answers, and they don't always get published when they do receive answers. So, it is pretty clear that the highest authorities in the Vatican wanted this cleared up, and wanted not only their decision but their thinking and their recommendations about how to deal with it to be known generally.

The question this Vatican watcher has is: Why not make this sort of transparency standard practice, at least when it comes to *dubia* generally?

Transparency in governance has been a major problem not only for the Vatican but for the Church's leadership culture just about everywhere.

The Vatican and chancery outfits worldwide have become aware of the need for greater transpar-



A detail of the Masonic apron depicted on a statue of George Washington in the Masonic hall in New York City, USA. On November 15 the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released a reminder that Catholics enrolled in Freemasonry are “in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion”. Photo: OSV News/ Wikimedia Commons

ency when and where it matters most – at least, they've begun to feel the cost of failure more keenly – in high-stakes matters like finance, major personnel decisions, and the administration of criminal justice.

With *dubia*, the stakes are usually relatively low.

### System

It wouldn't take much to set up a sort of ‘opt out’ system in which the standard operating procedure would be to answer *dubia* and publish the answers to some central archive or searchable database. Not every answer to every *dubium* would get a press release or even a line in the official Vatican news pages, but the answers would be there for folks who were interested, most of whom would be canon lawyers, theology grad students and chancery wonks.

The Vatican would then assume the burden of explaining why a particular answer wasn't listed where it was supposed to be.

In the fight for credibility, the Church's worst enemy is within. It is her culture of opacity. Here's to thinking through little ways to push back and change the culture, maybe just a little bit at a time.



Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, leaves the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall in this file photo dated October 6. Photo: OSV News/ Lola Gomez



# Polish archbishop urges Pope to resist Church in Germany's demands



Jonathon Luxmoore

**T**he president of the Polish bishops' conference has bitterly criticised demands for liberal change by the Church in neighbouring Germany and urged the Pope not to allow them to dominate the Rome Synod on Synodality.

"Awareness of the power of truth sustains my hope for the ongoing synod – that it won't be in any way manipulated or used to authorise German theses which openly contradict Catholic Church teaching," Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poznan said in a letter to Pope Francis released November 14.

"There's a risk the scientific claims being cited are wrong, as happened with another once-popular theory about racism. If doctrinal competence were granted to bishops' conferences or continental assemblies, then such theses would be considered Catholic – and perhaps imposed on other conferences, despite their obviously non-Catholic character," the archbishop said.

The 1,000-word letter was published ahead of the Polish bishops' November 20-21 fall plenary, which was expected to focus on reactions to the October Rome synod.

At the close of the October 4-29 synod, a report summarising the discussions was released. What follows now is a yearlong period of reflection for the whole Church, which will culminate in the second and final synod assembly in late 2024 on the same topic of synodality.

**“The authors of this document seem so ashamed at how German bishops reacted to reports of sexual abuse”**

In his letter, Archbishop Gadecki said he had been alarmed by a 150-page document circulated to synod participants, setting out German demands, as well as by suggestions in the synod's working document, or *Instrumentum Laboris*, that “discernments by a single episcopal conference” might carry “authentic doctrinal authority”.

“The authors of this document seem so ashamed at how German bishops reacted to reports of sexual abuse by clergy that they've decided to start a moral and legal revolution in the universal Church – however, it seems this wouldn't be an evangelical revolution, but one inspired by left-liberal ideologies,” the Polish bishops' president told the Pontiff.



Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poznan, Poland, speaks during a briefing about the assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican October 26. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

“The main themes are change to the Church's order and teaching on sexual morality, and ordaining women to the diaconate and priesthood ... (that) the Church should become as similar as possible to the liberal democratic world, which exemplifies humanism,” he said, criticising the Church in Germany's ‘Synodal Path’.

The Catholic Church in Germany sent six delegates to the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome and was widely believed to have influenced the agenda through its own ‘Synodal Path’ discussions, launched in December 2019. The path, running till 2026, resumed in Essen November 11, although several German bishops, including Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne have pulled out after opposing its liberal demands.

## The political system

In his letter, Archbishop Gadecki said the German “Synodal Path” had called on the Church to adopt the “political system” and “democratic bureaucracy” dominant in the West, through lay supervision over clergy, decision-making transparency and a “power structure parallel to the hierarchy,” while also demanding “the blessing of non-sacramental unions, including same-sex unions”

on grounds these were not sinful.

“On the contrary, it's the Church's teaching which is sinful, as well as unmerciful and discriminatory – it makes the Church, according to the authors, responsible for the persecution and suicide of transgender people,” the Polish archbishop said.

**“The Polish Church believes any changes must be pastoral, rather than doctrinal”**

“In reality, relationships between people, including sexual relationships, are traditionally subject to moral evaluation in the Church's teaching... Love does not justify everything or make everything good. In the Catholic approach, we treat every person with respect, but not every human choice,” he said.

Bishops from Poland's predominant Catholic Church are widely seen as upholding conservative Catholic teaching in Europe.

Meanwhile, a Polish lay delegate to the synod told *OSV News* the archbishop's open letter signalled Polish “public misgivings” over reform demands in the wider Church, but said he doubted any

Polish bishop would openly dissent from papal decisions, such as by publicly issuing critical questions, known as *dubia*.

“The Polish Church believes any changes must be pastoral, rather than doctrinal,” said philosophy professor Aleksander Banka, a member of the Polish Church's Lay Apostolate Council.

“But *dubia* aren't a proper way of communicating with the Holy Father, since they apply pressure and force him to reply on issues requiring delicacy and care. Any bishop with questions or doubts can resolve these through direct talks with the Pope. Having shown much greater public loyalty to the Holy Father and Church teaching than their German counterparts, I don't think Polish bishops would go public this way,” he said.

## Transgender Baptism

Archbishop Gadecki's letter follows a ruling released November 8 by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith that transgender persons “may receive Baptism under the same conditions as other faithful,” if it would not cause scandal or confusion among other Catholics.

In his letter, the Polish archbishop said German reform demands also had included not recording a child's gender on baptismal certificates, and

providing transgender people with access to the sacraments, including priesthood and consecrated life.

“The entire teaching of the Church on gender should thus be fundamentally changed, since it does not correspond to the self-understanding of transgender people,” the Polish bishops' president told the pope.

“This is all in the name of so-called latest achievements in social sciences,” he said.

However, Prof. Banka said the Vatican had shown “great critical reserve” about current German demands, adding that the new transgender ruling reflected the impact of “many public voices”.

“The Vatican is seeking cautiously to maintain the basic anthropological view of the human person long articulated by the Church, while recognising the present situation requires a deeper, sensitive understanding,” the Polish delegate told *OSV News*.

“While maintaining its unity of doctrine, it's trying to answer pastoral needs by moving towards these people. It's clearly necessary to speak about this, whatever postulates have emerged in Germany.”

**i** Jonathon Luxmoore writes for *OSV News from Oxford, England*.



# Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

## Letter of the week

### Liturgy of the Hours better than 'Communion Services'

**Dear Editor,** I wish to commend you on your article, 'We need a rethink on Communion Services' [*The Irish Catholic* – November 9, 2023]. Your suggestion that the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours by parishioners might be a preferable option to 'Communion Services' is worthy of serious consideration.

The revision of the divine office after Vatican II intended that it be

promoted for use by the whole People of God, and not just for clergy and religious. However, the adult faith formation or catechesis necessary to institute this as a form of prayer for use outside of religious communities did not happen. Perhaps now is the time.

The big gaping hole of lack of adult faith formation has left some Catholics with little or no under-

standing of the Mass. If the adults don't 'get it', what hope have we of passing on the Faith to the next generation?

The term 'paraliturgies' was used to describe 'Communion Services'. I agree with Prof. Tom Whelan, quoted on page 2 of the same edition, "...there's no such thing as a para-liturgy". Support for this truth can be found in the spir-

itual texts of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, who wrote that "all authentic prayer is prayer of the Church". This Carmelite saint has much to offer us today in our understanding of prayer and especially the prayer of the Church.

I urge people to read *The Prayer of the Church* by Edith Stein, who is currently being proposed as Doctor of the Church, to get an insight into

the Mystery of our Faith.

In the spirit of synodality currently being promoted, what better way than to have every person in the Church praying together as one in the Liturgy of the Hours? Is any diocese or parish brave enough to give it a try?

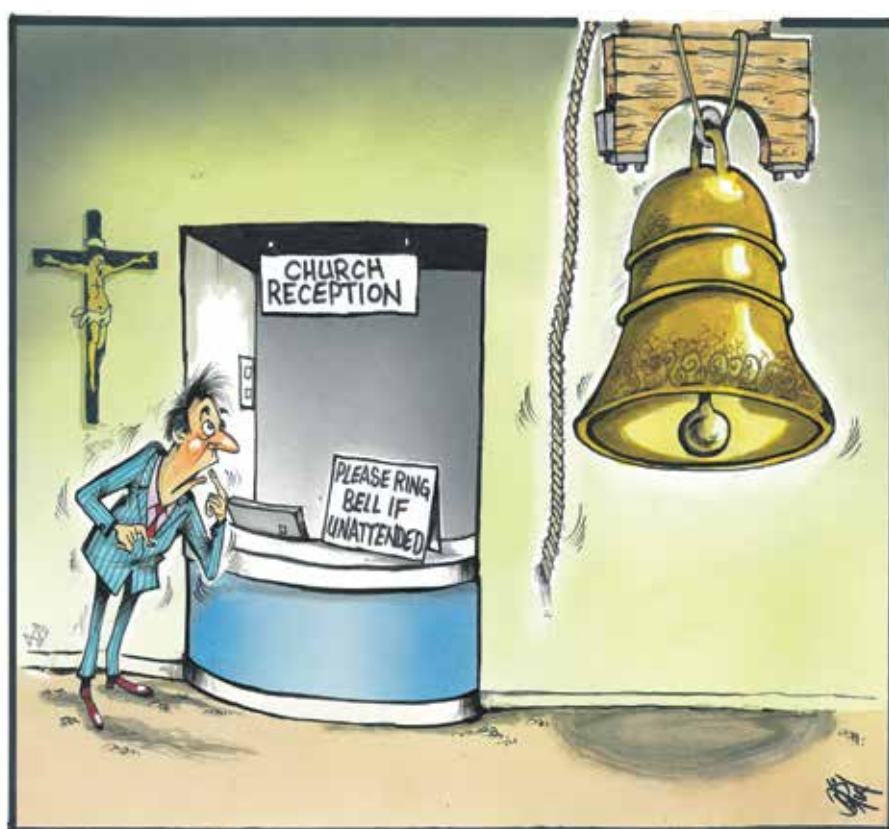
Yours etc.,  
**Margie Kennedy**  
Donaghmede, Dublin 13

### Live crib important for Dubliners celebrating Christmas

**Dear Editor,** News that the live animal crib will return to Dublin's Mansion House after a blessing of the live animals expected to take place on December 6 is welcomed as it signifies so much of Christmas traditions [*The Irish Catholic* – November 16, 2023].

It was decided in 2022 by former Lord Mayor Caroline Conway to remove the live animals from the crib for the first time since 1995 amid concerns over their welfare in the capital. Current Lord Mayor Daithí de Róiste confirmed the crib will return to its original location this year as this tradition is an important aspect of celebrating Christmas for Dubliners and visitors to the capital alike. The Irish Farmers' Association, who for multiple years have played a pivotal role in this tradition, confirmed they are thrilled to see that the crib is returning this Christmas.

Yours etc.,  
**Gerry Coughlan**  
Kilnamanagh, Dublin 24.



### Addressing specific desires of women in the workplace

**Dear Editor,** I am writing in response to Mary Kenny's recent article addressing the 'gender pay gap' and the newly implemented Gender Pay Gap Information Act of 2021 [*The Irish Catholic* – November 16, 2023]. I appreciate Ms Kenny's insightful perspective on this issue and her acknowledgment of the complexities involved in understanding the pay disparity between men and women.

Ms Kenny rightly highlights the need for a nuanced approach in interpreting the data. Louise Perry's suggestion to rename the 'gender pay gap' as a 'mothers and others' gap offers a more accurate reflection of the factors at play.

It is refreshing to see an exploration of the impact of motherhood on women's career choices and earnings. Perry's observation that the choice to spend more time with children significantly influences the pay difference is a crucial aspect often overlooked

in discussions about the gender wage gap.

By recognising that women, especially mothers, may prioritise family life over demanding work schedules, we move away from a one-size-fits-all narrative. Perry's insight challenges the prevailing cultural denial of the biological and psychological differences between men and women, emphasising the importance of acknowledging diverse desires and priorities.

The plea for truthful and analytical data in reporting this situation, rather than relying on raw statistics that may not capture the full reality, is a call for a more comprehensive understanding of the 'mothers and others' gap. This nuanced approach is essential in fostering meaningful discussions and implementing effective policies that address the specific needs and desires of women in the workforce.

Yours etc.,  
**Cathy Healy**  
Drogheda, Co. Louth

### A moral duty to condemn such evil in Gaza

**Dear Editor,** Like most people, I am absolutely horrified and disgusted at what Israel is doing in Gaza. Almost 10,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza, over 4,000 of them children, by Israeli bombing of homes, hospitals, churches, mosques and refugee shelters. Hospitals trying to perform operations without anaesthetics and no power to keep incubators

working. A million people in north Gaza told by Israel to move south of Gaza. This is a war crime and Netanyahu should face the International Criminal Court. People all over the world, including in Israel, are calling for an immediate cessation of the horrific killing and destruction. Joe Biden could stop Israel's crimes in Gaza if he wanted to.

What Hamas did in Israel on October 7 was unspeakably horrific and evil and I pray that the hostages, many of them little children and old people, will be released unharmed to their loved ones. Over 1,400 Israelis murdered by Hamas [This figure has been revised and now stands at roughly 1,200 according to Israel's government]. It was a horrible

crime.

I ask God to bring the killing of innocent poor people to an end. I wish that Pope Francis would speak out strongly and unequivocally against the slaughter that's taking place in Gaza. We have a moral duty to condemn such evil.

Yours etc.,  
**Anthony Redmond**  
Drimnagh, Dublin 12.

### The synodal pathway remaining a vibrant and impactful initiative

**Dear Editor,** Extending the Irish Synodal Pathway beyond the initially proposed five years – while the commitment to fostering dialogue and decision-making in the Church is commendable – I would like to express some concerns regarding the potential impact of a more extended synodal process.

The original timeline, concluding in 2026, was set with the intention of thorough consultation and prayerful discernment. The risk is that such an extension, of five years duration, might lead to a further loss of interest and engagement among the laity.

While the Synod on Synodality

announced by Pope Francis has provided valuable insights, there is a need for balance. The simultaneous running of the universal synod and the Irish synodal pathway has presented challenges, as acknowledged by Julieann Moran. The necessity for content from Rome to guide the process indicates a potential dependence that could impact the organic development of the Irish synodal discussions.

Moreover, the laudable goal of perpetual decision-making in the Church requires careful consideration. There is a danger of fatigue and diminishing participation over time. The success of

the synodal pathway depends on active engagement, and a judicious balance between consultation and timely decision-making is crucial.

As we navigate this crucial phase in the Church in Ireland, it is essential to weigh the benefits of continued dialogue against the risk of waning interest and enthusiasm. Striking the right balance will be key to ensuring that the synodal pathway remains a vibrant and impactful initiative.

Yours etc.,  
**Ciaran Devlin**  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20

### Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, November 23, 2023

**Russell Shaw**

The Synod is levelling hierarchy and clericalising the laity

Page 32



## How decluttering our lives and homes advances our spiritual lives



**R**eligious have it easy – at least in some regards. Consider, for example, their vow of poverty.

Religious brothers, sisters and priests pledge a sacred oath that shields them from basements overrun by toys, cupboards overflowing with unused wedding gifts, and closets stuffed with purses and shoes. Religious can't own four bedroom houses, packed from basement to attic with school yearbooks, college term papers and giant foam fingers purchased at a match in 1985. And they most certainly aren't forced to consign their dining room table to piles of paper, bills and kids' art projects.

All the clutter and chaos



**In the battle against clutter both physical and spiritual, the path to holiness lies, writes Emily Stimpson Chapman**

made possible for the rest of us by cheap labour in China is impossible in the walls of their convents and monasteries. Their life is clutter-free by design: The order of their cells and common rooms are a reflection of the order of their day, and the simplicity of their surroundings are a perpetual reminder of the simplicity God calls them to cultivate in their souls.

Laypeople, on the other hand, don't have it that easy. When it comes to living the simple life, ours is by far the harder row to hoe. We must learn to walk the always fine line between having and having too much. We also must find the balance that allows us to appreciate what we do have without becoming inordinately attached to any of it. And we must do all that while

occupying the same 1,600 square feet as junk mail, babies and sippy cups.

But we do have to do it. The collective wisdom of the saints and the Bible leave little room for doubt: The simple life helps pave a smooth and direct path to heaven, a path that investment bankers, politicians and home-schooling mothers, as well as Jesuit priests and Carmelite nuns, are all wise to follow.

That's part of the reasoning behind the whole "rich man/camel/eye of a needle" warning Christ gave in Matthew 19:24. The more we have and the more attached we are to what we have, the harder it is for us to leave those things behind in pursuit of greater goods.

That's also what St Vincent de Paul tells us when he advises, "Simplicity ought to be held in great esteem. ... It is a virtue most worthy of love, because it leads us straight to the kingdom of God".

Religious have long understood that. With their vow of poverty and carefully ordered spaces, their physical surroundings perpetually remind them of the detachment necessary for entering heaven and the peace they'll find there. In a sense, their simplicity of life functions as a sacramental, an incarnational habit that serves as a channel for grace, an outward practice that leads to inner transformation. But again, those who wear



religious habits aren't the only ones called to practice the habit of simplicity. Nor are they the only ones who stand to benefit from it. The simple life to which God calls religious is also the life to which he calls lay people. And the graces that come to the Dominicans and Franciscans who embrace simplicity in their monasteries are the same graces that come to accountants and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) presidents who embrace it in their homes.

But how do PTA presidents, not to mention the rest of us, do that? After all, it's one thing for a convent's living room floor to remain clear of Legos, but how does a young mother accomplish the same task? How do lay people order their homes so that they reflect and facilitate holy simplicity? How do they embrace the simple life when they live lives that, by their very nature, require acquiring?

### Attitude

It starts with attitude.

St Francis de Sales, the great spiritual adviser to the laity, once counselled, "Let us learn from Jesus in the manger, to hold the things of the world in such esteem as they deserve".

That's detachment, the virtue which enables us to throw away the notebooks and binders from our college days and give away our favourite little black dress that hasn't fit since our first child was born. Detachment is also the virtue that prevents us from finding our self-worth in a new couch from the furniture shop or a new Land Rover with all the upgrades. It prevents us from conflating Christ's idea of the good life with the high street's idea of the good life, and it frees us to buy and keep what we know we need, while letting go of what others want us to think we need.

Along with detachment, the simple life requires gratitude.

**“We accumulate because we can. Likewise, we neglect what we accumulate because we can”**

“(Give) thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father,” urges St Paul in Ephesians 5:20. And by that, he didn't just mean saying “thank you”. He meant appreciating God's gifts in deed as well as in word, caring for everything given and entrusted to us as wise and good stewards.



### Too much 'stuff'

In cultures where material goods are scarce, where the price paid in time, labour or money for clothes, tools and toys is high, this isn't hard to grasp. We always care more for what's precious and rare than we do for what's cheap and abundant.

But in the West today, almost everything is cheap and abundant. And that's reflected in our homes, where 'stuff' – inexpensive, poorly made 'stuff' – piles up in cupboards and on countertops. It lies scattered about on living room floors, gets stuffed under beds, and collects dust on closet shelves. We accumulate because we can. Likewise, we neglect what we accumulate because we can. We have so much that it makes it harder, not easier, to be grateful for what we've been given.

The more we recognise our obligation to cultivate gratitude, however, the more compelled we are to shed the excess, invest in quality rather than quantity, and exercise the proper care for that in which we've invested. Gratitude, by its very nature, acts as a check against toys stuffed under beds and closets filled with broken electronics. It also prevents us from using cashmere sweaters and smart devices to fill holes that only God can fill. It reminds us of what's really important. And it calls us

to order our homes in such a way as to reflect that.

**“Ridding the clutter from our homes is as constant a battle as ridding the clutter from our souls”**

Detachment and gratitude make simplicity possible. They lay the foundation upon which the simple life can be built. And to actually build that life, we only have to imitate, at

least in terms of general design, the simple life constructed and embraced by centuries of nuns and monks.

That life has been lived within the walls of monasteries that are solid and beautiful, but free of clutter. There is no excess of furniture, gadgets or knickknacks. They own little, but what they do own is usually of the highest quality, designed and built to last through any number of clumsy novices and overeager postulants. Everything is

cared for. Everything has a purpose. Everything has a place. Memories are treasured more than memorabilia. Relationships are invested in more than gadgets and gizmos. There is peace. There is order. There is beauty. And in that peaceful, ordered, beautiful space, souls find freedom. They find God.

Translating those habits into the lay life isn't easy. Most of us will spend a lifetime looking for the line and finding our balance. Ridding the clutter from our homes is as constant a

battle as ridding the clutter from our souls. And it's as much a battle against our own need for security, comfort and control as it is a battle against plastic toys and piles of paper. But in the battle, as much as in the victories, the path to holy simplicity and holiness itself lies.

**Emily Stimpson** Chapman is a bestselling Catholic author of nearly a dozen books, and a former contributing editor to Our Sunday Visitor.





# What battles are we losing when the holy water fonts are dry?



Elizabeth Scalia

In chapter 31 of her autobiography, the 16th Century Carmelite St Teresa of Avila – one of four female doctors of the Church, including her spiritual daughter, St Thérèse of Lisieux – urges us toward frequent use of one particular, very common and (usually) widely available sacramental. “From long experience I have learned that there is nothing like holy water to put devils to flight and prevent them from coming back again... For my own part, whenever I take it, my soul feels a particular and most notable consolation.”

During a recent holiday in Italy that included numerous visits to churches throughout the mainland and Sicily, I couldn't help but think of the great reformer's testimony and, in particular, on her insistence that evil and its helpers are repelled by the intentional use of holy water, whether sprinkled about one's person, or, to use her word, “flung” into spaces of spiritual concern or where we would seek the protection of a blessing, even on the material things we use.

**“Arguments can be made, and doubtlessly were made, for and against the drying of the holy water”**

Because, sadly, as I entered churches and prepared to bless myself in these Italian churches my fingertips would meet the bone-dry bottoms of holy water fonts, or stoups.

During the Covid-19 global pandemic, the hard-hit Italian churches had emptied the vessels to prevent any possibility of spreading illness among those Faithful who, for a while lacking access to the live celebration of Mass, might wish to nevertheless enter a Church for a

prayerful moment. Most churches here in the United States did likewise, with many parishes making holy water available in urns for the Faithful to collect in small bottles and carry on their persons or to their homes.

Arguments can be made, and doubtlessly were made, for and against the drying of the holy water fonts while Covid was rampaging across the world, but while the illness seems like it is destined to be with us forever, the time of real crisis has ended. Liturgies are restored, people are once more gathering to pray, to shop, to travel, and mostly unmasked.

## Deserted pews

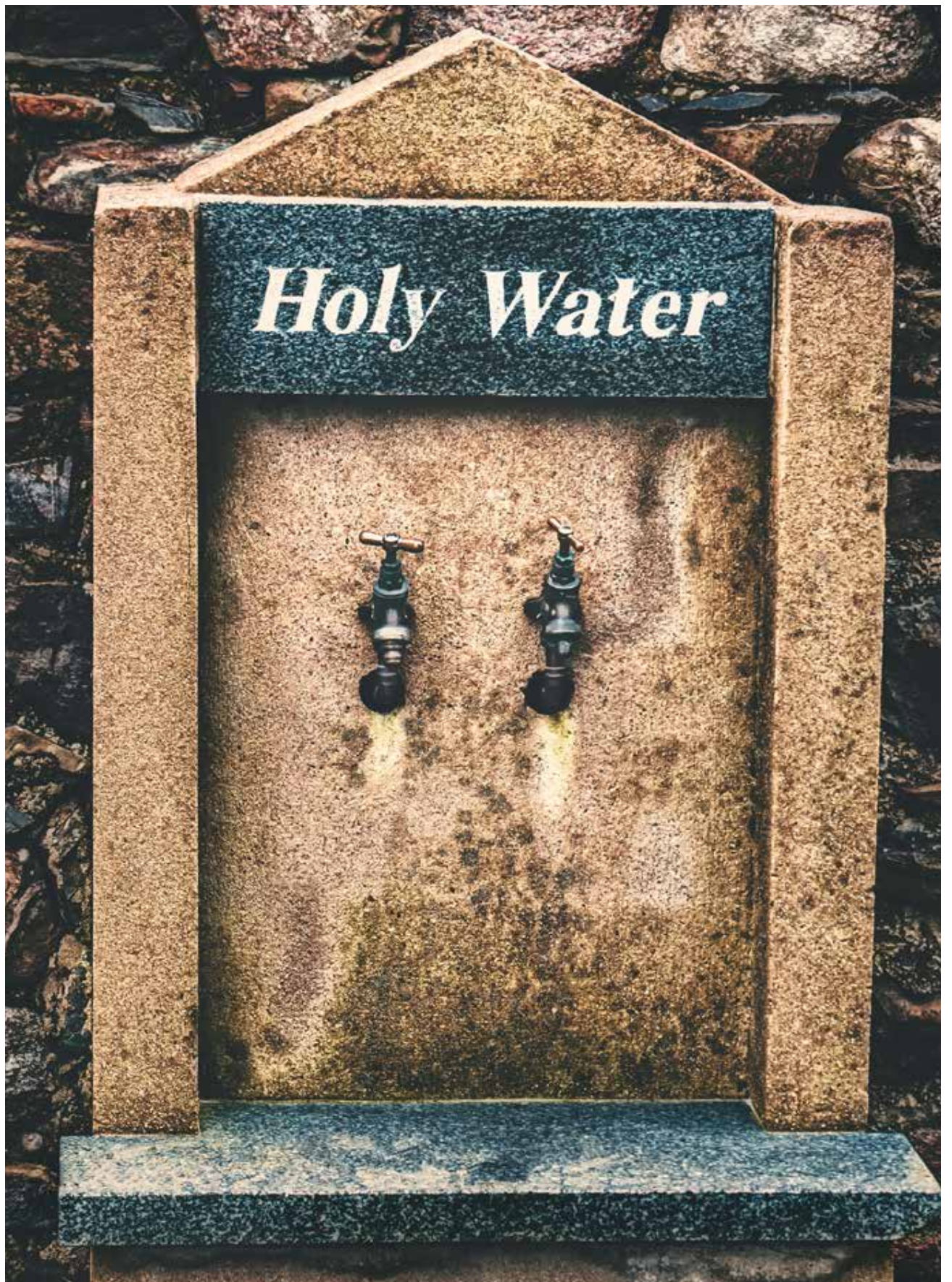
And yet in my travels, the holy water fonts were empty. Having the opportunity to attend occasional daily Masses and two Sunday Masses, I couldn't help but notice that the pews were mostly deserted as well.

Obviously, I can't prove a direct correlation between the absence of holy water and empty pews, but my head, my heart and my gut nevertheless make the connection. Encountering one empty font after another, I couldn't help but wonder: What battles are we losing when without the chance to make the sign of the cross over ourselves and our children with holy water before we enter a sacred space – before we come together to worship, even in all of our sinfulness?

Because one of the great things about holy water at those entrances is that in a momentary but singular action, we are assisted in facing the supernatural together in worship.

I always think of the sign of the cross as a kind of key, meant to open us, body, mind and spirit, to the actions of the Triune God, and holy water is part of that. At consecration, during the liturgy of the Eucharist, the veil between heaven and earth is pierced, and we are standing at the thinnest place on earth. And we've been opened and sprinkled, made ready for that moment.

Every act of spiritual opening is an act of supernatural vulnerability – we tell our children to stay away from Ouija boards for precisely that reason



– because a thought is a thing, and even innocent intentions can be preyed upon by what is evil. So, using a sacramental of blessing and protection, especially one that is so powerfully connected to being claimed for Christ in Baptism, seems a sensible,

necessary thing, before Mass and after – and, frankly, every day.

## Malevolent energies

That the vulnerability of spiritual opening warrants a bit of reassuring protection – because where there is great holiness, great evil

is always nearby (one of the great lessons of Calvary) – is also true of our sacred spaces. We cannot know what sort of malevolent energies are repelled by fonts and stoups full of holy water positioned at our church doors, but we can certainly imagine the opportunistic entities that

might enter without them.

Pastors throughout the Church, if you haven't already, please fill the fonts and supply holy water to the stoups. Restore to us this first and fundamental reminder that we are a supernatural Church in constant battle, and make handy this invaluable weapon. It is a good thing.

**Elizabeth Scalia is culture editor for OSV News.**

**“Restore to us this first and fundamental reminder that we are a supernatural Church in constant battle”**



# Levelling hierarchical distinctions while further clericalising the laity



Russell Shaw

Levelling hierarchical distinctions in the Church without removing them entirely has emerged as a principal objective of Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality.

That is perhaps the chief conclusion to be drawn from the first session of the synod, which took place October 4-29 at the Vatican. The second, and presumably last, session will be held in October next year.

Advance speculation had focused on whether the synod would address hot-button issues like ordaining women and giving blessings to same-sex couples. But although these topics were discussed – though no consensus was reached – the synod's more immediate goal was the less dramatic, but in the long run arguably more significant, objective of cutting back on clergy-only hierarchy.

**“The symbolism was clear – rank doesn't count at a synod”**

Several things that happened at the session suggest as much.

One was the seating arrangement. In a dispatch from the synod, Christopher Lamb, then Rome correspondent of the *London Tablet* and a synod booster, wrote enthusiastically of what he called “a new moment” – cardi-

nals, bishops, and lay people all sitting together at round tables. Even the Pope sat there while addressing the synod, Mr Lamb noted.

The symbolism was clear – rank doesn't count at a synod.

Fr Dario Vitali, an Italian theologian serving as coordinator of theological consultants at the synod, carried things beyond symbolism when he told the participants that in the synodal Church of the future, “we will have to rethink the whole Church, all the institutions, the whole life of the Church in a synodal sense”.

## Identification

And Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, prefect of the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, provided the clincher when he told a news conference, “I think that the identification between [holy] orders and offices is something that is being overcome”.

What does that mean? Cardinal Czerny gave this explanation:

“In other words, we're understanding orders not to be necessary for every office which until now has been headed by a cleric and in fact a hierarchy and in some cases even a cardinal. There's no danger to the nature of the Church because there are responsibilities which are already being, and which perhaps will increasingly be, entrusted to non-cardinals, non-bishops, non-priests.”

The trajectory of events being described here did not begin with the Synod on Synodality. In fact, it goes back a half-century and involves the progressive clericalisation of the Catholic laity. A little history sheds light on that.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65), speaking of the apostolate of the laity, said lay people have “this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth” (*Lumen Gentium*, 33).

**“If the change that Cardinal Czerny outlined becomes reality, that will be the next step in clericalising the laity”**

That formal recognition of lay apostolate directed to evangelising the secular order was real progress. But within a few years, the word ‘apostolate’ had disappeared from the Catholic vocabulary as a description of the laity's special role and been replaced by ‘ministry’. Originally, lay ministries were limited to liturgical offices, but over time ‘ministry’ came to be used for just about anything lay people do in a Church setting. That is approximately where the clericalisation of the laity stands now.

If the change that Cardinal Czerny outlined – letting lay people hold some offices in the Church now reserved to people in holy orders – becomes reality, that will be the next step in clericalising the laity. Meantime, apostolate carried on by lay people and directed to evangelising an increasingly de-Christianised world will be even more out in the cold. Score one for synodality, I guess.

**i** Russell Shaw, a veteran journalist and writer, is the author of more than 20 books, including three novels.



## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



**Q: My parish recently returned to communion under the second species. A Eucharistic Minister holds one cup and one cloth and does one wipe after each serve. Most people are still not receiving it for fear of Covid or other illness. Why can't the Church simply use disposable plastic cups with the wine already in it? The priest could say the same blessing and the Eucharistic Minister could still distribute but holding a tray instead of a cup. The empty cup could be disposed of with the passing of germs reduced to almost nothing.**

A: What you describe – with the elements of Communion pre-portioned in individual disposable packaging – is not uncommon in many non-Catholic Christian communities. However, there are several reasons why this would be inappropriate for Catholic worship.

For context, we need to recall that the Catholic theology of the Eucharist is radically different from the vast majority of Protestant understandings of Holy Communion. Many Protestant communities occasionally distribute bread and wine (or even grape juice) as a way of simply recalling and remembering Jesus' last meal and the friendship he shared with his disciples.

In contrast, a core central teaching of the Catholic Faith is the doctrine of the “real presence,” meaning that bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ at Mass when the priest prays the prayer of consecration. In technical philosophical terms this process is called “transubstantiation,” and because of it the prayer of consecration is much more radical and impactful than a simple blessing would be.

Because we believe that Jesus is physically, bodily present in the “sacred species” (our term for the bread and wine which have been turned into the body and blood of Christ), we have several laws and customs pertaining to the Eucharist which ensure a sufficient degree of protection and reverence for Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

For instance, it is required that

the vessels used during the Eucharist such as the ciborium, paten, and chalice (the “plates” and cup) be made from worthy and suitable materials. As paragraph 328 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us: “Sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside.” Clearly, this directive is incompatible with the use of disposable communion cups!

Additionally, during the Mass the priest must take care that every particle of the host and every last drop of the Precious Blood are reverently consumed. This is why, at the end of communion, the priest “purifies” the chalice, rinsing it with water that he then drinks himself. Even if disposable materials were allowed, there would be no way to be sure that absolutely all Precious Blood was actually consumed. As a result it would be impossible not to have some of the Precious Blood wind up in the trash. This would be at least de facto sacrilege.

It is certainly understandable that some Catholics might long for the fuller sign value of receiving Communion under both kinds, while still having legitimate concerns about germs and the spread of illness. Still, it's good to keep in mind that few things worth doing are ever one hundred percent risk-free. Most things in this life involve some sort of trade-off of risks versus benefits. Catholics who piously desire to receive the Precious Blood should prayerfully consider whether, in light of their own personal health status and spiritual needs, it might make sense for them in their own circumstances to brave the possibility of catching a bug in order to receive from the chalice.

In any case, we should always remember that in receiving the Eucharist under only one species, bread or wine, we nevertheless receive the entirety of Christ

**i** Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.



Participants in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops gather for an afternoon session October 25, 2023, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media



# Bridging the gap between piety and academia



I live on both sides of a border. Not a geographical one, but one that separates the church pew from the academic halls of theology.

I was raised a conservative Catholic. Although my dad worked politically for the Liberal party, most everything within my upbringing was conservative, particularly as this pertains to religion. I was a staunch Catholic in most every way. I grew up under the papacy of Pius XII (and the fact that my youngest brother is named Pius will tell you how loyal our family was to that Pope's version of things). We believed that Catholicism was the one true religion and that Protestants and Evangelicals needed to convert and return to the true faith. I memorised the Catholic catechism and defended its every word. Moreover, beyond being faithful churchgoers, my family was given over to piety and devotions: we prayed the rosary together as a family every day; had statues and holy pictures around our house; wore blessed medals around our necks; prayed litanies to Mary, Joseph, and the Sacred Heart during certain months; and practiced a warm devotion to the saints. And it was wonderful. I will forever be grateful for that religious foundation.

I went from my family home to the seminary at the tender age of 17 and my early seminary years reinforced what my family had given me. The



Fr Rolheiser

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

academics were good and we were encouraged to read great thinkers in every discipline. But this higher learning was still set solidly within a Catholic ethos that honoured my religious and devotional background. My initial university studies were still friends with my piety. My mind was expanding, but my piety remained intact.

### Strain on youth

But home is where we start from. Gradually, through the years, my world has changed. Studying at various graduate schools, teaching on graduate faculties, being in daily contact with other expressions of the faith, reading contemporary novelists and thinkers, and having academic colleagues as cherished friends has, I confess,

put some strain on the piety of my youth. Truth be told, we don't often pray the rosary or litanies to Mary or the Sacred Heart in graduate classrooms or at faculty gatherings.

However academic classrooms and faculty gatherings bring something else, something vitally needed in church pews and in circles of piety, namely, a critical theological vision and principles to keep unbridled piety, naive fundamentalism, and misguided religious fervour within proper boundaries. What I've learned in academic circles is also wonderful and I am forever grateful for the privilege of being in academic circles most of my adult life.

But, of course, that's a formula for tension, albeit a healthy one. Let me use someone else's voice to articulate this. In his book

*Silence and Beauty*, Japanese American artist, Makoto Fujimura, shares this incident from his own life. Coming out of church one Sunday, he was asked by his pastor to add his name to a list of people who had agreed to boycott the film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. He liked his pastor and wanted to please him by signing the petition, but felt hesitant to sign for reasons that, at that time, he couldn't articulate. But his wife could. Before he could sign, she stepped in and said: "Artists may have other roles to play than to boycott this film." He understood what she meant. He didn't sign the petition.

### Tension

But his decision left him pondering the tension between boycotting such a movie and his role as an artist. Here's how he puts it: "An artist is often pulled in two directions. Religiously conservative people tend to see culture as suspect at best, and when cultural statements are made to transgress the normative reality they hold dear, their

default reaction is to oppose and boycott. People in the more liberal artistic community see these transgressive steps as necessary for their 'freedom of expression'. An artist like me, who values both religion and art, will be exiled from both. I try to hold together both of these commitments, but it is a struggle."

That's also my struggle. The piety of my youth, of my parents, and of that rich branch of Catholicism is real and life-giving; but so too is the critical (sometimes unsettling) iconoclastic theology of the academy. The two desperately need each other; yet someone who is trying to be loyal to both can, like Fujimura, end up feeling exiled from both. Theologians also have other roles to play than boycotting movies.

The people whom I take as mentors in this area are men and women who, in my eyes, can do both: like Dorothy Day, who could be equally comfortable, leading the rosary or the peace march; like Jim Wallis, who can advocate just as passionately for radical social engagement as he can for personal intimacy with Jesus; and like Thomas Aquinas, whose intellect could intimidate intellectuals, even as he could pray with the piety of a child.

Circles of piety and the academy of theology are not enemies. They need to befriend each other.

**“Religiously conservative people tend to see culture as suspect at best, and when cultural statements are made to transgress the normative reality they hold dear, their default reaction is to oppose and boycott”**



# Christ is the King we didn't expect



A thin blanket of snow covers a statue of Christ the King. Photo: CNS/Sam Lucero

Ez 43:11-12, 15-17

Ps 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

1 Cor 15:20-26, 28

Mt 25:31-46

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon  
Greg  
Kandra



*Quas primas (In the first)* to respond to growing secularism and atheism... During the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in Mexico, Russia and some parts of Europe, militantly secularistic regimes threatened not just the Catholic Church, but civilisation itself. Pope Pius XI's encyclical gave Catholics hope and – while governments around them crumbled – the assurance that Christ the King shall reign forever.”

### Hopelessness

A century later, that's a message that still needs to be proclaimed, a hope that a world full of hopelessness still needs to hear – now more than ever.

As part of this feast, I

think there are two vitally important messages we need to take away from this Sunday.

First, we not only need to hear the message that Christ is King, but to remember that the other things that try to exert power over our lives are really powerless.

**“As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep”**

We let ourselves be ruled by stuff. We make monarchs out of that new car, the better iPhone, the swankier office or the best job title. All of this and more can make us feel like Masters of the Universe.

But then this feast comes along to remind us: No. There is only one.

And, in fact, he may not

be what we expect – which is the other important takeaway this weekend.

Surprisingly, the Scripture readings for a Sunday devoted to Christ's kingship don't speak of an all-powerful monarch or head of state. They describe someone humble and simple – a shepherd, guiding his flock through verdant pastures, beside restful waters.

As the prophetic reading from Ezekiel puts it: “As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep.”

### The Last Judgement

And there is the even more striking image in Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus speaks of the Last Judgement – separating the sheep from the goats – and renders his verdict with words that make up one of the most famous challenges in the Gospels:

“Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

If we are to consider Christ as King, just what kind of king is he?

The king of the Gospel is a figure concerned more about the powerless than the powerful. He is focused on those who hunger and thirst, the ones who are unwelcomed or marginalised, the people who are uncared for and unclothed.

**“He doesn't lead with a sceptre, but with a shepherd's staff, promising restful repose, justice and peace”**

Forget power and glory, ambition and influence. This king doesn't care about any of that. His rule is about remembering those who are so often forgotten.

And he is asking us – no,

commanding us – to do the same. He makes this much clear: our salvation depends on it.

As much as this particular solemnity reflects modern global and political concerns, its real meaning is as old as the Gospel itself, and just as urgent.

It serves as a final punctuation mark to the liturgical year – an exclamation point, really – with a message of transcendent humility, simplicity and hope, along with this timely reminder: only ONE king matters.

He doesn't lead with a sceptre, but with a shepherd's staff, promising restful repose, justice and peace.

As we pray so often: may his kingdom come.

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



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Newstalk works hard to foster a real diversity of viewpoints

With very little publicity, significant in itself, the 'Safe Access Zones' Bill passed in the Dáil last week.

The only coverage I came across was on **Newstalk Breakfast** (Wednesday). It was unfortunately a short item, though the coverage was welcome and I thought presenter Shane Coleman (pictured right) was even-handed – increasingly Newstalk is the only national station that fosters real diversity of viewpoint. Eilis Mulroy of the Pro-Life Campaign pointed out the wide-ranging effect of the legislation – banning protest within 100 metres of GP practices and healthcare facilities. This would 'sterilise' large areas where the constitutional right to protest was banned. She said that this draconian and discriminatory legislation would technically criminalise a mother who was trying until the last minute to persuade her daughter to keep the baby (her grand-child), or indeed anyone offering support.

Karen Sugrue of the group 'Together for Safety', was "absolutely thrilled" by the Bill, and said protesters were just being asked to move back "a little bit" (100 metres!). She even spoke of "discussions" being banned in these safe access zones. One thing is clear – these zones are anything but safe



Newstalk presenter Shane Coleman.

for unborn babies, who are, lest we forget it, as alive as the rest of us.

On **It Says in the Papers** (RTÉ Radio One, Tuesday) the reviewer quoted an impassioned plea from that morning's *Irish Examiner*, where Fergus Finlay appealed to Israel to stop the bombing of Gaza, while also lambasting the actions of Hamas. He wrote: "...no one can justify the deaths of babies and children, on any terms in any circumstances. And already too many have died. Some in the places where they should be safest"

– absolutely right. Pro-life people have been saying this for decades.

Meanwhile RTÉ's problems continue, and one of them is its obsession about climate change, with a zealotry that would put the most ardent religious extremist to shame. Sometimes it feels as if commentators get a bounty every time the mention it, with an extra bonus if they can put 'climate' as an adjective in front of words that never kept that company before. The pinnacle of the

obsession was **Ireland 2050: Tomorrow Tonight** (RTÉ One, Wednesday) – a sort of docu-drama imagining how bad the climate crisis will be in 27 years' time. This hectoring po-faced programme, with its current affairs show format (a format unchanged in 27 years!), imagined it was pretty bleak, and maybe it will be. They hit the jackpot (or jackboot?) with the concept of 'climate crime', and military intervention (the UN 'Green Helmets'!) if certain countries weren't compliant enough. Apart from the climate wreckage (bonus please) it wasn't presented as a dystopian future, they were wallowing in it. The UN agreement about climate crime and enforcement, championed by Greta Thunberg, by then Prime Minister of Sweden, was seen as a triumph.

Fashion changes were minimal, apart from some weird lapels, and there was one good joke, about the Luas trams being introduced to Cork and called Cluas. Not so funny was the awkward involvement in this cringe drama of real 2023 journalists like Sinead O'Carroll and Harry McGee – playing unaged versions of themselves. For balance (haha) there was a generic right wing conspiracy theorist banging on about 'elites', a reference to 'witch-hunt' and tokenistic nods to 'creeping government oppression'.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### CATHOLIC SPHERE

**EWTN Monday November 27, 8am and Tuesday November 28, 9.30pm**

Debbie Cowden and her panel of experts help parents discuss human sexuality with their children according to Church teaching and God's plan for humanity.

#### A HIDDEN LIFE

**Film 4 Wednesday November 29, 11.25pm**

(2019) World War II drama written and directed by Terrence Malick, set in rural Austria and following the life story of Franz Jägerstätter (August Diehl), a conscientious objector during World War II.

#### WITNESS

**RTÉ Radio One Friday December 1, 10.05pm**

Siobhán Garrigan presents topical religious and ethical issues.

The worst nods were those of the presenters, including anchorman Mark Little, nodding in approval at every point made for the one acceptable narrative. The language was colourful – with talk of 'rain bombs', 'pollinating drones', 'slush avalanche', 'micro-stock' (insect protein replacing meat in children's lunches, yummy!), 'synthetic milk' and our scary old friend 'global boiling'.

Of course, these are existential matters, and ultimately pro-life matters, in the broadest sense, so I don't want to be blasé about it, but whipping up hysteria never did any cause any good in the long term. Zealotry never did religion

any favours, and dodgy programmes like this may well bring serious climate concerns into disrepute.

Scriptwriter Graham Linehan was brought undeservedly into disrepute and 'cancelled' over his conflicts with transgender activists. In his interview with Kieran Cuddihy on **The Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Thursday) he said he hadn't wanted to be "too satirical" about priests in *Father Ted* – his fellow scriptwriter Arthur Matthews had priests in his family that he was "really fond of", and Linehan himself was taught by priests and they were "quite fair" to him. It's worth listening back to.

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Brilliant documentary about snooker's finest

Ronnie O'Sullivan is generally regarded as the greatest snooker player of all time. In the just-released documentary about his life, *Ronnie O'Sullivan: The Edge of Reason* (Amazon Prime) we're brought into the complexities of his life and game.

At times he appears so good he's on a different planet to his colleagues. He can do things on the table that other mere mortals can't even envisage. But he's also capable of self-destructing.

Sam Blair's film goes into the things that make him great and the demons that stop him fulfilling his true potential. As I write, he's won seven world titles. So has Stephen Hendry, but Hendry won his seven in the one dec-

ade (the 90s). Ronnie's have been spread over three – and won at a time when the game has been more difficult.

His life has been as complex as his game. When he was 15 his father was charged with the murder of a man associated with the notorious Kray twins and sentenced to life in prison. He served 18 years.

He grew up fast in London's underbelly, something he reveals in his three published autobiographies – the last one, *Unbreakable*, is a masterpiece in my view – and in his second avocation of crime novelist.

I interviewed him some years ago in Bewley's hotel in Tallaght, as the interview wound towards its close he



Snooker ace Ronnie O'Sullivan.

suddenly remembered he had a plane to catch to London. It was too late to call a taxi so he asked me if I would drive him. I was honoured to be asked, I never had a world

champion in my car.

As we drove to Collins-town he rang his father. Listening to a world champion sportsman talking to a man who had been sentenced to

life imprisonment for murder was a surreal experience for me. After he hung up he continued talking as if it was nothing.

The two sides of his life, the normal and the abnormal, are brilliantly captured in the movie which contains footage going back to his childhood years when the game was so simple for him. He made his first century at 12 and his first 'maximum' (a 147 break) three years later.

I regard him as the Paganini of snooker, a maestro who can conjure up magic like Harry Potter, wielding his cue like a magic wand. He's 47 now so I imagine titles will be thin on the ground from now on. He's eyeing up a third career in punditry and

is also a prize-winning athlete.

Ronnie became prey to many addictions – drink, drugs, gambling – after his father was taken away from him but he's in a 'good place' now, as they say. A lot of that is down to the help of sports psychologist Steve Peters, whom he credits with saving him from himself.

It's a travesty that he's never won sportsman of the year, despite numerous nominations. Part of the reason is his contentious nature, his refusal to bend the knee to the WPBSA, snooker's ruling body.

We need our rebels. Long may he continue, like Francis Albert Sinatra, to do things his way.



# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Keeping going in fine style guided by one who knows how



Francis Brennan (right) and his brother John are pictured with two South American friends.

**Age is Just a Number: Make the Best of Every Decade,**  
by Francis Brennan  
(Gill Books, €19.99 / £17.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

**F**rancis Brennan is not a young man, and yet he has conquered our attention on television and become a bestselling author. One can't help wondering if he has some secret which might be of interest and perhaps use to those of us who are not as young as we once were. In this respect this latest book of his is illuminating.

Francis Brennan was born in Sandyford, Co. Dublin, on September 24, 1953. He attended the local national school and CUS, the Marist College, on Leeson Street in central Dublin.

Following his secondary education he set out to be an hotelier. He served his apprenticeship in some of the best-known hotels in the country, including the Parknasilla Resort and Spa

in Co. Kerry and Jury's Hotel in Dublin.

**“Between 2008 and 2017 RTÉ presented 55 programmes showing the brothers doing makeovers on B&B's, guest-houses, hotels, hostels, restaurants”**

Eventually he acquired the Park Hotel in Kenmare, Co. Kerry. With his brother John he developed it into a five-star hotel. He also became an influential figure in the Irish Hotel Business and the Irish Tourist Industry.

Apart from excelling as hoteliers, Francis and John excelled as the producers of immensely popular TV programmes. In concert with RTÉ they offered to modernise and update premises which were in the hospitality business, provided their efforts to this end could

be presented as a TV programme.

Between 2008 and 2017 RTÉ presented 55 programmes showing the brothers doing makeovers on B&B's, guest-houses, hotels, hostels, restaurants and other places of business from the length and breadth of Ireland. As a result the brothers became television personalities.

### Appearances

Subsequently Francis also made other television appearances, notably in a series, entitled *Francis Brennan's Grand Tour*, in which he leads holiday-makers on a tour of Europe, next on a tour of India's Golden Triangle and finally on a trip to Vietnam.

Following his popular TV programmes Francis continued to share his widespread experience and practical

wisdom. He published *The Homekeeper's Diary* in 2023 in which he suggested how householders could re-model their homes and he also provided advice on cleaning, gardening, cooking and other aspects of household living.

**“He illustrates how counting one's blessings can be a wonderful antidote to stress”**

It was inevitable that when he reached his 70th year that he would be prompted to direct his optimistic and positive attitude to life in the direction of his fellow-septuagenarians.

*Age is Just a Number: Make the Best of Every Decade* is beautifully shaped. At the outset Francis warns

that it is crucial to be prepared for the period when one no longer has the duty nor the right to show up for work and he indicates how one could and should prepare for this eventuality.

### Importance

He emphasises the importance of caring for one's mental and physical health and proffers the advice of experts on how to ensure one's general well-being in that area.

He illustrates how counting one's blessings can be a wonderful antidote to stress. And he points out that the reasons all scientific studies give for a long life highlight regular exercise, connection with family, eating lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and no smoking.

For Francis friends are ever important in every stage of one's existence and

especially for the elderly. He advocates that they retain a close relationship with their extended family, friends and neighbours.

**“In this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes”**

He offers numerous practical tips with regard to dealing with financial matters. Nor does he omit to make useful suggestions on the need to dress so that one can be “looking good and feeling great”.

He quotes Benjamin Franklin: “In this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes”: and counsels that the drafting of a will and overseeing funeral arrangements should not be delayed.

Francis Brennan's book is a treasure trove of enlightened commonsense and is a *vade mecum* which could greatly enhance the lives of elderly persons.

**“Francis warns that it is crucial to be prepared for the period when one no longer has the duty nor the right to show up for work and he indicates how one could and should prepare for this eventuality”**



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

## The healing powers of wild flowers



The Chelsea Physic Garden, London, one of the most famous apothecary gardens in the world.

**All My Wild Mothers: A Memoir of Motherhood, Loss and an Apothecary Garden**, by Victoria Bennett (Two Roads / Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99 / €19.99)

**Peter Costello**

**M**ens sana in corpore sano (a healthy mind in a healthy body) is an old saying, but its truth is borne out by this very evocative book.

Most books about wild flowers and herbal gardens are written from a gardening point of view. This narrative however is intensely personal; it is a psychological memoir with additional herbs.

It is more akin to the sort of books that you find on the memoir shelves in your local bookshop.

### Recovered

It tells of how a shattered life was recovered and remade, but brutally. As a hoarder I got a shock on reading how the author ruthlessly burned all the relics of her past life on leaving an old home, even down to family snaps and the battered stuffed toy she had hugged as a child. To the dismay of her little boy it went on the top of the bonfire.

However a move with her little boy to rural Cumbria allowed her to so to speak begin again. On the rubble building site that surrounded their new home they began to explore, finding their way to a new relaxed and nourishing inner life involving the wild flowers and then the herbs that could be found around where they lived.

The sections of her book are given the names over 80 flowers and herbs. Slowly through experiences in the fields and through the books she began to read she learnt about the plants and about the traditions around them, and how they are to be used as aids to health and to cooking and to simply adding delight to one's life.

All this makes for fascinating reading at an emotional level. But she also bought a battered copy of *Gerard's Herbal* as the beginning of a small library.

Her suggestions for "an apothecary's book case" contain of course some familiar tomes including Mrs Maud Grieve's *Modern Herbal* (1931), but also many up to date books, some very much in the line of alternative living.

However herbs need care. One has only to recall the difficulties that the enthusiasm

for St John's Wort gave rise to. This being so the publishers have added "A Note on Safety", declaring the book is for entertainment only.

It is not intended as a guide to self-diagnosis or treatment. The bottom line is always seek medical advice. And be careful what you pick – buy a book with really good colour illustrations, drawings in preference to photographs.

### Reminded

Though they are far from the author's outlook, I was reminded in these pages of the wisdom enshrined in the 'Brother Cadfael' series of books on medieval life by the novelist Ellis Peters written around the detective experiences of a monastic herbalist.

There the herbs and plants are directly seen as part of the wonders of God's creation. But this is a very modern book – and so misses out in a way on some deeper aspects of the lore of past centuries that she admires and cultivates.

This book deserves the praise already heaped upon it. But as Francis Brennan might advise, good health is not an end in itself, but means to benefit you and others.

## A saint recounts his struggle with the Irish hierarchy

**My Campaign in Ireland Part II: My Connection with the Catholic University**, by John Henry Newman, with an introduction and notes by Paul Shrimpton [Newman Millennium Edition, volume XVII] (Gracewing, £35.00 / €40.00)

**Peter Costello**

**F**or Catholics it may be enough that John Henry Newman is now canonised. But this in a way is a limitation on understanding all aspects of his life.

He has also to be seen as a major figure in the Victorian culture of Britain, a major figure to set beside say Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and others. His *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) is an historical document of the first importance.

The time that Newman spent in Ireland is an important passage in his life, but an unhappy one. I suspect it is difficult for a British critic to comprehend the affair fully, for it is closely bound up with Irish ideas about culture and identity that have always thwarted British observers.

Newman was called to Ireland to establish a Catholic University. But the nature of a 'Catholic University' was seen from two different aspects by the hierarchy and by Newman. At cross purposes from the start the affair could not but end unhappily.

All his life Newman saw himself as addressing the widest possible audience available to a Catholic scholar in those days. By contrast this book was a confidential document for restricted circulation, which ran contrary to Newman's nature.

### Louvain

For the hierarchy, drawing on the bishops' own experiences, a Catholic university meant something like Louvain (or Leuven if one prefers). To Newman a Catholic University meant, in its ideal form, something akin to, certainly modelled on, his beloved Medieval pre-Reformation Oxford.

In the end neither got what they hoped for. The hierarchy were wanting an institution to counter the Queens Colleges in Galway, Cork and Belfast. These they saw as standing alongside Trinity College in Dublin.

These were for many in the hierarchy 'Godless' colleges, which would have come as a surprise to those



St John Henry Newman as seen today.

who taught in them.

They conceived of a grand edifice in Drumcondra. They even had an idealisation of it painted to give some kind of physical form to their dream.

They saw it as a benefit to the Church rather than a resource for society. They misjudged the movement of public opinion which was towards widespread popular education.

What they got were those connected houses on St Stephen's Green, where Newman began his work, while living in the house attached to the semi-Byzantine church he had specially erected next to what is now Newman House, 'No. 86' to generations of students.

But the college could not grant government recognised degrees. Middle class parents were not going to risk their sons' professional futures to assist the hierarchy in its plans.

Later the institution he founded as University College Dublin passed into the hands of the Jesuits – who inevitably gave it an overall cast of their own educational philosophy.

It became one of the constituent colleges, along with such places as Blackrock College and Muckross College, which had 'University level' section that prepared students for the public exams of the Royal University, established in Earlsfort for Terrace.

This was not the outcome either the hierarchy or Newman had intended. Eventually the Irish Party needed to be placated.

The National University of Ireland was established which consisted of the old royal colleges and of UCD. It was a compromise. It has

survived, but in an evolved form

The only two institutions of Newman's founding that really succeeded were St Cecilia's medical college, which flourished because it had the remit to grant a recognised qualification.

That certainly attracted students from the middle class parents on whom any university depends. The other was the Catholic University School (now in the hands of the Marist Fathers), which also flourishes in the same neighbourhood in which it was erected by Newman.

### Memory

The UCD of today owes little to Newman's ideas, aside from the piety of memory. Since the move to Belfield it has been modelled on the modern American university, and its staff see themselves in that light.

To an English admirer of Newman the Irish treatment of Newman seems strange, even inexplicable. But the Irish hierarchy of the day were not to know they were dealing with a saint, a man whose fame would far outlive their own. They saw Newman as an Englishman of a kind they did not care for.

It makes for a sad and sorry narrative, from which all parties emerge badly. This book edited from a point of view fails to engage with the miasmatic quagmire in which Newman and his sponsors found themselves.

There are lessons to be learned from it. But for the saintly Newman his time in Ireland became (as it later did for Gerard Manley Hopkins) a kind of 'white martyrdom'.



# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4027 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)



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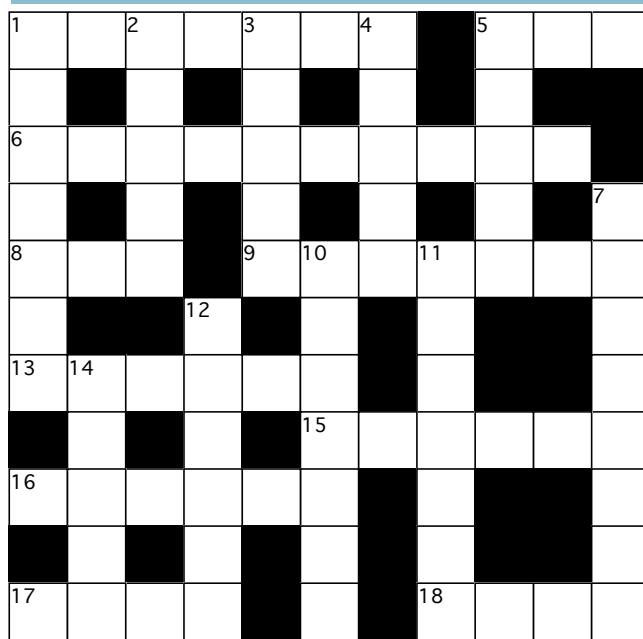
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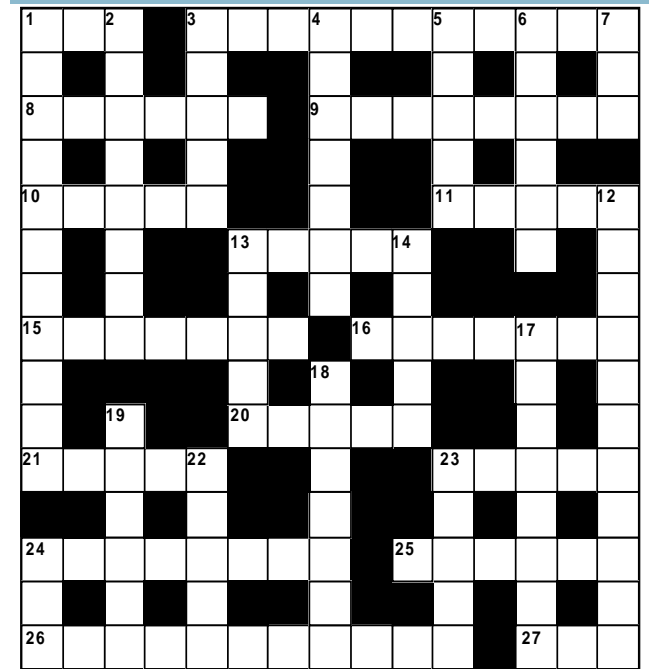
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### Crossword Junior Gordius 510



- Across**
- 1 Start a game of soccer (4,3)
  - 5 Trophy (3)
  - 6 Magical being who will pay for your molars and incisors (5,5)
  - 8 Use this to scratch weeds out of the ground (3)
  - 9 Move back from battle (7)
  - 13 Temple of the far East (6)
  - 15 Where pupils and teachers learn together (6)
  - 16 The longest play by Shakespeare, which includes the line "To be or not to be" (6)
  - 17 'I saw a flock of sheep and
- Down**
- a \_\_\_\_ of cattle' (4)
  - 18 In a little while (4)
  - 1 Tomato sauce (7)
  - 2 Not far away (5)
  - 3 'Not that one, the \_\_\_\_ one' (5)
  - 4 Huge meal, banquet (5)
  - 5 Cut wood to decorate it (5)
  - 7 Male horse (8)
  - 10 Stretchable material (7)
  - 11 Slices of bacon (7)
  - 12 Heated water in a kettle (6)
  - 14 Not asleep (5)

### Crossword Gordius 638



- Across**
- 1 Gratuity (3)
  - 3 Financial institution owned by its members (6,5)
  - 8 The symbol of the virtue of hope (6)
  - 9 & 13d Iconic Scottish traditional dance (8,5)
  - 10 French river, scene of a terrible World War I battle (5)
  - 11 Respond to a stimulus (5)
  - 13 Criminal offence involving deception (5)
  - 15 Skipper (7)
  - 16 Perfect state aspired to by Buddhists (7)
  - 20 Small statue seen in some gardens (5)
  - 21 Redesign hat, or get the name in Judaism for the Pentateuch (5)
  - 23 Keyboard instrument (5)
  - 24 Town in Galilee where Christ lived for many years (8)
  - 25 Serpents (6)
  - 26 One type of man-made fibre (11)
  - 27 Arid (3)
- Down**
- 1 Light can shine through such material (11)
  - 2 Tonic (4-2-2)
  - 3 It is added sometimes to an apple tart or a hot whiskey (5)
  - 4 Brightly-coloured flowers (7)
  - 5 One who will show you to your seat (5)
  - 6 Old Testament prophet whose book precedes Jeremiah in the Bible (6)
  - 7 Signal agreement (3)
  - 12 Composer of the 1812 Overture (11)
  - 13 See 9 across
  - 14 Hit the ball from the teebox (5)
  - 17 Assailed (8)
  - 18 Gift token (7)
  - 19 The largest country in South America (6)
  - 22 Aromatic or medicinal shrubs (5)
  - 23 Pasta whose name is Italian for 'quills' (5)
  - 24 Snooze (3)

### SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 16

- GORDIUS NO. 637**
- Across** - 1 Mud 3 Simple Simon 8 Tasted 9 Tomorrow 10 Harpy 11 Mogul 13 First 15 Masseur 16 Survive 20 Dalek 21 Knead 23 Cloud 24 Grieving 25 Come to 26 Giant-killer 27 Ton
- Down** - 1 Matthew, Mark, Luke and John 2 Destroys 3 Seedy 4 Pottery 5 Storm 6 Mirage 7 New 13 Found 14 Truck 17 Innocent 18 Illegal 19 Retina 22 Duvet 23 Choir 24 Gig
- CHILDREN'S No. 509**
- Across** - 1 Chicken soup 7 Listening 8 Evil 9 Avenue 11 Tacks 13 Rapid 15 Opinion 16 Clean 17 Hound
- Down** - 1 Collects 2 Instinct 3 Keep 4 Nail varnish 5 Organ 6 Plane 10 Unicorn 12 Stone 14 Fly

### Sudoku Corner 510

**Easy**

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

**Hard**

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

### Last week's Easy 509

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

### Last week's Hard 509

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



Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



# JFK, Catholic education and objective truth

November 22, marked the 60th anniversary of the death of President John F. Kennedy who was assassinated in Dallas, Texas in 1963. This Irish American was the first Catholic to be elected president of the United States and his rise to the highest office of American politics represented a moment of pride and triumph of the Irish abroad.



Yet despite his popularity, his Catholic Faith was always viewed with suspicion by the predominantly Protestant electorate. While on the election campaign in 1960, he famously said: "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic candidate for president who happens to be Catholic. I do not speak for my Church on public matters and the Church does not speak for me." However, while the president insisted that his Catholicism would not have a determining influence on his decision making and that his identity as an American would always take precedence over his identity as a Catholic Christian, his speeches and vision were deeply imbued with a Catholic imagination.

One example is in the field of education. He himself would

have been formed and educated in the classical model whereby what you learned was connected to who you are and are meant to become. At the heart of this educational vision was truth. Education was an adventure towards the discovery of truth that makes demands on us. These demands are not to be resisted because they are hard but embraced because they are right. The president's conviction did not come out of a vacuum but emerged from the tradition of Catholic education. Contrast these words of Kennedy to what the

late Pope Benedict XVI said many years later: "Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger people" (President Kennedy); "The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness" (Pope Benedict, XVI).

### Faithful

For the late president, we need to be faithful to the truth, no matter where it takes us. He said: "Truth is a tyrant – the only tyrant to

whom we can give our allegiance. The service of truth is a matter of heroism."

Here President Kennedy stands firmly within the Faith tradition of the Church which states that: "Men and women have the specific duty to move always towards the truth, to respect it and bear responsible witness to it... Modern times call for an intense educational effort and a corresponding commitment on the part of all so that the quest for truth

cannot be ascribed to the sum of different opinions" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 198).

### Subversive

This teaching is a subversive antidote to what many describe as our modern 'post-truth culture' where objective truth is increasingly denied as merely subjective to every person and interpretation. For the president, education in truth is "the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation". Sixty years after his death, we remember and pray for John Fitzgerald Kennedy – the first Catholic president of the USA whose Faith had more influence on him than he cared to admit.

### The 60th anniversary of the death of CS. Lewis

On the same day that President Kennedy was killed, the Belfast born writer CS. Lewis died too. In 1943, Lewis published a prophetic work called *The Abolition of Man*. In the book, Lewis observed that educational trends were replacing the classical emphasis on objective values such as beauty, goodness and truth with subjective sentiments. For Lewis, nothing less than the future of human nature itself was at stake. The classical model for education was founded on human beings endowed with a common nature that is naturally drawn to the good, true and beautiful and that flourishes in conformity to that goodness, truth and beauty. In contrast modern models of education are founded less on what it means to be human and more on our tastes and whims. Yet, as the Roman poet Horace famously said: "You can drive out nature with a pitchfork, but she keeps on coming back" (*Epistles*, Book I, 10). She does indeed. For Lewis, education was about how to conform the soul to objective truth and to become more human in the process. The way to this goal was wisdom, self-discipline, and virtue. For the modern, he says, the cardinal problem is how to conform truth to our wishes instead. Prophetic words.



## BISHOP SENDS URGENT PLEA FOR OUR HELP TO BUILD A CHAPEL FOR A HOSPICE IN BRAZIL



Bishop Carlos Verzeletti has contacted us from his diocese of Castanhal, N.E. Brazil. He has been inspired to build a Hospice for many cancer patients, whose condition is terminal and who need palliative care when discharged from hospital. He writes: "We are witnessing the suffering of totally abandoned families that don't have the means and medicines necessary to help their sick people to die in peace."

Construction of the Hospice buildings, which will care for 74 men and women, is under way. Many of the cancers have been caused by very toxic pesticides, which is a tragedy. To ease the pain and trauma of the patients, palliative care and much else will be made use of. Families will be supported and spiritual, mental as well as physical care given to the residents.

Bishop Carlos is asking The Little Way for funds needed to construct a chapel on the Abba Hospice site. He writes "The chapel will be a much-needed place for the families to meet the Lord in prayer, to pour out their tears, not fall into despair but to renew their hope and abandon themselves trustingly into the hands of the Father."

Please send whatever you can for this special project.

Every euro you can send will be gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction, to Bishop Carlos in Brazil. Bishop Carlos ends his letter by saying: "I pray every day for you and your benefactors in the hope that you can help us realize this very important part of our Hospice."



"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul." - St Therese

### REMEMBER THE HOLY SOULS IN NOVEMBER

If you wish to have Masses offered for friends or loved ones who have died, please send us a list of intentions and a recommended stipend of €6.50 (but more is very welcome) as an offering to the priest who will celebrate each Mass.

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